

PART 3: ADVANCED DRAPING

Overall aim: These exercises will help you to:

- practise advanced techniques and increase your dexterity and skill
- recognize subtleties in shape and contour
- improve your creativity and confidence in draping more complex garments
- develop your own distinctive style

3.1: Coats and Jackets

Challenge #1: To create 3 sample bolero-length collarless and sleeveless jacket drapes with taped armholes and different types of shoulder pads for each one. These samples can be fitted, as with a classic bolero, or have some flare at the hem.

Objectives:

- To study how to balance fabric from the shoulders and to experiment working with shoulder and armhole shapes.
- To improve your skill in working with an important element of a well-fitting jacket by understanding the differences between a comfortable lowered armhole and sleeve crown and a very tailored, close-fitting one.

Strategy:

1. Choose 3 different types of shoulder pads with which to work. Select one type and pin a pad to the right and left shoulder on the mannequin (page 212).
2. Prepare calico sections for the front and back of the jacket that finish just below the waist. Leave only 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches) at the centre front as these jacket drapes will not include a lapel.
3. Drape the front and back sections as for a classic bodice (pages 45, 52-53 or 61-63). Remember that the jacket will be worn over other garments, so drape it loosely away from the mannequin. Keep the centre front

firmly pinned as you work. Don't let it shift or angle; keep the grainline vertical. Leave the neckline pinned high on the mannequin for stability.

4. Use whatever darting you like from the shoulders, neckline or side seam, to control the shape.
5. Connect the side seams wrong sides together, but only with a few pins, as this connection may shift after you finalize the shoulder.
6. Turn the shoulder seams front over back carefully, as this is the crucial moment in determining the fall of the piece. Follow the shape of the shoulder pad as you drape the shoulder seam from neck to shoulder edge.
7. Experiment with shifting the side seams up and down in relation to each other. Notice how altering the position of these pieces changes the shape of your silhouette.
8. Once you have finalized the side seams, trim, clip if necessary, and turn side seams front over back.
9. Tape and then chalk your neckline and front edge and your armhole.
10. Turn up the hem of the jacket to allow the final silhouette to be more precisely observed.
11. Photograph the drape for reference.
12. Repeat the above process to create 2 new jacket drapes using the other 2 shoulder pads selected.

Notes for Student:

- When choosing your shoulder pads, try to visualize ahead of time the kind of silhouette they will create.
- Make sure your stuffed arm is securely attached to the mannequin so that it doesn't shift as you work with it.
- Make sure that your shoulder pads are also firmly attached.
- Use a calico weight that imitates a jacket weight, but keep in mind that since you are working with a shortened shape, a calico that is too stiff will not move well.

- When working with the balance, it sometimes helps to angle the shoulder seam slightly to the front or back depending on your darting treatments. Feel free to experiment with this.
- Be sure that the shoulder area, about 2.5 cm (1 inch) out from the neck edge, is pinned firmly. This is a crucial point of balance and, if it is loosely draped, it will weaken the hang of the jacket and throw the centre front grainline off.
- When marking the armhole, first do a preliminary taping and observe it from all angles. Also observe how it hangs as you lift and lower the stuffed arm.
- Keep in mind that an armhole is generally cut away in front for additional ease at the front underarm, and usually has extra width in the back to allow for the arms being angled forward. This armhole shape can be subtle for a more fitted jacket, or more exaggerated for a looser-fitting jacket.

Reading/Research:

- Section 3.1: Coats and Jackets pages 206-257
- Study new collections online and observe closely what types of shoulder silhouettes seem current.
- Research shoulder shapes of the 1940s and the 1980s, when larger pads were being used. Consider whether the looks you have created are strictly vintage or a newer take on a vintage inspiration.

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
10. Pinning, Marking and Turning Seams

11. Trimming and Clipping
13. Turning Front Over Back

Darts

12. Side Bust Dart

Preparing For and Making the Pattern and Fitting

16. Taping the Stylelines

Challenge #2: Repeat the same exercise of creating a collarless and sleeveless jacket body using the classic panel jacket pieces on page 210 and draping them as on pages 212-214.

