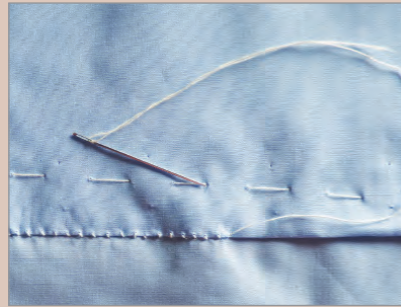


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WHAT WE NEED TO MAKE A START

To start, you will need the following equipment (some of these items can be found in a haberdashery store):



SEWING BY HAND

To begin this journey, you have to know the main hand stitches and learn how to do them correctly. Before you start sewing by hand, make sure you are wearing a thimble. This is a protective device that will prevent you from hurting yourself and is used to push the needle through the fabric. It usually fits on the middle finger, but you can wear it on whichever finger seems best for you.

TACKING STITCHES

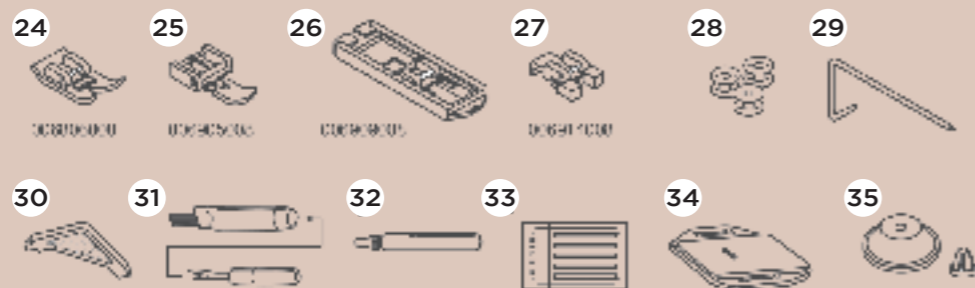
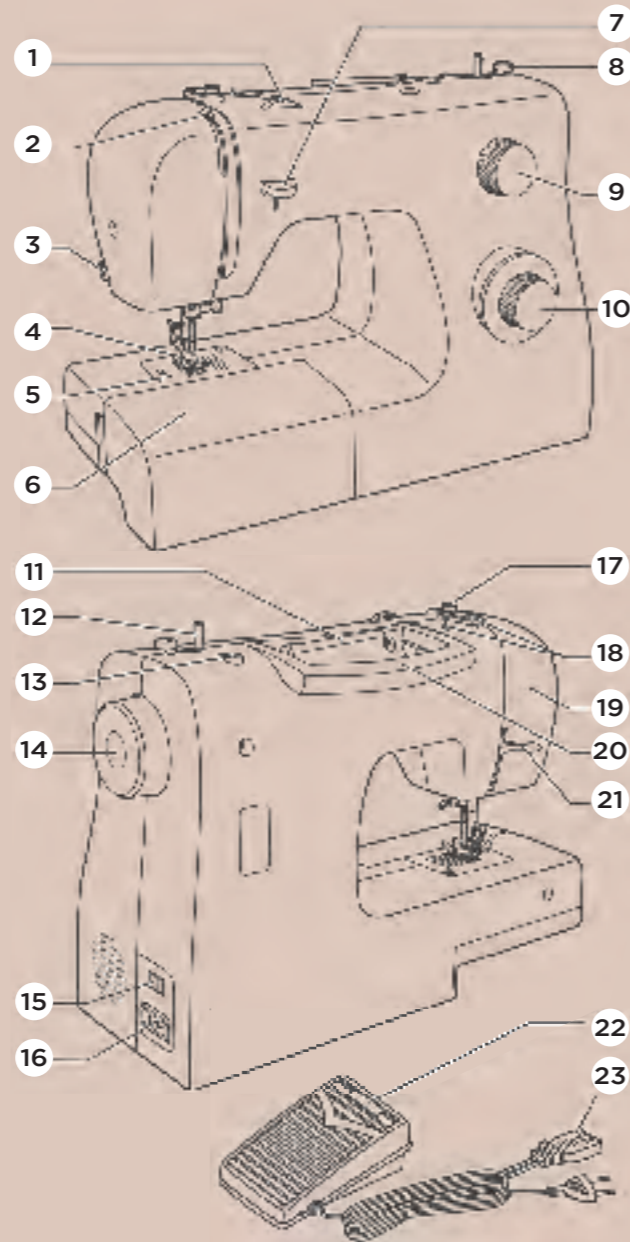
Tacking stitches are long and loose linear stitches that are easy to remove, and serve to join two pieces of fabric together before you sew them together with the machine. Special tacking thread is often used, but you can also use normal thread on particularly deli-

cate fabrics. Tacking stitches are normally used to hold together parts that are difficult to stitch, so that the fabric does not slip under the machine and you get a perfect result. They are also used to assemble pieces of a tailored suit for the first fitting. For example, they are often used to sew a sleeve onto an armhole, or onto very stretchy fabrics, since it would be impossible to get the best result if only the sewing machine was used. To do this, thread the tacking thread through a medium-sized needle, then take two pieces of fabric to do a test, putting them on top of each other (1). Use the needle to pierce the right side of the fabric, pass it through to the wrong side, then pull it through to the right side at about 1 cm (0.39") away and repeat the action (2).

