

# How to Make a Chiton

A simplified guide for newcomers

Kate Swan / Edda - 2025

## A What?

Chiton is the name given to a universal garment from Ancient Greece made from a rectangle fastened at the shoulders with brooches and a belt about the waist. Yes, you read that right - a rectangle! As far as historic clothing goes, this is probably the easiest garment you'll ever make.

## Patterning Your Chiton

Get yourself

- Some fabric
- Measuring tape
- A helper if possible

Measure the distance from one wrist to the your opposite shoulder with your arm outstretched. Multiply this measurement by 2 and that's about as wide as you will want your rectangular piece to be.

	Chiton pattern	cm	Times 2
Width	Wrist to opposite shoulder		

To decide how long you want your chiton, measure from your shoulder to your desired hem. Add about 15cm to this to account for blousing and the shape of your torso (else it may end up scandalously short!)

	Chiton pattern	cm	Plus 15
Length	Shoulder to desired hem		

An easier way to determine the length is to just go based on the fabric you have - most fabrics these days are about 140-150cm wide, which is long enough for an ankle-length tunic on most people. You can always turn the top section over to shorten it, which was commonly done throughout history.

## Sewing Your Chiton

Hem all sides of the rectangle. Yep, that's it. You can sew the side seam to make the garment tubular, turning it into a 'peplos'. You can also make a chiton from two separate pieces of fabric pinned at the shoulders, but whatever the case it's rectangles all the way down!

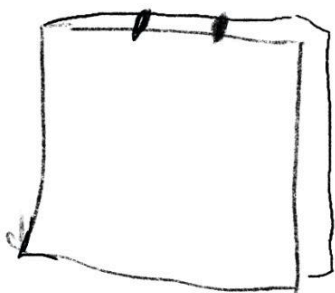
## How to Wear Your Chiton

You can sew the top of your chiton if you aren't too keen on pins, but otherwise safety pins or even blanket/kilt pins are a good substitute for the historical brooches called *fibulae* used to fasten the shoulders. This style of clothing persisted in Northern Europe well into the medieval period, which is why pairs of brooches are such a common archaeological find.

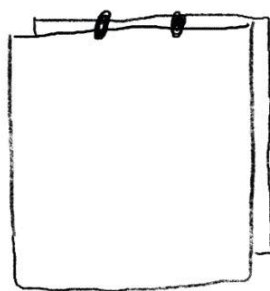
Dressing in a chiton is very much a vibes-based affair. Try different arrangements, you will probably have to move pins around, and might find this easiest with a friend to help.



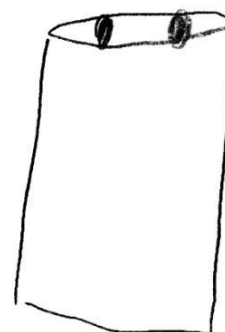
One-piece chiton



Two-piece chiton



Peplos



## Fabric Guide

For your first t-tunic, go with cotton, linen or a blend of the two. For outer tunics, wool is highly recommended, and silk if you are feeling fancy. Be aware that there are many different types of fabrics beyond fibre content, and one silk might work whereas another isn't suitable

Here are some features of different fibres:

	What is it?	Pros	Cons
Linen (flax)	Plant-based	Doesn't lose heat when it gets wet Washable and breathable	Pricey due to heavily involved production process Feels icky when wet
Cotton	Plant-based	Cheap Washable and breathable	Takes heat away from the body when wet
Wool	From sheep, alpaca, yaks etc. Hair fibres	Holds up to 30% of its weight in water before feeling wet or losing heat Excellent in heat and cold (use thinner fabrics for heat) Breathable	Expensive, hard to find, can be scratchy It gets very heavy when wet - be careful around water, there's a reason so many medieval people drowned!
Silk	From silkworms	Natural fibre, very fancy	Expensive Traps heat like crazy
Polyester/Nylon	Petrochemical	Cheap, washable, strong	Sheds microplastics upon washing Traps heat and doesn't breathe Highly flammable - whilst linen will burn away from your skin, this will melt into it
Ramie	Extruded fibre from Central Asian Nettle ( <b>not</b> the same as European nettle)	Lovely and soft, breathable	Very soft and difficult to work with
Viscose	Extruded fibre from wood chips	Lovely and soft, breathable	Lots of deforestation in the production since it is made from wood Very soft and difficult to work with

## Where to Buy Fabric

This information is very specific to Sydney in 2025, the same shops may not exist if this guide is used beyond this date.

	What/where?	Pros	Cons
Spotlight and Lincraft	Online or in person (not Lincraft, they're online only now)	Cheap and easily accessible, lots of linen, cotton and cotton/linen blend	Often very shoddy quality and honestly overpriced
EM Greenfield	Surry Hills or online	Excellent prices, good selection of cotton, linen and cotton/linen blend	To get the price of a material you will need to go in person or submit a quote online as they are a wholesaler
The Remnant Warehouse	Alexandria or online	Mostly stock deadstock fabrics (secondhand) They do \$1 samples online so you can try the fabrics before buying They have an amazing offcuts/remnants table with big discounts	Can be pricey
Super Cheap Fabrics	Warehouse in Melbourne, online store	Cheap wools (generally just very thick ones) and other materials	Can't order samples, quality can be variable, wools sometimes smell bad (wool absorbs smells and the warehouse workers smoke)
Drapers Fabrics	Newtown and online	Beautiful selection of wools and other materials	Expensive, generally high end materials
The Fabric Store	Newtown and online	Beautiful selection of wools and other materials	Expensive, generally high end materials
The Sewing Basket	Balmain, Kincumber, Newington, in person only	The best place to go for fabrics - amazing selection including wools for very cheap since it's a charity shop	It's hit-and-miss thrifting, you might not find what you're after It can be hard to tell what a material is if you don't have an eye for it, but the staff are lovely and will help