

ESSENTIAL GUIDE

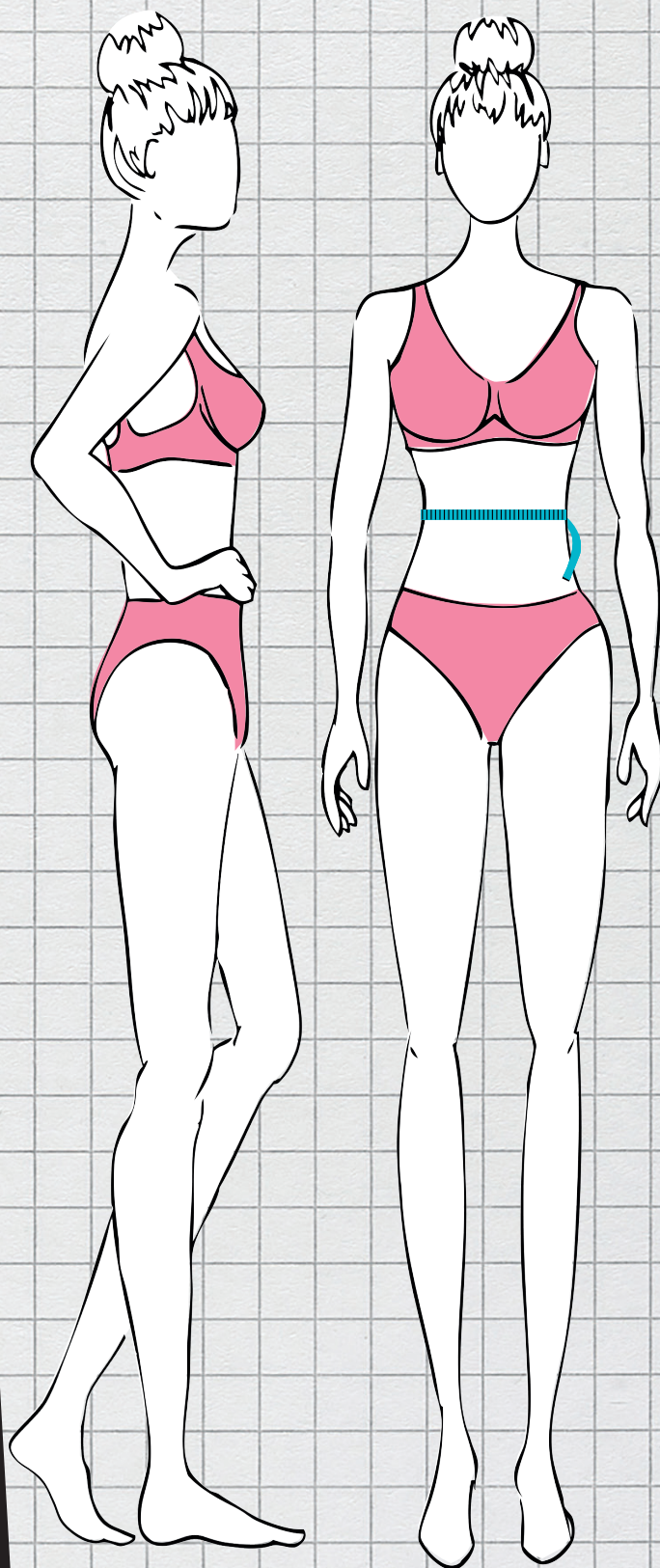
to measuring & fitting



ACHIEVE A
PERFECT FIT
& FINISH

INSIDE!

- ✓ SIZE CHART
- ✓ MEASURING GUIDE
- ✓ PATTERN MARKINGS
- ✓ PATTERN ADJUSTMENT
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PATTERN MARKINGS

Sewing patterns have markings on them to help you achieve the perfect cut, sew and fit. Follow these markings carefully and transfer them onto your fabric for a more professional finish.



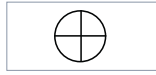
CUTTING LINES Multi-size patterns have different style lines for each size, such as dots and dashes. Cut along the line that matches your size.



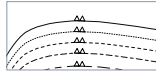
GRAINLINE Match up the direction the arrow is pointing with the grain on the fabric which runs parallel to the selvages. Measure this for accuracy.