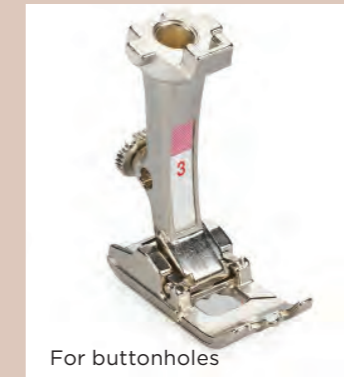


MAIN PARTS OF THE SEWING MACHINE

1. Tension selector switch
2. Tension lever
3. Thread cutter
4. Foot
5. Needle plate
6. Free arm / accessory compartment
7. Reverse lever
8. Spool cap
9. Stitch length selector
10. Stitch selector
11. Horizontal spool pin and spool cap
12. Bobbin tension stud
13. Second spool pin housing
14. Hand wheel
15. Switch for the motor and light
16. Plug housing
17. Bobbin thread guide
18. Upper thread guide
19. Front cover
20. Handle
21. Foot lifter
22. Rheostat
23. Power cable
24. Standard foot
25. Zipper foot
26. Buttonhole foot
27. Button foot
28. Bobbins
29. Allen key
30. Quilt / seam guide
31. Buttonhole cutter/brush
32. Oil
33. Needles
34. Jaw cover plate
35. Spool cap



EXAMPLES OF FEET



MACHINE STITCHES

LINEAR STITCH AND ZIG-ZAG STITCH

The two stitches that we will use here are the “linear” stitch – the classic straight stitch that is used to join fabric together – and the “zig-zag” finishing stitch that stops the fabric from fraying. In mechanical machines, the type of stitch is regulated by a knob, where each type of stitch is labelled with a number (for example: 1. linear stitch, 2. zig-zag stitch). When you first start to use the sewing machine, I suggest you take a piece of fabric – preferably of medium thickness and in a light-coloured cotton – and sew the stitches in a contrasting colour, so you will be able to see them more easily. On a piece of fabric, draw straight lines, oblique lines and circles with a pencil, using a ruler to help you. Slip this piece of fabric under the machine foot and try to sew exactly

you completely autonomous and confident in its use. Before tackling the not exactly simple task of making skirts and trousers, it is important that you master at least some of the hand and sewing machine stitches. In order for the stitches to remain firm and not come out, remember to “weld” the seams at the beginning and at the end, using a back stitch, which you can do using the special button or knob on your machine.

If you can manage the straight stitch, repeat the exercise with the zig-zag stitch, first on the lines drawn in pencil, then on the edges of the fabric, being careful not to go over the same stitch, creating a bump; it must be flat and constant. For the more experienced among you, or simply for those who



along the lines you have drawn on it. Repeat this until you are able to easily adjust the pressure of your foot on the pedal, to make perfectly straight and curved seams. This exercise will help you become familiar with the sewing machine and make

want to achieve a more professional finish, there is a special machine called a “cut and sew”: it is a professional tool that can be used in a home or industrial setting. It creates an excellent finish and can be used on stretchy fabrics, such as jersey.

THE CUT-AND-SEW-MACHINE

If you are not satisfied and would like a more professional finish, you can use the cut-and-sew-machine instead of a zig-zag stitch on the sewing machine. The cut and sew is a machine that is predominantly used to finish off the edges of a garment. There are different types of cut-and-sew-machines on the market, with various functions and price ranges. This type of machine can be used in an industrial or household setting: the first model shown here is used in industrial or artisanal enterprises, while the second is generally used by people who love to sew for themselves or as a hobby, rather than for members of the public. The household cut-and-sew-machine can also be used in a company that serves the public, but generally the industrial type is preferred for that because it can support a greater workload and lasts longer over time.

For what we’re interested in, ie the household kind of cut-and-sew-machine, there are several available on the market that hold four or five threads, but which can be used for only two or three threads at a time. But can you tell the difference? As already mentioned, this machine can have various functions: the main one being to finish off the edges of a garment; generally only three threads are required for this. Other functions of the cut-and-sew-machine are: the rolled, or “roulé”, edge and the coverstitch.

A rolled hem is often used for finishing off the edges of stoles or any other sort of ceremonial garment that uses very light fabrics, such as chiffon, organza, voile, etc...



Cut and sew Singer 14SH654.

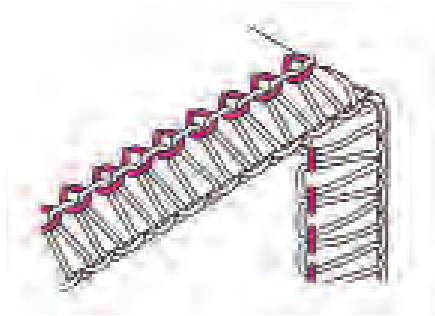


Cut and sew Pfaff HobbyLock 2.0

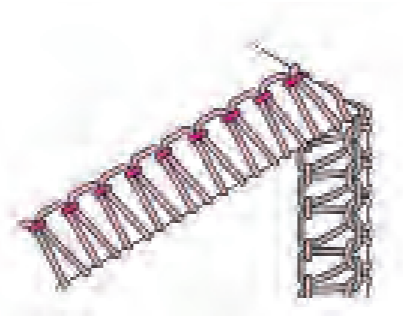
GETTING THE TENSION RIGHT ON THE CUT-AND-SEW-MACHINE

Another very important aspect for the correct use of the cut-and-sew-machine is getting the tension right. It is important to adjust it correctly to get a regular stitch size. The tension varies according to the fabric you use: for fabrics of medium thickness, such as cotton, the tension is usually set to number four on the adjustment wheels. My personal advice for beginners who want to understand how the different tensions work, is to thread the cut-and-sew-machine with different coloured threads. That way, not only can you evaluate the overall result of the threads as they are intertwined on the fabric, but you can also see the specific tension that each of them has. Use