Objective:

- To observe how the additional seaming gives more control over the shape of the jacket front and back.

Challenge #3: To create a two-piece sleeve that works with the shoulder and armhole shapes in Challenge #1 and/or Challenge #2.

Objectives:

- To practise working with a two-piece sleeve and to learn how the seams can be used to expand or reduce the fabric necessary to fit the sleeve with the armhole.
- To match the proportions of the bolero style jacket already created with a sleeve that works together with it.

Strategy:

1. Study the sleeve types on page 218 for inspiration and choose a sleeve design.
2. Use the “Easy two-piece sleeve draft” on pages 216-217 to create your sleeve. Add to the seam allowances if you feel your sleeve will need to be fuller to accommodate a larger armhole.
3. As you attach the sleeve, study the step-by-step

instructions on pages 220-221 and 249-250 to help you finesse a truly well-fitting sleeve/armhole.

4. Remember to lift and drop the stuffed arm continually to observe how the fabric breaks and to make certain that it looks good through 360 degrees.

5. When you have finished with the sleeve, mark and true it, and make a paper pattern to save for reference.

Video:

29. The Two-Piece Sleeve

Challenge #4: Create the pattern for, cut and sew a finished short jacket from one of the drapes.

Notes for Instructor:

- Encourage your students to take their time with this exercise. Learning how a sleeve fits into a jacket armhole is a difficult and time-consuming process, but an important one for them to master as an ill-fitting sleeve is an immediate sign of a poorly constructed jacket.
- A traditional bolero jacket is fairly fitted, but it may be valuable experience for students to try draping with a raglan pad, which might look better with a less fitted, or even flared silhouette.
- Have students make sure the neckline areas and centre front and back of their drapes are firmly pinned to the mannequin. If the calico pieces are floating around or shifting, it will affect the balance of the front and back pieces, which is the crux of this exercise.
- Encourage some creativity with the two-piece sleeve. Lowered armholes, sleeves that are flared at the wrist or angled towards the front, etc., provide good practice.

Presentation Suggestion:

- Have students photograph all of their drapes and then line them up on a board so that they can see the subtle differences in the drapes. Sometimes these subtleties are more apparent in photographs than in the actual drapes.
- Students who are able to complete the additional sleeve exercise should put their drapes on mannequins lined up. The other students can then observe any subtle differences in the jacket drapes and critique together about which drapes seem to fall most successfully.

Timing: Challenge #1 should take 1 to 2 hours for preparing the calico and each shoulder pad draping; using the paneled jacket (Challenge #2) should take an extra 1 to 2 hours to complete; draping the two-piece sleeve and fitting it into the armholes (Challenge #3) should take at least 2 to 3 hours for each style; and making the pattern, cutting and sewing (Challenge #4) should take approximately 3 to 4 hours (sewing time will vary depending on the skill of the student and the degree of difficulty).

3.2: The Grand Gown

Challenge: To drape, create a pattern for, and sew a gown of your own design, using the basic structure of a boned foundation, petticoat underskirt and gown. The understructure can be made with any kind of support elements you choose. Since this is a draping project, the sewing treatments should be kept simple, with the emphasis on creating a specific shape.

Objectives:

- To construct a foundation and petticoat structure to match a specific sketched shape.
- To understand how the shape of that understructure will determine the outcome of the final gown, and how the final fabric chosen will also affect it.
- To use fundamental draping skills to execute the drape of an overdress that employs large pieces of fabric.
- To hone the skill of visualizing the final look of the gown during the draping process, so that the outcome reflects the initial sketch.

