

# THE BOOK OF -COSPLAY SEWING-

STARTING FROM ZERO



BY SVETLANA QUINDT

# SO MUCH TO SEW!

Please visit my website and check out my other books and patterns:

[www.kamucosplay.com/books](http://www.kamucosplay.com/books)



Welcome to book number eight! Crazy how time flies, right? We've come such a long way together! After burning our fingers with hot thermoplastics, gluing together mighty weapons out of foam, applying glorious paint-jobs and soldering eye popping lights, we've finally reached a point where we have to talk about a topic that we have been avoiding for a long time: Sewing. I know, just by hearing this word cold sweat begins to run down your back and you feel the sudden urge to leave the room and go to a place where nobody will find you. I know what it's like. I've been there. Now is the time to be brave, however. You will sit here, read this book about shiny fabrics, pretty top stitchings and complicated sewing patterns and you will start to love it. Together, my dear reader, you and I will overcome our fear of needles and sewing machines and finally learn how to create dresses, leggings, boot covers and gloves – everything you will

need for your next mighty warrior outfit or superhero battle armor.

If you've followed my previous work at all, I don't have to tell you that I'm not a professional seamstress by any stretch of imagination. I learned what I know the hard and painful way. Everything I explain on the following pages is based on my own sewing experiments, which were basically a lot of trying and failing. I'm sure if you're a professional seamstress you will find a lot of things in this book that will make you want to shake your head in disgust. However, if you're just looking for a way to finish a dress or bodysuit at 4am the morning before the convention, I'm your girl! Been there, done that! I'm a cosplayer just like you and I know that it's more important to get your stuff done in time. You can always do it properly the next time, right?



## ABOUT KAMUI COSPLAY

We're Svetlana and Benni but most of you just know us as Kamui Cosplay. If you're into dressing up, chances are you've already stumbled upon one of our videos, pictures or tutorials. We consider ourselves very lucky to be able to make our living by helping others. Cosplay is a huge part of our lives and cosplayers are some of the most welcoming people around. We're humbled by all the support you give us and try to pass it on as much as we can. We love you guys!

Thank you for your support by buying this book! Hopefully you will find it helpful and inspirational!



# I can sew you the world 🎵

Sitting in front of a sewing machine for the very first time is really intimidating. So many buttons! As soon you figure out what they do it will open up *a whole new world* of possibilities! So let's talk about your new best friend!

## Sewing machine

While hand sewing might be a viable option at the beginning, you will need to upgrade to a reliable sewing machine eventually. I've burned through around three of those in the last couple of years and started to notice that there are some functions that are great but also some you can do without. Usually, you can get a good product starting at around \$100 to \$150. I know it's tough, but don't try to save money here. Your sewing machine will be your faithful companion through every single project and you will probably regret trying to save a couple of bucks. To make a long story short, Singer and Brother (W6 and Pfaff in Germany) are brands you can trust. Additionally it's a good idea to check if your sewing machine has a stretch stitch. This means the needle will go back and forth for every stitch and create an elastic, but straight seam. You can always pay more to get better quality and more functions. If you just want to get started, there is no need to spend all of your cash on something super fancy. Thread the needle yourself or pay more so the machine does it for you. Your choice!



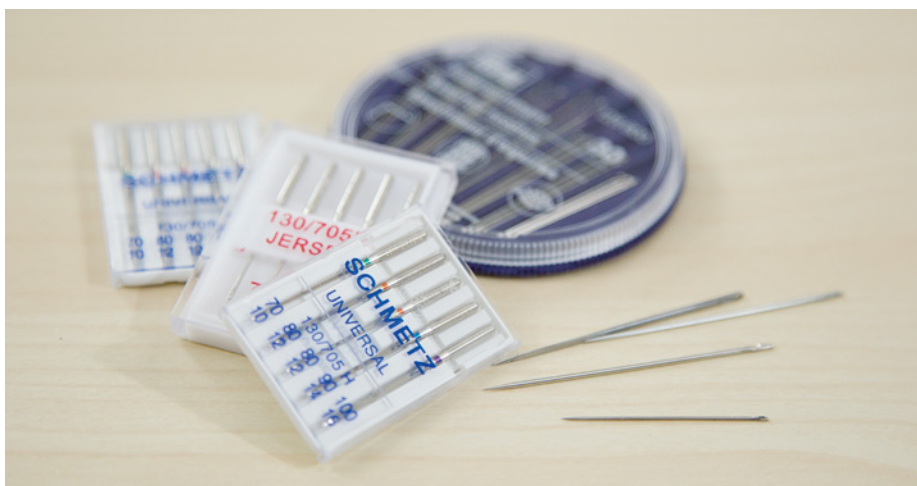
Brother Innov-is 55

## Overlock (Sergers)

A serger (also called overlock) is a special kind of sewing machine that's limited to only one stitch. You can easily see it's purpose by looking inside your sweater, leggings or t-shirt. This machine cuts the fabric off and seals it with an elastic and super durable four thread stitch. Getting a serger is totally optional, however, it's an amazingly helpful tool if you have to work with flexible materials or just want to easily sew up countless meters/yards of fabric. I was hesitant to buy one as well but never once regretted it. Good machine! A Brother or Singer will cost you \$200 to \$250, so it's a bit more pricey.



Brother 1034D



## Needles

Thread and needle belong in the emergency kit of every cosplayer. They have already saved me plenty of times and I would not go to a convention without them! Even when making your costume it will be hard to avoid hand stitching a few pieces, so it's a good idea to get a basic needle set from your local crafting supplier. Your sewing machine also needs replacement needles as well as a few special ones. Regular point needles are great for most fabrics, ball point needles handle lycra and jersey better and wedge point needles are made for heavy duty materials like leather and suede.



## Thread

If you try to sew without a thread you're either a magician or a little weird. A color matching thread for your fabric of choice is a must for every project. Gutermann is usually the brand to go (at least here in Europe), but as long as your thread is strong and doesn't break apart it should be fine as well. If you can find a color similar to your fabric, your seams will become invisible and your work will look clean and professional. You can, however, also use completely different colors if you want your seams to really show. In addition, get plenty of bobbins. You will need them all.



## Sewing feet

Instead of using only the standard foot of your sewing machine, you can actually switch it to countless other special feet with all kinds of useful benefits. You will be surprised to find out how many different ones there are! Don't worry, they're super cheap! A must-have is clearly the Teflon foot, which allows you to sew over slippery fabrics like vinyl, leather and pleather. A clear zig-zag presser is super helpful for zig-zagging ornaments or if you need to sew extra precise. Most costumes require a zipper, so you'll also need a zipper foot and an invisible zipper foot. There are a ton of other useful feet, but for now these should do the trick. I don't want you to become a foot fetishist.



## Lot's of pins

You can never have enough cake - I mean pins! You might reach a point where you think 'Ah, I think I already have enough.' and 10 minutes later you're crawling on the floor like a weasel trying to sniff out only one more pin from under your carpet. So make sure to buy enough! Pins are good to... well, pin stuff together. Once you've cut out your fabric patterns, you will need to try them on before you actually sew them together. So - use pins and slip in! It doesn't fit? Adjust it and try again! Now repeat this step until it's perfect! Oh, and get one of those fancy magnetic pin cushions in case you gotta catch them all again!

## Fabric scissors

Unless you got really sharp teeth, you will need something to cut your fabrics with. Not every pair of scissors will do, however. You can buy special fabric scissors, which you should use only for cutting fabric. You'll notice the difference especially on tight curves, small details or thin fabrics. Don't cut anything else with them and try to keep them as sharp as possible (never give them to your boyfriend/husband for sharpening, it will not end well). A good pair will cost you around \$10 to \$20. You can also get rotary fabric cutters (those work only on cutting boards) but I personally don't like them that much.



## Markers and chalk

During your projects you'll have to draw patterns on your fabrics, set marks or write notes to remind you which parts belong together. Water soluble pens and chalk are just perfect for this job. You can buy them in different colors, so use white for darker fabrics and something dark for brighter ones. It's important to get clean lines that you can follow with your scissors but also easily get rid of later. So keep permanent markers, ball point pens and sharpies away from your fabric and grab some of these handy temporary ones.



## Fabric glues

There are many types of fabric glues. My favorite one is called Gutermann H2, which dries fast and is amazingly strong. I mainly use it to stick something in place and sew over it afterwards. You can even glue your fabric pieces together, when you have no needle and thread around. Another great product is known as Vliesofix in Germany or Heat-Bond in the States. You'll get it in rolls or as small tapes. Both products are activated by heat and completely washable, which means you just need to place them between two pieces of fabric and iron it on. It's a good idea to have these products at hand for any type of applications, patches, details, hems and more!



## Dress form

The dress form will be one of your most helpful tools. You are able to drape fabrics on it, see if your costume pieces would fit, adjust them or just display them! Simple dress forms are carved out of foam and covered with stretchy fabric. That way you can stick your pins inside and test patterns without even sewing. I got really lucky, since I have a perfect size 38 and everything that fits my dress form, will also fit me. You can order them in a lot of different sizes though, even custom made ones with your personal measurements. Adjustable dress forms are an option as well, but I personally prefer the foam ones.





## Iron and ironing board

Fabrics can get wrinkled super quickly, so a trusty iron and ironing board to flatten them again is a must. Use it not only to get rid of wrinkles in your finished costumes, but also to straighten your fabrics for precise cuts, activate iron-on glue for applications, create folds and pleats, clean up your creased pattern paper, iron on self-adhesive foils and so much more. One important advice: Don't forget to unplug it when you go to bed! Not that it ever happens to me. Of course not!



## Store-bought patterns

Store bought patterns are great! Unlike building armor, when it comes to sewing you do not need to create all of your patterns completely from scratch. There are historically, fantasy, culturally and even cosplay inspired patterns, which are really helpful and provide a great place to start. You can try to figure out how to sew Cersei's dress from Game of Thrones on your own - or you just buy McCall's M6940 also referred to as 'Queens of the Game'. Sneaky! What I do most of the time is to grab an existing pattern that's close enough to what I want and then start to modify it using tracing paper. It's a lot easier than having to figure out every single line and curve on your own.



## Foil, tape and tracing paper

A great way to adjust and reuse patterns is tracing paper. It comes in really big sheets, is thin and translucent - just perfect to trace your patterns. Simply lay it on top, add adjustments, change lengths or even combine a pattern with a different one. No need to cut out your original.

In some occasions you will have to create your own patterns from scratch. Just like when making armor, you can wrap yourself in plastic wrap and duct tape and draw on the shapes you want. Cut yourself free and you have a pattern you can work with. It's a little bit harder to get it right this way but nothing is impossible!



## Sewing books

There is a huge library of sewing techniques, specialties and applications: embroidery, hand stitching, quilting, smocking or advanced pattern making. This book is only intended to help you take your first steps and make you excited to try out more. If you want to dig deeper, there are a ton of great professional sewing books. 'Fabric Manipulation' from Ruth Singer is one of my favorites, but you can also get 'Sewing for Beginners' from my friend Naraku Brock or any other highly rated sewing book an Amazon to take your skills even further!

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# It's a textile paradise

Oh boy! Where to start? Even if you exclusively build armor sets, you will still need to use fabric for some small parts of your costume. While you can decide between Worbla, EVA foam and a few other materials for making armors or props, you'll literally find a million different types of fabrics. So what to buy? How to navigate all those colors, thicknesses, shines and textures? On the following pages I will try to give you a few tips!

