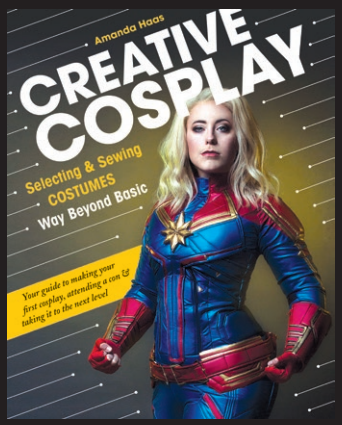
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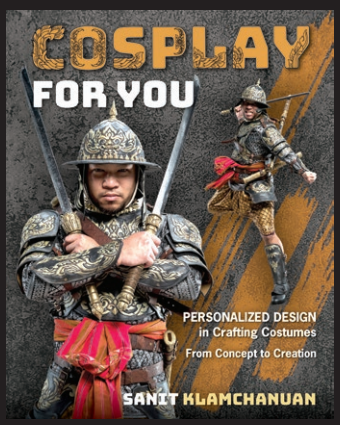


















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Cosplayer: Downen Creative Studios
Costume: Hela from Thor: Ragnarok
Photo by: Downen Photography

From ***Cosplayer's Ultimate Guide to EVA Foam***, by Beverly Downen

Amanda Haas

CREATIVE COSPLAY

Selecting & Sewing COSTUMES Way Beyond Basic

Your guide to making your first cosplay, attending a con & taking it to the next level



WHAT IS COSPLAY?

If you ask people about cosplay, they seem to draw a blank. Some say it's a Japanese pop-culture thing; others think it's a Halloween-type event that happens at comic book conventions. Both are right in a sense. *Cosplay* is an ultimate art form in which players create costumes, accessories (including body paint and makeup), and just about anything and everything else they can think of to represent a fandom. (*Fandom* is the word used to describe the subculture of a certain pop culture subject, like a movie or video game.) Cosplayers even develop original ideas with fantasy twists—it's amazing!

Merriam-Webster defines *cosplay* as "the activity or practice of dressing up as a character from a work of fiction (such as a comic book, video game, or television show)." This is an extremely accurate definition; however, I would like to add that most cosplay portrays characters from every aspect of fantasy and sometimes nonfiction. Real-life character portrayals are becoming more popular as cosplay becomes more mainstream. Let's go back a bit and see where and why cosplay began.

The History and Psychology of Cosplay

Throughout history, humans have dressed up for all kinds of occasions, from attending a masquerade ball at the Palace of Versailles in France (during the reign of King Louis XIV), to dressing for Carnival in Rio de Janeiro for the first time in 1723. Most people did, and still do, refer to this as *costuming*. Fast forward to the early twentieth century, when authors started creating fandom worlds. People fell in love with the intellectual properties of manga in East Asia and science fiction in the West. Fans developed the first fandoms.



The term *cosplay* wasn't used until 1984. According to an article in *The Artifice*, an online magazine, Japanese reporter Nobuyuki Takahashi had attended Worldcon in Los Angeles. When translating the word *masquerade* for his Japanese readers, he thought the word sounded too old-fashioned and he coined the word *cosplay*.

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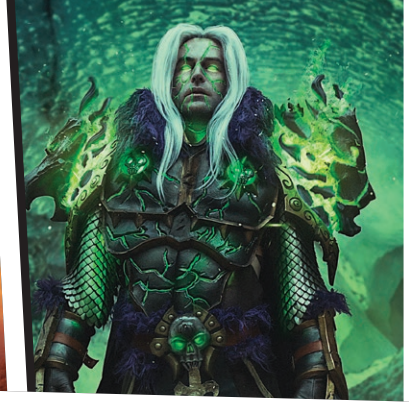
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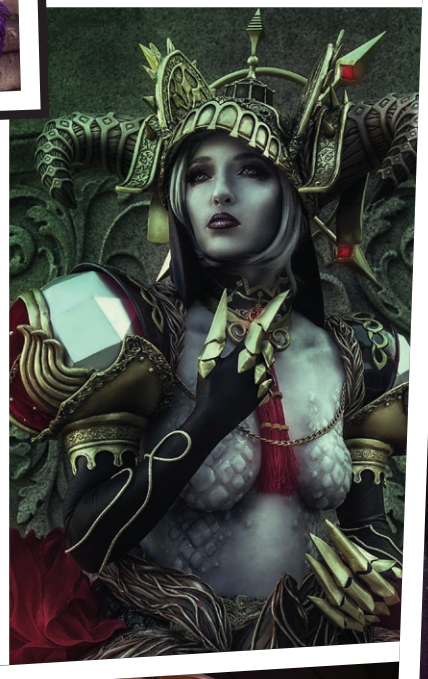















TYPES OF FABRICS

Once you understand how fabric is made, it is easier to understand the fabric itself and how it behaves. Once you really start to dive deep into fiber contents and fabric textures, you will find yourself understanding why pattern envelopes suggest the fabrics they do. This a pretty powerful skill set in the art of cosplay.

Satin, cotton blends, flannel, crepe back satin, and jersey knits are just the tip of the iceberg for the types of fabrics used in cosplay. With hundreds of fabric types to choose from, here the ones that I believe are the most useful for cosplayers. This isn't a finite list, but it's a good start.

Brocade

Brocade is a rich, heavy, and luxe fabric. Use this fabric for all your royal cosplays. The root word for brocade is *broccato*, which is Italian for "embossed cloth." Brocades have been woven on a loom for centuries for the finest of folks. Brocade is heavily decorated, sporting outdoor scenes with birds and leaves, paisleys, damask, and all sorts of designs. Just like lace, brocade weaving is an art form, so the fabrics can be expensive. Consider hand sewing beads and sequins onto brocade to really make this fabric sing! This fabric does fray, so be sure to finish the edges before you start sewing.



COSPLAYER: Jedimanda
COSTUME: Cersei Lannister from *Game of Thrones*

Spandex

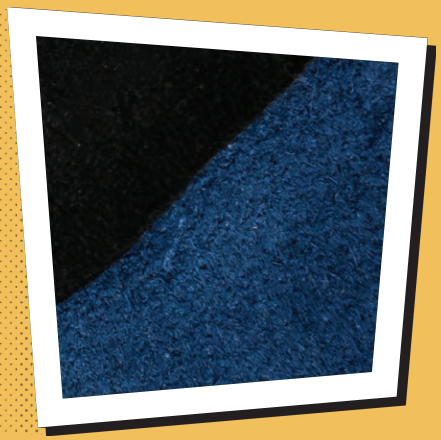
Spandex is a popular cosplay fabric, particularly for superhero suits and anything that needs to stretch. Spandex is an anagram for the word *expands*. Spandex, a synthetic fiber fabric, is the term that is commonly used in North America, but in Europe and other parts of the world, they use the term Lycra to describe the same fabrics. Lycra is the brand name created by the company DuPont in 1958. When you are making skintight garments that need to hug the body, be sure to purchase four-way stretch spandex, which stretches in all four directions. Spandex is always four-way stretch, but sometimes in stores it's stocked near knit fabrics that are two-way stretch. While two-way stretch fabrics have their use, you do not want to use them for skin-tight garments. (You'll want to be able to sit down, right?) When stitching spandex fabric, make sure to use a ballpoint/stretch needle and sew with a zigzag stitch. Spandex is great for super suits, leggings, active wear, and anything tight fitting.



COSPLAYER: Jedimanda
COSTUME: Jean Grey from *X-Men*

Suede

Suede is great to use for corsetry and accessories like belts and pouches. It comes in different weights and at different price points. Suede is the soft underside of the animal skin, perfect for jackets and shoes or anything that needs some durability and texture. Take care when sewing suede because if you need to remove stitches, the holes remain. Suede is a spot-clean fabric, so don't throw it in the washer and dryer.



Pattern Prep

Now let's move to pattern and fabric prepping. A few steps before you start to cut and sew will save you a lot of time in the long run.

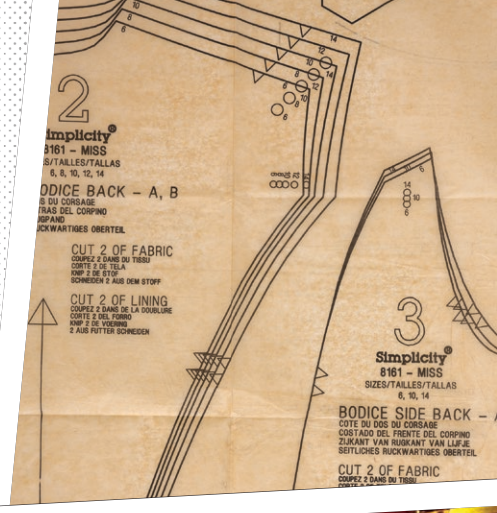
PREPPING THE PATTERN

Once you have determined your size (see Size, page 60), you might want to highlight the cutting lines on the pattern, especially if there are multiple sizes printed together. Depending on your project, you might want to be able to tailor the garment for a more custom fit. If so, consider cutting a larger size so you have extra fabric to take in or let out as you sew the pieces together.

Use craft scissors to cut out all the pattern pieces you need for your build. Be sure to follow the cutting line for the size you want to make. If the pattern has a lot of folds and wrinkles, you might want to press it carefully with a dry iron.

Pattern Mash-Ups

A common technique that many cosplayers use when crafting an outfit is *pattern mashing*. Pattern mashing involves taking two or more patterns and putting them together. I tend to do this when I am creating a gown or super suits; often one pattern will have the bodice I want but not the sleeves I want. So I look through my stash of patterns and pull the pattern with the sleeves that I want.

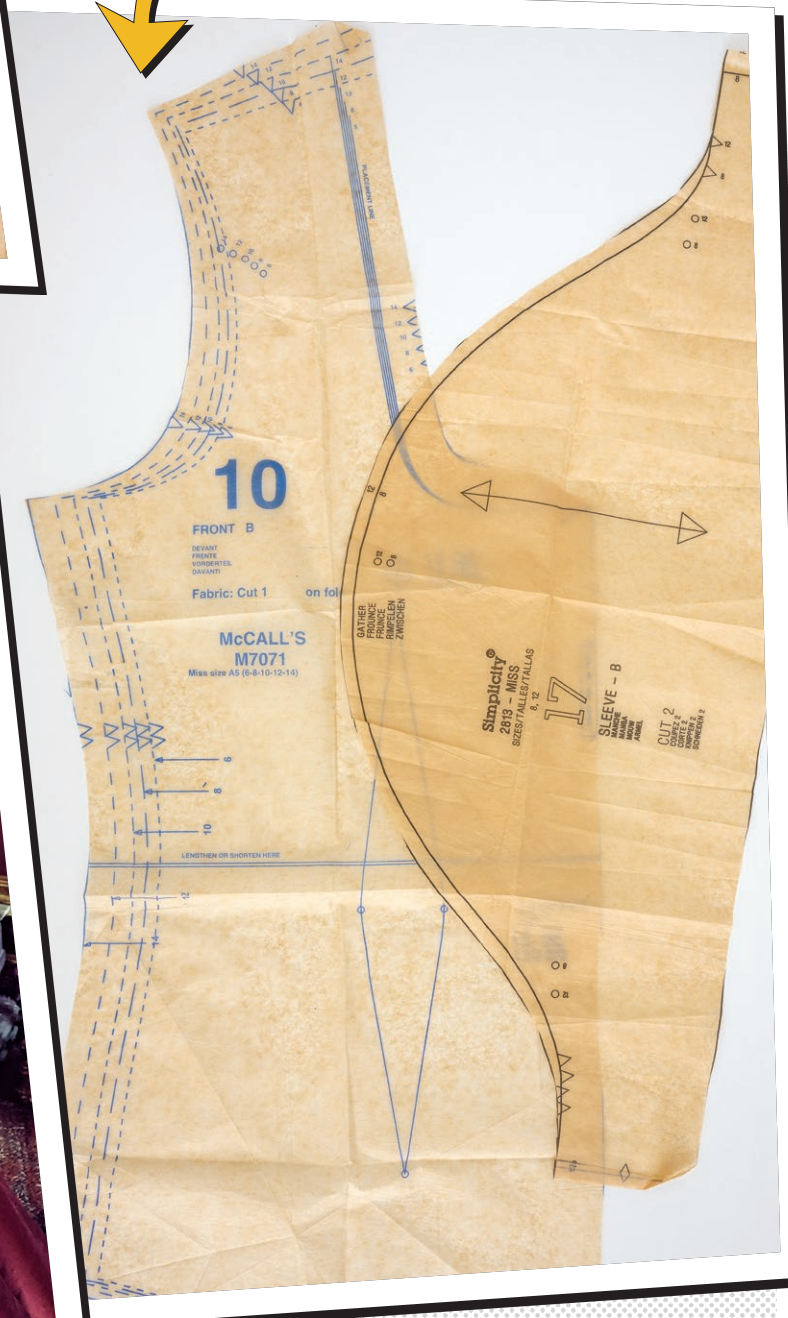




Pattern mash-up in progress in my studio

The trick to determining whether pattern pieces from different patterns work together is to "seam walk" the patterns against each other before you cut any fabric. To walk a seam, place the patterns on top of each other and align the seamlines. Pin the two pattern pieces together starting at the midpoint of a seam (bodice to sleeve; skirt to bodice, and so on). Hopefully the edges will match up and the two patterns will work together. If the seams do match up, move forward and use the patterns to cut your fabric. If they don't match up, see if you can gather up the pattern a bit or maybe add a pleat or a dart to make the pieces align. If this works, make sure to mark the pattern piece accordingly. This is your garment—you can do whatever you want!