ON THE FOLD To cut a pattern piece on the fold, line up and pin this marking with the fold on the fabric then pin the rest of the pattern in place.



BUST AND HIP INDICATORS These indicate the bustline, waistline or hipline on the pattern and are a good way of checking if the pattern fits your shape.



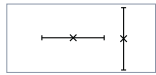
NOTCHES These triangles or lines are marked on the edges of a pattern to indicate where to match up two pattern pieces and fit them together.



OTHER SHAPES These are used to mark specific parts of the pattern, such as pocket placements, dart points, clipping, gathering and staystitching.



LENGTHEN AND SHORTEN LINES Two horizontal, parallel lines which show the point on the pattern where you can lengthen or shorten it to suit your size.



BUTTONHOLES AND BUTTONS Buttonholes are usually represented by a horizontal or vertical line and the button position is marked on this line with an X.



DARTS Dart lines on a pattern, used for shaping, are usually shown as a diamond shape or as two lines coming from one point.

USING A PATTERN

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Preparing your fabric and cutting out the pattern correctly is just as important as the actual sewing. Always wash your fabric before you begin (if it's washable!) as fabric can shrink and run, so get this out of the way before you start cutting and stitching. Once dry, press well to remove any folds and creases so that it's flat and wrinkle-free.

PREPARING THE PATTERN

Many patterns come with lots of options for different finishes, so read the instruction sheet to work out which pieces you'll need. Cut out all the pieces outside the lines as it's easier to do this first. Use paper scissors for this rather than your fabric scissors as the paper will blunt them. Press your pattern pieces using a dry iron on a low heat to remove folds and creases so they will lie flat on your fabric when cutting out.

CUTTING OUT THE PATTERN

Choose your size using your measurements and the size chart. You may well be a different pattern size for some of your measurements, but if you have a multisized pattern then follow the instructions for combining pattern sizes overleaf. Cut along the corresponding lines on your pattern. If they're close together, draw over your chosen size with a highlighter pen first so you can easily see which line to cut.

CUTTING LAYOUTS

If your pattern has several cutting layouts then choose the correct one for the width of fabric you're using, the size you're cutting and the style of garment.

CUTTING OUT

Lay your fabric flat on a table or the floor and smooth it out so it's crease and wrinkle free. Fold or place the fabric as shown on the cutting layout. Lay the pattern pieces in the order and right side or wrong side up as shown on the cutting layout. Check to make sure that the grainlines of the pattern are parallel with the selvages by measuring. Now pin your pattern pieces carefully in place and cut around them through the fabric using a sharp pair of dressmaker's shears. Use a pair of smaller, sharp scissors on fiddly sections for accuracy.

TRANSFERRING PATTERN MARKINGS

All the markings on your pattern pieces need to be transferred to the fabric. Don't miss out this step as these are really important for matching up fabric pieces later on and for positioning elements such as darts and pockets. You can mark these with snips on the fabric, using a fabric pen or with small tacking stitches. Keep all of your pattern pieces pinned to the fabric until you need them, so you'll know exactly which piece is which when you come to sew them together.

PATTERN MATCHING

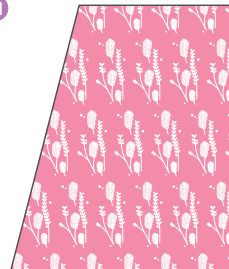
Deciding where to pattern match when you make a garment can be tricky, as it's not always possible to pattern match on every seam. The first thing to look at is whether the pattern on the fabric runs in one direction, as it's important that each pattern piece is cut in the same direction. If the fabric has a bold motif it's best not to cut your pattern pieces on the fold. Instead, cut out one half, flip the pattern piece and then cut out the other half – this is the most accurate way of making sure that the pattern piece lies correctly and straight on your fabric.

Pattern matching straight seams is simple, but once curved seams are involved then you won't be able to get a perfect match. However, if there is a seam where you can pattern match, for example the back seam of a skirt, then it really is worth doing this for a better finish. If it's impossible as you have too many seams, then try to get the pattern running on the same plane horizontally around the garment, even if you can't achieve a perfect vertical match. If you have a fabric with a large print, then decide where you want the motifs of the pattern to go on your garment. It will look more even if a larger motif runs down the centre of the bodice and skirt of a dress, but you need to check how this affects the rest of the pattern. Always place your pattern pieces on your fabric and move them around to choose the positioning that works for you. Really, though, it's all about what's pleasing to your eye and what you think looks right.

