

## Easy Ways to Dress Like a Pirate for Pirate Fest!

**Clothes** - Pirates were known for having a flamboyant mix of clothes, but these were out in the sun on the deck of a ship and washed in salty sea water, so a slightly “worn” look is appropriate. Red and black are the big colors here. Ripped and torn is appropriate if you want to portray a shipwrecked pirate.



### Shirt/top

#### *Very easy*

Start with a large t-shirt (any color or horizontal stripes), cut off the neck binding, cut the bottom edge of the sleeves and bottom of the shirt in a haphazard way.

#### *A little more involved*

A white, solid color or checked shirt that's oversized and has loose long sleeves. If the shirt is a pullover, the top buttons or ties can be left undone. If you're using a button down shirt and it has a button down collar, you might want to consider cutting off the collar leaving a plain round neck. If the shirt is long enough you can wear it untucked and tie a sash or a long scarf around your waist, or wear a wide, rustic looking belt. Women can wear a loose shirt or peasant style blouse.

*"The North Star," inset artist unknown, 1769, Yale University Lewis Walpole Library.*

**Trousers** for men or women – Long, loose trousers or loose knee length breeches are ideal, but any dark long pants will work. If you don't mind permanently “piratizing” the pants, you can cut them off just below the knee. Wear knee length socks if your pants are short. Stripes are a good look

**Skirt** for women – A long, full skirt may be worn if you prefer, instead of trousers. Fancy or patterned knee length or longer hose can be worn.

**Vest** – red, black or anything flashy; leather, suede or cloth will work. If you have something a little longer than normal, it will look better. It can be left open.

**Coat** – there's really no substitute for a true pirate coat, but it would have to be made up specially.



"The Embarkation," John Collet, c. 1760's, National Maritime Museum (UK).  
Excerpts from a Blog entry Posted by Kyle Dalton

"In another colorful piece by Collet, a poor and portly landsman tries to climb aboard a vessel with his feet divided by two long boats. As he struggles, a sailor takes the lovely lady above him into his arms..

The sailor embracing the woman wears a cocked hat trimmed in white. His blue jacket has slash cuffs with three large buttons. At his neck is a red neckerchief.

To left is another tar (British Sailor) reaching through the ratlines with some mail. It appears that he is wearing the black "jockey" style cap that appear occasionally in earlier pieces, and are entirely absent by the 1780's. His jacket is red with brass buttons. Behind him is a shipmate with an off white cap, possibly a workman's cap. His jacket is also blue, though with white metal buttons. Above them climbs a tar in a pair of trousers, a blue jacket and some unidentifiable cap. Forward of all of these gathered sailors is another salty fellow with his arms crossed. His cocked hat is reversed, and he wears a red neckerchief. Beneath his blue jacket with white metal buttons and slash cuffs is a waistcoat with narrow and horizontal red stripes. Most

interesting are his trousers: very few images of sailors show any color in their striping save for red. On top of that, we see very clearly a broad fall fly, whereas most sailors' trousers show no detail in the fly at all. Quite a treat!

Below these tars in the boat are a pair of mariners trying to load some dunnage. At the fore of the boat is a sailor offering the slightest of hands to the distressed landsman. Our seaman wears an odd black and red cap, not too unlike that worn in a watercolor or two by Gabriel Bray. This jack is weather beaten: his trousers are patched, his green waistcoat has a gaping hole, and his blue checked shirt is stained. Clutching a box is an unfinished sailor. Atop his head is a black round hat with a very narrow brim, and he wears an open red waistcoat. Little more can be said about the figure, as this painting will forever remain unfinished.”

Look for more information and images of early sailors in Kyle's blog “British Tars 1740-1790”

### **Face and hair**

Pirates didn't often get haircuts, so long hair can be worn down and natural rather than styled. It can also be in a ponytail or braid. Short hair should also be left natural.

Men pirates sometimes had beards and the ones who didn't probably didn't shave every day. If you want to get the look without the scratchy feel, you can rub your cheeks and chin with the burnt end of a cork or a splotchy coating of black make-up.

### **Accessories**

**Belt** - You can tie a long red sash or scarf around your waist and let the ends hang down. A wide, leather, rustic looking belt is also good. You could also use rope for a belt.

**Hat** – a tricorne hat with feathers, gold or silver braid, buttons or beads – here's your chance to really accessorize. You can wear a cloth cap that's shaped like a stocking cap, or a bandana tied around your head.

**Shoes** – black shoes or boots or leather sandals. If you have tall boots, you can tuck your trousers into them.

**Other Accessories** – Gold, silver, pearl jewelry. Try long chain necklaces with some interesting pendant hanging down, long strings of small shells or colored beads, or hoop earrings. Temporary tattoos of skull and crossbones would be very pirate-like as would a fabric or leather bag of gold coins that you can jingle when people ask how business is. Want some more ideas? How about an Eye patch, Spy glass, Treasure map, Parrot, pipe, or Peg Leg?



Title: The gig

- Date Published: London : Pub. by W. Wells, No. 132 Fleet Street, 1781.
- British sailor, Left 3rd of image.
- Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA