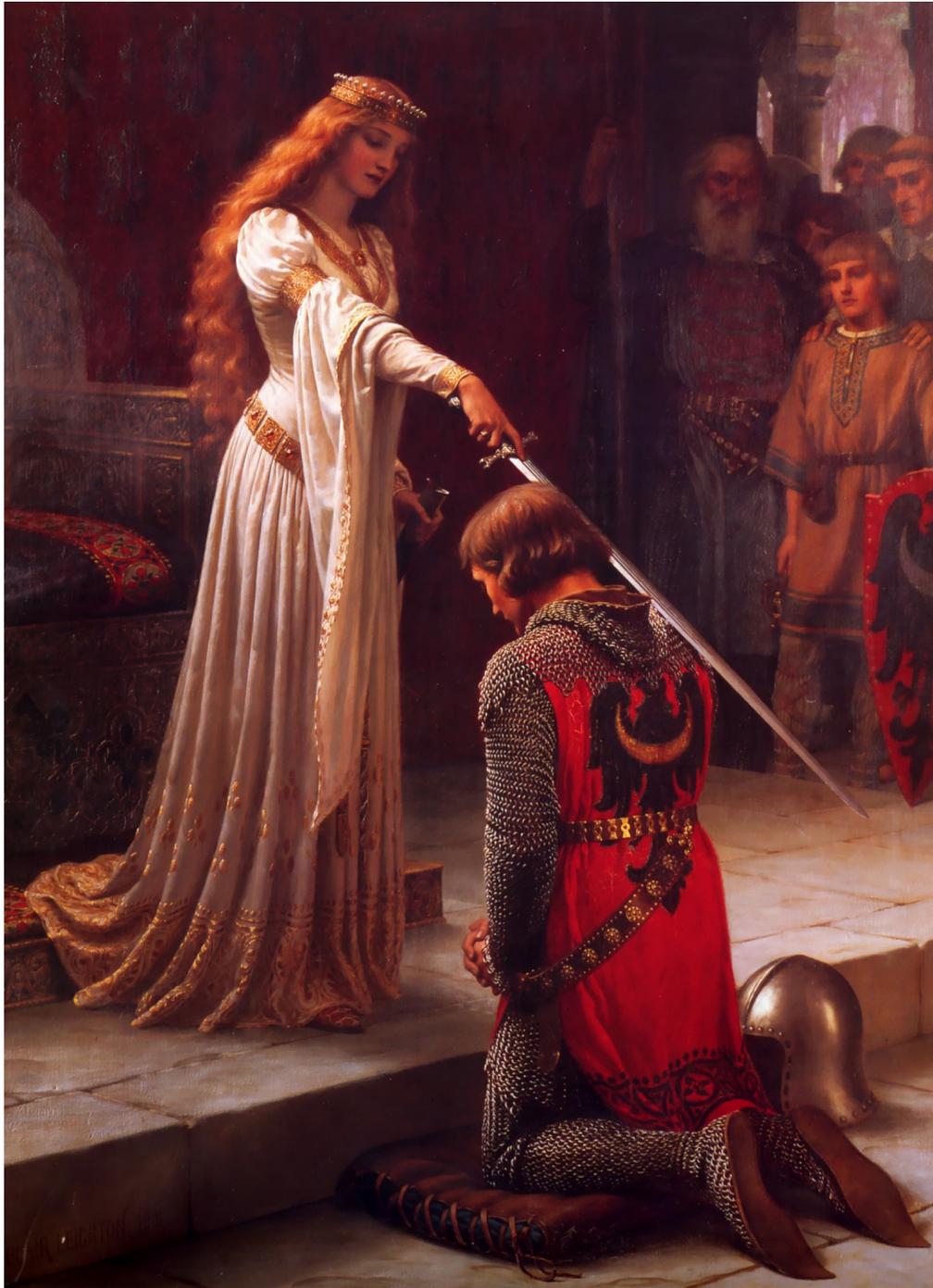


THE QUICK AND DIRTY BLIAUT

A simple guide to making one of the more romantic articles of medieval clothing.
Ideal for newcomers who want to garb themselves like a fairytale princess without committing anachronism!



