

Fitz's Tunic Tutorial

This tutorial is a work in progress and is intended to help anyone from the newbie up in how the process of making a quality field tunic "Fitz's Way". It is my belief that Field Garb should not only be durable and comfortable but that it should look as good if not better than most court Garb. After all, what is the first thing a newbie sees when coming to the park? Garb.

The following tutorial is a mixture of things I've learned from other people and things I had to learn for myself. I've been making these so long that it would be foolish to try to say which is which, or who I learn what from, especially since most of my tutors learned from others as well. So I'll break this down as to how I do this now and leave it at that.

Hints: Don't rush this. When I say to pin it like crazy, or Iron it, or anything else you really want to do this. One of the worst things you can do is to rush this and not take your time. These steps are critical to getting a superb tunic as the end result. The newbie mistake is to want to get it done NOW! Well if you do that you will end a passable tunic at best wishing you had not wasted your money and had taken your time. (Yes this is experience talking!!!)

Step 1- Designing the tunic.

You first need to know what you/the wearer wants. Colors are secondary. First thing you need to know which shape you want it to be. This first step is crucial!

I personally prefer the modified T-tunic/Bell-tunic cross for the look, flow, and ease of creation. So I sketch the following out on paper:



If you want to go with another design feel free, the rest of this tutorial will follow the bell tunic as a base, modify as you need.

Next I determine the base color(s) and Trim colors(s). This is really a personal preference, and a good way to distinguish yourself or your company/household on the field. Try to pick colors that look good together.

Next I get a rough idea of what type of trim design is wanted and sketch it out. If you have a way to color the sketch into the appropriate choices it helps get a general idea:



So this is what I'm shooting for. The color scheme isn't really my first choice for this tunic, rather the color choices are to demonstrate how overboard you can go (and this one is only about middle rank in the appliqué world of Fighting Tunics).

First you need the following:

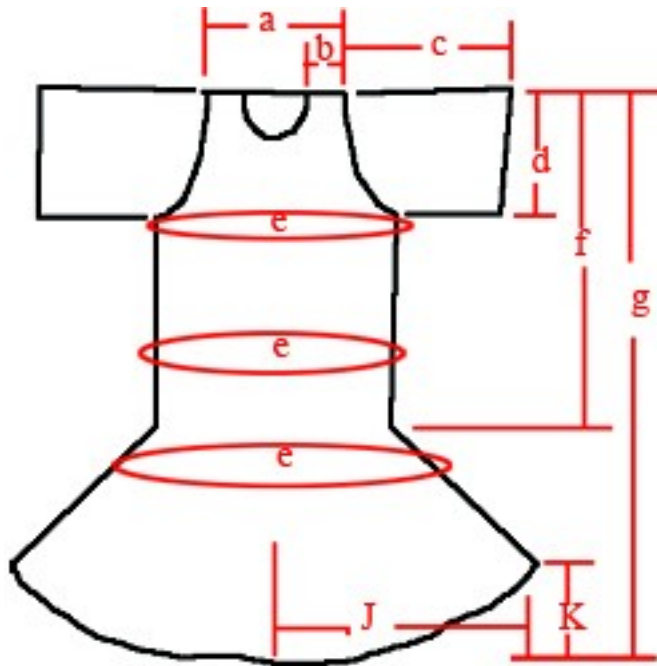
- the person your making the tunic for
- a cloth measuring tape
- pencil and paper
- good cloth cutting Scissors
- a contrasting marking pencil (yes pencil works, it washes right out, get a small box of colored pencils handy)
- Clothing Pins
- Steam a Seam
- Sewing machine with thread that matches both your primary color and trim color.
- **I recommend you use Coats and Clarks Appliqué/Embroidery thread**
- Your cloth (covered below)

I've been asked many times where to buy the pattern for the Tunic design I use. My answer is normally "Pattern? What's a Pattern?" Then I explain the following process:

Measurements:

So you have your sketch design, now you need to add measurements to it for reference latter. Get the following measurements and mark on sketch as shown:

- a-Shoulder to Shoulder (add 1 inch for single colored tunic or 2 for a paneled)
- b-Neck to Shoulder (add ½ inch)
- c-Shoulder to Elbow(add 1 inch)
- d-Shoulder to approx. 3" below armpit (add ½ inch)
- e-Around torso @ armpits
- e-Around torso @ widest part of belly
- e-Around torso @ widest part of hips
- (use whichever of the three torso measurements is the largest and add 4 inches)
- f-Shoulder to Beltline (add ½ inch)
- g-Shoulder to Knee (Add 1 inch)
- h-Diameter of head
- I-Diameter of neck
- J = $\frac{1}{4}e + 6$ inches
- K= roughly 3 inches from the bottom of g. (or g-3 from the top)



