

PART 1: BEGINNING DRAPING

Overall aim These exercises will help you to:

- create items of 'real' clothing with fabrics of your choice
- increase your motivation to learn the techniques by working on projects that are engaging

1.1: Draping the Woven Panel

Challenge: To create an 'evening wear' dance tunic (page 26) or a Diana of Versailles garment (page 30) using a contemporary fashion fabric such as silk chiffon, georgette or rayon matte jersey.

Objectives:

- To improve basic draping skills such as thread tracing grainlines and pinning.
- To learn the importance of grainlines by working with simple shapes that make it easier for you to recognize when your grainlines are properly set.
- To hone observational skills by working with balance and proportion.
- To see how an entirely new look can be created using a different fabric.

Strategy:

1. Choose a fabric that reflects current trends in colour and/or print styles.
2. Before cutting the fabric, drape it roughly on the mannequin to determine whether you want to vary the volume in your drape. A fine chiffon, for example, will need more fabric to give generous gathers, a knit fabric may require less.
3. Following the appropriate calico preparation diagram, size the fabric pieces up or down according to your volume assessment in Step 2 above. If you are working with the dance tunic, begin with the diagram on page 27, but note that it is for a half drape and you will need

to double the width measurements to make a complete garment. For the Diana of Versailles garment, use the diagram on page 36 which includes the measurements for the complete garment.

4. Instead of drawing lines on the fabric, thread trace the grainlines so that the fabric can be used in the actual garment (page 22).

5. Follow the step-by-step instructions for your chosen garment: the dance tunic (pages 26-29) or the Diana of Versailles garment (pages 30-37). As you drape, experiment with the volume and observe how it looks with slightly more or less fullness in each piece.

Notes for Student:

- Although you are restricted to fabrics that drape with fine folds, try to find a fabric that you would like to experiment working with. Even a solid colour can be made interesting by using a contrast belt or some type of ornamentation, as on the dance tunic (page 26).

Reading/Research:

- Section 1.1: Draping the Woven Panel pages 18-37
- Research and study the clothing of ancient cultures such as the Greeks or Romans and try to visualize how the garments are made. See if you can figure out the size and proportions of the fabric pieces in some of the garments you discover.

Videos:

Preparation

1. Tearing the Muslin (Calico)
2. Blocking the Muslin (Calico)
3. Pressing the Muslin (Calico)
5. Marking the Grainlines – Thread Tracing
7. Aligning the Grainlines

Pinning, Trimming and Clipping

8. Pinning Two Pieces of Muslin (Calico) Together
9. Turning Up and Pinning the Hem
10. Pinning, Marking and Turning Seams

Notes for Instructor:

- Ask each student to bring in swatches of the fabrics he or she would like to use for approval.
- To work well, fabrics should be thin but have a medium to heavy drape. A silk chiffon is beautiful but relatively difficult to work with. Fine, lightweight linens or gauzes work well and are less expensive than silks. If the fabric doesn't fold well, such as with a polyester chiffon, the gathered areas will look puffy. Fine knits also work well with these designs, but as these knits are covered in a later chapter, encourage your students to find wovens that drape well, even though it may take a little more persistence to find the right ones.

Presentation Suggestion:

- Because the fit here is very easy, students may be able to try on their own garment or find a friend willing to try it on. Take photographs of how the garments look being worn and post them on a board to compare how they appear.

Timing: This exercise should take 2 to 3 hours.

1.2: Dresses

Challenge: To drape, create a pattern for, and sew a knee-length, sleeveless "sheath" dress by using the information in this section to create a design of your choice.

Objectives:

- To reinforce the skills learned in this section by using darting and seaming to construct a specific silhouette and shape.
- To learn the importance of using precision when pinning, clipping and fitting.
- To assess the finished dress in terms of the seams and darts matching your final sketch and also to determine if the garment matches the mood and tone of the sketch.