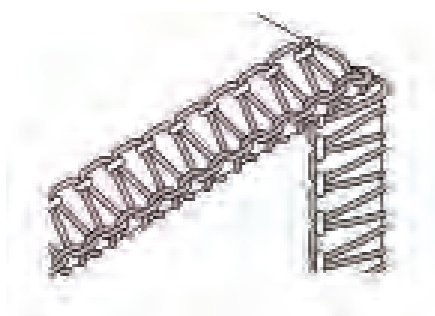
yarns that contrast with the scrap piece of fabric you are using to do a test. To carry out the test, place the fabric under the foot with the edge in line with the blade. The result must be regular on both sides of the fabric, and the meeting point of all the threads will be exactly along the edge. You are doing it correctly if the finishing stitch does not pull the fabric, nor is it too loose. By following my advice to use different coloured threads for the first tests, you will easily be able to solve any of the mishaps mentioned above. In general, then, adjust the tensions according to the fabric you are using and do a few tests until you get the result you want.



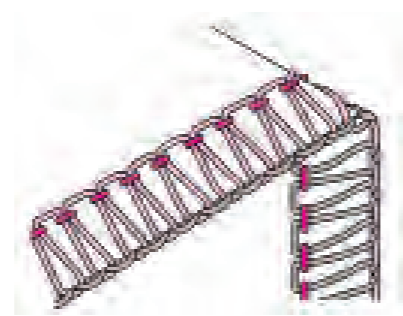
An example of a slow, loose thread.



Here, the upper loop of thread is taut and the lower loop is loose. This creates a wrinkled effect on the fabric.



Here, the upper loop of thread is loose and the lower loop is taut.



Correct final result.

ADJUSTING STITCH LENGTH

As with sewing machines, the cut-and-sew-machine also has a knob to adjust the stitch length. This knob will be slightly different on each model, but it is generally located on the right of the machine. The stitch length is indicated by corresponding numbers: select #1 for a very short stitch and #4 for a very long stitch. The stitch length should be adjusted according to the fabric you are using: the lighter the fabric, the shorter the stitch; the heavier the fabric, the longer the stitch. For a rolled edge, select the stitch type according to the effect you want to achieve: small stitches for a thicker hem; longer stitches for a thinner hem.

DIFFERENTIAL FEED ADJUSTMENT

Having a differential feed is indispensable when sewing elasticated fabrics, such as jersey and wool; it makes sure that the fabric does not curl up or stretch out of shape, thereby guaranteeing a perfect stitch.

The differential feed must also be adjusted according to the type of fabric you are working on and it is therefore necessary to carry out tests, by moving the corresponding knob to the various settings. You only have to change the settings for elasticated fabrics; for non-stretchy fabrics, simply leave the knob on the middle setting.

ible ones are completely imperceptible, which is why they are the most commonly used zips for chic items of clothing, such as elegant skirts, classic trousers or formal dresses.

Where to put the zip also depends on the kind of clothing it is for: on a pencil skirt, for example, it would be best to insert it in the middle at the back; on a pair of high-waisted classic trousers, place it along the hip on the left side; on a denim miniskirt, jeans or sports trousers, it is nice to see the zip in full view, front and centre. On a full skirt, however, a side zip rather than a rear fastener would be more appropriate, so as not to spoil the flow of the design. The same rule applies to certain skirts - such as those with an asymmetrical hem, or with a train or flounces attached - and trousers. In addition to zips, buttons are another type of garment fastener: they can be the normal kind (that need a buttonhole), or press studs. For greater convenience, especially for the beginners among you, I recommend using press studs for the skirts and trousers discussed in this



book, since buttonholes are very difficult to make by hand, even when the method is explained well. Also, although many sewing machines are able to make buttonholes automatically, the result does not always meet expectations.

Since making waistbands and inserting zips is exactly the same for most of the skirts and trousers covered in this book, the following explanations are a good introduction. The instructional samples I made are all in 1:2 scale.

DESIGNING AND TAILORING A STRAIGHT WAISTBAND

Draw the straight waistband as a rectangle, which is as long as the waist circumference, plus 3 cm (1.18") as a useful overlap for buttonholes and buttons, and 2 cm (0.78") is enough for a good seam allowance.

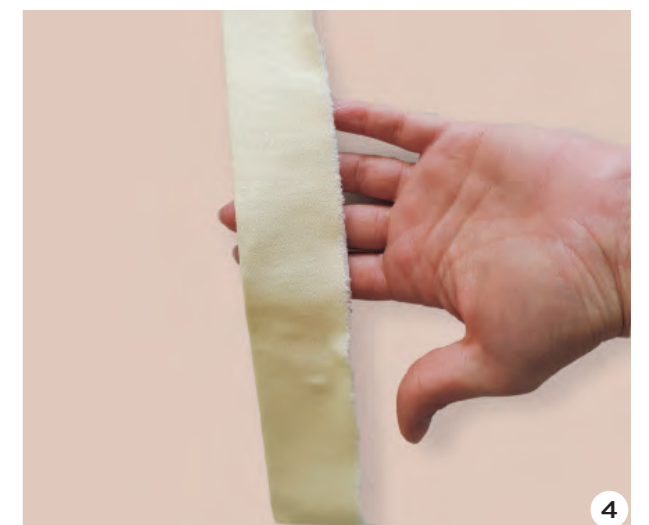
Example: 70 cm (27.55") waist circumference + 3 cm (1.18") overlap + 2 cm (0.78") seam allowance = 75 cm (29.52") total length of the waistband. Twice as wide as the final desired width + 2 cm (0.78") for the seam allowances.