Fabric

*** Side note: Choice of Fabric. Opinions different but my choice of Fabric is Trigger/Target for Field Garb. It is durable, breathable, and appliqués very nicely. (Trigger is no longer being made and Target is the new replacement industry wide) It is NOT a \$1/yard fabric off the bargain bin! Expect to spend \$5-\$7/yard for your fabric alone. The good thing about it is that it'll last quite a long time! It comes in a decent array of colors and can be specially ordered if you want to get a whole bolt. Try as much as possible to get the 60 inch wide(approx) bolts not the 40ish ones. *****

To determine the amount of Fabric you need in Yards take the Shoulder to Knee measurement **g** and figure out how many yards (36 inches to a yard) that is (round up) and add ½ yard. That is how much you need per side (front and Back). So if you are doing a single color tunic you need twice that (or 2g+1yard). If paneled you need 1g+.5yards per color. (If you are able it's always a good idea to get more then you think you need, extra is always nice for other projects.)

Once you have your fabric make sure you run it through the washing machine/dryer. This will help get most of the shrinkage out of your fabric before making it. It's a step I generally hate (cause I wanna be garbing as soon as I get home from the fabric store!!!) but it definitely helps the end result.

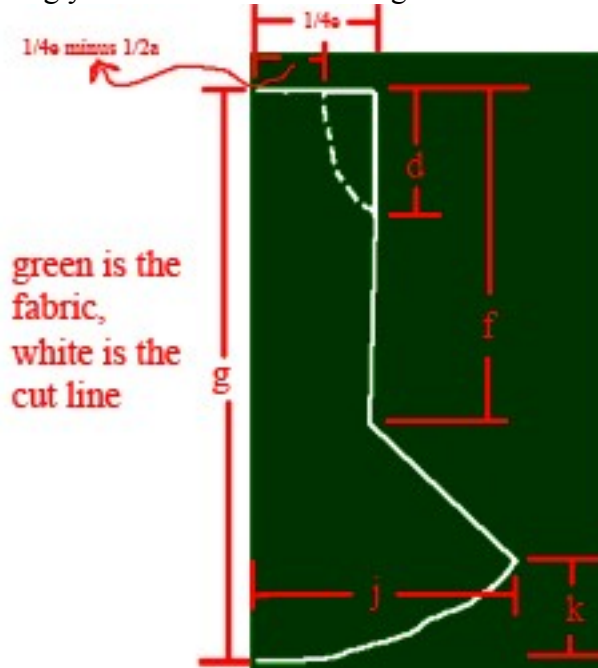
Cutting your fabric

This step frightened the crap out of me when I first started buying "expensive fabric" ie NOT the stuff out of the \$1 bin at Wally World. What if I screw up! That's some expensive stuff to waist if I cut wrong.... Ok so it still frightens the crap out of me. Use the old adage "measure twice, cut once",.. Or how I say it "Measure 12 times, Cut once!"

So, you need to transfer the measurements that you've got on your sketch to the fabric. First thing to realize is that with the fabric folded over you can pin it all together and make 1 cut that will make all the panels (or if your only doing 1 base color then the front and back) identical. Lay your fabric out with the fold still in place. Double it up so you

get 2 pieces (or 4 if your doing the paneled look). (I didn't get a live shot of this so look at this sketch)

Using your ruler sketch the design out as shown:



Remember that you are only sketching out half of the tunic with the centerline on the edge so adjust your width measurements by $\frac{1}{2}$ for the width (or follow the formulas in the sketch above). If you have a fraction round up to the nearest number (going a little large is never a bad thing, you want to be able to move!)

To get the bell curvature add about 6-8 inches **[J]** to the torso measurement and come up about 2-3 inches from the bottom of the tunic **[K]** then eyeball in a curve as shown above.

Pin at every corner and roughly every 6 inches on the inside of the line.

Double check!!! Triple Check!!! Unless you like wasting fabric and lots of time!

-OK, Cut out the tunic:



Next you'll want to cut out the trim pieces for the bell edge. Again you can save time if your trim design is uniform/symmetrical by folding the fabric, pinning, and cutting like you did with the main panels.

