

Quick and Dirty Fourteenth Century Clothing

(or how to look good with the minimum of effort)

By Cynehild Cynesigesdohtor

Glossary

As there are as many words for medieval clothing as there are for the shirt you wear with jeans I have included below a short glossary of some of the terms I'm using in this handout.

Chausses, the legging-like leg coverings worn by men.

From Chaucer derived from the Middle French plural of *chauce*.

Cote, the tighter, outermost and fanciest garment for men, worn over a kirtle and shirt. (also coete or coote) - A tunic or kirtle (worn by men or women, either alone or under a mantle or other overgarment); also, a kind of surcoat or cote-hardie; ~ tabard, a tabard; cope ~, a tunic, robe; tiing ~, a laced surcoat or tunic; Duch ~, ?a kind of cote-hardie; ~ cloth, a length of cloth for making a tunic or surcoat.

Gown, the outermost and fanciest garment for women, worn over a kirtle and smock.

From Goune (also gown, gune, gowne, gwn) - a) An outer garment, a robe, gown; long ~, short ~, childes ~, womman ~; (b) a coat or cloak worn out-of-doors to cover one's clothing, armor, etc.; (c) an official or distinguishing robe; the robe of a monk, a guildsman, an alderman; a Roman toga; livere ~, a guildsman's robe; (d) night ~, a dressing robe; (e) ~ cloth, a piece of cloth for a robe or livery.

Hose, leg coverings women.

From Hose (also hoise, hosa) - (a) A legging or stocking of woven cloth or leather, with or without feet; -- often pl.; (b) a close-fitting garment resembling tights worn by men and boys, joined hose; clos hosen; (c) hosen and shon, stockings and shoes; leg and footwear as distinct from other clothing; paire (of) hosen, a pair of hose; parti hosen, parti-colored hose; (d) ~ cloth, a piece of cloth for making hose; ~ lether, leather for making hose.

Kirtle, the tunic or dress worn most frequently by men and women, worn over a smock or shirt and, on dress occasions, under a gown.

From Kirtel (also cuyrtel, kurtel, curtel, kirtil, kertel, kirtel, kirtelle, kyrtile) – 1. (a) A garment for men or boys, varying as to length, shape, and materials, usually (but not always) worn as an outer garment; coat, gown, tunic, cloak; (b) ~ and (ne) cote, ~ and cope (courte-pi, mantel, tabard), ~ ne hod, ~ nor coule; (c) a jacket or tunic worn under armor; (d) the seamless robe of Christ; (e) a garment made from the skins of animals. 2. (a) A garment for women or girls, often an outer garment, sometimes worn over a smock or under a mantle, gown, or pilch; (b) ~ and cloke (cope, mantel, smok), goune and ~, etc.; (c) ~ cloth, a length of cloth for making a kirtle.

Shirt, the innermost layer for men, worn under the kirtle.

From Shirt (also schuyrte, schert, sserte, schorte, sherte, shurte) - A garment for the upper body worn next to the skin by both men and women, a shirt.

Smock, the innermost layer for women.

From Smok (also smoke, smock) – (a) A woman's undergarment, shift, chemise; ~ cloth, a piece of cloth sufficient for making a smock; (b) ~ of oure ladie, oure ladie(s ~, a relic alleged to be the chemise of the Virgin Mary; (c) in images of poverty and deprivation; (d) in prov. expressions; (e) in surname.

Women

Step one – Underclothes

1. If the goal is to put together an outfit that passes the 10' test, then I recommend wearing shorts and a comfortable bra, rather than trying to make a supportive undergarment.
2. If you wish to make a supportive undergarment, check out this website: <http://cottesimple.com/articles/fitting-for-bust-support-how-i-started/>
3. A smock can help give fullness to the skirts of your kirtle. Smocks are invariably shown as a dress rather than just a skirt.
4. Smocks can be made quickly and efficiently by using a t-tunic pattern (Appendix A)
5. The best material for this is a light-weight linen. Linen/cotton blends or straight cotton can also be used. **I do not recommend using anything with any polyester.**
6. Making hose can be tricky; however they're nice to have and are quite comfortable to wear. You can either order a pair from Historic Enterprises, Revival Clothing, or a similar website or you can make your own using instructions found online, for example: http://historiclifecom.com/essays/howto_hose.html