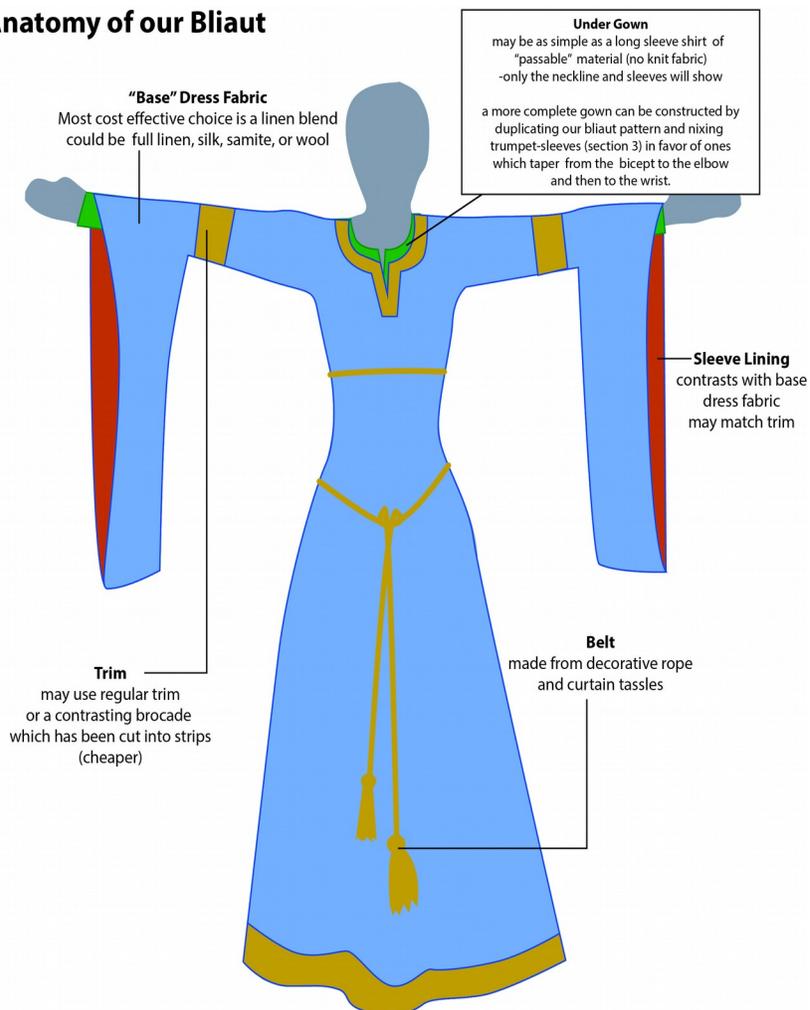
By Donna Fede di Fiore dkaulakis@gmail.com



A bliaut is a dress worn in areas of French influence throughout the 11th- 13th centuries. It is a garment that features a fitted torso and shoulders, a voluminous floor length skirt and long draping sleeves. This article of clothing was worn by both men and women, but has been romanticized in later days as the stereotypical “fairytale princess” dress.

This dress would have been worn over an under-gown and sometimes paired with an ornate belt. In our class we will be focusing on the bliaut itself and it's construction, but an under-gown can be adapted from the same base pattern.

