

FABULOUS COSPLAY  
FOOTWEAR

REGAN CERATO AND KELLEY KULLMAN *of Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay*



CREATE EASY BOOT COVERS, SHOES & TIGHTS *for* ANY COSTUME

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REGAN CERATO AND KELLEY KULLMAN  
*of Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay*

**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt  
Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Thor from *Thor*

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## *dedication*

With special thanks to the people who made this book possible: Sam, Theresa, Giorgia, Cat, Sami, Emilia, Kacie, Kyle, and Amie.

And, of course, forever love to our Cow Clan family—we'll see you all at a convention soon!

**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt Crunchies  
Cosplay

**COSTUMES:** Princess Bubblegum  
and Marceline from *Adventure Time*  
(an original cosplay design)



**COSPLAYER:** Sarcasm Himé  
**COSTUME:** Sewing Machine  
from Sakizuki Art Book



# CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION 6

HOW TO USE  
*this* BOOK 7

*base* SHOES 9

TOOLS *and*  
MATERIALS 10

*modifying* SHOES  
*and* BOOTS 13

*making* BOOT  
COVERS 18

*making* CUSTOM-DYED  
TIGHTS 24

*making* ILLUSIONARY  
THIGH HIGHS 28

PATTERNS 34

ABOUT *the* AUTHORS 38



## COVER IMAGE

**COSPLAYERS:**  
Cowbutt Crunchies  
Cosplay and  
Terieri Cosplay

**COSTUMES:**  
Button Knight (an  
original cosplay  
design), Beidou from  
*Genshin Impact*, and  
Lumpy Space Princess  
from *Adventure Time*



# INTRO *duction*

*“Where am I going to get knee-high high-heeled boots in pink glitter zebra print with gold trim?”*

If you've ever asked yourself a question like this, you just might be a cosplayer! Cosplay is the art of dressing up as your favorite fictional character, and it is a growing hobby for people all over the world. Cosplayers set out to recreate characters from games, movies, TV, and more; however, bringing those characters to life might be trickier than you think! It takes creativity and patience to transform fantastical, one-of-a-kind designs into a head-to-toe cosplay, and sometimes that journey ends with ...

*“Nobody sells shoes with giant bat wings and pink bows. I guess I'll just wear something close enough.”*

**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Button Knight  
(an original cosplay design)



## **Footwear is often a struggle for cosplayers.**

While many learn to manipulate fabric and foam to perfectly recreate clothing that represents their favorite over-the-top, elaborate characters, making shoes remains a far frontier for all but a handful. Real shoemaking requires special tools and can be expensive and time consuming. So, for many cosplayers, whatever they can find that's "close enough" becomes good enough.

**Not anymore!** This book breaks down ways to customize and create custom foot and legwear for a flawless finish to your costume. Follow along with veteran cosplayers Cowbutt Crunchies as we demonstrate how to make every type of leg covering a cosplayer could ask for, from removable boot covers to custom tights to thigh highs that don't roll down! Complete with two patterns, this handbook is sure to put some pep in your step!



# HOW TO USE *this* BOOK

We suggest reading this book from beginning to end before getting started. Like many cosplay skills, footwear-making techniques build on each other. Looking through each chapter could provide ideas, tips, and tricks that will work for any costume.

**COSPLAYER:** 16bitsami

**COSTUME:** She-Ra from *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

## *This book includes:*

- .....● **TWO PATTERNS FOR BOOT COVERS AND ILLUSION SHORTS**, given in a reduced size for enlarging, as a tinyurl to download and print, or with a QR code.
- .....● **THE TOOLS AND MATERIALS CHAPTER**, which provides a comprehensive list of everything you need to assemble your project materials.
- .....● **PROJECT CHAPTERS**, which provide step-by-step instructions with photos to help you create your fabulous, fantastical, fandom footwear! Instructions are provided for modifying shoes and boots with paints and embellishments, making boot covers, customizing tights, and making illusionary thigh highs.

## GENERAL SEWING INSTRUCTIONS

### *preparing the patterns*

The two patterns are given in a reduced size on the book pages for enlarging, as a tinyurl to download and print, and with a QR code (see Patterns, page 34).

Use the patterns as “master” copies by placing a piece of tracing or tissue paper over the pattern and carefully tracing your desired size. This copy can be modified as needed, it is easier to pin through, and it allows you to reuse the masters over and over.

### *preparing the fabric*

Prewash your fabric before cutting. Most stretch fabrics should be washed in cold water and machine dried on low heat.

### *sewing stretch fabric*

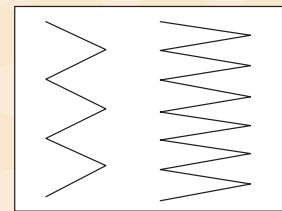
**THE STITCH:** Most cosplay footwear, except for the shoes and boots, is made of stretch fabric, which should be sewn with a stretch stitch.

We suggest using the zigzag stitch wherever a stretch stitch is called for. In general, the wider the zigzag, the more the item can stretch. Typically, the default zigzag stitch setting on your sewing machine can be used unless the instructions call for a wide zigzag.

**THE NEEDLE:** Use a stretch or jersey needle, designed specifically for sewing stretch fabrics. A regular universal needle can lead to skipped stitches and tension issues.

**THE PINS:** Use plenty of pins! Layers of stretch fabric can be tricky to keep pinned. Look for ball-point pins for best results.

**SEWING:** Be careful to feed the fabric evenly so it doesn't stretch out of shape. If you find your fabric is stretching as you sew, place a piece of tissue paper between the fabric and the machine. Simply tear the tissue paper away after you finish sewing the seam.




A default machine zigzag; a wide machine zigzag for extra stretch

# base SHOES

## CHOOSING SHOES *and* BOOTS

*The first step to choosing the perfect shoe or boot is to consult your character's reference images.* Ignore the color of the shoe and instead focus solely on the silhouette and shape. Is your character wearing a recognizable type of shoe such as a boot or a sneaker? Is it chunky or lightweight? Does it have a high or low heel? These can be great starting points, but don't feel obligated to follow the reference images exactly if you prefer a shoe that's easier to wear—your comfort is more important than complete accuracy.

Once you have a general idea of what you need, it's time to hunt for a close match. Local discount shoe stores and online retailers are a great place to start, and even cheaper footwear can be found at second-hand stores or on auction sites such as eBay. Try on your shoes before modifying them or making covers, because you never want to sacrifice comfort for cosplay accuracy. Convention days are long, and comfortable feet are happy feet!



**COSPLAYER:** Coffee Cat Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Ahri from K/DA

## BEST BASE SHOES *for* BOOT COVERS

*Boot covers, made from a thin layer of stretch fabric, completely enclose a base shoe,* so choose a closed-toe shoe that slips on and off easily. Pumps, stilettos, wedges, or even ballet flats make a perfect base shoe. Avoid styles with zippers, buckles, or laces that require adjusting or could create unsightly bumps under the thin fabric cover.

Both flats and heels can be turned into great covered shoes, so choose a heel according to your character's design and your own comfort level. If you prefer a zero-heel option, try smooth plastic slip-ons or clogs. Crocs are inexpensive and come in styles that are great bases for flat boot covers!

# TOOLS *and* MATERIALS

## PAINTS AND SEALANTS

Not all paints are created equal. Shoes flex and bend as you walk, so choosing an equally flexible paint is a must! Avoid standard acrylic paints or spray paints, as these can crack and flake as the shoe moves.

### *Suitable paints include:*

#### ● ANGELUS LEATHER ACRYLIC PAINT:

These paints come in a shiny satin finish and work great on all sorts of shoes in addition to leather ones.

#### ● PLAIDFX FLEXIBLE ACRYLIC PAINT:

This line was created specifically for cosplayers' flexible costume pieces and comes in a variety of colors, including metallics.

#### ● LUMIERE ACRYLICS (BY JACQUARD PRODUCTS):

These work on a variety of surfaces including leather.

#### ● FABRIC OR FLORAL PAINT:

Inexpensive paints made for fabric won't crack and work great in a pinch!

