

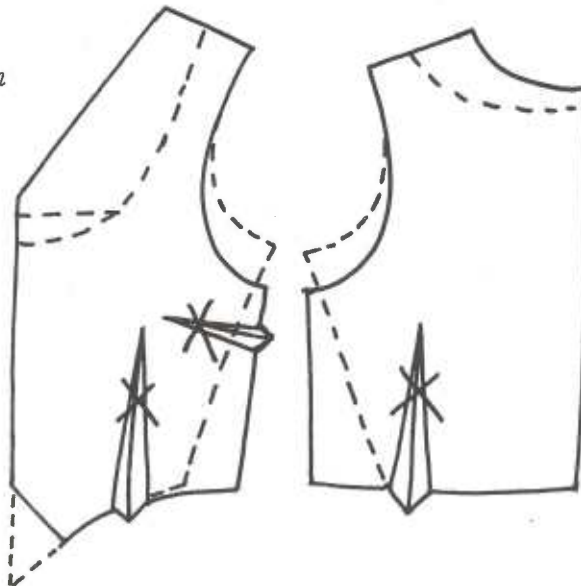
Basic Bodice

To make a woman's bodice, you will need a vest pattern that fits, or a high necked, tight fitting dress pattern with a waist seam. See the pattern for examples of pattern types. Folkwear pattern numbers 123 and 126 are just about perfect as they are. The first one, the Austrian dirndl should be used in the higher necked version only. The second one has several views, one even has a small peplum or skirting. A regular woman's suit vest pattern will need to be altered slightly.

You will also need fabric, lining, and medium to heavyweight interfacing, so that the bodice will hold its shape, and yours. The peasant bodice fabric hardly ever matched the fabric of any of her other garments, so don't even try. This will be a good opportunity to use up that spare yard of fabric you have had lying around for so long. Middle class and upper class bodices should match the fabric of one of the skirts, preferably the outer one.

Making a peasant bodice pattern from a modern vest pattern is relatively simple. Most of the changes are made in the front piece, because that is where the line differs. The back is much the same. The neck of the vest should be changed from the 'V' to a scoop or square cut. The darts should be left off altogether and the sides cut in more to compensate. The pattern should be cut off or folded back along the center front line for the lacing. To make the pointed waist, extend the line down the center front until it is as long as you will want it, usually about 4". Then draw a curved line from the side seam $\frac{1}{2}$ " below the waistline, to the bottom of the point. On the back piece, eliminate the darts as before, and draw a line across the back $\frac{1}{2}$ " below the waistline. Fold up or cut the pattern along this line. If you want, you may cut the neck down in the back a little.

