

# How to Wear the Belted Plaid

To make the belted *plaid*, take two pieces of 30" wide by 12' to 18' long wool and sew it together along the selvages (if you have 60" wide fabric, cut it in half and sew it back together to preserve this look). You should now have a piece of fabric 60" wide and four to six yards long with a seam down the center. If you are a stout man, you might want to increase the length to accommodate yourself. Likewise, if you are tall, you could increase the width of the piece. The best idea is to try wrapping the belted plaid with a piece of scrap material or sheets sewn together. If the final wrap is too long, too short, or not full enough, you can adjust the measurements. The dimensions given are from historical records, but undoubtedly the size of the plaid varied from man to man.

To wear the belted *plaid*, lay it out on the floor or bed. The Highland Scots often used a sloping bank for this. Begin by folding it neatly in transverse pleats until the piece measures 4' to 5', leaving a foot or so at each end unpleated. Carefully slide your belt or girdle under the material. Now lie down on it, aligning your knees with its lower edge. Fold the unpleated ends across your body, right first, then left, being careful not to disrupt the pleated part as you do so. Now fasten the belt around your waist. When you stand up, you should look like you are wearing a "double skirt" with the pleated kilt-like part of the plaid underneath and the rest hanging down around you like an ankle-length skirt (see left drawing, below).



Now some variation comes into the process. For bad weather, pull the "ankle-length skirt" up over your shoulders until you are wearing it like a cape (like the right drawing above). To wear it in the usual manner, let the plaid side drop from your shoulders so you're wearing the "double skirt" again. Take the outermost (left) front part, roll it up a bit, and tuck into your belt at the small of your back. Now most of the front stuff is out of the way, and you have a "tail" hanging down in back. Pick the right portion up again in front of you and the tail in back and join them on your left shoulder with a

brooch. Tuck the rest of the front into the belt so that it appears that you are only wearing a sash across your chest. This left shoulder wrap allows freedom of the dominant (i.e. right) arm for battle. Of course, this style can be reversed for left-handed men. To sleep in your belted plaid, simply revert to the “bad weather” step. Then pull the part on your shoulders up over your head. The Highlanders in “Rob Roy” are sleeping in the hills in this manner in the beginning of the movie when they are tracking the stolen cattle. Yet another way to wear the *plaid* marks back to its early roots. When the *plaid* was worn with trews, it was not belted. Instead it was passed over the left shoulder, under the right arm, and across the chest, fastened with a brooch in front. the excess length hung down in back. this bears a striking resemblance to the description of Conor Mac Nessa’s “five-folded *brat*” mentioned earlier. This is also the way in which the pre-1600 Scots wore their mantles. It seems that the old way of wearing the *brat* had not yet been discarded in the 17th century.