**COSPLAYER:** Giorgia Costumes

**COSTUME:** Witch Peach from *Mario Brothers* (an original cosplay design)





## In addition to paint, you'll need:

### ● ANGELUS LEATHER

#### PREPARER AND DEGLAZER:

If your base shoes are pleather or polyurethane (PU) material, you'll need to apply a stripper to remove any finish that may prevent the paint from sticking.

### ● ANGELUS ACRYLIC FINISHER:

Are you rough on your shoes? Apply a flexible sealant over your dried paint job to prevent damage.

### ● ANGELUS WATER & STAIN

**REPELLENT:** Give your shoes even more protection from the elements.

### ● MOD PODGE FABRIC:

This easy-to-find product adds a protective coating.

### ● PAPER TOWELS OR RAGS

to apply the stripper

### ● FINE SANDPAPER (200 GRIT) AND NAIL POLISH REMOVER

for preparing surfaces as needed

### ● GOOD-QUALITY CRAFT PAINTBRUSHES



## FABRIC DYES AND SUPPLIES

Dyeing tights, or even dyeing fabric for boot covers, requires several tools. Always dye in a well-ventilated area with open windows, away from any pets or children.

- **FABRIC DYES:** These are inexpensive and easy to use! For tights made with natural fibers like cotton or rayon, Rit Dye and iDye for Natural Fabrics (by Jacquard Products) are good brands. Even if the tights contain spandex, the amount is usually fairly small, so go ahead and use the dye for natural fibers. For nylon-fiber tights, use Rit DyeMore since it is made for synthetic fibers like polyester.
- **STAINLESS STEEL DYE POT:** This pot should *only* be used for crafting and never for food. Thrift stores can be a great source of cheap kitchenware for this purpose. If you don't have a separate dye pot, a plastic bucket can be used in a pinch.
- **SPOON OR TONGS:** Like your dye pots, these tools should never touch food and should only be used for dyeing or crafting.
- **RUBBER DISHWASHING/CLEANING GLOVES:** These are necessary to protect your hands and arms from steam and dye splatter.



## FABRICS

The best-fitting shoe covers and thigh highs are created from stretchy knit fabrics rather than woven materials. This stretch allows the covers to be both formfitting and easy to tailor. Stretch knits also bend as you move, which prevents wrinkling and warping. Stretch fabrics come in 4-way and 2-way stretch options—you'll want to use 4-way stretch fabric. Some good options include spandex, stretch suede, stretch velvet, stretch lamé, Milliskin, and sport knits. For the top portion of the Illusionary Thigh Highs, look for stretch solid mesh.

Search the stretch fabric section of your local fabric store for these types of knit fabrics. If you can't find what you're looking for, online retailers such as Spandex House, Inc. and Spandex World Inc stock a fantastic variety of stretchy fabrics.



## EMBELLISHMENTS

What's a cosplay without a little bling? If you can dream it, you can attach it! Stuck on what to accessorize with? Consider some of these common cosplay embellishments: chains, rhinestones, large gems, lace trim, beads, and filigrees.



## BASIC TOOLS, GLUES, *and a* FEW EXTRAS

Keep the basic sewing tools on hand: fabric scissors, small trimming scissors, hand-sewing needles, and threads in a variety of colors.

Round out your arsenal with these additional supplies.

- **NONSLIP SHOE PADS:** Glue or sew these pads to the bottom of your shoe covers to provide better grip and to prevent any sliding as you walk.
- **TACKY GLUE, A HOT GLUE GUN, GLUE STICKS, AND LIGHTWEIGHT GLOVES:** Keep these on hand to make quick work of attaching embellishments. Gloves will prevent getting glue on your fingers.
- **HEAVY-DUTY OR LEATHER HAND-SEWING NEEDLES:** You'll need these for sewing through leather and heavier materials.
- **AWL:** Use this to pierce holes in leather so it is easier to sew embellishments to the shoes.

# MODIFYING SHOES *and* BOOTS



*Cosplay footwear  
doesn't always look  
out of this world!*

And in many cases, customizing a store-bought pair of shoes can save time and effort over making full shoe covers. Changing the color, adding bows and embellishments, attaching closures—these are fun and simple ways to transform existing footwear into fabulous accessories.

**COSPLAYER:**

Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Marceline from  
*Adventure Time* (an original  
cosplay design)

## PAINTING YOUR SHOES

Paint can be used on a huge variety of footwear and is one of the most common ways to alter shoes for cosplay. From adding details to creating colorful patterns to simply changing black leather to brown, paint can completely change the look of a shoe without needing to make a complete cover.

*Painting is also easy to tackle, so long as you remember these three things:*

- Prep your shoes properly.
- Use the right paint and technique.
- Seal your work.

### *prep your shoes*

Different materials require different prep techniques.

#### **CLOTH, CANVAS, OR SUEDE**

Sneakers and other soft shoes should be cleaned first. A short wash cycle in the washing machine works, especially for thrifted or used base shoes. If they are otherwise in good shape, use a toothbrush and a mixture of water and baking soda to spot clean. Because cloth shoes can be flimsy, stuff them with paper or bubble wrap while you paint them to maintain their shape. And, of course, remove any laces prior to painting.

#### **LEATHER OR PLEATHER**

Leather and pleather shoes often come with a finish on them that is meant to repel stains, including your paint. Acetone or a shoe deglazer removes the finish that keeps the paint from adhering. To use these products, apply a small amount to a paper towel or microfiber cloth and gently buff across the surface of the shoe in circular motions.



#### **PLASTIC, VINYL, BUCKLES, OR HEELS**

Smooth materials and elements like these require an additional step to help the paint grip to the surface. Before painting, lightly scuff these areas with a fine sandpaper. Buff in a circular motion until the area feels slightly rougher to the touch.



## let's get painting!

Nothing is worse than spending the time and effort to get your shoes looking perfect, only to have the paint flake and chip as soon as you start walking around. Because shoes are subject to so much movement, always use a specialty paint designed to flex and give (see *Paints and Sealants*, page 10).



## SOLID COLORS

Use a quality craft paintbrush to apply thin, light coats of paint to your shoes. Allow the paint to fully dry between coats until you've reached the desired amount of color. Avoid applying too much paint, which will compromise the paint's ability to stretch and move with the shoe and can cause cracks.



## PATTERNS AND DESIGNS

If your shoe design requires multiple colors, focus on one color at a time to avoid muddling your paints. Apply as many layers of your first color as desired, letting them dry between coats and then begin applying the second shade, again allowing the paint to dry between applications.



For complex patterns, try using stencil cutouts to guide your painting. Or create your own homemade stencil with painter's tape. Trim the tape to the desired width, press the tape onto the shoe, and paint along the edge. Once dry, peel away the tape to reveal a perfectly clean line!



## sealing and protecting

After painting a beautiful shoe, you want to protect your hard work! A sealant locks the paint in place and protects the paint job from the elements, whether it's a rainy walk from hotel to convention center or a photo shoot in the woods.

Apply a clear acrylic sealant as the vital last step. As with paint, apply thin layers for a flexible finish!



*tip* FOR PRINCESS GLASS HEELS OR SPARKLING RUBY SLIPPERS, MIX CRAFT GLITTER INTO YOUR SEALANT TO ADD SOME SPARKLE AND SHINE TO YOUR PAINT JOB. LET THE GLITTER LAYER DRY COMPLETELY AND SEAL OVER IT WITH A LAYER OF NON-GLITTER SEALANT FOR CONVENTION-PROOF PERFECTION.



## ATTACHING EMBELLISHMENTS AND ACCESSORIES

*From magical bows to vampire-hunter spikes, sometimes it's the accessories that really complete the outfit.*

Adding gems, lace, bows, ruffles, chains, trim, and other embellishments to your shoes is an easy way to add detail to your costume and tie your shoes into the outfit more completely.

To glue or to sew? That is the question.