Step two – Kirtle

1. I make my kirtles in the exact same way as my smocks using the t-tunic pattern (see Appendix A).
2. If you are feeling advanced enough, you can also modify your tunic pattern to fit your body more closely and use set-in sleeves. This will produce the silhouette of a later fitted dress. It takes time, but it's worth it!
For more information on how to do this, I recommend visiting By My Measure at <http://wp.bymy Measure.com/fitting-and-construction/pattern-a-gothic-fitted-dress>
3. The tunic pattern in Appendix A can also become a bit more fitted by taking fabric in along the center and side seams. How much fabric you want to take in is down to your preference.
4. Kirtles can be made of wool, wool blends, linen, and linen blends. I prefer mid-weight fabric to keep the bulk down.
5. At this point, kirtles are almost all long-sleeved and buttons have become THE THING to add a little flair to your dress.
 - a. Sleeves with buttons are rotated in the armhole so that the seam runs along the outside of the arm (lining up with your pinkie finger). If you are using a tunic pattern instead of a fitted pattern you can still do this by adding an armhole to your tunic. This is a bit of a complicated process.
 - i. I usually make up a tunic body with waste fabric and then lay one of my shirts down and trace the armhole from that.
 - ii. There are more professional ways to do it, I'm told, but that's what works for me.
 - b. Cloth-covered buttons that will pass the 10' test are easily made using a Dritz kit from Joann's (or other craft goods source).
 - c. If button holes intimidate you, you can always just sew the buttons along the seam for decoration.
 - d. **If you plan to wear your kirtle with a long-sleeved gown, do not use buttons on the kirtle's sleeves!**

Step three – Gown

1. Gowns are made in much the same fashion as kirtles.
2. As the century progresses, the gowns get tighter.
3. Short sleeves are the most commonly seen.
 - a. Towards the beginning of the period, these sleeves reached about the elbow and usually had built-in tippets (no more than a foot or so long)
 - b. As time progressed, the tippets became narrower and longer and eventually were separate items that were attached over the sleeve.
 - c. Fur lining is a common decorative element.
4. Sleeveless gowns, sometimes called cyclas were worn by the rich and poor alike at the beginning of the century and by the poor throughout the century.
 - a. Working women are shown wearing their belts over the cyclas, rich women are not.

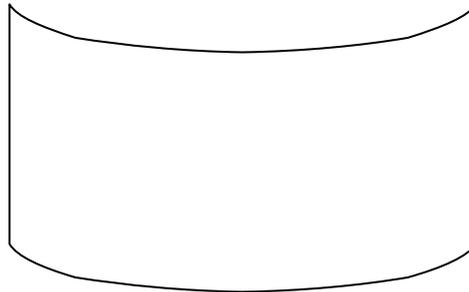
5. On rich women's gowns, the armholes of the cyclas were exaggerated, becoming the sideless surcoat we all know and love.
 - a. The belt is always worn under the sideless surcoat.
6. Gowns can be made of wool, linen, brocade, silk, and other fine fabrics.
 - a. I have found that simplicity is often the best policy. A nicely made, nicely accessorized gown made of simple fabrics will always look better than a poorly made gown made of finer fabrics.