-Put the trim fabric on the bottom with the panels on top. Trace the bottom edge of the bell onto the trim fabric. Trace up outside edge as well. Sorry didn't get pictures of the

step but you should be able to figure it out, you want to be able to reproduce the same curvature as the bottom of the tunic.

-Remove the main panels and pin the trim panels together so that the fabric doesn't slip.

-Trace your design for the trim onto the fabric, add extra pins. Too many pins is not a factor here. The more intricate the trim the more pins you want! Yeah it's time consuming but the end result is worth it, the trim will look so much better!

-Cut out the trim.



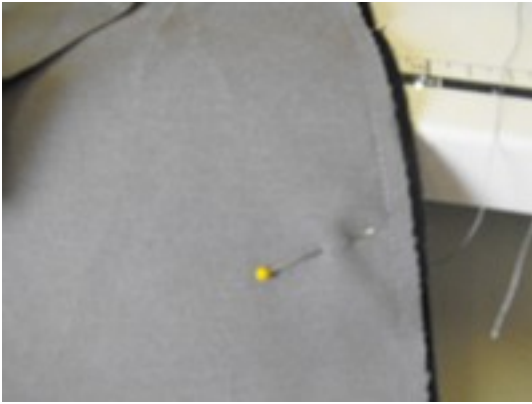
In this tunic I've got alternating colors and panels so getting the placement of the trim correct is crucial.

-Pin the trim to the bottom of the Bell panels on the "wrong side" (that means the side that will be the inside of the tunic) along the bottom edge.



-Once pinned, sew a straight-stitch line roughly 1/4" from the edge to anchor the trim to the bottom edge of the Bell panel. Remove the pins. Repeat for all the panels.





Time for the Ironing board again! Keep it hot and ready for Steam!

-Lay your panel down with the trim facing up. Lift the trim up and iron the steamed edge so that the trim fabric is laying away from the Bell Panel. Make sure you get a nice clean crisp edge on the seam.



-Flip the Bell Panel over and lay the Trim fabric up onto the panel. Iron the seam again, this time making the seam set as even as possible on the edge of the stitch as show.



-Pin the trim down every 5-6 inches unless you are comfortable with your sewing and can guarantee it won't move on the next step.

-Top stitch the trim bottom edge. I normally make sure I'm using the same color thread as the Trim for this and just do a straight stitch again $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the bottom edge. This keeps the trim on the edge crisp and flat. You can alternate thread color or even use a decorative stitch if you want.



Next my favorite secret! STEAM A SEAM!!



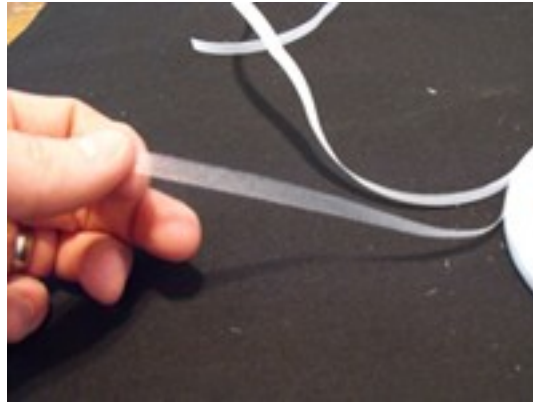
Such an awesome invention! This will make appliquéing the upper edge of the trim SOOOOOooooo Much easier. It comes in Sheets of 8"x10" or in the rolls roughly 1/4" wide. Use the rolls unless you need the sheets for something specific.

*****Read the instructions on the box. I suggest you practice with some scrap pieces of cloth the next couple of steps before actually doing them on your tunic. Practicing will make sure you understand how to use the Steam a Seam as well as getting your machine's Appliqué stitch "dialed" in correctly. *****

