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## How To Prepare for a Pioneer Trek

### Prepare Physically

If you will be physically trekking, **add daily walking** to your schedule at least four weeks before the event. You likely won't be asked to keep the pace of the original emigrants, but you'll have a better time if you can manage several miles without fatigue or pain.

If you will be wearing **unfamiliar boots or shoes**, try them out on walks at home. You may need to add arch supports, gel-pads, or other modern medical aids to complete your trek experience in good health and comfort. Better to find out before you leave!

At least two weeks before your experience, start increasing your water intake. **Dehydration** is a main cause of discomfort and illness when engaged in living history activities. Pre-hydration is vital, as is drinking steady, small amounts of clear liquid at the event. Tepid water is better than ice-cold water or boiling hot liquids.

Be sure to wear **100% natural fibers** (wool or cotton will be very common). Man-made fibers (including polyester, microfleece, and lycra) will melt when exposed to flame or sparks, and can cause problems with over-heating on warm days. Natural fibers are safer around fires and candles. Exercise extreme caution around any fires or lanterns! Stop, drop, and roll to smother any embers. Remember, light layers of wool will insulate better than one thick layer of anything else!

Be careful around **wagons and carts**—never try to climb in or out of a moving conveyance. Do not fool around with, or play pranks with, carts, wagons, or livestock.

Learn to **recognize** the signs of dehydration, and heat and cold emergencies in yourself, and in others. Keep an eye on your friends and companions—if someone stops sweating on a hot day, seek emergency medical aid immediately; if someone has an altered state of mind on a cold day, seek help for hypothermia. If you feel dizzy or disoriented, tell someone immediately!

Don't forget to bring any needed **medications**. If you have severe health problems, talk about the event with your doctor first, and get his advice. Normal medical conditions can become severe emergencies if poorly managed "in the field." Asthmatics should always have a rescue inhaler in a handy pocket; those allergic to bees should keep an epi-pen handy, etc. Be sure your leaders know of your medical needs before the event.

**Prepare for the weather.** You may experience extremes of heat and cold, wet and dry, all in one day. Dressing in historically-accurate layers and textiles is a good plan. If you will be camping, bring something to wear on your head at night.

If you get chilly at night, **warm up from the inside**: do some jumping jacks or vigorous dancing for 10 minutes, until you

have a nice glow worked up. Then, briskly towel off any sweat, change to clean, dry socks (and into clean, dry clothing if possible), put something over your head, and snuggle down to sleep. Going to sleep in the socks you wore all day, or with a bare head, is a sure recipe for getting chilled.

Bring modern **sunblock** (unscented), and take the time for a quick water-wipedown and reapplication every three hours. Use sunblock on your face, neck, ears, upper chest, hands, and forearms; everything else should be covered with light cloth layers.

Above all, **ask questions**. If you're not sure of something, ask! If you're concerned about something, ask! Put safety first.

### Prepare Spiritually

The LDS overland emigrants often had deeply spiritual experiences during their trek. Check the local library for great books on the early Church and the emigration experience. Just a few that contain accounts from young people's perspective:

- I Walked to Zion
- I Sailed to Zion
- Life in Zion

Memorize the words and tune of several popular hymns of the era. Simply having something to sing while you walk along can enhance your experience on the trail.

Re-read scriptural passages that deal with the various "exodus" experiences in the history of God's people, from the Bible, Book of Mormon, and D&C. What were these groups leaving? What did they hope for their destination? How are your challenges different or similar? How do their experiences and outcomes encourage you?

Get a small notebook or journal to write down your thoughts as you prepare for the event. Write about your own life, your challenges, and parallels you find to the early Saints. Take the notebook with you on the trek, and write your experiences as you go. Include the mundane as well as the spiritual, sketch the scenery, write about your physical challenges, the food, sleeping arrangements—and about the things spoken to your heart. It doesn't need to be perfect to be wonderful!

What you take away from a trek depends on what you bring to start... choose wisely!

