AUSSEW Along

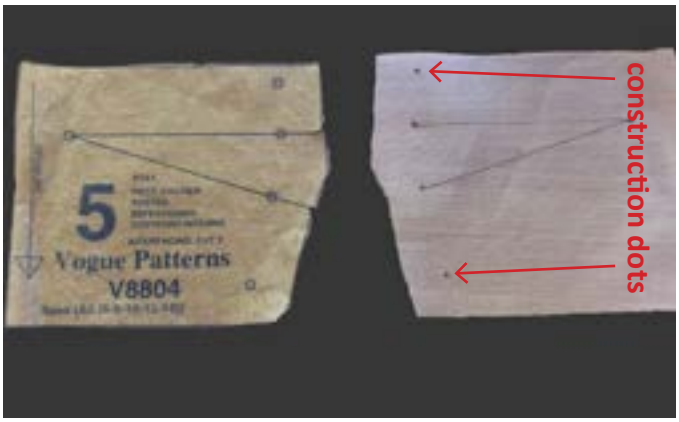
Couture Cardigan Jacket - Part 4

Bust shaping and Dart Stay

The side front section of the jacket is shaped over the bust with ease basting, steaming and shrinking, and the use of a bust dart stay. This creates invisible shaping which is important when using fabric with a pattern, especially checks or plaids. Stitching a traditional dart disturbes the pattern and makes the dart visible.

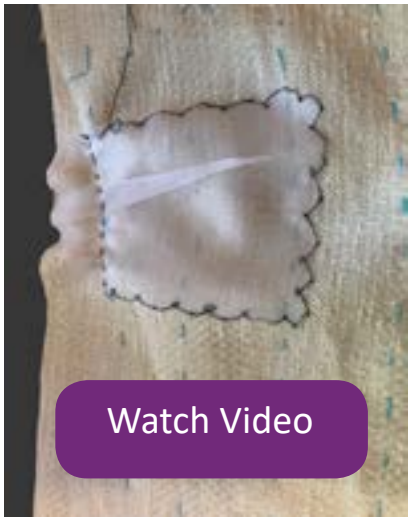
For those who have opted for fabric without an pattern, as recommended, you may wish to first experiment with scraps of fabric to determine how well you are able to steam and shape the fabric. If you are not happy with the results, you can choose to sew a traditional dart instead. Hopefully you have followed recommendations and selected a natural fibre fabric with a loose weave. If so, you should not have a problem shaping the bust using the following couture technique.

1. Place a row of ease stitching on the seamline in the designated bust area (refer to pattern). Place a second row of ease stitching 1/8" (3 mm) away, in the seam allowance. Your ease stitching can be by hand or by machine.



2. Use the dart stay pattern to cut two stays from silk organza. Mark the dart and the two construction symbols (dots) with pencil, as indicated in the photo. Stitch the dart.

3. With the side front piece wrong side up, position the dart stay in the bust area, matching the symbols. Pin in place and adjust the ease stitching along the seamline to fit the dart stay. This will create a 'bubble' of fabric in the dart area. Temporarily tack the stay in place with a running stitch along all four edges.



4. Place the side front over a tailor's ham and steam the fabric in the bust area to shape it and shrink out the ease along the seam line.

5. Sew the stay in place permanently with running stitches along the seamline and catchstitches on the other three sides. Sew carefully so the stitches don't show on the right side.

NOTE Black thread is shown in the illustration so you can see it clearly. When sewing the garment, use matching thread.

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Quilting the side front

The next step is to quilt the lining to the two side front pieces. The process is exactly the same as described for the front pieces, except that you will be quilting the lining to the back of the fabric rather than organza. Each side front has three quilting lines.

You will notice that the fashion fabric is shorter than the lining on the side with the 'dart'. This is because of the easing for the bust.

1. Stitch only the two quilting lines farthest away from the dart easing. Remember to leave thread tails at beginning and end of each row; pull the top thread through to the wrong side and tie in a knot. Hide the thread tails by burying them between the two layers of fabric.

