# Dress in Ancient Rome

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## Background

After the rise of the Roman Empire, people in ancient Rome became wealthier, so footwear became more decorative. People wore different shoes to indicate status and wealth. For example, the lawmakers, emperors, and prisoners wore different shoes. Slaves had to walk barefoot. The actors in Roman plays wore specific footwear to emphasize the character they played.

## Findings

Women wore different shoes for indoors and outdoors. For indoors, they would wear the solea, or sandal. It held to the foot with a simple strap across the top of the foot. Men wore an outdoor shoe called the cothurnus, mostly worn by horseman, hunters, or other high-status men. It was a high ornate boot that showed their status. In ancient times, men’s and women’s footwear was significantly different. Men wore sturdy shoes and women wore delicate shoes, mostly because of their occupations and duties.

## Vocabulary

- **Toga**: a bleached white garment that men wore outside of the household. It symbolized their citizenship to the Empire.
- **Clavi**: a colorful cloth worn around the toga of men to signify their rank in the early stages of the Empire.
- **Solea**: the standard leather sandal worn by men.
- **Lorica**: a brass or bronze plate with a molded fit of the wearers torso. It was typically worn by not

## Findings

Romans valued their appearance. Their hair was often cut to the head, while beards were sported closely oriented to their mustache. Although a majority of togas were bleached white, the rich had to stand out. Like any other articles of clothing, they would be colored with dyes to reveal their stature to the public eye. For an example, purple was not easy to get one’s hands on, so that was the most prestigious color.

## Findings

- Dress was depicted by rank.
- Wealthy women wore greenish/yellow pallas.
- Young girls wore tunica rectas, which were straight tunics.
- Girls also wore toga praetextas - white togas with a purple stripe.
- After marriage, women wore tunicas, stollas and pallas.

## Vocabulary

- **Subligaculum** – the most basic form of undergarments for men and women the main purpose of the subligaculum was to cover the genitals.
- **Bracce** – long pants that were adopted by Rome from barbarians who lived outside of Rome; first it was seen as crude, but the understanding of the idea of having bracce was quickly understood, which was to keep the legs warm.

## Findings

The Romans took the traditional clothing that they created and adapted them to become the most distinctive clothing in all of history. Romans’ greatest influences were the Etruscans and the Greeks. The material of the garments of the Romans vary from rough wool to imported silk.

Romans first had strict rules about what designs could be used, but soon after, when there was a small portion of wealth and the rest were poor, the rules disappeared.

## References