

How To Tie a Sari

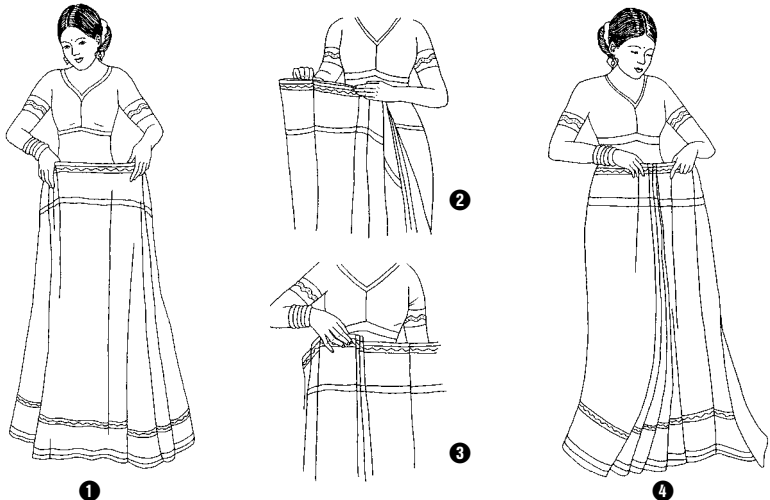
WE DON'T KNOW when the first sari was made, but stories and artistic renderings of saris have been around for roughly 5,000 years. Saris are still worn today all over India and around the world, and the design, fabric, patterns, and wrapping styles vary depending on the region and status of the wearer.

The contemporary sari is actually a three-piece garment: the sari itself (unstitched fabric 42-49 inches in width and 5½ to 9 yards in length, usually with ornamental borders and an end piece called the *pallu*, which is the part draped over the shoulder); the petticoat, or underskirt; and the *choli*, a tight-fitting cropped shirt, also known as a sari blouse or sari jacket.

The underskirt is a fairly recent development in sari wear. It's not absolutely required, though it has practical applications: in addition to acting as a slip beneath sheer fabrics, the petticoat also provides the wearer with a waistband to tuck the cloth's edges and pleats into. Some modern sari-wearers use capri leggings instead. Most saris come with a matching piece of fabric for the *choli*, but a pre-made cropped top or tank top can be worn instead.

The most popular modern style of tying a sari is *nivi*, which is created most basically by wrapping the sari around the waist, tucking one end of it into the underskirt, and then draping the *pallu* diagonally across the chest and over the shoulder. Here are some step-by-step instructions for wrapping a sari in the *nivi* style.

Choose your 9-yard length of fabric for the sari, and put on the *choli* (a cropped top or tank top) and petticoat (full-length slip, or capri pants).



❶ Tuck the inner top edge of the sari into the petticoat just to the left of where your belly-button is. Wrap the sari from left to right so that it goes completely around you one time, making sure that the bottom edge of the sari hangs evenly and touches the ground. Tuck that first wrap-around into the same left-of-belly-button place where you made the first tuck.

❷ Hold the tucked part of the fabric at your waist tightly and begin to make pleats. You'll be using about a yard of material for about seven to ten pleats of 4-5 inches in depth. ❸ The first pleat should lie the center of your body, and as you continue to fold, take care to keep the pleats even and straight.

❹ Hold the pleats together and make sure they line up evenly. Tuck the pleats into your waist to the left of your belly-button, making sure the folds are turned toward the left. You can use a safety pin to fasten the pleats for more security.

❺ Wrap the remaining material around your waist again from left to right. ❻ Pull the sari up diagonally with your right hand so that it fits just beneath your right armpit, then drape the material over your left shoulder so that it hangs down your back. You can pleat the material and secure it with a safety pin if you wish by pinning from inside the *choli* along the shoulder seam. Or you can wrap the *pallu* over your left shoulder, bringing it behind your back and over your right shoulder to rest in front.

Now you have a beautiful *nivi*-style sari. It might take some getting used to to walk around in. But if you can't be bothered to master the art of wearing a sari as a dress, did you know that a sari can be tied as pants?

