

# Battledress: Vikings 850 - 1100 AD

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## Visual Aides

**VIK** = Osprey Elite #3, The Vikings

**SVN** = Osprey MAA #85

**AotDA** = WRG Armies of the Dark Ages

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**Note:** As far as can be told, there was no formal dress requirements for 'units'. All the warriors pretty much wore what they chose, based on their status in society.

## Huscarls/Bondi/Hird/Chiefs

### Weapons

Most commonly a sword/axe (sword being more common). The sword was about 3' in length, double-edged (sometimes single edged - *sax*), with a brown leather grip, with metal/ivory/bone/horn hilts, often decorated with gold/silver/copper. Some swords were much plainer with not much decoration (hilts of wood). Scabbards were of wood, covered in leather, with a bronze chape. It was either hung from a buckled (and often decorated with bronze/silver mounts) waist belt, or shoulder bauldric.

Different types of axe were in use, including single-handed and double-handed (single-handed more common). All would have a single blade (silver metal) with wooded haft (dark-brown).

Would also commonly carry a small knife from the waist belt.

Bows were also used. These were made of elm or yew (brown colors), and were almost the size of long bows. The bow was extensively used by the bondi (but not exclusively - even kings were proficient in their use). Arrows were carried in a cylindrical leather (brown/tan) quiver hung from a shoulder belt (over the left shoulder), hanging along the right thigh.

Spears (thrusting and throwing types) were the least common, but present non the less. Silver metal tips, with dark brown wooden hafts.

### Armor

Chain/ring mail corselets not very common, although more can be seen being worn in the 10-12th C. These were most often worn by the wealthier warriors, or chiefs, or those warriors closest to the chiefs. Early versions were often short sleeved and reached to the hips or just above the knee. Later (11th C.), they would be longer, reaching to mid-calf.

A quilted and padded leather (tan/brown colored) jerkin was more common than mail, and was worn instead.

Lamellar armor may also have been worn, at least in Sweden.

Various helmet types were worn (helmets being very common). These were mostly conical types, with or without nasal/eye guard. Some were decorated with eyebrow ridges inlaid with copper/silver. Such helmets might also have a spike on its top. Some might also have a short mail eye guard.

Metal greaves might also have been worn on jarls/kings/chiefs in the earlier period. These greaves extends from the knee to the instep (although they could also extend to cover the foot).

### Shields

Shields were very common amongst all Vikings. They were circular (30-40" in diameter, although some could be much smaller), wooden, and might be leather covered. The outside edges were bound in iron or leather, some times with small bronze plates. The center of the shield had a hemispherical or conical iron (silver in color) boss.

Shields would have been painted in the outside in various colors. They may even be in combinations of altering colors, or have designs painted on them. Common colors were red (most popular), yellow, black, white, and to a lesser extent green and blue.

### Clothing

Long sleeve woolen/linen tunic reaching to mid-thigh or just below the knee (often worn over a fine wool/linen shirt), often with panels, and hems of tablet-woven cloth, patterned in colored silk and metal thread. Headbands were also common, in a similar design to hems on tunics. Trousers were worn in an assortment of styles (close fitting ski-like trousers; untapered; or very baggy and gathered below the knee). Some trousers were only knee length, with separate leggings, often cross-gartered from knee to ankle. Stockinged breeches (sometimes of fur/leather, might also be worn.

A short cape, or a longer cloak (pinned at the right shoulder by an iron or bronze pin) was common. The cloak might be of rich cloth and fur-lined, while some woolen ones were made to look like shaggy fur.

Common cloth colors were: red, scarlet, reddish-brown, brown, blue green, white, black and grey. Red, leaf-green and blue were very popular; grey popular with cloaks. Trousers might be striped vertically.

### Belting

Leather (various shades of brown, with bronze or iron fittings/buckles.

### Footwear

Soft leather shoes common (in winter the fur would be left on the outside of the shoe).

### Facial Appearance

All wear beards (worn long, sometimes to the waist)) and mustaches. Hair colors were commonly blonde and red, as well as browns and black (the darker colors more common among Danes). Some would wear their beards forked, or plaited (tied/braided).

## Berserkers

Same as other warriors except would not wear armor, and would fight with sword/axe, and perhaps shield and/or helmet. They might be naked, shirtless, or dawn wolf/bear skin cloaks.

## Standards

The standards carried were often small semi oval with painted birds on them (eagle/raven), or other devises, with a flanged edge. See page 94 of **AotDA** book for illustrations of standard designs (plate 72).