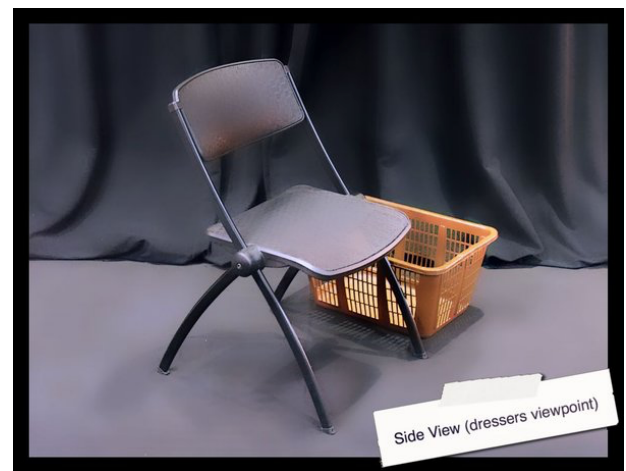




The purpose of this handout is to help backstage wardrobe run crew (aka 'a **dresser**') set up costumes for a **quick change**. The orientation of costumes can be laid out in such a way that the dresser may grab an item and have it automatically facing the actor for a quick hand-off. Learning some of these tricks of the trade may help speed up the changing process while keeping it consistent and safe.

**NOTE:** While the examples provided here use contemporary clothing, these basic setups could be applied to most costume items that an actor would wear. That said, this tutorial is introductory and does not include complicated period costumes, jewelry or wigs etc.

### Step 1: The Basics (CHAIR and BASKET)



You will need one **chair** for costume setup and one **basket** to catch the costumes being removed. The dresser can stand on the opposite side of the laundry basket. This will allow the actor room to change.

**PRO TIP:** Costumes are typically laid out in reverse order. This means that the last item the actor changes into will be the first item placed on the chair.



### Step 2: HAT or SCARF

Place the **hat or scarf** (or similar item) on the basket side of the chair or on a hook on the wall. This is usually the very last item placed on an actor before they go on stage.

**PRO TIP:** Since hats and scarves are smaller items, it is best to keep them away from other costume items to avoid entanglement.



### Step 3: SHOES

Place **shoes** on the opposite side of the basket, either angled out or directly next to the chair. Make sure the laces are elastic or loose (but safely tied), or untied.

**PRO TIP:** If you have costume changes involving shoes, keep a handheld shoehorn in the back pocket of your strong hand.



### Step 4: JACKET OR CARDIGAN (open in the front)

There are a couple of ways **open front jackets or cardigans** can be set up.

For jackets, to avoid wrinkling, hang on the chair seat back on the corner farthest from the basket.

For a cardigan sweater, either hang on the seat back corner or, to avoid stretching it out, drape over seat of chair in an accordion fashion.

To do this:

(A) First drape sweater neatly across chair seat with the front of the sweater facing down

(B) Fold back at the collar with tag facing up.

This allows the grabbing of the sweater in such a fashion that it is immediately ready to put on actor.

**PRO TIP:** *Do not drape across the back of the chair.* This risks toppling the chair over when grabbing jacket or cardigan.

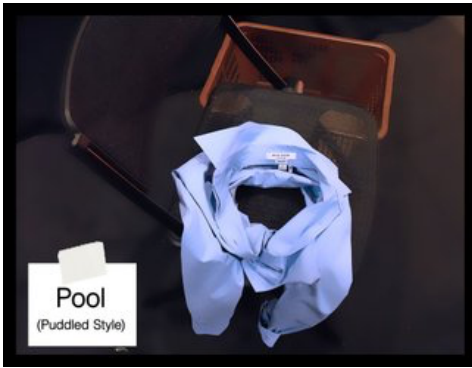


### Step 5: TIE

Hang the **tie** on seat back corner chair farthest from the basket. If with a suit jacket, hang it over the jacket.

**PRO TIP:** Make sure the tie is already knotted loosely to be quickly placed over the actor's head. If you have a clip on tie, make sure to attach it to the shirt collar on one side for your setup.





### Step 6: SHIRT (closed front)

Similar to coats and cardigans, there are a few options. First, if the shirt is a button down style, button it up from the bottom, leaving the top two or three unbuttoned (check with your actor to see which can comfortably go over their head).

Then, for shirts not easily wrinkled, you can do one of two things:

(1) You can pool the shirt on the seat with the buttons facing you and the tag facing up.

-or-

(2) Scrunch the back of the shirt and hang on the back corner of the chair with the neck open like a donut. If there is a tie that needs to be put on after the shirt, pull up the collar as shown.

-or-

(3) If wrinkling is an issue, drape the shirt over the seat back of the chair with the buttons facing down and the tag facing the dresser. Allow the arms to fall on either side of the seat back. See notes in photos for further tips about this setup.

**PRO TIP:** These setups can be applied to any close front item of clothing such as a non-cardigan sweater, tee shirt, polo etc.

### Step 7: PANTS

Similar to the previous cardigan set up, drape pants across seat with the front of the pants facing up then fold/pool forward with tag facing up and the button/snap/zipper is unfastened. This allows the grabbing of the pants in such a way that it is immediately ready to hand-off to your actor.

This setup can also be used for shorts and skirts.

**PRO TIP:** Make sure any belts are already threaded into the pants (buckle on the left hand side of actor)



### Step 8: DRESSES

There are a couple of ways to put a dress on an actor. It depends on whether it is easier to put the dress over the actor's head or, if hair and makeup are an issue, have the actor step into the dress. Here are those two setups:

(1) For situations when the actor needs to step into a dress, pool it in a donut style at the base of a chair with the arms spread out. Instruct the actor to step into the dress while the crew pulls it up.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



-or-

(2) Similar to a button down shirt setup, hang the dress over the corner edge on the back of the chair with the neck open and the back buttons facing up. Allow the arms to hang.

**PRO TIP:** If at all possible, it is strongly recommended to conduct a quick test run with your actor (especially with long dresses or any complex changes) before dress rehearsals begin. This does not have to be done for every change but can help alleviate questions and determine an actor's preference.



### Step 9: REVIEW paperwork & CHECK in with actor

Review the final setup with your paperwork and your actor.  
Communication is key to the success of any quick change.

**FINAL NOTE :** *Every costume change is different. Make sure to consult your actor before dress rehearsal begins. Adapt to what they need, what the costumes require, the space and the tools provided. Also, be aware of what others around you are doing during your change times. Theatre is a collaborative process and safety is always the top priority.*