



# 501<sup>ST</sup> VADER'S FIST LEGION

## JOINING THE 501<sup>ST</sup>

### *Do you have what it takes?*

*"The most upstanding and loyal citizens of the Empire dedicate their lives to enforcing the Emperor's New Order. Only the best of these will ever become Imperial soldiers. And only the best of the best become members of the **Fighting 501st, Vader's Fist!** These elite men and women serve the Dark Lord of the Sith himself, taking on the most challenging and exciting missions in his name.*

*Crossing the vastness of space and conquering the harshest of environments, the **501st Legion** fights to restore peace and order to the galaxy. Do you have what it takes to fight at their side?"*

*– Imperial Military recruitment brochure*

*"**The 501st Legion** is an international STAR WARS™ costuming organization dedicated to celebrating the STAR WARS universe through the creation, display, and wearing of quality character costumes that represent the villainous characters from the STAR WARS saga.*

*The Legion promotes interest in STAR WARS and facilitates the use of these costumes for STAR WARS-related events and contributes to the local community through costumed charity and volunteer work."*

*– 501st Legion Charter, Article II*

So you're interested in joining up with **the 501st Legion!** You've read over the 501st.com website, you know what we do and what we're about. You've seen the Legion FAQ (<http://www.501st.com/databank/FAQ>), but that's still left you wondering where to go. Maybe you've even done some research on the internet, but you've hit a roadblock and you need some guidance, a nudge in the right direction. Fear not! The members of the 501st Legion are here to help!





# BAD GUYS WHO DO GOOD!

First, let's make sure you're in the right place. The **501st Legion** focuses on recreating screen-accurate costumes of villains in the *Star Wars* saga. While many of our members are avid costumers in general and may moonlight as Ghostbusters, predators, superheroes, or all of the above, the scope and focus of the 501st is limited to the *Star Wars* "bad guys."

If you're interested in costuming as a "good guy" from the *Star Wars* saga, the club you're probably looking for is our "sister" group, the **Rebel Legion** ([www.rebellegion.com](http://www.rebellegion.com)). Among dozens of other costumes, they cover farmboys, princesses, smugglers, wookiees, golden droids, x-wing pilots, commandos, and crazy old wizards. If you want to go that route, the Rebel Legion has tons of great resources for you... but do keep the Empire in mind in the future. We're always looking for double agents!

The 501st also only focuses on villains that have official visual references in the *Star Wars* films and other published materials. There are other clubs, like the **Mandalorian Mercenaries** ([mercs.firespray.net](http://mercs.firespray.net)) and **The Dark Empire** ([www.thedarkempire.org](http://www.thedarkempire.org)), which have looser costuming guidelines and allow for creative, original interpretations of *Star Wars* characters. If you want to create an original character, perhaps one of those clubs is just the one you're looking for. Here in the 501st Legion, though, all of our costumes come from officially-established Lucasfilm sources, including the films, television shows, video games, and graphic novels.

For now, since the 501st Legion deals with the canonical bad guys, let's move forward under the assumption that you want to build a screen-accurate costume for the Galactic Empire!



# WHERE CAN I GET THIS STUFF?

You might have a burning question you're dying to ask, especially if you've been searching for an easy way to get your own white armor on the internet: *Why all the secrecy? Why can't I find a list of people selling accurate Stormtrooper kits, and where can I go to get one?*

The short answer is: If we could post that information for the public, we would, but sadly we can't.

The 501st Legion has a complex, unofficial relationship with Lucasfilm, Ltd (or "LFL"). While George Lucas very much appreciates what we do to promote his brand, technically, the people who vacu-form and sell armor pieces are infringing on Disney/LFL copyright. Copyright law requires a person to defend their intellectual property, or they could lose the exclusive rights to it. So if the armorers of the Legion were to publicly advertise their services, then LFL would be required to serve them with a cease-and-desist notice and (if they did not stop making and selling armor) would then have to take them to court to defend ownership of the copyrighted characters. No one wants that to happen. So Disney and LFL quietly looks the other way while we do our thing, but in order to give them "plausible deniability," we can't go out and sell armor to just anyone on the street.

This can make things tough on someone new who wants to get armor and join up. We can't post links on a public forum, and we can't just set up an internet shop without risking our legal necks, no matter how much we would like to. Members of the Legion can only make armor for members of the Legion.