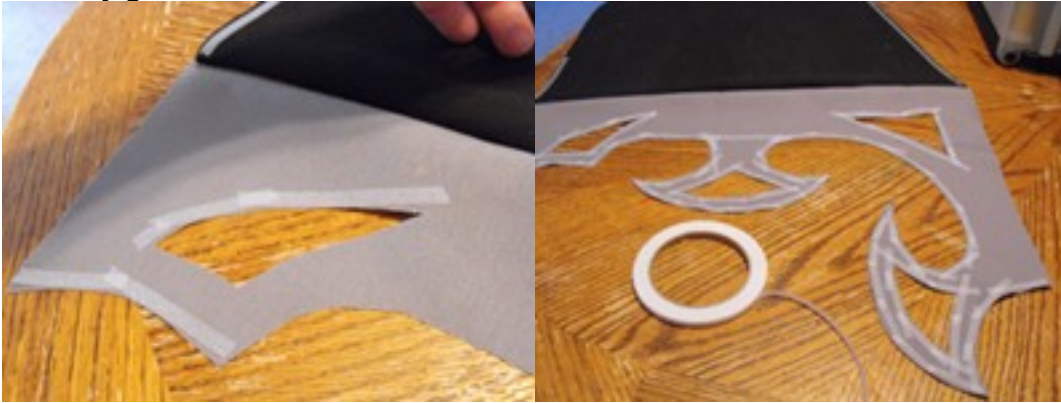
Using the Steam a Seam-

-Lay your panel face up on a table or your ironing board (you will be ironing onto this surface during this step so make sure the surface your on is big enough and won't be damaged by the heat and steam from your iron).

-Fold the trim back so you see the under side. Line the edge with small overlapping sections of the Steam A Seam tape. It has a sticky nature and will grip the fabric a bit (takes a little getting used to). Line every edge of the trim. On the outside edges of the Bell Panel I normally but the Steam a Seam onto the Bell Panel fabric as the trim will



normally go over.



-Carefully fold the Trim back over onto the Bell Panel and smooth the Trim into place.
 ---Make sure you get the Steam A Seam Strips to stay under the trim fabric but very close to the edge.



-Very carefully Iron the trim. You want High Steam! Each area should have high steam for roughly 8-10 seconds. Once it is all down let it cool for a few seconds and the test the edges of the trim, if any pull away from the Bell Panel iron some more over that area.

-Repeat the previous step for all panels.

Machine Appliquéing-

You want to select the Zig-Zag stitch option on your machine. Adjust the stitch width to be just a little over $1/8^{\text{th}}$ wide. Adjust the stitch speed/distance as close as possible. Ideally you want the zig-zag to be wide enough to grab a decent amount of the trim on one side and just over the trim edge onto the Bell Panel on the other while having the thread from each stitch land right next to the previous one.

Again I like to use the same color thread as the trim because the trim edges often come up in between the zig-zag stitches. Using the same color makes it less noticeable.

Once you have your Appliqué stitch dialed in just go to town and appliqué the trim edge for each panel.

****If you are going to add any symbols or other appliqué to the main portion of the panels now would be the time. Use the same principles above to Steam a Seam it into place, then Appliqué stitch it into place.****

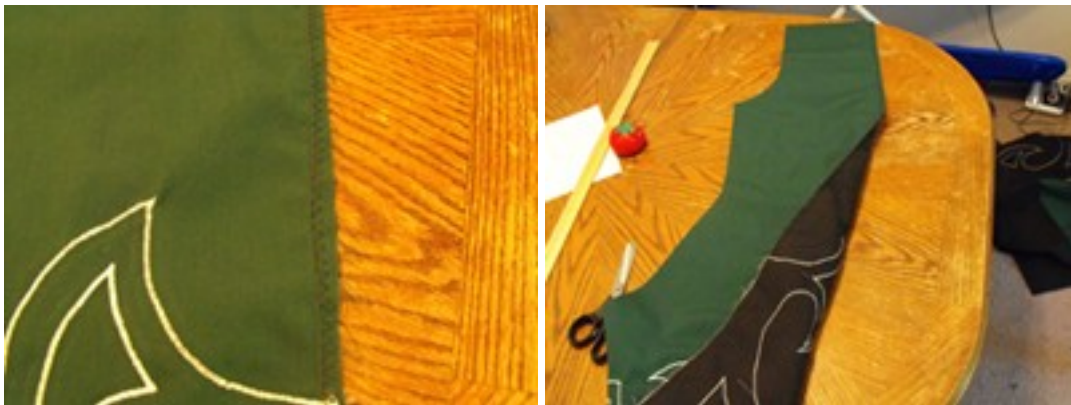
My camera couldn't get a decent close up picture of the thread once stitched so look at examples at your park, hopefully you'll find some good ones. Find your preference and go for it. It's not a bad idea to try out the stitch on some scrap. I suggest trying out some scraps steam-a-seamed tighter if you're new to the process.