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## Cotton

Cotton is great for many purposes. It's cheap, it's easy to work with and you can buy it everywhere. If you need a natural looking material for a medieval or Viking gown, cotton is the way to go. It's the perfect fabric for simple sewing projects like skirts, blouses or pants. I use it mostly for doing mock-ups, which is when you sew together your patterns with a cheap fabric to check if it works and fits. You'll find cotton in all kinds of colors, prints and qualities, so it might be just the right fabric for your project.



## Lycra / Spandex

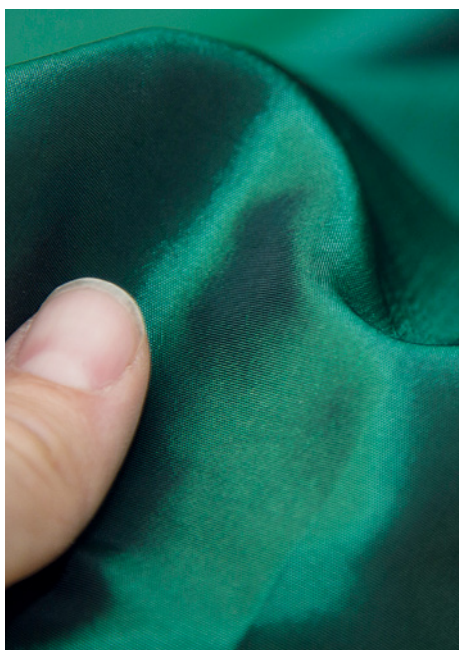
Elastic fabrics are some of the most used in the cosplay community. Lycra (also called spandex), which you surely know from your swim wear and leggings, is a 4-way stretch fabric, which means it's extremely elastic in all directions. It's great for super hero costumes, undersuits and pretty much everything else that's supposed to keep your body in shape. You'll find lycra in thin and lightweight as well as thick and heavy qualities.



## Jersey

While lycra is made with synthetic fibers, jersey is a (mostly) natural product and therefore more breathable. It's available in 2-way and 4-way stretch but doesn't shape as well as lycra does, so be prepared that everything will show if your pattern is too tight. If you can live with that, jersey is a great fabric, very comfortable to wear and looks more natural since it isn't shiny. Just like lycra, you'll find jersey in different colors, stretch levels and thicknesses.





## Taffeta

My personal favorites are taffeta, silk and satin. All of them have a shiny and sleek look, float nicely and just give you goosebumps when you touch them. So good. In my opinion, taffeta is a better alternative to the sometimes too plain looking cotton. I often use it for costumes that don't need to be quite as pretty as a ball gown, but still need to look sleek like my druids from World of Warcraft or my Summoner from Final Fantasy XIV. You can also get it in a thinner quality to use for lining.



## Satin

Satin can look great but you have to be careful what you get. Most of the China-produced eBay costumes are made with low quality satin, which is the reason why many of them look so cheap. A good choice is duchesse satin, which is heavier, not that shiny and doesn't wrinkle so fast. Another cheap but great alternative is bridal satin. When I started cosplaying in 2003 I wasn't able to tell a high quality silk from a cheap Halloween fabric and made my very first costume with a budget of only \$30. Well, let's just say that now I know the difference and we don't talk about it anymore.



## Silk

Silk is the ultimate dream fabric for many cosplayers. It has a natural, floating shine and some varieties even show different colors depending on the angle you look at them. It's a feast for the eyes and you just want to wrap yourself in it (don't try to do this in a store or you'll get weird looks). Silk is a great all-rounder for elaborate costumes and pretty dresses, but also if you have very simple patterns that you still want to pop out a bit. You can find it as dupioni silk with little knots and lines, as wild silk with a very natural looking texture, as slightly transparent chiffon silk or high quality charmeuse silk. I am a huge fan and use this fabric as often as I can, even though it can be pricey. One of my latest projects was the Wizard from Diablo III. I used black, white and purple silk for the magical robe of the costume.

## Faux furniture leather

While most fabrics just need to be pretty, others actually have a special purpose. Alcantara (also called furniture leather or suede) is one of my favorite materials to work with. These fabrics are amazingly durable and just perfect for belts, straps and other types of attachments for your armor costumes. In addition they look very organic, almost like wild leather, which makes them perfect for all kinds of special designs. In fact, furniture leather was a main material for most of my night elf druid costumes from World of Warcraft.



## Vinyl

Vinyl is available in a lot of different shapes, qualities and thicknesses. It comes non-stretchy, 2-way or even 4-way-stretch. I mostly collect vinyl in metallic colors like gold, silver and bronze - simply because you can always add some gorgeous gold to a random costume. It is great for applications, shiny hems and other highlights. Since vinyl can be very thick and very reflective, it's the closest you will get to a piece of your costume looking like armor without actually being armor. The downside is that it's often pricey and you need a special Teflon foot to sew it, but apart from that, you'll never regret the purchase of this material!



## Faux leather

I try to avoid using real animal products for my costumes (besides dog hair which automatically gets everywhere). Luckily, faux leather is a great alternative. It's just 1 mm (0.04 inches) thin, available in many colors and textures and like vinyl you'll need a Teflon foot to work with it. It's great for belts, bags, armor pieces, applications or an awesome looking bodysuit. Stock up on metallic colors, browns and blacks for your workshop. I have countless different varieties of faux leather and I am always excited to use them.



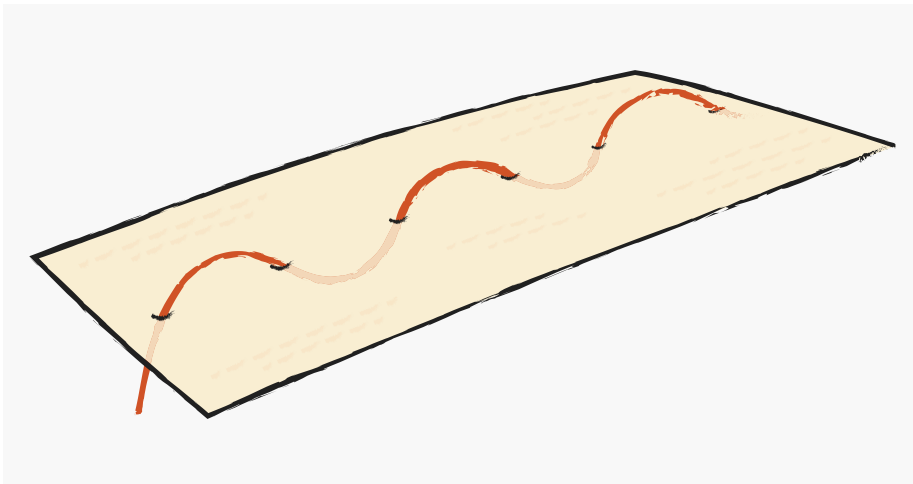
## Faux fur

Getting the right looking fur for your costumes is always a challenge. Thankfully there are a ton of different fake furs you can buy! You'll find pretty much every color, thickness and quality. If you spend enough money (around \$30 - \$50 per meter/ yard), you might even get a genuine looking fake bear fur, which is great for every type of barbarian or medieval looking costume. Be careful however: faux fur is often displayed and described wrong on Internet shops and you might waste a lot of money on a wrong product. It's definitely better to go into a real shop and see and feel the fabric.



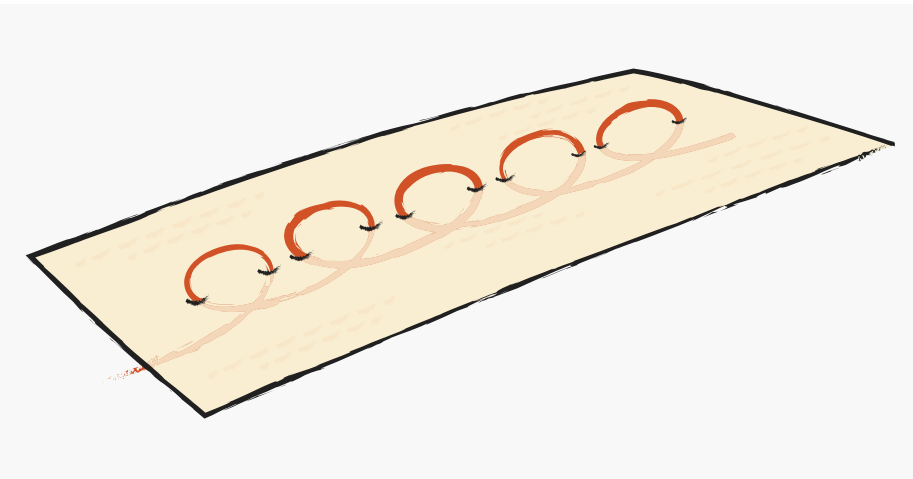
# Three very useful hand stitches

Sewing by hand is super boring – but sometimes necessary. Years ago, when I was freshly getting into cosplay, I had to struggle with a broken sewing machine. The *only* way to finish my costume was sewing it completely by hand. This could happen to you, too! Another reason might be attaching laces, embroidery or simply finishing a nice and clean lining. This is the time when you can get comfy on your sofa, grab needle and thread and turn on a good show. Here are my favorite hand stitches:



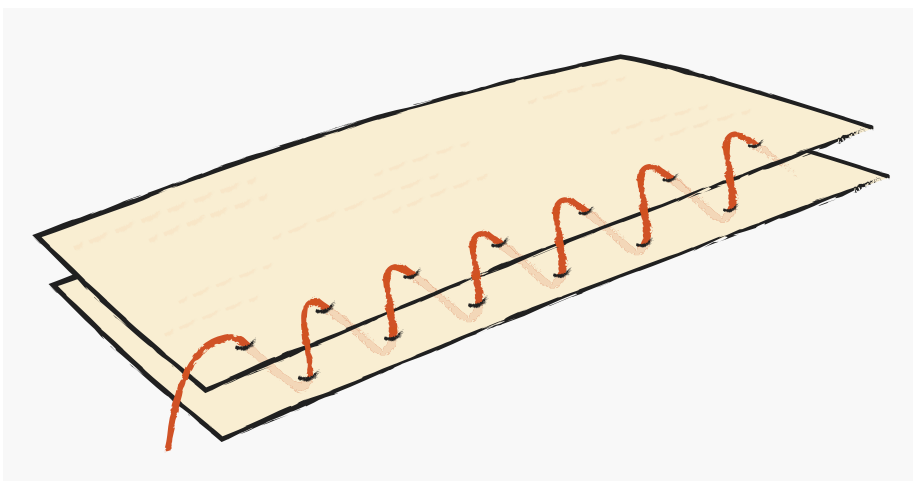
## Running stitch

The most basic of all stitches! Sometimes, just pinning your fabric isn't enough. To connect and secure your fabric pieces even stronger, the running stitch is the way to go. It's fast to sew and easy to remove afterwards. Additionally, you can use it to gather skirts and create ruffles.



## Backstitch

The backstitch creates a very strong seam which is just perfect to repair costumes by hand or to attach something the sewing machine isn't able to reach. Well, or sew an entire costume. It's great to apply fine lace and embroidery, small details and other elements that you can only attach by hand.



