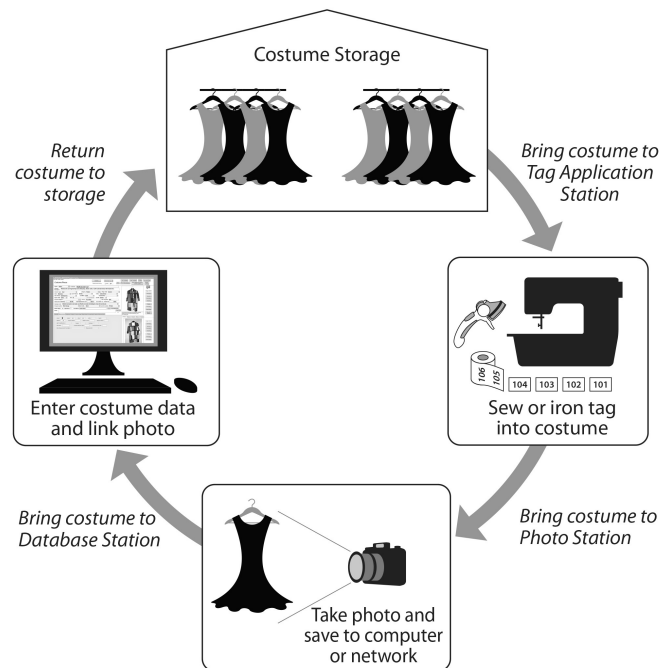


Suggestions for Costume or Prop Inventory Day

You've got the costumes and props, you've got the inventory program, you've got the inventory tags and labels - how can you put it all together??

The best way to get as many costumes or props inventoried and tagged is to have a **Costume or Prop Inventory Day**. You set aside 4 - 6 hours of a day, clear your work area of projects, get 4-6 volunteers, a good pot of coffee and get to work !

Here are the basic steps: (outlined for a Costume Day)



Here is a checklist of what you will need:

- 1) **Costume Shop Supervisor or Prop Master** - the person who knows all the costumes/props and can help the data entry person with the costume/prop details, help the seamstress decide where to put tags for difficult costumes, and generally answer questions as they arise during the day.
- 2) **Volunteers !** You can accomplish a lot if you have 4 - 6 volunteers who will work a station for a few hours. The jobs for these volunteers will be:

- Tag / Label Person. One or two people to sew-in or iron-on the inventory tags. You can also use a tagging gun (such as the Avery Dennison Fine Fabric Tagging Gun) to temporarily apply tags to the costumes. It is a quick and easy way to get the tags on.

If you are inventorying props then one or more people will be needed to apply labels to the props directly or onto the tyvek or string/shipping tags that can be tied to the props.

- Photographer and assistant - you will need at least one - it's better with two - to take pictures of the costumes/props - if you don't already have photos of each one. One person for the camera / webcam and one for arranging the costumes/props for the photo. If you are using a digital camera or phone, one of the photographers can also transfer the photos from the camera or phone to a computer and then save the costume/prop photos to a USB stick or 'thumb drive' so that the photos can go to the database station. If you have a volunteer that is good at taking photos have them practice on a few costumes/props a day or two before the *Costume or Prop Inventory Day* so they know how to save and transfer the photos.
- Data Entry Person - You will need one for each computer you have. If your computers are networked you can have two or more people enter data at the same time (for 2 different costumes/props). The data entry people enter all the data about a costume/prop, assign the inventory tag number, and link the picture(s) if they are ready.
- Runner - 2 people - it is good to have one person taking costumes off a rack or props off the shelf and delivering them to the Tag Application Station and then another volunteer to take finished costumes or props and put them back on the racks or shelves once they have been entered into the computer.