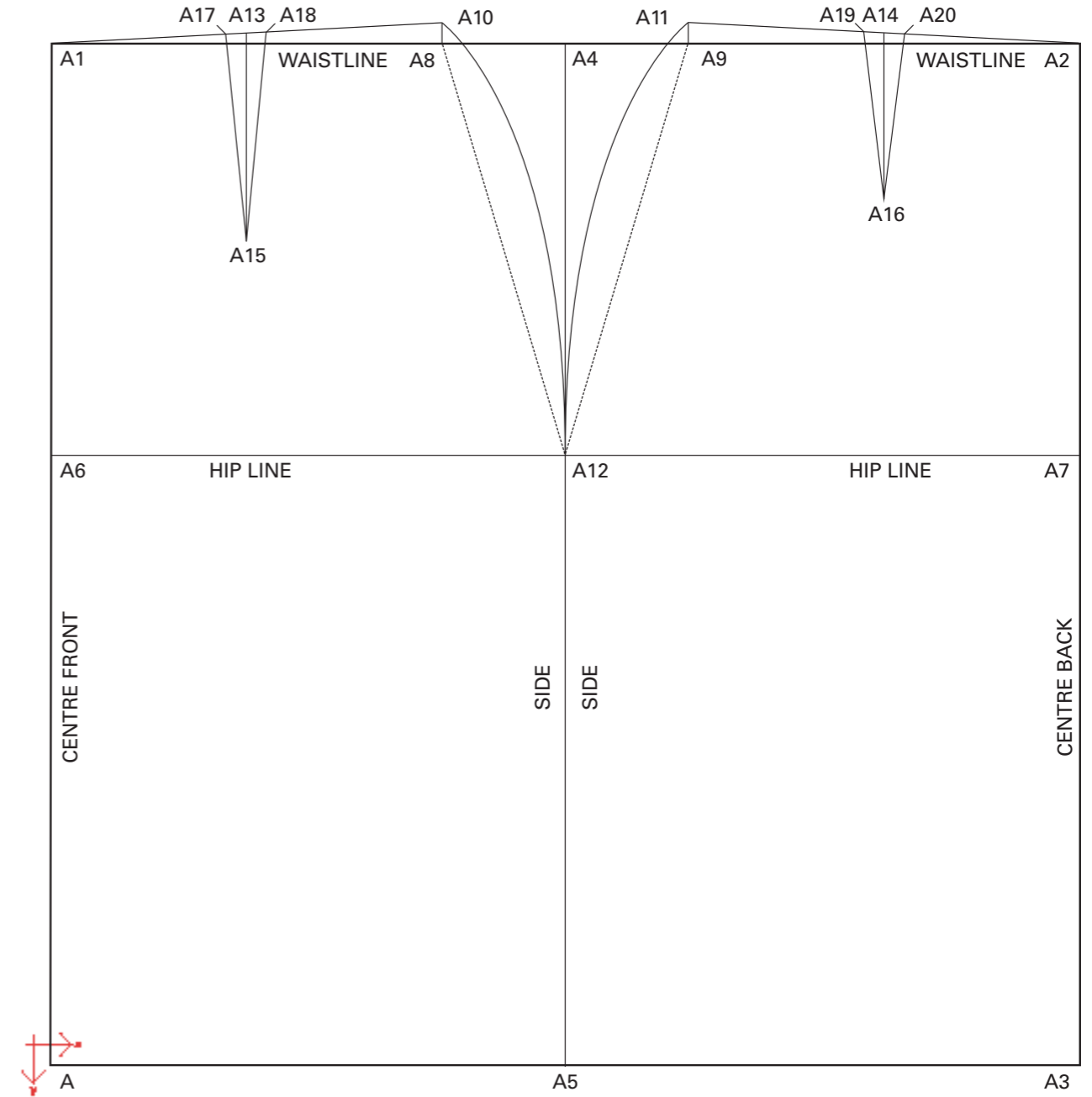
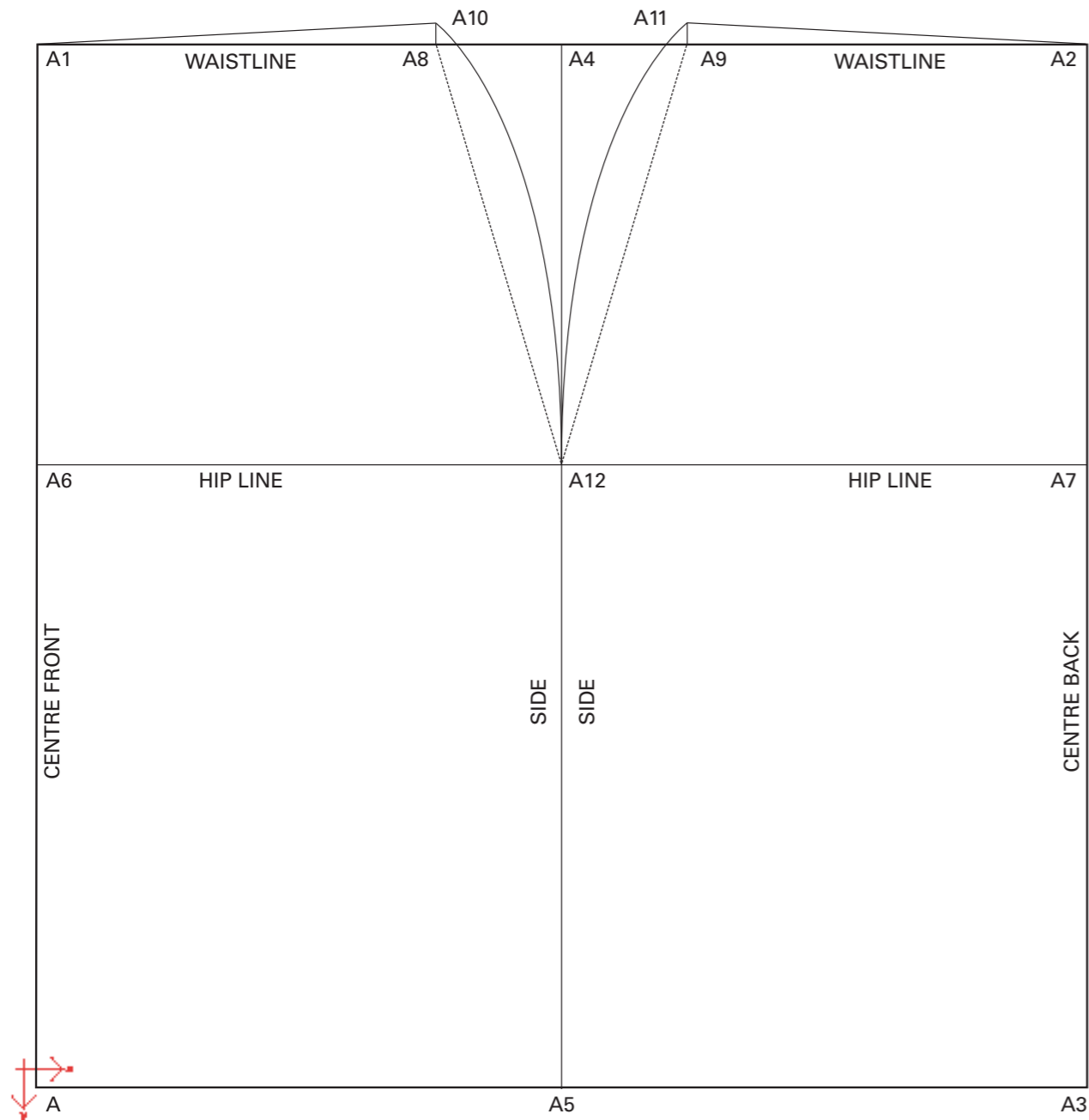
Example: if you want the waistband to be 4 cm (1.57") wide, draw it 8 cm (3.14") wide + 2 cm (0.78") for seam allowances = 10 cm (3.93") total width.