## Slip stitch

There are a hundred different ways to finish a lining by hand. My favorite by far is the slip stitch. If done right, this quick and easy technique can give you an almost invisible seam. Attaching your lining fabric of course also works with your sewing machine, but at some point you will need to grab your needle and thread to finish the last few millimeters by hand.

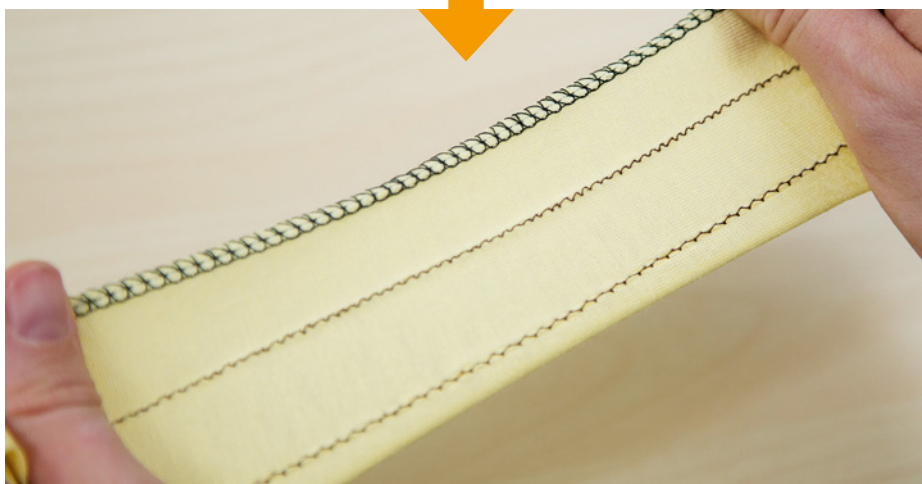
## More useful know-how

When choosing a fabric, and especially when tracing your pattern on it, you need to be aware that many of them have a front and a back side. They are called 'right side' and 'wrong side' in sewing instructions. Often they are completely different! By swapping them you can turn a shiny satin into a dull looking one, change colors and/or hide a texture you might not like. Use this to your advantage and always look at both sides before you buy! There are also a couple of other things you should keep in mind.

### Sewing elastic fabrics

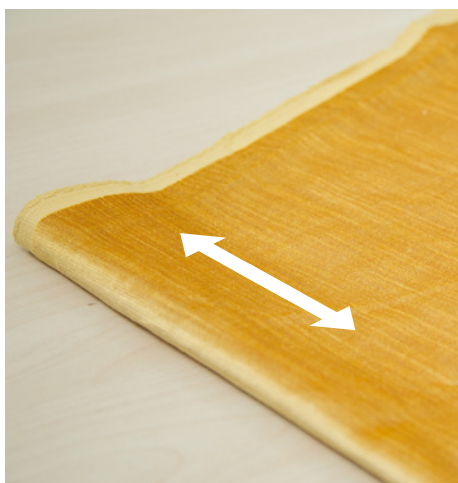
Stretchy fabrics can be a little tricky to work with, so make sure to follow a few simple rules. First, use the stretch to your advantage. If you are working with a 2-way stretch fabric, the elasticity should be horizontal. Just check one of your shirts for example: most of the time you can stretch them wider but not longer, right? Same goes for leggings, pants or dresses. Always make sure to trace your patterns with the direction of the stretch in mind. You don't need to worry too much if you are working with a 4-way-strech fabric, but be careful with the 2-way one!

Next, sewing elastic fabrics can be a real pain. The best solution is actually to use an overlock machine (serger), which will keep every seam just as stretchy as the fabric. If you don't have access to one, the alternative is to use a zig-zag, stretch, or an elastic stitch as shown in the image on the right. They're not perfect and rarely look very clean, but they do the job. A normal straight stitch is slightly elastic, but stretching the fabric too much will tear the seam apart, so be careful.



### Direction of thread

Most fabrics have a grain, which goes either vertically or horizontally through the fabric. If you have a full meter/yard of material, it's easy enough to see (check the image on the right - do you see it?). If you only have a scrap, it will be a lot tougher to find! Just check how it was woven on the backside and follow the direction of the thread. Once you've figured it out, always follow the grain when you draw on your patterns. This way your fabric will stretch and follow your movement properly.



### NOTE

Fabrics - especially with natural fibers - can shrink when they come in contact with water. This can happen by using your steam iron, cleaning or simply sweating (a lot). If you don't want your costume to get tighter during a hot summer day, it's a good idea to wash your fabrics straight after purchase.



## Sewing vinyl and pleather

Some fabrics can be real troublemakers. Your machine skips stitches, does super tiny ones or might get completely stuck. I promise, it's not you. The reason for this mess is usually that you're trying to sew materials like vinyl, fake leather or coated lycra with your standard metal sewing foot. If you just switch to a slippery Teflon foot, you'll instantly notice the difference. It sews super smooth! You can also use long stitches to reduce the holes in your fabric and keep your costume pretty. These materials will show every single stitch - even those of your pins - so consider using sewing clips or hemming tape instead.



## Interfacing and boning

Thick coats, stiff collars and tight corsets always need some kind of reinforcement. Interfacing is what you call a glue-in or sew-in material, which grants your fabric more strength and thickness. Most of them are available by the meter/yard and need to be placed in between the top fabric and the lining. To give your project even more stiffness, you can also add boning, which is available as flexible plastic boning or super durable and well shaping metal boning.



## Buying and storing fabrics

It's *always* hard to guess how much fabric you will need for a project. You might buy too little and run out in the middle of your costume - or you buy too much and it's lying around your house for years. If you already picked a pre-existing pattern, you'll usually find the amount of yards necessary on the package. Following this note works only if you don't make any mistakes though. Cut something wrong and you have to give it a second go. Happens to me all the time. So in general, I always try to buy at least two extra yards. That way I usually end up with three yards for a simple dress and around five for a coat for example. If you don't use it all there will be another costume that you can use it for soon. I still work with fabrics that I bought years ago but never found a use for until now.

### NOTE

After collecting fabrics for years, it might become quite a challenge to find the right fabric again. To do this easily, I cut out a piece of every material I own and attach it to the front of a storage box with a safety pin. Now I'm able to spot what I have immediately and can even take these scraps with me on shopping tours to avoid double purchases!

## NOTE

Not everyone is lucky enough to have a fabric store just across the street. Ordering over the Internet is usually the way to go. Amazon and eBay offer a huge variety of fabrics, but it might take a while until you find the right material. Many smaller online stores are better prepared and sometimes even offer little samples for free. There are also traveling fabric markets that might visit your city once in a while, so do some research for the dates! If you keep your eyes open at all times, you might even discover a few tiny stores with a good range of products but no website. So good luck finding your dream fabric, it's not going to be easy.



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Enough theory, now let's get our hands dirty!

Turn on your sewing machine, get some shiny fabric and let's do this! Sewing is intimidating at first, but once you understand the basics, you'll immediately want to try out more!

I chose the following examples to show you all the basic techniques and knowledge required to start your own sewing projects.

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# How to sew simple gloves

Sewing gloves can prove to be quite a *handful*. Some patterns are tiny, complicated and easy to mess up. Pretty difficult for a beginner! Despite that, we still need gloves for many of our costumes so I thought it would come in *handy* if I showed you how to sew some really basic ones.

If this technique is too easy for you, go ahead and buy some proper glove patterns from Burda or Simplicity. They are great but will definitely challenge your sewing skills. If you're crafting the night before a convention, suddenly realizing that you still need some gloves and all the stores are already closed - this is the way to go! It's a great solution for every sewing rookie.

First, just place your hand flat on a piece of paper and spread all fingers as wide as possible. I'm sure many of you will remember this from kindergarten. Now take a pen and draw all around your hand, including your wrist **[1]**. Add around 0.5 cm (0.2 inches) of seam allowance **[2]** and cut the shape out. That's actually your pattern already, congratulations! Easy right? Keep in mind however, that this pattern will only work with elastic fabrics. For my example, I used thick red Lycra. Just fold the fabric once so you have a double layer of it (you'll need two identical pieces) and trace your pattern using a water soluble pen **[3]**. Place down a little mark for the curve between your fingers. This will be quite helpful later **[4]**. Now pin both fabric layers together **[5]** and cut them out along your line **[6]**.



## NOTE

You might have trouble sewing thinner fabric, which is totally normal. To avoid that, it helps to sew the fabric layers together first and then cut them out afterwards. Just place your pins, trace the shape of your hand with your sewing machine, do a fitting test and cut the fabric away as the very last step. This also helps if you are having problems following all the curves. Sewing gloves can get pretty fiddly. Additionally, it might be useful to switch to a ball point needle, which handles stretch fabric better.



Before you start sewing your pieces together, you can add a few more pins. Your fabric layers might shift apart while you work on it, so make extra sure everything stays in place. Now set your sewing machine to the standard straight stitch and sew both fabric pieces together. Go all around the glove and use the marks between the fingers for orientation **[7]**. You won't stretch the seams at all, so no need to use any fancy elastic stitches.

When you are done, slip into your piece to check if it really fits like a glove **[8]**. It's quite possible that you will need some corrections, so don't

worry if it's not perfect yet. I often have to adjust the length of the fingers or add some more space in between. To be able to spread your hand properly, you have to cut between your fingers without damaging the seam **[9]**. When you are happy with your adjustments, sew around the fingers a second time just to make sure the seam will not open up again. After that, cut away all excess fabric close to the seam, turn your glove inside out and you're done **[10]**! Now just mirror your pattern and repeat everything for the other hand!

## NOTE

Depending on your choice of material, your gloves might turn out to be a little bit tight. Thin jersey and lycra are really comfortable, while heavier fabric qualities might not stretch so much anymore. In addition, this tutorial only works with elastic fabrics. If you really want to sew leather, vinyl, wool or other non-elastic materials you have to get one of those professional fabric patterns from McCalls or Simplicity.

# The fastest way to sew leggings

Instead of tracing a body part, you can also create patterns by copying one of the pieces of clothing you already have in your closet. This is a great technique in case you need to sew something similar to what you already own. That way you can copy shirts, dresses or pants without having to open their seams.

Sewing a pair of leggings is also a great opportunity to introduce you to the serger and show you how to work with elastic fabrics. Plus, you'll end up with a great pair of comfy pants for your upcoming armor. In case you don't own a serger, this also works with a stretch or zig-zag stitch on your regular sewing machine. The main difference is that you have to cut off the excess fabric yourself. A serger would do this for you. Additionally these machines are super fast and will keep your material more elastic than any stretch stitch on a sewing machine can. So, if you've ever thought about buying one - go do it now!

Sewing leggings is super simple, all you need is an old pair and a bit of stretchy fabric **[1]**. First I laid down my pair on folded, brown jersey. To get a perfect copy of the shape, I pressed them completely flat and traced the shape of one leg with a water soluble pen **[2]**. Since I will need to roll up the legs and the waistband, I added around 3 cm (1.2 inches) of seam allowance to the bottom of the leg **[3]** and another 5 cm (2 inches) to the waist **[4]**. Next I drew the shape all the way to the middle line and cut my piece out. To get a full pair of leggings I needed another leg of course so I simply copied the first one again.

You may not have noticed, but your leggings are always a little bit shorter at the front than at the back (I guess the booty needs some space). To correct that, I simply unfolded the fabric, laid both pieces over each other and cut out a little triangle at one side **[5]** - this will be the front of the leggings.





