

Making a Tailored Fitted Dress, AKA Cotehardie

By Cerridwen verch Ioreword (Jamie Pience)



Amount of fabric needed: You will need approximately 6 yards of your desired fabric. The most accurate way to measure the exact amount needed is by measuring yourself from shoulder to floor (measurement 1), hip to floor (measurement 2), and shoulder to wrist with elbow bent (measurement 3). Multiply measurement 1 by 2, add measurement 2 and 3, and add 18 inches. Add a little more if you want to leave a bit more wiggle room. For example mine would be:

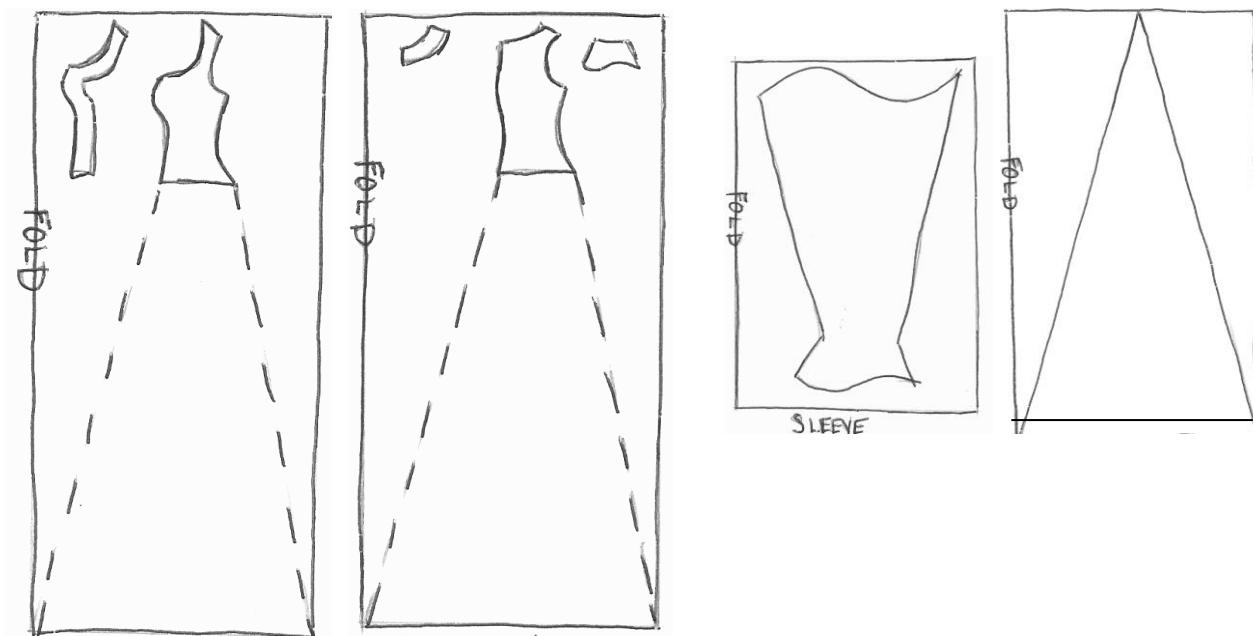
| | Mine | Yours |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Measurement 1 times 2 | 120" (60"x2) | _____ |
| Measurement 2 | 37" | _____ |
| Measurement 3 | 30" | _____ |
| plus 18" | + 18" | + 18" |
| <i>Subtotal</i> | 205" | _____ |
| Divide by 36" | ÷ 36 | ÷ 36 |
| Total Yards needed: | 5.7 yards | _____ |

Cutting out: Divide your chosen fabric into sections. Two sections should equal measurement 1 plus at least 4", depending upon how much wiggle room you've given yourself. Fold the fabric in half lengthwise. Center and pin your front pattern in place, being sure to have the shoulder piece as close to the top as possible. Repeat with the back pattern on the second section. At the hip line,

draw a line straight down at an angle forming a triangle. See layout below. Pin your facing pieces as space allows. Cut out.

The next section should be equal to measurement 3 plus at least 5". Pin your sleeve pattern in place and cut out.