> *"Make it work."*
>
> —Tim Gunn from *Project Runway*

Another consideration when you are mashing patterns is to make sure all the patterns you plan to use recommend the same types of fabrics. You can't mash up a pattern that requires stretch fabric with one that recommends woven fabrics that don't stretch.

Frequent pattern mashing will help you learn the look of patterns and mentally establish what a sleeve pattern looks like against a side front bodice piece. Mashing is a great way to gain more knowledge as you progress in your sewing journey.

TIP

Don't forget to add seam allowances if you rework some of the patterns.

The Art of
EXTREME WIG STYLING



Regan Cerato
of Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay



Let's Make Some Wigs!

Welcome, stylists! I am one-half of Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay, and for years I've loved creating everything from giant ballgowns to detailed armor. Larger-than-life wigs are a specialty of mine, but over the years I've found that extravagant wigs can be intimidating for even the most seasoned of crafters. However, I believe that extreme wig making is for everybody: anyone from beginner to advanced stylist can tackle these styles with a combination of the right techniques, patience, and ambition!

This book includes many of my favorite styling methods and tips that I've picked up over the years, as well as several of my own wig creations to serve as artistic inspiration. I've also included a hefty number of guides on both essential and extreme styling techniques, along with a number of talking points on best practices, tips, and instructions for re-creating common styles. My teaching style centers around stepping readers through the logic behind why exactly a styling technique works. I want you to walk away with knowledge that you can apply to your own future projects beyond what's contained in this book. Use these chapters as a guideline, but as always there is no one "right" way to style—be sure to try new things, experiment, and adopt the techniques that work best for you!

Working with wigs in general, and especially making larger-than-life wigs, inherently involves working with a lot of synthetic materials, tools, and chemicals. Always work in a well-ventilated space, and always read and follow all safety instructions for the products you choose to use.

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Fiber Contents

What are synthetic wigs made of?

Most synthetic wig fiber is composed of long strings of plastic. Unlike the keratin in human hair, plastic is shinier, often thicker, and can withstand more abuse. There are many different types of wig fiber plastic out there, and some brands even use their own special blends. Extremely cheap "bag wigs" that you might see in a Halloween store have a tell-tale shine that indicates that the fiber is made of low-quality plastic. Older brands and "ready-wear" wigs tend to be made of Kanekalon fibers, which can vary in shine and come in limited, more realistic colors like blondes and browns. This can be great if you're looking for realistic hair tones, but bear in mind that some wigs like this are not heat resistant. They cannot accept very hot temperatures from tools like flat irons (up to 400 degrees F), and may melt under an extremely hot blow dryer. Keep an eye out for wigs that are labeled as "heat resistant" and especially ones that come in a variety of colors and thicknesses. Depending on which store you purchase your wig from, you may notice that your fiber might have a slick sheen to it or that it might appear almost matte. This is due to the blend of fiber used.



Matte fiber versus slick fiber

All fibers are not created equally! While I am a firm believer that you can style any wig with enough effort, I also believe that there is always a way to make less work for yourself. Matte fibers tend to be thicker and coarser, while slicker or shiny fiber tends to be thinner and smoother.

Aside from a personal visual preference, this has a few important effects on our styling. Coarse fibers like those sold by cosplay brands Arda Wigs or The Five Wits naturally have more "tooth" to them and tend to grab onto each other even with natural wear. This is a great advantage and can save effort when you need to tease or spike a wig. However, for this same reason long styles made with matte fiber tend to tangle more with wear and friction.

To contrast, if your wig displays a visible shine or sheen, it may be made from thinner, softer wig hair. These fibers tend to slide against each other rather than knot and tangle. A good rule of thumb is to use slicker fiber if you want a long wig that doesn't tangle as easily. Or if you need a shorter wig with lots of upward volume, matte fiber will help you achieve that look.

TIP: Don't want to follow the above suggestion? That's fine too: pick the fiber type you like best!

If using matte fiber for a long wig, be sure to apply a detangling spray before wearing. If using slick fiber for heavy styling, a few sprays of hairspray will give the hair some temporary grip during the teasing process.

Wig Terminology

Wig

1. Wig Cap
2. Netting
3. Crown
4. Ear Tab
5. Elastic Band
6. Adjustable Strap
7. Weft





Weft

1. Weft Track
2. Stitch Line
3. Hair Fiber
4. Fiber Ends

Dyeing with Polyester Fabric Dye

Pros:

- Extremely rich, dark colors
- Easy to mix colors
- Very fast
- Dye is inexpensive

Cons:

- Requires separate equipment investment
- Requires ventilation and safety precautions
- Dye colors may be limited or will require mix tests
- Wigs must be restyled
- Long wigs may severely tangle
- Prone to bleeding without thorough washing



A bold, saturated color is a perfect candidate for fabric dye

Best for: short, richly colored wigs

For short, bold-colored wigs that you don't mind restyling, fabric dye is a great option! This is often my go-to for dyeing because an entire wig can be dyed in just five minutes and the color will always turn out extremely rich and bold. That's the fastest option you're going to get!

However, the downside to using dye comes with the prep and clean up. Dye can give off fumes and so you must be sure to ventilate the area you're working in. Polyester dye must also be heated to near-simmering in a pot that is not used for food. Finally, dropping a wig in very hot water will soften the fibers so any previous style will immediately be gone once you pull it out of the water. This can be a nightmare for long wigs or wefts, which will badly tangle in the water. You can use this method to dye long wigs if you are careful, but anticipate spending a good amount of time detangling and straightening your wig.

Remember to make sure you have selected a dye formulated specifically for polyester. Natural dyes will not stick to plastic and will not affect your wig's color tone. Two popular polyester dyes in the cosplay community are iDye Poly (by Jacquard Products) or Rit DyeMore, both of which make excellent choices. Whichever dye you choose for your project, be sure to read and follow all of the safety instructions included in the product packaging.

Polyester dye only activates at higher temperatures, so it's important to keep the water at or just below simmering to achieve dark tones. At simmering temperatures, wig fiber absorbs dye very quickly. If you need a pastel or lighter tone and a quick 10-second dunk is too difficult, try adding significantly less dye or try turning the heat down to prevent adhesion.

The following dye tests utilized three brands of pure white fiber from Arda Wigs, Epic Cosplay, and an alternative brand L-email Wig. Each absorbed the dye in a similar way, and each looked nearly indistinguishable after the dye bath. We could see some slight variation when placed under a scanner, but this should not discourage you from attempting to dye your favorite brands. Polyester dye works great on all synthetic fibers.

iDye Poly Color Chart

White wig fiber in ⅛ tsp (1ml) dye and 1 cup (250ml) water, heated to simmering unless otherwise stated



iDye Poly comes in a sealed, dissolvable powder packet. This dye is easy to use since you can easily toss the entire container into your water. However, it's much harder to partition out portions of dye for color mixing or to save for later. To save your dye powder, snip open the packet corner and empty the powder into a plastic bag. During my tests I found that iDye was more potent than Rit for some tones, but was more difficult to wash from the fiber and required significantly more ventilation.

For the above color tests I used ⅛ tsp (1ml) iDye Poly, heated to just under simmering (180 degrees F [85 degrees C]) with the exception of the bottom row that was under-heated to only 120 degrees F (50 degrees C).

Updos and Rearranging Wefts

Let's inspect our wig's wefts again. Depending on your wig style, you may find that some wefts are arranged in a circle around the crown, some lie in parallel lines between two pigtails, and others are sewn in upside down. Why do these wig styles have such dramatically different weft lines?

The direction in which the weft fiber is pointed determines the direction in which your wig's hair will naturally want to fall and where it will look the thickest. This helps the hair lie flat in the desired direction, but it also helps hide any weft tracks or netting. Pulling the hair away from its track direction can be dangerous; a small change is fine but completely reversing the direction for high ponytails or an updo can result in exposed weft track or thinner-looking hair.

To avoid this problem, be sure to rearrange your wefts' directions when severely modifying your wig's style! Alternatively, to save time, keep an eye out for wigs that already come premade for these styles. These wigs' wefts are already arranged in the correct direction for high ponytails or reverse-wefted updos. However, you can rearrange any wig's direction by de-wefting and then re-wefting those fibers into a new track pattern.



Above shows a typical weft arrangement, while below shows a wig with perpendicular wefts for pigtails.



New Part Lines



① Place your wig on a wig head, stretch, and pin into place.

② Choose where your new part will lie and separate the hair along this line. Depending on your base wig, you may notice that large amounts of netting or elastic is exposed when the hair is pulled aside. Note how the example wig is exposed because the wefts were not arranged with a back part in mind. If this occurs with your wig, consider adding additional wefts in the following steps to hide these bare areas.







③ Lay your first weft along the center of the part line with the hair fiber pointed away from the part; in this example it is pointed toward the right side of the wig. Sew the weft into place. Sewing is recommended in order to force the weft to lie flat and straight, but glue may be used instead.

④ Lay 1–2 additional wefts on top of or to the immediate right of the first weft. Sew into place.

⑤ Fold the above wefts across the part line and toward the opposite side of the wig. In this example we are folding them toward the wig's left side. Blow dry and firmly press down.

⑥ Repeat steps 3–5 for the opposite side: add a weft to the left side of the part line with the hair fiber pointed away from the part. In this example the fiber is pointed toward the left side of the wig. Take care to place the sewn edge of the weft as close to the wefts from steps 3–5 as possible.

⑦ Lay 1–2 additional wefts on top of or to the immediate left of the above weft. Sew or glue into place.

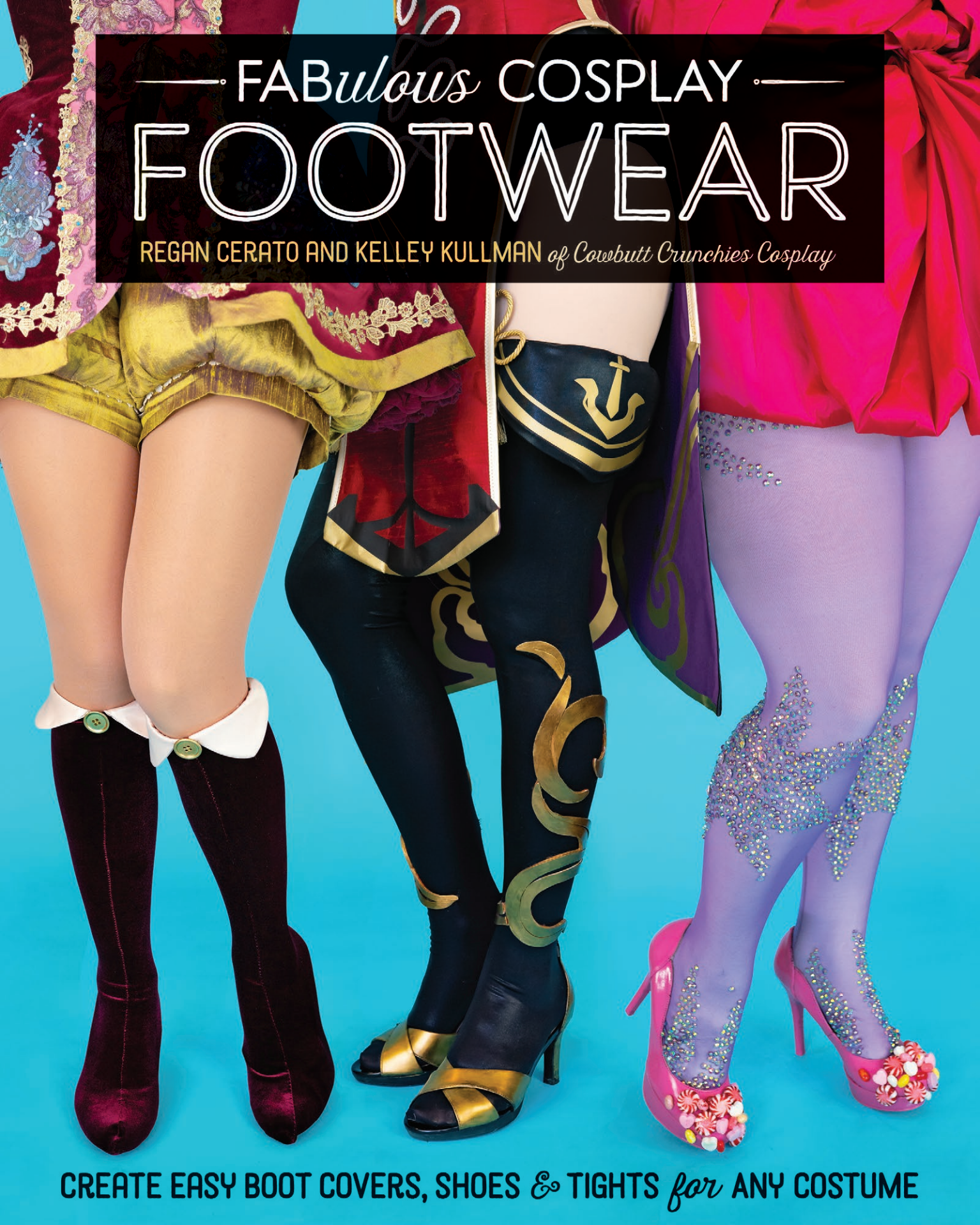
⑧ Fold the wefts from steps 6–7 toward the opposite side of the wig to hide the weft track. Use a blow dryer to heat train this fiber flat.

TIP: For the best results, use purchased wefts rather than harvested wefts. Purchased wefts are often thicker than layered, harvested wefts and will hide the weft's sewn areas.








FABulous COSPLAY
FOOTWEAR
REGAN CERATO AND KELLEY KULLMAN of Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay
CREATE EASY BOOT COVERS, SHOES & TIGHTS for ANY COSTUME

INTROduction



"Where am I going to get knee-high high-heeled boots in pink glitter zebra print with gold trim?"