Strategy:

1. Design and sketch a 'sheath' dress with darts that fit the bust emanating from the neckline, shoulder, armhole, side seam or empire/waist seam (pages 42-43).
2. Next add another fit seam by creating either a yoke or empire/waist or princess seams.
3. Colour blocking or detailing such as topstitching can be used.
4. You may need to sketch 4 to 5 dresses before arriving at one that has a visually pleasing combination of darts and seams.
5. Choose a solid colour (or two) in a stable woven fabric (not a knit or stretch woven fabric) that will hold some shape, such as a cotton twill, denim or medium weight linen.
6. First, drape the dress you have chosen in calico, taking care to follow the proportions of your sketch.
7. When the drape is finished, check it in a mirror at a distance to make sure you are satisfied with the

position of the darts, the balance of seamlines, and the silhouette you have created.

8. Proceed with marking and truing up the dress (pages 54-55), and making a paper pattern (page 56).

9. Cut and sew the dress using the utmost precision. If the dress pieces are not cut exactly on the grainlines of the fabric, the fit will change and you may get twisting and pulling.

10. Try the finished garment on the mannequin and make any corrections needed. Make sure to transfer corrections to the pattern as well.

Notes for Student:

- When sketching, study the photographs of the different darts on pages 43, 44, 47 and 52-54 and the seaming on pages 59, 63 and 65 and note the subtle differences the specific darts and seams make so that you can use the right combination to control the outcome of your design silhouette.
- Too many seamlines may be distracting. For example, a shoulder dart on a yoke is fine, but if princess seams are then added, the dress may start looking too busy.
- When draping make sure you are shaping the dress to the mannequin in a body skimming way, not moulding it tightly to the mannequin.

Reading/Research:

- Section 1.2: Dresses pages 40-65
- Study the dresses of the 1960s and observe how darting and seaming were used then. Many contemporary dresses have the same silhouette as those from that era, but try to discern which contemporary dresses fit well because of skillful darting and seaming and which use a knit fabric to achieve fit.

Videos:

Preparation

1. Tearing the Muslin (Calico)

2. Blocking the Muslin (Calico)

3. Pressing the Muslin (Calico)

4. Marking the Grainlines – Pencil

7. Aligning the Grainlines

Pinning, Trimming and Clipping

8. Pinning Two Pieces of Muslin (Calico) Together

9. Turning Up and Pinning the Hem

10. Pinning, Marking and Turning Seams

11. Trimming and Clipping

13. Turning Front Over Back

Darts

12. Side Bust Dart

14. French Dart

15. Long Vertical Darts, Front and Back

Preparing For and Making the Pattern and Fitting

16. Taping the Stylelines

17. Marking

18. Truing

19. Fitting the Dress

20. Transferring the Muslin (Toile) to a Paper Pattern

Notes for Instructor:

- When approving the sketches, remind students that the lines they have drawn on their sketches to indicate darting and seaming will be visible to varying degrees on the final garment. Well-pressed seams will tend to disappear, but topstitched seams will stand out. Students should determine ahead of time which outcome is desired and make sure the lines are balanced and well-proportioned, especially if seams are going to show prominently.
- As the students are draping, discuss the amount of ease needed in a wearable garment and make sure they are shaping the dress to the mannequin in a body skimming way, not moulding it tightly to the mannequin.
- If working with a group of students, it is a good idea to have a critique after their drapes are done so that they can learn by studying the silhouettes created by others and also see how these vary with the different types of darting and seaming.

- This would also be a good time to point out how small adjustments in dart intake or side seam fit can make a big difference in the silhouette outcome.
- After truing up and transferring to paper, check each student's pattern to make sure all the seams are matching up, and check before cutting to ensure he or she is aligning grainlines of the pattern with the grain of the fabric.
- When the finished dresses are on the mannequins, remind students that a garment is rarely perfect after a first drape and that small and sometimes even major corrections may be required. For example, the yoke line may be too low or high, or the princess seams set too wide which make the dress appear unflattering at the hips.

Presentation Suggestion:

- Put the group of dresses on mannequins and encourage students to study the differences in the way they look. This will help train their eyes to see subtleties in line and silhouette.

Timing: This exercise should take 2 to 3 hours for preparing the calico and draping; approximately 2 to 3 hours to true up the drape and make a paper pattern; and 2 to 3 hours to cut and sew the dress (sewing time will vary depending on the skill of the student).

1.3: Corsets

Challenge: To drape, create a pattern for, and sew a fitted corset of your own design using a contemporary fashion fabric.

