

1940s "Swing" Dress Pattern Instructions

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Notes:

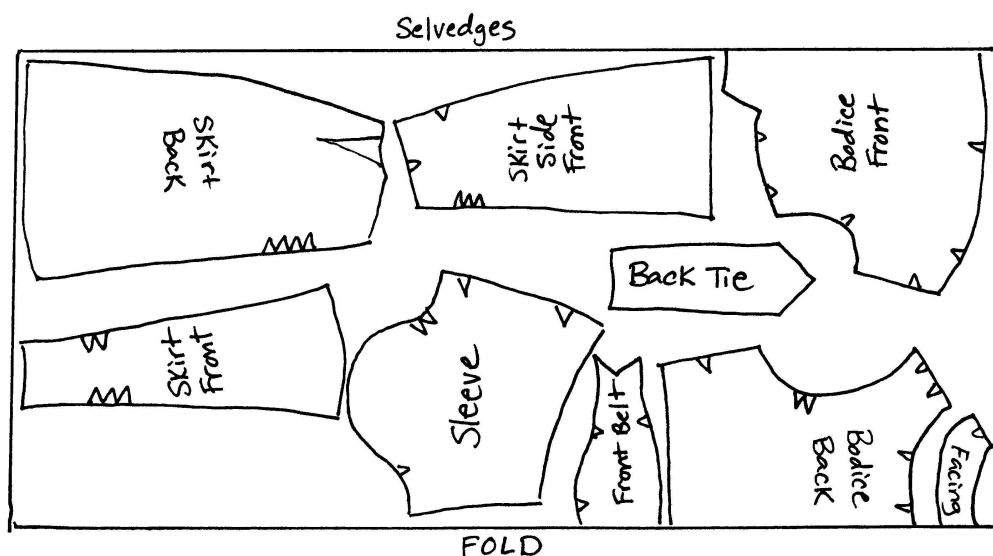
Inspired by a Hollywood fashion of 1943, this pattern features the tailored lines so typical of the WWII era. Following the fabric ration guidelines of the time, women made their dresses with narrower skirts, fitted sleeves, and fewer fabric embellishments like ruffles or flounces. This "swing" dress features a wide front waistband and back ties to give a nice fit. The skirt is slightly gored for a bit of flare at the bottom when you twirl. It is even possible to take this pattern from day to evening by lengthening the skirt to the floor and using the "bracelet-length" sleeve pattern! Please take careful note of the lines on the pattern pieces for lengthening or shortening. The bodice is designed to accommodate long-waisted ladies -- those with a nape-to-waist measurement 17" to 18". If your nape-to-waist measurement is less than this, you will most definitely need to shorten the bodice pieces. If you do not, you will end up with a lot of extra material hanging out over the waistband, which is not flattering. I strongly advise making a muslin mock-up of the bodice to check its fit before you slice into your beautiful fashion material! See my online pattern instructions with photos at www.sensibility.com/pattern/swinghelp.htm.



Suggested fabrics include crepe, rayon, and polyester blends. Extremely lightweight fabrics are not recommended, since they do not create as nice a drape. A small brooch or fancy button can be used to secure the bodice at the front neckline.

Do note that I always recommend tracing a master pattern from your original onto interfacing or medium-weight tracing paper. This preserves the original pattern sheets intact and gives you a sturdy master to use over and over again. It's also very important to read all instructions prior to cutting into your material.

Pattern layout:

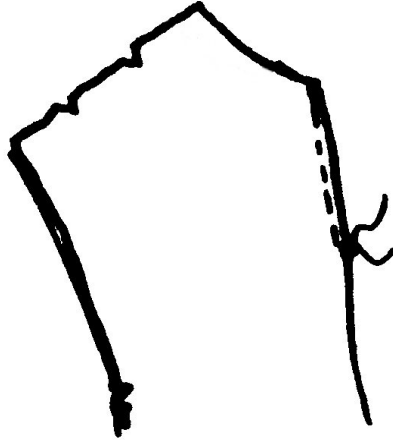


Here is the suggested layout for the pattern pieces on 54" wide material.

