

COSTUME CONSTRUCTION BASICS

Getting Ready to Sew!

Who Are These People?



- Samaru has been cosplaying since 2010
 - Has won multiple awards over the years

What's This About?

- Tips & Tricks on Preparing to Create a Costume
 - Equipment / Supplies
 - Terminology
 - Pattern Selection and Use
 - Fabric Selection & Preparation
 - Common Problems and how to fix them



What is this NOT about?

- Picking Your Costume
- Props
- Accessories
- The Act of Sewing

You can always try to catch us later, or check YouTube for
Instructional Videos.

Don't forget about your good buddy, Google!

Where Do I Start?

- You have your costume selected
- You have **TIME** to work on it
- You have budgeted money for it

Equipment

- Sewing Machine
- Iron
- Ironing Board
- Mirror
- A worktable/work area
 - Space to cut fabric
- OPTIONAL: Dress form



Look up Duct-Tape Dummy/Double for an economical way to create your own dress form!

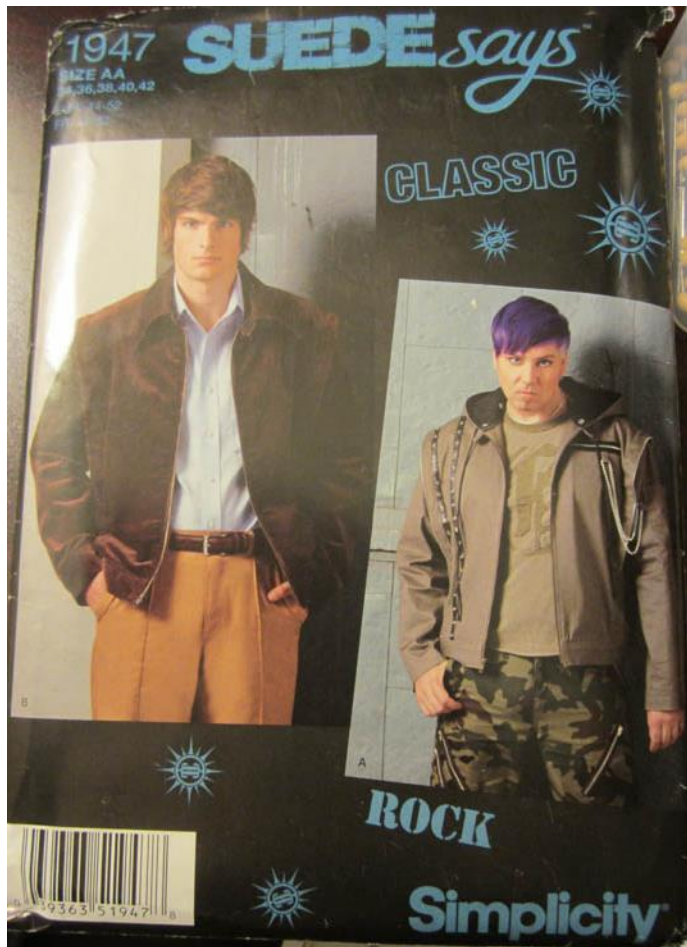
Supplies?

- Patterns
- Fabric
- Interfacing
- Thread
- Scissors
- Notions

Choosing Your Pattern

- Check for the following:
 - Difficulty
 - Pattern drawings vs. Reference picture
 - Measurements
 - “Size” of patterns in envelope
 - Ideal fabrics (watch out for stretch)
 - Extra supplies needed
- You will need more fabric than it suggests to match odd patterns (plaids, stripes, etc)

Pattern Envelope Contents



1947 MEN'S JACKET WITH COLLAR VARIATIONS AND DETACHABLE HOOD

Fabrics: Denim, Lightweight Denim, Corduroy, Poplin, Twill, Sateen, Nylon Sport Fabrics, Prequilted Fabrics, Synthetic Leather, Synthetic Suede. Extra fabric needed to match plaids, stripes or one-way design fabrics.

Notions: Thread, one 24" separating zipper, four 1½" D-rings, seven ¾" buttons for hood, one N" square of hook and loop tape. **A:** Two 7" zippers. **B:** Two ¾" buttons. Look for Simplicity notions and Wrights® Trims.

BODY MEASUREMENTS

Chest	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	In
Waist	28	30	32	34	36	39	42	44	46	48	"
Hip	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51	53	"
Neck Band	14	14½	15	15½	16	16½	17	17½	18	18½	"
Sizes	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	
Sizes-Eur/Fr	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62	

A Jacket

45***	3¾	3¾	3¾	3¾	3¾	3¾	3¾	4	4	4	Yd
60***	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	2¾	"

Interfacing 1¾ yd. of 20" to 25" lightweight fusible

Zipper Trim 3¾ yd. of ¾" wide; **Grommet Trim** 2¾ yd. of ¾" wide; **Chain Trim** ¾ yd. of ¾" wide