Anatomy of our Bliaut

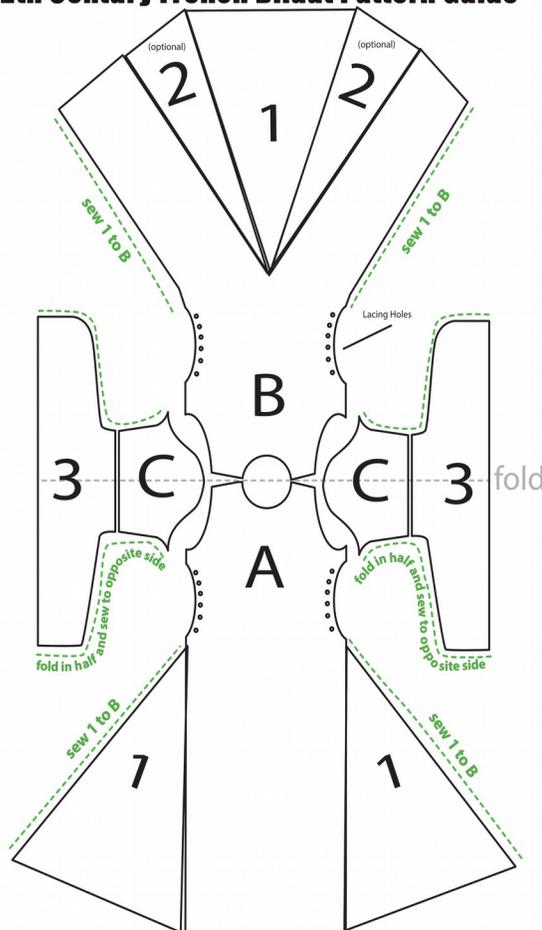


FABRIC

Linen, wool or silk. The most cost effective option would be to use a linen blend. In addition to the base fabric (which was usually a solid color), the sleeves would be lined in a contrasting material, and then the garment would be trimmed with a decorative fabric. For the trim, I prefer to use a brocade (silk would be best but isn't always within budget), cut into strips and sewn to adorn the hem, neckline, and upper arm. This is the most cost effective route, since a yard of a nice brocade is often much cheaper than multiple yards of jacquard trim.

I have included two possible patterns, along with a formula for figuring out how much fabric to obtain.
(see back of this packet)

12th Century French Bliaut Pattern Guide



AREAS OF DIFFERENCE

- For my pattern I prefer to have as much skirt as possible, so I use the remnants after cutting three equal sized gores. These remnants are optional and are not required to make the garment.
- My pattern includes gores on the sides and rear. I choose not to include a gore in the front because having that much fabric in the front is liable to trip me up when I walk. If your preference differs, there is enough fabric to include gores equally on both sides, front and back.
- The size and shape of your trumpet-sleeves may vary. In my designs the sleeves have more or a lip to them instead of a constant gradual rise to the elbow—it doesn't really matter. Shape them as you like.
- If you have chosen a base fabric with some stretch (like linen) you may opt to forgo the eyelets on the sides in favor of a seam that follows the curve of your body. I would refrain from making this seam too tight, however, otherwise you will have trouble getting in and out of your dress.
- As you can see by studying the historical

examples at the top of page one, the trim is also optional, however it looks lovely when included. For this pattern, the armbands are used to disguise the seam which merges C and 3. Though if you forgo the trim, these pieces could be merged into the same section.

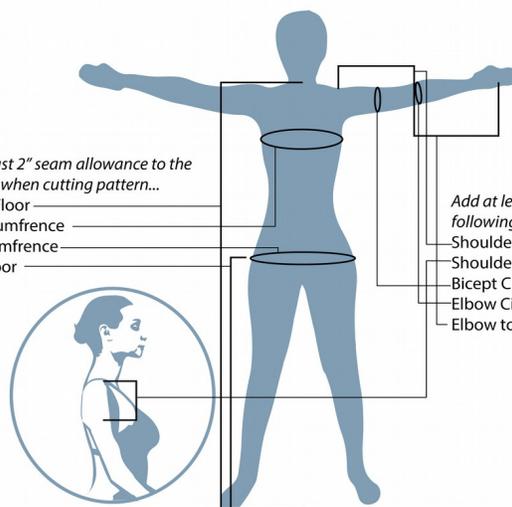
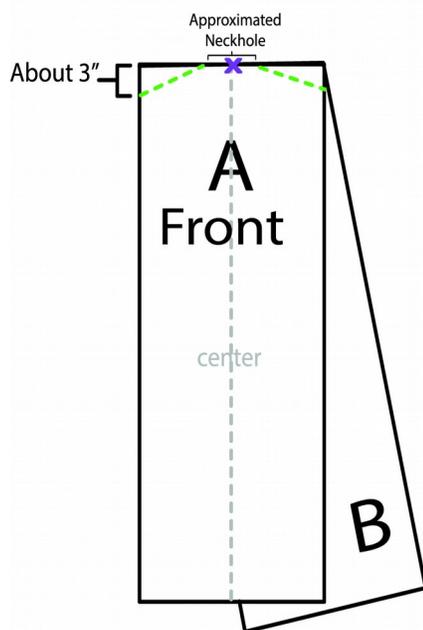
- The upper sleeve design is admittedly more modern in construction. In the absence of historical extants to confirm definitively how these fitted sleeves were achieved, I recommend this route since it fits most snugly. Though, if you prefer, this method could be replaced with a more simple design which utilizes gussets.