Objectives:

- To improve basic draping skills such as pulling a thread to mark the grainlines (page 71) and pinning very close to the mannequin (page 76).
- To improve marking and truing skills by making the paper pattern from the drape.
- To experiment with your own choices of fit and seaming over the bust, while working within the fairly narrow structure of the traditional corset.
- To continue learning the importance of properly set grainlines by working with aligning multiple panels which make it easy for you to recognize when your grainlines are shifting.

Strategy:

1. Design and sketch a basic corset taking care to place the style lines where they will create a good fit over the bust and waist areas.
2. Drape the corset, following the basic steps on page 73.
3. Mark, true and make the paper pattern as on page 83. Cut and re-pin half the toile from the paper pattern to check the fit and shape. If you are making the corset to fit a specific model, you will need to make a full toile in order for the garment to be tried on.
4. Analyze the fit, pin the corrections, and transfer them to the paper pattern.
5. Choose a heavy weight cotton, damask or brocade fabric that reflects current trends in colour and/or print styles. Use fusible interlining to strengthen the fabric if necessary.
6. Cut the fabric taking great care to match the grainline of the fabric with the grainline of the pattern.

7. After sewing the basic panels together, press the corset, and then try it on the mannequin again to check for any additional adjustments in the fit or look of the garment.
8. Note for future reference any differences in fit or look between the toile and the actual fabric used. As a designer, it is important for you to be able to visualize these differences.
9. Determine where you are going to place the boning and whether it will be inserted into seam allowance casings or topstitched onto the outer fabric layer.
10. While this is not shown here, you can set a Petersham ribbon at the waistline on the inside to hold the corset in place using a hood and eye closure (page 272).
11. Trims and/or additional embellishments can be machine or hand tacked onto the finished corset.

Notes for Student:

- Although you are restricted to a corset shape, use your creativity when choosing the fabric or combination of fabric and trims.
- Decide ahead of time what mood and tone you are going to set with your garment. Will it be whimsical and fun, or edgy and dark? Sexy or girlish? Choose your fabric and trims carefully to communicate the look you are aiming for.

Reading/Research:

- Section 1.3: Corsets pages 68-85
- The sewing techniques used in this book are fairly straightforward, but there are many books on the art of corsetry that provide more detailed methods of construction (see *The Basics of Corset Building* by Linda Sparks, Griffin, 2008).
- Research and study the corsets of the Georgian and Victorian eras to get ideas for silhouette and detail.

Videos:

Preparation

1. Tearing the Muslin (Calico)
2. Blocking the Muslin (Calico)
3. Pressing the Muslin (Calico)
21. Marking the Grainlines – Pulling a Thread
7. Aligning the Grainlines

Pinning, Trimming and Clipping

8. Pinning Two Pieces of Muslin (Calico) Together
10. Pinning, Marking and Turning Seams
11. Trimming and Clipping
13. Turning Front Over Back
23. Turning the Seams of a Fitted Garment

Preparing For and Making the Pattern and Fitting

16. Taping the Stylelines
17. Marking
18. Truing
20. Transferring the Muslin (Toile) to a Paper Pattern

Notes for Instructor:

- Ask each student to bring in swatches of the fabrics he or she would like to use for approval. Make sure the fabrics are heavy enough to keep the shape of the corset, but not so heavy that they will be difficult to sew and press. Leather or very stiff canvas should be avoided unless the student is an experienced sewer.
- There are many levels of sewing difficulty in this type of project. Determine how much detail you want the students to engage in. The corset could be simplified into an outer layer with boning stitched into seam allowance casings and top and lower edges turned and stitched up. Separating zippers or hook and eye tape are the easiest closures to execute.
- If desired, the project can be expanded into additional class sessions using more detailed construction techniques, such as incorporating linings, topstitching and lace up areas.

Presentation Suggestion:

- Have your students place their corsets on the mannequins and do a class critique. Ask students to describe the mood or attitude they discern in each other's projects and compare this to how each student intended his or her corset to appear. Discuss the different techniques used and the level of success achieved.

Timing: This exercise should take 2 to 3 hours for preparing the calico and draping; approximately 2 to 3 hours to true up the drape and make a paper pattern; and 2 to 3 hours to cut and sew the corset (sewing time will vary depending on the skill of the student and the complexity of the construction techniques chosen).