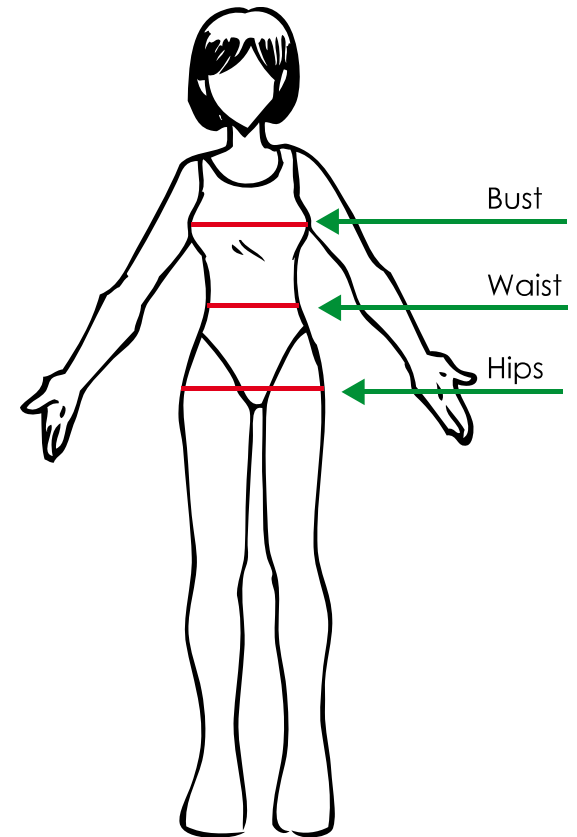
B Jacket

Selecting Your Source

- **Simplicity, Butterick, McCalls, Kwik Sew – GOOD!**
 - Standard patterns you can find
 - All skill levels
- **Burda – NOT BAD....**
 - German pattern company
 - All skills, better for slightly experienced
 - Good selection of men's clothing
- **Vogue – AHHHHHHHHHHHNOOOO!**
 - Couture patterns
 - Difficult to alter

What are my Measurements?

- Your clothing size will not match your pattern size
- Measure the following:
 - Bust
 - Waist
 - Hips



Fabric Selection

- Type of fabric
- Width of fabric
- Pattern or nap?
- “Drape”
- Fiber Content
- Washing methods

Good/Easy to Use Fabric

- Twill
- Poplin
- Denim
- Canvas
- Sateens
- Anything Labeled “Bottomweight”
- Relatively inexpensive (usually)
- Not slippery

For the More Advanced

- Stretch Knits
- Rayon / Lycra
- Sheers
- Wools
- Upholstery Weight / Thicker Fabric
- Satin
 - Avoid cheap costume satin - FRAGILE

What NOT to Use

- Muslin
- Panne Crushed Velvet
- Anything labeled “Costume”
- Quilter’s Cotton
 - Exception: accessories, trim
- Some pleathers
- Weird “blends”
- Extra Stiff Fabric



Tips for Buying Fabric

- Beware Super Deals
 - Cheap does not always provide quality
- FEEL your fabric
 - If it is itchy on your hand, it will be itchy on your body
- If possible, check “drape”
- Check for transparency
- Check washing instructions (on the end)
- Make sure it is wide enough
- Save your coupons!



Interfacing and You

- What is Interfacing
 - A “fabric” used to stiffen and provide body for fabrics
- Used mainly in:
 - Sleeve Cuffs
 - Collars
 - Facing
 - Waistbands
- Test a small piece of interfacing on your fabric to see how it will change the way it flows and hangs

If you have to interface all your fabric,
you’ve selected the wrong fabric.

Types of Interfacing

- **Fusible**
 - Ironed onto the fabric
 - Easiest to use since you don't have to worry about basting the interfacing to the fabric
 - Fabrics must be able to withstand the heat of the iron used to melt the adhesive
 - Can have issues with interfacing detaching, especially if not properly fused
- **Sew In**
 - Basted to the fabric around the edges
 - Can be used for fabrics that will melt
 - Care must be taken during basting to prevent wrinkles due to interfacing and fabric not being the same sizes

Thread

- Thread is available in a wide range of colors and types.
- Common brands are Gutermann, Mettler, and Coats and Clark
- Be sure to select general purpose machine sewing thread
- Avoid heavy topstitching thread and embroidery thread. Both may cause problems with your machine
- You want your thread to match your fabric if possible. Slightly darker thread is better than slightly lighter

Scissors/Cutting Tools

- A good pair of fabric scissors is a necessity
- Keep your scissors sharp and use them only for fabric
- If possible, look for scissors that can be sharpened. They will get dull!

What's a Notion?

- That stuff on the wall in the sewing stores that help you sew things
 - Sewing Needles
 - Pins
 - Seam Rippers
 - Bobbins
 - Clasps/Snaps
 - Buckles
 - Heat n Bond/Stitch Witchery
 - Velcro
 - Elastic
 - Tracing paper/chalk

I bought fabric! Now what?

- Wash your fabric!
 - Check the washing instructions to be sure the fabric can be washed.
 - Most cottons can be washed on cool and dried on low
 - Separate Reds and Darks from Whites and Lights
- Why?
 - Chemicals from processing (sizing)
 - Can change feel of fabric
 - Pre-Shrink

If you don't know, TEST A SQUARE.