Step four – Accessories

1. Belts
 - a. Belts, or the effects of a belt, are shown fairly frequently throughout period.
 - b. Belts were made of leather, woven braid, embroidered fabric or solid metalwork mounted on leather.
 - i. I have made one of leather wrapped in velvet, it was hard, I do not recommend doing this.
 - c. The level of decoration on the belt increased as you move up the social scale. Most belts had at least a tip and buckle.
 - i. I like Billy and Charlie for my hardware: www.billyandcharlie.com, but I've heard Fettered Cock is good too: www.fetteredcockpewters.com
2. Pouches
 - a. Pouches usually take one of two shapes
 - i. Square-ish
 1. Made of fabric.
 2. Hangs from the belt or carried in the hand.
 3. Mostly square shape with a draw-cord at the top.
 4. Some are trapezoidal with a flap.
 5. Tassels can hang from the bottom.
 6. Extant examples are heavily embroidered.
 7. Here's some nice examples: <http://rosaliegilbert.com/purses.html>
 - ii. Kidney shape
 1. Made of fabric or thin leather.
 2. Attached to the belt with two broad loops or tabs.
 3. Kidney-ish shape (hence the name).
 4. There's a nice tutorial available here: <http://arcaneleather.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/first-project-i-will-be-showing-is-how-i-make-14th-century-kidney-bags/>
 - iii. Other shapes
 1. There are other shapes, check out the illuminations.
3. Head coverings
 - a. Veil and wimple
 - i. A veil and wimple of white linen is always a fashionable choice, especially towards the beginning of the 14th century, or in the lower economic registers.
 - ii. My headdress consists of three parts
 1. A **coif** – I used St. Brigitta's Coif as inspiration for mine. Here's a quick pattern: <http://edythmiller.blogspot.com/2010/01/st-birgittas-coif-in-15-minutes.html>
 - a. If a coif isn't your gig, you can also make a fillet and barrette, two bands of cloth that encircle your head vertically and horizontally.



2. A **wimple** – Mine is the shape below, though a rectangle would work just fine too.

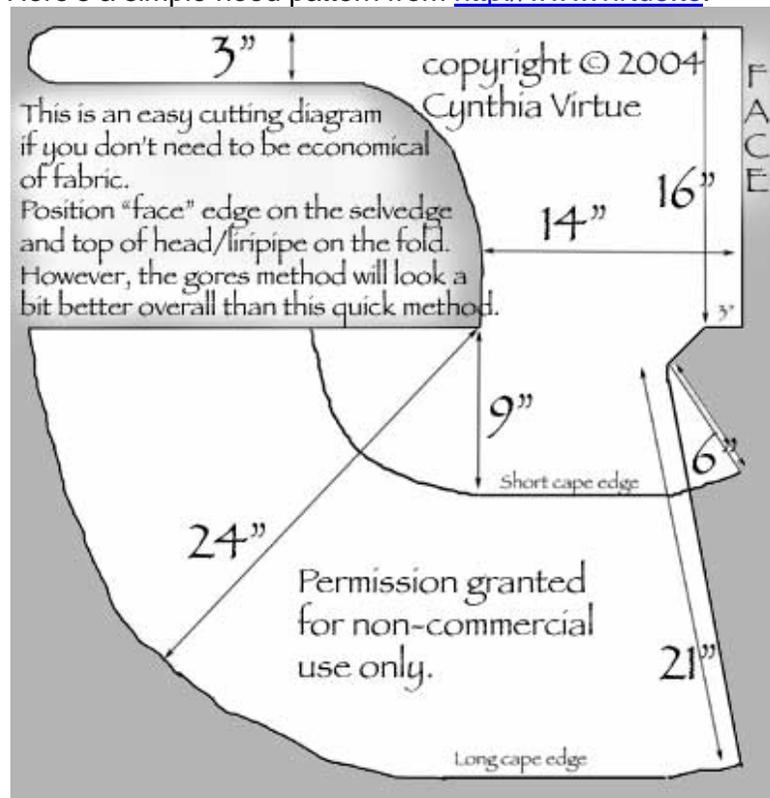


- a. I pin my veil to the back of the coif towards the top of my head.
3. A **veil** – Mine is a very large veil that I fold in half, you can also make a smaller oval that you just fold back the front of.
 - a. I pin my veil to the coif at my temples. Here's the website I used to learn: http://www.neulakko.net/?page_id=912
4. Bam, you look medieval.

b. Hood

- i. Close front hoods have been the rage since the Iron Age.

1. Here's a simple hood pattern from <http://www.virtue.to>:



- ii. Open front hoods were all the rage in the second half of the century.
 1. An open fronted hood can be made quite easily by simply not sewing together the seam that would be under your chin on a regular hood pattern
- iii. Wools and linens are the best for making hoods. I have also used good cotton twill. Hoods are quick and easy to make and nice to wear, I usually wear one in the winter from my car to my office.

c. Braids

- i. Wearing your braids on your temples was a thing. I don't pretend to understand.