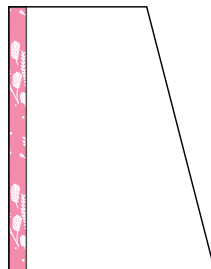
HOW MUCH FABRIC TO BUY

If you are going to pattern match your pieces then you will, most likely, need to buy more fabric than is listed in the instructions. The most accurate way to work this out is to measure each of your pattern pieces before you buy your fabric. Next, find out the pattern repeat of the fabric you want to use. The pattern repeat is the measurement of one whole pattern as it is printed on the fabric. To work this out, lay the fabric out flat and mark a prominent point of the pattern with a pin. Find the next place that this

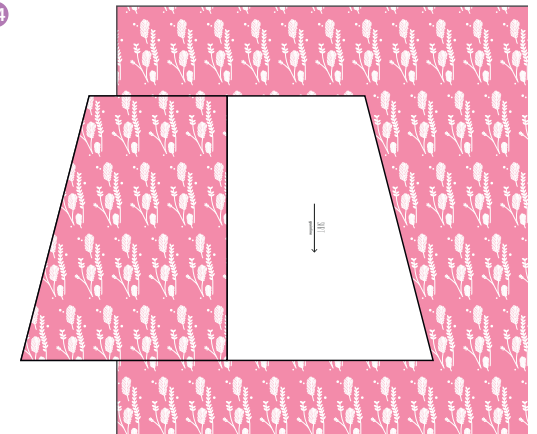
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CHOOSING FABRIC

It's important to choose the correct fabric for your pattern. Most patterns give suggested fabric types that will work best with the style of garment, so use this to guide you as some patterns need more drape, body or structure than others.

Fabric can be made from natural fibres such as cotton, linen, wool and silk, or synthetic fibres such as acetate, acrylic, nylon, polyester, rayon and viscose. All of these fabrics can be bought in varying thicknesses (called weights) to suit different garment types.

Lightweight fabrics are ideal for making lingerie, nightwear and summer clothing, and include cheesecloth, chiffon, crepe de chine, georgette, lawn, muslin, organdie, organza and voile.

Medium-weight fabrics work well for making dresses, tops, shirts, trousers and childrenswear, and include calico, cotton, crepe, dupion, linen, poplin and finer woollen fabrics.

Heavy-weight fabrics are used for garments or projects that get lots of wear and so need more strength, like coats, jackets, winterwear and bags. Canvas, corduroy, denim, tweeds, velvet and wool are all in this category.

Some patterns require fabrics that are quite fluid and have a good drape to make them hang properly, such as challis or crepe. Stretch and knit fabrics such as jersey and lycra can be bought in a variety of thicknesses and qualities depending on their intended use.

is repeated and mark with a pin. The space between these pins is the pattern repeat. Each pattern piece needs to start and finish at the same point of the pattern repeat so calculate how much fabric you'll need for this to happen. If you have a striped or check fabric then you may want the pattern pieces to match horizontally, so bear this in mind when calculating your fabric. There will be some wasted fabric, but your finished garment will have a more professional look if the pattern is matched accurately.

CUTTING OUT AND PATTERN

MATCHING A SKIRT PIECE

Step one Cut out one piece from your fabric – in this example, we have cut out the left back piece for a skirt and we want to cut out the right back piece so that the centre back seam will match. The pattern usually says to cut them out together but to get a perfect pattern match they need to be cut out separately. ⁰¹

Step two Now turn under and press the centre seam allowance to the wrong side along the centre back seam. ⁰²

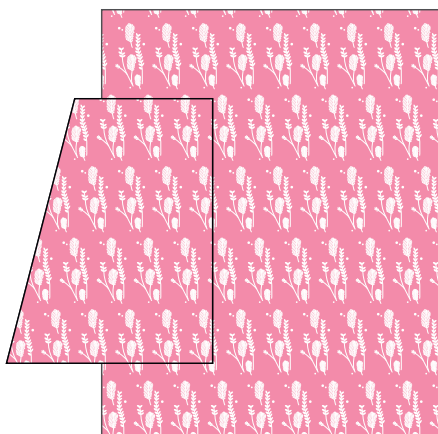
Step three Lay the cut out piece right side up on top of the right side of your fabric and match the pattern print along the turned-under edge. ⁰³