Finally, your remaining fabric should be equal to measurement 2 plus at least 5". Fold in half lengthwise and cut out a triangle. These will become the gores to the fitted dress which adds fullness. When cut out, you will have 3 triangular pieces (2 which you cut out and one resulting from the fold.) The two right triangles which result from the edge can be sewn together on the edge to make a total of four triangles so no fabric is wasted.



Take a break! Have some mead and celebrate the completion of cutting out your fitted dress. You deserve it!

Sewing the Fitted Dress: Now, onto the sewing. As a note, be aware of your fabric. Linens and unworsted wools will fray from handling, wear and washing. You need to leave sufficient allowance to finish these edges in some manner. Further, if you are making this as a single supportive article, the seams will take a lot of stress when worn snugly as it should. In period there was likely a supportive underdress or a supportive lining at the least to help prevent pulling on the main garment. This is important to know so you can choose an appropriate construction method for your

desired look and needs. When cutting the pattern, an approximate $\frac{5}{8}$ " seam allowance was built in to allow you to properly finish an edge.

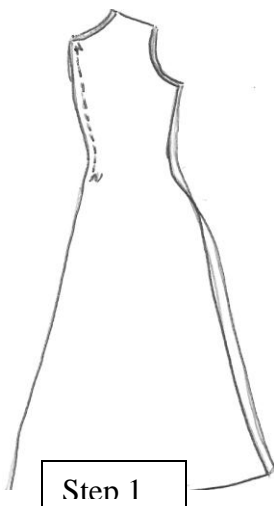
Additional directions have been inserted if you choose to line the bodice of the dress. Why line? Well, lining was period. When you line you have two layers to help take the stress instead of one. If lining, you will need to cut out of the front and back pieces of the bodice from your lining material. However, you will not need to cut out the back or neck facing pieces.

OK, so why wouldn't I line if it's period? Because not lining is also period. Secondly, lining takes more fabric since you have to make the bodice portion twice. Is it cooler? It's hard to tell. I have worn a lightweight woolen dress with a linen lining and a linen chemise in 85-90° weather with a high humidity level. While I was not sweating profusely (the double layer of linen acted as moisture barrier, I was warm and not overly active at the event. It was similar to wearing a light weight suit in summer heat. Therefore, no lining at least give the appearance of being cooler as it is less layers.

There are two methods to deal with not lining the garment. You can put in a facing of the same material as shown in the layout diagram. This is a modern method. A second alternative is to use a woven band of silk, linen, wool, or cotton, to face the edges. Extant pieces have shown this method to be used on sleeve and opening edges in conjunction with buttons and button holes, as well as on what is believed to be a neck or armhole curve.

In the end, it is up to you. Experiment and have fun with.

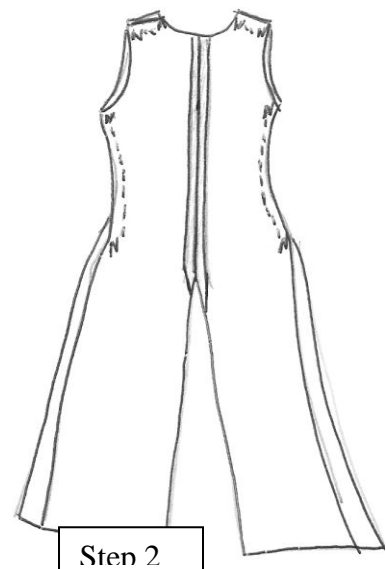
- Instructions for differences from the modern method are denoted by bullets as shown here.

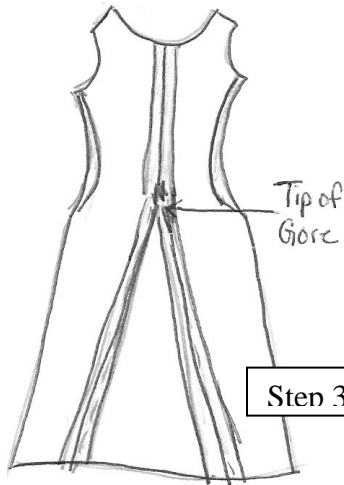


1) Start with the back. With right sides together (RST), sew from the neck to the hip, reinforcing your start and stop points.