STEP BY STEP CONSTRUCTION

Step 1

Find your Measurements.

With a measuring tape, record the circumference of your bust, (widest) of you hips, length from the nape of your neck to the floor and length from the hips to the floor.



Add at least 2" seam allowance to the following when cutting pattern...

- Nape to Floor
- Bust Circumference
- Hip Circumference
- Hip to Floor

Add at least 1" seam allowance to the following when cutting pattern...

- Shoulder to Elbow
- Shoulder to Armpit
- Bicep Circumference (making a muscle)
- Elbow Circumference (while bent)
- Elbow to Knuckles (or to wrist, if preferred)

With these figures recorded, lay your base fabric down and measure; cut out sections **A** and **B** using either of the patterns I've included with this worksheet as your guide. Lay **A** over **B** (good sides facing in, if fabric has a "good" side) and fold them in half to find the center line. Mark this point at the top of **A** so you can center the neck hole.

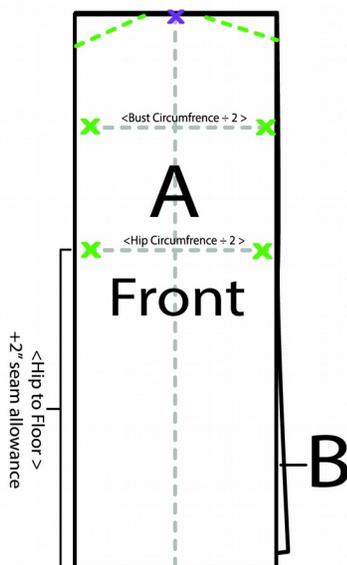
Measure over about 5" from either side and join **A** and **B**, sewing diagonally to follow the slope of a shoulder (shown in green in above). This slope should be approximately a 3" rise. This seam need not be precise, but it shouldn't be too steep.

Step 2

With **A** and **B** joined at the top, we will now hand-stitch place holders to mark the bust and hip outlines.

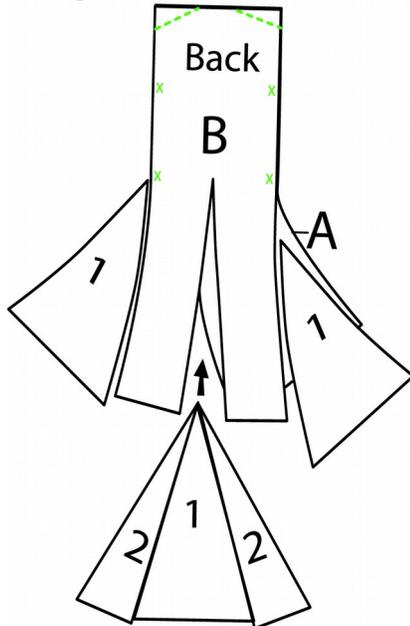
Fold in half again to find the center line, the bust and hip measurements will need to be centered over this line. From the bottom of **A** and **B**, measure upward to mark out the Hip to Floor measurement (+2" seam allowance). Now lay half the hip circumference figure on this line and hand-stitch a few passes to mark either side and tack **A** and **B** together. (shown to the left in green).

Move up the center line and eyeball where the bust line should fall. Do the same with this figure to mark out the bust line. (bust placement need not be perfect as these are quick stitches just to get things started.)



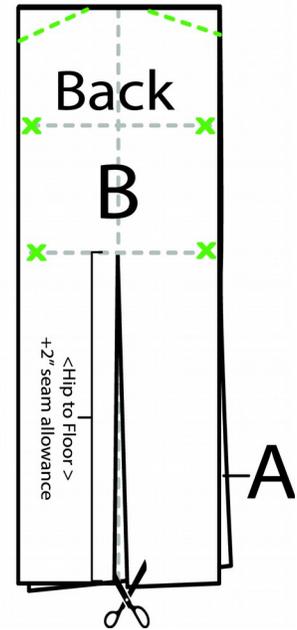
Now flip the sections, so **B** is up and **A** is facing down. Find the center point between the hand-stitched points on the hip line (hopefully this is centered along the original center line, but mistakes happen). From this point begin cutting down to what will be the hem of the garment. This is where we will place our back gore(s).