-Sew the panels together- If your doing a paneled version like this one lay the panels out



(If you are not doing the paneled skip this step but not the Surge step description):

Fold the panels together "right side" to "right side". Pin and then straight stitch the middle Seam.



Remove Pins and use a wide zig-zag stitch or Surger down the seam. If you use a Zig-Zag stitch, as I did here for illustration purposes (not everyone has a Surger, though I highly recommend them) clean up the excess edge with your scissors.

Now you have a front and back with Bottom Trim appliquéd.



-Put the two side together Right side to Right Side. Pin the Top edge. Straight stitch and Surge the top edge.

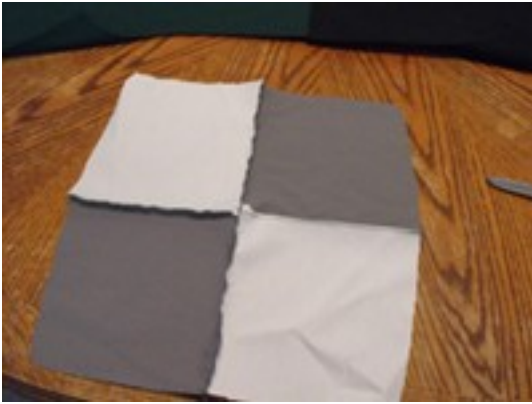


Lay out the tunic and iron the seams flat. (a step I frequently ignore)



The Neck Hole-

The following pictures illustrate the process I use for necks, I'm going to let the pictures illustrate the process mostly because this specific neck (with multi-panels and multi-colors) is one of the most complex necks I've done. If you are doing just a single color on the neck trim you can skip all the alternating paneling and just start with one square of the trim color.



(FYI I did the following steps backwards when rushing through this, do them in the order I write below and it'll be easier for you)

-Start with laying the Tunic “wrong side” up. If your trim is paneled like this tunic then position the neck trim on top also facing “wrong side up”. If your just using a single color trim you can just lay it on the Tunic with the Tunic “wrong side up”.

Note: I get sunburned really easy so I like a tight neck design. I’ve found that our little Cereal bowls work for a great starting pattern. Offset the neck so there is slightly more of the circle on the front panel then on the back.



That'll make a decent neck hole but there's no way I'll get my head in it so I sketch out a little keyhole design and then the outer edge of the trim.





-Now Pin the trim down to the Tunic panels (if you are doing a paneled version like this make sure the Trim seams line up with the tunic panels before tracing the neck design).



-Straight Stitch over the traced line of your neck hole.