The good news is that once you're a member of the Legion, you will get access to our private forums, where information is passed around and shared a whole lot more freely. Yes, this is something of a Catch-22, where the people who most need the information have the least access to it, and the people who don't necessarily need the information any longer have more than they could ever want. Unfortunately, that is just the way things are. But there is a work-around... we'll get to that shortly.



# GETTING STARTED

With the legal stuff out of the way, let's really get started. Your first order of business is deciding what costume to enlist with. There are dozens of options, and each has its own pros and cons as far as personal comfort and utility, cost, and public recognition. Many of our members have multiple costumes, because once you get into costuming in the *Star Wars* galaxy, it's hard to stop at just one outfit. Having more than one option in your closet helps to keep trooping fun and gives you some flexibility to better cater to an event host's wishes. Of course, you have to start somewhere, and it all really comes down to what you most want to do first.

Many people initially opt to go with a Stormtrooper (commonly referred to by their Legion costume code of "TK"), since it's the "classic" option and is often what drives people to seek out the 501st Legion in the first place.

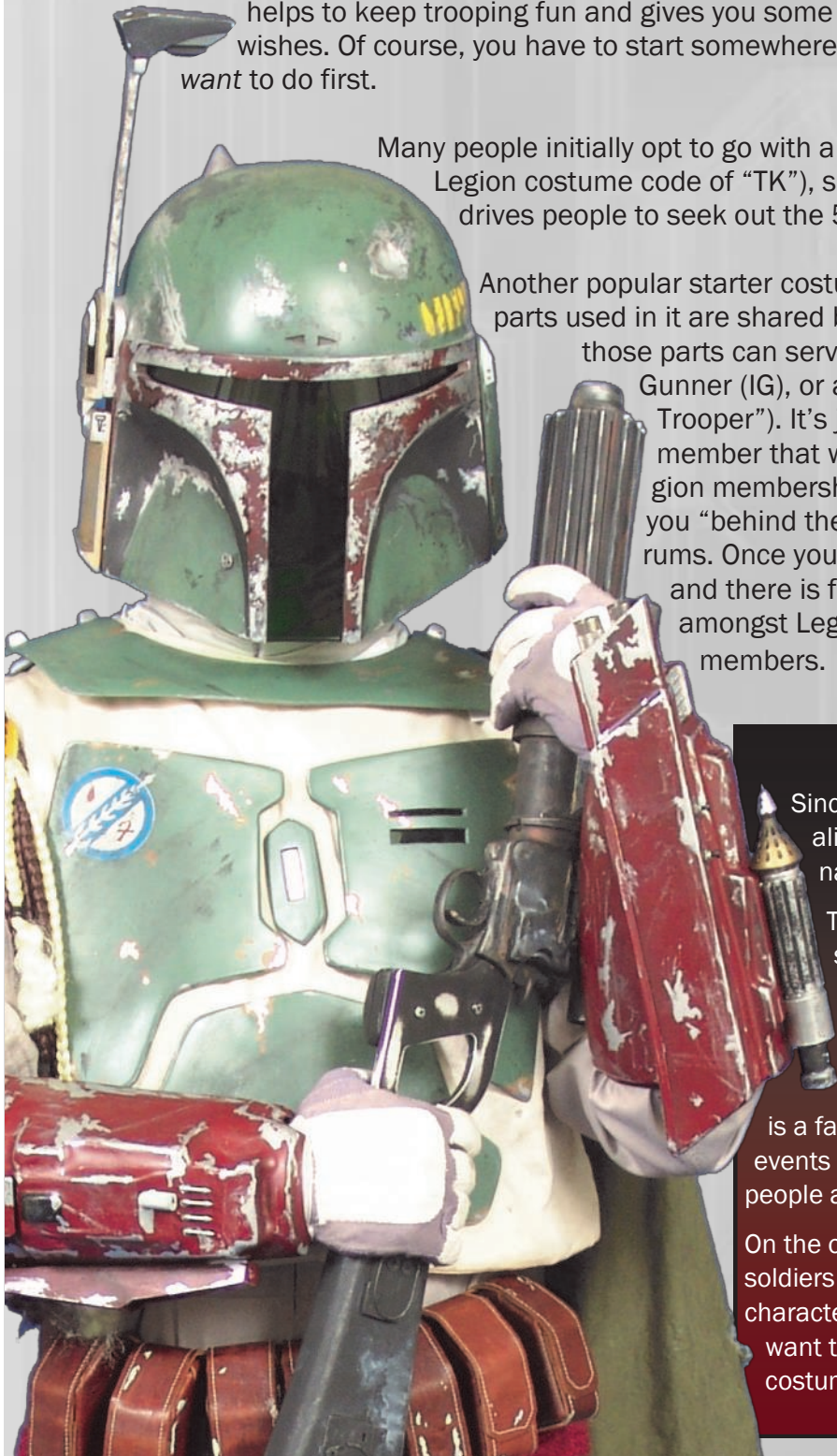
Another popular starter costume is the Imperial Crewman (IC), because the parts used in it are shared by a number of other costumes. Almost all of those parts can serve double-duty for a TIE Pilot (TI), an Imperial Gunner (IG), or a Naval Trooper (IN, a.k.a. the "Death Star Trooper"). It's just a matter of changing the head gear. Remember that work-around we talked about? Getting your Legion membership with a relatively inexpensive IC also gets you "behind the curtain" into the Legion members-only forums. Once you're in, you're in, no matter how you got here, and there is far more transparency and trust shared amongst Legion members than what we can allow for non-members.