Step 4



Now sew the gores in place following the guide on the left. Please note, the points of the side gores should be joined to the hip points we marked earlier. Leave approximately .5" seam allowance when sewing.

Step 3



With our gores in place it's time to do our first fitting. Find the center point we marked earlier at the top of **A**, and cut downward to make room for your head and widen the neck hole for later modification.

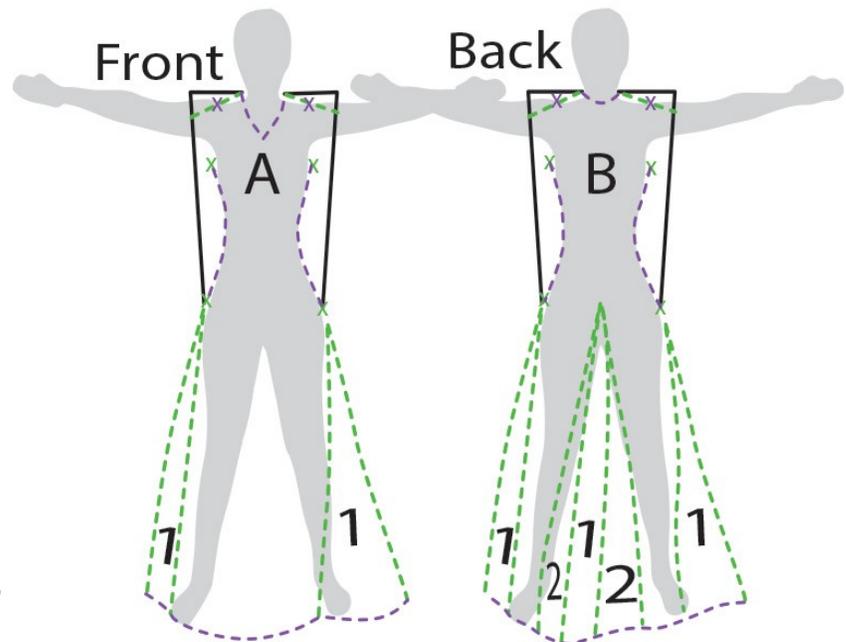
Put the b্লাউট on ("bad" side out) and have a friend mark the top of the shoulder joints with a pencil.

If the bust line is too high and is cutting into the arm pits, then seam rip and refit as this time.

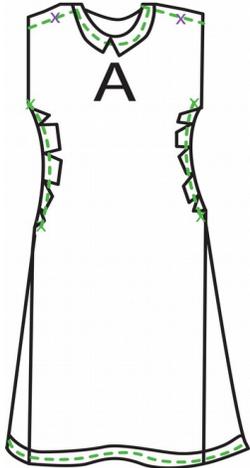
If you are forgoing side lacing, loosely pin the out the curve of your torso. If you intend to include eyelets, make this curve very fitted. After pins are in place, mark out the seam by penciling along this pin line. The pins are prone to falling out or will need to be removed in order to disrobe, so this step is important.

While still wearing the dress, pin the hemline in place and begin shaping the neckline.

Step 5



Step 6

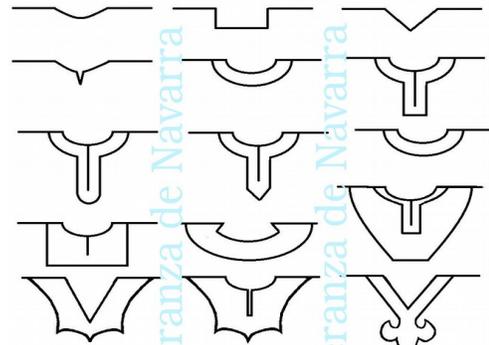


Remove bliaut and (keeping the bad side facing out) sew up the hem and neckline using a “double fold” hem.

At this time, either sew up the sides normally (following the pencil guides we've marked) or fold each side over individually (this may require the cutting of relief slits to allow for more flexibility in our fabric) and make a line of stitches to hold the fabric in place.

