

Custom Coat

One basic design yields infinite possibilities

PHOTOS: (P. 60, P. 61, AND P. 63) JACK DEUTSCH; STYLISTS: JESSICA SAAL AND JOHANNA LARACUENTE, HAIR AND MAKEUP: GREG CLARK FOR HALLEY RESOURCES; ALL OTHERS: SLOAN HOWARD. ILLUSTRATIONS: KATHY BRAY

Take one length of fabric, sew two short seams, and then play with edge treatments and embellishments for a super-easy, super-fun cover-up. This basic design can make a coat, blouse, vest, and more—in any length from bolero to maxi and any width from column to tent. This technique is so popular, people have used it for 2,000 years; it's called a "bog coat," and its possibilities are endless.

The keys to this smart garment are its simple structure and choosing the right fabrics. Choose an interesting finished length, combine unexpected colors and trims, and you're ready to go.

The best fabrics for this design are either very drapey or quite stiff. Fabrics with a liquid drape such as a georgette or woven rayon flatter most sizes because they slide over curves and hint at the body's shape without showing every detail. Stiff fabrics create the same effect if you make the garment slightly oversized.

—SUSAN B. ALLEN

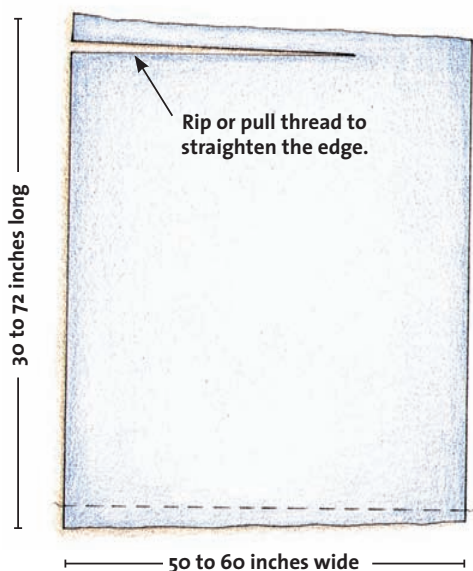
Adapted from "The Bog Coat: One-Seam Sophistication" in Threads No. 87

Make a basic bog coat

It starts with an arm's span (or less) width of fabric. The length is determined by the desired finished coat length. You then make three simple cuts in the fabric and sew two seams.

{1} PREPARE YOUR FABRIC. Before you begin, decide how you want to care for your finished garment. If you want it to be washable, prewash the fabric.

{2} LAY THE FABRIC FLAT. Position the fabric wrong-side up on a large surface; a gridded cutting mat is ideal. Make sure the fabric is even and square in all directions.



Supplies

- Clasps or buttons
- Fabric
- Pins
- Scissors
- Sewing machine
- Thread
- Optional:
> Trim

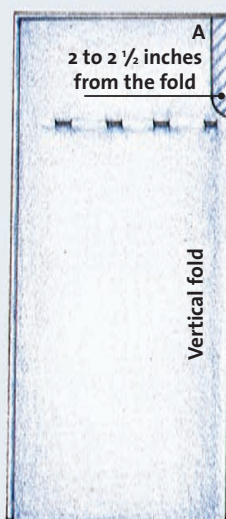
{3} CHOOSE THE ARMHOLE DEPTH. How wide do you want your sleeves? You can tell from the photographs that this is not a fitted garment; the arms are full, but the amount of ease in the sleeve can vary from somewhat close to the underarm (about 10 inches for a petite person to 15 inches for a taller person) and as low as the waist.



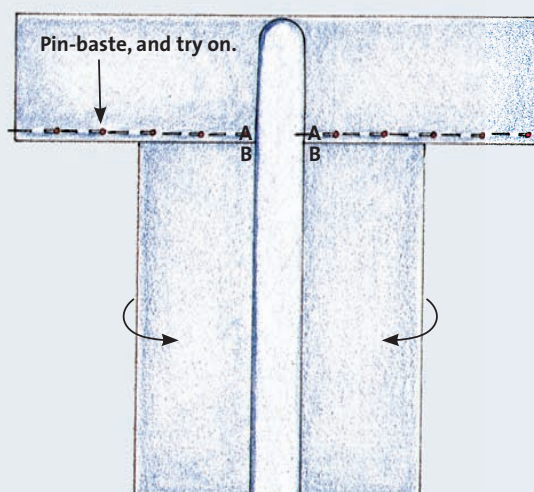
{4} CREATE THE SHOULDER FOLD. Fold the top edge down to the desired armhole depth. Mark the fold with pins.



