

History of Sleeves

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Rawls

Middle Ages (476AD – 1492)

- Early medieval sleeve designs were generally cut in one with the garment, not set-in.
- The sleeve of the outer tunic was cut fully; it could be short, elbow, three-quarter or full-length.
- If it was not full-length it displayed the wrist length under sleeve which was usually fitting.
- If it was long, it was often very wide and flaring at the wrist



Italian Renaissance(14th – 17th century)

- In the fourteenth century the tightly-fitting sleeve was fashionable, with the outer tunic often ending at the elbow in a cuff and hanging tippets
- Fifteenth-century styles included the bishop sleeve, full and long and gathered into a tight wristband
- It also included the fuller bag or bagpipe sleeve, also fitting at the wrist, and the padded shoulder style



Elizabethan (1558 – 1603)

- In the 1560s and 1570s an upstanding puff sleeve was fashionable.
- Trunk sleeves were very wide and excessive and because of this were a popular style of the upper class
- Sleeves were banded at intervals creating puffs which in turn were padded and slashed to display linings and undergarments.



French Neoclassical (18 - 19 century)

- Eighteenth century sleeves for ladies' gowns were generally fitting to the elbow where they were finished by a deep cuff or, later, as funnel sleeves.
- In the 1830s the puff sleeves became much larger developing into the leg-of-mutton sleeve, a style which was reintroduced in the 1890s. Also fashionable in the 1830s was the elephant sleeve
- The mid-century style was usually wide and flaring at the bottom and only three-quarter or bracelet length



Victorian (1837 – 1901)

- Bell sleeves came into fashion during the 1840s
- Dolman sleeves were closely fitted during much the Victorian era and were part of the military look in fashion.
- The word also came to interchangeable with mantle (cloak) during this time
- Pagoda sleeves is a term that is interchangeable with bell sleeves but mostly referenced flounced bell sleeves.



Victorian (1837 – 1901)

- The leg of lamb or mutton and puff were in and out of fashion during the Victorian era.
- Leg of lamb: the puff at the shoulder that comes together in a tight fit.
- Other ways of wearing this type of sleeve included one long puff that ended in a tight cuff at the wrist, elbow, or upper arm.



Edwardian (1900-1910)

- Early Edwardian sleeves fit tightly at the top of the arm, filled toward the lower end and gathered into a tight cuff.
- 1900 - 1905 Edwardian fashion trended toward open end pagoda sleeves
- By 1905 fullness at the wrist was gone and sleeves were wide and full at the top.
- Sleeves stayed full at the top through 1909. They narrowed below the elbow and fit snugly at the wrist in a style often called Leg of Mutton.



1920s

- Except for evening wear, most day dresses were long sleeved. Short cap sleeves on house dresses were ok, but daytime public appearances being more modest needed more coverage.
- Fitted sleeves had little extra room in the shoulder or arm and fit straight down to either a full length or an above the elbow or three-quarter length.
- The other most common day sleeves were the bishop and bell sleeves



1930s

- In the early 1930s, sleeves were usually mid-length and slim, even for juniors' dresses.
- 1930s afternoon dress sleeves were employed to create the effect of wider shoulders
 - mostly variations of puff sleeves with generous gathers at the shoulder seam
- “Caplet” sleeves that looked almost like a little cape when the wearer bent their elbows, a less full “flaring” sleeve and ruffle “butterfly” sleeves, even pleated sleeves were popular



1940s

- Dresses in the early 40's had sleeves that ended just above the elbow or mid forearm.
- Except for the Kitty Foyle style dress, sleeve did not have cuffs.
- Many dresses in the mid 40's started showing very small sleeves called cap sleeves.
- These were cut with the dress bodice and required no additional sewing other than a simple hem.
- Shoulders are squared off in both dresses and blouses.



1950s/1960s

- Sleeves came in long, short, cap sleeves, or sleeveless.
- The puffy sleeve of the 1940s blouse went out of fashion for a less fussy straight fitting sleeve
- sometimes with a narrow cuff by the mid 1950s.
- Bishop sleeves became popular again in the mid-60s and was popular on dresses and blouses and later became an important part of the hippy look.



80s/90s

- Dolman sleeves (batwing sleeves): sleeves that are cut deep and wide at the shoulder, with armholes extending almost to the waist. The sleeves taper to the wrist, and when the arms are held outward the fabric hangs in a long wing
- Puffed sleeves and shoulder pads were everything
- once we were in the 90s, puffed sleeves (along with their soul sister, big shoulder pads) fell out of style



2000/2010

- Bishop and flounce sleeves are back again
- Bell sleeves were a thing in the 2000s but it was more extreme
- Extra-long sleeves. Appearing oversized and stretched out, these extra-long sleeves have found a place in modern fashion
- Off-the-shoulder sleeves have been trending for some time now, and they're only getting more popular
- With the rise in popularity of the off-the-shoulder sleeves has been the rise of cold-shoulder sleeves.



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