
Westminster Abbey

Learning



Q is for Quire

Making your own ruff

Ruffs became fashionable in Queen Elizabeth I's time and if you look at old portraits from that time you'll notice all the important people wearing ruffs. Back then they were worn to show how important and rich you were, and were usually made from fine cloth. Since King James II's coronation in 1685, choristers at Westminster Abbey have also worn a ruff around their necks.

At Westminster Abbey, the choir is made up of boys aged 8-13. You can learn more about the life of a Westminster Abbey chorister here: <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship-music/music/the-abbey-choir-and-musicians/choristership>



Choristers in 1685



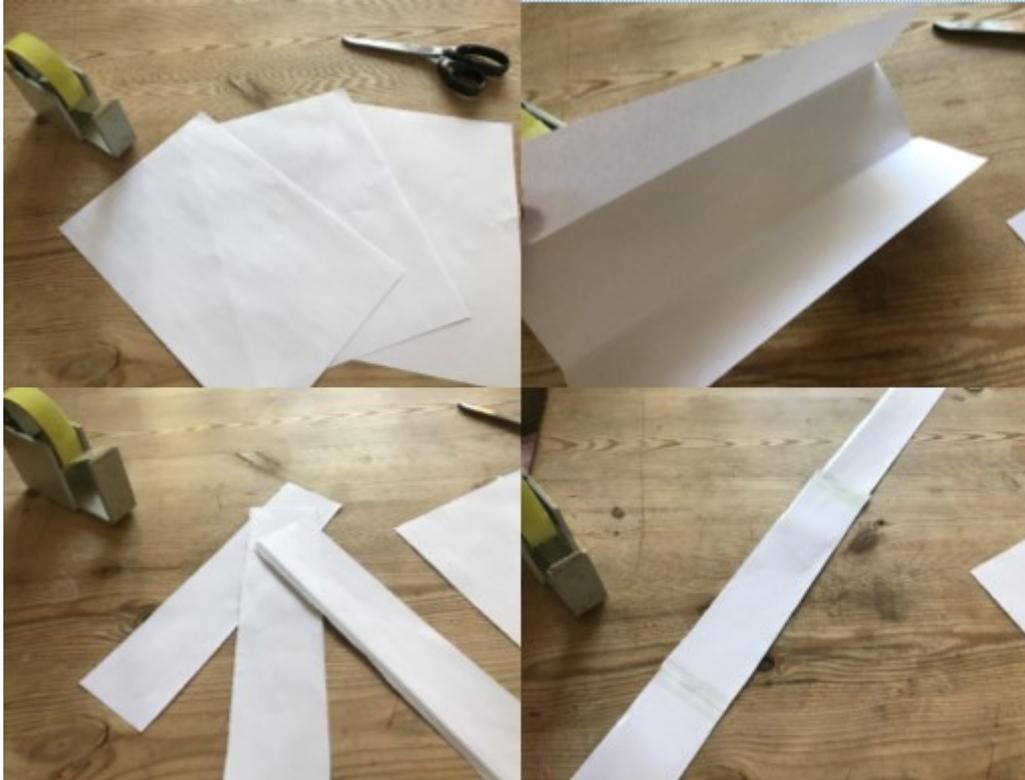
Choristers today

Time to make your own ruff

You will need:

- A length of ribbon (the length of your arm). If you don't have ribbon, string is also fine.
 - A hole puncher.
 - A long strip of paper, about 7cms wide and 100cms long (see instructions below) to make this you will need:
 - A pair of scissors.
 - Sticky tape.
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- 1) Cut sheets of A4 lengthways and stick the long pieces end to end until you have a good length to work with.



- 2) Take your length of paper (or the long pieces of paper stuck together), and fold it into pleats. With each fold, you'll be making a little square roughly 7cms by 5cms. Keep folding until you have what looks like a giant paper accordion.



- 3) Using your hole puncher, punch a hole in the centre of the top of the short edge, going all the way through your pleats (you may need an adult to help here).



- 4) Now take your ribbon or string and pass it through the hole.
- 5) Wrap the ruff about your neck and tie the ends of the ribbon in a bow (again, an adult might need to help here).



Your ruff may not be the most comfortable item of clothing in your wardrobe. In Elizabethan and Jacobean times, they were worn to throw light upwards and highlight your face (as well as show off how much money you had to spend on huge lengths of fine linen).



“Are you trying to look like me?” said Livingstone the lion, “I think ruffs are the people version of a lion’s mane!”

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