Men

Step one – Underclothes

1. If the goal is to put together an outfit that passes the 10' test, then I recommend wearing chausses, braise and a shirt underneath your tunic.
2. Shirts can be made quickly and efficiently by using a t-tunic pattern (see Appendix A)
3. Braies are basically longer boxer shorts (that got tighter and shorter as the century progressed). These can be easily made by using your favorite pants pattern and cutting the legs shorter
4. The best material for shirts and braies is a light-weight linen. Linen/cotton blends or straight cotton can also be used. **I do not recommend using anything with any polyester.**
5. Making chausses can be tricky; however they're nice to have and are quite comfortable to wear. You can either order a pair from Historic Enterprises, Revival Clothing, or a similar website or you can make your own using instructions found online, for example:
http://historiclifecomessays/howto_hose.html or
<http://sevenstarwheel.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/how-to-make-hose-020711a1.pdf>
6. If you're not comfortable with the idea of wearing braies and chausses, just make a pair of close fitting (but not tight!) pants, no one who isn't flipping your tunic up will notice.

Step two – Kirtle

1. I make my kirtles in the exact same way as my smocks using the t-tunic pattern (see Appendix A).
2. If you are feeling advanced enough, you can also modify your tunic pattern to fit your body more closely and use set-in sleeves.
For more information on how to do this, I recommend visiting By My Measure at
<http://wp.bymy Measure.com/fitting-and-construction/pattern-a-gothic-fitted-dress>
This is a demonstration for a woman's garment, but the principles are the same as for men.
3. The tunic pattern in Appendix A can also become a bit more fitted by taking fabric in along the center and side seams. How much fabric you want to take in is down to your preference.
4. Kirtles can be made of wool, wool blends, linen, and linen blends. I prefer mid-weight fabric to keep the bulk down.
5. At this point, kirtles are almost all long-sleeved and buttons have become THE THING to add a little flair to your garment.
 - a. Sleeves with buttons are rotated in the armscye so that the seam runs along the outside of the arm (lining up with your pinkie finger). If you are using a tunic pattern instead of a fitted pattern you can still do this by adding an armscye to your tunic. This is a bit of a complicated process.
 - i. I usually make up a tunic body with waste fabric and then lay one of my shirts down and trace the armscye from that.
 - ii. There are more professional ways to do it, I'm told, but that's what works for me.
 - b. Cloth-covered buttons that will pass the 10' test are easily made using a Dritz kit from Joann's (or other craft goods source).
 - c. If button holes intimidate you, you can always just sew the buttons along the seam for decoration.

Step three – Cote

1. Cotes are made in much the same fashion as kirtles.
2. As the century progresses, the Cotes get tighter.
3. The front closure of a cote is either lacing or buttons, buttons are always more popular.
4. Short sleeves are the most commonly seen.
 - a. Towards the beginning of the period, these sleeves reached about the elbow and usually had built-in tippets (no more than a foot or so long)
 - b. As time progressed, the tippets became narrower and longer and eventually were separate items that were attached over the sleeve.
 - c. Fur lining is a common decorative element.
5. Cotes can be made of wool, linen, brocade, silk, and other fine fabrics.

- a. I have found that simplicity is often the best policy. I nicely made, nicely accessorized gown made of simple fabrics will always look better than a poorly made gown made of finer fabrics.

Step four – Accessories

1. Belts

- a. Belts, or the effects of a belt, are shown fairly frequently throughout period.
- b. Belts were made of leather, woven braid, embroidered fabric or solid metalwork mounted on leather.
 - i. I have made one of leather wrapped in velvet, it was hard, I do not recommend doing this.
- c. The level of decoration on the belt increased as you move up the social scale. Most belts had at least a tip and buckle.
 - i. I like Billy and Charlie for my hardware: www.billyandcharlie.com, but I've heard Fettered Cock is good too: www.fetteredcockpewters.com

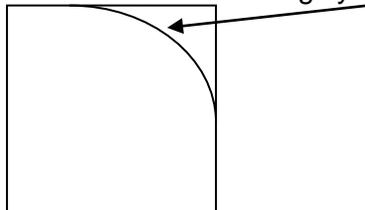
2. Pouches

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 - i. Square-ish
 1. Made of fabric.
 2. Hangs from the belt or carried in the hand.
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 4. Some are trapezoidal with a flap.
 5. Tassels can hang from the bottom.
 6. Extant examples are heavily embroidered.
 7. Here's some nice examples: <http://rosaliegilbert.com/purses.html>
 8. **These are often associated with women, but the more trapezoidal shape dependant from a wide loop shows up on guys.**
 - ii. Kidney shape
 1. Made of fabric or thin leather.
 2. Attached to the belt with two broad loops or tabs.
 3. Kidney-ish shape (hence the name).
 4. There's a nice tutorial available here: <http://arcaneleather.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/first-project-i-will-be-showing-is-how-i-make-14th-century-kidney-bags/>
 - iii. Other shapes
 1. There are other shapes, check out the illuminations.