That was quick! The patterns were done and I was ready to sew them together **[6]**! To continue I placed the pieces on top of each other and pinned together the left (butt) and the right (belly) side of the middle seam **[7]**. Then I put the piece in my overlock machine and serged both seams together **[8]**. This machine can sew only one single stitch, but it's perfect for every stretch material and automatically trims the edges at the same time. *Do not* forget to take your pins out before they reach the fabric cutting blade of your

machine. It will not be good for either the knife, the pins or your soul. The sound it makes when you try to cut a needle is not pleasant. I'm not speaking from experience of course!

The seam an overlock creates is amazing. I don't really understand how it works, but it's super strong while being flexible at the same time **[9]**. Great stuff! I turned the leggings around and started to pin the legs together all the way from the bottom of the left leg, over the crotch and to

the end of the other leg **[10]**. Then I just sewed over this long seam as well. Easy, right **[11]**? You only have to remember to pin the front and butt seam first. Otherwise the thin stretchy fabric might shift and your seams will not fit correctly in the crotch area.

Now, everything left was the hem on the waist line and on the bottom of the legs. To do this, just grab a long elastic band and pin it to the inside of the fabric on your waist **[12]**. I actually started at the booty seam and laid the fabric including the elastic into the serger. Now I slowly sewed over both layers and carefully stretched only the elastic band, but not the fabric underneath. This is a little tricky but will prevent the leggings from sliding down later.

Next, I folded the waistband over, so it was hidden under the fabric **[13]**. Then I folded it again so I had a double layer of fabric under the elastic band **[14]**. I left a little strip of folded fabric visible at the bottom which I then cut away with my serger **[15]**. Once I was done, I had a nicely finished waistband without any visible seam **[16]**.



## NOTE

Treat your serger and sewing machines well. Mechanical parts can get stuck, threads can lose tension or blades can get dull. If your machine suddenly misses stitches or does other weird things, chances are it will need some maintenance. Every machine needs some fixing from time to time, so bring it to a store that offers such a service. Also check out the manual to figure out how to clean and oil your machine yourself. This will keep your machine healthy and in top shape for all your upcoming projects.



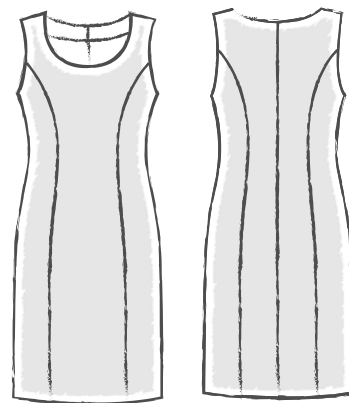
Just repeat the same step for the hem on the legs **[17-18]** but you can leave the rubber band out this time.

Yay! The leggings were done! It took me around one hour to sew them together and they turned out perfectly **[19]**. Leggings can be useful for all kinds of costumes, even if you don't notice them at first. A few pages back you saw my Symmetra costume which is a great example of how you can utilize leggings without making it look like you're wearing leggings. In this case I used them to create fake strapless stockings that will never slip down - more on that later when I talk about my Cleric costume.

I hope this tutorial helps you to understand how easy it is to use existing clothes for patterns and how elastic fabrics work. I also hope it might have convinced you to save some money for a serger. It's a truly awesome machine!

# Sewing a simple dress

After creating a few patterns by ourselves, let's continue working with store-bought instructions. I chose to make this dress as it is my single most used pattern. I utilized this basic shape to create a lot of my costumes, many of which you would not think that they started with a dress.

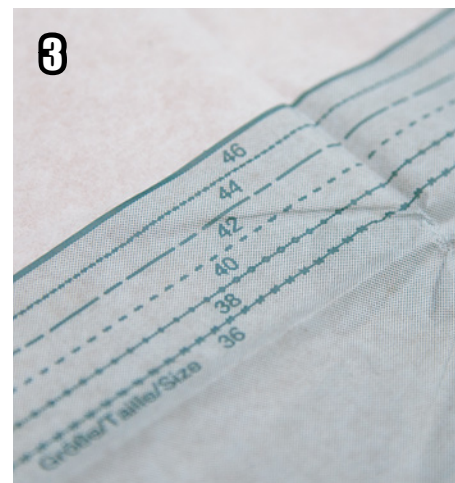
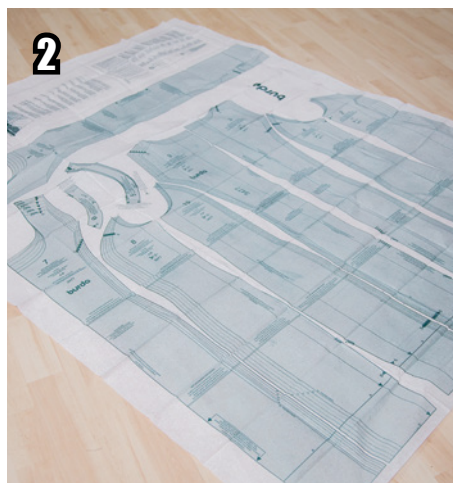


As I mentioned, Burda, Simplicity, McCalls and a few other companies offer catalogs full of different sewing patterns. If you've never worked with one of those however, they can be quite a challenge to read and understand. Yes, most of them will include sewing instructions, but they are often short and cryptic - especially for a beginner. So as a start, I'll guide you through one of my favorites: Burda 3477. A well fitting, slim dress with a lining **[1]**. Sewing this is pretty straight forward and will help you understand and read patterns. Once you've got this one, it will already be a lot easier to work with other and more complicated patterns as well!

## Reading the pattern

First, unpack your pattern and lay it flat on the floor **[2]**. It's a huge piece of thin paper and you will need to fold it and put it back into its package later, so be careful. One sewing pattern commonly covers a range of clothing sizes and on the paper, these are marked by differently designed lines **[3]**. My size, 38, has a line-circle-line, so I have to trace this one to get a fitting piece. Instead of trusting your size blindly, always compare your measurements with the sizing scale on the pattern. Your actual size and your pattern size might be different. Take a big piece of tracing paper and cover your patterns with it. Grab a pen and start following your lines **[4]**. If you know what you want, you can already adjust some things like shorten the dress for example.

You'll also find little marks spread all over your pattern - in my case those were little triangles **[5]**. Make sure to copy them as well, as they will help you to connect all pieces exactly at the right place.



## NOTE

My pattern, Burda 3477 is already years old and only available on eBay anymore. If you are curious and like the pattern, luckily there are a few alternatives: Butterick B5554, McCalls M7352, McCalls M7283, McCalls M7014 or Butterick B6299.

Once you are done, cut everything out **[6]** and fold your original pattern carefully back into its package. Always keep things nice and organized! If you want to use this pattern again later, it's easier to find it ready to go instead of trying to search for little cut out pieces scattered around your room.

## Creating a mock-up

Since two people who both have size 38 can still have very different body proportions, patterns often need some more adjustments. We'll create a so-called 'mock-up', which is a quick and dirty

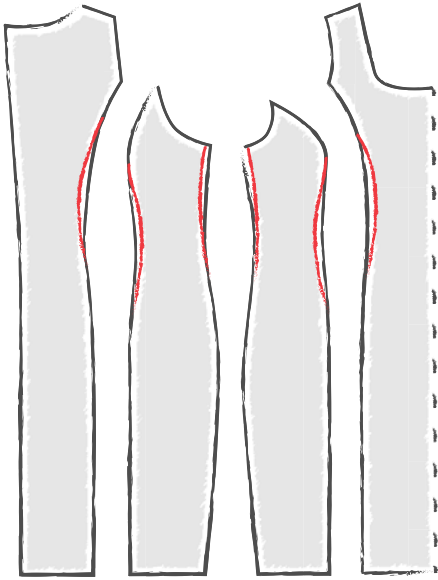
sewing test with a cheap fabric. Making one of those will help you to adjust your patterns so that they fit you perfectly. This adds an extra step and will cost you a bit of time. In the end you will avoid a lot of frustrating corrections and get a nice fit much faster.

First, trace all of your paper pieces on a fabric that is similar in stretch to your final material and add around 1.5 cm (0.6 inches) of seam allowance all around **[7]**. Some patterns already include seam allowance, so make sure to check the instruction in advance. Cut all fabric pieces out **[8]**.

You will need a mirrored copy of each, except for the middle part. Now pin all of them together along the edges **[9]**. Set your sewing machine to a regular straight stitch and sew everything together **[10]**. You don't have to work particularly clean and carefully, so don't worry if something looks odd. Just finish this step quickly and try on your brand-new mock-up! Or, like in my case, put it on your dress form. Keep the seams on the outside, so you are able to make adjustments fast and easy **[11]**.



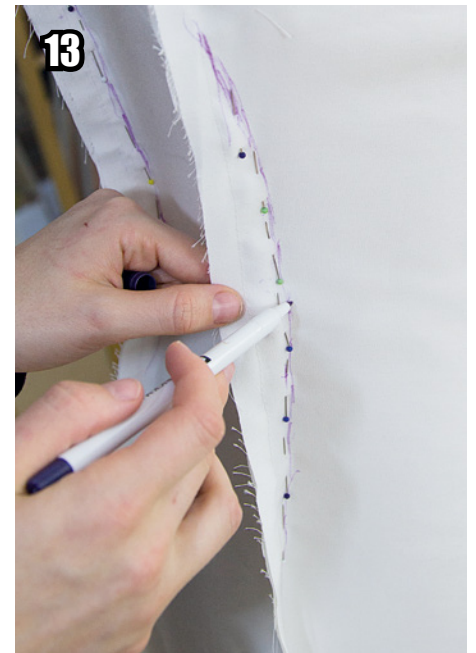
Personally, I have a little bit more of an hourglass shape, so I had to take some fabric away from around the waist area. I simply put pins into the fabric until it was tight enough and marked the area I had to correct with a pen [12-13]. Afterwards I took the dress off my dress form again, grabbed my traced paper pattern and transferred the changes I made onto my paper [14]. As you can see in the drawing below, I basically just narrowed down the general waist area. It's really not a big deal and I could have just left it like it was, but I didn't want my dress to look too wide on my body later [15].

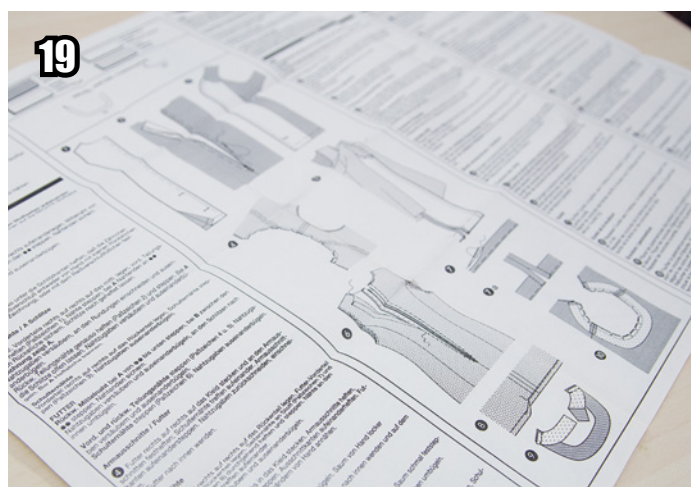


This is pretty much how adjusting an existing pattern works. Make a mock-up and see if it fits. Sometimes there are only a few details you have to change. Sometimes, though you have to get rid of whole sections or combine completely different patterns. Tracing paper is a huge help there! Just trace both shapes on the same paper and cut out the combined result. Create a mock-up, adjust, and you're ready to go!