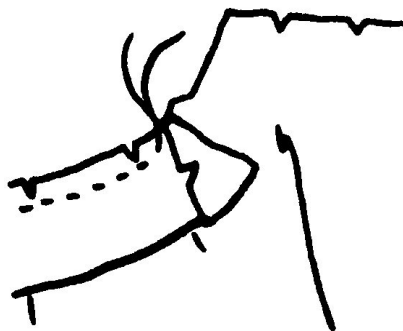
Assembly Instructions:

(Note: There is a 1/2" seam allowance on all seams except where noted.)

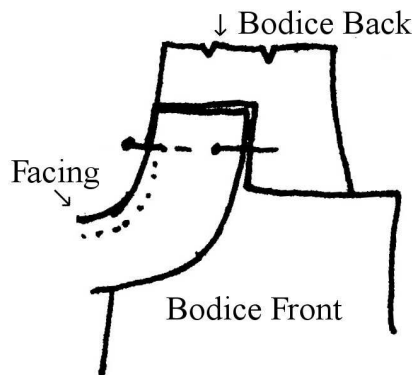
1. Dart bodice back at neck by creasing at center back and stitching 1/8" from crease at the top, tapering to nothing at the dot marking the bottom of the dart.



2. Pin back facing to bodice back, matching notches and centers. Stitch, stopping at the dot marked on the bodice back neckline. Clip curves.

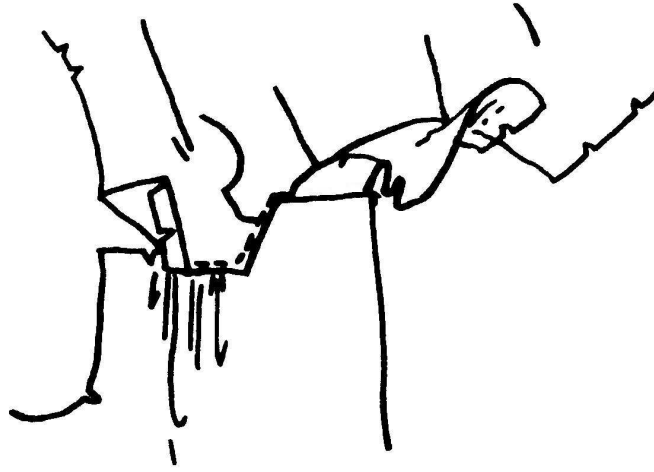


3. Match back facing to front facing (this is the tall area at the top of the bodice front), right sides together. Stitch, taking up a 5/8" seam. (Note that this seam will meet the dot where you stopped stitching the back facing to the bodice back.)

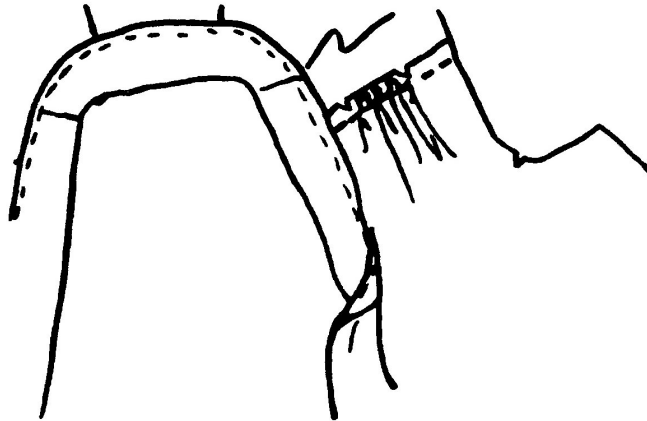


Note: Don't stitch through the bodice back! This is shown only to illustrate the bodice front and the facing right sides together (the facing was sewn to the bodice back already). You will fold the back out of the way to stitch the facing to the bodice front extension only.