3. Head coverings

a. Coif

- i. A white linen coif is a great way to make a mediocre medieval outfit look the part.
 1. To make:
 - a. Cut out a long rectangle, approximately as wide as your head from the corner of your eye to the back of your head and as long as the corner of your jaw, over your head, to the corner of the other jaw.
 - b. Fold it in half and sew one side closed so you have a square-ish shape that is closed on two adjacent sides (one side is the fold, the other is the seam).
 - c. Put it on your head.
 - d. Pin it together along the top of your head so that you have a rounded line. It should look roughly like this



- e. Sew along this line and trim off any excess.
- f. Finish edges and add ties.
- g. Wear with pride.

b. Hood

- i. Close front hoods have been the rage since the Iron Age. A simple hood pattern is available in the women's section above.
- ii. Wools and linens are the best for making hoods. I have also used good cotton twill. Hoods are quick and easy to make and nice to wear, I usually wear one in the winter from my car to my office.

Appendix A

How to make a T-Tunic

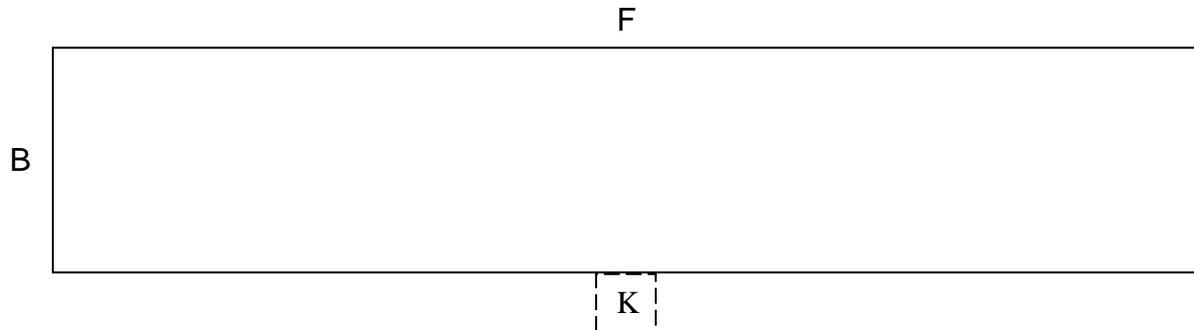
You will need the following measurements. To determine the final measurements, add between two and three inches for ease and seam allowance.

	Actual	Ease		Final
Mandatory Measurements				
Around the head	_____	-	_____	A _____
			<small>I usually subtract about 1 inch</small>	
Around the widest part of the torso	_____	+	_____	B _____
			/ 4	
Arm when slightly bent	_____	+	_____	C _____
Around the upper arm	_____	+	_____	D _____
Around the widest part of the hand	_____	+	_____	E _____
Shoulder to hem	_____	+	_____	F _____
			x 2	
Shoulder to waist	_____	+	_____	G _____
			<small>Shoulder to Hem - Shoulder to waist</small>	
Optional Measurements				
Around the widest part of the forearm	_____	+	_____	H _____
Wrist to elbow	_____		<small>This is used to determine where your elbow is</small>	I _____
Elbow to shoulder	_____		<small>This is used to determine where your elbow is</small>	J _____
Shoulder to hem (front)	_____	+	_____	K _____
Shoulder to hem (back)	_____	+	_____	_____
			<small>Shoulder to hem (front) + Shoulder to hem (back)</small>	
Around the neck	_____		_____	L _____

