

# Augsburg Dress Code (1530)

## Abstract

Dress codes played an important role in the Early Modern period because they were intended to reflect and uphold the social hierarchy. Certain affiliations and distinctions were rendered visible by clothing. Among them was social class. Furthermore, the Early Modern period saw the emergence of an urban middle class that became increasingly important over time. In addition to upholding social class, clothing emphasized the gender order between men and women within a class. Religious minorities, especially the Jewish population, were made recognizable and stigmatized through symbols attached to their clothes, and the poor, prostitutes, lepers, and other people or groups considered “disreputable” were identified by their clothing as well.

## Source

### Regulations of the Roman Imperial Majesty and reformation of good policies, in the Holy Roman Empire, established in Augsburg in 1530.

[...]

IX.

Improper and costly clothing. (b)

Because [it is] honorable, decent, and fair that every person, however great his dignity or whatever his origins, conduct himself according to his class, honors, and means so that every class can be differentiated, we conferred and agreed with electors, princes, and the estates on the following dress regulations, which we want to have followed completely under threat of punishment and penalty.

[...]

XI.

Citizens and residents of cities

§. 1. Further, there are generally three kinds of citizens and residents of cities, that is, common citizens and artisans, merchants and tradesmen, and others, who are in the council of noble families or are of other honorable lineage and who live from their interest and rents. On this basis, we establish, order, and intend that common citizens, artisans, and common shopkeepers shall not wear gold, silver, pearls, velvet, or silk, or clothes that are embroidered, slashed, or fur-trimmed, likewise they shall not wear elaborate, fashionable headwear or linings of marten or other similarly costly linings, but must be satisfied with rather serviceable garb and also rough linings, with minimal muskrat, fox, polecat [fitch], lamb, and such.

§. 2. Their wives and children shall abide by the same rules in their dress. However, their wives may wear a gold ring, not valued at more than five or six guilders, without gemstones; a collar embroidered with silk; a veil with a golden border, not more than two fingers wide; a damask or atlas silk escoffion; a belt not worth more than ten guilders, studded with silver, but not gilded; likewise, the young unmarried women [may wear] a velvet hair band studded with silver but not gilded.

§. 3. Further, artisans' apprentices and journeymen shall wear no gold, silver, silk, or ostrich feathers, nor have any slashed clothing made, or otherwise behave any differently in their dress from what is now reported for artisans in

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cities.

§. 4. However, in the case that such an artisan is chosen for the council in a city, then he shall be empowered not to dress any differently from what is reported below for merchants.

## XII.

### Merchants and tradesmen

§. 1. Further, merchants and tradesmen in cities shall not wear velvet, damask, atlas, or silk jackets, or gold, silver, pearls, silk, or gold or silver hair coverings. However, they may wear camel-hair jackets, silk vests, on the outside velvet and carmine silk atlas, untrimmed, and likewise gold rings.

§. 2. Further, they shall have no fabric made into clothing that is worth more than two guilders per ell [about 45 inches], or wear any marten, sable, ermine, and similar linings. Indeed, they may at most wear linings of marten throat, and their wives, linings of feh [squirrel winter fur].

§. 3. Further, their wives shall do the same in their attire, and shall not put a border of more than two ells of velvet, silk, atlas silk, or damask at the top of any dress.

§. 4. Further, they are permitted to wear a belt worth twenty guilders.

§. 5. Further, a border on their veil four fingers wide.

§. 6. Also a velvet and silk escoffion with a gold closing or clasp not worth more than twenty guilders.

§. 7. Further, their daughters and young unmarried women may wear a small headband worth ten guilders.

## XIII.

Citizens in cities who are from the council, from noble families, or are otherwise of highbred lineage and who live from their interest and rents.

§. 1. But citizens in cities who are from the council, from noble families, and who otherwise live from their interest and rents shall be seen in just the same clothing as announced here for merchants and tradesmen, except that they may wear camel-hair jackets, lined with three ells of velvet at most, likewise martin linings and none better, also velvet and silk vests, carmine excluded, and silk hair coverings.

