

Original tutorial can be found at: <http://www.jasnachicago.org/turban-demo>

Turban Draping Demo

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Introduction



"Anne Mitchell had tried to put on a turban like mine, as I wore it the week before at the concert, but made wretched work of it — it happened to become my odd face..."
—*Northanger Abbey*

After Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign of 1798-1801, all things “Oriental” came into vogue. The turban was immediately adapted as informal men’s attire, and quickly caught on for women as well. Regency turbans varied widely in style, from small scale pillbox-like chapeaux to simple head wraps to full-blown ethnic-style turbans. Various types of turbans were worn at all times of the day, including simple draped caps for morning and lavish plumed creations for evening.

For the Regency re-enactor, the turban is an excellent choice of head wear. Not only is it universally attractive (apologies to Miss Isabella Thorpe, but the turban actually becomes most types of face), it also beautifully captures the look of the period. The turban is a wonderful cover-up for anyone whose real-life hairstyle does not adapt well to Regency silhouettes.

While a simple Regency turban can be temporarily fashioned by draping the head in a scarf, many will find it advisable to take the time to create a “fixed turban,” made on a base, which will retain its impromptu charm through many, many outings.



Regency Era Turbans

Click on the thumbnails to view two examples of turbans from period fashion prints.

Assemble materials and supplies

- 1
- Minimum one yard of appropriate fabric (see notes about fabric)
 - Trims (See notes about trim)
 - Terry turban or similar stretch cap
 - Small comb
 - Styrofoam wig head (or a canvas or wooden head block, if you are fortunate enough to possess one)
 - Craft felt or polar fleece
 - Pins
 - Thread (preferably hand quilting thread, or all-purpose treated with beeswax)
 - Hand-sewing needles
 - Scissors
 - Tape measure
 - Iron & ironing board



Notes about fabrics

- Regency turbans were generally made of muslin or silk.
- Natural fibers will yield a much nicer result,

Notes about trims

- Regency turbans were trimmed with a wide range of items, depending on time of day and formality of the occasion for

though good quality synthetics can be used.

- Choose fabric of a medium weight such as taffeta, Thai silk, shantung, medium-weight jacquard or brocade.
- Light weight fabrics may require the use of an interfacing.
- Heavy weight fabrics will make a bulky, less attractive turban.
- For a lovely effect, work two or more fabrics into your turban.

which they were worn

- Ostrich or pheasant plumes, jeweled brooches, flowers, tassels, fringe and pearls are all excellent trim choices.

Measure your head

This is a step best done by an assistant.

Measure around the head, parallel to the floor at eyebrow level.

2

In measuring your head, bear in mind how you will wear your hair under the turban. Hair worn in an “updo” can add a great deal to the circumference of your head, as can wigs and hairpieces. It is advisable to style your hair as you will when you wear your turban, then measure your head.



Measure the head block

Since we're using a stretchy cap as a base, in order for the final turban to fit properly, you'll need to make the Styrofoam head the same size as your finished turban. It will probably be necessary to pad the head up to your head size plus ease.

- 3 Do a little math—add ½” to your head measurement for ease. This adds comfort, and accommodates fabric that will get turned into the head size opening.

Measure the head size of the Styrofoam head.

If the two measurements are the same, skip to Step 5.

A bit more math. Find the difference between the two.



Pad the head block

Cut 3" wide strips of the felt or polar fleece and wrap them around, pinning directly into the Styrofoam head.

4

Measure the head size after each strip and continue the process until the desired size is achieved.



Put the cap on the head block

Place the cap on the head block, being sure to orient it correctly from front to back.

5

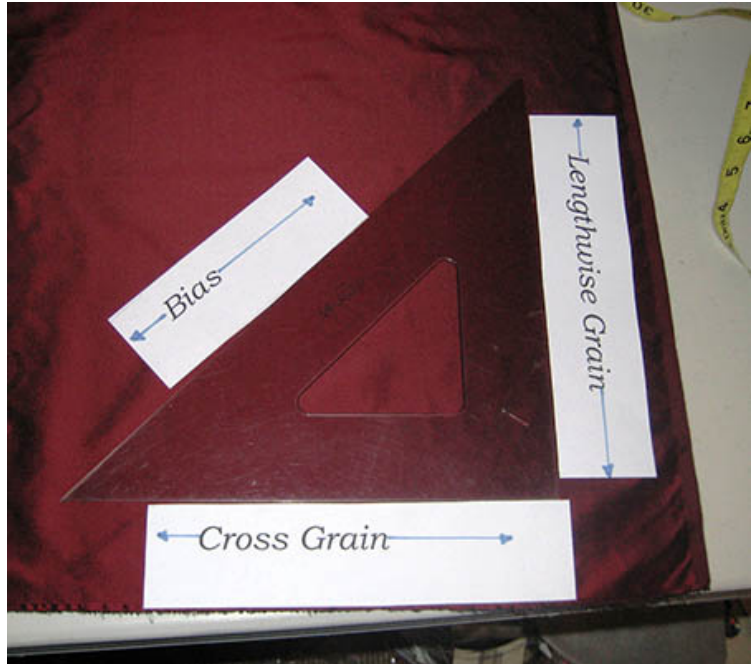
You may wish to sew in a tiny colorful bow on the inside of the cap to indicate the center back.