It's washed! Now what?

IRON YOUR FABRIC

- Ironing will smooth out the fabric to ensure accurate cutting
- Iron the fabric open not folded
- Use iron setting appropriate for the fabric
- Steam if appropriate
- “Squaring” it off
 - Grain
 - Bias

Cutting Your Pattern

- Lay your freshly ironed pattern on your freshly ironed fabric and pin/weight
- Pay attention to right vs. wrong side of fabric and pattern
- Be sure to check patterns and nap
- The grainline should run parallel to the finished edge of the fabric

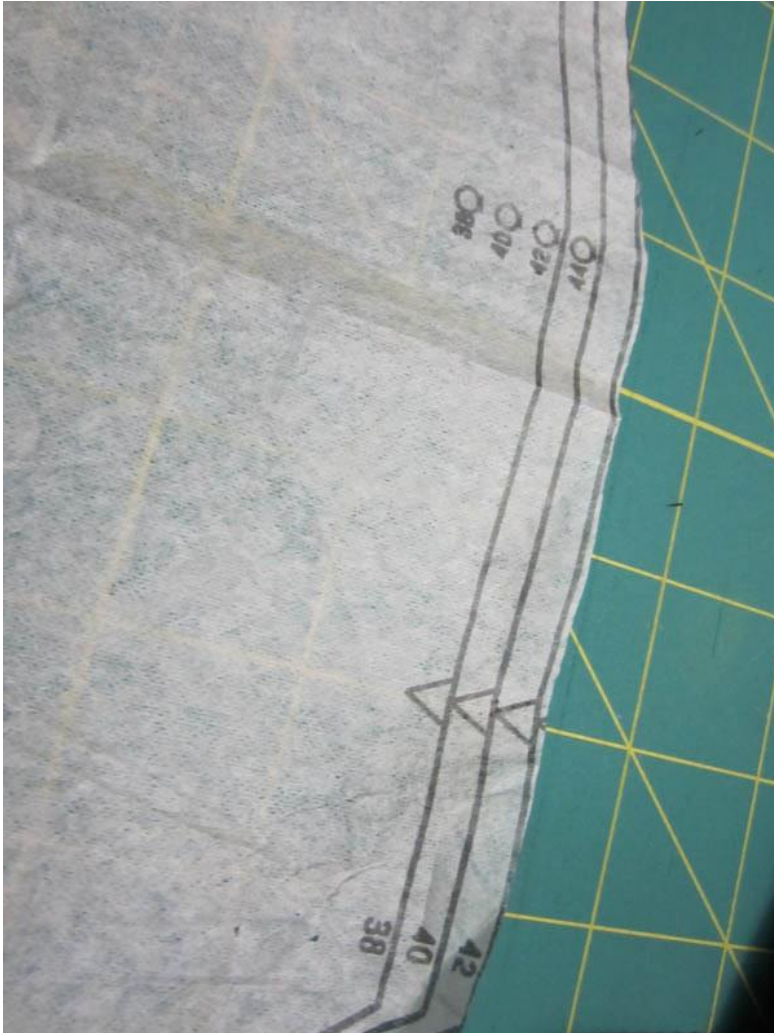


Cutting Your Pattern

- Cut the lines on the pattern that correspond to your chosen size
- Be sure to transfer all markings to your fabric
 - Tailors chalk or tracing paper is useful for this
- Be sure to cut on the fold or edge where appropriate
- Don't forget the interfacing and lining if needed!

Accuracy in the cutting step will make sewing much easier and improve the look of your costume!

Marking Your Pattern



- Triangles next to the size lines are usually called notches and are used to match pieces of fabric when joining seams.
- Circles are used to match spots where pieces should line up with attaching. Usually used for sleeves.
- Mark the triangles next to the size lines for the size you are using and mark the circles labeled with the correct size.
- You may also see various markings for button, buttonhole, and pocket placement

Common Problems

- My pieces don't match up/lay right
 - IRON YOUR SEAMS
- My Costume turned out too big
 - Check what size seams you used vs pattern
 - Check “actual size” before sewing
 - You may be able to alter the garment but it can be difficult

Common Problems

- My costume looks like two colors
 - “Right” side vs “Wrong Side” of fabric
 - Nap/Pile/Sheen
 - Dye lots
- My fabric is full of holes!
 - Some fabrics you shouldn't pin

Common Problems

- My costume shrank after I washed it!
 - Wash fabric ahead of time
- My fabric is falling apart!
 - Could be an easy-fray fabric
 - Reinforce edges (zigzag, pinking, serging)

Common Problems

- My fabric melted!
 - Your iron is too hot
 - Use an ironing cloth if possible

Common Problems

- I hate everything, this sucks, I can't do this, I'll never finish this costume.
 - YES. YOU WILL. KEEP SEWING.

Remember:

Good, fast, or cheap.

Pick two.



More Information



- Sanddiverstudios.com – our website, working on How To's detailing construction of our costumes as well as con photos
- American Cosplay Paradise/Experience-Costume listing and discussion forums
- Cosplay.com – Cosplay discussion forums, anything you need to know!