If you've ever asked yourself a question like this, you just might be a cosplayer! Cosplay is the art of dressing up as your favorite fictional character, and it is a growing hobby for people all over the world. Cosplayers set out to recreate characters from games, movies, TV, and more; however, bringing those characters to life might be trickier than you think! It takes creativity and patience to transform fantastical, one-of-a-kind designs into a head-to-toe cosplay, and sometimes that journey ends with ...

"Nobody sells shoes with giant bat wings and pink bows. I guess I'll just wear something close enough."

COSPLAYER: Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

COSTUME: Button Knight (an original cosplay design)

Footwear is often a struggle for cosplayers. While many learn to manipulate fabric and foam to perfectly recreate clothing that represents their favorite over-the-top, elaborate characters, making shoes remains a far frontier for all but a handful. Real shoemaking requires special tools and can be expensive and time consuming. So, for many cosplayers, whatever they can find that's "close enough" becomes good enough.

Not anymore! This book breaks down ways to customize and create custom foot and legwear for a flawless finish to your costume. Follow along with veteran cosplayers Cowbutt Crunchies as we demonstrate how to make every type of leg covering a cosplayer could ask for, from removable boot covers to custom tights to thigh highs that don't roll down! Complete with two patterns, this handbook is sure to put some pep in your step!



COSPLAYER: Sarcasm Himé

COSTUME: Sewing Machine from *Sakizo Art Book*















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COVER IMAGE

COSPLAYERS:
Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay and Terieri Cosplay

COSTUMES:
Button Knight (an original cosplay design), Beidou from *Genshin Impact*, and Lumpy Space Princess from *Adventure Time*

MAKING BOOT COVERS

True custom shoes have long been a struggle for cosplayers—the bright colors, specific colors, specific heights, and custom trim that our favorite characters wear means a quick trip to the shoe store just isn't going to work. But cobbling shoes from scratch is something that can take years to learn and master. So instead, cosplayers turn to a handy, beloved shortcut: boot covers!

COSPLAYER: Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

COSTUME: Button Knight (an original cosplay design)





HOW *are* BOOT COVERS DIFFERENT FROM BOOTS?

Boot covers are fabric sleeves that cover both a base shoe and your own leg. This allows you to create truly custom faux boots with whatever colors, heel style and height, and trim you need. They're also removable, which means you can reuse your base shoes in the future, saving time and effort for your next cosplay. While any fabric can be used, we always recommend creating your covers from stretch fabric for a smooth, seamless, and comfortable look.

BOOT COVERS

YOU WILL NEED

- Boot covers pattern (pages 34 and 35)
- Pattern paper or tissue paper for tracing the pattern
- Measuring tape
- 1–2 yards of 4-way stretch fabric *(Fabrics with a definite right and wrong side or with a nap will require the larger amount.)*
- 1–1½ yards of ½"-wide braided elastic
- Scissors, thread, and pins
- Adhesive-backed nonslip shoe pads or grips

1 Measure around the widest part of your calf and use this measurement to prepare a copy of your chosen pattern size. Cut 2 fabric pieces for each boot cover, taking care to cut mirrored versions if your fabric has a right and wrong side. **FIG. A**

2 Pin 2 pieces right sides together, and baste the front and back seam using a stretch stitch and a ½" seam allowance. Leave the top and bottom edges open. **FIG. B**



A



B


The Cosplay Book of
BALLGOWNS
A Complete Guide to Creating Your Own
MASTERPIECE
REGAN CERATO AND KELLEY KULLMAN of Cowbutt Crunchies Cosplay

For many, cosplay is about extravagance and creating larger-than-life outfits. And there's nothing more extravagant than the indomitable ballgown! Ballgowns can be found in all corners of pop culture and historical reenactment, from superpowered princesses to ladies in waiting. Beloved by master cosplayers and novices alike, ballgowns are a favorite due to their versatility and variety.

INTRODUCTION



COSPLAYER: Ilabelle Cosplay

COSTUME: Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*

Photo by Mama Kat Photography

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COSPLAYER: Cowbutt Crunchies
COSTUME: Seraphim from Sakizo
Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios

Create the Cosplay Ballgown of Your Dreams!

Don't be intimidated by their size! These monster gowns can be broken down into easy-to-understand components, which, once assembled, come together to create a head-to-toe garment that looks fantastic on cosplayers of all shapes and sizes. At its core, a ballgown is composed of three main pieces: the undergarments, the bodice, and the skirt. However, your choices don't end there; selecting the style of these main pieces heavily influences both the level of sewing difficulty, as well as the final gown shape!

As long time cosplayers who adore these fabulous dresses, we've created our fair share of ballgowns over the years, from original designs to re-creations to historical silhouettes. In this book we hope to provide a one-stop resource to help guide newcomers and experienced cosplayers alike toward creating the gowns of their dreams!



COSPLAYER: Cowbutt Crunchies

COSTUMES: Princess Bubblegum and Marceline from *Adventure Time* (original designs)

Photo by Charles Lan Photography

Ballgown Anatomy

What exactly is a ballgown? While most people have a good idea of what a "classic" ballgown is, understanding the pieces and construction methods helps explain why there is such a huge variety of dresses in different styles, periods, and levels of formality.

Not all gowns are created equal! From classic Disney styles to modern, sleek dresses to historically influenced garments, changes in the bodice, undergarments, skirts, and embellishments can create drastic changes in the overall look and feel of your cosplay! Translating a two-dimensional or fictional character's design requires understanding not just the basic anatomy of a ballgown, but things like silhouette and proportion.

Understanding the basic parts of a ballgown is an important start in the journey of ballgown creation.



COSPLAYER: Cowbutt Crunchies

COSTUME: Helgasercle from *Tree of Savior*

Photo by Sam Saturn

If you plan on purchasing undergarments which will change your measurements, such as an off-the-rack corset, body shaper, or padded undergarment, it's important to wear them during the measurement process, since they affect ballgown fit and fabric yardage. Treat these measurements as base measurements when choosing patterns or buying fabric.

If you plan to make your own corset or other undergarments, take your natural measurements to start. Most commercial corset patterns include instructions on how to pick a pattern size based on desired waist reduction and your unreduced waist measurement. A reduction of 1″–2″ is very common but consult your pattern!

Tip

Don't forget to account for shoes—the difference between ballet flats and 3″ heels is a big change to height-based measurements! It's fine to not have your final footwear but try to wear a pair that has similar heel height to your planned final shoes.

Finally, try to plan ahead for all accessories that might drastically change body or garment measurements, such as wing attachments, harnesses for armor or prosthetics, or other dramatic cosplay pieces.

Figuring Out Proportion

Cosplayers often have the additional challenge of re-creating beautiful designs from anime, comics, and illustrations where the characters aren't drawn as realistically proportioned figures. Anime characters especially tend to have impossibly long legs or thin waists, so translating their garments is difficult and there is often something that looks off. Proportion is an often-overlooked part of planning your costume but can really impact your finished garment. It is also difficult to go back and adjust proportion once you're deep into constructing your costume.

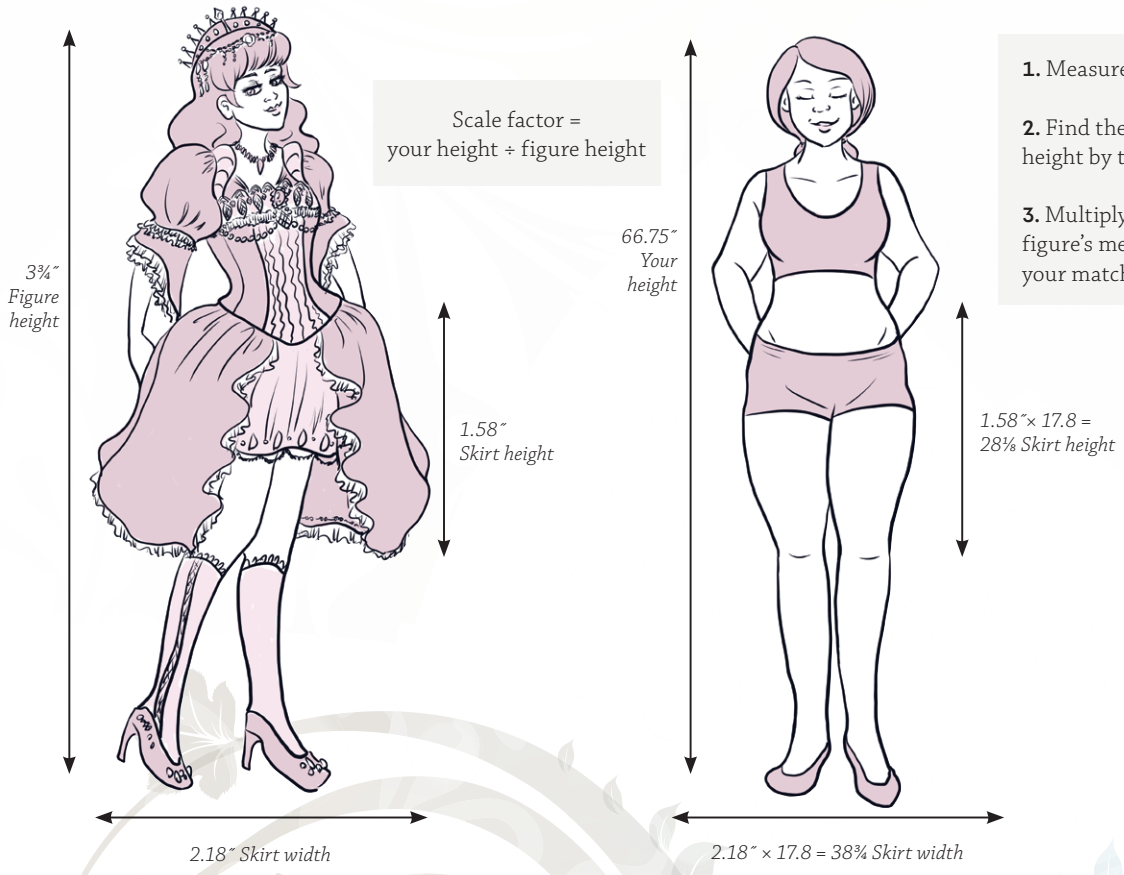
Your body measurements can be used to scale the original art (character references), and figure out how long or full to make your dress, where the waist should start, how poufed the sleeves should be, and so on. These aren't your finished measurements—rather, they're starting points to discuss sizing and patterning for your ballgown pieces.

Once you have your measurements, measure any important garment pieces of your planned cosplay, to determine the scale factor. Find the scale factor by dividing your height by the height of the figure. In this example, the cosplayer is just over 5′ 6″ (66.75″) and the figure in the art is 3.75″. So, the scale factor for the height is 17.8 (66.75″ divided by 3.75″).

In the illustration, the skirt width is 2.18″. Multiplying that by the scale factor of 17.8 yields approximately 38¾″ wide from side to side, so a total full circumference of about 76¾″. Now you should think about options to add that volume (see Undergarments, page 34).

Similarly, in the illustration, the skirt length is 1.58″. Scaled up to our cosplayer, the visual length of the finished cosplay skirt is approximately 28⅛″. Note this doesn't mean the actual length of the final skirt will be exactly 28⅛″ because the distance straight up and down from the waist to the floor is less than the diagonal distance, caused by structural undergarments that are much wider at the bottom. Rather, the 28⅛″ measurement is a final goal to work backwards from so that when all the pieces of the gown are together, the skirt should look 28⅛″ long to maintain the proportion.

You can use different body parts to scale different items on the costume; for example use your arm length to scale for bracers and your overall height for a cape! Your body can even be used to size small details like bows or bodice appliqués.



1. Measure your reference

2. Find the scale by dividing your height by the figure's height

3. Multiply the scale factor by the figure's measurements to find your matching measurement

The following ideas will help you visualize your cosplay and help proportion it for your body.

- Measure a string or ribbon and lay it in a circle matching your skirt circumference. Stand in the center and use a yardstick or have a friend use a measuring tape or other piece of ribbon to measure out to the "hem" you've marked. This requires a bit of imagination but is a good quick gut check, especially if you can tell immediately that you want your skirt much larger or smaller. This can help prevent wasted materials!
- Try on other costume or clothing pieces. For example, if your references and proportion math suggest 13″-long sleeves, try on a shirt with similar length and style sleeves for a quick visual comparison.
- For smaller pieces—such as sleeve flounces, accessories, and trim—draw them roughly on paper or scrap fabric and check them against your body in a mirror.
- For a very accurate visual, you can make a muslin (see Making a Muslin, page 33), although this is often more useful as a way to fine-tune measurements and sizing than when you are still in the early stages of planning.

When visualizing, consider: Does the proportion feel right? While the mathematical proportions are a great planning tool, they never need be set in stone! Cosplay is ultimately about being creative and designing a garment that you love, and love to wear, so if the mathematical answer doesn't feel or look right to you, feel free to make a creative choice. It's your cosplay, after all.