2. Align the fashion fabric and the lining at the top and bottom of the side seam and pin in place at hem and armscye.

3. With the lining side up, place the bust area over a tailor's ham and pin a dart in the lining. to remove the excess fabric. The dart should be on top of the dart stay.

4. Baste the dart in place and remove the pins. Permanently sew the dart with tiny fell stitches, taking care not to catch the fabric. The two layers must remain separate so you can finish the seams later.

5. Now you can stitch the remaining row of quilting.

NOTE When comparing your quilted side front to the original pattern piece, first pin out the dart in the pattern. You can use the dart stay pattern piece as a guide for how much to pin out of the side front pattern. Now compare the pattern to the quilted fabric to check for shrinkage.

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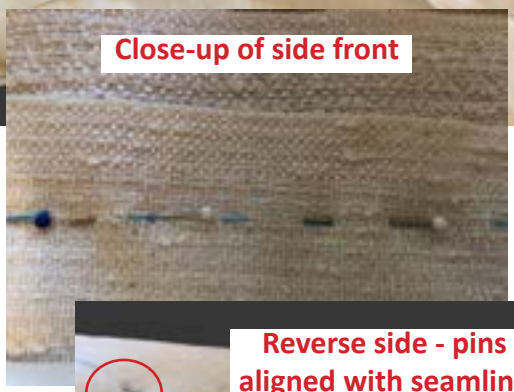
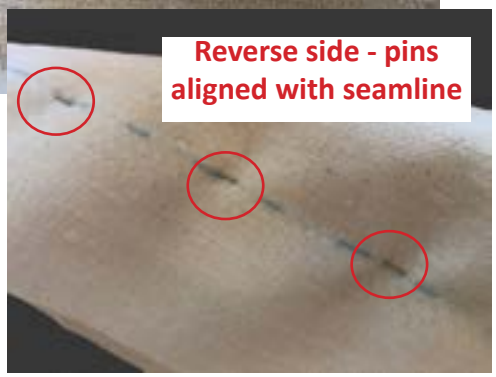
Stitch front to side front

The front and side front pieces have been quilted and shaped and are now ready to be joined. At this stage they are still rectangular shapes. You will match the thread-traced seamlines and stitch together.

1. Fold the side front lining out of the way so you don't catch it while stitching the seam. DO NOT fold back the organza interfacing on the front piece.



2. Pin the front to the side front, matching seamlines and all construction symbols. In the close-up view you can see pins are inserted exactly along the seamline of the side front. Check on the reverse side to make sure the pins fall exactly on the seamline of the front.



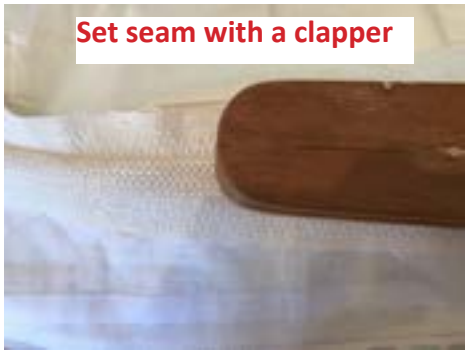
3. After pinning, hand-baste the seamline and remove the pins. Lightly press the basted seam - this helps to meld the layers of fabric and prevent them from shifting while you machine-stitch.

TIP Don't be tempted to skip the basting and stitch over the pins. Fabric tends to shift during stitching if you rely only on pins. Basting is easier than unpicking!

4. Machine-stitch the seam with a stitch length of 2 mm (12 stitches per inch). Begin stitching at the shoulder and continue into the hem allowance. Remove the basting threads.

5. Before you open the seam, first press it flat. Then put it on a seam roll and press the seam open. Press just the stitching line with the tip of your iron.

6. With the iron hovering over the seam, give it lots of steam. Then cover it with a clapper and press hard to set the seam.



7. Trim seams, leaving about a 1 inch (2.5 cm) allowance.

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