Strategy:

1. Sketch a gown design focusing on the final shape or silhouette you would like the gown to exhibit.
2. Decide on the final fabric you will be using for the gown, as its weight will affect the understructure. A heavy velvet will need a stronger petticoat – crinoline, for example – whereas a lightweight taffeta will almost stand out on its own. A satin crêpe will tend to fall heavily over any support elements.
3. Construct a foundation and petticoat following the step-by-step instructions on pages 272 and 267-268.
4. Keeping in mind your vision of how you want the final garment to look, drape the gown with calico.
5. Work with a mirror or take regular “perspective checks” to make sure your silhouette is as desired.
6. Mark, true up and create the pattern for the gown.

7. Cut the final fabric and sew.

8. Test the overdress over the foundation. If additional support elements are needed, add them now.

9. Self critique your work. Go back to your sketch, and recall the desired emotional effect you wanted to achieve with the dress. Has the look you intended been accomplished? Did the fabric help or hinder the result?

Notes for Student:

- An important element for success in this project lies in understanding the function of the foundation and petticoat. Carefully consider how you want the bodice of your dress to look, and choose a foundation construction that supports that look.
- Drape the top edge of the foundation higher than you think the top of the dress will be, and then tape the top edge to cut down later.
- It is equally important to determine how your final fabric will interact with its support structure. It should appear to lie effortlessly on top of the structure. Test the effect by laying the fabric on top of your understructure to make sure you have enough support (page 274).
- The photograph of Lady Gaga on page 265 shows a foundation with rings of boning circling her body. Note that any kind of understructure can be created with any kinds of support elements to achieve a desired shape. Be creative with boning, horsehair, crinoline, wire, etc., but be aware of the degree to which your overdress fabric will change that silhouette once the dress is completed.

Reading/Research:

- Section 3.2: The Grand Gown pages 260-281
- Make a study of classic gowns throughout the last three centuries. Notice the various silhouettes and, when working on your own sketches, try incorporating some of them into your modern design.

- Look at contemporary collections online and study how the silhouettes continue to change.
- Sketch some new gowns and try to determine what their understructure might look like.

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
23. Turning the Seams of a Fitted Garment

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

Garment Specific Draping Techniques

30. Draping the Gown

Notes for Instructor:

- To ensure that your students are successful with their gowns, have them keep their sketches simple. The focus should be on executing a planned silhouette accurately and devising an understructure that will enable the creation of that silhouette.

- Encourage the sketching of interesting silhouettes that can be created by understructure or by volume created in the overdress through gathering, pleating, tucking, etc.
- Have students include a waistline Petersham ribbon in their foundations, so that the weight of the skirt and bodice is supported.
- To aid in the stability of the drape, it is a good idea for the neckline of the foundation to be draped higher than the anticipated top edge of the dress. Also, to make sure that the top edge doesn't get cut away prematurely.
- When students are draping large sections of fabric, suggest that they use elastic to hold in gathers, or whatever helps give the effect as they are pinning.
- Avoid students spending too much time perfecting one detailed area before the overall drape is done. It will restrict their ability to go back and adjust the look in its entirety.
- When they arrive at the final look, encourage students to push it even further to perfection by exaggerating or adjusting the proportions up and down in small increments.

Presentation Suggestion:

- A group critique with the finished gowns on the mannequins is a valuable exercise. Have your students observe the various foundations and petticoats, and how they interact with their overdresses.
- Have students talk about their designs and verbalize the emotional effect they were hoping to convey.

Timing: Sketching time will vary; draping and sewing the foundation should take about 2 to 6 hours; draping and sewing the petticoat 2 to 6 hours; draping the gown 3 to 5 hours; making the pattern, cutting and sewing the gown approximately 8 to 14 hours. All these estimates depend on the skill of the student and complexity of the gown he or she is creating.

3.3: Draping on the Bias

Challenge #1: To create a bias dress of your own design using 2 m (2 yards) of fabric. Use as much of the fabric as you possibly can with no scraps leftover.

Objectives:

- To work further with the bias drape, observing how it fits and falls.
- To practise specific bias draping techniques, such as how to connect bias edges.
- To practise draping with fabric on the mannequin, experimenting with how it moves and drapes, and figuring out how and where to cut it for a dress design.

