

1910s Tea Gown Pattern Instructions

*Sense and Sensibility presents...
A 1910s Tea Gown Pattern*



Notes:

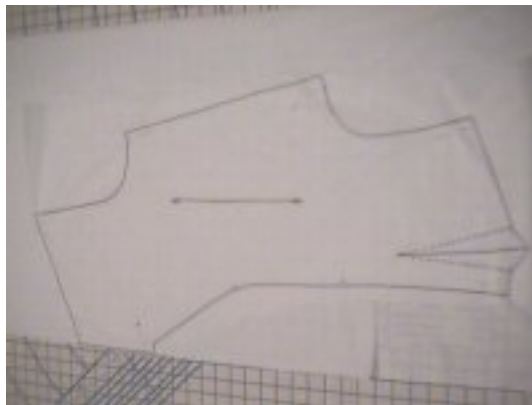
This is an intermediate to advanced pattern mainly because of all the skirt layers involved and because it is strongly recommended that you make a "fit bodice" of cotton/muslin first in order to check the fitting of the dress. I cannot emphasize strongly enough how important this step is in creating a gown that fits perfectly. The sizes have been carefully drawn, but each woman's body has its own unique shape, and fitting a muslin bodice at the beginning will save a lot of trouble in the long run. You can also turn right around and use your fit bodice as the lining of your dress bodice, since cotton is a very comfortable lining.

I recommend crepe georgette fabric for the outer bodice and skirt layers. Chiffon is also a fine choice if you are prepared to deal with the difficulties of hemming chiffon (a special rolled hem foot for your machine is most helpful). The bodice interlining may be cotton or rayon, and the linings of both the bodice and the skirt may be cotton, rayon or acetate. I strongly recommend a lining that is static-free and has a nice drape to it, so that you don't end up with skirt layers that cling or bunch in an ungainly fashion. I like to use georgette for the sash as well, since it drapes so beautifully, but stretch velvet is another lovely option. Satin is workable, but it is often very stiff and not as easy to drape around the waistline.

IMPORTANT NOTE: I inadvertently left off the yardage requirement for the bodice interlining. It is 1 yard for all sizes.

Cutting Out the Pattern:

First you will cut out the bodice lining, which will be used as a fit guide (toile). Set aside the other pieces to cut out later. Lay out the bodice piece as shown below and cut out your lining (bodice inset is not needed at this time).



Click thumbnail for larger image.
Bodice pattern piece pinned to lining, with back opening at selvedge.

Sewing the Bodice Lining

The first step in making this gown is to sew together the bodice fit lining, using basting stitches, since they will later be pulled out. First, mark the front darts and sew along the dotted lines indicated on the pattern. Next, sew the right and left bodice pieces together at the center back seam. Finally, sew each sleeve/side seam together. You do not need to sew the bodice inset on at this time.

Pin-fitting the Bodice Lining

1. Try on the lining (or try it on your mannequin), making sure the center back seam is over your spine (this is where the invisible zipper will go). In almost every case, you will not need to make changes to the center back seam, since it should remain constant. If the bodice back is buckling out in diagonal lines, you can take in the bottom of the center back seam a bit to correct this.
2. Check the fit of the lining at the side/sleeve seams and the darts. If the bust darts are too far over toward the center opening of the bodice, try tightening the side seams until the darts come right under the bust. Mark the seams accordingly with pins. The darts should come right under each bust and should not go up over the bustline. If darts are too long, mark where the top of the darts should hit. (Note, if you plan to wear a corset under your gown, the bust darts *will* go up higher. Make sure you

try on the bodice lining *over* your corset!). The sleeve seam should not be so tight that the wearer cannot “make a muscle,” and it should be loose enough to move freely. If it is too loose for your taste, use pins to mark how much tighter it should be. If it is too tight, write down how much more room you’ll need to add when you cut out the new lining (if that is necessary).