If you are using a particularly light material, you may want to add an extra line of support fabric to this edge, otherwise proceed to mark out and measure where you will be putting your eyelets. (I typically place them about 1.5” apart, and try to keep the same number on each side)

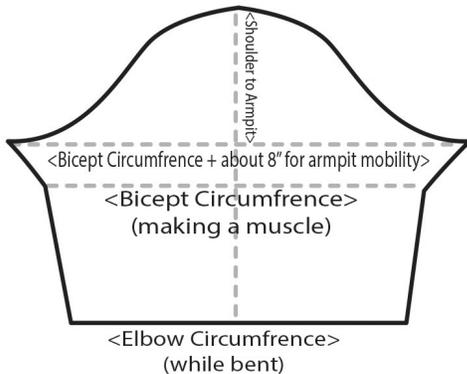
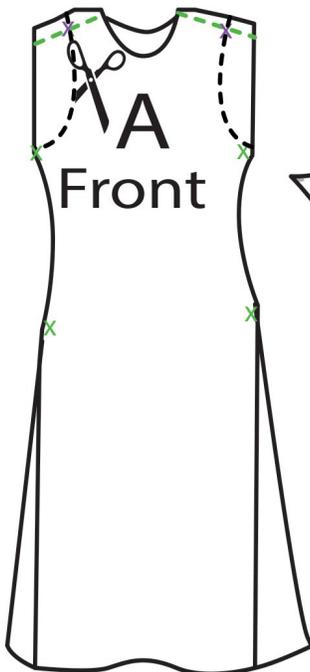
Eyelets can be sewn by hand (and historically were) or can be replaced with 3/4” grommets which can be found in most craft or hardware stores (most reliably online).



Neckline Variations from Period Sources

illustration courtesy of THL Esperanza de Navarra

Step 7



Now that the core of our dress is assembled, cut out arm holes starting from the shoulder points we marked out earlier (remember to leave .5” seam allowance). If in doubt, put the bliaut back on and trace the area around the armpits to be sure.

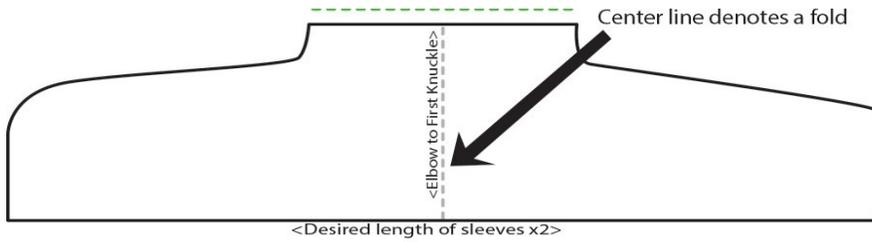
Following the guide on the left, measure and construct the upper sleeve section or **C**.

Begin pinning **C** to the core dress, starting with the top of the shoulder cap, joining it to the shoulder points and moving downward to the armpits. You will likely have extra fabric, and this is ok (as we will need it if we need to fix anything).

Once **C** is joined with the dress, Fold it in half and sew along the bottom to form the sleeve.

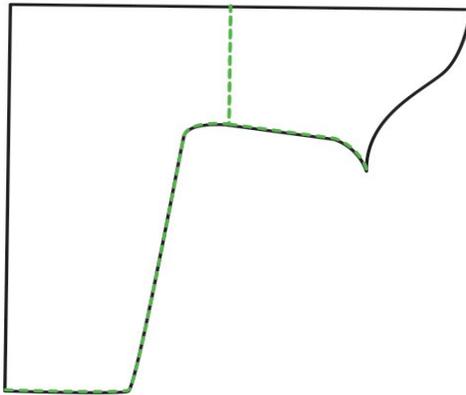
Step 8

Now create the lower sleeves (section **3**) using the guide below, cutting a pair from the base fabric and an additional pair from the contrasting lining. Join **3** to section **C** and sew along the top edge as demonstrated below.



Then fold **3** in half and sew along the under side line to close the sleeve.

When folded in half



Step 9

Add finishing touches. Insert lining and french hem along the outside lip of the trumpet-sleeves. Whip-stitch the inside seam to close the lining and join it with the base fabric.