Cut out the resulting rectangle and pin it to the fabric you are using. Then cut around the edges, since the seam allowances have already been added.

You will need to reinforce the waistband with a special canvas, called adhesive canvas, which you can buy at a haberdashery. Cut a piece of adhesive canvas the same size as the strap that will be used as the waistband, then position it with the section that will be glued facing the back of the strap and iron over it to make it stick to the fabric (1). Fold the strap in half, along its ends, on the right side of the fabric and then hold it in place with pins, followed by tacking stitches, and then sew it together (2).

Trim the fabric 0.5 cm (0.19") from the seam, cutting off the excess: this trick allows you to turn the strap more easily onto its right side (3). Turn the strap over onto the right side of the fabric and iron it (4).





Once you have studied the diagram and carefully followed the explanation, draw your basic pattern.

- A1_A2 being half the circumference of the hip (for example, hip circumference 100 cm : 2 = 50 cm / 39.37" : 2 = 19.68").
- A1_A being the length of the skirt (for example, 50 cm / 19.68").
- A_A3 same as A1_A2.
- A2_A3 same as A1_A.
- Combine A1_A_A3_A2_A1 to get the quadrature.
- The line A1_A2 represents the waistline.
- A1_A6 is the height of the pelvis (for example, 20 cm / 7.88"). The pelvis height is the distance between the waist and the widest part of the hip, measured with the tape measure along the hip.

- A2_A7 same as A1_A6.
- Draw the hip line to join A6_A7 together.
- A1_A4 is half of A1_A2 (for example 50 cm : 2 = 25 cm / 19.68" : 2 = 9.84").
- A_A5 same as A1_A4.
- A4_A5 represents the line of the hips.
- A1_A represents the centre line at the front of the skirt, A2_A3 represents the centre line at the back of the skirt.
- A1_A8 same as 1/4 of waist circumference + 2 cm (0.78") (for example, 70 cm : 4 = 17.5 + 2 = 19.5 / 27.56" : 4 = 6.89 + 0.78" = 7.67").
- Draw a dotted line between A8_A12.
- A2_A9 same as A1_A8; draw a dotted line between A9_A12.

- A8_A10 = 1 cm (0.39") (this measurement can vary according to the width of the hip).
 - A9_A11 same as A8_A10.
 - Draw a line between A1_A10 and A2_A11.
 - Draw a curved line between A10_A12 and A11_A12, like in the diagram.
- These curved lines represent the roundness of the hips.