3) **Tag Application Station:**

Sewing machine(s) and / or Iron - Any standard sewing machine is all that is needed to sew in the tags. You just need thread (in a variety of colors to match garments) and scissors to cut in the tags. For Iron-on tags you can use a household iron but a small iron called the **Petite Press** by Dritz is recommended. The Petite Press can get very hot and has a small foot print so it can apply the tags well and work in the small area of a costume. Iron-on tags have to be applied with a hot iron (350°) and a heavy hand (press down hard) to get the adhesive to melt. See the **Tutorial** on the Support page of the website.

Labels: For props, shoes, or hats you can use the adhesive labels. For props that can support a label (for example a chair or framed picture) and shoes you can put the adhesive label directly on the prop or inside the shoes. For props that can't have a label (because it might show on stage) you can apply the labels to a Tyvek or heavy string tag (such as Avery Shipping Tags #1 - available at office supply stores).

See the Resource Guide "*Suggestions on Applying Inventory Tags and Labels*".

4) **Photo Station - Digital camera / Phone, lights, etc.**

Lights: You don't need professional lights but it is good to have lighting from the front and the side. See the Resource Guides for the handout "Set up a Photo Station".

Display the Costumes: Costumes look better on a dress form but it can take too long to put the costume on the form and take it off. A heavy duty IV-Pole from a medical supply store works very well to hang a costume that is on a hanger for photographing. You can also hang it in front of a door but most doors aren't as wide as you need to provide a background to the costume. If a costume has no hanger I usually pin it to a bulletin board that is covered with a white or black piece of fabric.

It is also recommended to hang a plain backdrop behind the garment so that distracting details in the background aren't seen. See the website for a *Resource Guide* on making a back drop for the photos.

Digital Camera / Phone: You can use a digital camera or phone to take the photos and then save them to the computer. The process will be to take the photo with the camera or phone, copy the photo to the computer. Once the photos are resized (see Resource Guide on Resizing Photos) and renamed then can then be linked into the database costume/prop records.

If you don't have a network set up you can save the photos to a USB stick and then take the USB stick to the data entry computer, copy the files to the folder where the files are being stored.

Pay attention to the image file size ! No matter which method you use for taking photos the phone/camera should be set to take the photos at a low resolution - 1 - 2 Megapixels. This will keep the size of the image small. Even though the database has an image processing software to manage the photos you still have to keep the size of the photos at around 500 kb each. See the Resource Guide for "*Resizing Photos*" to reduce the size of the photos before they are linked to the costume record.

See the Resource Guides "*Setting up a Photo Station*", and "Create a backdrop for Costumes" for help on setting up the station and making a backdrop and other suggestions.

5) **Database Station:**

You need 1 or 2 Windows computer(s) with the *Theatre Inventory Database* loaded to enter all the costume/prop records. Be sure to **create a folder for the photos**. It is a good idea to create the folder in the C:\Costume Inventory Resources folder. You can name the folder "Costume (or Props) Photos. In the *Theatre Inventory Database* you can go to the *Utilities menu* and look for the *Setup Photo Folders* option and enter the folder address. This way the program knows where to find the photos.

Computer at the Photo Station - This is a good idea if you are taking photos with a digital camera and need to download them from the camera to then take to the Data Entry Station on a USB stick.

OR - if you have a network - you can have 1 or more workstations that are linked to that network. See the Resource Guides on installing the database on a network.

- 6) **2 USB Sticks** or 'thumb' drives - these are used to transfer the photo image files from the Photo Station to the Database Station. These are needed if you are not on a network.

A few photos (up to 10) can be taken, resized and saved to the USB stick then handed over to the Database Station. Then the next series of files are saved to the 2nd stick. Once the data entry person has imported all those photos they will switch with the photographer who has the next batch ready.

If the computers are attached to a network these will not be necessary as the files can be stored on the network by the photographer and then retrieved by the data entry person (after resizing).

