

Linen cloth was produced from fibres taken from the stem of the flax plant. The flax had to be treated in many different ways before the fibres were ready to be woven into linen.

1. Flax was sown in the spring usually around April.
2. Harvesting was usually done in August. The flax was traditionally pulled out of the ground by the root and not cut like other crops.
3. Bundles of flax were put into a pond or tank of water for retting. After retting for up to two weeks to soften the stems the flax was taken out and dried.
4. A flat broad wooden knife was then used for 'scutching'. This removed the outer skin and the inner parts and left the fibres.
5. Scutching could be done by hand or by using a scutching mill. It was the fibres that were then used to make linen.
6. Next, the fibres were hackled or combed to untangle them.
7. The fibres were then taken and wrapped around each other during spinning to make strong linen yarn.
8. Linen yarn was reeled into lengths of 300 yards (274.32 metres). This was called a cut. Twelve cuts made one hank.
9. Linen yarn was then woven into cloth on a loom.
10. The cloth then needed to be bleached; this involved washing and boiling it.
11. The cloth was then spread on the grass to be whitened by the sun.
12. The final part of the process was "Beetling" the linen and it involved using a machine to beat the surface of the cloth to make it shiny and smooth.

# The Linen process

How long does it take for the flax to grow ready for harvesting?

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How many yards are in a hank?

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Draw a picture to go with each step of the process.

|    |     |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 2.  | 3.  | 4.  |
| 5. | 6.  | 7.  | 8.  |
| 9. | 10. | 11. | 12. |