## A Note About Named Characters

Since the Legion attempts to uphold the illusion of reality for our fans, we often can only have one of each named (or "face") character at an event.

There are exceptions to the rule, but generally speaking, we cannot have two or three Boba Fetts show up at one event. Most local units do their best to share the face character honors fairly amongst all of the members who want to portray those characters, so if the only costume you have is a face character, be aware that there may be several events that you'll have to sit out of in order to give other people a turn.

On the other hand, we can never have too many nameless soldiers of the Empire, so building a back-up "faceless" character costume is almost certainly something you'll want to plan on... if you don't make one as your initial costume to start with!





# CONNECT WITH OTHER MEMBERS

## Legion Detachments

Once you've decided what costume to build (or if you need some help deciding!), you should seek out the proper Legion Detachment for it. Each costume in the 501st Legion falls under one of fifteen Detachments. Detachments are how we organize costumers so that they can reach people with the same needs as others who share their outfit. For example, Sandtroopers belong to the Mos Eisley Police Department (MEPD); the Armored Cavalry Detachment covers AT-AT and AT-ST Drivers and Armor Assault Commanders (like General Veers); Biker Scouts have a headquarters with the 501st Pathfinders; and so on.

Joining the Detachment of the uniform you are aiming for is a great way to get straight to the experts on your costume. Join their forums, read old threads, introduce yourself and let everyone know why you're interested in joining up, send a private message (PM) to the Detachment Leader asking for advice, and start asking questions! By researching your costume on a Detachment site, and by asking questions there, you will hit a broad base of people who are keenly knowledgeable about a particular costume.

And unlike the 501st.com Legion Message Boards, which are members-only, the message boards on Detachment sites are open to anyone in the public who would like to register and join in the conversation.

Note, however, that most (if not all) Detachments have rules on their forums about posting "Want To Buy" (WTB) threads. Usually these are immediately deleted for the legal reasons we discussed above. So heading to a Detachment gets you into the company of people who can help you, but you still have to overcome a few technical hurdles.

A full list of Detachments, the costumes that they cover, and links to their websites can be found on the main Legion site, here: [www.501st.com/resources.php](http://www.501st.com/resources.php)

## Your Local Legion Unit

To help facilitate event appearances, the Legion has local units that oversee geographic areas. Most places in the globe are assigned to either a Garrison or an Outpost, depending on the number of members in the area. Garrisons are the largest local unit, with at least 25 members, while Outposts can have as few as a single trooper in the area. Some Garrisons which cover a large geographic region also set up Squads to help them manage local events, but they are still a part of the Garrison.

As you set out on your journey, you should also find your local Garrison or Outpost and talk to 501st members in your area. While Detachment members are happy to provide you with guidance, if you live on the opposite side of the globe from someone, there are limits to the help that they can give. And besides, it's never too early to start building relationships with the troopers that you'll be spending the most time with in person once you join up! You can find your local Legion unit through the maps here: <http://www.501st.com/maps/index.php>

Register on their message boards, and do the same as you did with your Detachment. Find their section for aspiring troopers and start a new thread. Introduce yourself there, and tell your future Garrison-mates a little about who you are, what brought you to the 501st Legion, and what you hope to accomplish!