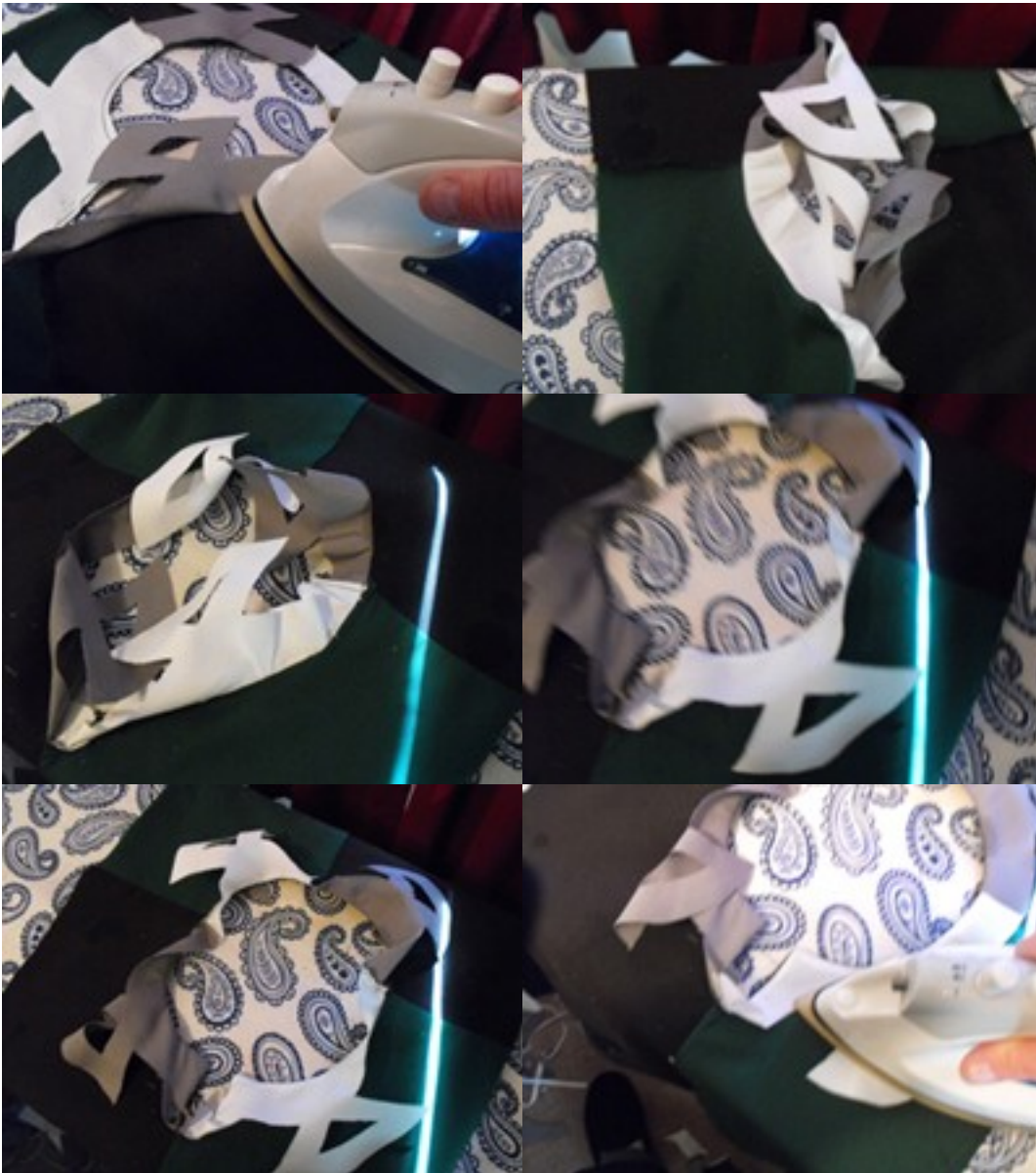
-Remove pins and Cut out the interior of hole.



Note: it is very wise at this point to test the neck by having the person who you are making this for try the tunic on. If the neck is to small now is the time to extend the keyhole down enough to be able to get it on comfortably.

-When your comfortable with the size of the neck hole trace the design for the trim (I already did this the step before because I knew the size of the head it needed to go through), and cut out the design.

-With the Tunic facing wrong side up, iron the neck trim up like you did for the trim on the bottom.



-Flip the tunic over and Iron the edge like you did before on the bottom trim. Some extra time should be spent here to make sure this edge lays as flat and crisp as possible. A little steam will help a lot!

-Top stitch the neck hole like you did the other trim.

-*Steam a Seam* the neck trim like you did the other trim and iron down. You should be fairly proficient at it at this point. One hint I can give you is to start the ironing at the middle/bottom of the keyhole and slowly work your way up and around equally on both sides. You want this to lay perfectly flat so be careful and don't rush it.



Appliqué stitch the neck.

Sleeves-

-You need to make 2 rectangles (or 4 if you are paneling like this one). The dimensions are the width you measured the upper arm (Shoulder to Elbow +1") **id** by the length of the arm holes in the Tunic panels + 3". (I measure them at this point with the tunic laid out like it is below.) Don't forget to measure the curvature of the armpits!!!! (If you are paneling the arms like below add an extra ½ inch to each side for the middle seam allowance.)



-Next follow the steps for trimming from the Bell Panels bottom edge trim:





-When the sleeves are ready to attach you want to lay the Tunic “right side up” and the Sleeve “wrong side up” on top of the tunic. Find the middle point of the Sleeve and start pinning from the middle of the sleeve all the way down to the end of the armpit. Pin at least every inch.



-Pin the other side down to the armpit.

****Notice how the armpits curl. That is a natural Gusset! A Gusset will keep your armpits from tearing out when you throw cross shots. It's a must!



-Straight stitch the edge, Remove pins and Surge/Zig-Zag the edge.



-Repeat for other arm.

-Fold the tunic in half at the top seam.



- Pin each side starting at the end of the Sleeve and continue to pin all the way down to the bottom of the Bell.
- Straight Stitch each edge.
- Remove Pins and Surge seams.
- Turn right-side out.



-Trim/fire off stray threads and Walla! You're done!

Time to look Sexy in your spiffy new tunic!.