

Tips, Tricks and Toddlers, plus Experiments in Baby Clothing by Baroness Kaleeb

The history of children's clothing roughly follows the adult fashions of their time period. Having said that, this class will deal more with how to make clothing for tiny babies and some strategies on surviving an event with a tiny baby.

The first piece of garb I made my son is the brown linen tunic in the top picture. It tied all the way up the back and it was a failure in the experiment department. To dress a tiny baby, who just lies there, you have to put the baby face down on a table then tie all of those bows. All the while convinced your baby will be smothered. The next problem that this garment had was all you saw of the baby was his back and the ties.



First event at 2 weeks old

The second piece of garb that I made for my son was the red tunic. It worked much better. Underneath the row of trim, which is from neck to hem line, is a row of snaps. (A good fabric store will carry snaps on a roll of white twill tape. They will stay snapped and are much easier to use than the snaps you install with a hammer.) The center front closure allowed me to dress the baby by setting him on the garment on his back. The snaps were easy to open up for diaper changes. I thought about Velcro but decided it was too rough and stiff.



First demo at 2.5 months old

The third set of garb that I made was the turquoise tunic. It pulls over the head. A baby's head is much larger than you would think. If you make the neck hole large enough to go over the baby's head it will look sloppy and huge. I made the tunic with a double keyhole neckline. In the back I placed a snap about 1-2 inches apart, to "remove" the extra fullness. This solution has worked well. I have used it for almost 2 years.

By now you have probably noticed that every event my son has gone to he has new garb. Some of that is because I like to sew and some of that is because babies grow so fast. I have seen baby clothing which has large tucks or folds in it which are designed to be let out as the child grows. (I hate alterations, I feel as though I am being punished for doing something wrong, because I have to do it again. Hence my son got a new tunic.) I hope to use the baby garb again and I did not want to put it back together. I treated his garb as disposable. I also learned to try on his outfit a few days before he needed to wear it, thus giving me enough time to make an other tunic, if last months no longer fit.



5 month old event veteran

Note the knight slaying a dragon pajamas sticking out from underneath my sons tunic. If you make the garb just a little bit too big, you will have enough space to put a onesie or footy pajamas underneath. It takes babies awhile to regulate their own body temperature. Plus if the Mother is cold, the baby must put on an other layer.



Male and Female children were dressed alike until they were toilet trained. Most SCA members know this bit of information, but most of the mundane public does not. If you chose to dress your son in a period manner, be ready to explain that the child running amuck is a boy not a girl. The very practical reason for putting all children in a unisex garment will be discovered when you fully realize how quickly children grow and it is also very easy to lift the hem of a tunic to change a diaper.

My son wore disposable diapers. I found tiny plaid shorts at the Salvation Army to use as a diaper cover. At less than a dollar per pair it was not worth my time to sew them. I tended to put him in several different plaids, and he went to an event as a Celtic baby. Once he learned to crawl I bought long pants or pajama bottoms.

A friend of mine put her son in disposable diapers, then put a cloth diaper on top as a cover.

I also used little girls tights, as hose. (Get a size larger than you think you will need.) They worked beautifully, until the spring. I did not realize that cotton tights are a seasonal item and can only be bought in the fall and early winter. This year I will buy a range of sizes.

I have found the easiest way to make a t-tunic is to take a t-shirt that has been worn and is stretched out of shape to use as the base pattern. You will need to add a bit of ease because you will be working with a woven fabric and not a knit, plus some to the length. Once I get a pattern that fits, I just make it larger the next time my son needs a new tunic. A lot of friends have given me scraps of fabric, because it is fun to see a whole outfit made from 1/2 yard of fabric. Normally I only make garb out of natural fabrics, but I bought a polyester plaid piece of fabric by mistake, there is nothing my son can do to wear out or stain that tunic. Plus it has the added benefit of being water proof for rainy days or meal time.

Note the lack of hat my son is wearing. He hates hats. I have heard that if you put your child in a hat from day one, they will wear them.

Note the lack of belt that my son is wearing. Babies do not have a waist, but tend to have a

belly, so if you want to use a belt sew it to the garb or it will be lost

Note the lack of projects in my hands, as they are full of a baby. It has taken me awhile to admit that I only get to bring one piece of handwork to an event. It is usually worked on in the car.

You will be amazed at what you now consider a necessity to go to an event, be prepared to get a mini van.

I always bring food for my son, even though he likes to eat sand and grass. The one time you forget, will be the time that the lunch tavern opens 2 hours late. My son eats according to a schedule! and woe to anybody who is late with a meal.

Don't forget about children's loaner garb or garb exchanges.



Stylish in a cotehardie at 16 months



Babies do not model clothes well and they are not fond of trying on garb as you are stitching it. Hence this outfit has a few problems. Most babies are long in the torso, so the shirt should have been longer. The little pumpkin pants are cute but a little too tight. The doublet has a strip of Velcro down the front and false buttons on top. It works beautifully.

