



How To Design Clothing, Fashion, and Costumes For Your Character: With Outfit Ideas!



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Character outfit design can be one of the most fun, yet challenging parts of the character design process. You may end up designing a great OC, but maybe their wardrobe is a little limited because of the process of getting their design down. How do you expand their fashion choices while maintaining the essence of their character? Thankfully, we can help you out with this guide.

Character Clothing Design: The Basics

Character outfit ideas, female and male, have a lot of considerations. The same applies to the character's sense of style, role in a story, or how culture may play into what they wear. Genre may be a factor too, when it comes to anime character outfit ideas. Here are some basics you need to consider when designing character outfits.



Caption: Plus, now I can totally canonize Hubert's love of 90s hip-hop thanks to his fashion choices.

Character Clothes Design: Role

Broadly speaking, when we mention roles here, we refer to their part in a story. How might a character's clothing design emphasize their part in a narrative? What does their outfit design say about their relevance to the plot? Do they look like a hero, or do they look villainous?

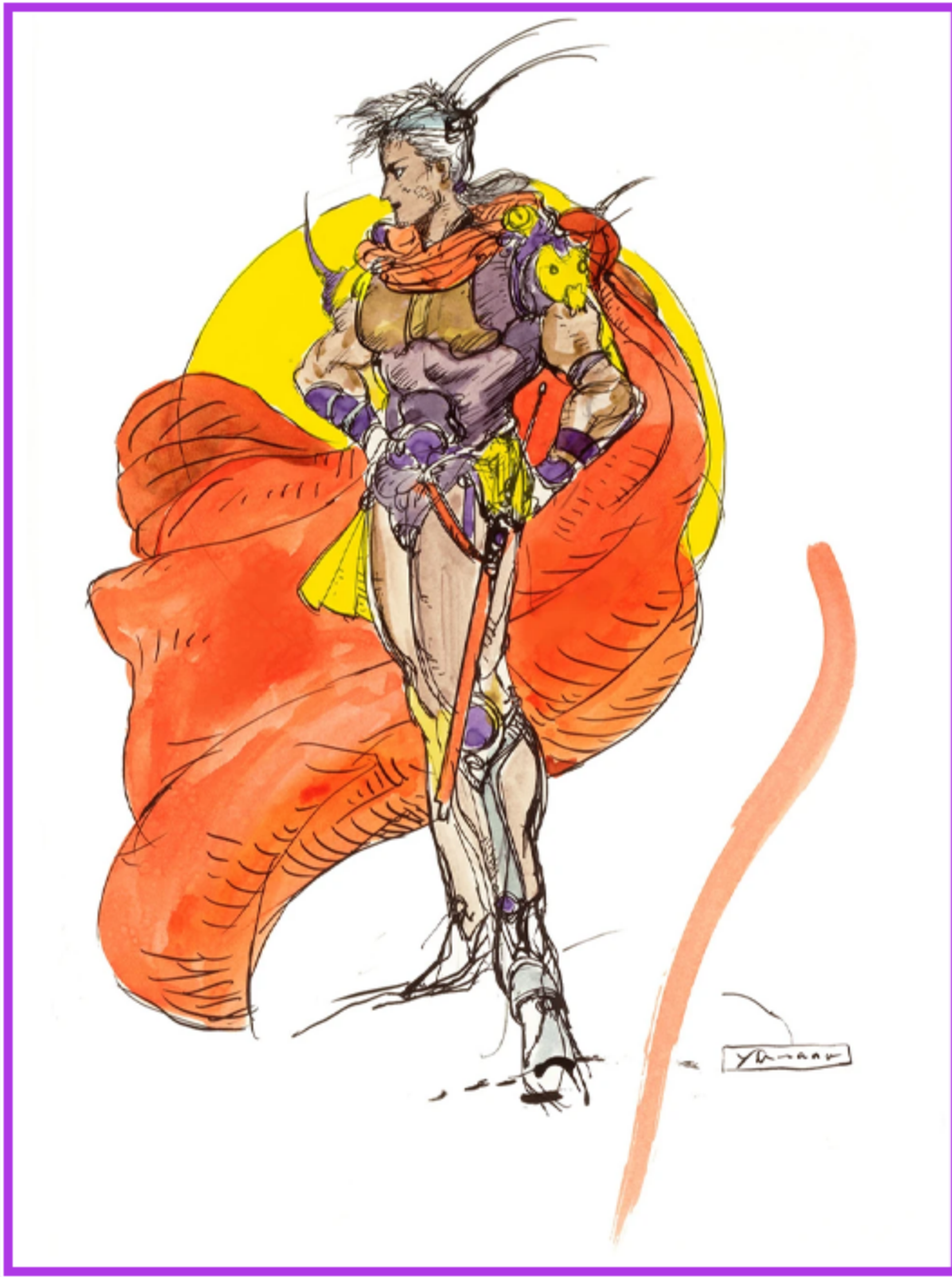


In *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, it is easy to tell who is good and who is bad through color choices in the outfit designs.

