



## Costuming sets the tone



# How to Look Like the Dickens!

*Many thrift store items or items from your closet can be altered to create the Dickens style.*



So that Chestertown can offer our visitors an authentic Dickens experience, we encourage our event participants and vendors to dress the part of a typical resident of Victorian London. Here are some suggestions to achieve the look.

### WOMEN:

Loose fitting long sleeved, high-necked blouses can be cinched at the waist and wrists to create the typical Dickensian blouse. Working class women often paired this blouse with a long, plain skirt and crinoline. Long skirts can be plain or accented with ribbons, lace and a full petticoat or hoop. A long skirt, paired with a mid-length skirt can create the proper full effect. A bonnet or "mobcap" completes the look.

Historically, more complicated dresses were reserved for the wealthy upper class. They involve voluminous layers of petticoats, bustles and ruffles. Many thrift-shop finds can be transformed into lovely Victorian dresses by adding more fullness to the skirt, accents of ribbons, braid, lace and flowers, or adding a collar,

Hats and gloves were crucial to a "respectable appearance." Enormous wide-brimmed hats

were covered with elaborate creations of silk flowers, ribbons, and above all, exotic plumes; hats sometimes included entire exotic birds that had been stuffed.

You can create a bonnet from an old straw or felt hat by adding ribbons and flowers. Capes or large scarves can be used as outerwear.

Often, patterns to make clothing and accessories can be purchased online or found in sewing stores in pattern books under "costumes."



### MEN:

The top hat or derby was standard formal wear for upper- and middle-class men. Outfits like today's formal wear fit well. Middle- and upper-class men wore overcoats, dress shirts, and vests. The working class wore less fanciful or hand-me-down versions in cheaper materials.

Uncollared or dress shirts with the fold over part of the collar removed paired with a plain, squared-bottom (non-notched) vest achieve a Dickens look. A plain white shirt can be given a period look by turning the collar up. Add a ribbon, scarf or fancy cravat and knot in front.

Pants are straight-legged and worn with suspenders. Most men also wore a frock coat or overcoat, gloves, and a top hat or bowler. A frock coat or tailcoat is easy to create, using a dark overcoat or raincoat. Trim the collar with velvet, silk or brocade, and move the first button to mid-chest, causing the coat to fall in a cutaway fashion. Canes can be carried as an accessory.

Plain, short, lace-up boots work for everyone. Otherwise, plain leather shoes.



Need inspiration or want to purchase an outfit or accessories? Consider these online vendors:  
[dickensfair.com](http://dickensfair.com)  
[trulyvictorian.net](http://trulyvictorian.net)  
[vintagedancer.com](http://vintagedancer.com)