Your answer depends on two important factors: the type of the accessory and its placement. Consider the following chart when making your decision:

Size and Weight	Types of Embellishments	Glue or Sew?
Small or lightweight items	Lace, small bows, gems	Use flexible glue, like tacky glue or hot glue gun and glue sticks.
Extra-large or heavy items	Bells, buckles, buttons, foam armor, heavy jewels	Stitch in place with heavy thread if possible, depending on location.
Location	Considerations	Glue or Sew?
Near the ankle, calf, or top of the shoe	These areas stretch and twist when you walk, which spell danger for embellishments.	Stitch in place as securely as possible.
Over the toe, platform, or heel of the shoe	These areas are thick and heavy and difficult to maneuver a needle through.	Glue in place as securely as possible.

When gluing the embellishments in place, keep in mind that dirt, residue, and paint can weaken the glue's hold. It's important to make sure the surface is clean and deglazed, but concentrate your cleaning to the areas where you plan to apply glue to prevent stripping the finish from the unembellished areas.

When sewing the embellishments in place, use an awl to pierce holes; then stitch with heavyweight thread and a heavy-duty needle.



Red-circled areas are best for gluing, while yellow circled-areas are best for stitching.

*tip* IF YOUR SHOE DESIGN REQUIRES BOTH PAINTING AND EMBELLISHING, LEAVE A SMALL, UNPAINTED AREA WHERE YOU PLAN TO ATTACH THE EMBELLISHMENTS. AFTER PAINTING, SEW OR GLUE THE EMBELLISHMENTS IN PLACE AND THEN CAREFULLY TOUCH UP ANY VISIBLE, UNPAINTED AREAS USING A SMALL BRUSH. PAINT SLOWLY AND PROTECT YOUR EMBELLISHMENTS BY COVERING THEM WITH PAINTER'S TAPE IF NECESSARY.



**COSPLAYERS:** Ivorivet and Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUMES:** Pincushion and Button Knight (original cosplay designs)

# MAKING BOOT COVERS

*True custom shoes have long been a struggle for cosplayers*—the bright colors, specific colors, specific heights, and custom trim that our favorite characters wear means a quick trip to the shoe store just isn't going to work. But cobbling shoes from scratch is something that can take years to learn and master. So instead, cosplayers turn to a handy, beloved shortcut: boot covers!

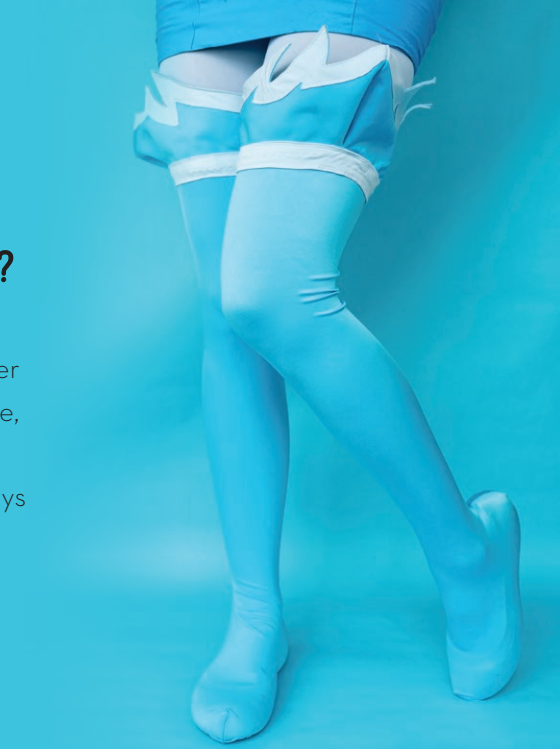
**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt  
Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Button Knight  
(an original cosplay design)



## HOW *are* BOOT COVERS DIFFERENT FROM BOOTS?

Boot covers are fabric sleeves that cover both a base shoe and your own leg. This allows you to create truly custom faux boots with whatever colors, heel style and height, and trim you need. They're also removable, which means you can reuse your base shoes in the future, saving time and effort for your next cosplay. While any fabric can be used, we always recommend creating your covers from stretch fabric for a smooth, seamless, and comfortable look.



# BOOT COVERS

### YOU WILL NEED

- Boot covers pattern (pages 34 and 35)
- Pattern paper or tissue paper for tracing the pattern
- Measuring tape
- 1-2 yards of 4-way stretch fabric (*Fabrics with a definite right and wrong side or with a nap will require the larger amount.*)
- 1-1½ yards of ½"-wide braided elastic
- Scissors, thread, and pins
- Adhesive-backed nonslip shoe pads or grips

**1** Measure around the widest part of your calf and use this measurement to prepare a copy of your chosen pattern size. Cut 2 fabric pieces for each boot cover, taking care to cut mirrored versions if your fabric has a right and wrong side. **FIG. A**

**2** Pin 2 pieces right sides together, and baste the front and back seam using a stretch stitch and a ½" seam allowance. Leave the top and bottom edges open. **FIG. B**



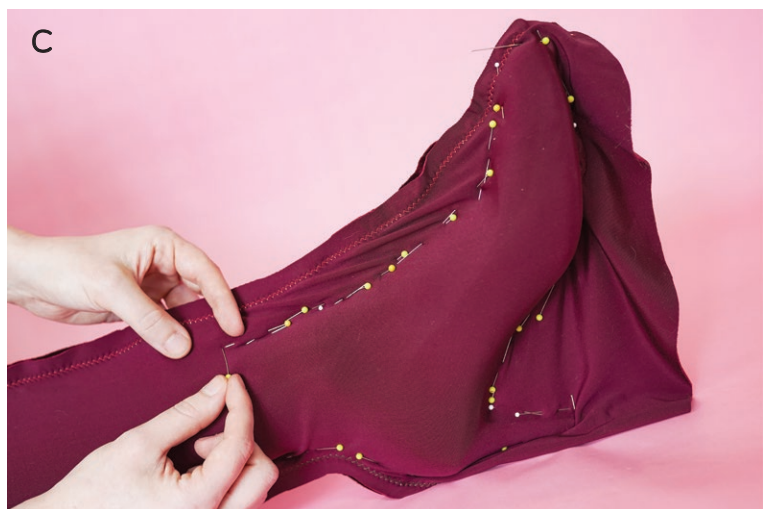
**3** Leaving the piece wrong side out, pull the sleeve onto your leg and put on your base shoe. The pattern is large enough to fit a variety of leg shapes, shoe sizes, and shoe types, so the basted cover will be loose to start.

**4** It's time to pin! Using as many pins as needed, carefully pin around your leg and foot area. With one hand, pinch the excess fabric and gently pull it away from your leg until the fabric is taut. Pin with your other hand, carefully working down your leg and under the shoe. **FIGS. C & D**

*tip* BEFORE PINNING FOR AN EXACT FIT, START WITH A FEW KEY PINS UNDER THE BALLS OF YOUR FEET, AT THE HEEL, AND AT YOUR ANKLE, CALF, AND KNEE TO ANCHOR THE PIECES IN THOSE AREAS. THIS KEEPS THE PIECE FROM SHIFTING AS YOU PIN EVERYWHERE ELSE.

Try and pull the fabric tight enough to make it smooth but not so tight that it feels uncomfortable. You may find once you've pinned all the way around, there are areas where wrinkles have popped up. Simply unpin that area and pin again to pull out more excess fabric. Patience is the name of the game!

**5** Once the entire cover is pinned, carefully ease your leg out of the cover. Check for any pins that have loosened and secure them. Reach into the cover and gently pull out the shoe. You should now have a fully pinned fabric piece ready for sewing.