Getting Started

There are many important but fundamental aspects of a gown that impact how it looks and feels. They include the following:

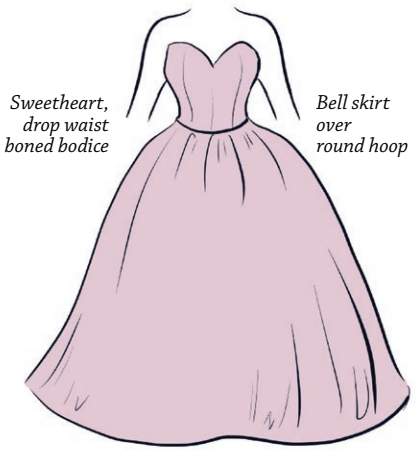
- Skirt shape (including the shape of hoops and petticoats)
- Overall skirt volume and skirt length
- Corset shape and bodice shape
- Neckline style
- Sleeve style and length
- Waist length (where the waistline hits)
- Whether the gown is purely fantastical or whether it references a specific historical period
- Fabric type, weight, and color choices
- Embellishment types and placement

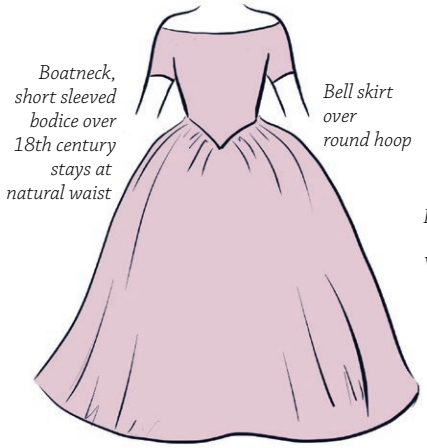
And of course, since this is cosplay, there are always special, extra, character-specific items to incorporate to really bring the ballgown to life.

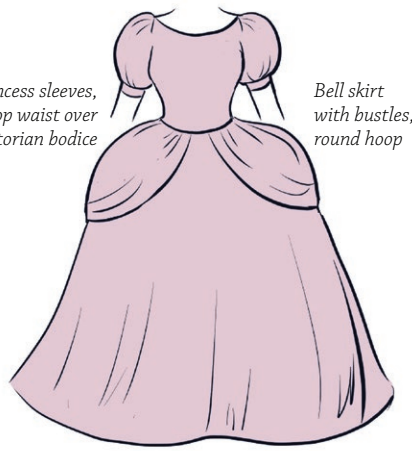
While we discuss these details in more depth in each relevant chapter, it's important to think about the overall design from the beginning. As you read through this book, feel free to mix, match, and be creative with different elements according to your source materials and design preferences!



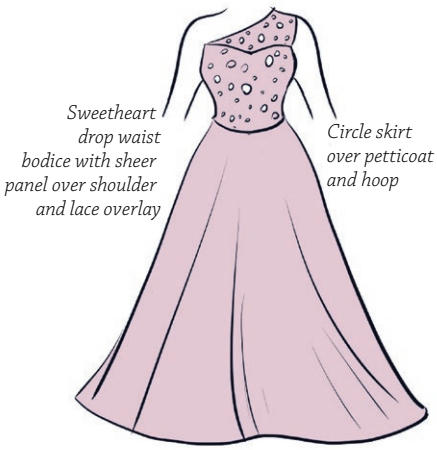
COSPLAYER: Cowbutt Crunchies
COSTUME: Machine Queen (original design)
Photo by Para Para Productions

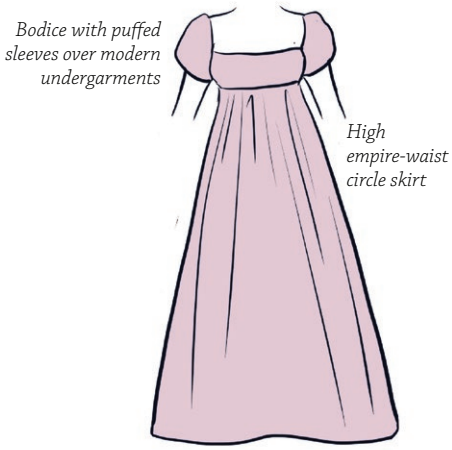


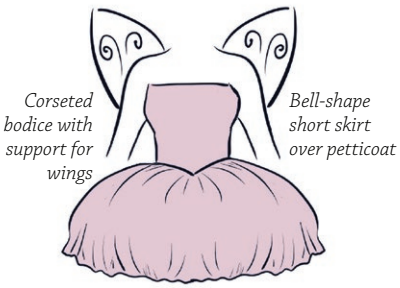


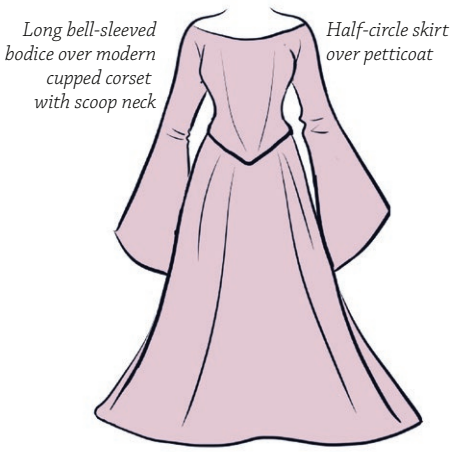


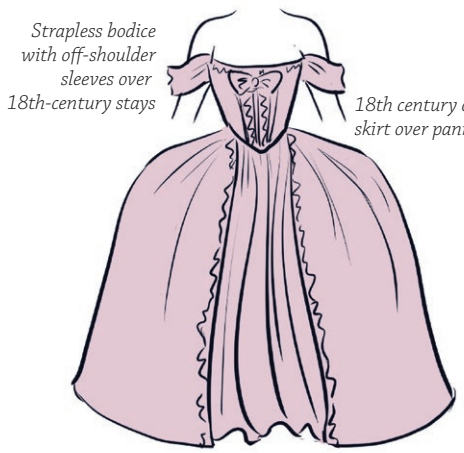
Examples of how mixing different elements can truly create a custom, one-of-a-kind cosplay ballgown.

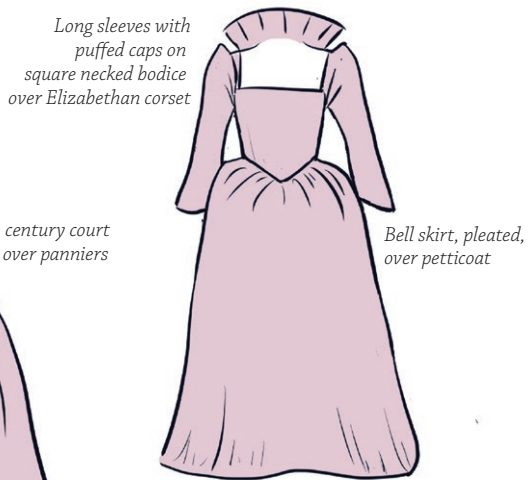












COSPLAY FOUNDATIONS

Casey Welsch
OF CASEY RENEE COSPLAY

Your Guide to Constructing Bodysuits, Corsets, Hoop Skirts, Petticoats & More



Create your dream silhouette for every costume

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, cosplay has grown exponentially in popularity. With the growth of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the Star Wars Universe, and with thousands of video games released every year, there is so much content to cosplay from. Cosplayers are not only pulling from these sources, but books and D&D (Dungeons and Dragons). Original characters are becoming incredibly popular to cosplay as well. As cosplay becomes more mainstream, cosplayers work even harder to level up their craftsmanship and creativity. Finding the exact garments to piece together a cosplay through thrifting and online shopping is an art form in and of itself. However, there is a rather large movement towards construction. As the world changes and resources become more widely available, costume construction is more accessible, and I am so excited to help you learn about the beauty and shape of cosplay undergarments.

Have you ever been standing on the convention floor, posing for pictures, or chatting with friends, and a cosplayer walks by with a costume that leaves you speechless? Every detail from how their armor seamlessly pieces together, or how their layers of skirts float as they walk, or even the way they carry themselves as if their wings were an extension of their body is spellbinding.

Chances are, those cosplayers are wearing foundation garments, like a spandex bodysuit, a hoop skirt, or a corset. There is so much that goes into making a costume and so much that goes on underneath a costume to make it look professional. Like the foundation of a building, the garment or set of garments can be the key to creating elaborate costumes with many moving parts. A properly fitted set of foundation garments can help take the World of Warcraft character out of Azeroth and make it come alive in our world.

Undergarments often help make the pieces of a costume come together that might not make sense on paper or in a video game. They can help create a dramatic silhouette for a costume and bring showmanship to a Masquerade Stage. Engineering the proper movement for armor and ballgowns is possible with a well-made set of foundation garments.

In the following chapters, I will give you the tools you need to create your very own undergarments. I will provide you with tips and tricks to create well-made, long-lasting, and interchangeable garments. Ultimately there is no right or wrong way to sew; the instructions and tips provided come from my own experiences. Cosplay construction is an art form, and if you are anything like me, self-expression will permeate through everything you make.

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Corsets and padding were (and are) also used to alter silhouettes and to create the illusion of being a different gender or genderless all together. Drag queens use tights and padding to create a feminine figure, just like women in the Victorian era used padding to form the illusion of a tiny waist. The modern development of elastic has made it possible to produce garments that compress breasts to create the illusion of a flatter chest. Padding the shoulders and upper arms of a garment would create the triangular figure that historically men often desired.

Today, you can wear shapewear and bras under form-fitting dresses to emphasize silhouette and hide unwanted curves. Cotton shirts are worn underneath suits to absorb sweat and keep suits cleaner longer.

COSPLAYER: Sudanrobladeworks

COSTUME: The Witcher from *The Witcher*

Photography by Alexandra Lee Studios

Foundation Garments in Cosplay

Like most aspects of cosplay, foundation garments can be as creative as the costumer making the costume. They can be adapted for you and your vision! The basic and most popular foundation garments for cosplay are corsets, hoop skirts, petticoats, shifts, bloomers, bodysuits, leggings, shorts, and wristlets, and all are covered in this book.

For foundation garments to be fully effective and to function better, there are suggested materials and closures for each garment. Each piece created to go under all the fancy bits of your costume should serve both you and your costume and not just exist to exist. You can decide that you don't need a corset and that a fully-boned bodice is perfect. It is your cosplay!

There are no limitations to how you can use foundation garments. A Sailor Scout fuku can be used for any costume that requires alternating parts like skirts and bows; they can even be worn under armor as a base for some costumes.

Bodysuits also help with armor placement and help keep the pieces from slipping around on the body. And, remember a bodysuit for under a set of armor doesn't have to be made in basic black, it can be techno-colored, or even air-brushed. It can also have hidden pockets for batteries or cooling packs, and Velcro or magnets for securing armor or capes,

Spandex garments like shorts and leggings can also live double lives. Shorts are perfect under short skirts or in fur suits. Leggings can replace bloomers if comfort is more important than frills.

Hoops and corsets can work together to help distribute the weight of a ballgown.



Cage crinoline

BODYSUITS FOR ARMOR AND ANIME

As costume designs in film and television become more challenging to reproduce, cosplayers must learn new skills and new combinations of skills to achieve screen accuracy. This means that adding some basic sewing skills to the long list of skills you already know will make your costuming adventures easier and more enjoyable. Being able to sew also allows for more customizations from sleeve length to the straps necessary to attach armor.

Armor is typically worn on top of another garment. Sometimes that garment is made of chain mail, sometimes it's a quilted gambeson, and other times, it might be something as simple as leggings or a bodysuit. While those garments are relatively easy to source and quite affordable, they do not always have the best fit. If they do not fit well, they could create issues with the fit of any armor attached to them later. Being able to sew a custom bodysuit allows for modifications to create a perfect character replica or to add your own flair to a design.



COSPLAYER: nyvednaproductions
COSTUME: Shuri from Black Panther
Photography by Alexandra Lee Studios

Corsets

Corsets Versus Stays

The earliest form of the corset as an undergarment is dated back to the 1500s and was called a pair of "bodies." At this time, the purpose of this garment was to create a rigid flatness in the bodice front with the curve of the breast peeking out over the top of the corset.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "bodies" could be worn as both undergarments and outer garments. At this time, whalebone was frequently used in the creation of these undergarments with a busk made of wood, whalebone, or steel inserted at the front. These early corsets also had straps that went over the shoulder and sometimes had eyelets in them for detachable sleeves.



COSPLAYER: Casey Renee Cosplay

COSTUME: Rococo undergarments, original design

Photography by Alexandra Lee Studios



COSPLAYER'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO EVA FOAM

BEVERLY DOWNEN

DESIGN

pattern

CREATE



LEVEL UP
Your Costumes & Props

INTRODUCTION

Hello, makers! Welcome to the starting line of leveling up your EVA foam costume and prop making skills!

Have you ever seen a costume or a prop in a movie that you've wanted to create, but you aren't sure where to start? Do you have experience building with EVA foam, but want to learn how to improve your techniques, patterning, and foamsmithing skills?

Every chapter of this book has been written for the eager maker who wants to learn how to use EVA foam like a pro, gather ideas for adding textures to their projects, and learn techniques and methods to create foam pieces that fit on a body without needing expensive tools, equipment, or materials.

This book will help you on your way to becoming a master of working with EVA foam and beyond, and it will give you tons of insider tips and techniques for making the best design and fabrication choices as you build your costumes and props. As you read through this book, you'll soon see that creating a good foundation for a well-designed, expertly constructed costume is well within reach of even the most novice of makers, and you won't need expensive equipment when using the techniques, methods, and materials suggested in these chapters.

These pages are absolutely packed with updated resources and processes, tons of pro tips, illustrations, more charts than you thought you'd ever need, and clear step-by-step instructions for cutting, priming, and patterning so you can get started making that incredible costume you've always dreamed of creating yourself!

So … let's get started!

Fun Fact

These materials and techniques are also used in professional costume and prop studios! Many of the props and costumes you see in films are created with EVA foam.

