

Female Body Block

A body block is a basic pattern or "blueprint" of your upper body. Taking into account a variety of specific measurements, this block can be used as a starting point for drafting your own patterns. What you'll end up with at the end of these instructions is a pattern for what looks like a neck-high, hip-length vest, which can be altered and built upon as you please to create a shirt, tunic, bodice, gown, robe, or anything else.

What You'll Need:

- ❖ 2 measuring tapes (or one measuring tape and a piece of string if that's all you have)
- ❖ The longest ruler you can find (or a measuring tape and a long straight edge)
- ❖ 1 square meter (1 square yard) of paper. Newspaper works, though you'll need a good marker to show up. The paper needs to be at least as wide as $\frac{1}{2}$ your hip measurement plus 5 inches, and at least as long as your back length plus lower hip depth plus 5 inches. If using newspaper, you'll need to tape 2 or more pieces together.
- ❖ Pencil or pen (or marker, if you're using the newspaper)
- ❖ Calculator (unless you really like long division)

With the help of a friend, take the following measurements:

- ❖ Bust (around the widest part)
- ❖ Waist (around the natural waistline)
- ❖ Hips (Widest part around the lower hip bone)
- ❖ Lower hip depth (distance down from waistline to where you took your hip measurement)
- ❖ Back length (distance from that prominent bone at the top of your back/base of your neck down to the waistline measurement)
- ❖ Narrow back (armpit to armpit across the back)
- ❖ Bust point to bust point (just what it sounds like... across the front)
- ❖ Centre shoulder to bust point (middle of the shoulder down)
- ❖ Arm hole depth

A few of these measurements (narrow back, arm hole depth) aren't as self explanatory as the others. See <http://www.silivren.com/bodyblock.html> for a diagram of where and how to measure.

At the end of the instructions is a diagram of what your block should look like when you're finished.

Important note on pattern construction: These instructions produce a body block with **no seam allowance!** When cutting out the resulting pattern pieces for fitting, make sure to add it in.

Important note on fitting: The body block instructions work best on women with small or average measurements. Unfortunately, very curvy women, those with full figures or anyone with a bust measurement that is large in proportion to waist and hips will require more adjustments in fitting after the pattern is made. These instructions will not work for everyone.

Female Body Block: Back

In these instructions, measurements "in" refer to measurements made toward the working edge of the paper, while measurements "out" are made toward the opposite edge of the paper. So on the back block, "in" is measuring left and "out" is right, while the opposite is true for the front block.

- 1) Draw a straight line down each side of your paper, 5 cm (2 in) from the edges, and across the top. Mark A at the right angle in the upper left corner.
- 2) Measure down from A 3.25 cm (1 1/4 in). Mark B.
- 3) Measure down from A back length. Mark C.
- 4) Measure down from C lower hip depth. Mark D.
- 5) Measure down from A arm hole depth. Mark E.
- 6) Bisect the distance between A and E. Mark F.
- 7) Square across all points horizontally to the line on the right side of the paper. Mark the intersections A2, B2, C2, etc.
- 8) Measure out from point A along the horizontal 1/6 of narrow back and mark. Measure up from this point 2 cm (3/4 in) and mark J. Join A and J with a gentle curve to form the back neckline.
- 9) Measure out from point E along the horizontal 1/4 bust. Mark G.
- 10) Measure out from point D along the horizontal 1/4 hip. Mark H.
- 11) Measure out from point F along the horizontal 1/2 narrow back. Mark I.
- 12) OPTIONAL: Join J and I for dropped shoulder guideline.
- 13) Lightly draw a vertical line up from point I to intersect with the B line. Measure out from this intersection 1 cm (3/8 in) and mark X.
- 14) Join J and X for the shoulder line.
- 15) Join X, I and G with a shallow curve to form the armscye.
- 16) Join H and G.
- 17) Measure in 3 cm (1 1/4 in) on horizontal line C from its intersection with the H-G line. Mark Y. Join H-Y and G-Y. Draw in a slight body curve.
- 18) Back Dart Placement:** Measure the distance from C to Y. Bisect and mark. Subtract 1/4 of the waist measurement from the C-Y measurement. The difference is the WHOLE dart width. Half of the whole dart width is placed on either side of the mark bisecting C-Y. Mark their placements. Draw a vertical line from 5 cm (2 in) below the E-G line, through the bisection point of the C-Y line, to 5 cm (2 in) above the D-H line. Join the dart width marks on C-Y to the ends of the vertical line, making an elongated diamond shape.

Female Body Block: Front

- 1) Make sure points A through F are squared across to the right edge of the paper and marked A2 through F2.
- 2) Measure out from point E2 along the horizontal $\frac{1}{4}$ bust plus 1.5 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ in) working ease. Mark G2.
- 3) Measure out from point D2 along the horizontal $\frac{1}{4}$ hip plus 1.5 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ in) working ease.
- 4) At G2 measure in toward E2 3 cm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ in). Mark O.
- 5) Lightly draw a vertical line up from point O and through the B line. Measure out from the intersection of these lines 3 cm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ in). Mark X2.
- 6) Measure up from A2 3 cm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ in). Mark Q.
- 7) From Q, measure $\frac{1}{6}$ of narrow back toward X2. Mark S.
- 8) Measure down from Q 7.5 cm (3 in). Mark R.
- 9) Join S and R with a deep curve to form the front neckline.
- 10) Join S and X2 for shoulder line.
- 11) Join G and X2 with a deep curve (passing above point O) for armscye.
- 12) Join G2 and H2. From where this line intersects with the C line, measure in along the horizontal 3 cm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ in). Mark Y2.
- 13) Join G2 with Y2 and Y2 with H2. Draw in a slight body curve.
- 14) **Front Dart Line:** At E2 measure out $\frac{1}{2}$ of bust point to bust point. Mark. Draw a vertical line down from this mark to about 5 cm (2 in) above the H2-D2 line.
- 15) **Shoulder Dart Line:** Bisect the S-X2 line. Mark N. From N, measure the centre shoulder to bust point length toward the front dart line, so that the end point of this measurement just meets the front dart line. Sketch a circle with an approximate 2.5 cm (1 in) diameter around the meeting point. This is the bust circle.
- 16) **Front Dart Placement:** Very similar to the back dart placement. Measure the line C2-Y2. Subtract $\frac{1}{4}$ of the waist measurement from the C2-Y2 measurement. The difference is the whole dart width, with half of the dart width being placed on either side of the front dart line where it intersects C2-Y2. Mark the dart width. Join the dart width points to the bottom of the front dart line and to the top of the front dart line where it intersects with the bust circle, to create an elongated diamond shape.
- 17) **Shoulder Dart Placement:** Measure the shoulder line J-X on the back block. Measure the shoulder line S-X2 on the front block. Subtract the J-X measurement from the S-X2 measurement. The difference is the whole dart width. Place half of the whole dart width on either side of N and mark. Label the point closer to the neck V, and the point closer to the shoulder Z. Join dart width points V and Z to the intersection of the front dart line and the bust circle to create an elongated, inverted triangle shape. Measure the V-bust circle and Z-bust circle lines. If one is shorter than the other, the shorter must be extended upward until the two lines are the same length. Join X2 with Z, Z with V, and V with S for the adjusted shoulder line.

Here is roughly what your body block pattern will look like when done. If this is your first time making the block, you'll likely want to refer to the diagram from time to time to have a look at where approximately all the marks and measurements should be, and how the curves are drawn.

