



SEWING A HEDEBY APRON DRESS

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TAKE YOUR MEASUREMENTS

There are three basic measurements:

- Circumference: You generally take the circumference measurement around your area of largest girth, whether the bust or the belly.
- Bodice length: This is a measurement from under the armpit (about 3" below the arm) to about an inch below where you want the skirt flare to start.
- Skirt length: This is from where the bodice length stops to where you want your hem to stop. Don't worry, we'll add hem allowance.

If your largest girth measurement is below where you want your skirt flare to start, use a bust measurement for the circumference. If you use the largest girth measurement for your circumference and a short bodice, you will end up with a very large bodice that will need to be taken in a lot.

CHOOSE YOUR SEAM AND HEM ALLOWANCES

Generally I use a ½" seam allowance. This is enough to allow me to finish the seam allowances however I choose. I use a 1" hem allowance, and turn the raw edges under for a clean finish.

DO THE MATH

The fabric needs to be cut to size before the pieces are cut out.

WIDTH

The easiest measure to figure is the width: Take the circumference measurement and add 4 times the seam allowance.

My circumference measurement is 47", and my seam allowance is ½". Four times the seam allowance is 2", so I need a fabric width of 49".

LENGTH

In order to figure the fabric length, you use one bodice length measurement and two skirt length measurements, plus hem allowances for two bodices and two skirts. It can be expressed as

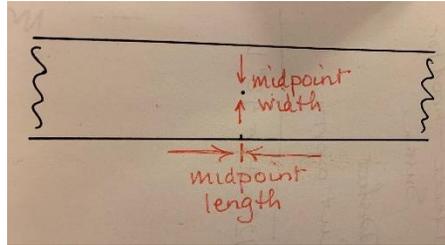
$$\text{bodice} + 2(\text{skirt}) + 4(\text{hem allowance}) = \text{fabric length.}$$

My bodice measurement is 12", and my skirt length is 31.5". Multiply the skirt length by two and add 2" of hem allowance for 65". Add 1" of hem allowance for the bodice length for 13" total, add it to the skirts, and you have a total length of 78", or 2 yards 6". (That 6" is *really annoying.*)

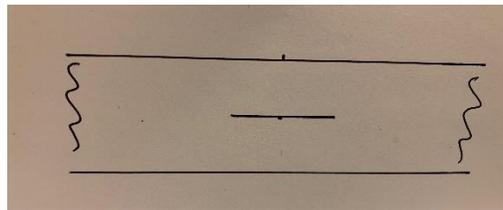
HOW DO I CUT THIS THING OUT?

Fold the fabric into quarters lengthwise.

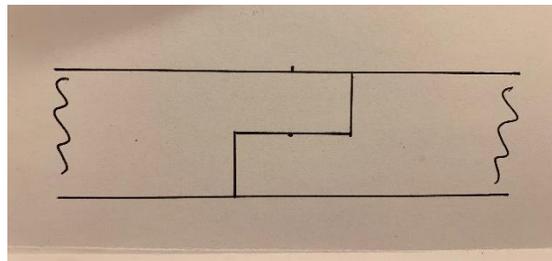
Place the fabric in front of you so that the length runs right to left. Find the middle of the length of the fabric, then the middle of the fabric widthwise.



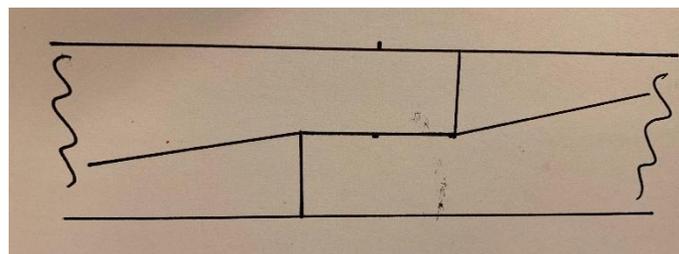
At that center point, draw a line lengthwise, using the bodice measurement plus hem allowance, half on one side of the line and half on the other.



At the left end of this line, draw a line at a right angle to the first, from the end of the line to a folded edge. Do the same at the other end of the lengthwise line, but to the opposite edge.



Finally, draw lines from these right-angled corners diagonally to the corner of the fabric. Be sure to draw the line in a direction so that you create triangles. These will be the gores for your dress.



I HAVE ALL THESE PIECES: NOW WHAT?

Now... you put them together.

You will find that you have one panel piece and one gore piece that are each in two pieces. These days I recut the split gore out of scrap using the whole gores as a template, but I always piece the panel together. You can piece the split gore if you like, but it will not be as long as the other gores. I have a couple of dresses that are bit lopsided in back as a result.

Once that panel piece is together, I start sewing gore to panel to gore to panel, all the way around, until I have a tube. If I'm concerned about fit, I've been known to just sew the bodice seams shut, so I can try it on without the effort of sewing the skirt seams (when you sew by hand, this is a definite consideration).

When you have everything sewn together and fitted to your satisfaction, hem the top and bottom of the dress, and then attach straps. I make my straps out of linen, even if the dress is wool, because most of the straps found in graves in Hedeby are linen. I don't actually care if they match, but it's nice if they complement the dress.

Most extant straps are about 1cm wide, made of double-folded fabric. I start with two grain-cut strips 4cm wide (bias-cut strips will stretch, and we don't want stretch) and about 36" long. I fold them in half and iron them, then turn the edges under and iron again. Then I whipstitch the fold closed, and I have a strap. 36" is long enough to make the long strap that goes over the shoulder as well as the small loop in front that the brooch pin goes through.

Sew the straps to the top edge of the dress. I usually position my brooches in line with the centerline of each breast. I attach the straps to the back of the dress slightly to the inside of my shoulderblades, about 3" away from my spine. The straps should be long enough to keep your brooches from flopping around or the straps from falling down your shoulders.



The brooches themselves should sit so that the lower edge of the brooch overlays the top edge of the dress.

Good luck, and happy sewing!

