

Learn the basics to create your own designs in one weekend!

1 Weekend, 2 Friends, Endless Outfits!

Attention renegade stitchers: get your scissors and fabric ready. We've all watched the contestants on *Project Runway* drape their designs episode after episode, and now, you can do it, too. All you need is a friend, a bit of fabric, some pins, and a free weekend—then you're in business.

We're here to help get you started, step by step by draping sloper (the pattern foundation). And when you're finished, use your sloper to draft a perfectly fitting, pleated skirt (*Sew Stylish* Fall 2008, p. 44).

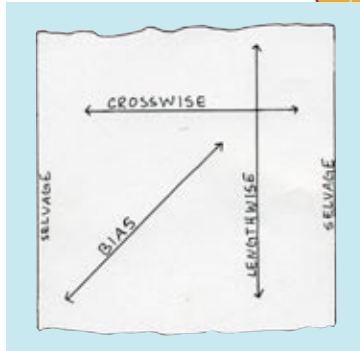


Visit CraftStylish.com and learn to draft a sleeve pattern to match your sloper.

The Whole Grain

Before you begin, take a look at your fabric. The fabric has a “grain” that we will refer to several times throughout the draping process.

The lengthwise grain (sometimes called the “warp,” “straight grain,” or just “grainline”), runs parallel to the selvage (the factory-finished edge of your fabric). The fabric is strongest in this direction and has little to no stretch.



Traditionally (and for our purposes here), the “grainline” refers to an imaginary line that runs parallel to the selvages along the lengthwise grain.

The crosswise grain (or weft) runs from selvage to selvage and has more stretch than the lengthwise grain. Typically, when you are draping, you want to keep the crossgrain parallel to the floor.

Cutting Your Fabric

Measure your friend from shoulder to knee. Add 5 inches, and multiply this by two for the length of fabric you will need. Measure around the fullest part of her body, divide that number in half, and add 10 inches for the width of the fabric you will need.

Block Party

Make sure your fabric is actually “on grain,” so your sloper won’t distort later (this is called “blocking”).

Cut into the crossgrain, and then tear your fabric to prepare a good edge. Then fold it from selvage to selvage. Pull on the bias to stretch the fabric in either direction until the cross-grains are at a 90-degree angle to the selvage.



STOCK UP

Before you get started, make sure you have the supplies you’ll be using all weekend.

You need:

- Form-fitted outfit (a leotard works best but a fitted T-shirt and leggings will work, too)
- Lots of pins
- Twill tape
- 2 to 3 yards of muslin or another inexpensive, lightweight test fabric (nothing stretchy)
- Gridded ruler
- Curved ruler
- French curve
- Awl
- Pinwheel (tracing wheel with spikes)
- Pencils and markers
- Pattern paper

Saturday

Today, you'll drape your entire sloper pattern—front and back. This way, you get the entire shift finished in one go.



1

Tie a wide string or twill tape around your friend's waistline to mark her waist.

Make sure it is parallel to the floor (you may want to safety pin it in place at center front and center back). Cut the fabric as directed in "Cutting Your Fabric."



2

Fold the fabric in half, matching the short ends, and press. Fold the fabric in half again as shown below, and press. Cut a "T" just large enough to fit your friend's head through, as shown below.



3

Pull the fabric over your friend's head, and make sure that the bottom edges on the front and back are even. Position the center crease over the center front and center back. Place the horizontal crease along the shoulders.



7

Pin out the vertical darts on the back (make sure that center back stays over your friend's spine). Taper the dart to about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the waist line. If a second dart is needed, place it about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch toward the side seam from your previous dart. For front and back, each vertical dart should be no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide.



8

Pin out one side seam as close as you can without distorting the rest of your work. To help locate where the armhole hits, gently push a ruler into the armpit. Trim away the excess fabric along the side seam, leaving about an inch or two of fabric along the seam.

4



Pin the shoulder shape, following its natural slant. Keep the shoulder crease parallel to the floor, and the fabric will start to fall smooth and undistorted.

5



Pin out the horizontal bust darts, taking in enough to lift the hem edge parallel to the floor. Make a crease that runs from each bust point to about hip level.

6



Pin out the excess fabric along the creases into vertical torso darts. Shape the darts into the waistline, and taper them to about 4 inches below the waist (you may have to go lower on a curvier person or higher for a petite person; just adjust as you see fit). If a second dart is needed, place it about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch towards the side seam. Make sure that both of your darts are parallel to the center front.

9



Use your fingers to feel the armhole shape on the same side, and mark it out with a marker. Make sure you allow adequate ease for arm movement. Clip into the fabric to make it lay smoothly. Trim away fabric around the armhole.

10



Tape the T-slit shut at your neck. Clip the fabric to the neckline to help it lie flat. Use your fingers to feel the outline of the neck while you mark it on the front and back.

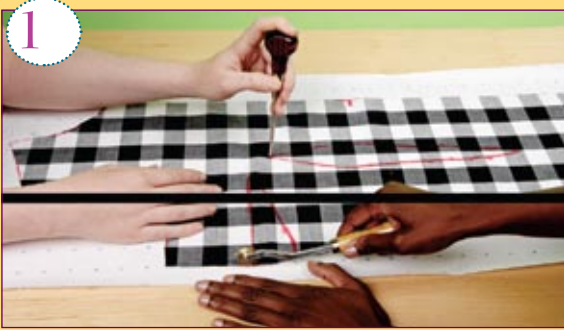
11



Once you are satisfied with the overall look and fit, mark all of your pins with a marker (this includes the side seam and darts). Also, make a crossmark at center-front waist, front and back side waist, and center-back waist. That's it! Now you're free to take off the fabric. Hang it so it won't get wrinkled overnight.