Using the measurements above you will need the following pieces

2 Long Rectangles – for the **Body**

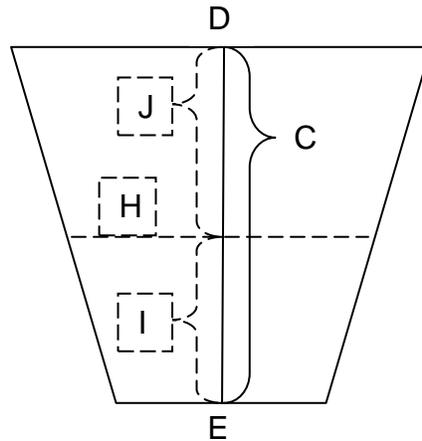
If your fabric is not long enough, you can use two shorter rectangles by not doubling the measurement F. Option measurements are shown with dotted lines. Use **either** F or K.



Appendix A

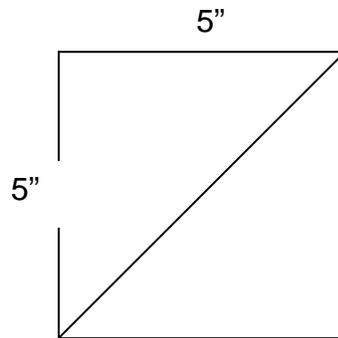
2 Trapezoids – for **Sleeves**

Option measurements are shown with dotted lines.



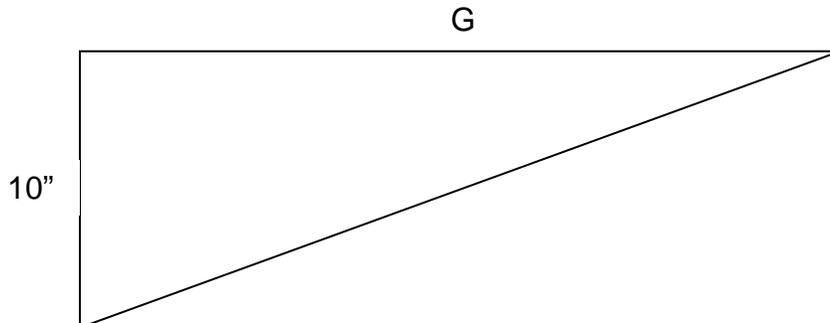
2 Squares – for **Gussets**

There isn't a specific measurement, I usually use between 3 and 5 inches, depending on what I have left. These squares will be cut on the diagonal to form two equilateral right triangles.



2-4 Rectangles – for **Gores**

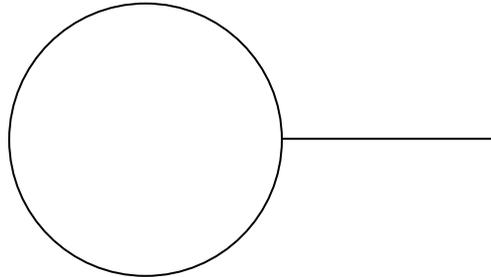
How wide my gores are depends on how much fabric I have left. I find that more than about 12" and they get a little weird looking. These rectangles will be cut on the diagonal to form two right triangles.



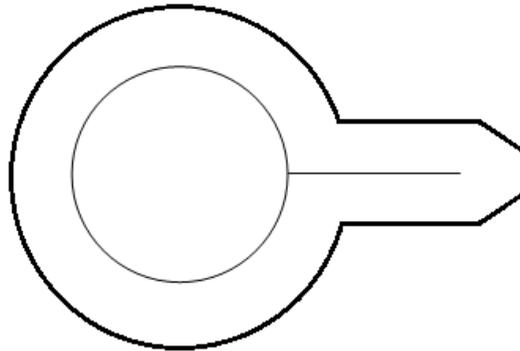
Appendix A

The Head Opening

I prefer a key-hole neckline. To make this, I draw a circle using measurement L as the circumference. Then I draw a straight line extending down from the circle that is about equal to half the difference between L (around the neck) and A (around the head). It looks like this:



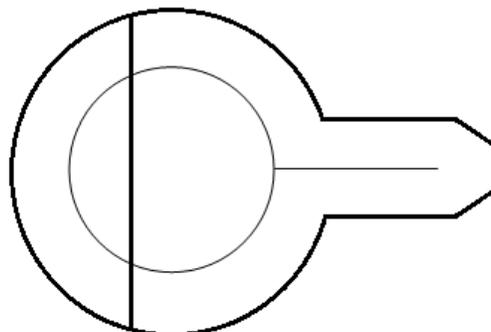
I usually face my neckline rather than rolling the hem. To make my facing, I make the same drawing as above, and then add an outline approximately 3" from my initial lines, like this:



I cut this out, both inside and out, and use it as a pattern for cutting the neck on my tunic.