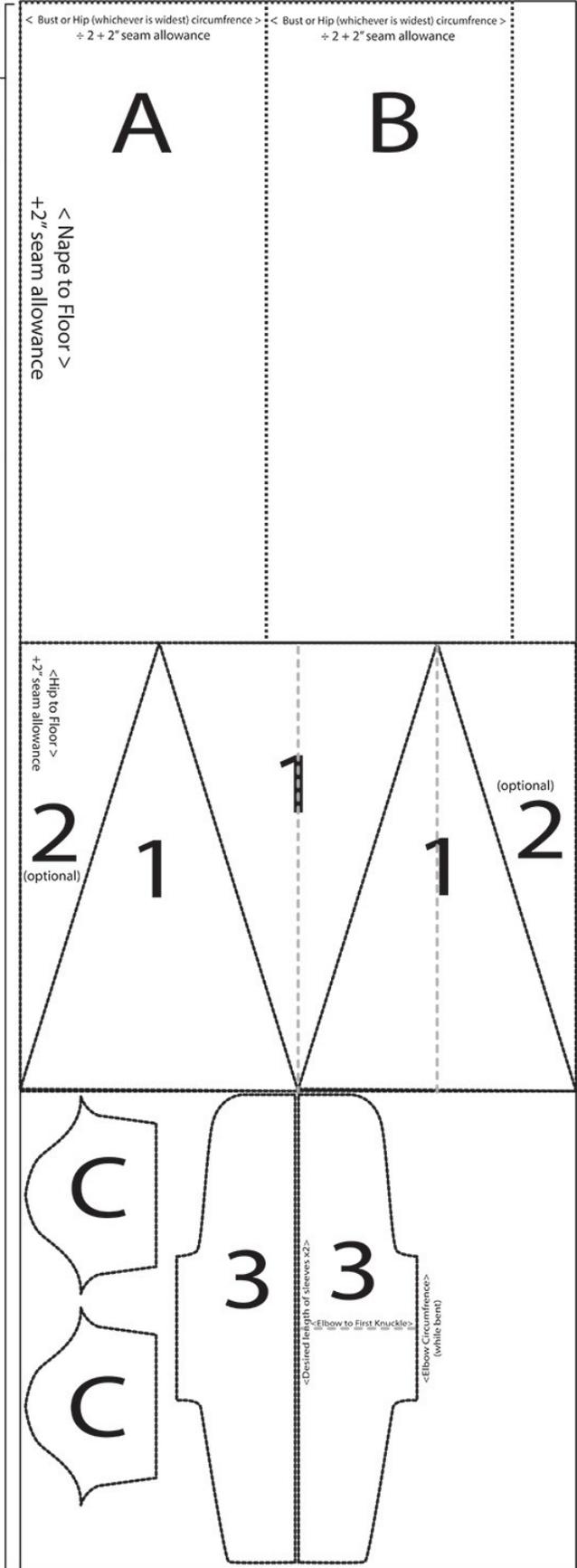
Add trim to skirt hem, neckline and arms (using the trim to hide the seam that joins **C** and **3**).

If the widest of hip/bust is **less than half** the width of the fabric bolt use the following to get the most out of your fabric

How much (base) fabric to get?
 Desired length of sleeves x2
 Hip to floor +2"
 + Nape to floor +2"
 Length (in inches)

How much trim to get?
 Width of section A x2
 width of bolt x2
 36" (neckline estimate)
 +Bicep circumference +2" x2
 Length (in inches) of trim
 (it is advisable to buy more than you think you will need)

How much lining?
 Get enough fabric to cut out an additional pair of section 3



Option B Pattern layout

If the widest of hip/bust is **more than half** the width of the fabric bolt use the following layout to get the most of your fabric

<p>How much (base) fabric to get? Hip to floor +2 + Nape to floor +2 x2 Length (in inches)</p>	<p>< Bust or Hip (whichever is widest) circumference > + 2 + 2" seam allowance</p> <p>A</p> <p>< Nape to Floor > +2" seam allowance</p> <p>3 3</p> <p><Desired length of sleeves x2> Elbow to First Knuckles Elbow Circumference > (while bent)</p>
<p>How much trim to get? Width of section A x2 width of bolt x2 36" (neckline estimate) +Bicept Circumference x2 Length (in inches) of trim (it is advisable to buy more than you think you will need)</p>	<p><Hip to Floor > +2" seam allowance</p> <p>2 1 1 2</p> <p>(optional) (optional)</p>
<p>How much lining? Get enough fabric to cut out an additional pair of section 3</p>	<p>< Bust or Hip (whichever is widest) circumference > + 2 + 2" seam allowance</p> <p>B C C</p>