Once you have made the basic quadrature, you need to insert the darts. The darts make the skirt fit the figure:

- A1_A13 is half of A1_A8.
- A2_A14 is the same as A1_A13.
- A13_A15 = 10 cm / 3.93" (fixed size).
- A14_A16 = 8 cm / 3.14" (fixed size).

- A13_A17 = 1 cm / 0.39" (fixed size).
- A13_A18 same as A13_A17.
- Draw a line between A17_A15_A18 and draw the dart on the front of the skirt.
- A14_A19 = 1 cm / 0.39" (fixed size).
- A14_A20 same as A14_A19.
- Draw a line between A19_A16_A20 and draw the dart on the back of the skirt.

The skirt pattern is now ready and can be used to base most known skirt designs on.

To clarify, all the skirt patterns in this book are made to 1/2 scale, but the procedure is identical at full scale.



FLARED SKIRT WITH STRAIGHT WAISTBAND

You do not need a pattern to make this sort of skirt. First, choose some fabric; it is important to remember that in order to get the flared effect once the skirt is finished, it is better to choose a medium-weight fabric, rather than a very lightweight one.

Fold the fabric on a tabletop, with its right side facing inwards, and join the selvages together. With the help of a tape measure, a ruler and a piece of chalk, draw a line on the fabric to determine which part will be the skirt and which part will be the waistband (1).

More specifically, the skirt must be no wider than the width of the fabric you have chosen and it can be as long as you want it to be, but leave at least 4 cm (1.57") for the hem and the seams.

The waistband should be as wide as the waist circumference, plus 2 cm (0.78") for seam allowances, plus 3 cm (1.18") for the button overlap; twice the length of the final length, plus a minimum 2 cm (0.78") seam allowance (for example, if the final waistband will be 4 cm / 1.57" wide, draw the width of the waistband as being equal to 8 cm / 3.14", ie. double the final width, plus 2 cm / 0.78" for seam allowances, making the total width 10 cm / 3.93").

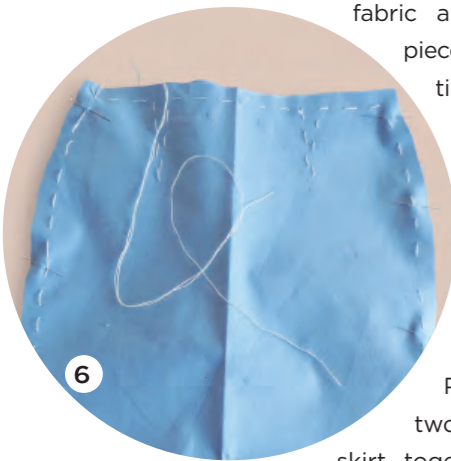
Cut along the line you've just drawn with the chalk, to end up with two pieces: the skirt and its waistband (2). Take the part relating to the skirt as a reference and use pins to block the edges at the selvages, then sew tacking stitches (3). Leave a gap (at least 20 cm / 7.87") to insert the zip.





Cut along the lines drawn in chalk (4). Sew guide stitches around the patterns for all the pieces that are still pinned to the fabric.

Once you have done this, detach the patterns from the fabric and open out the pieces of the skirt, cutting the stitches you made in the middle part, thereby marking out the seam allowances on each part of the skirt (5).



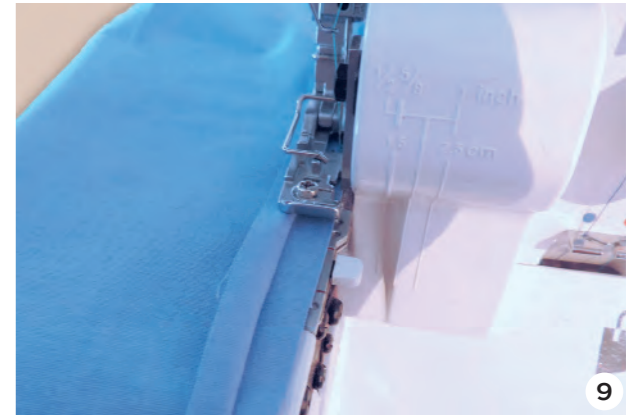
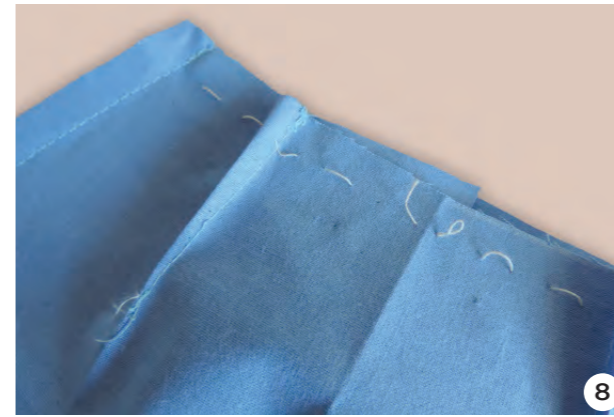
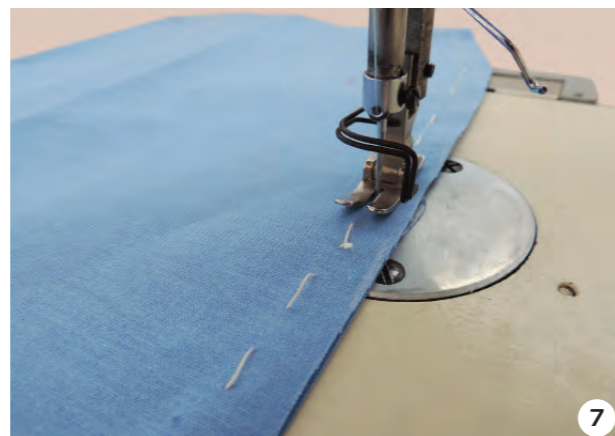
Put the front and two back parts of the skirt together, so that the right side of the fabric is facing inwards. In tailoring, this is called "Right Sides Together" (on the right side of the fabric, you now have cut guide stitches). Use pins to attach the parts together and then use tacking stitches to sew exactly on top of the marks you made previously (6).