The last step is to determine where the shoulder line should be.

To do this, put the cut-out facing on and situate it so that it's comfortable. Mark where your shoulders are with a small pen mark or pins. This is best done by a buddy so you don't move it by raising your arms. My shoulder line is usually around here:

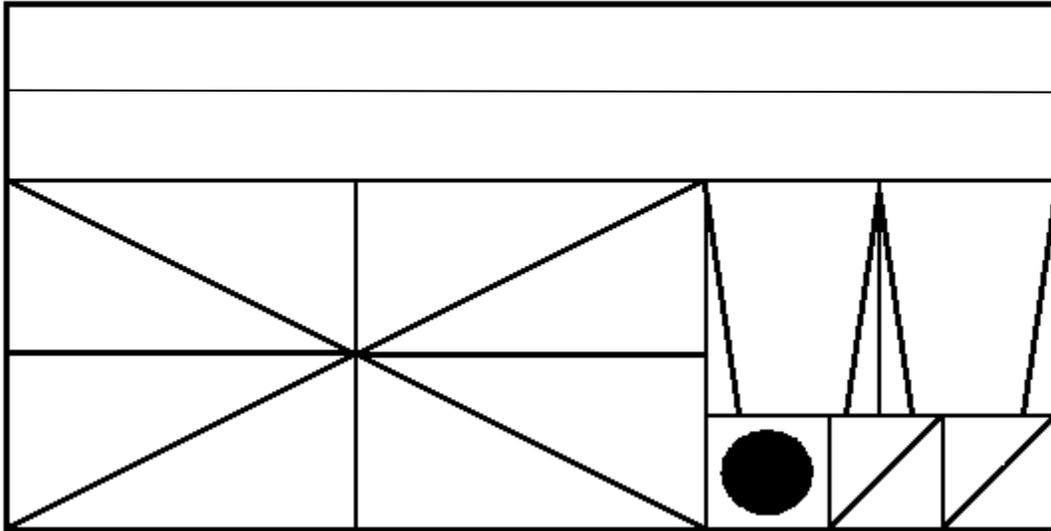


Now that I've been sewing for a while, I keep a couple of tracings of facings that have worked well in the past to reuse as patterns.

Appendix A

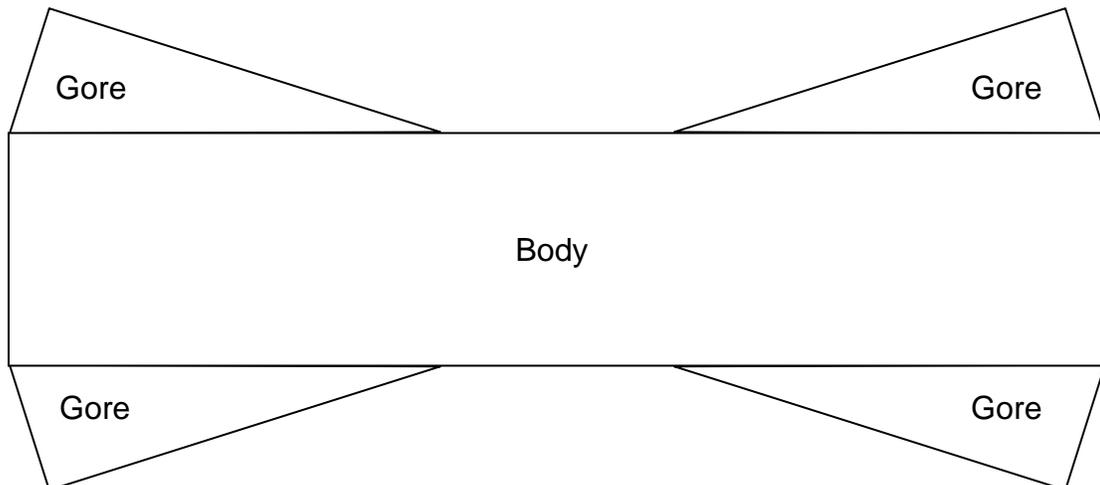
Layout

If your measurements and fabric width will allow, here is one example of how to lay out your pattern.