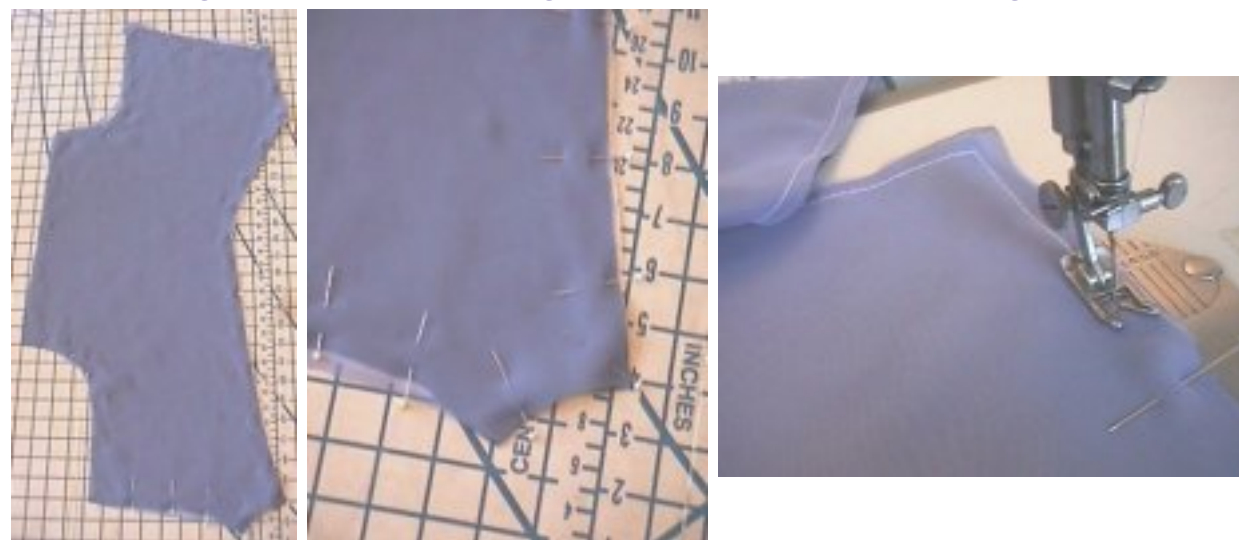
Click thumbnails for larger images.

Checking the fit of the lining on the mannequin. Back closure is centered and side seams come directly under each arm.

Note: Bust darts run a bit high on this fit bodice, since I am making it to go over a corset (and checked the fit on myself wearing the corset).

Making the bodice:

1. Remove the basting stitches from the bodice lining. Making sure to mark any changes first, place one half of the lining flat on the gown material (using it like a pattern piece). Cut out your bodice. You will need one bodice (two halves) of overlay material and one of interlining.
2. Cut out the bodice inset three times - once with lining, once with interlining (rayon or cotton) and once with your overlay (dress fabric or lace).
3. Lay the bodice interlining pieces flat on the table. On top of these, place your overlay bodice pieces (your outermost layer). Pin all the way around the outside edge, then run a basting stitch around the outer edge to hold the overlay in place.



Click thumbnails for larger images.

Left to right: Pinning the colored chiffon over the bodice interlining; detail of pinning; staystitching layers.