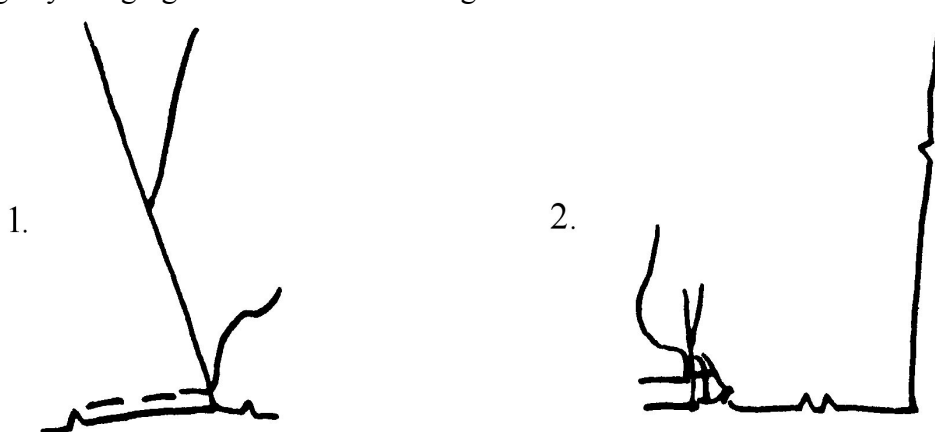
4. Gather bodice front at shoulder between notches. Turn under and press seam allowance at bodice back neckline (where the back facing ends) and the seam allowance at the bottom of the shoulder overlap (when both areas are turned under and pressed, you have an "L" shape). Pin bodice back over bodice front, matching notches and adjusting gathers to fit. Topstitch bodice back in place across the lower edge and up the side of the "L" until you reach the seam between front and back facings.



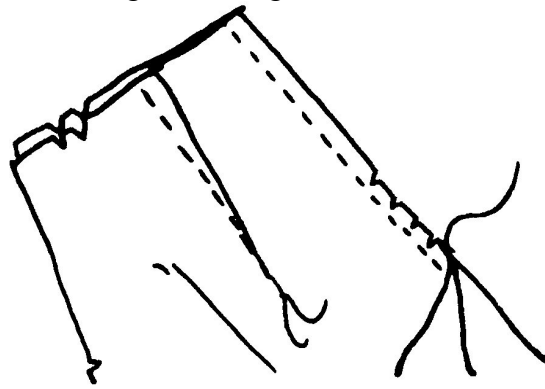
5. Turn under and stitch raw edges of facings to finish them. Turn back facing inside on seam line and front facing inside on fold line.



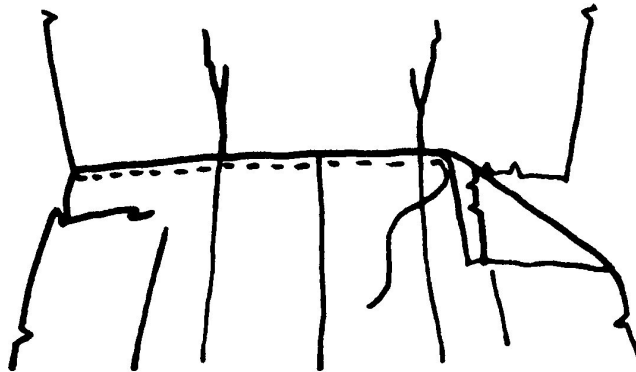
6. Lap right front over left, matching centers. Baste lower edges together. Pleat bodice back at lower edge by bringing small dots to meet large dots. Baste.



