**History of Fashion Accessories**

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Accessories complete the perfect look. Sometimes, even when the whole outfit is flawless, a statement accessory can transform it to make it more glamorous. Necklaces, earrings, bracelets, belts, neckties, and headwear add finishing touches to many outfits. Some of the types of these accessories are classic and timeless like the pearl earrings and leather belts, but some were trendy and could be out of fashion after a while. As fashion changes throughout the years and decades, accessories evolve as well.

Since the beginning of civilization, people have been wearing accessories. The history of fashion accessories is a lengthy and broad subject, so we will break it down per accessory type.

**NECKLACE/CHAINS**

Necklaces are adopted by early civilizations around the world. These are believed to be as old as 40,000 years. The oldest forms of the necklace are made from shells, teeth or bone beads, bird feathers, carved wood, seeds, stones and other artful natural elements found in the environment. Some used more precious materials from hard-to-find places, like the valuable necklace made of Mediterranean red coral beads found in a Neolithic remains in the Alps, dated around 4,200-3,400 BC.

When metalworking was developed, it added more jewelry options for humans. A flat, crescent-shaped neckpiece made of metal, or the lunula, is found in Bronze Age Scotland and Ireland in 1,800-1,500 BC. Meanwhile, the torc, a large, rigid neckpiece made of twisted metal, was found in the Celtic, Scythian and other cultures of the European Iron Age during 800 BC to 300 AD. These neckpieces were made of gold, copper, and other metals.

The ancient Egyptians’ necklaces were more complicated. From simple stringed bead necklaces, it evolved into a broad collar and pectoral types both women and men wore, especially the royalty and the wealthy.

Jewelry with gemstones was first used by the Romans during the first century. Later on, it became a trend for women to wear many necklaces at once until it’s use waned. In the late 14th century, necklaces regained popularity.

During the Middle Ages, necklaces replaced brooches as the primary form of jewelry. Gold chain necklaces with [pendants and necklace sets](https://lexiejordanjewelry.com/collections/necklace) with gemstone were in style. Their neck accessory usually indicates their social status and level of wealth.

Materials such as gold, silver, pearls, and diamonds have long been a popular choice for necklaces since the Western history of dressing until today. These often symbolize wealth, glamour, and prestige. Nowadays, the ideal necklace for professional, business and bridal dress are made up of these materials.

Locket necklaces were widely used in the 18th and 19th centuries after photography was developed. It was mostly given as a betrothal gift. Matched sets of jewelry also became popular during this era. These sets usually included at least a matching earring or brooch, but it could also include bracelets, tiara or buckles.

Men and women both used to wear necklaces until the 18th century when this accessory became primarily feminine. This is why men used to call their necklace as *chains* today. American pop culture re-popularized the use of necklaces for men with the 1960s hippie “love beads” and the 1970s disco dance craze. Some included gold chains with charms like a gold cross or gold Italian horn, and some used amulets, charms and beads. Black and African-American hip-hop artists of the 20th century had platinum and gold chains with diamond-encrusted pendants as their fashion statement, which is popularly known as “bling-bling.”

**BRACELETS**

After the ornaments for the neck, another oldest form of jewelry is the bracelet for wrist, arm or ankle. Archaeologists were able to date back the earliest bracelet to 7,500 BC found in Turkey. It was made of obsidian. Primitive humans were thought to have formed ancient bangles from stones, wood, and shells, then later on, from copper and bronze. The ancient Chinese wore bracelets on wrist made from wood, jade, and gold.

During Biblical times, bracelets were worn by both men and women, according to Hebrew Scripture. Some of the oldest-known bracelets were made of gold and bronze. The gold bracelets were often unadorned, while the bronze bracelets were decorated with designs.

Bracelets in Ancient Egyptian times were mostly strings of gold beads and hoops, and some were hinged. In Ancient Greeks, Romans and Assyrians, bracelets were often in the form of coiled spiral snakes or penannular armbands with enameled sphinxes and heads of lions or bulls. During the Iron Age, the spiral forms of bracelets with animal motifs were common in Europe. Meanwhile, the bracelets with separate, hinged panels were first created by the Etruscans, but the style was still popular in the early 21st century.

These arm trinkets were not only used as an adornment. In Celtic period Britain, men wore serpent-shaped bracelets and protective armlets to protect themselves from sword attacks. The Ancient Greeks soldiers wore metal cuffs on their upper and lower arms. When the Roman army saw this, they mimicked it and made their own arm accessories.

