

Fitting a Sleeveless Garment

When it's sleeveless
it's all about
the armhole

BY KENNETH D. KING

As I travel throughout the country, it's clear that the vest is a perennially popular garment to make. When it fits properly, it gives a good line to all the figures. However, if there is a full bust, the armhole gaps in front, making the whole garment look sloppy. If there is a prominent shoulder blade in back, the armhole gaps as well. Here, using these basic fitting principles shown at right, I'll show you how to make the armhole fit smoothly, front and back. In your fitting, you can change one or the other or both. Strangely, fitting the armhole greatly improves the fit of the entire garment.

Kenneth D. King designs and teaches in Manhattan.

With a perfect armhole, the whole vest fits better.

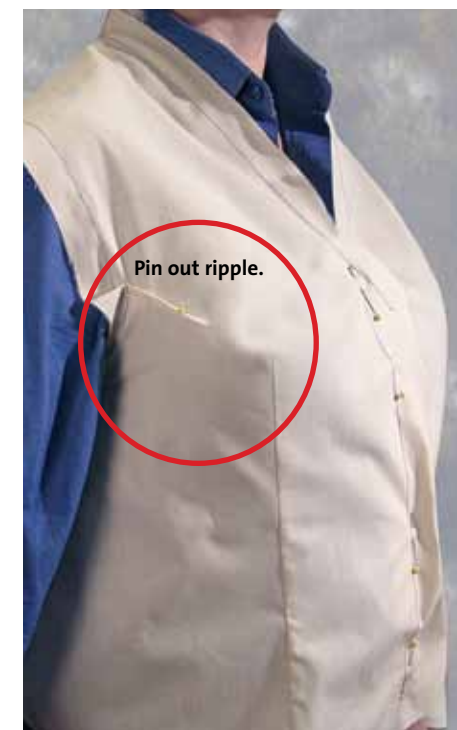


First, study the muslin

The best fitting starts with a muslin test garment, which enables you to analyze the fit and pin out the problems. The muslin then shows you exactly what marks to move to your pattern to begin the alterations.



Gapping ripple.



Pin out ripple.



Back armhole ripple

One look at the front of this classic vest is all you need to see the ripple that comes off the armhole, pointing toward the bust. Generally this ripple doesn't go all the way to the bust point, but stops about 2 inches away from the armhole. This ripple indicates the need for a net loss alteration at the armhole to reduce the armhole circumference.

Pin out the excess fabric at the armhole. Make the area around the armhole sit smoothly against the torso. The amount folded out represents the net loss.

The back view reveals another ripple coming from the armhole. This ripple is also a net loss, resulting from a prominent shoulder blade. These ripples can fall anywhere on the front or back or both armholes. Pin out the excess fabric just as you did on the front. Make that area lie smoothly. This also represents a net loss in the pattern.

THE THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PATTERN FITTING

Apply these principles to fit your patterns perfectly right at the source of the problem. Each principle has a predictable result. Study the drag lines in your muslin to determine which principle to apply. Note that you may need to apply multiple principles while fitting a single garment.