Step four Take your paper pattern piece, flip it over and fold the centre line under by the seam allowance. Line up this folded edge with the folded-under edge of your cut out left back piece on the fabric. Make sure the fabric fold and the paper fold match up exactly with no space between them. ⁰⁴

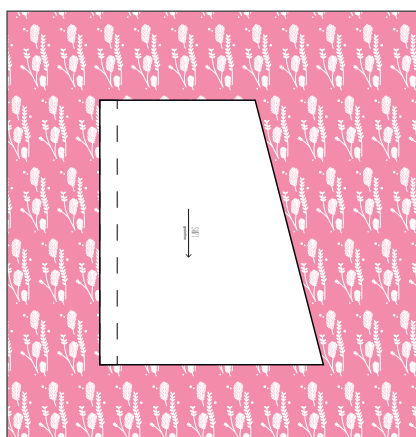
Step five Pin the pattern into place, with folds still touching. Take off the fabric left back piece then unfold the seam allowance on the paper pattern piece and pin it to the fabric. Cut around the paper pattern to cut out the right back piece. ⁰⁵

Step six You can now sew your two skirt back pieces together and the pattern will match perfectly. It's worth pinning then tacking before you stitch, especially when adding a zip, so you can check that the pattern matches up and hold it in place while you sew. ⁰⁶

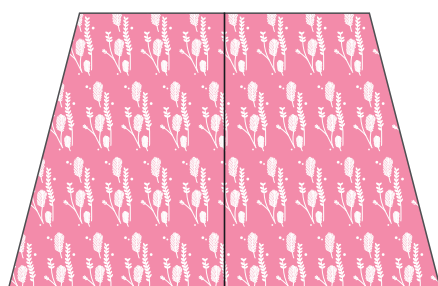
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GLOSSARY OF DRESSMAKING TERMS

BIAS The stretchiest part of the fabric, which runs diagonally to the selvedge or straight grain of the fabric.

CLIP Small snips made into the fabric edge. These are used help a seam lie flat or remove bulk from the fabric and are ideal for easing tight curves. Small snips are used for outside curves, and little wedges are clipped out for inner curves.

DARTS Stitched folds used to shape a garment by taking away fullness from a seam line. They are usually wedge or triangle shaped and often used at the bust, waistline, hips and back. They allow the garment to fit smoothly over a rounded area of the body. Darts are marked on the fabric from the pattern then stitched from the broad end towards the point, tapering narrowly.

DRAPE This describes the way a fabric hangs under its own weight. Different fabrics have different drape qualities as some are more fluid than others.

EASE The addition of extra fabric in a pattern to allow the finished garment to fit the body without being too tight and drape well.

EDGESTITCH A row of stitching 2-3mm (1/16-1/8in) from the folded or seamed edge. Used to hold the fabric edge neatly in place.

FACINGS Used to stabilise and create a neat finish on the edges of a garment such as the neckline or armholes. The facing is cut separately, often stiffened using interfacing, then sewn right sides together with the garment edge.

FINISHING/NEATENING RAW EDGES This is to stop the fabric edges, particularly on a seam, from fraying. It can be done by machine zigzag stitching, using an overlocker or trimming the edge with pinking shears.

INTERFACING Available in different thicknesses or weights and applied to fabric to stiffen it or stabilise it to prevent it from stretching out of shape. It can be non woven, woven or knitted depending on the usage and is either iron-on (fusible) or sewn-in (non-fusible).

NAP Fabrics like velvet, corduroy and fur have hairs or loops which lie in a particular direction, called the nap or pile. The hairs lie smooth and flat with the nap when your hand runs over them. When cutting out pattern pieces make sure the grainline arrow always runs in the direction of the nap.

NOTIONS Small tools or accessories used in sewing other than the fabric and the sewing machine, such as zips, fasteners, lace and buttons.

OVERLOCKING An overcast stitch used to prevent the fabric from fraying. Overlockers are machines which not only work this overlock stitch but also trim the seam allowance at the same time. Known as sergers in the U.S.

PRESS Pressing as you go along will give your garment a professional finish and should be done once each seam or area is completed. Pressing is done by placing the hot iron onto the fabric and holding or 'pressing' into place, rather than moving the iron across the fabric to remove creases as with ironing.