**6** Use a stretch stitch to carefully follow the lines of pinning, removing the pins one at a time as you sew. Use the tips in General Sewing Instructions (page 8) for help in sewing stretch materials. Trim the excess seam allowance, leaving about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " remaining. **FIG. E**

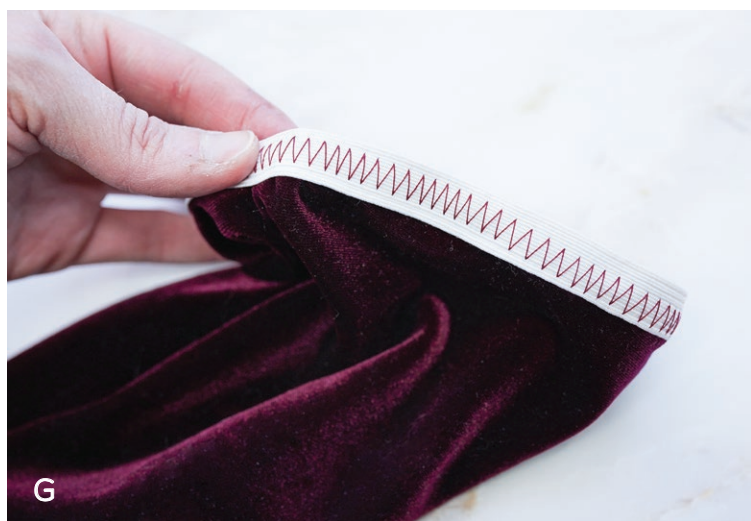
**7** Turn the boot cover right side out, and ease the *other* shoe, the opposite of the one used for pinning, inside. Push it all the way into place, including the toe and heel. **FIG. F**

*Keep in mind:* When the boot cover is turned right side out, it mirrors the seamlines and fit, as well as the shoe it was fitted over. If you pinned the boot cover on your left leg with the left shoe, it will properly fit your right leg and right shoe when turned right side out. Placing the left shoe back in might mean crooked seams or a mismatched fit.

**8** With the shoe inside, put on the cover to check the fit and height. If any wrinkles have developed, turn it wrong side out again to pin and sew it a bit tighter in those areas. Repeat Steps 2–8 for the other boot cover.

*tip* THIS IS ALSO HOW YOU SHOULD PUT ON THE FINISHED BOOT COVERS—BY EASING THE SHOE IN PLACE WITH BOTH HANDS THEN SLIDING IN YOUR FOOT. DON'T TRY TO PUT ON THE COVER WITH THE SHOE ON YOUR FOOT; IT'S A LOT HARDER TO DO AND IS SURE TO POP THE STITCHES!

**9** Use the measuring tape to measure the circumference of your calf below the knee. Cut 2 pieces of  $\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide braided elastic, each 1" shorter than the measurement. With each piece of elastic, overlap the ends by  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and stitch together to create 2 elastic loops.



**10** Pin the elastic to the right side of the top edge of the cover. The elastic will be smaller around than the cover, so gently stretch the elastic as you pin it to ease in the extra fabric.

**11** Stitch the elastic to the cover using a very wide zigzag stitch. As you sew, gently stretch the elastic again to join the layers without forming any tucks. **FIG. G**



H

**12** Measure  $\frac{1}{4}$ " down from the bottom edge of the elastic and mark the cover. Use this as your fold line to fold the fabric's edge toward the inside of the cover. This creates a finished edge with no visible elastic. Pin and stitch again with a wide zigzag stitch as in Step 11. **FIG. H**

**13** Adhere nonslip shoe pads to the bottom of the covers, especially where the balls of your feet rest. This prevents slipping and helps stop wear and tear. If your pad loses its stickiness, try applying a flexible adhesive like fabric or tacky glue to the pad and press into place. **FIG. I**

**14** Your boot covers are now complete! Embellishments such as cuffs, buttons, or bows can be added by hand sewing them in place or adhering with a flexible, fabric-friendly glue. **FIG. J**



I

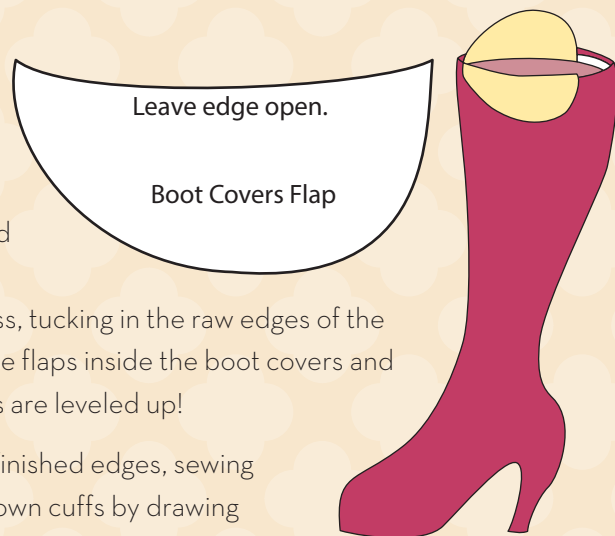


J

## BONUS!

For decorative flaps or faux cuffs, cut this simple shape and scale up so the width is one-fourth of your calf measurement. With the fabric folded same sides together, cut 4 pieces to yield 2 flaps per boot cover. Sew 2 shapes right sides together with a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance, leaving the top edge open. Turn and press, tucking in the raw edges of the top edge as you iron. Repeat with the remaining pieces. Tuck the flaps inside the boot covers and hand stitch them to the elastic. Fold over, press, and your boots are leveled up!

For very elaborate or stiff materials, add a tacking stitch at the finished edges, sewing through the boot cover to keep the cuffs in place. Design your own cuffs by drawing them first on poster board to help you perfect the shape.

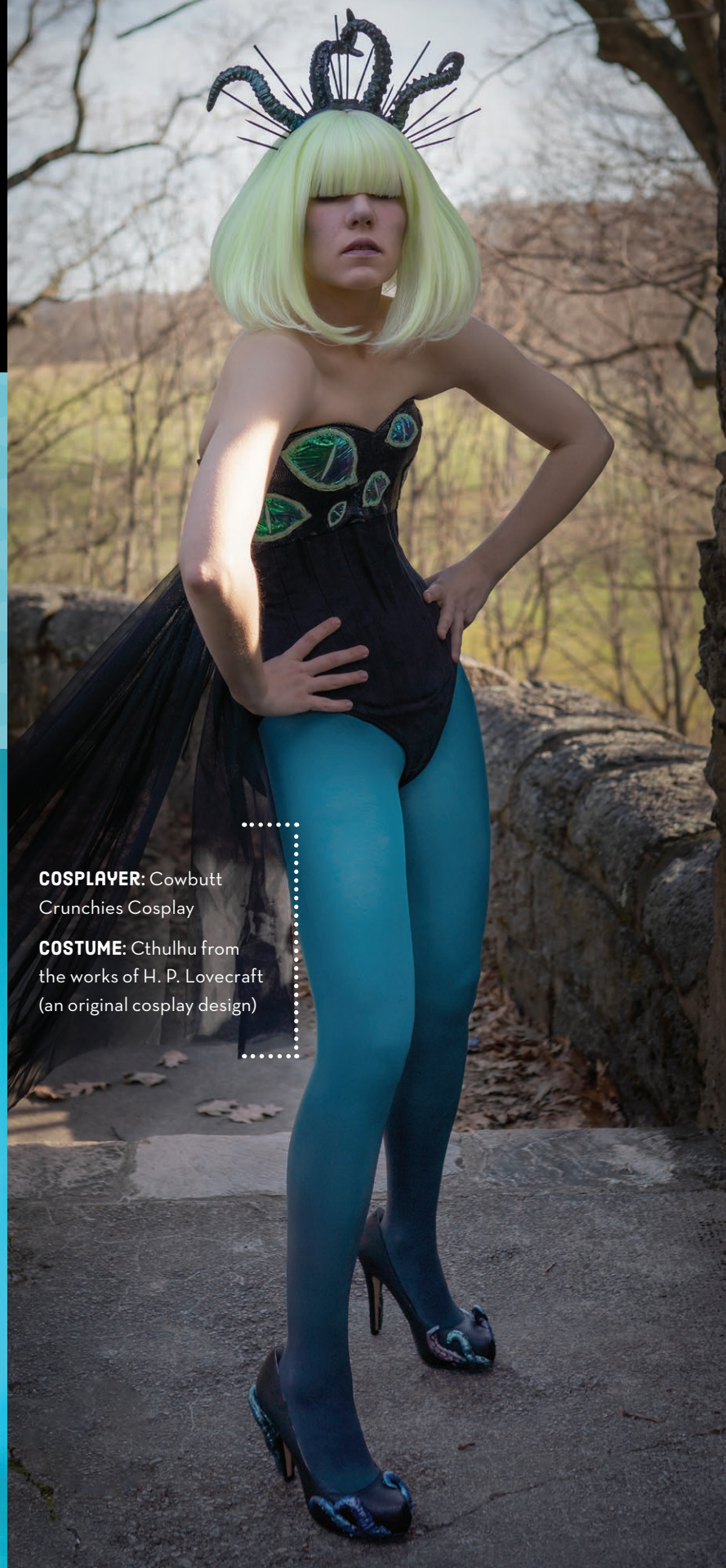


**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt  
Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Button Knight  
(an original cosplay design)

# MAKING *custom-dyed* TIGHTS

*Footwear can be more than just boots and pumps—sometimes it's what's inside your shoes that really pulls the whole costume together!* Customizing your own tights or legwear is a creative way to create accurate, comfortable, and secure accessories to wear with any kind of shoe.