The top picture is a prime illustration of what happens when my husband watches the baby. He gets to play with weapons that are twice as tall as he is.

I went to Pennsic with my son when he was 8 months old. At this point he could not walk and would stay put when you set him down. This year that was not the case. Because babies grow so fast I knew that I could not make his garb in May when I had time. I figured that he would need 2 outfits a day for a week. That estimate was a little high for a baby who barely crawled, but accurate for a toddler. (For

myself I take 1.5 outfits per day.) I made a bunch of unfinished tunics when I had time, and finished then at the last minute. I took the fabric and put a neck hole, snaps and trim on it, leaving the cutting out of the body and hemming for later. I must say that stitching 14 tunics in 2 days is very satisfying.

My favorite outfit for my son is very brightly colored. That way he is much easier to spot, when running toward the list field. Putting group heraldry on a child who cannot talk, is very helpful if they get lost. Most local people will know your child and be able to return him/her.

If you want to use a leash for your child, you need to do this from day one. I tried trying my son to my chair, when the site was too small to keep him out of the list field. It did not go over very well, as he was not used to it.



Events go smoother when you practice things at home before you arrive. For example: I knew my son would not take a shower at Pennsic, so that meant a bath. I got a large tin washtub, filled it with hose water and let him play in the backyard, before I scrubbed him down. The first few times were noisy, but as the weather got warmer he was happier.

Babies are cute, so most folks will be more than happy to hold your baby to give you a break. You will learn the people in your group who like children. I try very hard not to take advantage of them, but there are times when I have to (court.) We frequently travel with a babysitter. I make it very clear when she is responsible for my son and how much I will pay her. This made Pennsic very pleasant.

My husband and I trade off who is watching the baby at events, sometimes it is morning verses afternoon or a fighting event verses an arts and sciences event. It is rare, but there have been events when I refused to go and sent him to represent the Barony. I have found that I get more of a break, if I leave him to watch our son by himself.

Take what you and the baby need to be comfortable to an event, even if that means you are wearing tennis shoes and pushing a stroller. If the baby is miserable then you will have to leave, thus making both of you mad. Yes, it is nice to make an attempt to cover mundane objects, but that is not always possible.



It has now been two years since I first wrote this handout and a few things have changed. I now have two boys, they are two years nine month apart. I now have a slightly different list of the items I consider necessary for a successful event.

Most important is the period toy box. It is large and heavy (always pick up a trunk before purchasing it.) It turns out that the weight of the trunk is helpful, because young children cannot dump it out and it will survive being packed under the armor box. Before buying the trunk, we broke two nice wicker hampers. I have made a lot of the toys in the toy box, but not all of them.

A soccer ball or large wooden hoop is a great aid in unloading the car, especially while camping. You arrive at the site, open the car door and two boys go barreling past with the ball. Soon all of camps children are running after the ball, leaving you to peacefully unload your car and set up camp.

The next most import item is a rug. This goes in front of said toy box for kids to play on. It has taken me a while to learn this, so be warned. I encourage other children to come and play with our toys, but I do not allow them to come without a parent. I am not running a baby sitting service. I have had too many parents assure me that their child plays very well and then disappear for hours on end and leave me with a hungry child who needs a clean diaper.

In the still important department but not critical to my survival at an event, is a special toy for court. I made a special girldle book with crayons, paper and stickers. It is only played with during court and afterwards. This seems to keep the newness factor alive.

Miscellaneous tips that do not seem to fit anywhere else:

Pack Pajamas for the ride home. This way when your over tired child quits screaming on the car ride home, you can just leave them asleep and just put them too bed.

I pack the toy box at the end of the day. This way I know when something is missing or if it needs to be repaired. I am always on the look out for new period toys and haunt museum gift stores on a regular basis.

My kids still take a nap at most events. I do not try to put them down for their nap at the normal time, but rather one to two hours late. They seem to surrender much easier this way.

When we go to an event we usually plan on spending about two thirds of the day at the event. If we want to stay for feast, we go later in the day. Usually we pack up the car before court, stay through court and leave right away. Even at four years old my son is still not up to a full day.

I have changed how I make garb for the boys. The thought of making thirty tunics to go the Pennsic last year gave me hives. So I made 15 G-63's, I made them a little long in the sleeve and hem areas. They should make a second Pennsic, with new hems. This was only possible because my son has finally hit the growth stage where he only gets taller and not much wider.



Do not assume that the clothes which fit child number one at a specific age, will fit child number two at the same age.

Polar fleece hoods are great.

If you have the space to pack a wagon, it can make your life much easier. Put a couple of pillows in the bottom and rig a sun shade and you can walk comfortably for miles. Beware of hitch hikers.

Portable potty's are great, do not forget toilet paper.