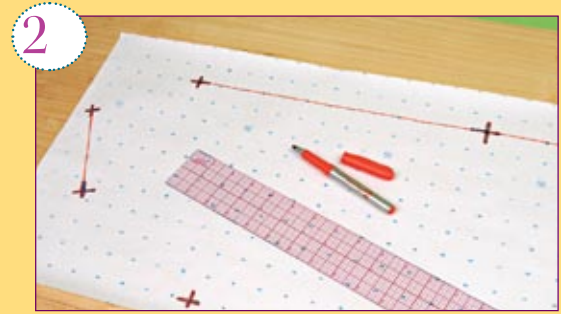
Sunday

Today, you'll transfer your draped fabric to paper for a perfectly fitted sloper.

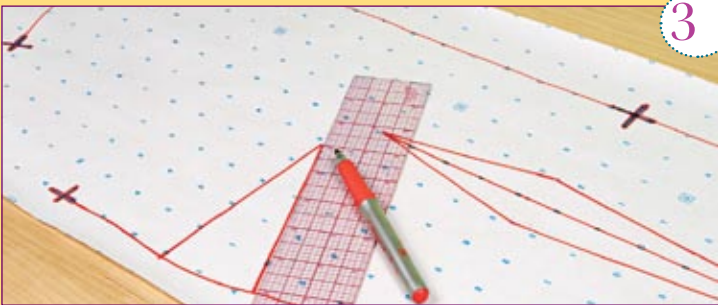


1 **Make sure all of your pins are removed from your fabric.** Cut the fabric along the center foldlines, and cut your front from the back piece. Lay the front and back pieces on the pattern paper. Secure them with pattern weights

(you could also use tape or canned goods). Trace around all of your markings with the pinwheel. (Don't forget to trace over center front and center back lines, too). Mark the points of the darts with the awl.



2 **Set your fabric aside.** Draw short 90-degree angles at center-front neck, center-front waist, center-back neck, and center-back waist. Also, make crossmarks at the shoulder ends and the bottom of the armhole. Draw in your center seams and shoulders.



3 **Draw in your darts using a ruler, following your tracing pinwheel marks.** Keep your vertical dart centers parallel to your center front and perpendicular to the bottom edge. If you want to draw in your side seam as a reference, use your ruler.



4 **Draw the front and back necklines using a French curve and following your pin pricks.** Be sure to blend the lines smoothly into the 90-degree mark at the center front and center back.



5 **Add ease by dropping armholes on the front and back side seams 1 inch from the armhole and expanding the side seam 1/2 inch as shown.** Make a new crossmark at the new armhole, and draw in your new side seam. Draw in your armholes using a French curve. Be sure to blend your curves smoothly into the crossmarks.



6 **Tape your bust dart, and trim along the side seamline.** This "trues" the dart, making its raw edges flush with the side seam when it is sewn.



7 **While the horizontal dart is still taped shut, position the front and back side seams on top of each other.** Compare the side seams to make sure they are the same length by "walking"

one piece down the side of the other. Adjust waist to hip differences by adding length to the hem. Adjust waist to armhole differences by adding length at the armhole.



8 **Make a rough draft of your pattern using inexpensive fabric.** Add a 1-inch seam allowance to the seams to make sure you have enough to play with, and baste all the seams and darts for easy removal. Mark any changes on your fabric, and take off the rough draft. Rip the seams and darts open, and transfer your changes to paper for your final sloper.

Keep in mind

Here are just a few things to keep in mind to help you get the best results while you are draping and drafting a shift sloper.

- The grainline of your sloper should run parallel to the center front or center back. You can adjust this later for different designs, but always keep it on grain for the sloper.
- Keep the bustline of your sloper on the crossgrain (we used gingham here to clearly show lengthwise and crossgrain lines).
- Look at the back of your draped sloper. An imaginary line running across the shoulder blades should be at crossgrain on the fabric.
- When you tape your front and back pattern pieces together at the side seam, your armhole should resemble a horseshoe. Use a French curve to adjust the depth and smooth it out.
- When draping, make your side seam is perpendicular to the floor (if it swings towards the front or back, you'll need to adjust it). After you've transferred the sloper to paper, your front and back side seams should be the same length.
- Use a permanent-ink, felt-tip pen to mark your fabric. Do not use an air-soluble, fabric-marking pen (your marks will disappear too quickly). Also, make sure that your pen isn't bleeding onto your undergarment.

What to do with your sloper

After you've created a sloper that fits you well, there's no limit to your design options. You can use it as a slim-fitting dress pattern or cut off the top or skirt for variations. Check out some of the projects in the Fall 2008 issue of *Sew Stylish: To add new seams and style lines, try the "Cut it Out" tutorial on p. 22. Try "Skirting the Issue" on p. 44 for making a pleated skirt version, or just stitch up the bottom half of your sloper to make a pencil skirt. Look to "Designing with Ease" on p. 27 for help with adding room for various silhouettes. Have fun and experiment—and don't forget to post your original designs on CraftStylish.com. We'd love to see what you come up with!*



There's no better way to get a personalized fit than draping fabric on a live person.