RAW EDGE The cut edge of fabric that is not stitched or finished in any way.

RIGHT SIDE (RS)/ WRONG SIDE (WS) The right side of the fabric with the design on it is also called the 'public' side. For plain fabrics, the right side is usually a little brighter or shinier.

SEAM ALLOWANCE The fabric between the raw or cut edge of the fabric and the seam is called the seam allowance. Patterns will state the seam allowance to be used, which is usually 1.5cm (3/8in) for dressmaking but can vary.

SLIP STITCH Often used on hems or for closing a turning gap. Small, neat almost invisible hand stitches are worked into the fold of the fabric with a fabric thread caught on the other side.

STAYSTITCHING A line of regular machine stitching usually worked 3mm (1/8in) inside the seam line, used to stabilise curved edges in particular to stop them stretching out of shape. This is worked before the permanent stitching, then curves can be clipped up to the staystitching if required.

TOPSTITCHING A line of stitching worked in the same way as edgestitching but usually 5mm (1/4in) from the folded or seam edge. Used to neaten the fabric edge, to hold the seam in place and as a decorative finish.

UNDERSTITCHING A line of machine stitching worked through the facing and seam allowance 3mm (1/8in) from the seam, used to keep the facing from rolling to the outside of the garment. The stitching will not be visible on the right side of the garment.

ZIGZAG STITCHING A sewing machine stitch that is mainly used for neatening raw edges and is ideal for stretch fabrics as the stitch is slightly elastic. The length and width of it can be altered on the machine. It is also a decorative stitch that is often used in appliqué. A satin stitch can be worked with this setting using a stitch length of zero.

HOW TO MEASURE YOURSELF ACCURATELY

ALWAYS MEASURE YOURSELF before you choose a pattern size. The sizing can vary greatly from pattern to pattern, so don't just assume you're a particular size. Take all of your measurements, then compare them to the size chart (usually printed on the pattern envelope or on the instruction sheet inside).

Measure yourself in your underwear and preferably in the bra you'll be wearing underneath your garment as this can alter the measurements slightly. For accuracy, use a fabric tape measure as it'll curve around your body. You can measure on your own if you stand in front of a mirror, but for best results ask a friend to help so they can check the tape measure is sitting in the right places. Make sure the tape measure sits snugly around you but isn't too tight.

These are the most common measurements you'll need, so take them carefully and write them down in the My Measurements table.

① HIGH BUST/CHEST

Across the back, directly under the arms and above the bust.

② BUST

Around the fullest part of your bust, across the centre of your nipples.

③ BUST POINT

Your nipple point when wearing the bra you will be wearing with the garment.

④ WAIST

Your natural waistline, where you bend to the side.

⑤ HIPS

Around the fullest and widest part of your thighs and bottom.

⑥ BACK WAIST

From the top of your spine at the base of your neck to your natural waistline.

⑦ HEIGHT

Stand against a wall without shoes on and measure from the top of your head to the floor.

⑧ NECK

The circumference of your neck at its fullest.

⑨ SHOULDER

From your neck to where the shoulder seam would be on a garment.

⑩ ARM

From where the shoulder seam would be to your wrist.

