VARIOUS RENTAL PROCEDURES
Various Sources

We do NOT allow anybody to browse through the costumes physically. We have pictures that we put in catalogs by category that people can browse through and pick what they want. We just have the pictures but I suppose you could add stuff next to the photos. On the card that is with the costume we list all normal accessories (tights, ties, wigs etc..) that generally go with the costume. In most cases we can keep the accessories attached to the costume in a bag. If it is something like a sword then we keep it separate because it goes for many costumes. We put the sizes on the card attached to the costume as well if applicable. We do a lot of alterations on site so in many cases we can make it fit, in some cases we can't and size is important. In addition we have the separate index cards in 1 spot that list just the costume(like Medieval #22) and the date rented, the price, to whom and the phone #. I suppose you could have larger index cards and add sizes and accessories and all that to the cards so you wouldn't have to go to the costume to get that info.

We have several booths to try on the costumes and unless the person is really tall or really short or really, really big we can find the costume he/she wants and make it fit them. We probably have 15 catalog books and we have an area where people can look through them. It works extremely well. I guess I can run through a standard sale and maybe anything you don't have answered will be answered in that.

Customer arrives and looks confused because the retail stuff is out front but the rental stuff is behind the counter where employees are. They will ask How do I pick a costume? And then they will be directed to look through the catalogs and once they see something they like we will get it if available and they can try it on. If they are looking for something particular we will pull out that particular book for them. They choose their costume or 2 or 3 to try on and we check availability for the date needed and pricing on the index cards(we keep those near the front counter but for employee use only). They try it on and they like 1 and it fits they move onto the paperwork. If it needs alterations and we can do it we move onto the paperwork and note the alterations and it goes into the "alterations needed" area. They MUST pay when they decide to rent in order to hold the costume for their date. No pay and no costume being held. When they pick up the costume(usually the day before or of use) they leave a security deposit equal to the rental price. If you get in this you will find some people are more reliable than others and you will learn all these rules become non-negotiable. We put the rental slip(the one I mentioned on our web site) with the costume(unless it is going out twice in a short period) and prep it(if necessary: clean, brush, repair etc..) and set it in the to go out area. When the costume goes out we take the card hanging over the costume and file it in a pile for costumes out and then the rental agreement slip goes in a folder under the date to be returned. So we can see on Nov 2 a bunch of slips in the Nov 1slot we know we have to start calling people.

So the card that was around the costume never goes out. We also charge $1 for unreturned hangars because they don't get returned otherwise.

When the costume is returned we set it out to be cleaned and checked for repair and when it is done we put the card back around the hangar and put it back in inventory. The rental slip goes in a pile of rental slips which we keep for reference if need be.

At that point the card around the costume has recorded who rented it and when as well as the index cards recording the same info. I think that sums up our process and handling the rental inventory.

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The first thing you need to have in place before you start renting costumes out is a good legal contract. Our business has an attorney who drew up a legally binding contract that each customer must sign before the taking any costume from our shop. They must also be 18 years of age and have a valid driver's license.

As for our costumes, our inventory is so outdated (I took over management of the store almost 3 years ago), and I have been trying to find a better method for keeping track of what we have. I can, however, give you the method that has worked fine for almost 28 years. Each costume has a store label sewn into it with an assigned number. The numbers are kept in a file (manual so far, but I'd like to computerize everything in 2003). Our costumes are put into categories, i.e. Renaissance is given an RN-000 number, Colonial is given a CL-000, Clown is given a CW-000, etc. Each costume also has a pink hang tag with the category, stock number, price for rental (daily rental rate). I will forward, if you would like, a sample of our contract, hang label and costume label. We also have catalogues of all our costumes. These are photo's of each costume with the stock number attached to the photo. This has been a great help to us at Halloween time because it cuts the amount of time down looking for a certain costume.

Remember to take into account whether you will need a garment dry cleaned or machine washed. Add that cost into your rental rate.