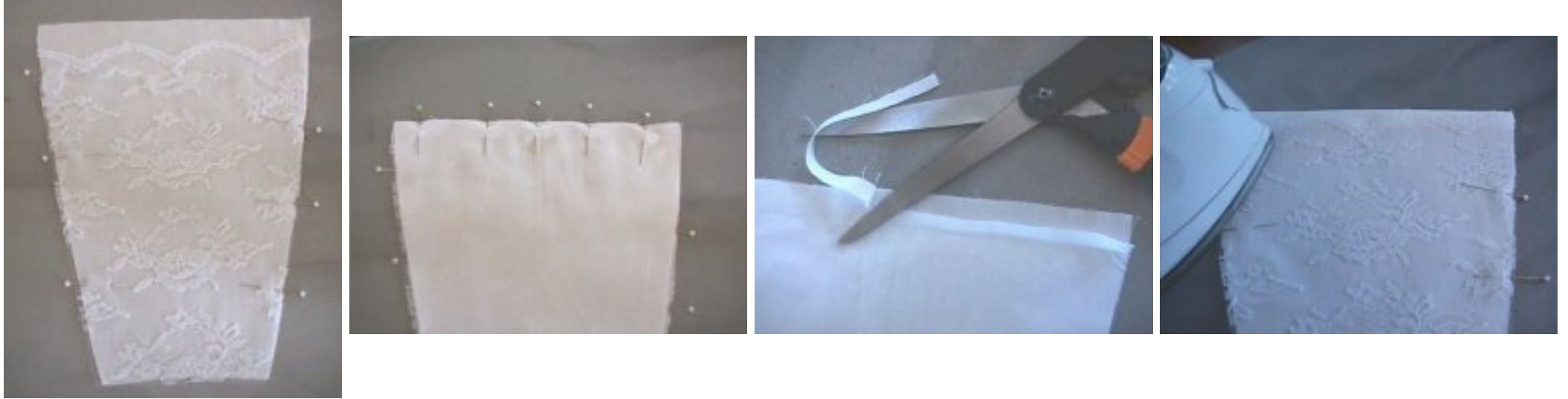
4. Pin the darts in place on each bodice piece (pinning from the wrong side of the interlining). Make sure the overlay material is pinned in smoothly with the interlining (this prevents dart seams from showing on the outermost layer of your bodice). Stitch down along dotted lines and iron darts toward side seams. Trim away the excess material at the bottom of each dart.



Click thumbnail for larger image.

Left to right: Pinning the dart in place; dart stitched; clipping bottom of dart; dart clipped; finished dart from outside of bodice.

5. Pin the darts in place on the bodice lining (these are the lining pieces from which you removed the basting stitches). Stitch darts and iron toward side seam. Trim away excess.
6. Lay the inset interlining flat on the table. Place the lace (or other fabric) overlay on top of it. Finally, place the lining on top of the overlay. Stitch across the top of all layers, using a 5/8” seam. Grade the seam allowance. Flip the lining piece to the back. Iron the entire inset so that the lining stays put behind the other two pieces and your pretty overlay is topmost.



Click thumbnails for larger images.

Left to right: Pinning lace to the interlining (note that I have left room at the top to show the scalloped edge of the lace); pinning lining over lace and interlining; grading the seam allowance; ironing stitched inset.

7. Take the inset and pin it right sides together to one half of the bodice (it doesn't matter which you do first), matching the top to the dot on the pattern piece. Stitch, using a 5/8" seam.



Click thumbnail for larger image.
Inset pinned to bodice.

8. Pin bodice lining to bodice half onto which you have just sewed the inset. You will be laying the lining over top of the inset. Match lining to the contours of the bodice, lining up with the back seam and matching notches. Stitch together, starting above the back zipper opening and continuing down the front, stopping 5/8" from the bottom of the bodice front (you will need to keep the bodice lining free later when you attach the skirt layers). Clip curves.



Click thumbnail for larger image.
Lining pinned to bodice over inset.