⑪ INSIDE LEG

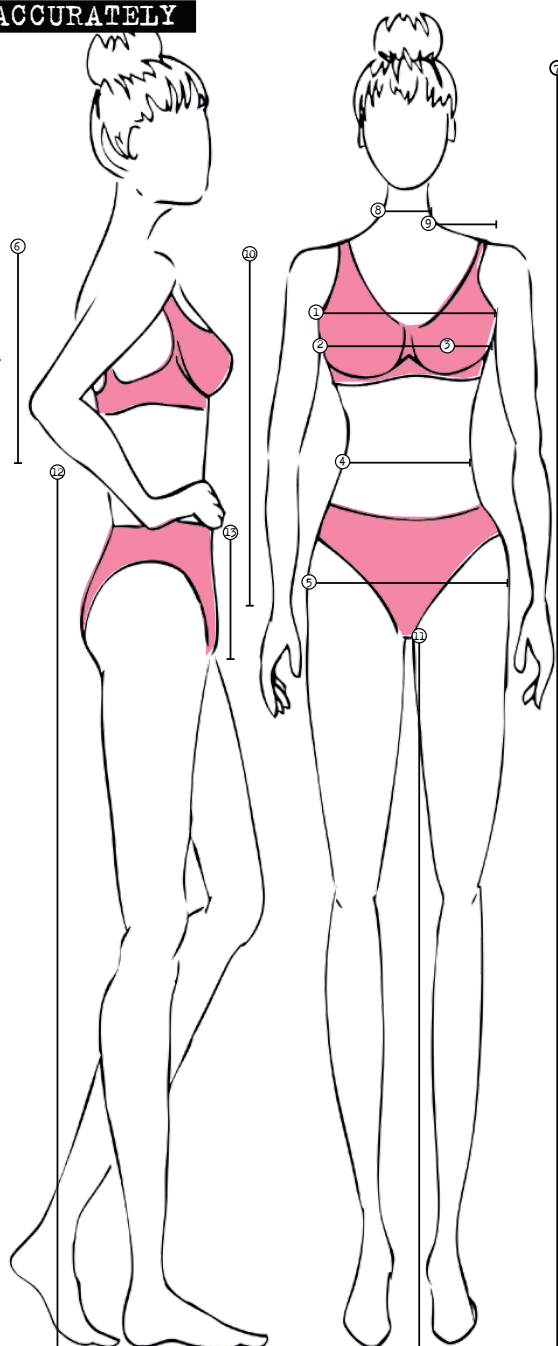
From your crotch to the floor.

⑫ OUTSIDE LEG

From your waist to the floor.

⑬ FRONT RISE

From your crotch to your waist, or wherever you want your waistband to sit.



MY MEASUREMENTS

Once you've taken your measurements, write them down in this table so you'll always have them to hand when you need to check them or begin a new dressmaking project.

	CM	IN
HIGH BUST/CHEST		
BUST		
BUST POINT		
WAIST		
HIPS		
BACK WAIST		
HEIGHT		
NECK		
SHOULDER		
ARM		
INSIDE LEG		
OUTSIDE LEG		
FRONT RISE		

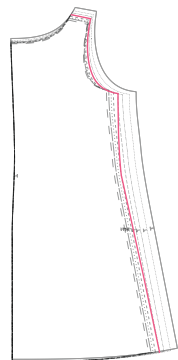
COMBINING PATTERN SIZES

Once you've taken your measurements, choose the size from the size chart on the pattern that is closest to your own measurements. If you're between two sizes, it's best to go for the larger size so you can adjust your garment to make it smaller if you need to.

However, people rarely fit exactly into the bust, waist and hip measurements on pattern size charts, so it can be tricky to choose which size to cut. Luckily, as most dressmaking patterns are multisized, you can combine the sizes to achieve a fit that will suit your body shape.

If there are darts on your pattern, fold them closed and pin into place. Using a different coloured pen or highlighter, draw a line from the end of your chosen bust size line to the end of your chosen waist size line. Repeat to connect your chosen hip size line to your chosen waist size line. If the pattern line is straight, you can connect it with a straight line. However, if the line is curved then follow the shape of the curve of the pattern to connect them. You can buy a curved ruler called a French curve that will help with this if you prefer.

Once you've drawn in your new lines, unpin the darts to make the pattern lie flat. Remember to remark any notches or other pattern markings you may have cut off.



SIZE CHART

Size charts are printed on the pattern envelope or instructions and vary from brand to brand. This is our standard chart, but you must always measure yourself and check the chart on the pattern to find your size.

SIZE		6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
TO FIT BUST	cm	80	83	86	89	94	99	107	114
	in	32	33	34	35	37	39	42	45
TO FIT WAIST	cm	63	66	69	71	76	82	89	97
	in	25	26	27	28	30	32	35	38
TO FIT HIPS	cm	87	91	94	97	102	107	114	122
	in	35	36	37	38	40	42	45	48

MAKING A TOILE

A toile, also called a muslin, is a test garment made in cheap fabric such as calico that you can use to test the size and fit of a pattern before you cut into your actual garment fabric. Although this may seem time-consuming, it really is well worth the effort and will actually save you time and money by getting the fit just right at this stage.