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One thing to consider is that focal characters, compared to background characters, are likely to have more detailed and complex character outfit ideas. For example, compare the look of a JRPG protagonist against most NPCs in a video game.

Main characters tend to [feature more attention to detail](#) versus others in the same setting, as their role necessitates that kind of attention. The Final Fantasy illustrations of [Yoshitaka Amano](#) are a great example of such costume design.



Final Fantasy II's Firion is a great example of the complexity of JRPG protagonist costume design. Yoshitaka Amano's signature drawing style is on full display.

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What if the character is a villain? Villains tend to have more complicated designs, even compared to protagonists. Look at the iconic Mr. Sinister of the *X-Men*, especially compared to Cyclops. Sinister's design is a lot more elaborate, so much so that when the animated series was in production in the early 1990s, the animators opted to mostly include him from the front as that cape of his is pretty complicated to animate.

Cyclops from *X-Men '97* has a heroic look thanks to the primary colors of red, blue, and yellow, balanced to emphasize the team colors.



Mister Sinister of *X-Men '97* features more details on his design, including wrinkles that make him less visually heroic compared to Cyclops.

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Another thing to note is a character's progression also influences a character's clothes design. Character outfit design can tell a story. Look at many video games and you'll see that as a character grows more powerful, their look grows more complex. In the case of MMOs like *World of Warcraft*, basic, introductory gear is nowhere as elaborate or cool looking as some of the [higher-end armors](#) available later in the level progression.



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Character Clothes Design: Culture

Beyond designing a character's outfit for their role in a story, cultural and historical considerations must be made. And yes, that even applies to completely fictional settings you have made. Clothes carry meaning beyond their purpose of covering up the body. Character outfit design should [reflect a larger world](#) and the character's relationship to their world.

The outfit design in *Demon Slayer* is hugely important because it reflects [the Taishō era of Japan](#), where more ancient and traditional Japanese clothing runs up against more modern, 20th-century style clothing. The anime character outfit idea of Tanjiro is not only a reflection of his working with a long-standing tradition of demon slaying but also helps to set him apart from the more modern world on the outskirts of his supernatural story.