## NOTE

If you prefer, you can also add the seam allowance directly to your paper pattern in the beginning. This way you don't need to measure it out for every single new piece. Make sure to mark those patterns with seam allowance so you don't accidentally add it twice.





## Sewing the real dress

To start sewing the real dress (finally), I took my adjusted patterns and traced them to the backside of the fabric I wanted to work with (at this step keep the grain in mind!) [16]. I decided on a red thick stretch satin and a color matching taffeta for the lining. Again, I added some seam allowance and cut out every piece afterwards [17]. If you have to mirror a piece you can save time by folding your fabric and cutting out two pieces at once. I usually have trouble eyeballing my seam allowance, so instead of just cutting

around the paper pattern, I first draw it on carefully and use my scissors to follow the lines. I repeated this step for the lining material, but used my previously cut fabric pieces instead of my paper patterns [18]. This way I got a perfect copy including the exact same seam allowance.

Next it was time to add a zipper. You can try to follow the instructions on the back of the patterns [19] but regarding the zipper it basically just says 'now sew the zipper on' which is not incredibly helpful if you've never done that before. In general, the longer a zipper is, the easier

it will be to get into your dress later. I bought a dark red one of 60 cm (23.6 inches). To sew it on, I laid both of my back pieces on top of each other - inner (wrong) side on top - and marked where the zipper should end. Afterwards I pinned the fabric layers together all along the sewing line [20]. For this step your pins should be in a 90° angle so you can simply sew over them. I pulled my piece into the sewing machine and sewed over the edge using a simple straight stitch [21]. Remember to never forget securing a seam at the beginning and the end by going back and forth or by using your machine's reverse feature.

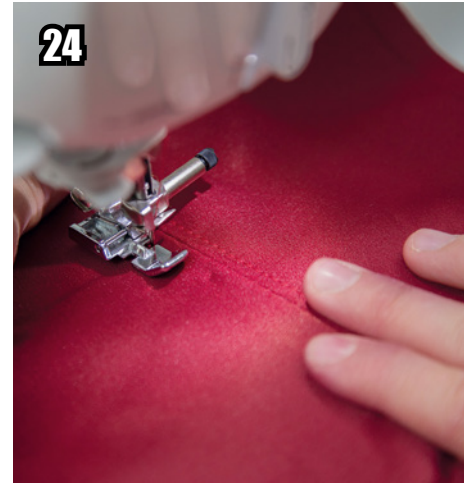
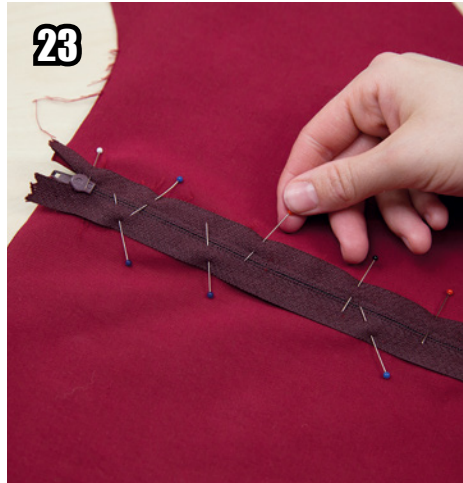
To continue, I ironed the seam allowance flat **[22]** and pinned my zipper to both sides with the little zipper teeth directly over the seam in the middle **[23]**. I turned the fabric around and exchanged the standard foot of my sewing machine with a zipper foot. Finally, I sewed from the top to the bottom of the zipper, made a turn and sewed back up again on the other side **[24]**. Using this technique you should get a pretty long U-seam all around.

So, how do I open my dress now? It's easy! I just grabbed a seam ripper, placed it on the beginning of the middle seam and carefully ripped it open again until I reached the end of the U **[25]**. The result was a neatly sewn, almost invisible zipper! Doesn't look that difficult anymore, right?

Next, the all-knowing instructions on the back told me to pin and sew together all the front pieces and all the back pieces separately **[26]**. Then I also had to repeat the same step for both

of the lining parts. Once this was done, the next instruction was to connect the back and the front pieces at the shoulder. Placed on top of each other, the seam allowance of the lining as well as the visible fabric should be outside **[27]**.

For this step, it was really helpful to put a pin into the little triangle marks that I traced on my fabric before. If they matched, my fabric pieces would align perfectly!





At this point, it would already be difficult to make any larger adjustments. Theoretically, I still could try the dress on and sew it a little bit smaller, but I would have to repeat the exact same step for the lining. In the past, I barely used any lining for my costumes at all, so this was fine. If you decide to go with at least two layers of fabric however, things get tricky. That's the reason why a mock-up is still the best way to avoid corrections later!

Time to connect the lining with the top fabric. First, I had to connect both layers at the armhole **[28]**. To avoid ugly wrinkles later, I made small cuts into the seam allowance **[29-30]**. That's actually always a good idea if you work with curved seams. You'll see this also in the other examples in this book.

Now it got a bit weird. I pulled my fabric layers apart, so that both top fabric pieces as well as my lining parts laid on top of each other. All I had to do now was to sew the side seams together from the bottom of the top fabric straight over to the bottom of the lining fabric **[31]**. After turning it inside out again and setting a few pins it almost looked like a dress! **[32]**.



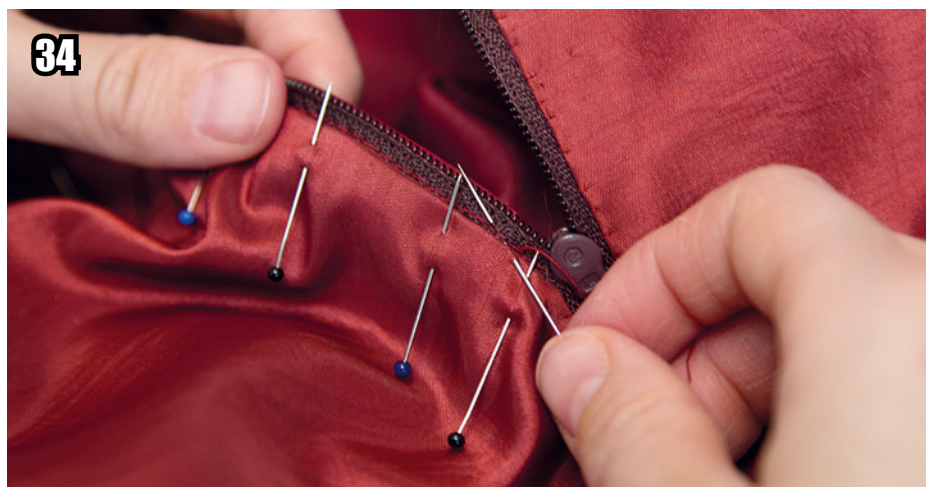
## NOTE

Some fabrics tend to fray like crazy, especially taffeta, silk and satin. Use zig-zag stitch over the edge, use fray-check liquid, pink them with a zig-zag scissors or serge the edge. If you don't care though it's not a big deal. Just keep them as they are - they are well hidden under the lining anyway. It's also an option to seal the seams before sewing all pieces together. It can be hard to do afterwards.

Time to get ready for plenty of hand stitching! You are able to sew lining with your machine most of the time, but at some parts of your costume you have to grab a needle and thread. For my dress, I had to hand stitch the lining around the collar, at the inside by the zipper and the bottom of the dress. I secured the fabric with a few pins and began to work on the collar. Again, I made small cuts into the curve of the fabric, flipped the seam allowance of the lining and the top fabric to the inside and pinned both layers together [33].

Since I wanted the stitch to be as unnoticeable as possible, I decided to use a slip stitch with a wine red thread [34]. As you can see, I used a good amount of pins so I didn't have to adjust the fabric again during stitching.

Finishing this step took me a few hours, but the resulting lining looked very clean. Finally the dress was done! Doesn't look so hard, right? If you were able to follow this example you can be proud of yourself! You can now read and adjust patterns, sew a mock-up, a zipper and a dress and even fill it with professional lining!



## NOTE

It is a really rare occasion but sometimes fabrics can actually stain. If you're ever unsure, consider washing them before you work with them. It's funny - in 14 years of cosplay I've never worked with a fabric that stained, but for this dress, oh boy! I guess I was too caught up in my work to notice it at first, but after a while of working with it I looked at my hands to see this! My fingers were red, my sewing machine was red. Heck even the toothbrush I used in the evening was red! Well, lesson learned...



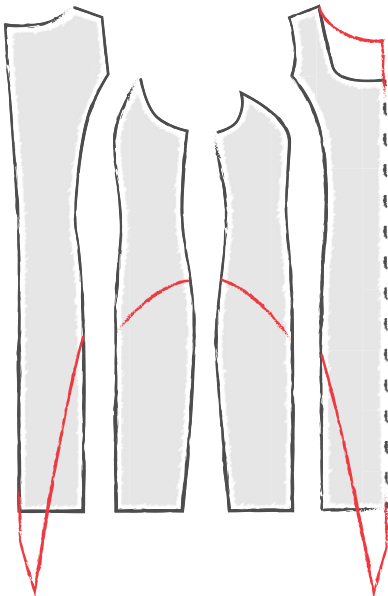


Photo by P. from P&amp;S Photography



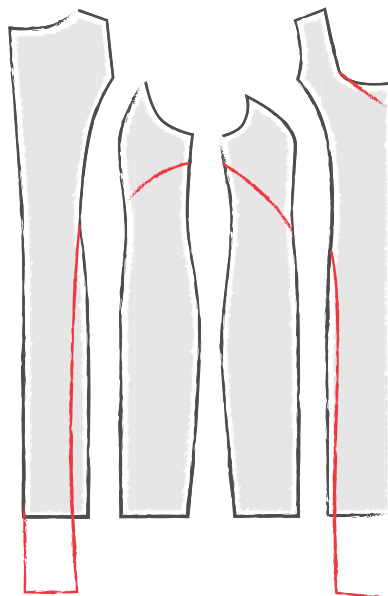
## Symmetra

Like I mentioned before, Burda 3477 was the base for a lot of my costumes. Symmetra from Overwatch was one of them. I used two layers of fabric, a thin blue lycra for the top and a thicker neoprene below to get a smoother shape. There was no lining inside, so I sewed the whole dress just like the mock-up I showed you a couple of pages ago. It was really easy to adjust the shape this way.



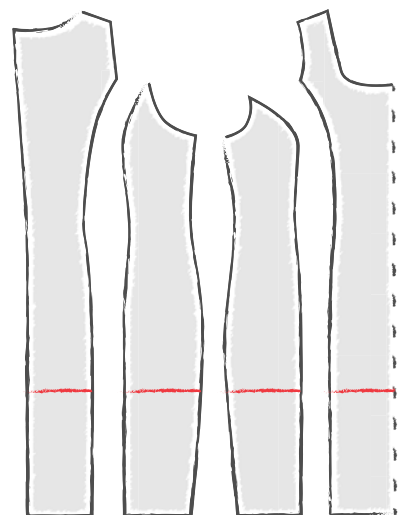
## Vanessa VanCleave

I first used 3477 around five to six years ago and I can show you a lot of really old costumes that I already used it for. It doesn't always have to be a dress either! Instead of just putting on a loose piece of fabric, I actually used this pattern to create a perfectly fitting tabard for my Vanessa VanCleave costume from World of Warcraft.



