Underclothing
The basic underclothes for all 16th century European people is the same. The base of the outfit for men, women, or children should be braies and a shirt (hemd). There are also examples of women binding their breasts, but that is a personal preference and not necessary for all women. For most women, the support of a correctly fitted bodice is sufficient.

Braies
Braies are basically medieval underwear. The pictorial and extant evidence of braies vary in length and fit throughout the 16th c., but not in a chronological order, as might be expected. This leads me to believe that it was more a matter of function than fashion.
To the left is my hemd pattern. The design is taken from the continuous pleating line as seen below in the Dorthea Meyer Portrait, as well as extant shirt patterns from Janet Arnold’s Patterns of Fashion.

The main distinguishing feature of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century German hemd is embroidered pleating. Embroidery is prevalent in many European countries at this time, but embroidery done over pleating is a German specialty. The term “smocking” is not a period term, but comes from smocks which used this same technique in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. The pleating can be done all the way around the neck or in the front section only. It can be sewn down with white, making the pleats the star of the show, or in colorful threads, making the embroidery stand out. Below are several examples of pleating, many edged with embroidered and/or beaded trim.

Self Portrait 1497
Albrecht Durer

Anna Cuspinian 1502
Lucas Cranach the Elder

Portrait of Dorothea Meyer 1516
Hans Holbein the Younger

Children’s Clothing
There are several examples of children wearing the same clothing as their parents throughout the 16th century. In the Holbein Family portrait, little Katharina is only about two, but wears a fine hemd and kirtle. She even has her hair dressed in a braid. The young knaves in the woodcuts below are dressed in fine Landsknecht gear, just like their fathers. Also keep in mind that while the children might be dressed in their finest for a family portrait, woodcuts tend to capture life of the lower and middle classes as they truly were.

The Artist’s Family 1528
Hans Holbein
Woodcut

Speisstrager und knave
Unknown Woodcut
Frau und knave
Unknown

Conrad Rehlinger and his Children 1515
Bernhard Strigel

Maximillian I with his Family 1515
Bernhard Strigel

Housebook Dress (1470-1520)
This is the dress shown by the Master of the Housebook from the end of the 15th c. to the beginning of the 16th c. It seems popular throughout Germany. The obvious stand out design feature of this style of dress is the
prominent pleats at the waist in the front and back of the dress. This is a trapezoidal set-in gore which gives the dress a voluminous skirt while maintaining the tight fit of the bodice. There are examples with lacing and without lacing above the pleats. There are also several different examples of sleeves worn with this popular style of dress.

Young Woman with bound hair 1497
Albrecht Durer

Aristotle & Phyllis 1485
Master of the Housebook

Men’s Kittel und Hosen (1450 - 1500)

Gentlemen’s clothing during this time in Germany is very similar to the rest of Europe, with hosen and tunic. Hosen are commonly constructed from wool or linen cut on the bias, so they have a very tight fit. The peasants fighting below left have truncated hose, while the young gentleman on the right has a full hose. As with men’s styles in France and England the young dandies wore their tunics short and tight while older men

Housebook Dress Pattern Diagram
Felicity Flußmullnerin

Nuremburg Woman 1500
Albrecht Durer
wore long, loose tunics, reaching even to the floor. This was a sign of wealth and stature because these men could afford more fabric and didn’t need to hurry around - they have servants for that. Peasants would need their kittel at a length out of their way, but loose and comfortable for work. The basic pattern for a kittel is the same for all of these, taking into account each man’s station in life when fitting. The dandy is even showing the beginning of the famous German slashing on his sleeves.

Two Peasants Fighting 1480
Master of the Housebook

Standing Couple 1480
Master of the Housebook

This basic pattern can be used to create any of the wappen seen above. The dandy’s wappen would be much more tightly fitted and shorter, with a vent over each hip. The older man’s tunic would be longer and closed down the front. The peasant’s tunic would float further from the body with a fuller sleeve. The seam of the sleeve is not placed under the arm, but at the back of the shoulder with the seam running over the elbow. This allows slits with puffs to be added to the pattern. Fullness to the skirting could be added with the addition of gores.

Men’s Wappen (1500 - 1540)
Once the fashions of the Landsknecht soldiers became more popular throughout Europe there is ever increasing examples of regular men starting to wear wams und hosen with a simple style of waffenrock. The top is fitted like a doublet, usually with a square neck, with skirting roll pleated on. The icon of this style is King Henry VIII of England, who employed Landsknechte and emulated the German style.
Swabian Dress (1480 - 1510)
This style of dress is specific to the south western, Black Forest region of Germany known as Swabia. It is similar to the housebook dress in cut and style but has the addition of embroidery and beading on the bodice. This intricate work is commonly asymmetrical - which is unusual for medieval clothing.

Saxon or Cranach Dress (1500-1540)
This style of dress is captured in abundance by the artist Lucas Cranach. As the court painter for the Elector of Saxony, most of his portraits are of the Saxon Royal family - all of whom seem to favor this style. It is an open front bodice with a brustfleck to cover the center. The brustfleck is usually embroidered and beaded, sometimes even with slashing. I have included the portrait of Martin Luther’s wife to show that middle class women wore this style of dress as well. Obviously her dress is more somber and plain, but still well made and with a fur lining. She is also wearing a high collared partlet with hers.