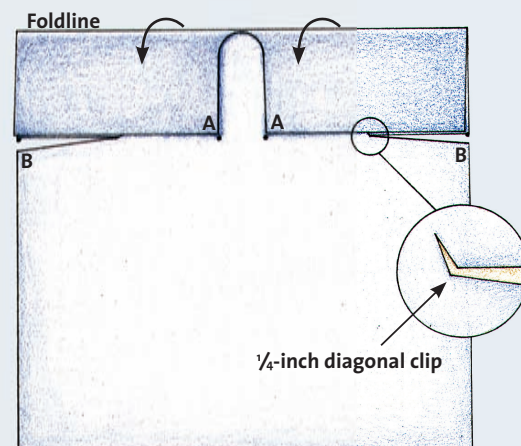
{5} CUT THE NECK OPENING. Open the shoulder fold, and fold the fabric in half vertically. Measure from the top edge to the line of pins. Cut a U-shaped piece 2 to 2½ inches from the fold, as shown at right. Staystitch the neck curve. Open the fold, and lay out the fabric with the shoulder line folded down again, carefully aligning the grain.



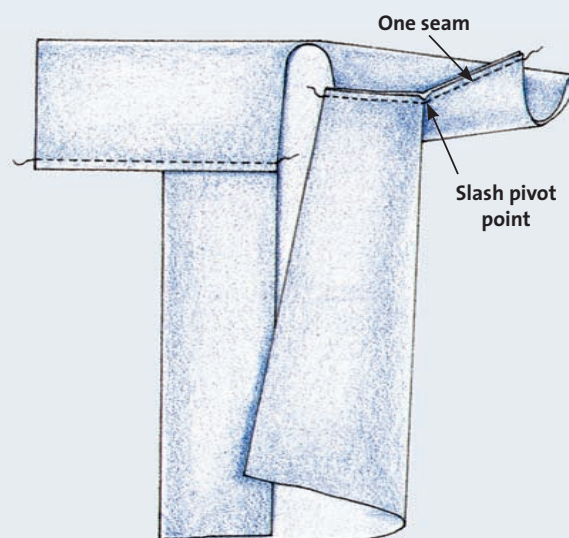
{7} CREATE THE SIDE FOLD. Fold B to A, allowing the diagonal clip to expand, and making sure that edge B aligns with the neck opening at A. Correct if necessary; if the edges don't align either, recut the neck-opening edges above A, or trim the edges below B.



{6} CUT THE SLEEVE. Label the outer edge of the fabric below the fold B. Measure from A to B, divide that distance in half, and then subtract ½ inch. Cut this length, following the raw sleeve edge. Make a ¼ inch diagonal clip at the end, as shown below for a slash pivot point.



{8} SEW THE SLEEVE SEAM. You can sew the seams with either the right or wrong sides together. Start by aligning the seam edges (A and B) from the center front to the cuff, and pin. Stretch the diagonal slash pivot point as needed. Sew the sleeve seam with a basting stitch and the narrowest possible seam allowance. You can cover the seam on the outside with a folded band of fabric sewn into the seam and pressed down over it, or you can otherwise finish the seam.



How wide, how long?

The best fabrics for this garment are at least 55 inches wide so they provide ample ease for drape in a soft fabric or drama in a stiff one. As you can see from the schematic, the width of the fabric determines not only the sleeve length but also the overall circumference. You can piece narrower fabrics to increase the width.

To create a slim, elegant illusion, plan for 10 to 20 inches of ease. This means a 45-inch-wide fabric would fit about a 30-inch hip. But even petite figures look great in 55- or 60-inch-wide bog coats, provided the right drapery fabric is used, perhaps belted or otherwise nipped in at the waist. If the garment is too big for your taste, trim off a few inches from the selvage next time to reduce the circumference, and if needed, add bands to the sleeves to lengthen them.

If you have plenty of fabric, use these guidelines: For a shrug, measure shoulder to waist, double that, and add 2 inches. For all other vests, tunics, jackets, or robes, measure from the shoulder to the desired hemline and add 16 inches (or whatever your preferred armhole depth is); add an extra ½ yard for pockets, bands, and trim.



A bog coat can be formal or sporty. This reversible two-toned jacket features patch pockets that make it extra functional. Any of these designs can be cut with a variety of sleeve lengths and widths—and even sleeveless to make a vest.

Finishing options

These coats are fun to make because the sewing is minimal, but the creative expression is unlimited. Let the fabric set the pace, and then trim with design and delight.

There are many ways to finish the edges, you can bind the edges with a coordinating trim; turn the edges under and stitch; overcast the edges with a serger; or line the entire jacket to the edge with a contrast lining.

Bind the edges with fabric.



Bind the edges with trim.



Line the entire jacket in contrasting fabric.



Buttons, clasps, and ties close the jackets shown on these pages. You can invent your own closures.