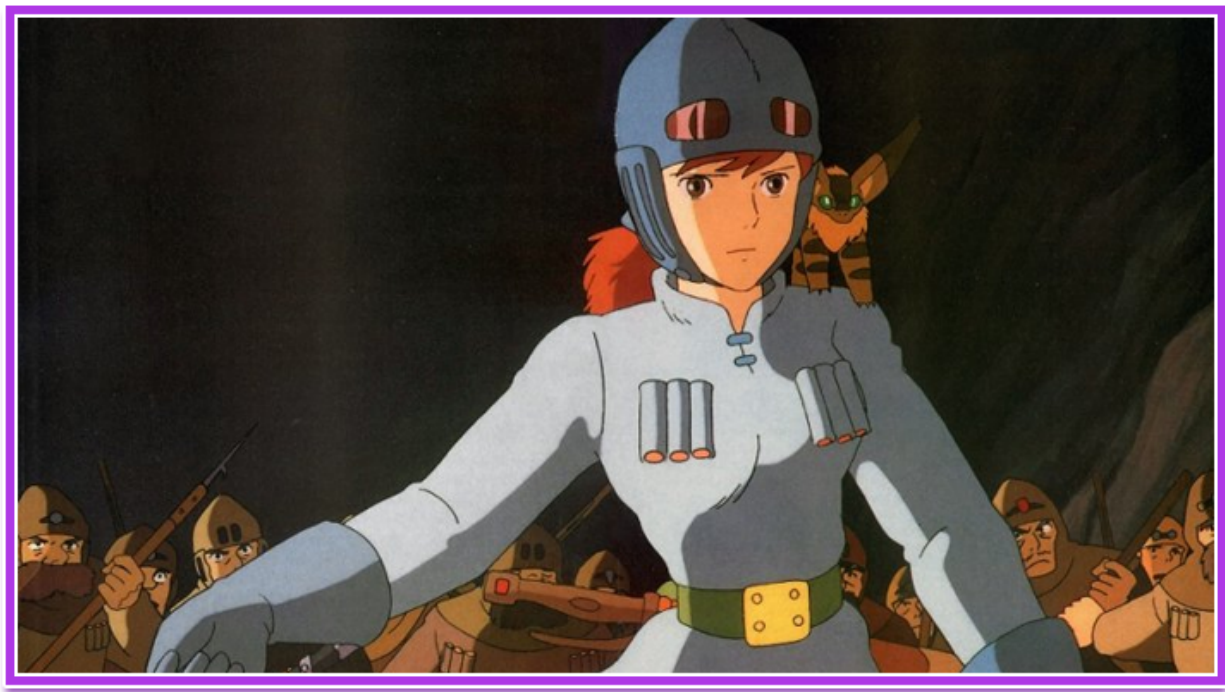


Traditional Japanese outfits set against the more modern fashion of the Taishō era speaks much about Tanjiro and how he stands out from the world around him.

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Characters who may have unnaturally long lives and live in another era are a great example of how character clothing design uses culture. *Star Wars: Jedi Survivor* features a character who wears the traditional Jedi robes of the High Republic Era, which stand out in gold and white against the more neutral tones of the Rebellion Era of the game.

Characters may also have certain design elements that factor into their culture. A common trope in character design for monks may include the presence of prayer beads. What sort of cartoon character outfit ideas help establish a character as a scientist? Elements such as lab coats, glasses, and other “nerdy” accessories go a long way.



The post-apocalyptic scavenger culture of Studio Ghibli's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* is clear by the outfit designs. The semi-modern clothing seems to have reverted to something more medieval.

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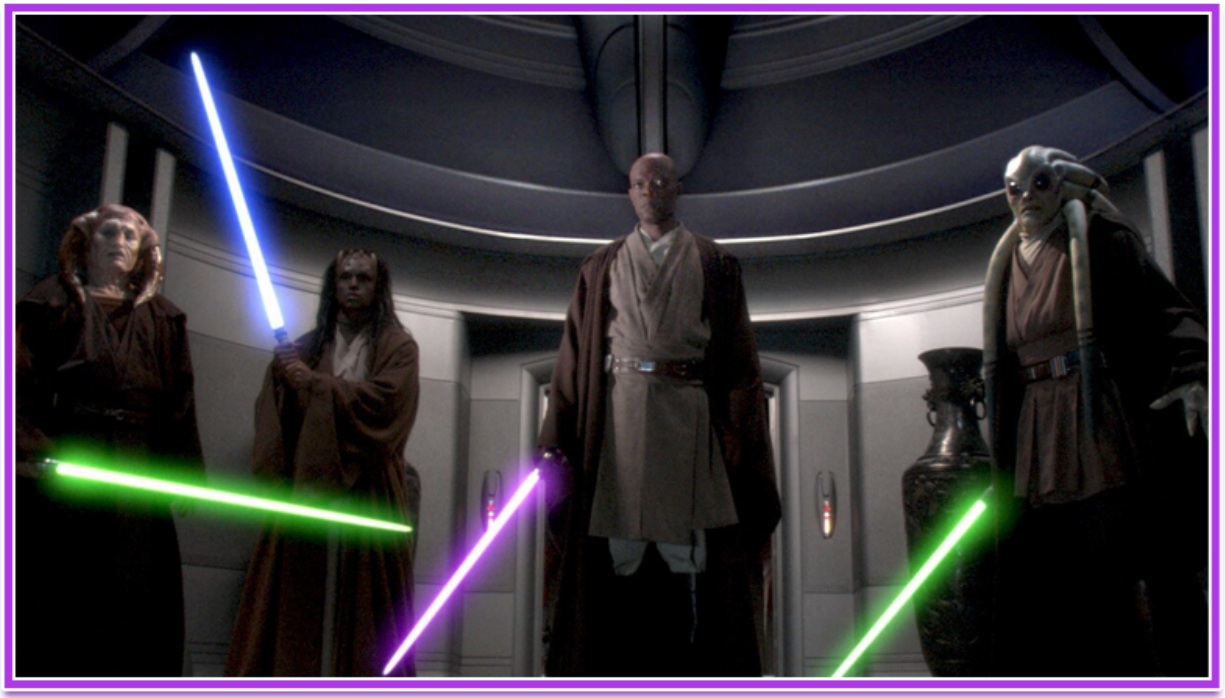
Character Clothes Design: Genre

Of course, we should not ignore how fundamental genre is concerning character outfit concepts. Usually, certain genres have associations, with a retro sci-fi look, for example, bubble helmets, skin-tight bodysuits, and laser guns are a sure thing. Your typical anime swordsman likely has a cape and tunic. These design shortcuts are just associations we most often make.