The sleeves are made to emulate the Landsknecht style, which was very popular. They were not the same as
landsknecht sleeves, however. This was a highly engineered version, with white fabric sewn into place to show beneath the slashes. These dresses would be made of fine silk, taffeta, and the guards of brocade or embroidered silk. Dressed hair was the fashion, commonly with gold hair nets to hold the hair in place. There are several examples of ladies wearing tellerbarrets or platter hats over their dressed hair. This also emulated the Landsknecht fashion.

Saint Mary Magdalene
Lucas Cransch (elder) 1525

Katharina von Bora (wife of Martin Luther)
Lucas Cranach (elder) 1529

Judith Victorious
Lucas Cranach (elder) 1530

The Saxon Princesses (Sibyl, Emilia and Sidonia of Saxe)
Lucas Cranach (elder)
Hausfrau (1490-1560)
The hausfrau is the basic dress of the middle class lady. Her dress, although similar to the Trossfrau in many ways, is simpler and less extravagant. Although the dress might be made of a finer material, these ladies are almost always shown with an apron. These dresses have guards running on either side of the front closure to around the neck, as well as on the skirt and cuff. The hausfrau is also commonly shown wearing a gollar of some sort and a steuchlein with a schleier. Embroidery is fine but not opulent.

Landsknecht (1500-1570)
The Landsknecht soldiers had no limitations to what they could wear. The basic outfit is wams und hosen - doublet and pants. Landsknechte love bright colors and do not always match pant legs or sleeves to each other. There are several woodcuts showing soldiers with bare legs. Ledergollar, and the wappenrock. Ledergollar or jerkin is made either wool or even more commonly leather. The wappenrock or fighting cote would be made of wool with a square neck doublet with roll pleated skirting. The wappenrock has contrasting guards at the closure in the front, around the neck, and horizontally on the skirting.
After 1550 pluderhosen come into fashion and are seen in several paintings and woodcuts. These are voluminous pants with contrasting panes, allowing the base fabric to droop through.

Like their men, these women also did not need to follow the sumptuary laws of the time. Their dresses were primarily wool with guards along the front closure of the bodice, around the collar, and running horizontally around the skirt, which would be roll pleated in place. Their sleeves were fairly close fitting with slashes at the shoulder and sometimes the elbow to allow the hemd to show. There are examples of both long and short sleeves and contrasting color cuffs are also shown. Unlike the men, the ladies dresses were made to match.

The hats commonly shown with these outfits are a steuchlein with a schleier pulled across the neck, chin, and sometimes mouth for marching. Over this there are examples of many different styles of hats, most to shade
the eyes. Platterhats, strawhats, tellerbarrets, lantern hats, all of large scale and with plumes. The Trossfrau accoutrements are also important since she would walk with her belongings on her at all times - basket, kettle, spoon, canteen, purse, all are worn while marching.

Neterin woodcut
Max Geisberg (1532)

Trossfrau woodcut
Max Geisberg (1535)

Sutlerin woodcut
Max Geisberg (1530)

Trossfrau woodcut
Edhard Schoen (1532)

Reisläufer (1480-1525)
The Reisläufer were the pike mercenaries from the Helvetic Confederacy who were the model of the German Landsknecht army. They have a similar outlandish style of dress but were known for being a little more put together. The Reisläufer and the Landsknecht were serious rivals, the Landsknecht insult of schweizer (cow herd) eventually giving the Swiss their national title. Propaganda from both sides are still available as the printing of pamphlets came into vogue during this time. On the right is a side by side comparison of Reisläufer and Landsknecht soldiers from the period, drawn by a Swiss engraver Niklaus Deutsch.
The gollar is a short cape that covers the top of the often low cut bodices of this time. The basic construction is a curved “capelet” with a collar. There are obvious seams along the shoulder and they are front closing. There are several different types of collar - built up, sewn on, even attached fur rolls. They vary from the plain, to guarded, to heavily embroidered and beaded. Fabric options also vary - wool, fur, velvet, satin, silk, linen, basically any fabric available during the time.

Schäube or Husecke
An overcoat lined with fur worn by German men and women throughout the 16th c. The schäube is made of heavy fabric, usually wool, tapestry, or fur, and then trimmed or lined with fur. Because this basic style of coat was popular for so long, there are many different lengths and cuts seen in portraiture and woodcuts. Sleeves are long but can be set-in or dropped off the shoulder, tunic style. Collars are cut in different ways: banded, fallen, rolled, or turnover. Various lengths are also seen.
Portrait of an Elderly Woman of the Ruess Family Barret
Wolf Huber, 1534 or 1524

Nurnberger Patrizien mit Husecke und
Jost Amman, 1577

Woodcut of Men’s Schaube - short and long
Unknown

Babenberger Family (1489 - 1492)
Hans Part