Leave a gap at the bottom of the back of the skirt for a slit (at least 11 cm / 4.33") and another gap for a zip to be inserted at the waist (at least 20 cm / 7.87"). Sew exactly along the tacking stitches you made



earlier and, if you find it easier, remove these loose stitches (7).

Tack and then sew the darts (8). Finish off the edges with a cut-and-sew-machine (9) or with zig-zag stitches and then iron them open. Insert the zip (10) and prepare the waistband as explained on page 42. For classic office skirts, I find an invisible zip looks better than a classic one. Finally, attach the waistband and add the finishing touches by hand on the wrong side of the skirt fabric (11). Finish the hem by hand or machine, as explained on page 50.

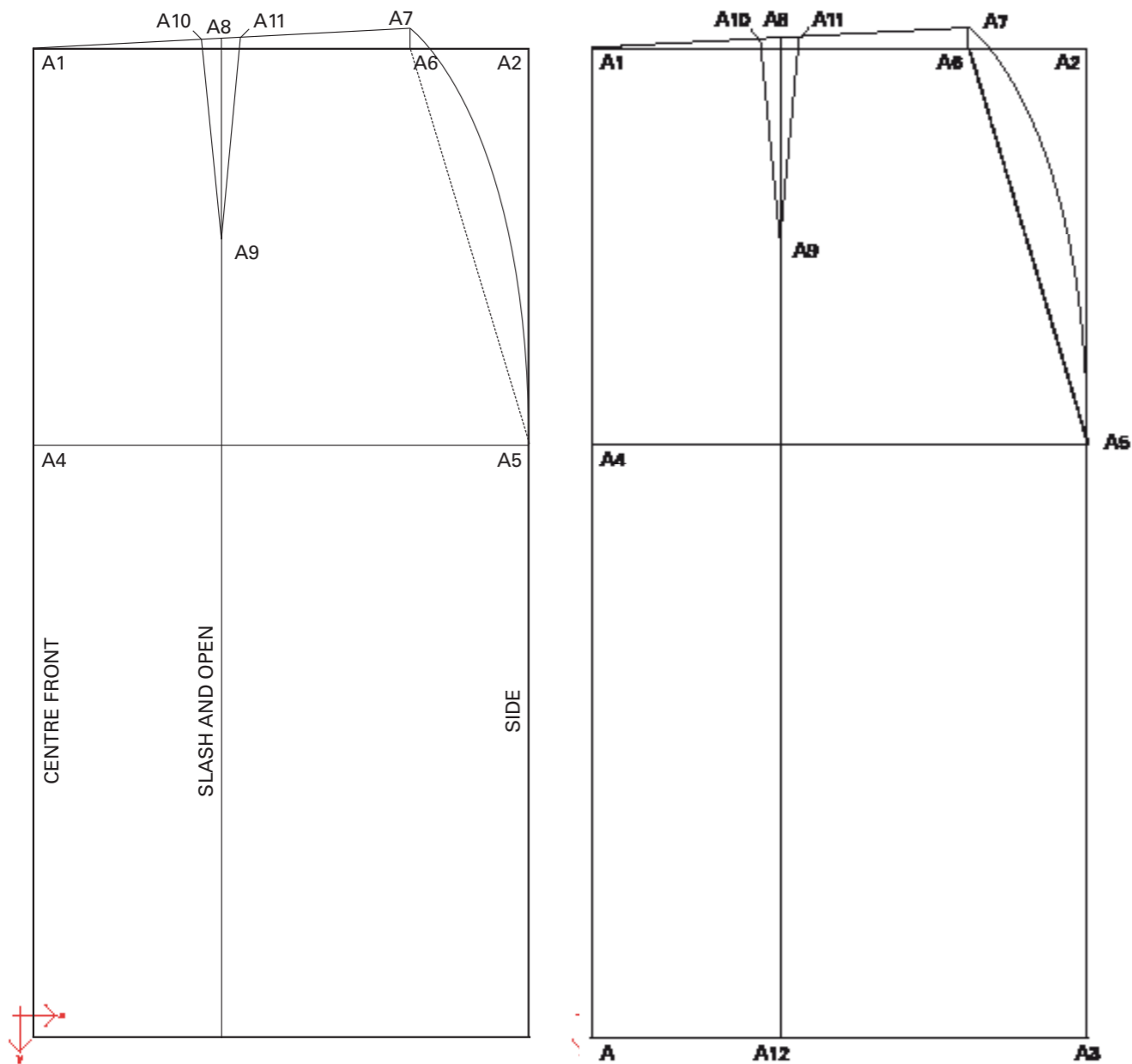


The mock-up skirt was made of a medium-weight cotton fabric, but you can use any fabric you like for the classic office skirt. I would recommend using Cool Wool for an elegant skirt.