However, sometimes playing against genre expectations can pay off. Drawing a modern SWAT team member might root them in the current era because of that outfit

choice, but with a couple of small tweaks and some sci-fi odds and ends, you now have a hard-edge technical sci-fi protagonist.

The Jedi of *Star Wars* make a great example of contrasting the sci-fi of a setting with more fantastical monk-like robes. Of course, all of this serves the ultimate juxtaposition: laser samurai swords, or lightsabers.



Why do these monks have laser swords? Because costume design creates interest.

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Outfit Ideas for Characters

With all these concepts in mind for character clothing design, the inevitable question is how to start coming up with unique looks. However, keeping the three basics in mind, role, culture, and genre, will greatly help as you gather your inspiration.

As for [gathering that inspiration](#), and how you'll use it, there are some significant options you'll need to keep in mind.

Study the Genre

When developing ideas for character outfits, one of your first considerations should be the setting and genre. For example, is your character a hero in a medievaesque fantasy world? Or are they in a 1940s-style noir city? This is likely your first question when designing character clothing and fashion.

From there, it becomes an issue of immersion. Engage yourself in the media of the genre you are tackling and explore how those creators outfit and equip their characters. Find the broader trends and the niche design concepts that speak to you and what you wish to achieve with your character's outfit design. What is better than reading comics and watching movies for research purposes?

In most cases, the answer to the genre question makes it easy to look for inspiration. However, sometimes it may not. That is where other ideas come in. For example, what if you are designing a character who wears contemporary clothing, as their setting is somewhat modern? Where do you go from there?

Study Other Outfit Concepts

As creators, you have an innate sense of taste, and while it may be personal to you to a large degree, you know what looks good and what doesn't for characters. That is when you can take in fashion and how it may look on your OCs. Think about some of your favorite character designs and what they wear. What works with the outfit design? What catches your attention? [Do the colors harmonize](#)? Figuring out why certain looks

appeal to you can help you identify what parts of costume designs you want to apply to your work.

Studying similar character designs to your concepts is a great way to land on costume inspiration. Look at how other creators across film, television, comics, and even CharacterHub have designed their outfits for their OCs. You never know where inspiration may strike, for example, [Brother Sharp](#) became a fashion icon in 2010.



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Pinterest and Fashion Blogs

We've mentioned in previous articles about [creating reference collections](#) for later use, among which you should have a dedicated collection of fashion images you find inspiring or interesting. A great way to do this, and share the link around, is by creating a Pinterest account and assembling a collection of sources. You can also find [costuming blogs](#) that provide many great references for contemporary and historical costuming. There is no shortage of great sources, such as the [Ringling College of Art + Design](#).

Of course, all this collecting should serve a purpose, which falls into our next suggestion.

Memes and Mood Boards

It can be very time-consuming to draw every conceivable outfit for a character in a near-endless amount of combinations. However, that is where memes and mood boards can help you quickly establish a character's wardrobe.

The infamous ["steal her look" meme](#) has a long history since at least 2009, but even if it is a tongue-in-cheek joke, that doesn't mean it doesn't serve a purpose for character outfit design. While we're mostly looking at the meme for a collage where you can assemble quick outfit references without drawing a thing, you should totally post your results to your CharacterHub social feed as well. For the laughs, of course.



Who knew Hank Hill of *King of the Hill* had such expensive tastes?

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This is similar to a mood board, a more abstract collage of images that convey a general “vibe” of a character. If you narrow [your mood board](#) to accessories and outfits then you have a great way to share potential character outfit designs for your expanding cast of OCs, all without needing to draw each in those multiple outfits. Uploading these

mood boards to a character's profile gallery gives fan artists options for approaching your character's fashion choices.

CharacterHub and Character Outfit Design

Character clothing designs can be a rewarding distraction for many of us, and for some, it can become an obsession. What better way to highlight your fashion sense of design skills than to share your OC and their various fits to CharacterHub?

CharacterHub's numerous social features allow creators to share updates and design work with the larger community - not just to flex their design skills, but to seek valuable feedback as well.

You can even use your [character profile gallery feature](#) to create dedicated galleries for types of looks - even Christmas character outfit designs if that is a particular angle you love. Even a gallery of mood boards or fashion inspiration collages are great ways to get your character and their look across to users all over the site.

character clothing design, character outfit design, character outfit ideas, outfit ideas for characters, cartoon character outfit ideas, Christmas character outfit ideas, anime character outfit ideas, character outfit ideas female, character outfit ideas male, character clothes design, character clothing designs, character design clothes fantasy, character design fantasy winter clothes