Strategy:

1. Find a fabric that has a fluid drape to work with, such as a georgette or crêpe. A soft tencel-type fibre will also work.
2. Thread trace a series of bias lines on the fabric about 30 cm (12 inches) apart.
3. Practise and experiment with pinning the fabric onto the mannequin in various ways to see what types of movement and/or draped areas you like.
4. If you have a mini mannequin to work with, take a half size piece of fabric, mark it with the bias lines, and use it to continue experimenting with draping and cutting.
5. Once you feel you have arrived at a dress design, cut and pin carefully, leaving plenty of seam allowance between the cuts to prevent too much stretching.
6. Tape style line edges – neckline and hem edges, armholes, etc. – to keep them from stretching.
7. Hand-baste the pieces together and remove the drape from the mannequin to continue marking it.
8. Make a paper pattern from your drape, matching seamlines and notches. However, beware of making too many changes, such as evening out sew lines or re-positioning notches. Some of the pieces may have

utilized the stretch of the bias on the mannequin more than others. Trust what you have draped.

9. Re-cut your fabric according to the pattern. The fabric pieces should generally fit the pattern, but there will be areas to correct, especially since seam allowances have been added which were not accurately trimmed as you draped.

10. Hand-baste the dress together and fit it on a model or the mannequin before final sewing.

Notes for Student:

- Note the skirt sections of the Vionnet dress on page 284. The way the bias sections hang is quite beautiful. Perhaps leftover sections can be used in such a decorative way as this on your own dress.
- Bias pieces make beautiful cowls. Practise creating various proportions of cowl drapes at the neckline or hip with your fabric piece.
- If you don't have a mini mannequin to work with, it may be sensible to start with a 'calico' type fabric with a similar handle, or drape, so that you don't risk cutting your actual fabric prematurely.
- Remember the principle of following the grainline upwards to create fit, and not trying to pull in the bias at the area in question.

Reading/Research:

- Section 3.3: Draping on the Bias pages 284-299
- Research the work of the designer Madeleine Vionnet in the 1920s and try to visualize how she cut the pieces of the bias patterns.
- Study the lingerie of the 1930s and observe the fit.

Challenge #2: Now that you have a paper pattern, try cutting and sewing the dress in another fabric to study the differences in how it fits and falls.

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
11. Trimming and Clipping
13. Turning Front Over Back

Darts

12. Side Bust Dart

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

Garment Specific Draping Techniques

31. Fitting on the Bias

Notes for Instructor:

- When students begin working with fabrics on the mannequins, it might be helpful to photograph some of the drapes and to make sketches based on those drapes. Students can then take some measurements and figure out a rough cutting diagram, so that when they start their final drape they have a better idea of where to start cutting into the fabric.
- If inexpensive georgette or soft fabrics are available, it is good practice for students to cut freely and loosely, creating several drapes as experiments.

- Once the drape is started, it is just as important that the grainlines of the bias flow as it is on the straight grain. Beware of random grainlines which might cause unforeseen interference with the balance.

- Check each student's drape carefully before it is removed from the mannequin, and encourage him or her to notice when an area has been particularly stretched. In such cases, the crossmarks might not necessarily meet when students match up the sew lines of the pattern.

- Sometimes it is helpful to take measurements of a seamline. Then, if the edges stretch during sewing, the student will have a target finished length, and can control the stretch with staystitching or bias strips on the sew line.

Presentation Suggestion:

- Place the dresses on mannequins and encourage students to comment on each other's garments. Have them observe which techniques have succeeded and which areas seem problematic.

Timing: This exercise should take 1 to 2 hours for experimenting with draping on the bias and deciding on the cuts; 2 to 3 hours to do the actual draping; and to make the paper pattern, cut the fabric and sew the dress approximately 2 to 3 hours (sewing time will vary depending on the skill of the student and complexity of the design).