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A **Prop Maker:** Sameer Bundela
Prop: Alucard shield from Castlevania

Photo by Sameer Bundela

B **Cosplayer:** Baldguycosplay
Costume: Lawbringer from For Honor

Photo by Downen Photography

C **Cosplayer:** Athel Artistry
Costume: Mysterio from Spider-Man: Far From Home

Photo by Christa J. Newman



A

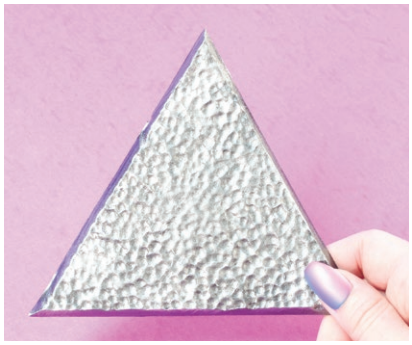


B



C

CREATING A HAMMERED-METAL EFFECT





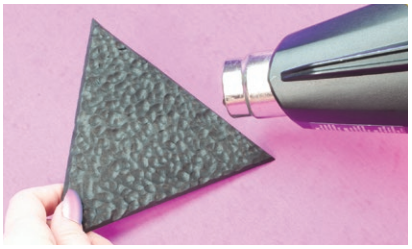
There are a few options for making this texture. One method is to use a rounded cutting tip on your rotary tool. Lightly press into the foam surface, repeating across the whole piece. Experiment with different rounded tips for more effects. You can also use a wood-burning tool, but remember to use proper safety gear and lots of ventilation. Wood-burning tools have a variety of tips, which can be used to create varieties of interesting textures.



1. With a rounded drill tip, gently press into the foam surface just long enough to remove a little bit of material.



2. Repeat along the surface.



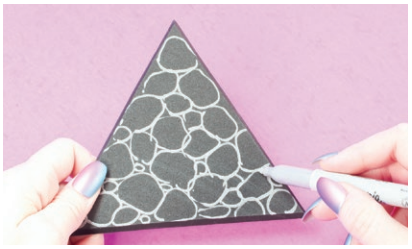
3. Heat seal and smooth the surface with your fingers to flatten any rough areas.

CREATING A PEBBLED EFFECT

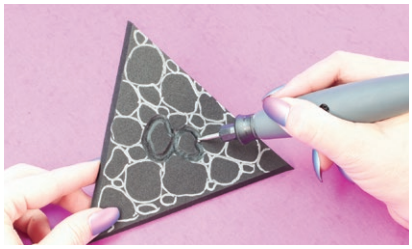




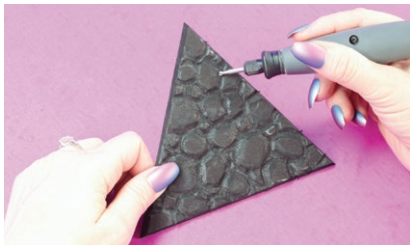
Use the carving tools to create realistic pebbled effects. This method will remove more material than others, so be sure to use a thicker material.



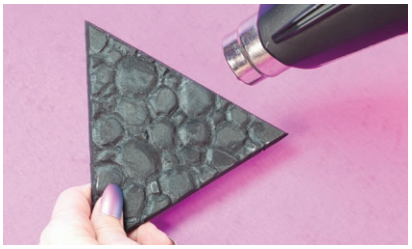
1. Draw guidelines (*optional*).



2. Use the carving tip to begin outlining the guidelines.



3. Continue working the texture, making deeper valleys and smoothing edges.



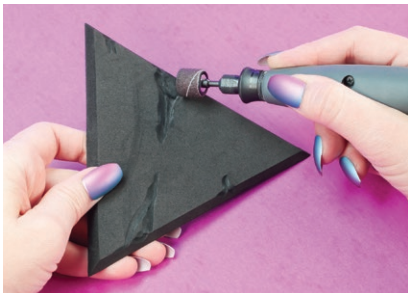
4. Heat seal.

CREATING BATTLE DAMAGE





Battle damage can give armor even more backstory and character! Use a rotary tool with a grinding bit or sanding drum and angle into the foam as you drag the bit across the surface. You can also use a wood-burning tool or, really, anything that will put some wear and tear on your projects.



1. Using the sanding drum bit and a rotary tool, lightly drag the tip across the surface of the foam. Use a medium speed setting for more control.



2. Continue removing more material, a small amount at a time. Adding randomly placed cuts and varying the depth of the damage will make this effect more realistic.



3. Heat seal.



Cosplayer: Baldguycosplay
Costume: Lawbringer from *For Honor*

Photo by Downen Photography

Baldguycosplay used weathering and battle damage techniques to create realistic effects on his Lawbringer cosplay.

CREATING A MOCK-UP

A *mock-up* is a rough draft version of your costume piece that you can confidently cut apart and edit to help you on the journey to the final form. This can help you properly fit your costume, figure out where attachments should go, and more. Mock-ups don't have to be glued together, painted, or pretty—they are raw, unfinished versions of your final piece. You can even use these to test paints and materials.

To make and refine a mock-up, follow these steps.



1. Trace your pattern to EVA foam. Use scrap foam or material of a similar thickness if possible.





2. Glue or tape the pieces together and check your work.

If you aren't happy with the shape, silhouette, or fit, don't worry! This is why a mock-up is so useful. The next step is making alterations to the mock-up where you can add or subtract material to get a perfect fit.

PRO TIP

I've noted this before, but it bears repeating. It's always easier to remove material than to add it. When in doubt, add extra room.

Story Time

Back in the dark ages when I made my first armor piece, I designed directly on the adjustable dress form instead of on my own form or a duct tape body form (I didn't know what those were yet). I painted the piece and added some hardware before I put it on for a fit test, and, of course, it didn't fit at all! I was heartbroken—this was a hard lesson about the importance of making a mock-up and trying it on multiple times throughout the building process.

Adjusting for Foam Thickness

If you will be using 8mm or 10mm EVA foam, do not forget that you will need to adjust your pattern pieces to accommodate the foam's thickness. To make this adjustment, use the following steps.

1. Make a mock-up of the piece you are working on with paper or scrap material. Place your mock-up on your duct tape body form.



2. For this example, I used 10mm foam. Place your 10mm foam ruler over the paper mock-up and make a note of the overall dimensions while it is curved on the form.



3. Compare the dimensions of your flat pattern piece to the dimensions you measured using your foam ruler. You'll see the dimensions of the mock-up need to be scaled up to match the dimensions of the foam ruler. In this case my mock-up has an upper width of 30cm and a lower width of 24cm. The foam ruler has an upper width of 34cm and a lower width of 27cm.

4. Estimate how much bigger your pattern needs to be. In this case, 4cm must be added to the upper edge and 3cm must be added to the lower edge. In this example I increased the pattern piece by 2cm along the upper edges and 1.5cm along the lower edges.

REFINING

If your mock-up is too small or too large, slight alterations are easy to do by adding or removing material. This is especially useful if you need to alter a premade pattern.

Altering a Pattern Before Printing

Are you printing your pattern but want to increase or decrease the size first? Change the scale or zoom factor in your printer settings in small increments, around 5%–10%, for smaller adjustments such as increasing a helmet size so it will fit well when you're wearing a thick wig. Larger percentage adjustments are useful for making oversize props or reducing a large adult-size prop for a child.

Altering a Mock-Up

When you put on the mock-up, is it too small or too large? Can you feel any pressure points or edges? Can you move well in it? Making small changes can make a big impact on how comfortable your costume will be and are always worth the time it takes to make alterations. Don't be afraid to cut a seam to remove or add material in the mock-up stage of your project. Here are a few tips to keep in mind while making adjustments to a mock-up.

Making Small Alterations

It's always best to make small adjustments to maintain the overall silhouette of the build. Small changes spread across the entire build can make a big impact on overall fit. Making one large adjustment instead of a few smaller ones can lead to frustration if, for example, you cut too much material away and make the piece too small.

Maintaining Symmetry

Take the time to add or remove from both sides of a mock-up that needs to be symmetrical. This step will help ensure that you make alterations to the entire pattern so the final piece will fit you as well as possible.

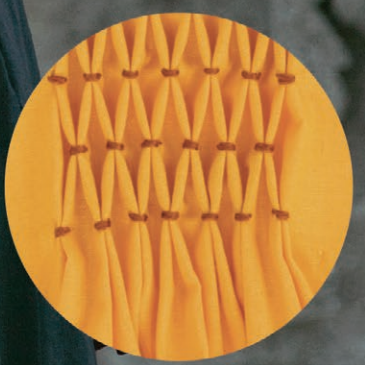
Maggie Hofmann

SMOCKING *secrets*









20 STITCH PATTERNS
to Create Unforgettable Texture

Cosplay, Garment, Home Dec & More

LET'S TALK SMOCKING!



COSPLAYER • Lady Kitz Cosplay

COSTUME • Design by Hannah Alexander based on Daenerys from *Game of Thrones*

Cape featuring arrow smocking

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios

Smocking is an ancient technique of fabric manipulation that has endured in various forms. We will be focusing on two of the more common forms, North American and English smocking. In North American smocking, the fabric to be smocked is pinched together along a grid and stitched in a pattern to form three-dimensional, raised designs that can be incorporated into a variety of garments. In contrast, English smocking is stitched on a pre-pleated piece of fabric that will ultimately create a decorative area of embroidered pleats in the final garment.

Both kinds of smocking can be adapted and used in various forms of costume making, either as full pieces or embellished elements within larger designs. We will be focusing on some of the more common patterns found within the techniques of North American and English smocking, but there is no end to the possible variations and combinations. I encourage you to try using smocking in your costumes in unconventional ways. Who knows? You may end up with a masterpiece!

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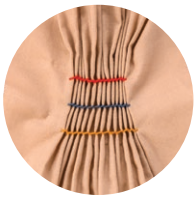
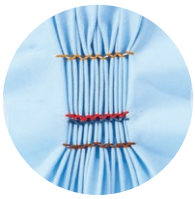
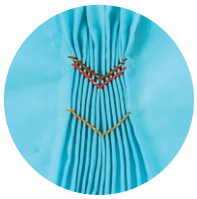
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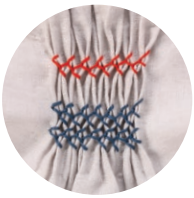
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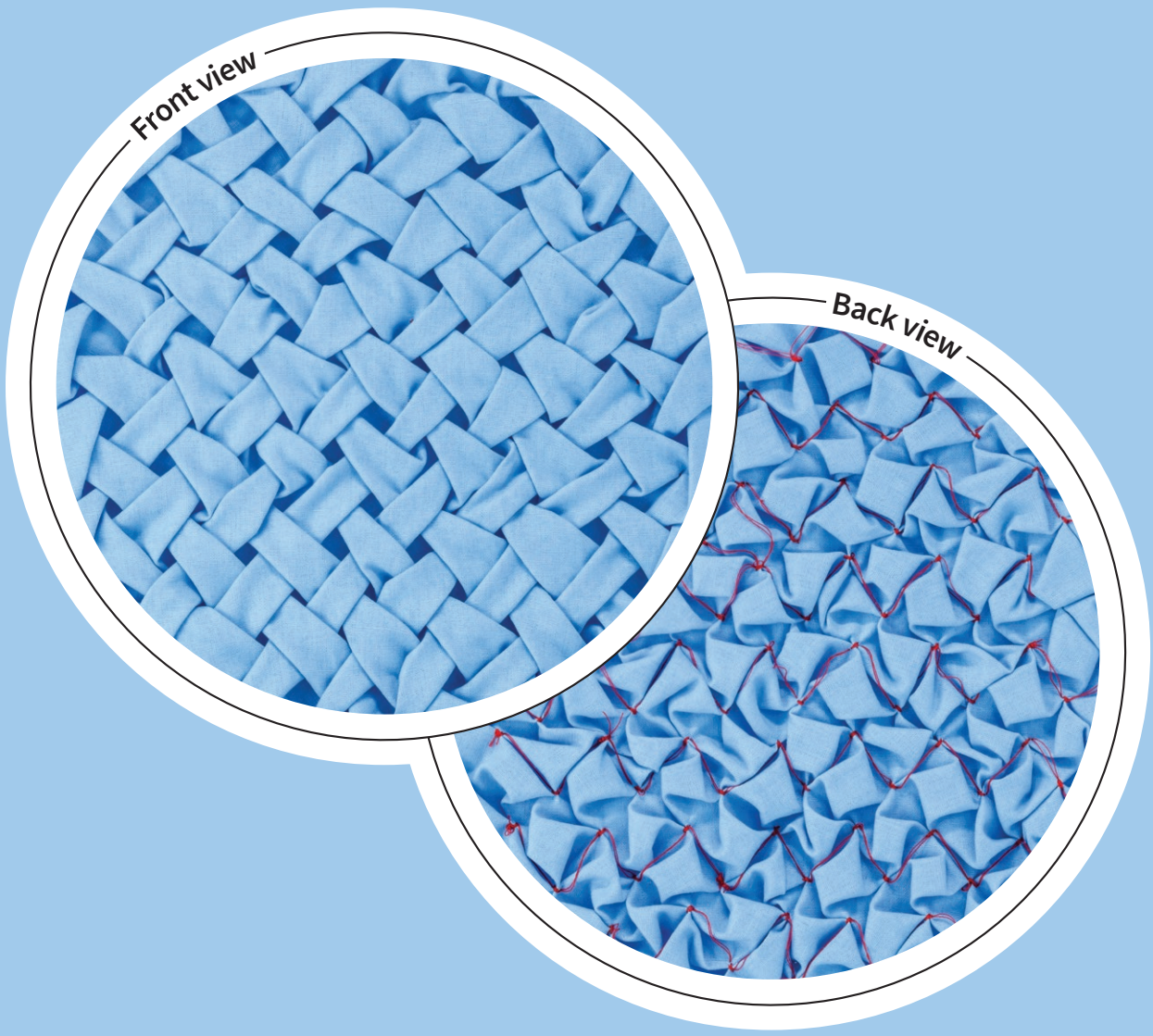