**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt  
Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Cthulhu from  
the works of H. P. Lovecraft  
(an original cosplay design)

Can't find the exact shade of orange? Need a two-tone ombré that changes colors exactly at the knees? No problem! Fabric dye is an easy way to transform store-bought tights without compromising the stretch or texture. Just be sure to know the fiber content of your tights to determine the best dye to use.

Check to see what your tights are made of—many tights are 90% cotton or rayon, and 10% spandex or another synthetic fiber. In this case, dyes for natural fibers often work just fine. However, if your tights are made of mostly nylon or another synthetic fiber in addition to the spandex, you'll need to use dyes for polyester fabric (see Fabric Dyes and Supplies, page 11). Be careful! Synthetic fibers color best with dyes that require a higher temperature, which can damage the stretchability of your tights. Buying natural fiber tights eliminates the risk.

*tip* REMEMBER THAT DYE CAN ONLY DARKEN, NOT LIGHTEN. FOR INSTANCE, YOU CAN DARKEN WHITE TIGHTS TO A RICH RED, BUT YOU CANNOT LIGHTEN PURPLE TIGHTS TO A PALE LILAC. THE SAME RULES APPLY TO OMBRÉ COLORS. TO CREATE AN OMBRÉ OF TWO CONTRASTING COLORS, YOU NEED TO DIP-DYE BOTH ENDS OF WHITE TIGHTS. ALWAYS CONSIDER THE COLOR WHEEL WHEN PLANNING YOUR DYE COLOR!

## PREPARING *the* DYE

- 1 Hand wash your tights using a small amount of gentle detergent to remove any finish. Tights should be wet, but not dripping, when they go into the dye bath.
- 2 Fill a stainless steel pot (not used for food preparation) with enough water so that your tights float freely. Place it on the stove top and turn the heat to medium-high. Your water should be hot but not boiling, around 140°F. If you do not have a food-separate pot, heat the water to the appropriate temperature on the stove and then pour it into a large plastic bucket.
- 3 Add the dye to the water and stir. Follow the manufacturer's instructions, but the usual ratio is a ½ cup of liquid dye or 2 tablespoons of powder dye to 3 gallons of water. For pale colors or a light over-tint, lower the dye amount to an ⅛ cup of liquid dye or a ½ tablespoon of powder dye to 3 gallons of water. If you are starting with pure white tights or seeking a bold color, use more dye. Adjust the ratio as needed for the size of your dye pot and the number of pieces you will be dyeing. **FIG. A**

*tip* ALWAYS TEST YOUR DYE AHEAD OF TIME ON A SCRAP PIECE OF FABRIC. DON'T HAVE ANY SIMILAR FABRIC AVAILABLE? DIP THE CORNER OF A PAPER TOWEL INTO YOUR DYEBATH TO CHECK THE COLOR BEFORE ADDING YOUR TIGHTS. THIS WILL GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF HOW THE MIX WILL LOOK ON FABRIC. **FIG. B**



## DYEING *the* TIGHTS

### 1 FOR SOLID COLORS:

Drop your prewashed tights into the dye bath. Stir continuously with a dye spoon or tongs to evenly distribute the color and prevent the tights from touching the bottom of the pot. The amount of time in the pot depends on the desired color tone and the manufacturer's instructions. For rich or dark colors, this can be as long as 30 minutes. For pale colors, begin checking on the tone after just 3 minutes. To finish, skip to Step 5.

2 FOR OMBRÉ COLORS: Hold the tights by the end that is staying the original color. In this example, we're adding black feet to colored tights and holding the tights by the waistband to dip the feet into the bath. **FIG. C**

3 Carefully lower the tights into the pot until the top of the water touches 1" below where you want the ombré to start. Soak for 10-20 seconds; then lift straight out of the water. **FIGS. D & E**

*tip* USE SAFETY PINS TO MARK THE PLACE ON THE TIGHTS WHERE YOU WANT THE OMBRÉ TO START.

4 Lower them again, but this time, stop when the top of the water is 1" below where it touched on the previous dip. Soak for 10-20 seconds and then lift again. Continue to repeat this process, dipping less and less of the tights into the water each time, until you have reached the end of the color transition area. If you want a darker color, repeat the process again as necessary. **FIG. F**



**5** Remove the tights from the water. They'll be hot, so be careful; use a waterproof container or heavy rubber gloves to carry them. In a sink or tub, rinse the tights in cold water until the water runs clear. Using a gentle detergent or dish soap helps remove the excess dye. The wet tights will be slightly darker than the final, dry color, so carefully wring out any excess water and use a hairdryer to dry a small patch of the fabric to check the final color.

**6** If the color is too light, repeat the process to add additional color. It's always better to err on the side of too little time in the pot and then dye again. Remember that you can always go darker, but it is difficult to remove dye.

**7** Hang the tights to dry. For ombré tights, hang with the undyed portion at the top to prevent drips from staining that area.



**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt  
Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Apprentice  
from *Sakizo Art Book*

# MAKING *illusionary* THIGH HIGHS

Stockings that extend over the knee and end mid-thigh are called *high socks* or *thigh highs* by cosplayers and are a staple of many cosplay designs. Unfortunately, the antigravity magic that keeps anime characters looking perfect doesn't always hold up on a convention floor!

Many cosplayers know the pain of pulling socks and thigh highs back up before each photo. While fashion tape or special sock adhesive can keep these in place, there's an even better method—transforming them into invisible tights!

Illusionary thigh highs have two parts: the bottom, or sock portion, and the top portion, a pair of illusion shorts that matches your skin tone. Sew the two pieces separately for ease of fit and embellishment, and then stitch them together for a seamless pair of tights that look like the perfect pair of high socks and will never roll down!

**COSPLAYER:** Cowbutt  
Crunchies Cosplay

**COSTUME:** Beidou from  
*Genshin Impact*



## YOU WILL NEED

- Illusion shorts pattern (pages 36 and 37)
- Pattern paper or tissue paper for tracing
- Measuring tape
- 1½–2 yards of stretch mesh fabric for shorts
- 1–2 yards of 4-way stretch fabric for socks (*Fabrics with a definite right and wrong side or with a nap will require the larger amount.*)
- 1–2 yards of ½”-wide elastic
- Scissors, thread, and pins
- Iron and ironing board

## MAKING ILLUSION SHORTS (*top of thigh highs*)

When choosing solid mesh fabric, try to match your skin tone as closely as possible. Spandex suppliers often stock a variety of colors. It’s always a good idea to order a swatch before purchasing the full yardage amount so you can compare it against your skin for a perfect match. If you are matching to a colorful body paint, mesh also comes in unusual colors, but the swatch rule still applies!

**1** To choose a size, measure around the fullest part of your hips. Note that different fabrics stretch differently; if your fabric is less stretchy or extra stretchy, you may find you need to go up or down a size.