## Members are your Best Resource

Don't be shy about asking for help!

At some point in the past, every member of the Legion has stood exactly where you are now, and we love helping new recruits get the advice they need to follow in our footsteps and help the Legion grow.

# GENERAL ADVICE

No matter what costume you're building, there are some pieces of advice that will serve you well to keep in mind.

## 1) Store-bought costumes are not going to cut it.

Any mass-produced costume, even a Rubies Stormtrooper or "Supreme Edition" Darth Vader is simply not accurate enough for Legion membership. While someone with an untrained eye might say, "Sure, that's a Stormtrooper!" when you see a Rubies next to the accurate armor of the Legion, there really is no comparison. If you want to do this, you want to do it right. Don't waste your money on mass market stuff.

## 2) Research, research, research.

The Web has a wealth of information if you're willing to take the time to look for it. There are video tutorials, helpful tips and tricks of construction, and comparative analyses, all out there to be found. Many Detachments have collected these in one handy place, or they will have specific links to point you toward. Asking a Detachment Leader for some direction in this regard is a great move.

## 3) Stay away from eBay.

Let's repeat that so that it sinks in: Stay. Away. From. eBay.

For the most part, what can be found there will be poorly constructed, overpriced, or just plain unacceptable when it comes to Legion standards. There are a few regularly-sold items that are passable (some Imperial "jumpsuits", for example), but there are many that are NOT acceptable (many Imperial belt buckles, for another example).

From time to time, there may be an auction that comes up with quality goods or a complete costume, but these are far, far rarer. Always get a second opinion from someone who knows the costume (by asking someone in the appropriate Detachment forum or on the forum of your local Legion unit) before purchasing anything.

In addition to knowing *what* you're buying, know *who* you're buying from. Find out all that you can about the maker or seller before sending them any money. Some people will claim to be a member of the 501st. If so, ask them for their Legion identification number and what Garrison they belong to. Then put the number into the member database (here: <http://www.501st.com/members/searchform.php>) to double-check. Most genuine members of the Legion won't be put off by your looking into their credentials. They know as well as anyone else that eBay is full of illegitimate sellers.





#### 4) Measure twice, cut once.

This is good advice both figuratively and literally, when looking at potential purchases or when physically constructing a costume. Double-check what you're buying before you buy it. And — whether fabric or plastic — always double-check what you're cutting before you cut it. You can always take off more. Adding material back on isn't so easy.

#### 5) Be patient.

When you're bitten by the Imperial costuming bug, it is tempting to rush to get accepted, but take your time, both in the build and in getting a feel for the Legion. Many would-be or new members don't realize just how much research and effort goes into some of the uniforms, and at the end of the day, it's about having fun with your hobby and your comrades. Don't get frustrated in the process; enjoy the journey.

#### 6) A costume is never "finished."

The Legion has fairly high standards for what is acceptable for each costume, but often a member will set even higher standards for him- or herself. Remember that no matter how finished a costume is, there will always be other tweaks and additions you can make to it. Perhaps you want a better neck seal, or more comfortable gloves, or even a more accurate helmet... that's great, and very understandable. But there will be plenty of time to add the "bells and whistles" to your costume after you've been approved for membership. And it will all be much easier to do it once you're a part of the Legion community.

So don't wait to submit your application until you're 100% satisfied with your costume. That day may never arrive. If you meet the Legion standards, there's no need to put it off!

#### A Character for Everyone

There are more than 300 different characters and costumes that a recruit like you might join the 501st Legion with. Explore the possibilities at <http://www.501st.com/databank/>

Get approved, and get out and troop, trooper!



# YOUR FIRST STEP INTO A LARGER WORLD

That brings us to the end of this little quick-start guide. It isn't comprehensive by any stretch of the imagination, but hopefully, you've gotten a few new answers and have a better understanding of where to go next. If you still have questions on what to do or where to go, you can send an email to the worldwide Legion Officers

through our Feedback Form at: <http://www.501st.com/contact.php> We will always be happy to assist you. Good luck with your costuming adventure, and we hope to see you trooping soon!

Duty! Honor! Empire!



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