9. Repeat for other half of bodice and clip curves.

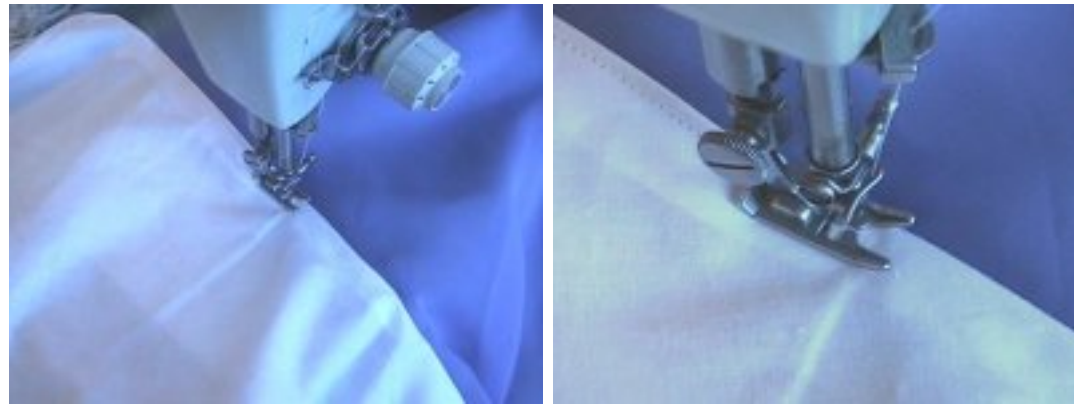


Click thumbnails for larger images.

Left to right: Inset pinned to other half of bodice; clipping neckline curves.

10. Understitch lining to seam allowance beneath by placing the presser foot right along the edge of the seam where the lining and bodice meet. You are stitching the lining to the seam allowance beneath, which leaves a stitching line on the inside of

the bodice neckline and keeps your lining from “rolling” out when you wear your gown. [Click [HERE](#) to see a video clip demonstrating understitching!]



Click thumbnails for larger images.
Understitching bodice lining to neckline seam (at right is a detail photo).

11. Keeping the lining free, pin the bodice sleeves and side seams together and stitch. Repeat this with the lining. Now you will be able to try on the finished bodice to double-check the fit. The back seam is open for the invisible zipper.



Click thumbnails for larger images.
Left to right: Sewing side seam with lining kept free; sewing lining side seam.

You've finished the bodice! Congratulations!



Click thumbnails for larger images.
Here is the finished bodice on the mannequin.

Cutting Out the Skirt and Overskirts

Use your remaining overlay material(s) to cut out your underskirt and overskirt layers. Cut out the skirt lining with the remaining lining material. Keep in mind that if you are over 5'8" tall, you will need to add length to the skirt layers. You can measure for this by holding up the skirt pattern pieces to the waistline of the bodice lining while you are wearing it. Have a second person figure out how much additional fabric is required-it will not be much, since the skirt pieces have been made long to start with.

Making the Skirt and Overskirts

1. Sew back seam of skirt lining up to dot marked on pattern. Sew skirt lining side and front seams together. Repeat for underskirt. Sew each overskirt section together at back and sides, using French seams on any sheer materials and stopping at dot marked on pattern for the center back seams. Iron all skirt layers.
2. Hem front edges of the split overskirts. Iron.
3. Pin overskirt on top of skirt lining at the waistline (matching side and back seams), then add the two split overskirts (#1 goes right over the bottom overskirt, and #2 is the topmost overskirt layer). Pin all the way around the waistline, matching side seams and center back seams.
4. Run two lines of gathering stitches around the top of the skirt layers, breaking the lines at the side seams (it's too hard to pull up the gathers if you go over the seams).
5. Pin bodice to skirt, matching side seams and center front and pulling up gathering stitches to fit. Keep the bodice lining free. It will not be sewn in with the bodice and skirt. (It isn't necessary to keep the inset lining free.)



Click thumbnails for larger images.
Left to right: Skirt pinned to bodice; detail shot showing that the bodice lining is kept free.

6. Stitch bodice to skirt. Iron seam allowance up toward bodice.
7. Using the special zipper foot required, place the invisible zipper in the back opening, lining up the top of the zipper tape with the top of the opening. Don't sew the bodice lining into the zipper. The invisible zipper will come with detailed illustrated instructions to help you place the zipper correctly. It is a far easier method to use, and the finished results are much, much prettier than a conventional zipper with topstitching. [Note: If you're new to invisible zippers, then click [HERE](#) for step-by-step photo instructions, thanks to the "[Sew? I Knit!](#)" blog.
8. Try on the dress. Have someone trim each skirt layer to the desired length, leaving enough allowance for a short rolled hem. Remove dress and hem all skirt layers. Iron.