**Note:** *The pattern is designed to extend down the leg about 6”; add to the length as needed so the shorts meet the top of the sock portion of your design.*

**2** Prepare the pattern and cut 2 shorts pieces in your chosen size. Include the notches and other markings as needed. **FIG. A**

**3** Use a ½” seam allowance and a stretch stitch to sew the shorts. Fold each shorts piece in half, aligning the edges; then sew each leg seam. Press the seam allowances open. **FIG. B**





**4** Turn one of the pieces right side out so that the seam allowance is facing the inside. Slide it into the other piece so the right sides are together. Align the leg seams and the top edges. Sew the crotch seam. Press the seam allowances to one side. Clip the seam allowance if needed. **FIGS. C & D**



**5** To create a waistband casing, turn the shorts wrong side out. **FIG. E**

**6** Fold the top of the shorts down on Foldline 1. Fold again on Foldline 2. Use a wide zigzag stitch close to the edge of the first fold, leaving the area between the 2 dots open for inserting the elastic. **FIG. F**



**FIG. F**

**7** Cut the elastic to your waist measurement minus 2". Insert the elastic through one end of the casing opening and out the other end. Make this easier by pinning a safety pin to one end of the elastic and using the pin to push the elastic through the casing. Overlap the ends of the elastic by 1/2" and zigzag stitch. Finish stitching the opening. Turn your completed shorts right side out. **FIG. G**



**G**



**COSPLAYER:** 16bitsami

**COSTUME:** Flareon from  
*Pokémon* (an original  
cosplay design)

## MAKING SOCKS *or* THIGH HIGHS (*bottom of thigh highs*)

The steps to create thigh highs and boot covers are very similar, with only a few modifications. Refer to the boot covers pattern (pages 34 and 35) and instructions with the following adjustments.

**1** The boot cover pattern and instructions are for knee-high legwear. For thigh-high legwear, measure the distance between your knee and the desired height. While tracing the boot cover pattern, mark a line that distance beyond the boot cover top. Extend the front and back seamlines to meet the new length, as shown. To account for additional width in your thigh, follow the existing curve of the boot cover pattern—don't draw straight up and down! Trace the cut line for socks instead of the line for boot covers. **FIGS. H & I**

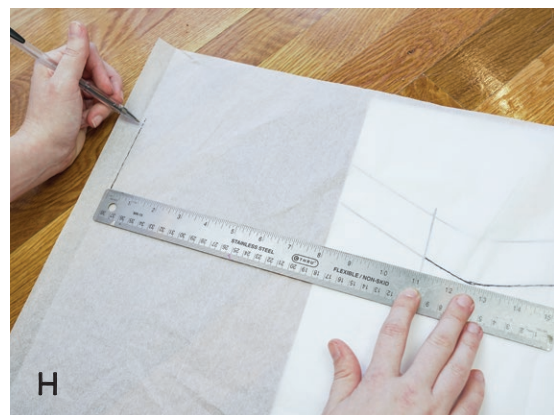
**2** Follow Boot Covers, Steps 1–6 (pages 19–21), except pin around your foot instead of a shoe. Pin the fabric along your entire leg, all the way up to your thigh, to create a close, custom fit. **FIG. J**

**3** To finish the top edges, fold  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the inside and temporarily pin in place. You will stitch the edges when you sew them to the shorts.

*tip* IF YOUR THIGH HIGHS HAVE CUFFS, TRIM, LACE, OR OTHER EMBELLISHMENTS THAT SHOULD BE PEEKING OUT BETWEEN THE SOCKS AND THE SHORTS, PIN OR TACKSTITCH THOSE TO THE TOP EDGES OF THE SOCKS AT THIS STAGE.

**4** Sometimes there's no replacement for fitting on your body. Because the illusion shorts and the socks are both stretch fabrics, and you need to keep in mind things like alignment, symmetry, and stretch, it's usually best to pin the shorts and socks together while you're wearing them. A few tips:

- Have a friend or assistant help you! If you're flying solo, use a full-length mirror and take your time to pin the pieces together for a flawless fit.
- Put on the illusion shorts first and make sure the seams are straight and the bottom edge of the shorts are at the same place on both thighs.





**K**

- Pull on and pin one sock at a time. Pull it all the way up, making sure the seams aren't twisting. Stretch the sock to the desired height and overlap the shorts leg. Make sure the top of the sock is an even height all the way around your leg.
- Once the sock is positioned over the shorts, carefully pin through all the layers, including the turned edge of the sock and any embellishments.

**FIG. K**

- It's usually easiest to pin and sew one sock at a time. Use the sewn sock as a reference when pinning the second one. Any stretching or pulling that happened in the sewing stage for the first leg can be adjusted for the second leg.

**5** Use a wide zigzag stitch to secure the top of the socks to the bottom of the illusion shorts. **FIG. L**

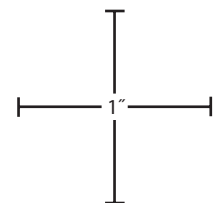
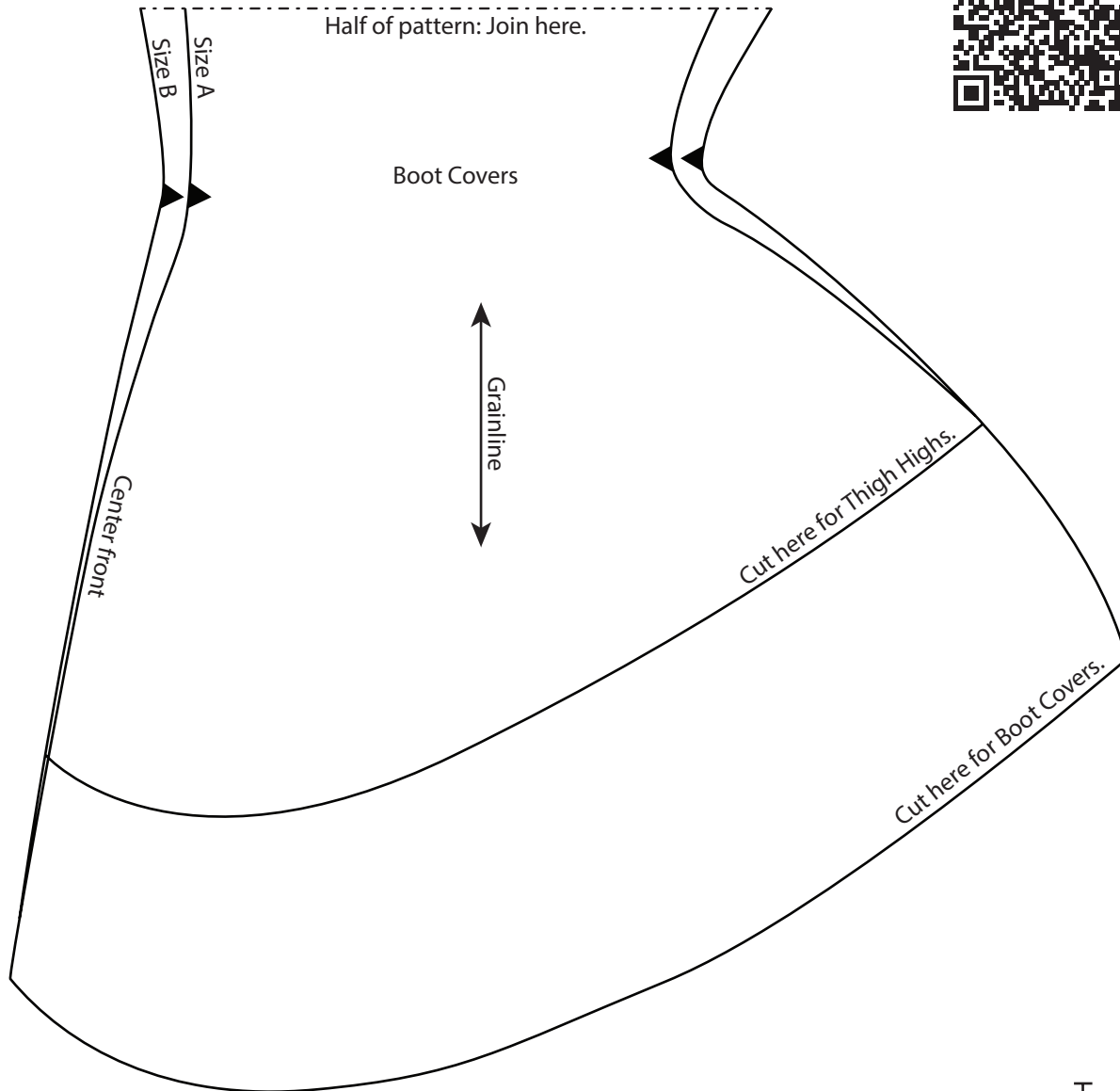
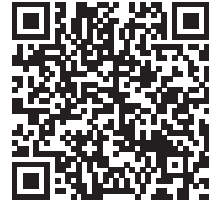