Putting it all together

1. Hold one body piece up to yourself and determine where the shoulder line should go. Mark this line.
2. Sew the hypotenuse of the gores to the bottom halves of the body pieces. You should end up with two pieces that look like this:

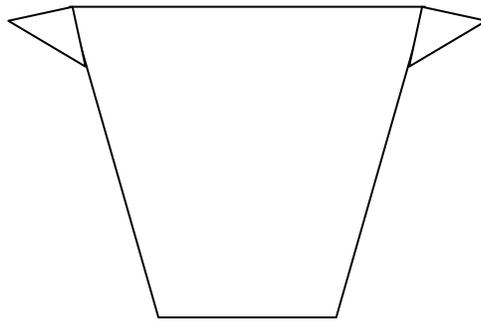


3. Sew the body pieces together along one long edge (your seam should lay along two gores and the middle part of the body).

Appendix A

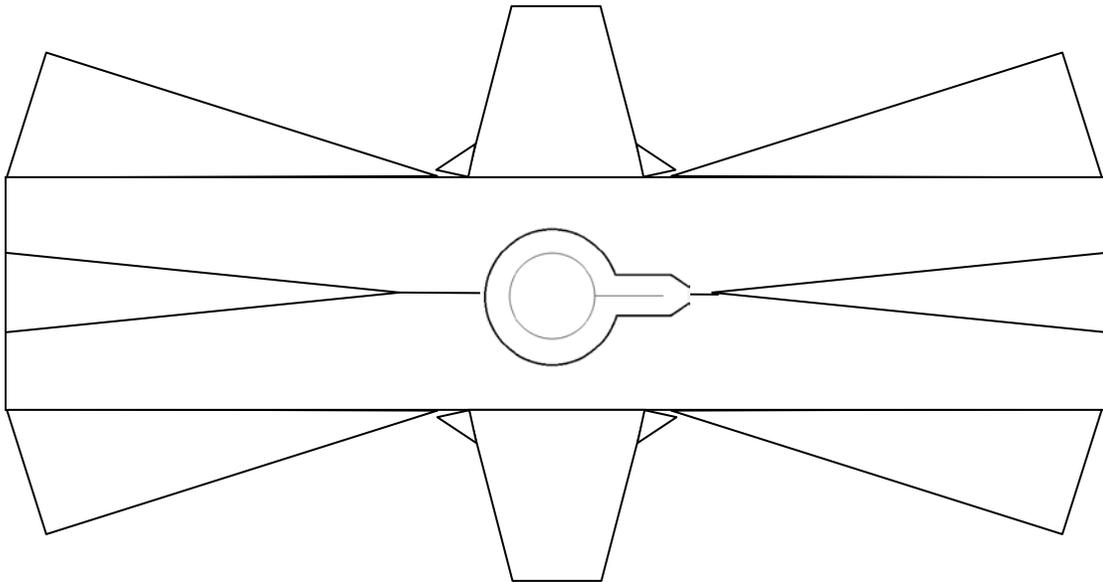
4. Using the facing, line up the shoulder lines and trace your neck hole. Cut it out. At this stage, I usually just finish the neck, as this is accomplished more easily without the sleeves in place.
 - a. To finish the neck, pin your facing to the neck hole (right sides together).
 - b. Sew it down.
 - c. Clip small triangles into the edges, along the curve of the neck. **Be very careful not to clip the seam.**
 - d. Turn the facing inside, and iron it flat.
 - e. Fold the edges of the facing under and sew it down to the body of the tunic. You should end up with a line of stitches visible on the outside of the dress that follows the edge of the facing.

5. Sew the gussets to the sleeves like this:



6. Sew the completed sleeves to the body, between the gores. Your tunic should now look like this.

THIS DRAWING IS NOT TO PRECISE SCALE.



7. Sew the sides together so it is tunic shaped. Trim the hem and finish the wrists and hem.

HURRAH, YOU'RE DONE!!