## My wedding dress

I'm actually so in love with this easy and perfectly fitting pattern, that I even sewed my own wedding dress with it. Yes, that's right, even though I was afraid of my sewing machine years ago, I still wanted to create my own dress for my big day. I was really happy how it turned out!



# Let's make a boot cover

It's pretty rare to find the perfect shoes for a costume. You can already call yourself lucky if you can find a pair that's similar and you only have to modify it a bit. Most of the time though, you have to add elements on top or cover them completely with another fabric. To do so, you have two options: The simple way is using stretch fabrics, like the previous gloves example, or the more challenging way with non elastic, stiff materials. Since we've already talked about the first, let's create some proper boot covers now!



Sometimes sewing is just like making armor - no matter what you want to build, you have to wrap yourself in tape first! In this case it helps to get a perfectly fitting pattern for your upcoming boot cover. Just put on the shoe you want to cover, grab some plastic wrap and cover your whole leg with it [1]. Afterwards take strips of duct tape (painters tape works as well) and add it on top.

Covering the foot is a bit tricky, but short horizontal strips worked best for me [2]. It's possible to do this entirely by yourself (pro-tip: use a mirror) but if someone is offering to help, it definitely speeds things up. When you are done, draw a top and bottom line for your upcoming boot as well as a center line on the front and the back [3]. If you want to do some extra work, but get a really tight

and fitting shape in return, add another middle line to both sides. Carefully cut yourself free and you should have four pattern pieces now [4-5].

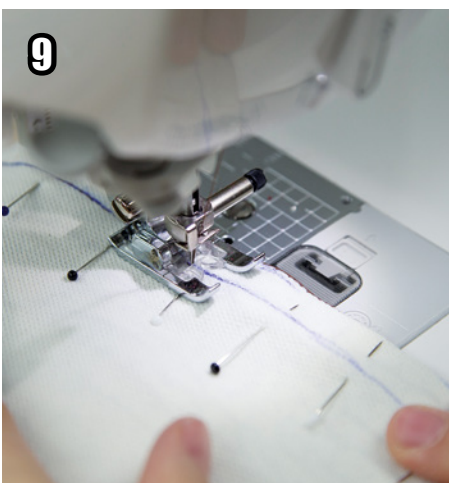
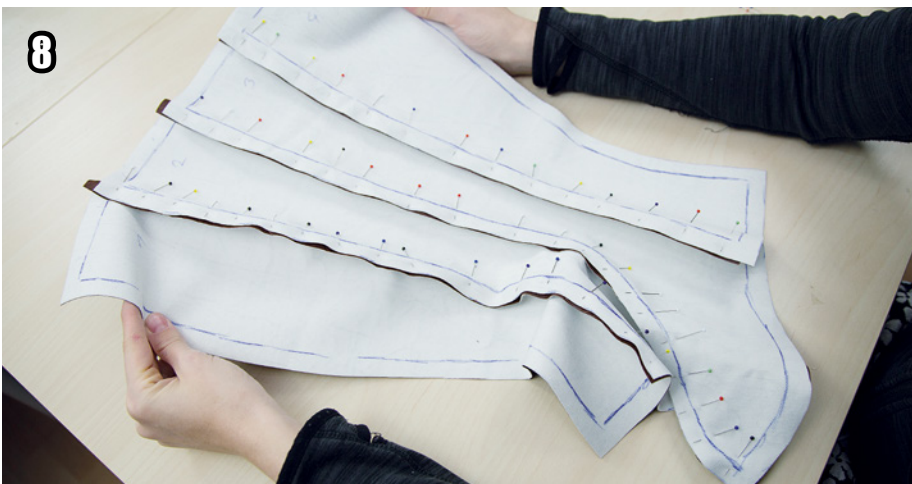
If your shoe cover is not just plain but has some kind of fancy shape, make sure to draw it on properly before you cut yourself free. Adapting a pattern that is already cut out is a lot harder.



For this example, I'm working with thick faux leather, but every other fabric is fine as well. Take your patterns and trace them on the material you want to use [6]. Be generous and add another 1 cm (0.4 inches) of seam allowance all around your pieces. It might be tricky to press the patterns flat, especially at the ankles, but that's totally fine. Just do it as good as you can. I actually prefer to draw on the shape of the original pattern as well as the seam allowance. That way it's possible to sew my boot cover to millimeter accuracy [7]. When you are done, cut all pieces out with your super sharp fabric scissors and start pinning them together [8]. If you want to keep your material free of holes, sewing clips would be a good alternative.



Just like in the glove example, we're going to use a normal straight stitch here. Just follow the marked seam and carefully sew over the pins. Repeat this step until you've connected all fabric pieces to one single boot cover [9]. Once you are done, take your scissors and carefully cut into the seam allowance of the middle seam in the ankle area [10]. This will help you create a better fit and also get rid of unnecessary wrinkles. In the end, it's still a shoe though, so there will *always* be wrinkles.



## NOTE

I know it's not the *proper* way but mostly I'm just too lazy to sew over my pins without taking them out first. It's quite unlikely that the needle of a sewing machine will hit a pin - and well, even if it does, you can always replace a broken pin or needle. Sewing over them is simply much faster and easier, especially during crunch time before a convention.

This next step is optional so you can totally skip it if you want. I prefer to add a pretty top stitching left and right from my seam. This helps to flatten and shape the boot cover and I simply like the look. To do this, just spread the seam allowance **[11]**, turn it around and press it flat under your sewing foot. Now place the middle of the foot directly over the center of the seam and follow it with the needle set completely to the right and once again set completely to the left **[12]**. In image **[13]** you can see how it looks finished. I actually like it a lot and do it for many of my sewing projects. It's just personal preference however and you don't have to do it if you don't want.



Now we have all of our pattern parts sewn together **[14]**! Awesome! One thing is missing however: a way to open and close your boot cover. Time to add a zipper! Since you will not be able to get the boot cover perfectly flat, this step might be a bit tricky. First, pin on only one side of the zipper **[15]**. When you open it, you should still be able to see a little bit of your original shoe at the bottom, so set a mark where it should start. This will ensure that you're still able to get into your shoe once you've glued the boot cover on. Now sew this part of the zipper on **[16]**. Press the fabric flat afterwards and then pin and sew the other part. When you're done with both sides, flip the zipper to the inside and add a top stitching here as well **[17-18]**.



Now just fold over the upper edge of the boot cover and sew it on **[18]**. If your zipper is too long, simply cut it shorter and zig-zag over the metal ends. That way the zipper slider won't just slip out when you close it. I forgot to do this several times and had to fumble it back in - which is not a fun way to spend your time, believe me!



Next, pull the whole boot cover over your leg and slip into your shoe. Then grab some pins and drag the cover down all the way to the sole. Try to keep your leg straight and pin the fabric into the rubber **[19]**. Make sure your boot cover is stretched and you were able to get rid of all the wrinkles.

Last but not least, carefully slip out of the shoe again and grab some trusty glue - I prefer strong contact cement. Now unpin small sections and attach the fabric carefully to the shoe by applying the adhesive in between **[20]**. Finally, just cut off excess material **[21]** and your boot cover is done **[22-23]**! Well, at least for one leg, ha ha! You know what to do! Mirror and repeat!



There are also plenty of ways to paint your sole if you want. Leather paint or fabric dye are the most common ones. Just try it out!



## Other examples

Boot covers don't always have to look like manly boots though. For my Alexstrasza costume (gosh, that was a long time ago) I used simple red elastic jersey to turn regular ankle boots into authentic costume pieces. I just made a rough pattern by drawing a silhouette around my shoe, added more material on top for my leg, traced the patterns on two pieces of fabric and sewed them together. To prevent

the fabric from ripping apart while walking, I also glued a second 'sole' out of furniture faux leather to the bottom [24]. That way it wasn't necessary to 'destroy' the shoe, and I was able to use it for many other projects as well. The golden edges were actually just thin pieces of EVA foam that I covered in some shiny golden vinyl. Looks almost like armor, doesn't it?

For Symmetra I actually used a similar pair of shoes. I made the same pattern as for Alexstrasza but this time on a wet-look, black lycra and glued some additional Worbla pieces on top [25]. As you can see, despite using a similar shoe, I was able to turn it into something complete different. In fact, I sometimes just take one pair of shoes for three different costumes to a convention. This saved me a lot of precious space in my suitcase.



For my FFXIV Summoner costume, I made quite a complicated boot cover. Again, I started by making a tape pattern but this time my husband Benni drew on all the different shapes and details the finished boots were supposed to have [26]. Then we cut my leg free again and I transferred my shapes to a light brown furniture leather.

I created a lot of little belts, sewed all separate parts together and glued it to my shoe [27].

To prevent the overknee boot covers from sliding down, I added two long stripes of plastic boning to the front window. After a bit of airbrush shading and some Worbla pieces the boots were done [28]. I think they turned out great!

Watch this video on YouTube to see how I made my Summoner boots:

> <https://youtu.be/amkwERilUMk>

## NOTE

It's super easy to sew directly through plastic boning. For my Summoner boots I first attached the boning with a bit of fabric glue and then sewed all the way through them with a straight stitch.

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You see, there is no right or wrong way to create a costume. This is true for making armor and sewing as well. Cosplay is all about having fun, being creative and trying out new techniques!

It's not about doing it properly and you should never feel bad for choosing the easy way. All that matters is that you have a costume in the end that you can be proud of.

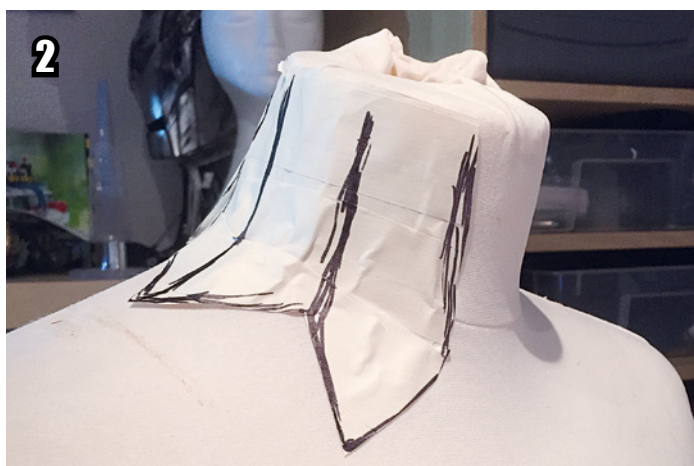
I wrote the following pages to show you how I struggled, failed, but eventually succeeded in creating my own costumes and I hope this will give you inspiration for your own upcoming projects!

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# Aion - Cleric

My Cleric from the video game Aion was one of my first larger sewing projects. I had no real sewing knowledge and didn't even know where to start, so it was a huge challenge for my skills and especially my patience. Just getting the dress right took me seven tries! It shows, that as long as you don't give up, not even the most difficult project can get you down! So don't get discouraged! Just keep trying!