2) Next, RST sew the sides and shoulders to the back, sewing from under arm to hip.

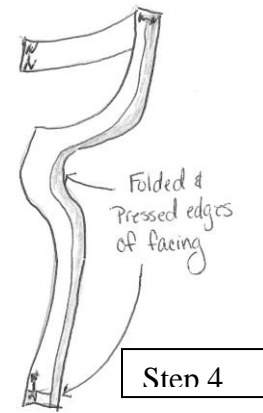
- If lining, repeat Steps 1 & 2 with lining pieces



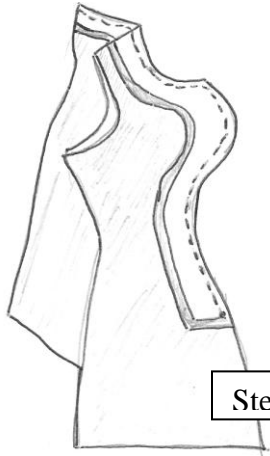


3) Take the gores and sew them RST in at the hip level. For the front gore, sew one side in place then sew up the second, going approximately 1" beyond the point to join the front. At this point, I like to finish my edges, however you can do it, or not, whenever you get the notion.

4) If you are doing the modern facing, sew the facing pieces together at back neck, shoulders, and 1" on the bottom front. Press $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the outer edge pieces and bottom front to the inside on the wrong side of the fabric.



➤ Skip this step if lining.

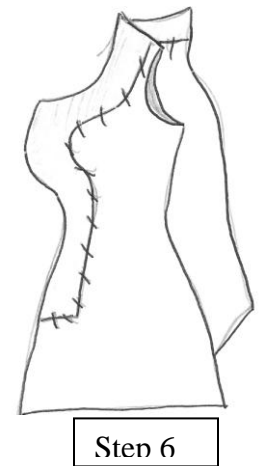


5) Attach the facing, RST to the front and neck. Sew in place. Cut notches in the curves, being sure not to cut into your stitches, to allow the fabric to lay properly when turned.

6) Turn and press, then tack in place.

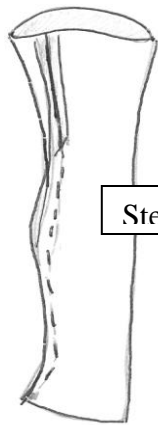
➤ If you are using the period method of a woven band as opposed to facing, skip steps 5-6 and follow below:

- a) To get the band to lay flat on the curve, baste the edge and pull till it matches the appropriate curve.
- b) Iron the band as is on high and let it cool. The ribbon will now lay flat.
- c) To attach the band, fold the edge of the garment so the raw edge is on the inside of the garment.
- d) Tack the band over the raw edge and then again on the bottom edge as you would the modern facing.



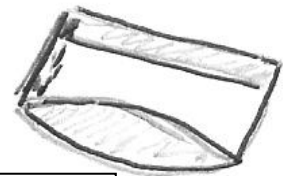
- **If you are lining:**
- Fold the edge of the garment so the raw edge is on the inside of the garment the main dress.
 - Tack this in place.
 - Fold the edge of the lining, being sure the lining is folded under a tiny bit more than the outer garment.
 - Place the lining inside the garment, wrong sides together.
 - Tack both layers in place.

YEAH!!! The body of the fitted dress is now complete. It even is beginning to look like one! Do a little dance! Have some more mead. Perhaps some chocolate. After all that, you definitely deserve it!!



Step 7

7) For the sleeves, RST sew the edges of one sleeve together. Repeat for the other sleeve. Finish these seams as well.



Step 8

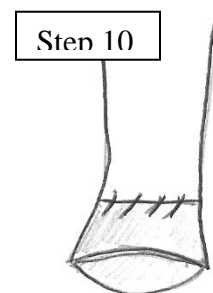
8) RST, sew the sleeve facing together if using the modern method at the side and press the bottom $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the edge up.