During the Middle Ages, the bracelet became unfashionable, but it was brought back again during the 17th century. Women began wearing bangles and wrist accessories made from ribbon strings. During the Victorian era, charms and pendant-style lockets became a trend in bracelets.

Plastic became a material for bracelets during the 20th century. For teenagers and children, plastic adornments became a fashion choice. Embroidery floss or thread was used to create armbands, especially for friendship bracelets, which became popular in the 1980s.  Jewelry makers also started creating charm bracelets made of gold-plated brass and sterling silver. This trend continues up to the present.

**EARRINGS**

The Sumerian women wore crescent-shaped gold hoop earrings at around 2,500 BC, according to archaeologists. In 1,500 BC Egypt, earrings were worn by both men and women. Ancient Egyptian earrings were usually mushroom-shaped studs or plugs to be stretched in the earlobe by an enlarged hole.

In the first millennium BC, Greeks and Etruscans wore earrings as a symbol of wealth. The wore hoop earrings, disk earrings, as well as leech earrings – a thick tube secured by a hidden wire, and box-type earrings. All these were stamped out of thin sheets of gold and were embellished with scrolls, flowers and fine palmettes

Later on, the Romans began to use gems or colored stones in earrings. This was imitated by other civilizations until the Roman influence began to decline. In the year 330 A.D., the Byzantine’s crescent-shaped, gold filigree earrings, and plain gold hoops with pearl pendants hanging on chains set the trend for ear accessory.

Earrings became unnecessary and impractical during the 11th to early 16th centuries because the stylish hairstyles and headdresses of the day covered the ears completely. It was during the late 1500s when earrings became fashionable among gentlemen and courtiers during the English Renaissance. By the late 17th century, earrings became an important part of dressing up to both men and women. It became lighter and simpler over time.

The practice of ear piercing for earrings re-emerged during the 1950s. The trend began as a fad among college girls, and Queen Elizabeth II set an example when she had ear piercing to be able to wear the diamond earrings she received as a wedding gift. By the 1970s, ear piercing became common among women. It was also when earrings returned to fashion for men, thanks to popular male music performers who set an example. Most of the men who wore earrings before were homosexuals, sailors or members of groups or gangs, but today, it has increasingly become more common and acceptable as something no other than decoration.

Multiple piercings in one or both ears also emerged into mainstream popularity in the 1970s. It became a trend to wear a second, third or more set of earrings within the ear. Asymmetric double piercing and cartilage piercing have become a trendy and acceptable practice.

Over time, different types and styles of earrings emerged. Earrings have become a form of personal expression and plainly a matter of personal choice – not indicative of social status, sexuality, moral or religious standards, and others.

**BELTS**

Since the Bronze Age, belts were worn by ancient people. In ancient Rome, Greece, and Crete, people used it in the form of sash or girdle. Belts were common for both genders in the Western world, but it was more common for men.

In the latter part of the 19th century until World War I, the belt was used as a decorative and utilitarian part of the military uniform.

During the 20th century, men started wearing leather belts with the purpose of preventing the pants from falling. Women’s belts, on the other hand, were often made of the same fabric as their matching dress or coat. Belts of plastic or metal links have also been worn as a trendy fashion accessory.

**HATS**

The earliest known hat was worn by a Bronze Age man named Otzi, a mummified body frozen in a mountain where it was found to be there since around 3,300 BC. This headwear was a bearskin cap that looks like a Russian fur hat without flaps.

Ancient, upper-class Egyptians cover their heads with headdress to keep them cool. In Mesopotamia, people wore conical hats or those that resemble an inverted vase.

During the Middle Ages, hats denoted social status. In the late 16th century, women had structured hats like those of male courtiers.

A wide range of hats were designed during the 19th century. Women often wore bonnets, but eventually, it became larger, decorated with flowers, ribbon, feathers, and gauze trimmings. By the years pass by, more exotic and outrageous designs were made with women’s headwear.

In Britain, the tradition of wearing hats to horse racing events began at the Royal Ascot’s Royal Enclosure. The British Royalty are known for their hat-wearing traditions. Weddings in Britain also required all visitors to wear hats. This headpiece was at the height of fashion relevance during the Regency era.

In the Western world, the beret hat has been worn by both sexes of all ages since the 1920s. It was adopted as part of the US Girl Scouts’ uniform in 1936 but was replaced with the visor baseball cap in 1994