

1861 Girls School Clothing Guidelines

Fabric

1. Fabrics should be of natural fiber (such as cotton, silk, etc.) or look like natural fiber. It can be cotton/polyester blend if it has a cotton look.
2. Fabrics can be striped, plaid, polka-dots, solid colors, have geometric designs, or be floral. If you use floral or plaid, they should be larger patterns, not calico style.
3. Day dresses (with the exception of a tea dress) should be made of fabrics that do not have much richness or shine. Those types of fabrics would be reserved for later in the day/evening. Mourning dresses should be a matte (not shiny) finish.

Jewelry

1. Earrings should be dangling. Hanging cameos or teardrop pearls are good choices, but there are many others. Jewelry of our period was generally more chunky and plain than the more dainty, filigreed jewelry of the later Victorian period.
2. Pierced ears were popular in the 1860s. If you wear pierced earrings, they need to be the “fish-hook” style, not posts (posts had not been invented at that time). If the ears are not pierced, then “screw-type” earrings should be worn.
3. Women did not wear wrist watches during the 1860s. Women who carried a timepiece carried a large-faced pocket watch (sometimes worn as a pin or brooch).
4. Pins or brooches were common, as were jet beaded necklaces or metal chain necklaces. Cameos were popular. Transparent precious stones and pearls were reserved for evening wear.
5. When in doubt, keep it plain and simple.
6. If you have multiple ear piercings or other piercings, earrings may only be worn in the lowest ear piercing. All piercings other than the lowest ear piercing must be removed and hair must be pulled over your ears, so that the holes do not show.

General Rules

1. Hair must be in natural colors and have a completely natural look.
2. Neither nail polish or excessive makeup is worn. Very little, if any, makeup should be worn.
3. Gloves or mitts are always worn (and gloves for the ball must be white and full-fingered).
4. When outside, a hat or bonnet must be worn.
5. Hair is either worn in a snood or is braided and twisted low on the neck. Hair is to be parted in the middle and bangs must be pinned back. (We will teach you hair styles, but feel free to get ideas online and practice ahead of time.)
6. Hats and bonnets must have ribbons attached, so that they can be tied under the chin.
7. Garments should cover from neck to wrists. Garments in the 1860s would not show arms or chest until evening. The only garments which could be lower in the neckline are dinner and tea dresses and ballgowns. Ball gowns should be at the edge of the shoulder, but not off the shoulder.
8. Mix and match separates were worn.
9. Pantalettes should be between ankle and knee length, but closer to ankle than knee.
10. Zippers and elastic had not yet been invented in the 1860s, so these should not be used (elastic may be used in pantalettes, since this is not visible).

There are many good photos to be found online which shows portraits of period ladies to help you.