3.4: Improvisational Draping

Challenge: To create a dress with a specific concept in mind, but without a prepared sketch. This concept can involve a certain activity, such as dancing or hunting, or an attitude you want to express, such as wild romanticism or meditative quiet. In lieu of a sketch, the preparation may be a visual shape that comes from experimenting with a fabric, or an idea about grainline configuration. In all cases, the dress must be draped improvisationally on the mannequin.

Objectives:

- To generate an abstract concept that will manifest itself in physical form in the dress.
- To practise concentrating and focusing on the feeling of the dress, and what is being expressed, rather than on a specific visual key, such as a sketch or photograph.
- To experiment intuitively with your chosen fabric, creating the shape of the dress by making spontaneous decisions about the placement of seams, tucks, gathers or asymmetrical angles.

Strategy:

1. Begin by jotting down some phrases that reflect what you wish to express or by drawing a rough sketch of grainline configuration.
2. Choose a fabric that supports the activity or attitude you would like the dress to communicate.
3. Decide how much fabric you would like to see on the person wearing the dress. If it is a light and thin fabric, then is it 5 m (5 yards)? If a heavy fabric, is it only 2 m (2 yards)?
4. Prepare some calico pieces (or final fabric if you wish) of a few different sizes and mark grainlines on them.
5. Start your drape anywhere you like but be sure to consider how it will be held to the body. Will it be balanced from the shoulders? Clasped at the waist? Suspended around the neck halter style?

6. Continue draping until you are satisfied with your look.
7. Photograph what you have draped for reference in construction.
8. Mark the calico or thread trace if you are using actual fabric.
9. Make a pattern only if you want to duplicate the piece at some later date.
10. Construct the dress.
11. Self critique your work. Does the finished dress retain the look that it had on the drape?

Notes for Student:

- The first challenge will be to figure out how to cut the fabric sections with which to drape. First, visualize the volume of fabric you want to see on the body. Then experiment with that length of fabric on the mannequin, and get a sense of where you might need to seam it.
- After making a decision about size of pieces, think about grainline placement and how that will affect your drape. Mark the pieces where you think it will be useful.
- Sometimes with improvisational draping, it is good to start with a sense of a familiar shape. For example, the dress will probably need to cover the hips, so think about some kind of skirt being involved, or how you want a sleeve to look.
- Don't cut the pieces until you are sure you are not cutting away needed areas.
- It is helpful to work in a circular motion, as with the draping of a sleeve. Move from top to bottom and side to side, alternating back and forth as you refine the shape.
- Before taking the drape off the mannequin, look at it from a distance or in a mirror to make sure you have taken it as far as you want to, and that you are truly finished.

Reading/Research:

- Section 3.4 Improvisational Draping pages 302-313
- Look at contemporary collections online to see which designers are using improvisational draping techniques.

Videos:

Preparation

1. Tearing the Muslin (Calico)
2. Blocking the Muslin (Calico)
3. Pressing the Muslin (Calico)
4. Marking the Grainlines – Pencil
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
11. Trimming and Clipping
13. Turning Front Over Back

Darts

12. Side Bust Dart
14. French Dart
15. Long Vertical Darts, Front and Back

Garment Specific Draping Techniques

32. Improvisational Draping

Notes for Instructor:

- If your students are having trouble getting started, encourage them to experiment with their fabric to generate ideas.
- Make sure students do not focus too much on one area at the expense of others. It is advisable that the student move around the total shape, refining all areas a little bit at a time, continually paying attention to the total look.
- Some students may over-work their dresses and continue adjusting long after the garment is done. Watch out for this and if a student has reached a good balance, suggest that he or she is finished.

Presentation Suggestion:

- Have students display their draped pieces on the mannequins and conduct a group critique. Give them the opportunity to respond to the comments, shift the pieces, change the dimensions and make adjustments. Then conduct another critique after the dresses are sewn.

Timing: This exercise should take about 2 to 3 hours to prepare the fabric and drape; and 2 to 3 hours to mark, cut and sew the dress (sewing time will vary depending on the skill of the student and complexity of the design).