### About the Author

*Elizabeth Stewart Clark is a 19th century dressmaking instructor and historic pattern designer. A member of the LDS Church, she is always interested in helping others more fully appreciate our pioneer heritage. Find more patterns, articles, and books related to living history and the 19th century at*

**[www.elizabethstewartclark.com](http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com)**

## Historic Clothing Overview

*For more complete descriptions and information, please visit [www.mormontrek.org](http://www.mormontrek.org). Patterns and instructions for underlined items can be printed free of charge, and photocopied for personal or Church use.*

<b>Basic Look: Get the Flavor of Historic Clothing</b>	
Young Women & Adult Women	Young Men & Adult Men
<u>Sunbonnet</u>	Cap or Straw Hat (wider brim)
<u>Neckerchief</u> (could also use a modern large hanky)	<u>Neckerchief</u> (could also use a modern large hanky)
<u>Full, Gathered Skirt</u>	Denim/Khaki pants (worn at the waist!)
Solid color, long-sleeve, button down shirt (no pocket)	Solid color or print long-sleeve, button-down shirt
Comfortable walking/hiking shoes	Comfortable walking/hiking shoes
White, tan, or black cotton or wool stockings	White, tan or black cotton or wool stockings

*The Basic Look* includes key safety and comfort garments and the flavor of pioneer clothing. The inexpensive period elements help the modern parts blend in better, to avoid disrupting “time travel” moments for others.

**Safety Note:** All young men and adult men of the period wear trousers at the natural waist, rather than the modern hip-bone level. *You **\*must\*** pull up trousers and use suspenders or a belt to keep them in place!* Sagging crutch seams and hanging hems are a safety hazard, as you cannot move freely and quickly in overly-baggy clothing.

**Basic-Plus** items include more historic garments, and fewer modern intrusions. If you’ll be participating in other pioneer-era events, this is a good first level to work with.

**Safety Note:** 100% Natural Fibers (wool, cotton, linen, or silk) are *vital* for safety at all levels! Man-made fibers melt when exposed to high heat and flame. Natural fibers pose far less danger around campfires, lanterns, and candles. Stop, Drop, and Roll is a skill you need.

<b>Basic-Plus: Increase Your Accuracy &amp; Comfort</b>	
Young Women & Adult Women	Young Men & Adult Men
Replace skirt/shirt with one-piece dress	Replace shirt & pants with historic cut shirt and wool or cotton trousers
Add <u>petticoats</u> , <u>apron</u> , <u>wool shawl</u>	Add solid or tweed wool vest
Black or brown leather boots, stockings as above	Black or brown leather boots, stockings as above
<u>Sunbonnet</u> and <u>neckerchief</u>	Cap or hat and <u>neckerchief</u>

<b>Stepped From the Past: Duplicate Historic Clothing</b>	
Young Women & Adult Women	Young Men & Adult Men
Complete historic undergarments: <u>chemise</u> , stays/corset, <u>drawers</u> , <u>petticoats</u>	Complete historic undergarments: undershirt, underdrawers
Historic-cut one-piece dress	Historic-cut wool sack or frock coat
<u>Sunbonnet</u> , <u>apron</u> , <u>shawl</u>	Cap or hat

**Stepped From the Past:** If you really love dressing as an early Saint, consider working up a highly-accurate wardrobe from the start. You’ll spend less money in the long-run, and have items you can use for years. All patterns should be historic specialty patterns, rather than “Big 4” lines; plan to use historic fabrics, as well.

### General Notes

- Girls wear dresses hemmed between lower-calf and a handspan above the ankle bones. Women wear dresses hemmed between just above the ankle bones and the top of the foot. *Any female under 18 years and unmarried is a “girl” in the period, not an adult woman.*
- Men and boys over the age of about 12 dress in very similar clothing styles. Caps are popular for both teens and adult men, and are worn for comfort as well as style.
- Bring modern, unscented sport sunblock, and re-apply it at least every three hours to the face, ears, neck, upper chest, hands, and forearms.
- Sponge-bathing will be the most common way to keep clean; bring extra underwear and socks for daily changes, and beat the dust from your outer clothing when possible.

### www.MormonTrek.org

Free, printable patterns and articles for researched historic clothing of the early pioneer era (1840-1865), including:

- Sunbonnets and caps
- Undergarments & Petticoats/Underskirts
- Shawls
- Pattern Recommendations

You can reach Sister Clark with questions or comments directly at

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*Remember: each adult handcart emigrant was allowed only 17 pounds of personal luggage! You’re preparing for a 3000-mile hike in all weathers and without convenient shelter, plus starting a new life in Utah. Consider the weights of needed items: spare boots (2 pound); wool dress (3 pounds); winter coat (3 pounds); warm bonnet (1/2 pound); quilt (4 pounds); scriptures (1-2 pounds); tools of your trade (10 pounds an up, depending). Could you start fresh with only 20 pounds of things today? What will you bring?*