I always like to start with the most interesting or difficult part of a costume, which in this case were the puffy sleeves. I found a book called 'Fabric Manipulation', which introduced me to countless amazing smocking techniques. Smocking is a way to fold fabrics to create beautiful textures. It would take too long to show you all the required steps here, so I highly recommend getting this book (or simply Google smocking) when you're interested in the topic. The next few days I spent with 'honeycomb smocking' some black heavy lycra for my sleeves. It took trial and error to figure out how puffy sleeves work and how much fabric I need to end up with the right size after folding. Next, I just sewed on some pretty pearls and beads while watching Netflix. Creating the sleeves was actually quite relaxing!

After I was done, I started cutting some red leaves, which I wanted to place all around one shoulder and the collar. My friend Yaya Han showed me how to cut and seal fabric using a soldering iron and this was the perfect time to try out this technique. I drew leaf outlines in different sizes onto my fabric, set my soldering iron to maximum and cut out leaf after leaf on a ceramic plate. This worked with thick satin as well as fragile organza **[1]**! You should really give this technique a try!

To get a pattern for my neck corset, I simply covered my dress form in tape, drew on some shapes and traced the resulting template on fabric **[2]**. I also added a second layer of material to give it more stiffness, applied a pretty hem, some laces and hand sewed on more fabric leaves **[3]**.

## NOTE

The great thing about cutting your fabrics with a soldering iron is that it automatically seals all the seams. No fraying at all! This will work only with synthetic materials however. Natural fibers will not seal using this method.





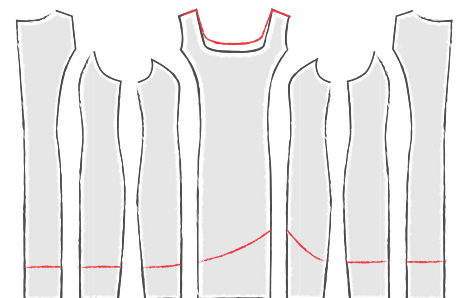
Time for the dress! Oh boy! The main problem of my reference was the vertical lines running through the costume from the top of the dress to the bottom of the legs. I had just bought my serger and was eager to try it out, so I got two different black fabrics, a dark, slightly elastic faux leather and a heavy 4-way stretch lycra, which I wanted to combine. Burda 3477, the slim dress from the beginning of this book, was my pattern of choice. I split it into long strips, traced them to the fabrics and started serging them together. Sadly, by sewing on more and more stripes, the pattern began to lose its shape and once I was done with dress version #1, it actually looked more like a wobbly sausage than an elegant dress [4].

I started again from scratch, but this time using fewer and thicker stripes. I spent another two days on dress #2. It turned out better, but I wasn't careful enough and the strip positions were shifting up and down too much. While the back of the dress turned out pretty long, the front was far too short at the bottom. Correcting this would have taken far too long. Additionally, I made the mistake of shortening the dress before I had actually tried it on [5]. Now the fabric I bought was already gone and I was getting frustrated.

Dress #3 was made out of a stretchy golden vinyl that I covered with a half transparent black fabric [6]. This would create an effect similar to the lines I wanted. I thought I could sew this dress with only a front and a back part, but my new fabrics weren't as stretchy as I thought and it turned out too small. I tried to sew dress #4 bigger, but again it was still too tight around the chest. I had to take a day off to collect my thoughts and calm myself before I was able to start with the next try. It was infuriating!

Dress #5 and #6 were failed experiments with my good old Burda 3477 pattern. #7 finally turned out as the final version. First I sewed both of my fabrics together and then combined the pattern parts with my serger. I tried the dress on and was happy! All the hard work had finally paid off [7]!

This is what my final pattern looked like:



The overknees gave me some trouble many of you probably know. They slipped down constantly and I had to pull them back up every couple of minutes. Adding strap holders was not an option for me, so I actually had the idea to turn this costume part into a pair of leggings! I started by sewing two tubes out of my two-layer fabric combination. Additionally, I pulled a skin-toned thin lycra out of my fabric box and used it to make some short pants. My template were my own leggings, just like I showed you before. I added an elastic band for the waist and finally connected the pants and the fabric tubes with my serger. The result were overknees, disguised as leggings – and they would never slip down again **[8]**!

The shoes were simple boot covers made out of stretchy thick lycra. Just like I showed you in the glove tutorial, I created a silhouette pattern and connected both parts with enough seam allowance. Now I only had to add a little bit of furniture leather to the sole and some fake fur for the top and the shoes were done **[9]**!

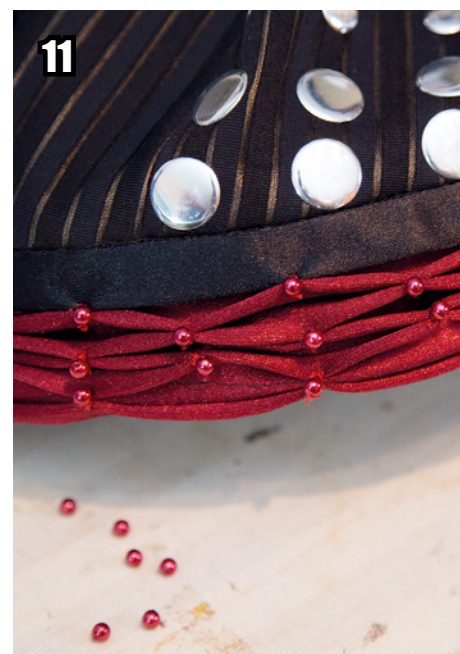
Adding more details was the final step. I applied *a lot* of iron-on rivets, beads, fake fur and then Benni molded and casted a few spiders for me **[10-11]**. The Cleric turned out to be one of my most comfortable costumes to wear and even if it doesn't look as impressive as a full set of shiny armor, I still love to wear it to conventions every now and then. It was one of my first, larger sewing projects and I'm super proud I managed to finish it!

I hope this example helps to show that even if you struggle, fail and want to give up – it pays off to pull yourself together and continue until you get it right.



## NOTE

Tight dresses love to slide up or create ugly wrinkles in the waist area. To counteract these problems, you can sew plastic boning to the inside. Just place them under your seams, sew them on and your costume will look so much better on the next photo!





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# Xena: Warrior Princess

Cosplaying a character from a TV show means that you have an unlimited amount of reference pictures – and the challenge to recreate the costume as perfectly as possible. Xena was the personal hero of my childhood and I wanted to do my best to bring her to life. This meant I had to draw all patterns from scratch and find the perfect materials.

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Xena's battle dress was obviously made out of leather, which I didn't feel comfortable to use. I try to avoid animal products where I can, plus it's hard to work with and pretty darn expensive. Instead I found a real looking fake leather, that was much easier to sew. I tried to find some patterns for her corset, but my search wasn't successful. So I decided to create the costume completely from scratch. As I mentioned before, my dress-form has the same measurements as me, so I covered one side completely with duct tape and drew on the shape of Xena's corset with a sharpie **[1]**. After that, I cut my patterns out and copied them on my material twice **[2-4]**. I got my ideas of where to separate the patterns by looking at corset tutorials online.





By now you probably know that pinning everything together was the next step [5-6]. I was quite happy with the overall look, so I sewed all of the parts together. Next I attached the cups and added metal boning to the inside. This works by pinning the boning under every seam and then sewing it on left and right [7]. Explaining how to create a corset from start to finish would go beyond the scope of this book and cost me too many pages. You'll find plenty of tutorials online though, and I'm sure this will not be my last sewing book either.

Afterwards I punched in some eyelets at the back for the lacing and Benni weathered the fabric with a bit of black acrylic paint [8]. Looks almost like real leather, right? As you can see, it's possible to create a perfectly fitting pattern completely from scratch. You'll notice it's *almost* the same technique as making armor, so I'm sure sewing doesn't look as scary anymore, right? Make sure to store your patterns in a box so you can use them again later. No need to do the same work twice!



For Xena's boots I took brown leather shoes and made a pattern just like I showed you before [9]. I wanted to keep the original pair, so instead of covering them completely with more material, I only glued on enough fabric to turn the shoes into high boots [10-11]. Instead of using a zipper in the back, this time I added eyelets to the front and pulled through some laces [12]. You know, just like when she ties her boots in the opening and then goes BAM! So awesome! Anyway. After that, Benni dyed the material with dark brown leather color and this part was done!

The skirt was super simple and quickly done. This costume part basically consisted of long and thin leather strips that were attached to a thick leather belt around the hip. The thin pieces were several scales, held together with rivets [13]. It took me quite some time to cut the 120 leather scales and connect them to each other, but the result was quite close to my reference [14]. I simply added Velcro tape to the back and got the most comfortable skirt ever.

Just like with the corset, Benni also weathered my skirt using an old sock and some black and brown acrylics. Even when you're not making any armor and only sew your costumes it's important to think about weathering. Dresses and other clothes can get dirty, too! Check out my [Advanced Painting Book](#) for more tips on how to weather fabrics.

If you're curious how I made the sword, the chakram and all the other armor parts, go and check out the full making-of video on Youtube!

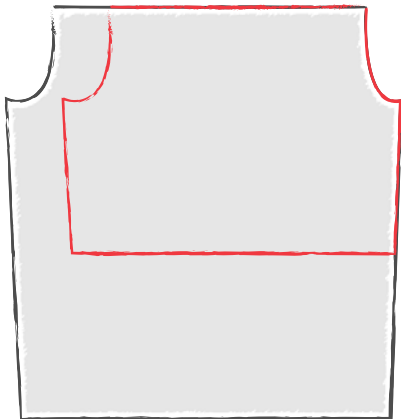
> <https://youtu.be/CvTOZ3-guoc>



# FFXIV - Monk

When I wrote this book, the Monk from Final Fantasy XIV was my most recent sewing project. After gathering some sewing practice, I hoped this costume wouldn't be as difficult as the last ones. And indeed, I was able to immediately pick the right patterns, change them accordingly and sew everything together correctly on the first try! So yes, I still believe there is no natural born talent, just patience and practice! Always keep fighting!

The fabrics for my monk costume were a yellow shimmering curtain fabric, some dark yellow satin for the lining and a bit of brown furniture leather **[1]**. My base pattern for the dress was Burda 3477 as well as Simplicity 7079 for the oriental looking pants. I started my costume by tracing the patterns for the pants, but once I laid them out flat, I noticed they looked pretty gigantic. Since I didn't need enormous pants and they also had to end right over my knees, I decided to make them shorter and slimmer (see drawing below, my final edit in red).

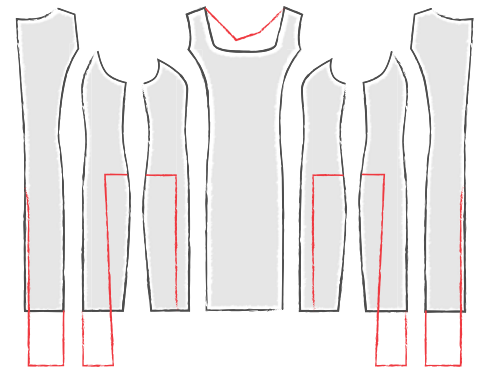


Once cut, the curtain fabric frayed quite a lot. That's why I decided to use my overlock for the whole fabric job – it sealed every seam easy and fast. The pattern itself was actually quite simple. I cut it out twice, sewed the left edge to the right, connected both of these tubes in the middle and added a zipper to the front **[2]**. Pretty much just like making leggings (minus the zipper). Afterwards I just folded a hem in the length of my waist and ruffled the pants so both fabric pieces would fit onto each other. After that I did the same with both legs **[3]**. Now all that was missing were a few belt loops and the embroidery patches that I'll talk about later **[4]**.