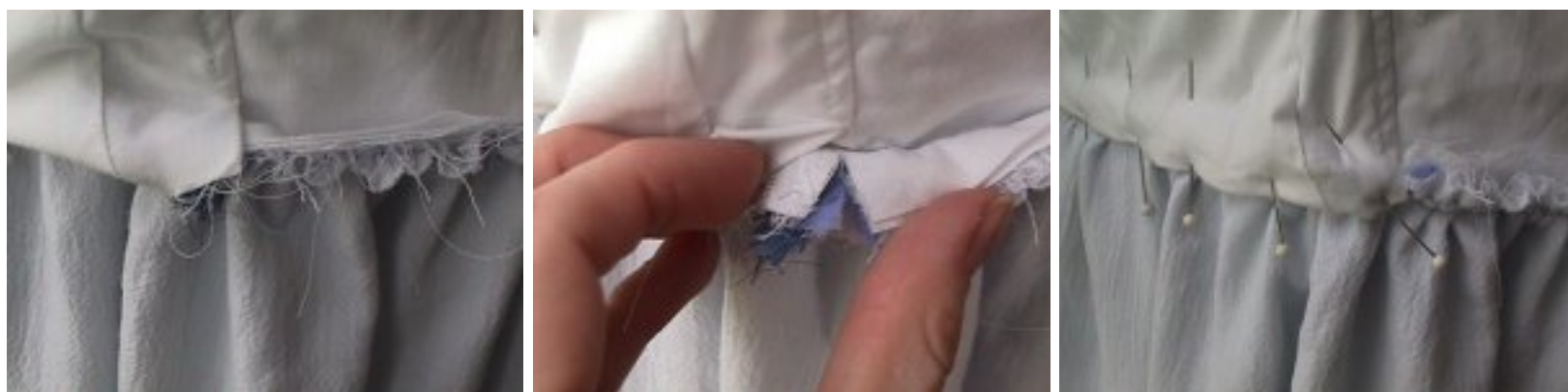


Click thumbnails for larger images.
 Here is the dress with the bodice and skirt sewn together. All it awaits is the inside finishing and sash!

9. To finish the gown, turn it wrong side out. Fold under the bottom edge of the bodice lining and pin it over the waistline seam allowance all the way around, including up along the edges of the zipper. This will completely hide the seam allowance and make your gown very comfortable to wear. Hand stitch lining to the seam allowance, using a simple whipstitch. To hem the sleeves, turn under each sleeve to the desired length. Then turn the sleeve lining under (toward the outside of the sleeve). Pin the lining to the sleeve all the way around, then slipstitch it to the sleeve, making an invisible seam and leaving no hem stitching on the outside of the sleeves. If desired, hand gather the topmost overskirt layer above the hemline at the center back as marked on the pattern piece.



Click thumbnails for larger images.
Left to right: Lining pinned to bodice; whipstitched lining at zipper; slipstitched sleeve (seen from inside of dress).



Click thumbnails for larger images.

Here are some extra detail shots to help you figure out how to pin the bodice lining at the front. *Left to right:* Lining next to front inset; clipping skirt seam at inset to allow remaining seam to be pinned smoothly under the lining; lining pinned.

Making the Waistline Sash

1. To make the sash, measure around the wearer's waist while she is wearing the gown. Use the waistline sash guide piece to measure the width of the sash on your fabric, then cut the sash two inches longer than the waistline measurement you just took. You will be cutting the sash across the material from selvedge to selvedge rather than up and down with the grain.



Click thumbnail for larger image.

Here you see the sash cut out, using the sash guide for the width.