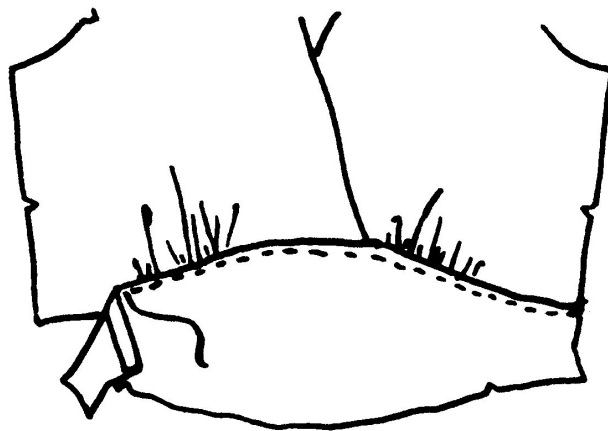
7. Dart skirt back pieces and sew together along center back seam, matching notches.



8. Turn under seam allowance on skirt back and stitch over bodice back, matching centers and notches.



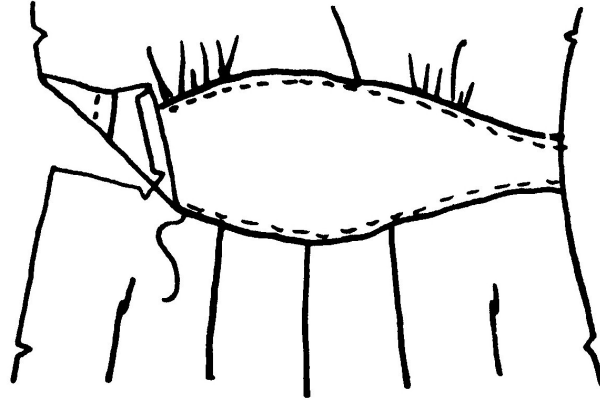
9. Gather bodice fronts at lower edge between notches. Turn under seam allowance on front midsection belt and pin to overlapped bodice front, matching centers and notches and adjusting gathers to fit. Topstitch in place.



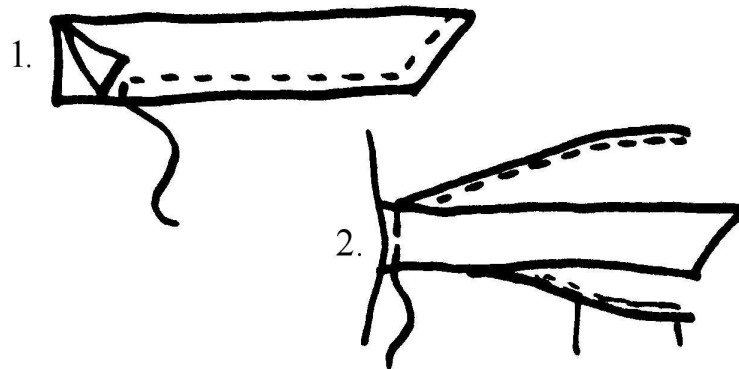
10. Sew skirt front pieces together, matching notches.

11. Sew skirt front to skirt side front, matching notches.

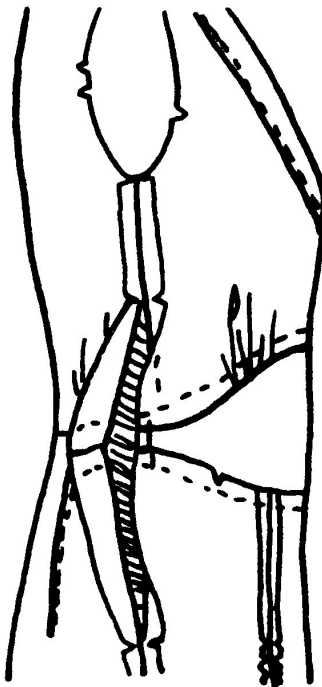
12. Turn under seam allowance on front midsection belt and pin over skirt, matching centers and notches. Topstitch in place.



13. Fold back ties in half and stitch, leaving straight ends open. Turn and press. Baste ties to midsection at side seams.