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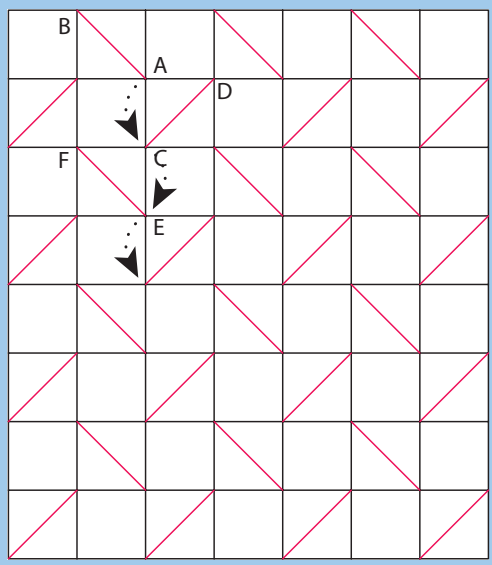

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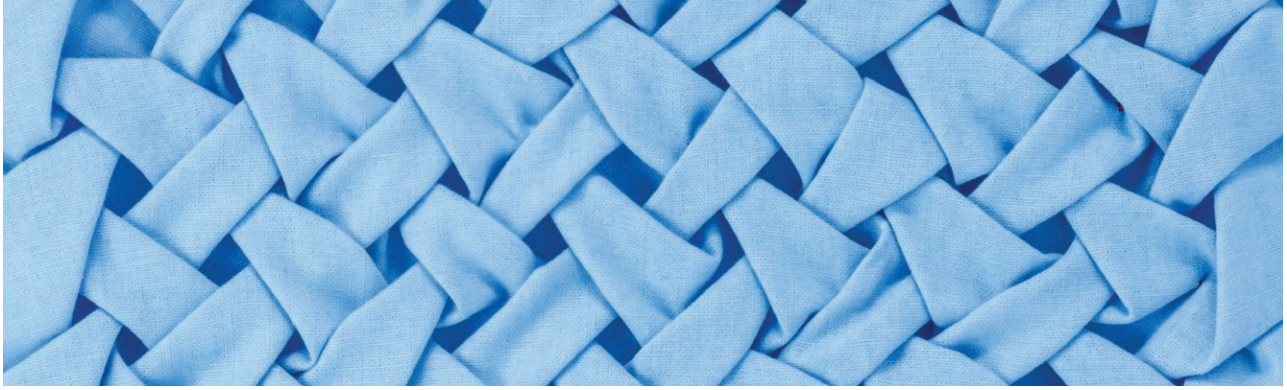
LATTICE

Skill Level: Intermediate

Lattice smocking gives the appearance of a woven design such as could be seen in a basket or open-weave fabric, making it a great choice for pieces where you want a strong design element.



Lattice stitch guide



INSTRUCTIONS

PLANNING

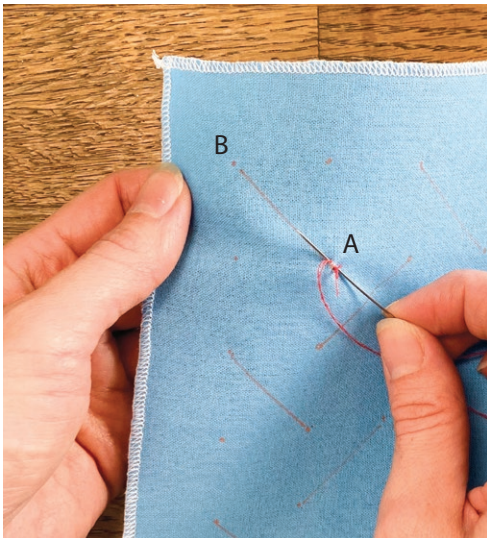
Refer to North American Smocking, General Instructions (page 14) for making a sample, planning yardage, preparing fabric, and marking a grid.

Note **YARDAGE AND GRID NOTES**

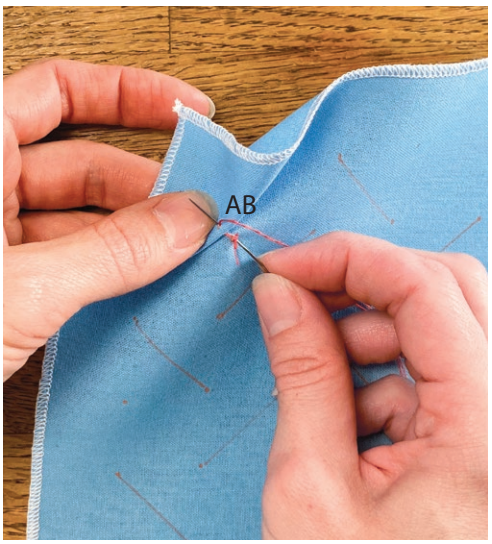
My example started as 18″ × 18″ and ended at 9″ × 9″ with a 1″ grid and a 1″ border.

STITCHING

1. Start in the upper left corner of the fabric. Knot the thread and take 2 stitches on top of each other through axis point A.



2. Take a stitch through axis point B and draw it in to meet the first stitch at A. Take another stitch or knot the thread to secure the 2 axis points. Do not cut the thread.



ENGLISH SMOCKING



COSPLAYER • Pro of Pros and Cons Cosplay

COSTUME • Juliette from Sakizo Artworks, an original design and character

Skirt featuring honeycomb smocking

Photo by Noah Smith Images

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

English smocking is worked from the front onto fabric that has been evenly pleated by hand or by a pleating machine. Because the design is worked from the front (usually with embroidery floss), the stitches become a decorative element and can be stitched in different colors to add further interest.

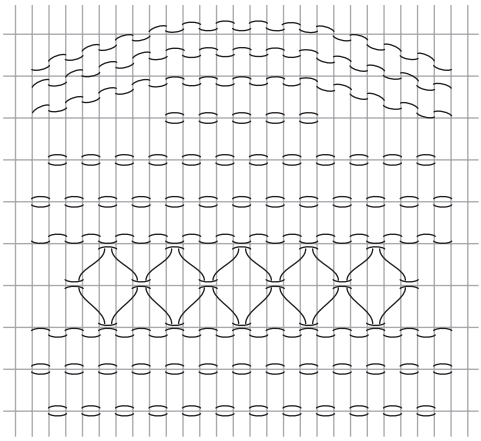
After the decorative stitches are added, the pleating stitches are released and the stitches that remain hold the fabric together in the desired pattern. The technique allows for some stretch, making it useful for garments such as chemises and period shirts with gathered necklines and sleeves. English smocking also can be used successfully as wide waistbands attached to voluminous pants or skirts, eliminating the need for a waistband.

GETTING STARTED

DRAW OUT THE PATTERN

Since English smocking is worked on a pre-pleated fabric, it is easy to combine different patterns and stitches to create unique patterns and decoration. I recommend drawing the pattern out on a piece of paper so you can figure out how many pleats you will need for your design.

Prepping the fabric for English smocking begins with a grid of dots, similar to North American smocking, but generally, the grid will be much smaller in scale, sometimes as small as ¼″ but usually not bigger than ½″. A larger grid of dots will take up more fabric by creating deeper pleats and the final smocked design will be much bulkier.



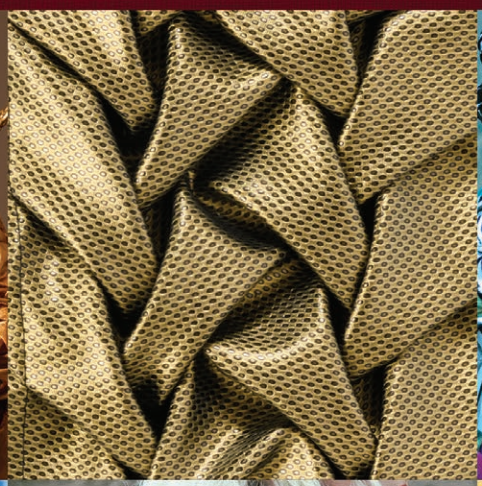
Smocking pattern made by the author for sleeve smocking featuring cable, diamond, and honeycomb smocking. See the stitched garment to the right.

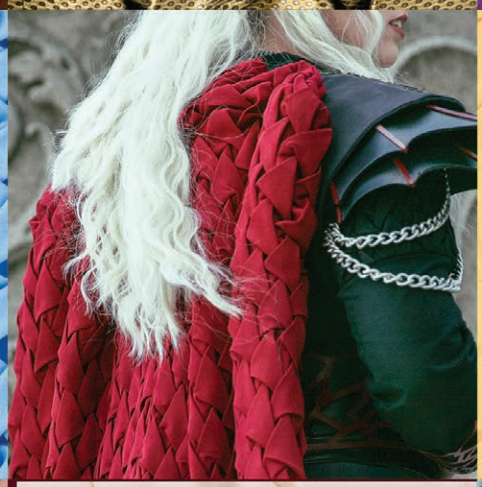
Smocking Stencils

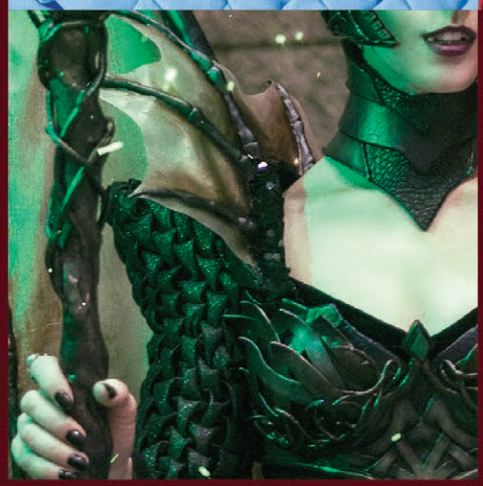
Foolproof Templates to Create Amazing Texture
for Cosplay, Garment & Home Dec Sewing

MAGGIE HOFMANN

fast2mark TOOLS



ACCURATE
STITCHES & SPACING
EVERY TIME



(3) 8½″×11″ durable plastic stencils (¾″, 1″, 1¼″ grids) and 16p instruction booklet

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

North American smocking is worked (that is, stitched) from the back of the fabric, usually in a matching thread. After marking a grid and stitch guide on the back of the fabric, the stitcher pulls the axis points together according to the pattern. This stitching technique creates a repeating, three-dimensionally raised design on the front of the fabric. It can be incorporated into seams or appliquéd as a separate element within the garment. For more detailed information, see my book *Smocking Secrets* (C&T Publishing).

GETTING STARTED

Choose a Pattern and Grid Size

The first step will be to decide how big to make your grid and pattern to give the desired look. The stencils included in this booklet come in three sizes, ¾", 1" and 1¼". By skipping dots, the grid can be doubled in size to become 1½", 2" and 2½" inches. The grid size is up to you, but generally any smaller than ¾" (unless your fabric is very thin) and any larger than 2" (unless your fabric is extremely stiff) will likely not give you very successful results.



Three different fabrics (vinyl, polyester silk, metallic jacquard) using the same braid stitch guide and a 1½" grid

Selecting Fabrics

Different fabrics will give you dramatically different effects when smocked. For example, a fabric that has a stiff hand will create a bouncier, more 3D design. A thinner, more lightweight fabric will give a softer, less defined shape to the final result. Stiffer/thicker fabrics will likely look better on a larger grid while a thinner fabric will likely be more successful on a smaller grid.

To add even more interest to your smocked pieces, you can add beads, embroidery, and various painting techniques. You can also try using unconventional fabrics like Ultrasuede or lightweight faux leather to give interesting textural effects to your project!

How to Plan Yardage Needs

North American smocking is stitched on flat pieces of fabric and then incorporated into the normal construction process of the garment. To ensure the amount of fabric to be smocked will equal the required amount after the design is worked, you will need to do some planning.

In general, you will need about twice the amount of fabric for your smocked area. Try smocking a small sample square to test out your grid size and determine how much fabric you will need.



Arrow-smocked sleeves, made and worn by Eveille Cosplay

Costume: Design by Sunset Dragon based on the character of Ysera from *World of Warcraft*

Photo by Alexandra Lee Studios

Julianna Franchini *of Marquise Cubey Cosplay*

COSPLAY FABRIC FX



Painting, Dyeing & Weathering Costumes LIKE A PRO

INTRODUCTION

Back when I was in school for costume design, one of my favourite classes was our dyeing and breakdown class, taught by Anthea Mallinson. Her enthusiasm for the subject was positively infectious. As early as the first day of the class, it became clear that every sweat stain, every pilled sweater texture, and every faded pocket and pant leg on a costume was painted, sanded, and dyed by hand by an artist. It was so mind blowing to find out how much thought went into both the big special effects that stole the show and the tiny details that made the characters feel human!

In the world of cosplay, where many resources are passed around on the internet, the art of costume weathering is, surprisingly, rarely talked about in depth. This is likely because it is so complex that it's kind of tricky to reduce into a single blog post or a snappy video tutorial. There are attempts, of course, but if you don't have professional training, it's difficult to tell which methods are legitimate and which are dubious. As a result, while many hobbyist cosplayers have been able to reach or even surpass the skill levels of entertainment-industry costumers when it comes to sewing and armour building, fabric weathering has never quite seen the same amount of fanfare and exploration from the community—which is nuts because there is clearly so much potential for geeking out hiding under the surface!

So, with the power of my formal education and my love of cosplay, I decided that I wanted to write a comprehensive, accessible guide to weathering and dyeing for cosplayers, as opposed to theatre and TV wardrobe teams, who have their own sets of needs. This turned out to be way more difficult than I thought. After months of working tirelessly with my editor to create something that made sense to an average Joe cosplayer and flowed reasonably well, I think we've finally done it!