**L**

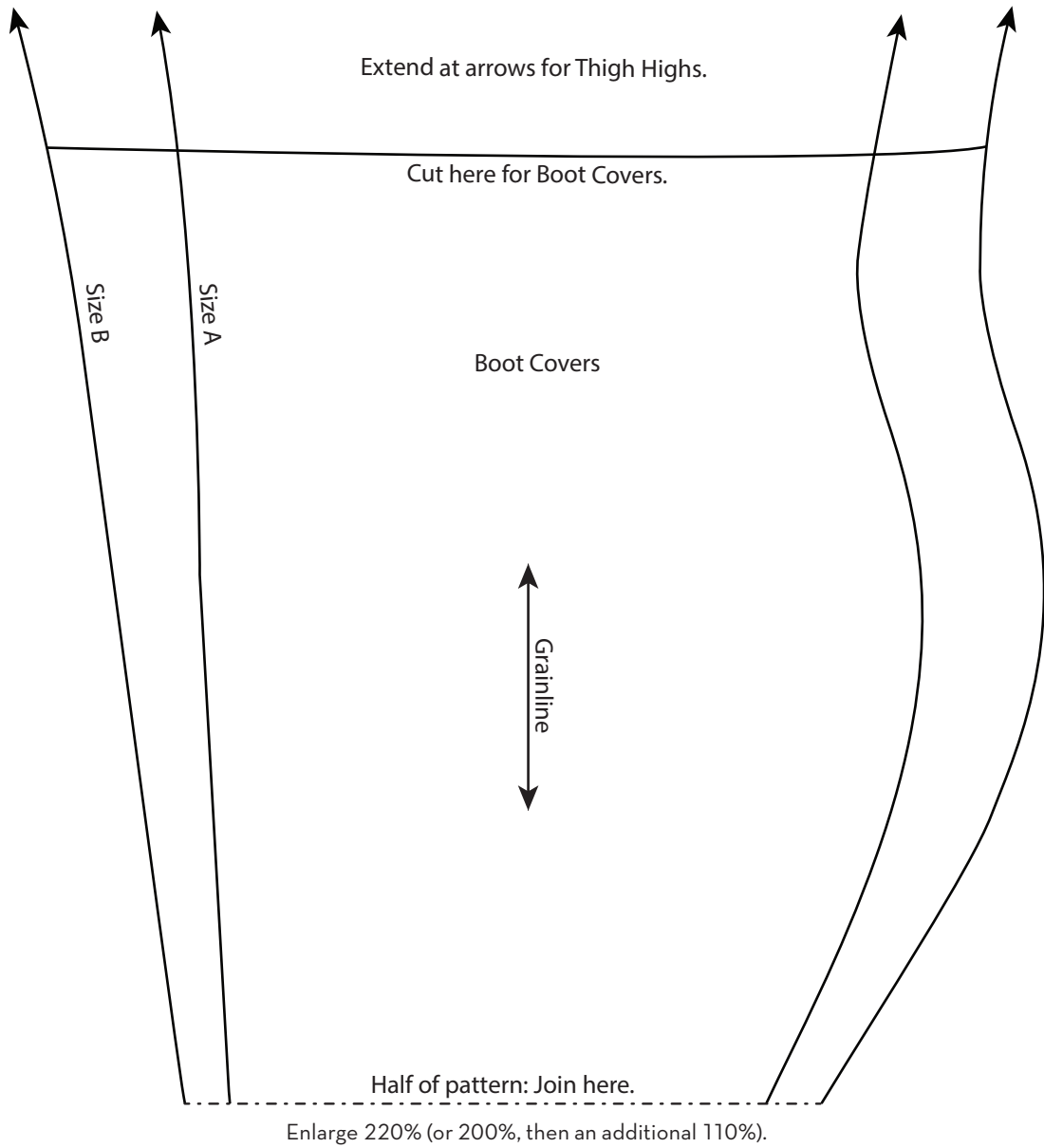
# PATTERNS

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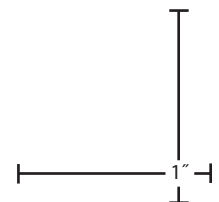


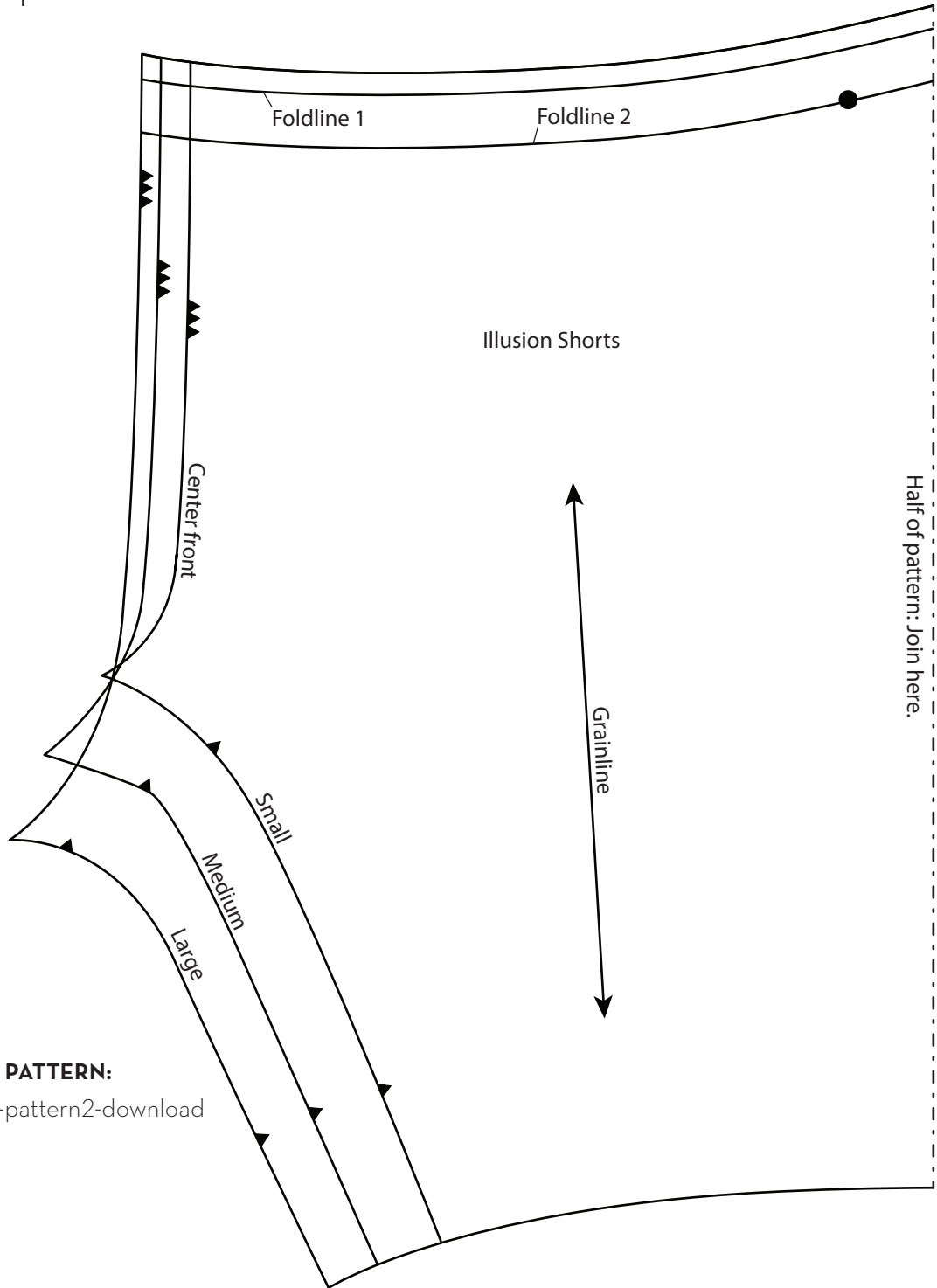
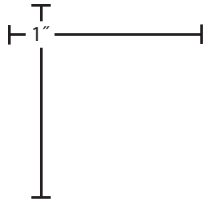
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Measure around the fullest part of your calf to find your size.