Bodice pattern

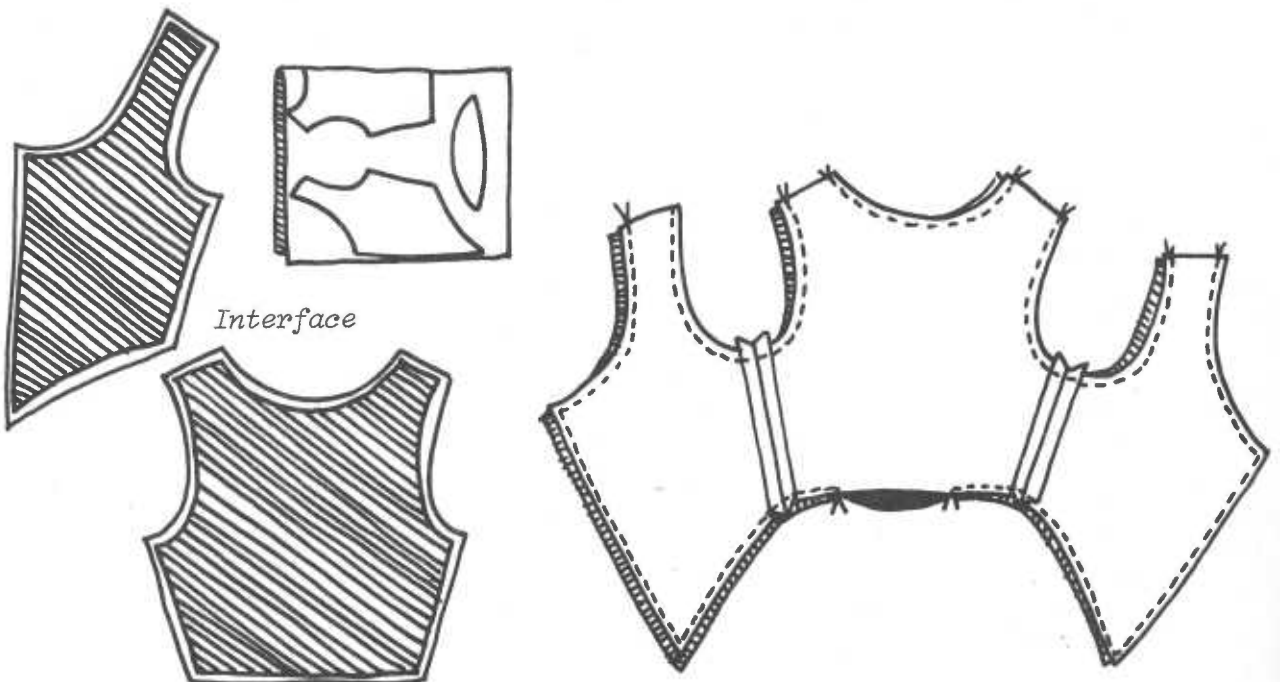


We suggest that you make a mock-up out of heavyweight interfacing to check your pattern alterations and make sure the pattern works. Just cut it, sew the seams together, make casings down the center front to slip boning into temporarily, and punch holes for the lacing and try it on, with the seams on the outside. Have a friend check the fit and make marks directly on the mock-up, so that you can make any necessary changes. It should fit snugly, without gaps or lumps. The opening in the front should just meet, or gape slightly. Make the corrections indicated and try it on again. Perfect? This is now your pattern. Aren't you glad you made your mistakes on this, instead of your more expensive fabric? We have found that beginning and intermediate seamstresses have a much smoother time if they take the extra time to do this.

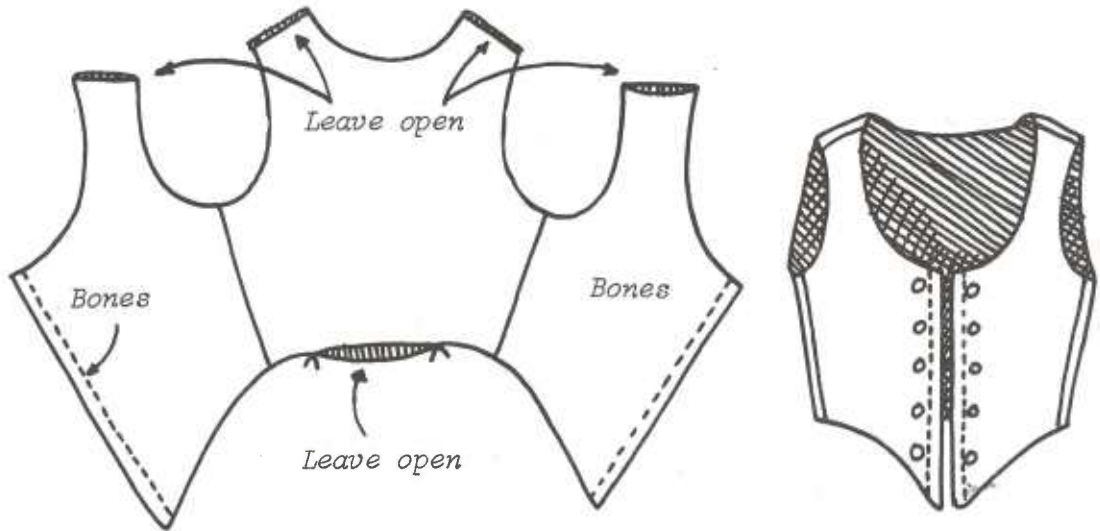
You may also want to allow a 2" seam allowance up the back pattern piece and split it into two pieces, instead of cutting it on the fold. This will make one more area that can be adjusted since the underarm seams should always be approached with caution when doing radical alterations.

To construct the vest, cut the front and back pieces out of your fabric, lining and interfacing. Sew the pieces of interfacing to the inside of the fabric pieces. Then sew the front to the back at the side seams, leaving the shoulders open for now. Do the same for the lining. Then, with the right sides together, sew the fabric to the lining, leaving an opening at the center back along the bottom, large enough to turn the vest right side out again. Clip all the curves, turn and press.

Before you stitch up the opening you left in the back, use it to insert the boning in the front next to the front edges of the vest. Sew along the edges, anchoring the boning in place, then put in grommets next to the boning. Sew up the back opening by hand, finish the raw edges of the shoulder seams, and sew them



Before you stitch up the opening you left in the back, use it to insert the boning in the front next to the front edges of the vest. Sew along the edges, anchoring the boning in place, then put in grommets next to the boning. Sew up the back opening by hand, finish the raw edges of the shoulder seams, and sew them shut by hand or machine. The peasant bodice is done.



Theatrical Bodice

We have also experimented with a more theatrical approach to putting together a bodice. This method allows for more size adjustments, so that one bodice may be able to span three different sizes. It can also be put together factory-style, so even twenty bodices can be constructed at the same time. This is especially useful for theatrical costuming of large productions. If you are just making one bodice, the advantages are if you are losing (or gaining) weight, or want to loan your bodice to a friend, you can easily make the adjustments in the shoulder and back seams.

To construct the bodice this way, stitch the interfacing to each fabric piece as before. Sew the front piece to the back piece at the side seam. Do the same for the other side, but do not sew the two halves together at the back seam. Repeat for the lining pieces. With the right sides together, sew around the arm-hole, neck, down the front and around the bottom to the back. If you are going to put tabs or picadils around the waist, put them on before you sandwich the fabric and lining together. Clip the curves, turn right side out through the back you left open, and press. Slip the boning through the back opening and stitch it in place next to the front edge. Zig-zag, overlock or otherwise finish the shoulder and back edges. Then sew a seam up the back, sew the shoulder seams, and tack the seam allowances to the lining so it won't flap. Put in your grommets and it is done.

If, when you put it on, or loan it to someone, there is still a fitting problem, you can easily adjust at the shoulder and back seams.