

# A Simple Guide on How to Look Victorian

(without having to sew or spend a lot of money)

## WOMEN

**Hats:** Look in thrift shops/resale shops/ yard sales for old wide brimmed dress hats. Trim with flowers, feathers, ribbon, netting, lace, etc.

Bonnets were popular also. Check with relatives, they may have an old bonnet in their attic.

You can make a mobcap (maid's cap) by cutting an 18" circle from cotton material. Thread a large needle with narrow ribbon (or you can use narrow rope elastic) and use a running stitch 3" from the cut edge all the way around. After you have gone all around the circle make sure both the ribbon ends come out the same side. Glue lace around the edge. You will set it on your head, pull the ribbon (rope elastic) to fit and tie the ends into a bow. Tuck the bow under the cap. Pin cap to hair to keep in place.

Ladies always wore their hair up, the only time they let it down was for bed.

**Blouse:** A blouse with a high collar is best. Lace and ruffles were popular. Mostly whites and solids; colors were subdued. Add a pin or brooch at the neck.

**Accessories:** Brooches, watches on gold chains as a necklace, parasols, gloves. Purses were usually made of cloth to compliment or contrast with the clothing and were closed with a drawstring which was also used to carry it. A few had a metal clasp with a chain handle and trimmed with lace, ribbon, fur. Muffs to keep the hands warm- made of matching or contrasting material or fur.



**Skirt:** A floor length gathered/full skirt complimenting the blouse. Here again, ruffles/lace/ribbon trim can be used. If you have a crinoline or hoop you can wear it under the skirt. (If you want to make a homemade hoop you can sew a hula hoop to the bottom of the skirt or a slip. It is a bit of a challenge to sit with a hoop). You can also use a floor length skirt that is fitted at the waist and flares out at the hem. Plaids/solids/stripes in rich colors or black.

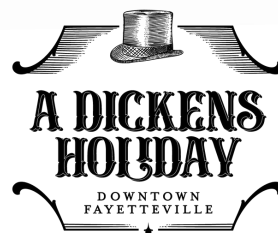
**Shoes:** High top shoes (which we call granny boots) were worn mostly (remember the streets were not paved and the dust, horses droppings and rain made for dirty shoes).

Small satin/cloth slippers were worn for dancing and special occasions.

**Capes:** From fingertip to floor length with ribbons/buttons/clasps to keep them closed. Made from wool, velvet, satin, etc. Some had a hood and/or were trimmed with fur.

**Dresses:** High collar similar to the blouse/skirt combination. Fabrics-cotton/wool/velvet/satin/brocade. Plaids/solids/stripes.

**DOWNTOWN  
ALLIANCE**  
FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA





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## MEN

- 1. Hats:** Top hat is good but pricey. You can buy costume (flocked plastic) top hats at places that sell costumes quite inexpensively.  
Derby – men's stores sell them for about \$35.  
A wide brimmed hat with a flat crown is OK (no cowboy hats).  
A soft cap (newsboy's cap) is good for craftsmen, laborers, and boys.
- 2. Shirt:** Any white or pin-stripe dress shirt. Fold the collar inside to create the look of a high collar and button top button.
- 3. Tie:** Make a fake ascot with a regular tie. Just tie it like normal except the last step – bring the wide part in front of the knot instead of through it. Hold it in place with a tie tack or stick pin. Ties should be a solid color or traditional pattern made of a soft silk or similar fabric. You can find ties at thrift stores.  
You can also use a ladies long (40"+) narrow (6-8") lightweight fabric scarf (solid color), tie a big bow (8") and let it drape down the front with the tie ends tucked into your vest.
- 4. Coat:** Tuxedo (tails) with a vest, or a morning coat. You can find them at thrift shops or formalwear (tuxedo) stores that sell their rental clothing periodically. Black or gray is best. In a pinch, just wear a vest.
- 5. Pants:** Regular pants, black, dark gray or brown without cuffs or pleats.  
Use suspenders (plain black) or a plain leather belt. Create "knickers" for young boys by pulling up pant legs and tucking inside the top of knee-high black, brown or plain white socks.
- 6. Shoes:** Boots are good (remember the dirt streets were often muddy and had horse droppings). Black or dark brown lace up shoes are OK.  
NO cowboy boots, loafers or tennis shoes.
- 7. Accessories:** A walking stick or cane, black umbrella, pocket watch, cloth dress gloves.
- 8. Topcoat or cape:** Black or brown, the coat usually had a wide collar.

