

SIMPLE TUDOR BONNETS

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The Tudor bonnet, usually called a “Tudor flat cap” in the SCA, is a simple and inexpensive garb accessory. They are neither exclusively English, nor unique to the Tudor period. They first appeared in England in the 1300s as knitted caps among the peasantry. As sewn bonnets, they became fashionable with the upper classes during Henry VIII’s reign, and could be quite elaborate. To support the wool trade, a 1571 law required all commoner males six and above to wear the cap or bonnet on holy days or face a three shilling fine. During the 16th century the bonnets were popular in German-speaking countries. Your host has seen an example in an Italian portrait dated to 1475. Surprisingly, Tudor bonnets are still made today for formal academic wear.

MATERIALS

Corrugated box cardboard, enough for 3 12” disks
Felted wool cloth, 13” wide by 4’ long, or other heavy cloth
Leather, about 1 square foot, thin and stiff
Craft felt, the cheapest available
Heavy sewing thread

TOOLS

Cloth scissors
Heavy shears for leather and cardboard
Sewing needle
Sewing machine
Medium-tip Sanford Sharpies or other cloth markers
Steel tape or dress-maker’s tape
Compass that can open to 6”, or plastic ruler
Small drill and bits
Craft knife (Xacto or similar)



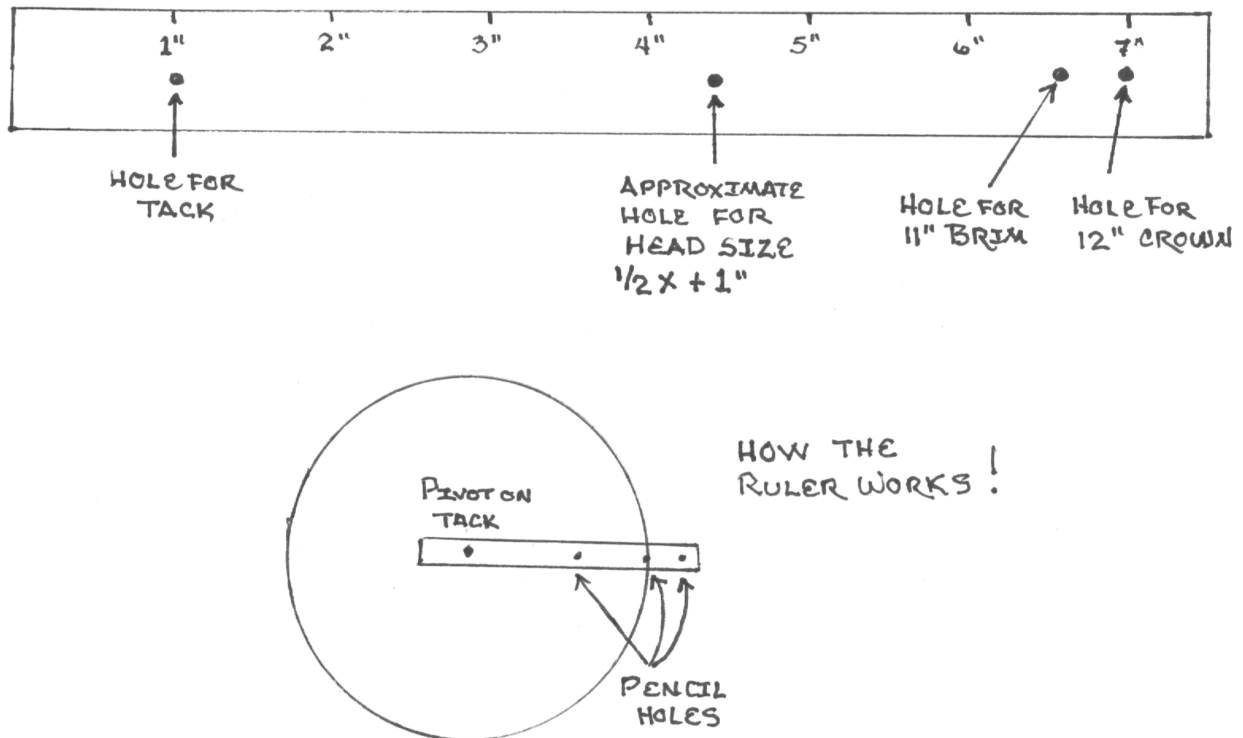
MEASURING HEAD SIZE

Use the tape to measure the circumference of your victim’s head following the diagram at left. Use the values below for the head opening. Only the 7” diameter is certain; the other sizes are approximate and should be tested before marking and cutting your wool. After you have cut a cardboard brim template, you can make a test piece with the cheap craft felt for your intended wearer to try. Make a smaller template, or enlarge the hole, as needed. Cardboard and craft felt are cheap, wool is not.

