

What kind of clothes did women and girls wear?

Girls and women wore a lot more clothing than they do today. Getting dressed in the morning was quite a production. It started with your shift. (You wouldn't have worn underpants.) It's likely you already had on your shift because you had worn it to bed. Next you would change from your nightcap to the one you wore during the day. Women and girls wore caps almost all the time.

Then you might pull on your long stockings. They were held up by ribbon garters tied around the leg.

Next came the *stays* to help you stand up straight. Well-to-do women might add *hoops* to make their skirts stand out.



Then you added your *petticoat* or petticoats. After that came your *pocket*, a separate pouch you tied around your waist.

Next you put on an *outer petticoat* and a *short gown*, a *frock*, or a *gown*. An outer petticoat was like a skirt, and the short gown you wore with it was like a jacket. Many middling-sort and poorer women and girls wore this kind of outfit, especially when they were working.

A frock was a dress that some gentry and middling-sort girls wore, usually with a colored sash. A gown was a dress that well-to-do women wore. The skirts of an outer petticoat, frock, or gown came down to the ankles.



Lucy Locket lost her pocket,
Kitty Fisher found it;
Nothing in it, nothing in it
But the binding round it.





*Little Polly Flinders
Sat among the cinders
Warming her pretty little toes;
Her mother came and caught her,
Whipped her little daughter
For spoiling her nice new clothes.*

When you were working, you usually wore an apron to protect your clothes. When you went out, you might put a kerchief around your neck to shield your skin from the sun or to keep warm — and for decoration. You also put a hat on top of your cap when you left the house.

When you went to bed, you took off everything but your shift, put on your nightcap — and probably heaved a sigh of relief to get rid of all that clothing!

Women accented their clothes with kerchiefs, ribbons, and other items copied from European styles. A girl might shop for these trimmings at Margaret Hunter's shop or John Greenhow's store. Both were on Duke of Gloucester Street.