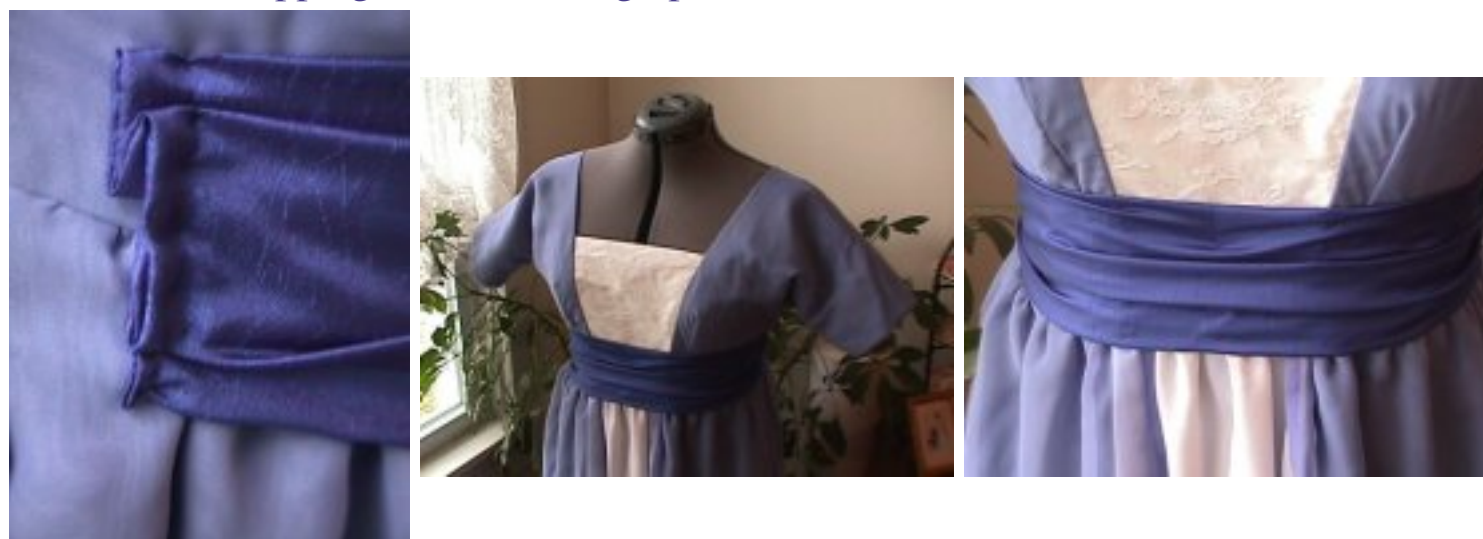
2. Fold sash in half, right sides together, and stitch down the long seam. Then stitch one end closed with the long seam in the middle, rather than at the top or bottom edge. (This makes for a nicer-looking sash, since the long seam will be hidden beneath.)



Click thumbnails for larger images.

Left to right: Long sash seam sewn together and pressed open; sash end sewn closed.

3. Turn sash right side out, then turn under the open end and slipstitch closed, leaving no stitches on the outside of the sash. Try on the sash over your dress, scrunching it up into nice folds. Have someone pin the sash ends to the back of the dress at either side of the back opening. You will stitch these ends to the dress by machine or by hand to hold the sash in place. I also recommend that you tack the sash to the waistline in several places (under the arms and at the center front) to hold the folds in place and keep the sash from slipping down or riding up.



Click thumbnails for larger images.

Left to right: Waistline sash sewn to bodice back next to zipper; sash on the dress; detail to show where sash was tacked at the center front of the bodice.