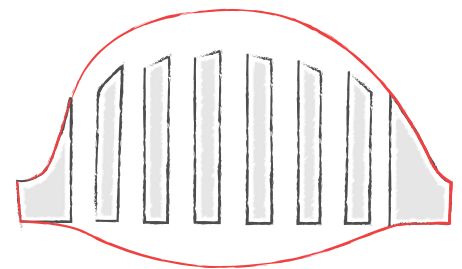




Based on my reference, I actually tried to sew a Chinese style dress at first, but after putting a quick mock-up together, I immediately switched back to my lovely Burda pattern. I already had a lot of practice with altering my trusty dress pattern, so it was relatively easy to combine some of the elements of my previous mock-up test with 3477 to get a nice final shape for the monk dress (see patterns below, my edit in red). The result turned out great, and I only had to add the puffy sleeves [5-6].



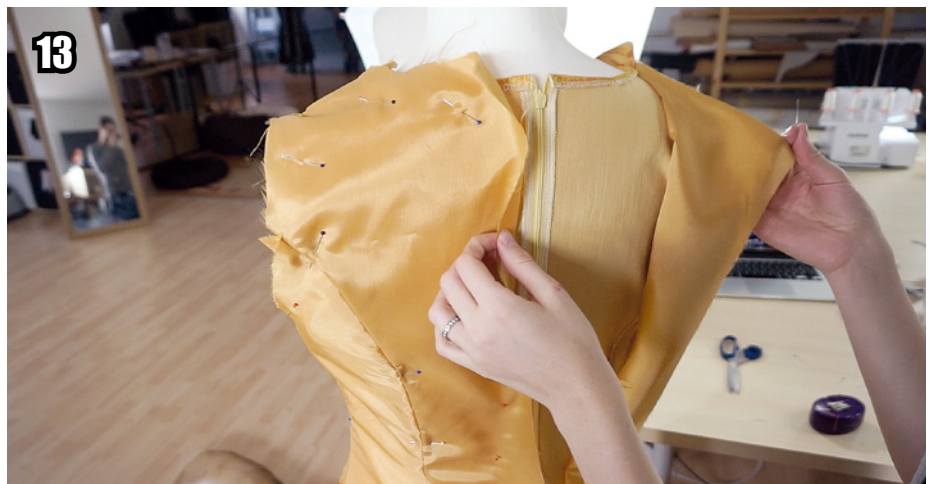
I didn't have any puffy sleeves pattern for this part of the costume, but the tight sleeves of my Chinese dress pattern and some quick Google searched tutorials gave me a good place to start. I laid my sleeve pattern down flat and separated it into eight little pieces. Then I placed those parts on fabric with some space in between, added a good amount of space at the top and the bottom, and cut everything out.



Next I sewed the fabric together at the left and right edge and ruffled it at the bottom and the top using pins [7-8]. Just like I did on pants, I also added thick hem to the end and connected my new and shiny puffy sleeve to the dress [9-10]. I'm actually still amazed it really worked out this easily! Must have been my lucky day!

Benni designed my embroidery patches in a program called Adobe Illustrator. After he was happy with the look, he sent them over to our new and shiny embroidery machine **[11]**. It took a few days to stitch all the patches for the dress, the sleeves, the pants and the shoes, but only a few minutes for me to sew them on afterwards **[12]**.

Next followed the lining. Since I kept all of my patterns, I just pulled them out of my box again and traced them on golden satin. I had experimented quite a bit with the fit of my dress and by the time I wanted to start with the lining it was already completely sewn together. So instead of following the instructions from my dress tutorial, I connected all parts of the lining too, turned my dress inside out and pulled it over my mannequin. I placed my satin on top and made sure the seams overlap each other **[13]**. Then I started roughly pinning the lining from the front to the back, attached the fabric around the zipper and went down to the lower part of the dress. After I was done, I turned the dress around again and pinned it to the edges of the golden curtain fabric. Hand sewing both layers together with a slip stitch took me almost two days **[14]**. Time for more Netflix! The result was a very clean and even lining! I guess good things really do take time!





Next, let's create some golden edges! I decided to use a 2 mm (0.08 inches) thick vinyl that I found in the LA fashion district years ago. Like I mentioned, I just buy whenever I see some shiny fabrics, thinking they might come in handy eventually. Well it did, so I was totally right! I covered my dress with painters tape, drew on some shapes for the ornaments **[15]**, cut them out and traced this pattern onto the back of my vinyl **[16]**. To hold these details in place, I carefully glued them onto my original curtain fabric using Gutermann H2 fabric glue **[17]** and finally sewed over them with a Teflon foot **[18-19]**.

The finished piece turned out amazingly comfortable **[20]**! Wearing a simple dress and loose pants didn't limit my movement at all and I was able to perform Kung-Fu kicks like the Monk from Final Fantasy XIV. Well, not quite like in the game. Additionally I made my armor pieces out of lightweight EVA foam. It literally takes me five minutes to get into the costume, which must be a new record for someone who usually only wears armor. To prevent the costume from getting all sweaty, I always wear a white T-shirt under the dress. I glued a bunch of stuff all over the costume so I wanted to keep it as clean as possible – washing a shirt is much easier than cleaning the dress.



You already saw how I made my collar for the Aion costume a few pages back, so this should sound familiar: To get the right pattern I covered the neck of my dress form in tape, drew all shapes on **[21]**, cut them out and handed them over to Benni, who turned them into an embroidery. I only had to sew the pieces together afterwards **[22]**. Teamwork where you do nothing and get a finished piece is the best teamwork, right?

Now let's move on to the boots! I'm sure by now I don't need to show you how we made the patterns anymore, right? Just flip back to page 30 to get a quick reminder. As described, I covered my legs in tape and traced this pattern with an added 1.5 cm (0.6 inches) of seam allowance onto my fabric **[23]**. I wanted to use the same material as for the dress and pants, but it would have been far too thin and wobbly to get sturdy boot covers. An extra layer of furniture leather was my answer **[24]**! I pinned both fabrics together around the edges and then connected them first before sewing all the pieces into the final shape of the shoe. I added a yellow zipper to the back **[25]**, some brown details to the front and a few embroidered patches all around the sole **[26]**. To hold my large but pretty lightweight knee armor in place, I simply attached two strips of Velcro tape to the top of my boot cover. More on this on the next page.

We actually documented our entire building process of the Monk and uploaded the videos to our YouTube channel. Please go check it out if you want to see more!

> <https://youtu.be/2urF0miScXk>



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# How to attach armor to fabric?

Even though this book is all about sewing, many of you asked me how to attach armor pieces to fabric costumes. It's actually super easy! In this bonus chapter I will show you a few of my favorite methods! After all, it's fun to combine armor making with sewing and the best costumes always use a combination of different techniques.

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## Velcro tape

Even if you want to attach heavy Worbla armor, Velcro tape is a great solution. It's cheap, easy to use and holds really well. You can buy the fluffy and rough sides by the meter/yard in pretty much every sewing store and there is even industrial Velcro which is a lot stronger. Consider a few things though: The part covered with tiny hooks can easily damage fabrics, so be careful how you store and pack your costumes. Additionally, make sure to attach your Velcro tape properly and sew over the edges several times. I often use a combination of Velcro with belts and D-rings, which I already explained in my [Advanced Armor Making Book](#). Other than that just sew some Velcro tape on your fabric, hot glue the counter part to the inside of your armor piece and enjoy the convenience in a comfortable costume!





## Magnets

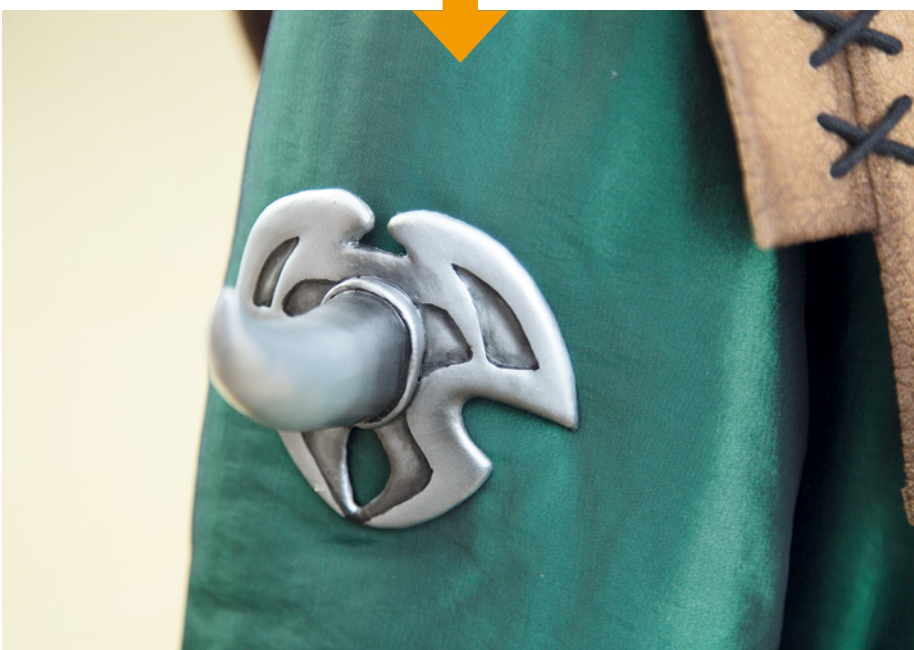
At first sight, magnets might look like a risky solution, but used properly, they can be just perfect for lightweight armor or accessory attachments. Just cover them with a piece of fabric and glue them inside your dress to make them invisible! Rare earth magnets or neodymium magnets are incredibly strong and can hold several kilos – as long as you do not slide them apart sideways. Once you shift them, they easily lose their connection, so be careful where and how you want to use them. If you want to be extra safe, there are special sewing magnets with a little cavity in the middle. This prevents them from sliding apart. I used magnets for my Monk as well as for my Cleric costume and for both occasions they worked great!



## Press buttons

While it takes time to hand sew your press buttons on one by one, they are a great solution to attach lightweight costume pieces. Smaller buttons carry less weight and are easier to sew, while larger ones can carry a lot but have more holes for you to sew through. I prefer medium sized buttons, which I mostly use to attach additional fabric parts, EVA foam armor or little accessories. It's never a bad idea to stock a variety of press buttons at home.

They were also the go-to solution for my FFXIV Summoner. I didn't want to damage the green taffeta of the coat with Velcro tape and magnets weren't strong enough to carry all the weight. In total, I sewed on nine buttons for the leather armor, four for the belt and two for other details. The best thing is, it only took me 10 seconds to attach everything to my costume!



This concludes book number eight, wow!

Thanks so much for supporting me! I really appreciate it and hope some tips in this book were helpful for you. Please leave me a message if you have more questions or ideas for upcoming books or videos!

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Check out my website for more tutorials, write-ups and videos.

[www.kamuicosplay.com](http://www.kamuicosplay.com)

Also, if you already made a costume or prop using my techniques, I would love to share your work in my gallery!

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