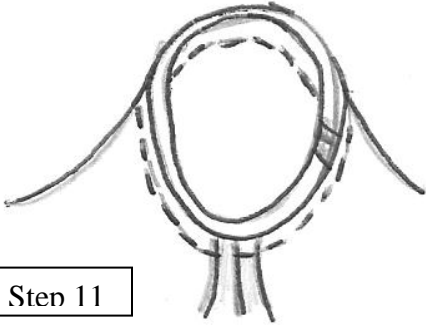
Step 9

9) Attach the facing, RST, to the bottom of the sleeve.
 a. If using the ribbon method, use the same method as you used for the body.

10) Turn and press, then tack in place.



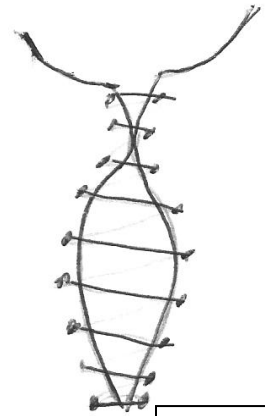
Step 10



Step 11

11) Turn the sleeve right side out. Place in the arm hold of the body which is inside out, thus having RST. Remember that the sleeve seam should be at the center of the back, **NOT** even with the body side seam. Pin and sew in place.

12) Now the hard part. On the inside front, mark the placement of the eyelets. (You can use grommets, or small button holes - whatever makes you happy.) The placement should look something like the diagram. This is for single lacing, which is the type shown in various illuminations and effigies. I have included instructions on placement and how to lace at the end. They can explain better than myself! If using metal eyelets, or grommets, it is suggested that you cover them with thread to make your fitted dress last longer by preventing them from ripping out when washed. Not to mention it makes it more comfortable against your body when wearing! Be sure to check the size against your lace. If you wrap them in thread, they need to be larger so the lace will still pass through the hole.



Step 12

If you want to button up the garment, simply place buttons where desired with corresponding buttonholes. Remember, most buttons were either metal with a shank or cloth. If your dress front is particularly curvy, I find it best to make my pattern larger and start with a straight front. Then refit the sides to help my buttons lay flatter and prevent unusual pulling/gathering around the chest. This may require additional fittings after the dress is made or by putting the buttons on after Step 6 and refitting the bodice portion at that time. For a period placement, your buttons should be at the very edge of the opening so they hang over the edge rather than on the actual front of the fabric as in modern clothing.

Whew! Not that's done, you are almost finished. Grab a friend or a dress form and hem. I usually cut it $\frac{1}{2}$ " longer than the desired length. I then press the hem under $\frac{1}{4}$ " and repeat to enclose the raw edge. You may choose any method of hemming you like.

Done! It is now ready to wear. You can add trim or embroidery, or once you feel comfortable, try variations such as parti-colored panels. Have fun!!

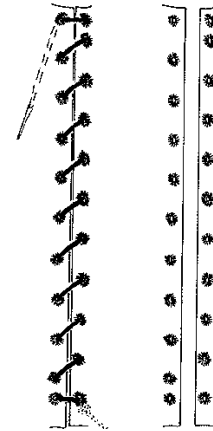
Lacing your clothes on

By Master Bedwyr Danwyn (Ted Lazcano) and Mistress Rhiannon y Bwa (Lois Swales)

The Spiral

A single lacing cord starts at the bottom of two opposing edges and spirals up through the eyelets to the end. The cord has one end finished with a metal chape and one end knotted. At the beginning, the chape end is threaded back through the cord inside to hold it in place. It must be removable if knotted in place, of course. A popular variation of the spiral skips eyelets and is left spread open.

Eyelet placement is not identical for the right and left sides. One side starts 1/2 a repeat offset. If the eyelets are the same on both sides, the top and bottom edges would not be even.



Reference: fingerloop.org/aglet.html

Picture references on cover page:

Left: Image taken off internet, source not provided.

Center: School of Lattagoona: Alterpiece from Castle of Santa Coloma de Queralt c. 1365

Right: Les Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry c. 1440