- 7) **Portable wardrobe racks** - at least 3 portable racks are needed to hold costumes between stations. If you are photographing props you may want a few carts to move props from the storage area to the photo station. A large cart is helpful for props.
- 8) **Theatre Inventory Database software** - available from Costume Inventory Resources. The Elite and Standard versions have modules to inventory costumes and props. The Costumes Only and Props Only versions are also available.
- 9) **Inventory tags and labels** - also available from Costume Inventory Resources. Sew-in, Iron-on and adhesive labels are available in several sizes.

The Inventory Process:

1) To start the day - have the Runners bring 15-20 costumes (or props) in from the main storage location and place them on a portable wardrobe rack (cart). They will transfer the costumes to the Tag Application station as the staff person is ready for them. As costumes/props are processed they will bring more costumes/props out.

2) The **Tag / Label Application Station** will have all the tags and labels. The staff will sew or iron-on the tag for a costume. The Costume Shop Manager will decide the best placement for the tags. The Props Master can decide on how the Props label will be applied (directly to the prop or on a string tag).

Once the tag has been applied to the costume / prop it can be returned to a portable rack/cart for the Runner to take to the Photo Station.

3) At the **Photo Station** the photo staff will take one or more photos for each costume/prop. Once they have taken a photo they can move the costume to the next portable rack - near the Database Station. After the photographers have taken 5 or 10 photos and saved the photos to the USB stick, the photos can be transferred to the Database Station.

4) The **Database Station** staff will create a record for the costume piece / prop, enter as much descriptive data as they can, link the photo (if it is available) then pass off the costume to the runner who will return it to the storage location.

5) Once everyone gets in a rhythm you should be able to process 20 to 30 costumes or props an hour.

If you have more volunteers you can always have 2 people work the Data Entry Station - one person to look at the costume and give the other person the details to enter. If the person typing in the data has to stop and figure out the size, time period or ask which production / role the costume is for it takes a lot of extra time. If you have extra seamstresses they can do minor repairs or identify spots and stains that will need to be cleaned later.

After a long day of creating the costume inventory - everyone will be tired and hungry. Treat the volunteers to a feast!

A few more hints:

Placement of tags:

A lot of time can be wasted discussing where an inventory tag should be placed in a costume. It might help the process if the Costume Shop Manager makes these decisions ahead of time. There is a worksheet at the end of this handout with basic drawings of garments and a place to note where the tag should be placed. There will always be exceptions but it might be a good idea to think of how it should be done ahead of time. The Sew-in tags can be removed and reapplied to a new place but the Iron-on tags are very, very securely attached if they are applied with a hot iron (350°) and a heavy hand.

Storage areas:

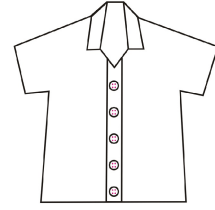
If your storage area is already labeled, for example Rack 1, 2, ... 100, 101 or Box 1, 2 etc - try to have the runners take note of the rack as they take the costumes to the Photo Station. They can use a clothes pin to attach a note (3x5 card) to the first costume of the rack so that the data entry person doesn't have to stop and ask where the costume is stored.

If your storage area is not already labeled this may be a good time to do so. Blank King Size rectangular rack dividers are inexpensive and available from Costume Inventory Resources and many companies online and E-Bay. The Theatre Inventory Database programs (Elite and Standard) both have reports that can print labels/business cards for the king size rack dividers. If you have a lot of costumes and want to arrange them by category and size - I would recommend getting the rectangular dividers to mark a section, i.e. "Black Suits" or "Rack 101" or by Production.

Worksheet for tag placement in garments:

Write your instructions for attaching the tags in each type of garment and/or mark the picture for more details. The more consistency in where you place the tags the better.

1. Shirt _____



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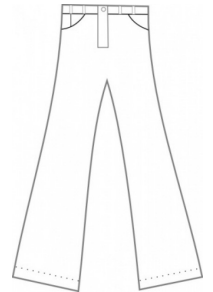
2. Jacket / Coat _____



3. Dress _____



4. Pants _____



5. Skirt _____



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6. Hats _____



7. Shoes _____