I truly hope that this book will inspire you with the vast possibilities offered by painting and weathering fabrics. After all, what you can do with some sandpaper and acrylic paint will blow your mind.

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COSPLAYER: Vic Trevino
COSTUME: Vicar Amelia from *Bloodborne*
Photo by David Ngo

Cutting with Blades

If you know that you want your rips or holes in a specific place or shape, it's a good idea to start by cutting them with a blade such as a craft knife or some sharp fabric scissors.

Even though fabric tends to rip on the straight grain in real life, it often looks significantly more interesting to cut diagonal and jagged lines into your fabric, even when you're aiming for a realistic look. An effective, natural-looking way to do this is to pull sideways on the fabric as you cut into it.



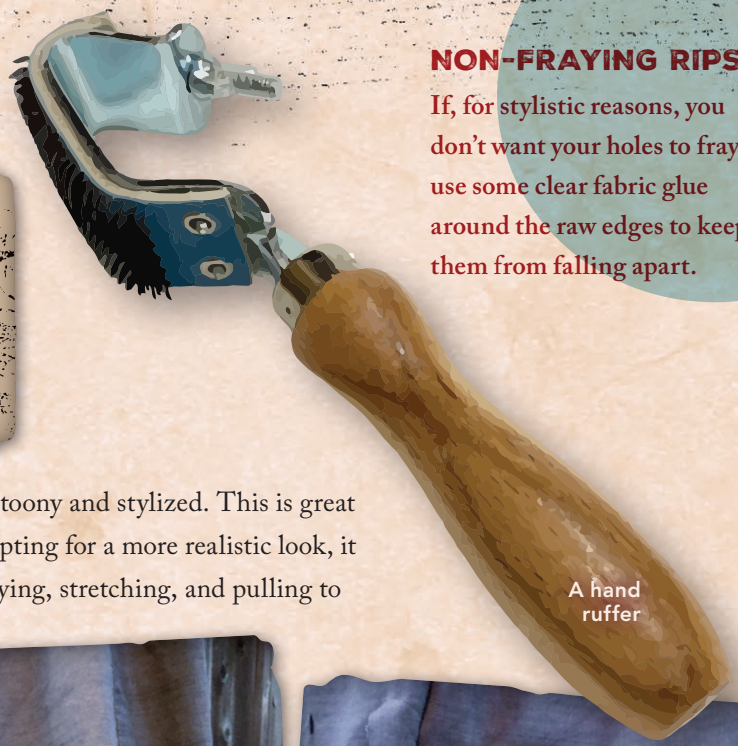
Fraying

SAFETY FIRST!

Techniques for making holes, cuts, and rips can cause the release of particulate matter and must be done in a well-ventilated space with the appropriate PPE.

NON-FRAYING RIPS

If, for stylistic reasons, you don't want your holes to fray, use some clear fabric glue around the raw edges to keep them from falling apart.



A hand ruffer

Cuts with very little fraying and texture read as cartoony and stylized. This is great if you're going in that artistic direction, but when opting for a more realistic look, it is important that they have at least a little bit of fraying, stretching, and pulling to convey some cause and effect.

The easiest way to fray something is by using any tool with a lot of sharp pointy bits to pull at threads along the raw edges. The most accessible of these tools are fine graters, such as the type meant for hard cheeses, and wire cleaning brushes. If you're fancy, though, you can also use a leatherworking tool called a *hand ruffer*. While much more expensive, these specialized tools are particularly powerful and versatile weathering tools because their hooked spikes can grab and pull loose threads far more easily than a wire brush can. This makes it a great tool to use when you're trying to sell a bit of weathering as a slash from a blunt item, such as a bullet or a claw.



A wire-cleaning brush from the dollar store being used to pull at threads on a hem.

Simply add a few dabs of black nail polish onto your hardware and rub it all over with your fingers, taking care to not get nail polish on the surrounding area. To help the polish adhere better, you can also sand the metallic surfaces with fine-grit sandpaper before painting.





Stylized Shading and Highlights

Realistic shadows are soft and subtle, but if you desire a cel-shaded effect that looks like it came straight from a cartoon, you should make your shadows look as solid as possible. It's essential to note, however, that solid colours painted with acrylic paint will turn hard and brittle when they dry on fabric, so in order for your costume to retain its drape, you'd want to use fabric ink, fabric paint, or flexible paint.

For a comic book dot-shading and cross-hatching effect, use stencils to keep the texture uniform. To apply the paint, use a stencil brush in a stabbing motion.





HEIGHTENED REALITY

While the majority of the texture in a cartoony, stylized costume is painted on and clearly not real, in order for it to be effective, lines and wrinkles should still be in believable places.

COSPLAYER: Jessilyn Cupcake
COSTUME: Tiny Tina from *Borderlands 3*
Photo by Jessilyn Cupcake

CREATING 3D TEXTURE

MATERIALS	TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT	
Garment	Vapour respirator	Heat-resistant work gloves
Puffy fabric paint	Dust mask	Rough paintbrushes
	Safety goggles	Heat gun

Process

1. Dry brush an initial layer of puffy fabric paint onto your fabric.



2. Use the puffy fabric paint again to paint a second heavier, 3D layer. If the garment you're painting is torn or shredded, try to make this second layer connect all of the edges and holes, giving the illusion that the garment is being eaten away by mould or flames.



3. While working outside or in a ventilated garage and wearing a respirator mask with vapour cartridges installed, use your heat gun to blow hot air at the puff paint. The paint should expand, crumble, and crack, creating a 3D texture.



4. If you want to emphasize the texture, you can lightly dry brush over the puffs with another colour to give it some highlights.



COSPLAY FOR YOU





PERSONALIZED DESIGN
in Crafting Costumes

From Concept to Creation

SANIT KLAMCHANUAN



INTRO DUCTION

Hello, everyone! My name is Sanit Klamchanuan, known in the cosplay and maker world as Spicythaidesign.

My hope for this book is to inspire you to explore the artistic side of costume making and to keep you from getting stuck making the same cosplay everyone else is making. I will show you how you can add a bit of yourself to your project and create something that is special to you. Adding your favourite colour, an element from your culture, or really anything that makes the costumes and props your own will let you stand out in the crowd and, most importantly, have fun.

I enjoy putting my own twist on costumes. That can be a whole new redesign, small changes to a costume to make it more wearable, or a bit of detail incorporated into a costume to add some Thai flavour. My early years and my experiences growing up shaped how I approach my costumes. What I am about to show you is the way I like to design and make my costumes. My process works for me. Please do give it a go, but I encourage you to find your own way.



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REDESIGNING FOR WEARABILITY

I had so much fun making my Thai Red Spartan. I dove into the world of *Halo*—feet first. I've always loved the look and the stories of the Orbital Drop Shock Troopers (ODST), the *Halo* universe's special forces. They often get dropped behind enemy lines and fight their way out. I really enjoy the look of their armour; it's simple with beautiful technical details, but it's designed for an in-game setting. In the real world, their armour couldn't move the way it should. On a person, the chest armour is so wide the wearer couldn't cross their arms, and the vambraces so high they couldn't bend their arms. I redesigned my costume to make this armour super wearable while still giving me the finished look I wanted. In Creating Body Armour (page 90), I'll explain how I accommodate both an oversized look and comfort.



COSPLAYER: Spicythaidesign

COSTUME: Orbital Drop Shock Troopers from *Halo*

My redesigned costume allows for free movement

Photo by Richard Heaps

In 2019, I captained the New Zealand team in the Overwatch Cosplay Battle in Pax, Australia. I chose Victoria Gridley (The Gridler) and Johanna Otto (Chimaera) as my teammates. In this competition, teams choose two characters, and the public votes on which character the team will make. We were given Reaper, in his Lu Bu skin, as our project. As this was a contest costume, we needed to keep the aesthetic of the character. While our main goal was to maintain the silhouette of the character, the inhuman proportions would need to be adjusted to make the costume both ergonomic and wearable. We first had to adjust the neck. Reaper has a very long neck, and we did think about having his head attached on top of my head, with an opaque panel so I could look out of his neck. We decided that would make the headpiece very heavy and wouldn't allow for movement. We opted to shorten the neck of the character in exchange for more comfort and realistic movement.

Because we needed to keep as close to the original character as possible, it was important that the rest of the costume reflect the complex look of the Reaper. One thing that I truly enjoy is looking at a design and trying to figure out how that costume could be constructed. I start by imagining each layer of the costume. The more layers you add, the more detail you can show. For Reaper, I started with the undersuit and designed each layer of the costume out to the top, most decorative, layer. Along the way, it was important to decide which materials would offer the right textures and look, and where and how to put in rigging to attach the armour pieces. In this costume we used both hook-and-loop tape and D-rings. We used hook-and-loop tape for most of the connections but substituted D-rings where we needed strong connections, like the connection from the pauldrons to the shoulders.

The illustration below demonstrates my approach to layering. The areas in red became the soft fabric or leather underlayer of the costume. The blue portions are soft EVA foam that begin to give the costume shape while remaining softer and allowing potentially problematic areas of the costume, such as the spikes, to be worn safely. The yellow shows the portions we created out of rigid EVA foam, which provides the structure and the sharper lines we needed. The final layer, in green, added the finest details and was made using Worbla.



TOOLS AND MATERIALS



I often get asked about my favourite tools, which materials I prefer to work with, and how I choose materials for various costume components. I hope this chapter will answer those questions. As I explain in this chapter, when I am working on a costume that should have a handmade look, I favour working by hand—for example, drawing and cutting templates by hand so the finished product has a handcrafted look. When I want my costume to look machine-made, I select power tools and machining to get the intended aesthetic.

COSPLAYER: Spicythaidesign

COSTUME: Thai Armour

Photo by Christina Phillips Photography



Next, I add another layer of face mask, this time made of Worbla. To match the shape of the foam layer, I heat form the Worbla using a face form. In this case, I used a vacuum-forming mask mould to achieve the correct shape.



Finally, I add additional details to the Worbla and foam layers, working layer by layer to create more detail, and attach the inner Worbla face mask to the outer foam face mask using contact cement.



COSTUMES: From left to right, Thai Armour and Orbital Drop Shock Trooper from *Halo*

THE BREASTPLATE

I came up with a few rules that I always follow to ensure that my armour allows mobility. First, I always begin with the breastplate. It's important not to make it too wide. Be sure you can fold your arms across your chest and touch the opposite sides of the piece. If your breastplate is too wide, then moving your arm across your body will dislodge the breastplate. This is a big issue if your costume includes weaponry, especially guns. With an oversized breastplate, you can't hold a gun properly.

You can see an example of my approach to scale in my Red Ranger costume from *Power Rangers*. The breastplate fits me, allows for freedom of movement, and matches the look I want in my finished costume.



COSTUME: Red Ranger from *Power Rangers*

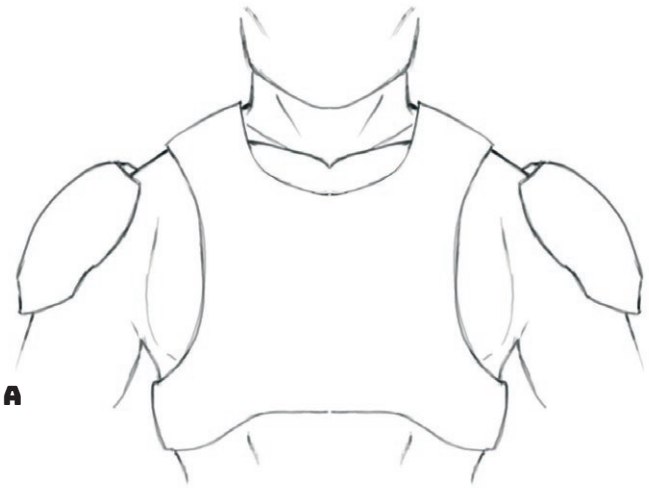
The illustration to the right shows a basic breastplate silhouette. *fig A*

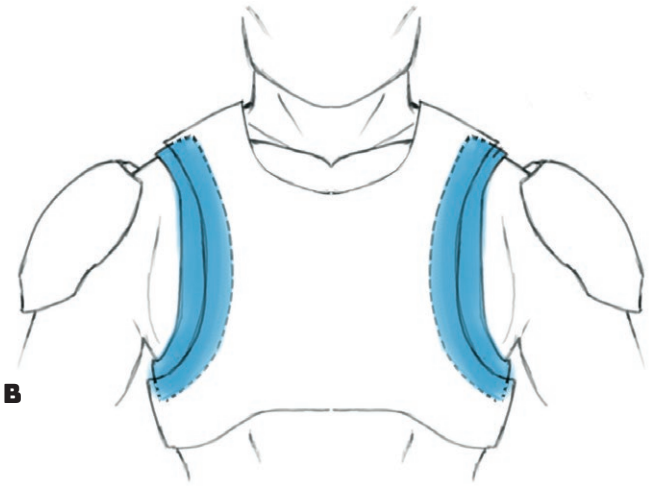
When my costume requires a bulkier breastplate, I turn to layering as a way to add size and bulk while retaining mobility. I add a second layer under the original breastplate to increase the width and use elastic to attach the added pieces, so that when I move, the layers naturally move back and forth with my movements. This creates the illusion that the breastplate is wider than it actually is while still allowing for a normal range of motion and comfort.

