

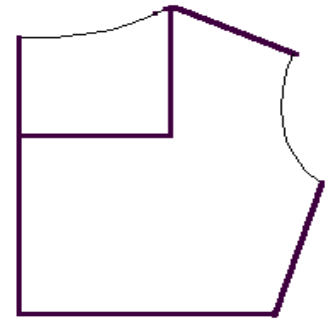
Introduction to Women's Italian Renaissance Clothing

By Baroness Briana Etain MacKorkhill

Toward the end of the 15th Century, the fashion in Italy changed once again. Gone are the houppelandes and in with the more fitted bodices of the now typical Italian Renaissance gowns.

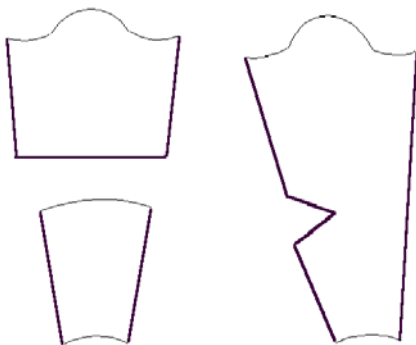
Along with the ever-present chemise, there evolved the short-waisted square-neckline bodice dress with pleated or gathered skirt.

The underdress was normally trimmed at the square (or occasionally round) neckline. These bodices were front laced or side laced and often have sleeves attached.



Sleeves varied greatly from simple tubes to elaborate piece sleeves that were usually tied in to the armseye.

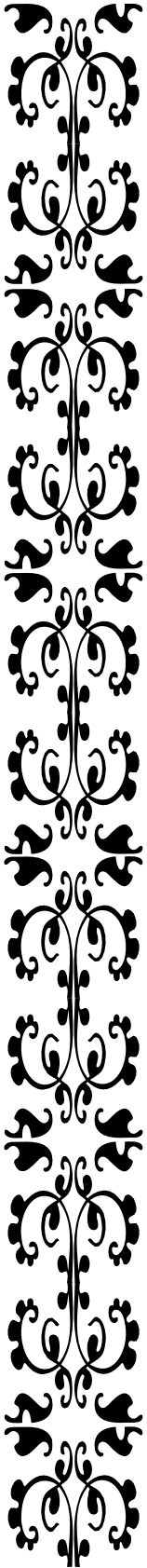
Here are two common examples.



Also popular were intricately cut-out sleeves and strip sleeves. There were often trimmed to match either the overdress or underdress. Ties were usually finished with points (metal aiglets).

And for formal occasions, there was added an overdress. As the demand for more intricate brocades increased, a new way to display these beautiful fabrics evolved into the overdress as we know it. They designed the new garment to be worn over the bodice dress. It was narrow at the shoulders, and slightly shaped in the bosom area but then flows out to the hem. With the addition of a gore that extends from below the underarm to the floor, it is almost semi-circular at the bottom. Most portraits of the period show the V-neckline and the bodice underneath.

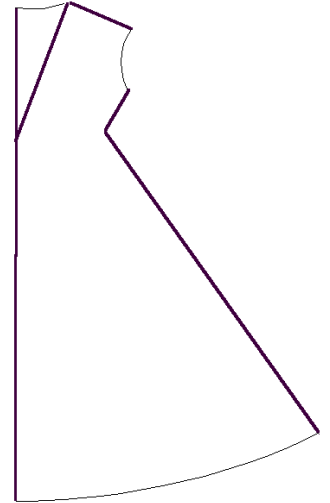




Often the two garments were of different fabrics, many times contrasting colors. Trim was used sparingly, if at all, on the overdress, preferring to let the sumptuous brocades have the focus.

The overdress may be open down the front and closed at the sides or may be open on the sides and be closed at the front. Both styles were equally popular.

If you have already drafted the basic bodice, simply lay your pattern down on your paper. You will need to trace the armseyes and shoulder seam. Then drop in a shallow curve from inside shoulder center front.

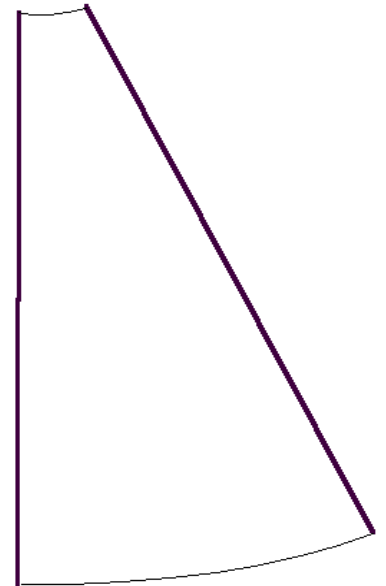


Next determine how low you want your V-neckline to be. Typically I like to have mine to come just below the breastbone. Mark that point on your pattern. Fold the pattern from the inside shoulder to that point. This should produce a nice diagonal line.

Mark your overall length (from your shoulder to the floor + 2 inches) on the center front.

Next trace the line of the side seam onto the pattern. From the bottom of the bodice side seam start a line out to the edge of your fabric at your length. (Measure from the bottom of your bodice to the floor + 2 inches)

Connect the front and side measurements with a semicircle (see pattern illustration).



For the gore, simply measure from the underarm to the floor + 2 inches and mark that on your paper. Then measure over 2 inches and use the same measurement to the desired width of the gore at the bottom. Drop in the semicircle at the bottom. Cut 4 of these.

You will need 2 of the back main pieces, 2 of the front main pieces, and 4 of the gores. One for each edge of the main pieces. This is what gives the nice vertical folds so desired. Decide if you want it to close on the sides or front. If the sides are left open, I put 2 lacing holes just under the arm to keep the garment together. Sew up accordingly.