

Difference Between Unitard and Leotard

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Key Difference - Unitard vs Leotard

Different performance categories such as dancing, athletics, and [gymnastics](#) showcase various qualities such as strength, poise, steadiness, and grace. Due to the clarity and difficulty of performing above categories, the costumes of performers should be very comfortable and flexible. Unitard and leotard are two garments worn for such performances. The key difference between unitard and leotard is that **a unitard is a skintight, one-piece garment with long legs and sometimes long sleeves** whereas **a leotard is also a skintight, one-piece garment which covers the torso of the wearer but leaves the legs exposed.**

What is a Unitard

A unitard is a skintight, one-piece garment with long legs and sometimes long sleeves. Unitards are worn by performers who require overall body coverage without hindering flexibility. Dancers, acrobats, gymnasts, athletes, contortionists and circus performers wear unitards in their performances. The unitard has a long history. In the early 1900s, models and dancers wore flesh-colored unitards to outshine skin. The unitard further emerged as a swimsuit in 1906 and was seen in many movies featuring swimmers at the time. Today, unitards are available in a variety of colors and materials. Also, stretchy materials are selected for unitard since it is comfortable to wear for the performers.

For performers such as gymnasts, contortionists and circus performers it is important that their precise body movements are seen clearly by the audience. Unitard enables this due to its skintight nature. Many dancers use unitards instead of adorned costumes since unitards are very simple in nature and do not distract attention from the dance like a decorated costume.



Figure 01: Unitard

What is a Leotard?

Similar to unitard, a leotard is also a skintight, one-piece garment which covers the torso of the wearer but leaves the legs exposed. In that sense, the leotard is very similar to a swimsuit. Leotards are also worn by a range of performers such as gymnasts, acrobats, and contortionists; however, unitards are more commonly worn by them compared to leotards since leotards expose a lot of skin, which may be damaged in case of injury. The leotard is a part of the [ballet](#) dress which is worn beneath the ballet skirt.

Leotard has an extended history than unitards; it was first introduced in the 1800s, by the French acrobatic performer Jules Léotard (1838–1870), from which the name of the garment was derived. Originally leotard was designated for male

performers, but it soon became popular with women in the early 1900s as a swimsuit. The early leotard was referred to as the **maillot** by Jules Léotard.

Today, leotards are available in various materials and colors. There are also sleeveless, short-sleeved and long-sleeved leotards. Further, various necklines can also be found in modern leotards such as crew necked, polo necked and scoop-necked leotards.



Figure 01: Leotard worn by a ballet dancer

What are the similarities between Unitard and Leotard?

- Both unitard and leotard are skintight, one-piece garments.
- Both unitard and leotard are unisex outfits.

What is the difference between Unitard and Leotard?

Unitard vs Leotard	
Unitard is a skintight, one-piece garment with long legs and sometimes long sleeves.	Leotard is a skintight, one-piece garment which covers the torso of the wearer but leaves the legs exposed.
Body Coverage	
Unitard has a full body coverage.	Leotard does not cover the body in full.
Wearers	
Unitard is commonly worn by dancers, gymnasts, athletes, and contortionists.	Leotard is most commonly worn by ballet dancers.
Origins	
Unitard was introduced in the 1900s.	Leotard was introduced by Jules Léotard in the 1800s.

Summary- Unitard vs Leotard

The difference between unitard and leotard is a visible one; a unitard can be explained as a leotard that covers the legs of the wearer. Both unitard and leotard are unisex outfits and are skin tight garments that complement the flexibility and comfort needed by the wearers. While unitard and leotard are widely used in a number of performance categories including dancing, athletics, and gymnastics, leotards are also worn as a part of the ballet costume.

Reference:

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