If you take this approach, be sure to allow for enough overlap of the pieces so that the lower layer doesn't pop out as you move. *fig B*

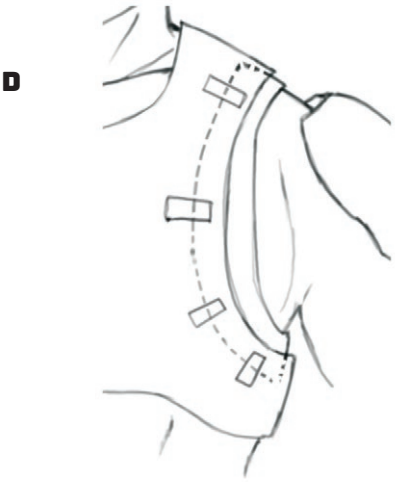
For attaching the two pieces, I find that elastic is best. I often choose ¾″ (20mm) elastic and add multiple attachment points. This allows the pieces to move smoothly and to shift back to their original position naturally. To create the attachment, I make a hole in the added section and then thread the elastic through the hole and attach it to the undersides of both the added piece and the main breastplate. *fig C*

Be sure to use enough elastic tabs so your pieces move smoothly and don't slip apart. *fig D*










Level Up!
CREATIVE
COSPLAY
Costume Design &
Creation, SFX Makeup,
LED Basics & More
Amanda Haas

INTRODUCTION





In 2011, I visited my first comic con. It was a small one: Derby City Comic Con in Louisville, Kentucky, to be exact. It was just one big room with space for a dealer's hall and the related panels. I wore a handmade *Star Wars* skirt, shirt, and Rebellion symbol necklace. I thought I was dressed for the con, but it turned out I was so underdressed. I saw fully-outfitted Stormtroopers, X-Men cosplay groups, and multiple *Mortal Kombat* characters in full costumes. My fashion items were cute, but I knew that I needed to be a cosplayer. I'll never forget that distinct moment and, honestly, that is when the light went on for me. I started reading about cosplay, sewing up some outfits, and learning about working with wigs. It was that drive and passion that led me to keep learning about the skills I needed to pull off the looks I wanted. This journey is never-ending and is always exciting.

Learning new skills and expanding your knowledge on how to make cosplays is invigorating. It's the main reason I wrote this book! I hope it helps you in your continued journey of all things cosplay. You've likely already made a few costumes and are ready to expand your skill set and really take your costumes to the next level. Between these covers you'll find information on advanced sewing options, cosplay makeup, adding lights to your costumes, and much more.

COSPLAYER: Jedimanda
COSTUME: Kitana from *Mortal Kombat 3*
The first cosplay that I wore to a convention, 2012

COSPLAYER: Jedimanda
COSTUME: Darth Maul from the Star Wars franchise
The first non-Halloween cosplay I made. I wore it to the 2011 3D rerelease of *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*

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Some examples of store bought patterns that I altered

Draping Your Own Pattern or Using a Commercial Pattern

I know many of you are probably wondering, why drape? Why make your own patterns? So many patterns already exist in the commercial world. You are correct—they do. There are a lot of large and small pattern companies releasing tons of commercial patterns each year, and they are a great first step when you are starting to make cosplays. However, there are not always commercial patterns available for the look you want, or the patterns that exist do not get close enough to your actual meausrements. Whichever is the case, when you are ready to design your own costumes, you'll want to know how to drape and draft your patterns (see From Drape to Draft, page xx).

It is not necessary to find a commercial pattern that exactly matches your vision for your cosplay. You can "Frankenstein" together multiple patterns or you can alter existing patterns (yours or commercial), which can save the cost of purchasing multiple patterns. For example, you can use the sleeve from one pattern and the bodice from another, lengthen a dress skirt to make a train, or add a peplum to the skirt or bodice!

Here are a few quick and easy ways to adapt patterns. Learning these simple tricks can help you save time, money, and stress if you choose to start with a commercial pattern.

ADD VOLUME

Use the *slash-and-spread method* to add volume to the pattern. For example, if you want more volume in the top of a sleeve near the shoulder, add perpendicular cuts in the paper pattern from the armhole edge toward the hem and fan out the pattern strips. Spread the pattern piece sections out until it is the necessary size. Tape the revised pattern piece onto a piece of blank pattern paper. Trace around the edges to create a new, larger pattern piece. You can use this method anywhere you want more volume.



Upper part of a sleeve pattern



Using the slash and spread method to expand the pattern to create a puffy upper portion of the sleeve

REDUCE VOLUME FOR A MORE TAILORED LOOK

If you want a more tailored look, consider *overlapping* your pattern or *making a dart* to reduce the fabric volume.

Overlapping requires you to cut into your pattern, as with the slash-and-spread alteration method, but here you overlap the pieces to make the area smaller. You might have to slash and overlap several times so the pattern lays flat. Once you have overlapped the pattern sufficiently, tape it down, place a new piece of pattern paper underneath, and draw your new pattern piece.

Darts are used for taking in areas with extreme curves. They are often already drawn on a commercial pattern, but if not, it's easy to add them. Grab your pattern and pinch the area you want to take in, tapering the width of the pinch until it comes to a point (the endpoint of the dart). Pin the dart. You might want to hold the pattern up to your dress form to make sure the endpoint meets the end of the curved area of your body. Then mark the stitching lines that form the dart on both sides of the dart. Once you have the markings, you can remove the pins. This is now a transferrable mark that you will copy onto the fabric to show you where to stitch the dart(s).



Adding a dart into the pattern to help reduce the bulk around the waist

Darts in a skirt pattern



What the skirt pattern looks like when the darts are taken in and pinned



Tools of the Trade

To get started you will need a few standard items:

- Lengths of muslin cloth, sharp fabric scissors, smaller scissors for trimming, a pencil, markers in multiple colors, a fabric tracing wheel and marking pens, straight pins, a tape measure, and, of course, your dress form.
- For draping fabric, I like to use muslin because it's a good medium-weight material that can mimic other fabrics. Muslin is a bleached or unbleached, lightweight cotton cloth with a plain weave. It is inexpensive and most sewists use it for draping. You might want to buy it in bulk if you plan to pursue pattern making or if you are draping a big outfit like a ball gown.





- One tool that I recently started using is drape tape, which is a narrow tape, usually ¼˝ or narrower, with an adhesive back. You use this tape to draw design lines out on the dress form. Then you take a length of muslin, place it over top of the tape, and trace the taped pattern onto the fabric. It's a great method for any garment that is form-fitting. It's also a great tool to use to mark off the bust, waist, hips, neck, and shoulder lines before draping your fabric.

Basic Draping Technique

Now it's time to drape. It's important that the straight grain of the muslin runs parallel to the vertical center of your dress form when you are draping pattern pieces. If you go off grain, the muslin could stretch and you might end up with a shape you don't want.

When you are draping the fabric on your form, just drape half! Unless your design calls for an asymmetrical pattern piece, draping only half of what you need saves time, muslin, and brainpower. Once you have the half pattern set (design lines drawn, darts pinned, fit perfected, waistline determined, etc.), you just trace half, flip the piece over and trace the other half for a full pattern piece.

If your garment has a unique design, it is better to drape the entire bodice or skirt, as I did for my Yennefer dress from *The Witcher* (see Patterning, page xx).



Draping a bodice, marking the seam lines with a maker.

1. Remember to put the necessary undergarments on the dress form before you start.

2. Keep your source material and sketchbook nearby.

3. I recommend draping each piece you need to make separately.

4. Pin the edge of a large piece of muslin across the front of the dress form, either from shoulder to shoulder of the torso for a bodice or a top, or from one side of the waist to the other for a skirt. Extend the fabric straight across the dress form to the side seam. Pin it in place along the side seam for the moment. **A**





Make sure the lengthwise grain of the fabric runs up and down the dress form.


Handwear
HANDBOOK
MAKE GLOVES, CUFFS & VAMBRACES
for Cosplay & Beyond
GILLIAN CONAHAN

Introduction

WELCOME GLOVEMAKERS

Hands are difficult to dress. They're small, complicated, and extremely mobile, and function must come before everything else. To get through a whole day in costume you should be able to manage bags and props, scratch an itch, and send a text. Anything that limits essential functions takes you into advanced costume-wearing territory, the sort of thing that ideally happens for shorter periods of time or with a handler nearby to assist.

Given all this fussiness and inconvenience, it can hardly seem worth it when gloves are also notoriously tricky to sew. While this reputation may be a bit overblown, it's true that they use relatively tricky materials like leather and spandex, the pieces and seam allowances are tiny, and they're full of hairpin pivots that have to be executed with utmost precision. All of this takes practice and patience to overcome, which just makes it more satisfying once you've accomplished it.

And despite all the obstacles, there are few things that complete a costume like a pair of gloves. For certain historical periods, they're essential, and few would have appeared in public without them. With a fully-armored suit, bare hands are blisteringly obvious and can look comically tiny. And gloves can be adorable, elegant, stately, threatening, and sexy too. So I propose to you that the fuss and effort are all worth it.

If you're still not convinced, relax. You can try your hand at some of the other arm wear in this book, whether you lean toward lacy cuffs or rugged wraps. You can try out simplified gloves, and proceed to the fully gusseted version once you've convinced yourself of the advantages. I'll make a glovemaker of you yet.



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HAND AND ARM ARMOR

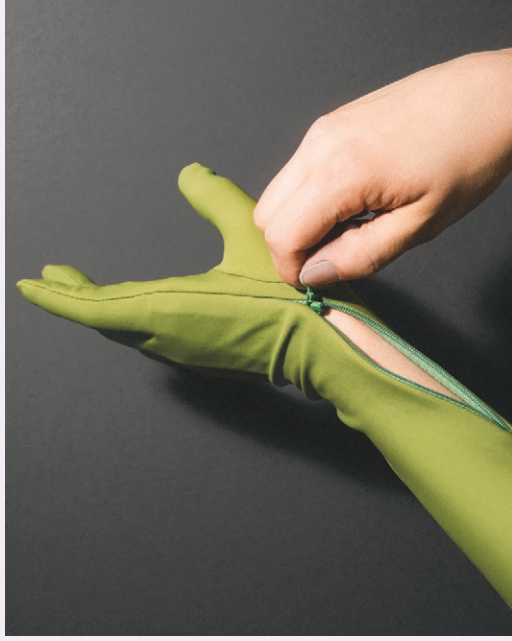
Armor Materials

Simple Bracer

Segmented Vambrace

Full Gauntlet











ULTIMATE COSPLAY ENCYCLOPEDIA

VOLUME 1

ARMOR UP!

COSPLAY PROPS, ARMOR & ACCESSORIES

Thermoplastics



CHRISTOPHER TOCK *of* TOCK CUSTOM

CHAD VAN WYE *and* SAMMY VAN WYE *of* HOKU PROPS

INTRODUCTION

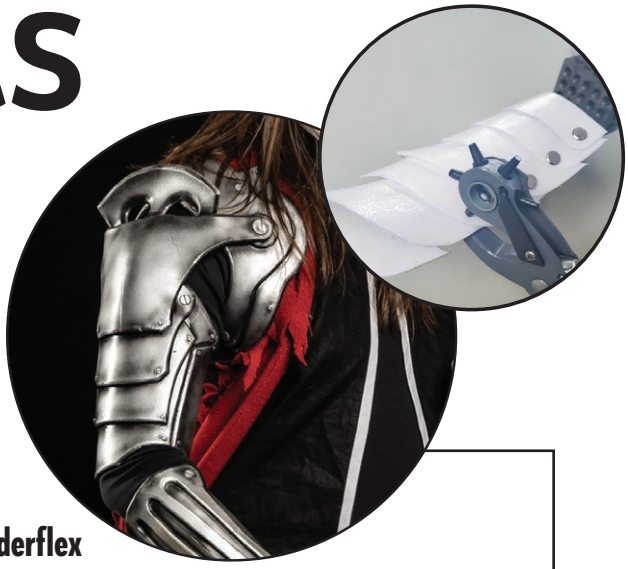
Cosplay as a performative art has come a long way from its humble beginnings on convention floors and small fan-run gatherings. Within the past ten years, it has become an international sensation that is practically a household name today. It's easier than ever to find information about how to cosplay, but as the popularity of cosplay continues to grow, so do the materials.

With the abundance of options and materials available now, it can be overwhelming to find a comfortable place to start for both beginners and cosplay veterans looking to expand their skill sets. Ultimate Cosplay and its global community wanted to find a way to help those who were struggling by creating a series of books that explore all the ins and outs of cosplay.

This first volume features an introduction to modern plastics commonly used in the cosplay and prop-making communities to make costumes, armor, and props. Within you will find many demonstrations from artists around the world, along with their personal insights on how to work with these materials.

The goal of this book is to provide a wide variety of fabrication techniques as well as personalized tips and tricks for each specific material. This book is a primer for expanding an artist's skills, but the techniques displayed in the demonstrations are not the be-all and end-all. We encourage you to continue to experiment, modify, and find new methods that work best for you, in hopes that one day you can spread that knowledge to the cosplay community.

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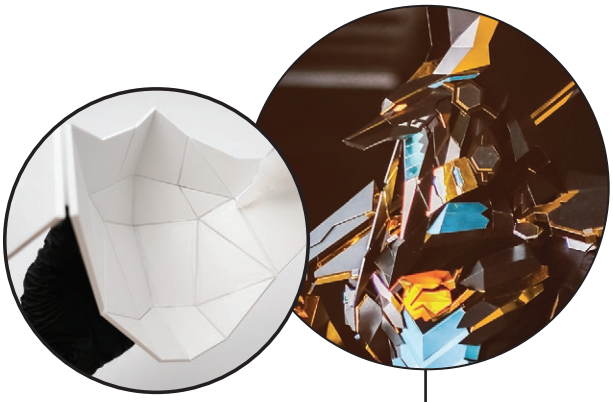
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Special Thanks

How Ultimate Cosplay Began

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CREATIVE SPARK
ONLINE LEARNING

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