You don't have to stitch in the zip or make a proper hem as these can be pinned, but you will see straight away if you need to make any adjustments. You can use any fabric you like – old sheets are perfect, but do bear in mind that you'll get a more realistic idea of the finished fit if you choose a similar fabric in terms of weight and stretch to the one you'll eventually be using to make your final garment.

Cut out the pattern and fabric in the usual way, but stitch it together using a longer stitch length than normal so it's easier to unpick if you want to make any changes. Cut the seam allowance off hems, sleeves and necklines if you want to see where they'll finish without the need to hem. Once it's made, try it on – you can then pin it for a better fit, or draw any changes on it. If there are areas which are too tight, cut the fabric and open it out to add extra space. If it's too loose, pin it to fit. Mark any changes you've made on the toile, then transfer these to your paper pattern. You're then ready to make your real garment from your chosen fabric, knowing that it will fit you perfectly.

LENGTH ADJUSTMENT

Making your garment longer or shorter is one of the simplest adjustments to make to a pattern. Many patterns have two sets of horizontal lines marked on them, labelled 'lengthen or shorten here', so it's easy to see where to do this.

If your pattern doesn't have these, you can draw your own set of lengthen or shorten lines onto your pattern where you want to make this adjustment.

LENGTHENING A PATTERN

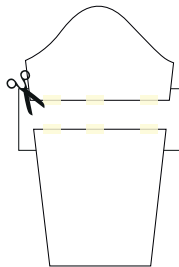
Step one Measure yourself (or ideally make a toile) to work out how much longer you will need your pattern piece to be.

Step two Cut along the lengthen/shorten line to separate the pattern piece.

Step three On a separate piece of paper, draw a strip a little wider than the width you want to add to the pattern and slightly longer than the cut line.

Step four Stick this strip of paper beneath the pattern pieces between the lines to lengthen the pattern piece by exactly the amount you need. Redraw the side seams so they merge from one cut pattern piece to the other gradually, if they weren't straight lines originally.

Step five Remember to adjust any other relevant pattern pieces in the same way. For example, if you lengthen the bodice front then you'll need to lengthen the bodice back by exactly the same amount. You can now use your pattern to cut out the fabric in the usual way.



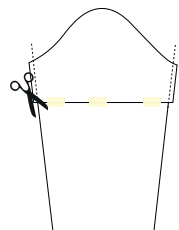
SHORTENING A PATTERN

Step one Measure yourself to work out how much shorter you will need your pattern piece to be.

Step two Cut along the lengthen/shorten line to separate the pattern piece.

Step three Overlap one piece on top of the other by the amount you want to shorten it, then stick into place.

Step four Redraw the side seams so they merge or curve gradually, and your pattern will be ready to use. Remember to shorten any other relevant pattern pieces by the same amount, too.



BUST ADJUSTMENT

Most patterns are designed to fit an 'average' bust size – which is a B cup (according to the pattern manufacturers!). So, if your cup size is smaller or larger than this you'll need to adjust your pattern for a perfect fit. If you choose a pattern size which matches your bust measurement, then the garment may not fit properly on the upper chest and shoulders. If the garment you are making has quite a loose fit then this may not matter, but if it's a closely fitted item then you'll need to make some adjustments.

Use your bust measurement and your high bust measurement and work out what the difference between them is. If it's more than 6.5cm (2½in) you'll need to make a full bust adjustment. If it's less than 4cm (1½in) then you'll need to make a small bust adjustment.

ALTERING THE PATTERN FOR A FULL BUST ADJUSTMENT (FBA)

Step one Choose the pattern size that matches your high bust measurement and trace around it and cut it out (so you can keep the original pattern uncut). The difference between your bust measurement and high bust measurement is the amount you need to add to your pattern, but you need to half this difference for each side of the garment so they add to the same for both sides once cut. For example, if the difference is 3cm then you'll need to add 1.5cm to the pattern piece as it will most likely be cut on the fold.

Step two Mark your bust point on the pattern piece (by either measuring or holding the pattern pieces against yourself) and draw three lines out from this point.

A = down to the waist, or hem, parallel to the centre front.

B = to the lower third of the armhole curve.

C = to the side seam, through the centre of the bust dart

D = from line A at right angles to the centre front, about a third of the way above the waist or hem.

Step three Starting at the bottom edge, cut up line A then along line B, stopping just before the end so you have a small hinge in the paper.