24”: 7 3/8”; 23”: 7”; 22”: 6 5/8”; 21”: 6 1/4”; 20”: 5 7/8”; 19”: 5 1/2”

CUTTING THE CARDBOARD TEMPLATES

Once you have the correct size for the center hole, cut one 12" disk with a center hole for the crown from corrugated cardboard, one 11" disk with a center hole for the brim, and one 10 1/4" disk with a 7 3/4" center hole for the brim stiffener. If you don't have a compass, modify a ruler as shown in the drawings. These dimensions should be correct for most adult hats, regardless of the center hole size. If you are making a hat for a child, or an adult with a very small or very large head, you are on your own. In general, the crown should be a somewhat larger than the brim, since it will be stretched upwards when the hat is worn. A hat with a crown the same size or smaller than the brim does not look right.



CUTTING THE CLOTH

Felted wool has two sides. The fuzzy side is the one that should be outside on all surfaces. The "back" side will have less fuzz and the warp should be plainly visible. Use the back side for all marking.

Cut one 12" crown disk with a hole the size of your wearer's head, and one 12" crown disk without a hole. Cut two 11" brim disks with holes. Cut one 10 1/4" disk with a 7 3/4" hole from leather. If you can't find thin and stiff leather, make three disks this size from craft felt and glue them together using white glue.

SEWING THE DISKS

Place the solid crown disk back side down. Place the crown disk with the hole back side up on top of the solid disk (this will put felted side against felted side). Spin the disk with the hole around to get the edges into the best match along the outer rim. You might want to trim off any bits that are sticking out. With the needle and thread, make locked whip stitches at the 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock positions. Add two more whip stitches between each of these. This will prevent the cloth from bunching. Sew the outer rim on a sewing machine or by hand. I sew by hand using locked whip stitches all the way around.

Orient the brim pieces as above, so they are again felted side against felted side, with the back sides out. Spin the two pieces for the best edge match. Tack them as above. Sew the edges.

Turn crown and brim inside out, and check for any sewing gaps around the edges. Flip back and repair as needed. When satisfied, turn the felted sides out again, and insert the leather or felt stiffener into the brim. It won't need to be sewed in place.

Align the brim center hole to the center hole in the crown. Tack the crown and brim together with at least eight locked whip stitches. Sew the brim and crown pieces together. You could stitch some bias tape around the edge of the center hole for a sweat band. This turned out to be a pain with hand stitching, so I no longer to this.

Your hat can be decorated with cords and tassels, jewels, or other gew-gaws to taste (or lack thereof). I prefer a simple pin or badge attached to the lower part of the crown, but think a pheasant or pea hen feather would look very nice.

REFERENCES

Wikipedia: "Flat Cap"; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_cap

Wikipedia: "Tudor Bonnet"; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tudor_bonnet

Johnson, Caroline. THE KING'S SERVANTS, MEN'S DRESS AT THE ACCESSION OF HENRY VIII. Lightwater, Surrey, England: Fat Goose Press, Ltd., 2009. Page 21.

Norris, Herbert. TUDOR COSTUME AND FASHION. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997. Illustrations and text, pages 313-316, 727; additional illustrations, pages 297-298, 302, 304.

MATERIAL SOURCES

96 District Fabrics: www.96fabrics.com . Sells wool in small pieces at Holiday Faire, or by mail.

Cottonwood, 2035 Barracks Road, C'ville. Felted and unfelted wool, mostly in 45" lengths.

Jo Ann Fabrics, 1740 Rio Hill Center, C'ville. Craft felt and decorator fabrics.

Tandy Leather, 9045 W. Broad St, #130, Henrico (Richmond), VA 23294. Leather.