Prepare the fabric

Press the fabric to remove any wrinkles. Be especially careful to press out the bolt fold. Nothing looks so amateur as the fold left in place.

- 6 Understand the grain of fabric (if you're a veteran sewer, you can skip this explanation). For the most part, textiles behave in predictable ways, depending on the manner in which they are cut. The lengthways grain, or warp of the fabric, is parallel to the selvage edge, and runs the length of the piece. The cross grain, or weft, runs at a 90° angle to the selvage. The term bias refers to the fabric cut or draped at a 45° angle to the selvage. It is on the bias that fabric magic happens. Fabric on the bias has a much greater ability to drape and conform to curves than it does on the lengthwise or cross grain. In order to create sleek and elegant draping, turban fabrics must always be cut on the bias.



Cut the fabric

- 7 Cut two 12 x 30" strips of fabric on the bias.



Prepare the bias strips

- 8 Using the steam setting on the iron, steam a roll into the raw edges of the strips. Don't give them a hard press, just steam.

Make a series of irregular pleats at one end of the strip. Pin the strip to the ironing board and steam the pleats into the first few inches of fabric. Again, don't give it a hard press; just steam the pleats in place. Repeat this step with the other strip.



Drape the turban

- 9 Pin the first pleated fabric strip in place center front.

Drape the fabric around the cap, either ending at the center back, or bringing it around to center front.



Continue draping

- 10 Pin the other strip in place center back, overlapping the other piece. Drape around as the first piece.



Get creative

You could stop draping here. Be sure that the draped fabric completely covers the stretchy cap and that all raw fabric edges are tucked under, and then skip to Step 8. Or...

- 11
- Play around with the draping. Have fun. Here are suggestions: Entwine the fabrics several times as they drape around the head. Use three fabrics and braid them loosely together prior to placing on the cap. Drape the braided fabric to create the turban. Twist the two fabrics together center front and continue on the opposite sides. Thread a string of pearls or decorative braid in with the fabrics.

Finish draping.



Prepare to sew

It has been said that the hallmark of a well-made hat is that it should appear to have been “Blown together by the spring breezes,” or “Beaten together by butterfly wings.” In other words, the secret of millinery is a light touch.

With that in mind, stitch together your turban.

- 12
- It is best to sew the turban together with a single thread. Choose a hand quilting thread, or treat multi-purpose thread by running it through beeswax, then passing it under a hot iron. This will let the thread pass more easily through the fabric and will give it less of a tendency to fray. One may also use a thread conditioner, such as Thread Heaven (available from quilting suppliers.)

Choose a long, fairly fine needle. A #8 millinery needle is ideal (available from millinery supply houses. Yes, there are still a few of those around).



Sew the turban

Begin at the center back and use a running stitch to hold the draped fabric in place. Stitch only as much as is necessary to hold the draping in place

- 13
- Try to stitch on the back side of the pleats, to keep your stitches invisible. Be sure that every few stitches go all the way through to the cap, and that you are not inadvertently sewing through to the padding on the head block.

Be sure to turn the edges of the fabric under, leaving a wide hem at the head opening, so that the edges of the cap don’t show. Stitch on the inside, taking care that your stitches don’t show on the outside.



Finish the interior

Remove the turban from the Styrofoam head and do a little fitting to check that the turban fits properly. Don't be surprised if it collapses a bit when you remove it from the block. The exterior fabric is more than likely larger in circumference than the
14 base.

Have a look-see in the mirror and gasp at just how beautiful your turban is. Or not. You may have to make some small adjustments. Carefully pin those with the turban still on your head. Or ask your lovely assistant to do so.

Make any necessary adjustments.



Select the trims

Ah, the fun part. Lay out the trims you're planning
15 to use. Be sure that they work nicely together and coordinate well with the fabrics of the turban.

Pin the trims in place. Step a few feet from the turban and have a look.



Assemble the trims

If you're using several items together, you may want to attach them to each other or on a felt base to make a single ornament. It is often easier to attach trims as a unit than all those bits individually. This is especially true with plumes. Stitch them one-at-a-time onto the base as they will have a tendency to
16 twist around.

A word about gluing—DON'T. It may seem like a good, time saving idea simply to glue the trims to the turban. We must avoid this temptation, for glue is eternal. Just as was the case with bonnets and turbans in the Regency period, you may wish to remake or retrim your bonnet in the future to go with another gown. You will not have this option if you have glued the trims in place.



Finish the trims

17 Time for another little fitting. Put on the turban with the trims pinned in place.

Amazing? Then sew them permanently in place. But do so with a light hand...remember, butterfly wings!



Accoutrement

18 You may find that you need a bit of accoutrement to keep your turban firmly in place. You can stitch a small comb in center front and set it in your hair when you put on your turban. You could also stitch a few thread loops into the head size opening for hairpins.



Wearing your turban

- 19 Try turning and tilting your turban to find the most fetching angle at which to wear it.

Enchant all whom you encounter.



Storing your turban

- 20 You may wish to store your turban on the padded block in order to prevent it from collapsing and keep the fabric from wrinkling. Otherwise, be sure to stuff it firmly with tissue paper and store in a box. Preferably a hat box, printed with charming Regency scenes.