§. 2. Likewise, they shall be allowed to wear gold rings, if said rings are not worth more than thirty, forty, or fifty guilders.

§. 3. And their wives shall keep their attire in moderation, like the merchants' wives, except that they [may] line their clothing with at most four ells of velvet or silk, except for carmine. Likewise, they may wear a gold chain worth thirty, forty, up to fifty guilders, and also a belt not worth more than thirty guilders.

## XIV.

### Nobility

§. 1. Furthermore, nobles shall not wear velvet or carmine atlas silk, and they are permitted at most damask, or the equivalent silk, which they may line with six ells of velvet and not more. Likewise, they may wear a golden ring with hair coverings, also a chain not worth more than two hundred guilders, which they shall entwine or pass

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through with a small cord, as is the tradition.

§. 2. And a prince's master of household, chancellor, marshal, or councilor, although not of the nobility, may dress like those of the nobility, as announced earlier.

§. 3. However, knights shall be excepted here; they may wear golden chains publicly without a cord; but the chain may not be worth more than four hundred guilders.

§. 4. They shall not be prohibited from wearing marten linings and the like.

§. 5. Further, the wives of nobles may have four silk skirts made for themselves, and wear and have them publicly, namely, one of velvet, and the remaining three of the equivalent silk, and not more than four; however, without pearls, silver, or gold. And if they want to have them edged, they may do so, with pearls and silver around the top, and not more than half a quarter ell wide. But the knight's wife may do the edging in gold, but around the top and not higher, and half a quarter of an ell wide. If there are some who have more clothes than just reported and want to keep them for their children and daughters, the clothes will not be taken away from them.

§. 6. They may also wear headwear and golden head coverings, but the ribbons and adornment on them may not be worth more than forty guilders.

§. 7. Further, a noblewoman may also wear on her person a necklace, small fibula, torque, and other jewelry, outside of her ring, worth not more than two hundred guilders.

§. 8. Gold borders and belts worth not more than forty guilders.

XV.

Doctors

Likewise, doctors and their wives shall and may also wear clothing, jewelry, chains, gold rings, and other such in keeping with their class and freedom.

XXII.

Jews' clothing

§. 1. Likewise, Jews shall always wear a yellow ring on their jackets or caps in public so that they are recognizable.

§. 2. And so that our statute and regulations regarding excessive, improper clothing and jewelry are strictly followed and carried out, we herewith earnestly call upon each and every elector, prince, prelate, duke, freeman, lord, knight, servant, sheriff, mayor, judge, and councilor, and desire that they themselves strictly follow these, our regulations, and also firmly enforce them on their subjects as follows: when someone violates these regulations, all authorities shall punish those subjects with loss of the clothing or jewelry worn in violation of our regulations, and in addition, with a fine of twice the value of the clothing or jewelry, paid to the civil authorities of the town. And if some authorities are found to be delinquent and negligent in handling and punishment, and for that reason asked by our treasury office to stop doing so and nevertheless persist, then our treasury office shall proceed and execute the above-cited punishments and penalties against such negligent authorities as well as the transgressing subjects.

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Source: *Kayser Conrads des II. bis jetzo, auf den Teutschen Reichs-Tägen abgefasset worden : sammt den wichtigsten Reichs-Schlüssen, so auf dem noch fürwährenden Reichs-Tage zur Richtigkeit gekommen sind.* In Vier Theilen ... Nebst einer Einleitung, Zugabe, und vollständigen Registern. [Heinrich Christian von Senckenberg; Johann Jacob Schmauß]. Theil 2 (1747) ... von dem Jahr 1495. bis auf das Jahr 1551. Inclusive. [Franckfurt am Mayn]: [Koch], 1747, pp. 332, 336–38, 340. Available online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.25673/82295>.

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