WIDE A-LINE SKIRT - FRONT

- A_A12 same as A1_A8.
- Draw a line between A9_A12 (this line defines how wide the skirt will be; it must be cut from the bottom up to the top of the dart). Then, while the dart closes on the paper, the cut section automatically opens up, giving shape to the skirt.

Using a pencil crayon, colour in the paper pattern to identify it as the front.

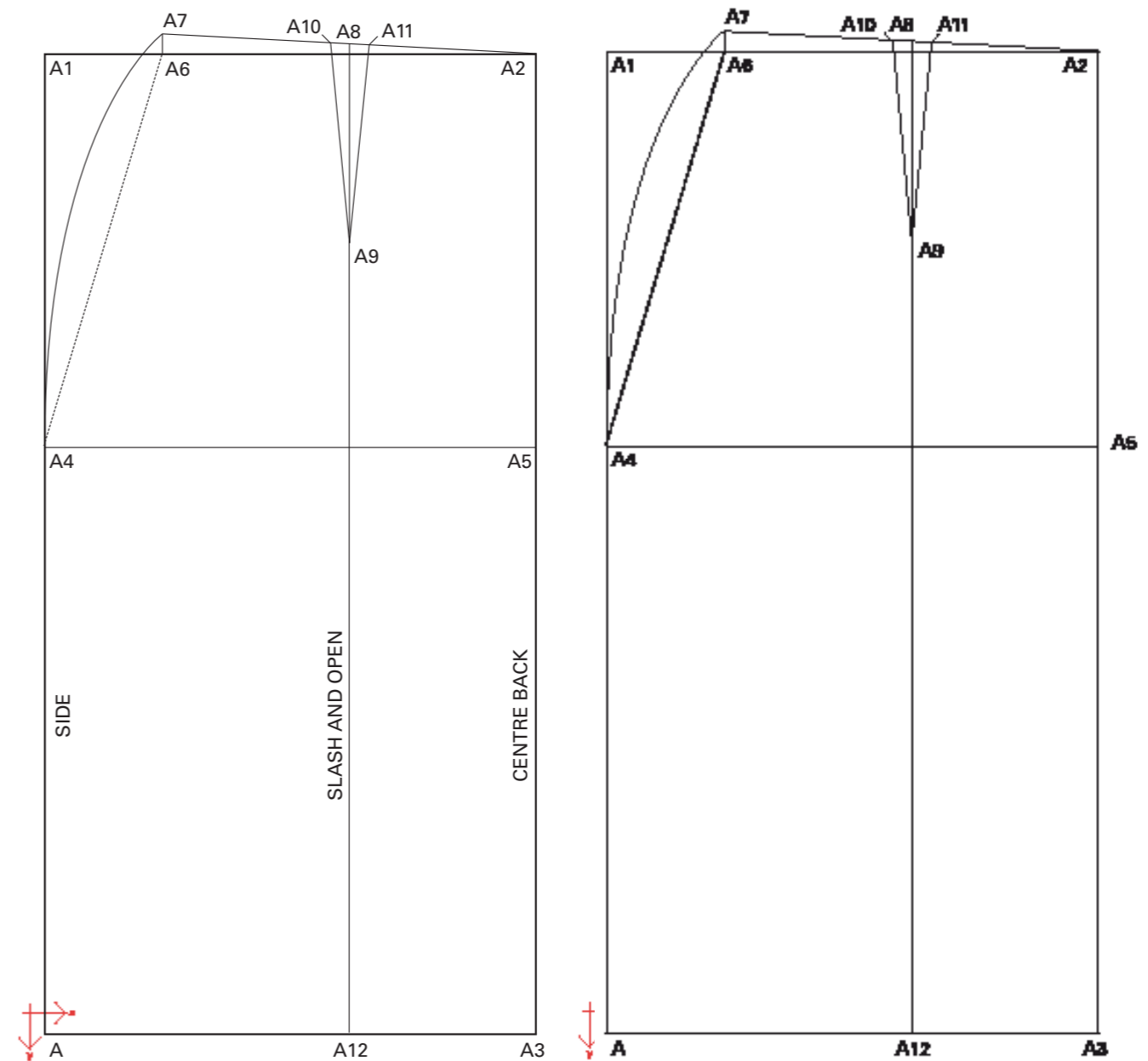


WIDE A-LINE SKIRT - BACK

- A3_A12 same as A2_A8.
- Draw a line between A9_A12 (this line defines how wide the skirt will be; it must be cut from the bottom up to the top of the dart). Then, while the dart closes on the paper, the cut section automatically opens up, giving shape to the skirt.

Using a pencil crayon, colour in the paper pattern to identify it as the back.

Since the simple A-line skirt is easier to make, I decided to demonstrate how to make the wide A-line skirt.





HALF-WHEEL SKIRT

To make a half-wheel skirt, you only need to take two measurements: the waist circumference and however long you want the skirt to be.

Looking at the diagram, draw the pattern out using the following calculations:

- A_A2 is at least double the length of the skirt.
- A_A1 is at least double the length of the skirt.

- A_A4 = 1/3 of waist circumference (for example $68 : 3 = 22.6 / 26.77 : 3 = 8.92$ ”).
- A_A3 same as A_A4.
- Draw a line between A3_A4.
- A7 = 1/2 of A3_A4.
- Draw a line between A_A8 passing through A7.
- A8 is at least twice the length of the skirt.
- A_A9 = 1/3 of waist circumference.