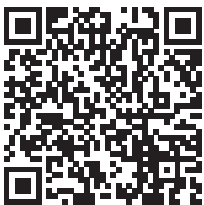
<b>A</b>	14"
<b>B</b>	18"

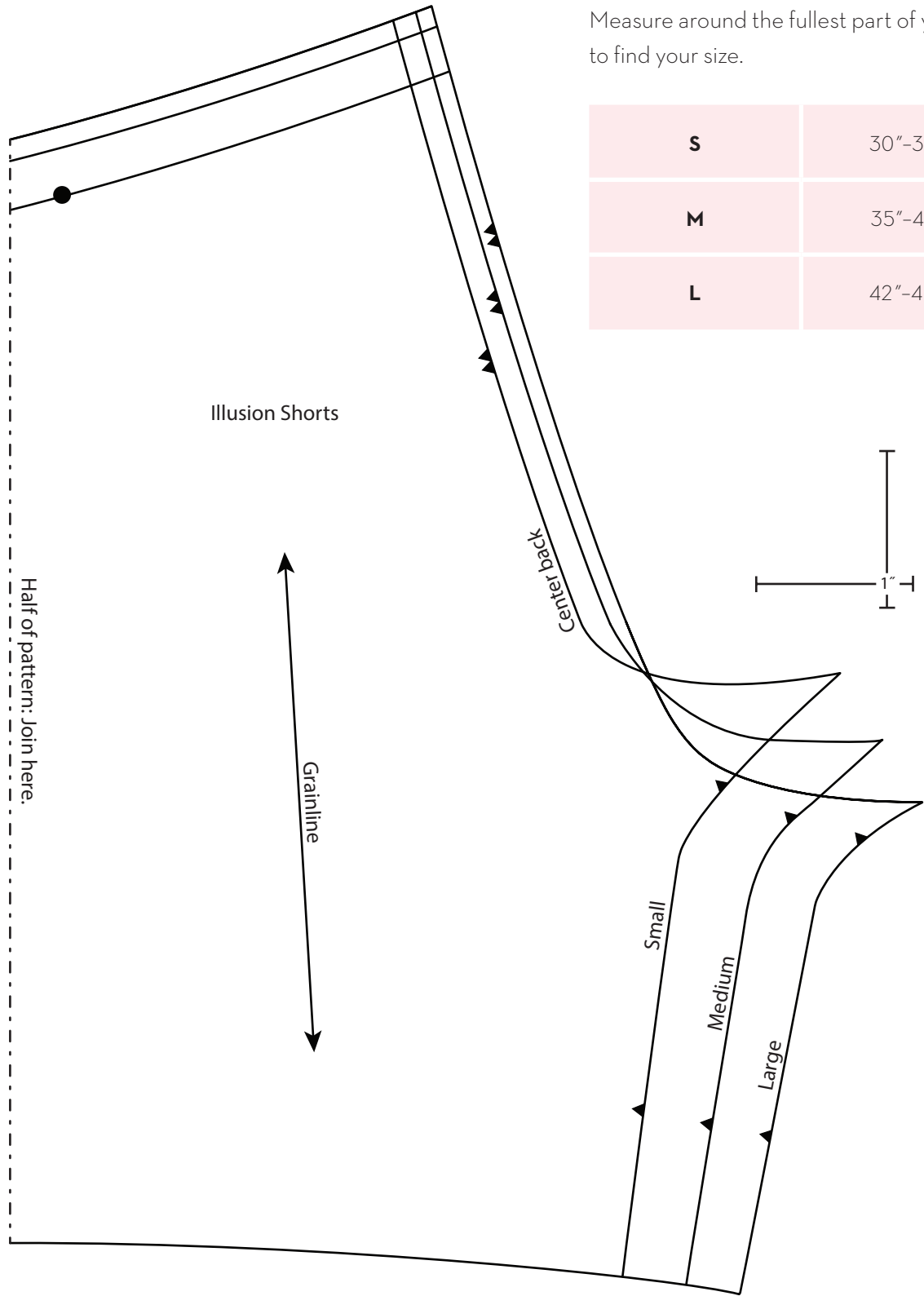




**DOWNLOADABLE PATTERN:**

[tinyurl.com/11479-pattern2-download](https://tinyurl.com/11479-pattern2-download)





Measure around the fullest part of your hips to find your size.

<b>S</b>	30"-35"
<b>M</b>	35"-41"
<b>L</b>	42"-48"

Illusion Shorts

Half of pattern: Join here.

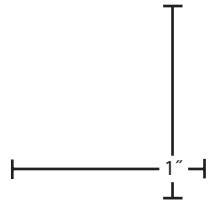
Grainline

Center back

Small

Medium

Large



Enlarge 220% (or 200%, then an additional 110%).



**COSPLAYERS:** Regan Cerato (*left*)  
and Kelley Kullman (*right*)

**COSTUMES:** Princess Bubblegum  
and Marceline from *Adventure Time*  
(original cosplay designs)

# ABOUT *the* AUTHORS

**REGAN CERATO** and **KELLEY KULLMAN** are better known as Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay, an internationally acclaimed couple who specializes in complex couture cosplay and incredible pop culture-based designs. They are always pushing the envelope of cosplay, and their passion for craftsmanship has taken them around the world, judging contests and teaching cosplayers everywhere from at home, in New England, to Sydney, Australia. Regan occasionally competes herself, and in 2019 she was crowned the Global Champion at the Crown Championships of Cosplay. With twenty years of experience, Regan and Kelley focus on learning, creativity, and introducing newcomers to the art of cosplay.

*Visit Regan and Kelley online and follow on social media!*

**WEBSITE:** [cowbuttcunchiescosplay.com](http://cowbuttcunchiescosplay.com)

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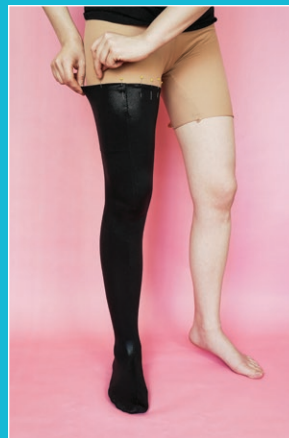
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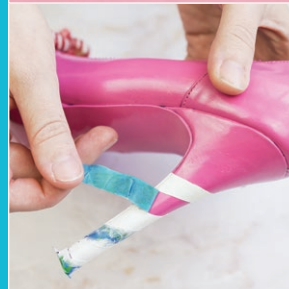
Humble Bundle



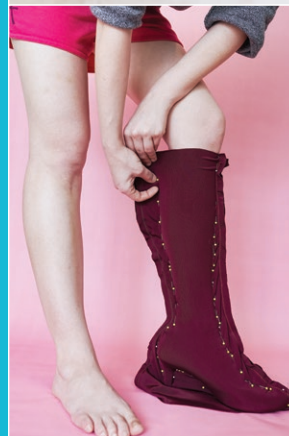
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