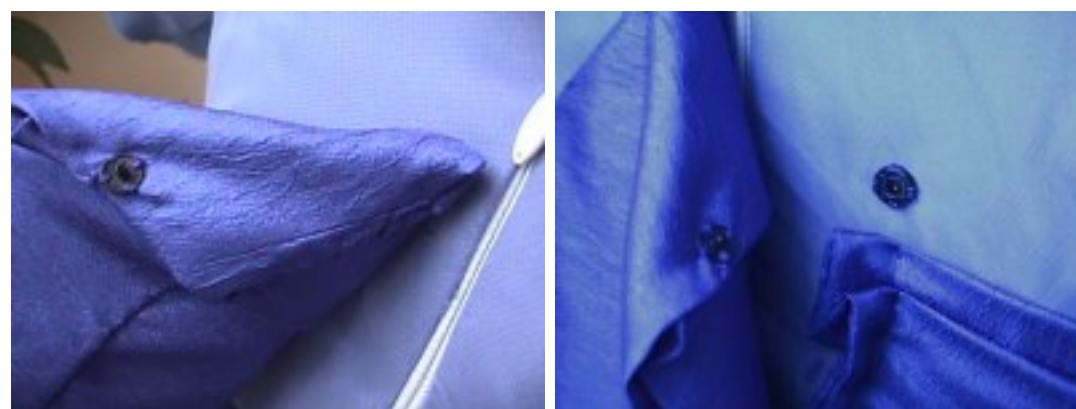
4. To make the sash ends which hang down the back of the dress, use the guide for the sash ends, cutting to the length you desire and making one sash end about three inches longer than the other. Fold each in half with right sides together and stitch down the long seam. Now fold so that the "N" shape becomes a diagonal edge. Stitch and turn sash right side out. Repeat with the other sash end. Finish top ends as you did the waistline sash.



Click thumbnails for larger images.

Left to right: One sash end cut out, using sash end guide; first seam of sash end sewn; diagonal end of sash end sewn.

5. Place the shorter sash end on top of the longer one. Turn under about 1/2 inch of the tops, keeping them together (or fold them into an arrow point, as I've done here). Sew left-hand top of sash ends to the left side of the waistline sash. Place heavy-duty snaps or hooks and eyes beneath the side that overlaps to fasten the right side of the sash ends to the right side of the waistline sash.

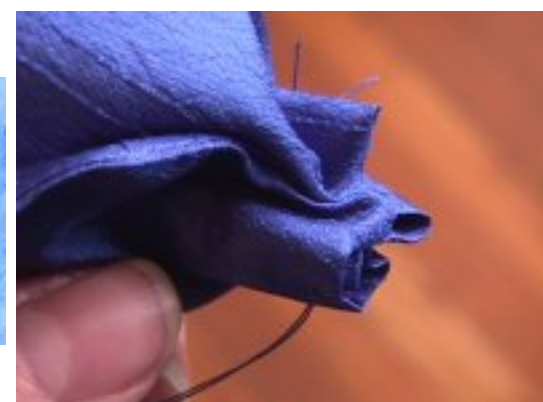


Click thumbnails for larger images.

Top: Sash ends sewn to left side of bodice back. Bottom: Snap sewn onto sash and bodice to secure sash ends over zipper.

Making the Rosette

1. Using your leftover sash material, cut a rectangle of fabric at least six inches long and four inches wide. Fold rectangle in half lengthwise, right sides together, and stitch along the top edge and down the long seam. Turn right side out and fold under raw edge, slipstitching closed.
2. Beginning at the end you've just stitched closed, loosely "roll" the material to form a rosette, securing it by stitching through all the layers at the bottom of the rose. A little practice will give you a perfect rose shape. Finally, sew your finished rosette onto the top of the sash ends.





Click thumbnails for larger images.

*Top left to right: starting the rosette; second fold in the rosette; stitching rosette after it has been fully rolled up.
Bottom left to right: Finished rosette from the side; from the top; on the dress.*

Enjoy your new creation!

[Back to Pattern Information](#) | [Home](#) | [Send feedback](#)

1910s Tea Gown Pattern copyright Mrs. Jennie Chancey, 2000-2008.