Step four Starting at the side seam, cut along line C, stopping just before the end again to make a small hinge.

Step five Carefully lay your cut pieces onto a new piece of pattern paper to draw your new pattern. Tape the centre front seams to the paper to hold it in place.

Spread the pieces apart at line A by half your calculated difference between your high bust and bust. This is shown by arrows on the diagram. As the paper pieces are hinged then lines B and C will open up as well to form spaces between them for the new bust dart.

Step six Cut along line D and move it down so it lines up with the waist or hem, as this will have moved downwards.

Step seven Pin or tape these moved pieces to the pattern paper beneath to hold them securely in place.

Step eight Draw around your moved pattern pieces, extending the centre front too so it lines up with the waist or hem.

DRAWING THE NEW BUST DART

Step one Now you need to draw the new bust dart. Draw a line from the bust point to the side seam through the centre of the section you've opened up when you separated line C.

Step two Mark a point 2cm (¾in) in from the bust point along this line for the new dart apex.

Step three Draw the dart legs from this new dart apex to the side seams where the original dart legs started.

Step four Redraw the side seams so they are joined at the centre line between the dart legs.

Step five You can now remove your cut pattern pieces to reveal the newly adjusted pattern piece below. Cut around this and use it to make your garment.

ALTERING THE PATTERN FOR A SMALL BUST ADJUSTMENT (SBA)

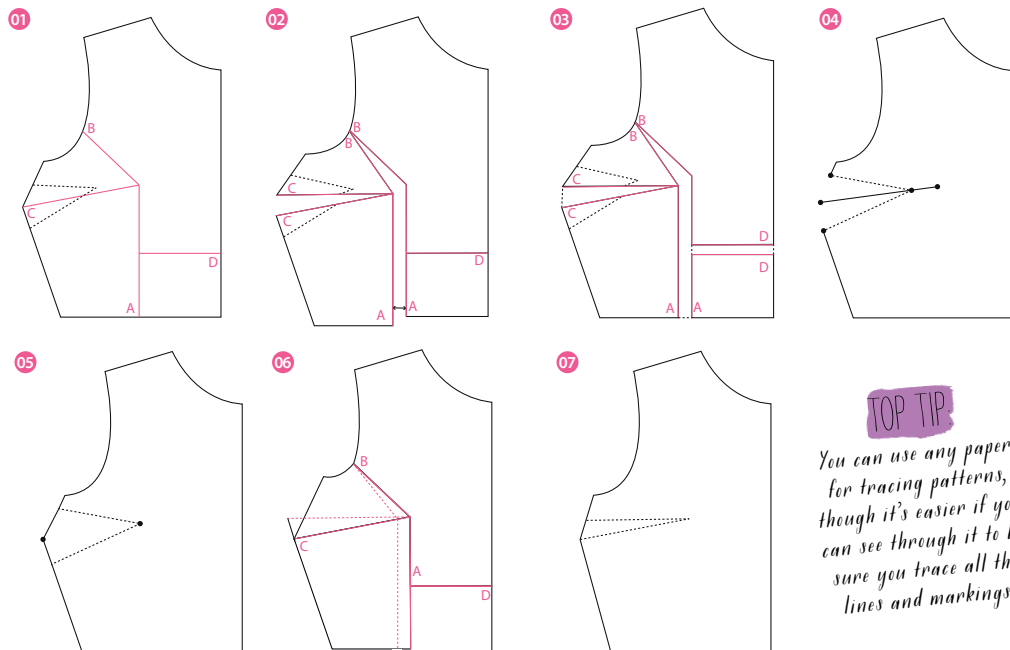
This is done in the same way as the FBA but in reverse.

Step one Draw the lines on your pattern and cut along them as in steps three and four of the FBA. But, instead of opening out lines A and B, overlap them to the right by half of the difference between your bust and high bust. Line C will overlap too when you straighten up line A.

Step two Cut along line D and move it up so it lines up with the waist or hem, as this will have moved upwards. Draw around your moved pattern pieces.

Step three Redraw the bust dart in the same way as for the FBA.

Step four Redraw the side seam by drawing a line from the under arm to the centre of the dart, then another from there to the waist.



TOP TIP

You can use any paper for tracing patterns, though it's easier if you can see through it to be sure you trace all the lines and markings.