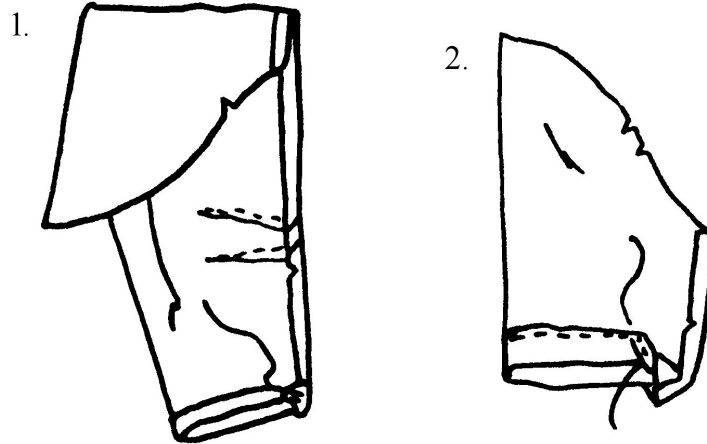


14. Pin dress together at sides, matching notches and leaving left side open between notches. Stitch, taking care that you don't accidentally catch the ends of your back ties into your side seams.

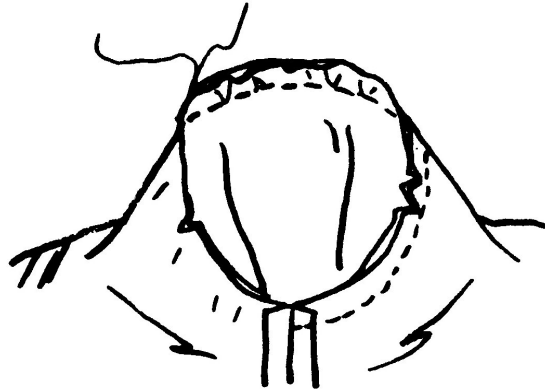


Sleeves:

1. For $\frac{3}{4}$ -length sleeves, dart sleeve at elbow and stitch seam together, matching notches. Finish lower edge with a narrow bias facing, or face with ribbon seam binding. Turn under and hem in place by hand.
2. For short sleeves, stitch seam together, matching notches. Turn up lower edge on hemline. Turn under and stitch edge of hem, then hem to sleeve by hand or machine.

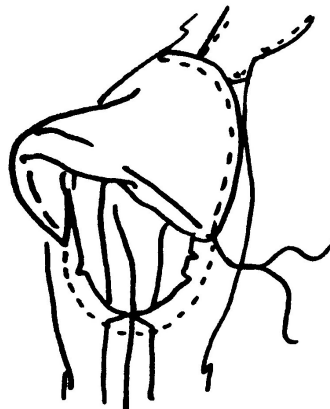


3. Pin sleeve into armhole, matching notches at front and back and the dot at the shoulder. Hold sleeve toward you and baste in place, adjusting ease so that the sleeve fits perfectly into the armhole. Stitch.



Shoulder Pads:

1. Tack pad to shoulder and armhole seams so center of folded edge is about 1" forward of shoulder seam and extends beyond armhole about $\frac{3}{4}$ " at shoulder.



Finishing:

1. Following the instructions included with your invisible zipper foot, sew the invisible zipper into the opening at the left side seam. [Note: If you're new to invisible zippers, there are dozens of photo tutorials on the web to help you out! If you'd like to skip using a zipper, you can also place heavy-duty snaps into the placket or use snap tape.]
2. Try on your dress and mark where the bodice front overlaps at the neckline. This is where you will place your brooch or sew a button to keep the "V" surplice closed. Use a hem marker or have someone else mark your skirt hem for you. Hem allowance is one inch. You may need to trim a bit to have it even all the way around if you are larger in the hips or derriere. Hem the skirt by machine or by hand.

Enjoy your new creation!