1 NET LOSS
If an area is too large, subtract fabric.

2 NET GAIN
If an area is too small, add fabric.

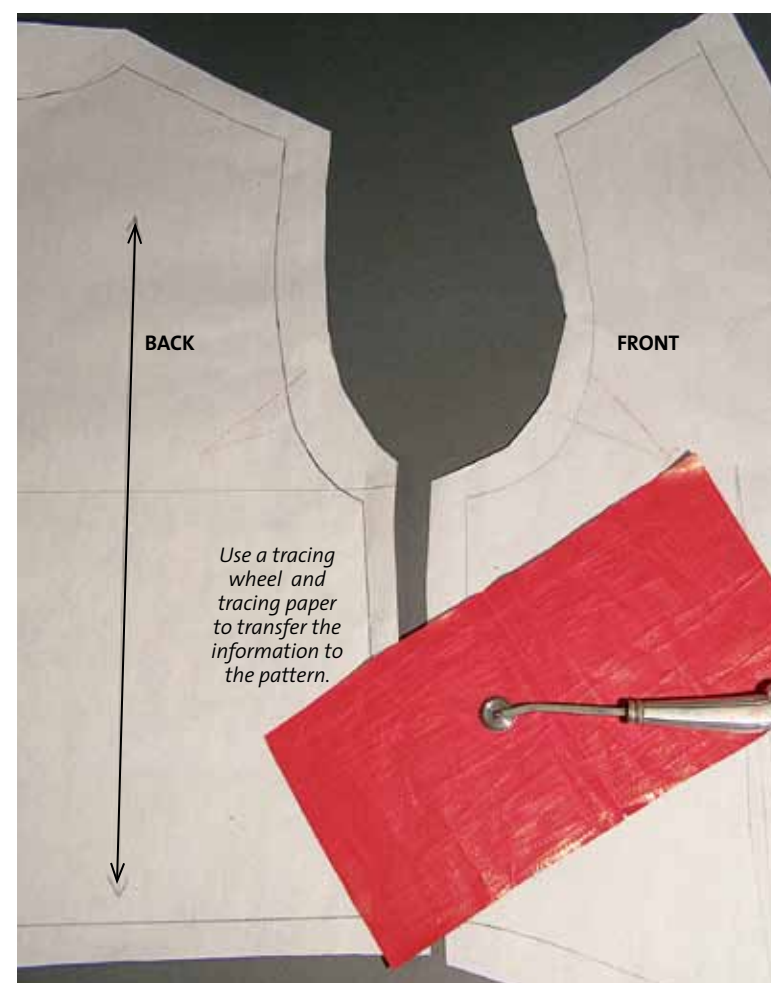
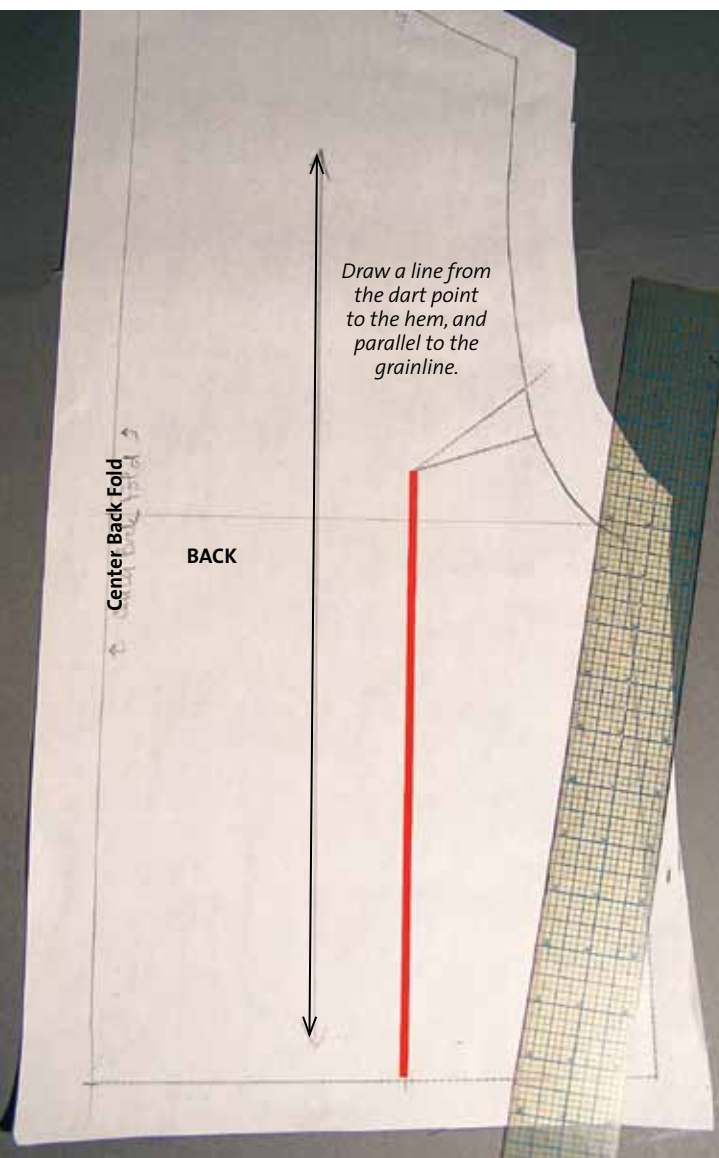
3 NO NET CHANGE
If an area is the wrong shape, redistribute.

Photo credit here

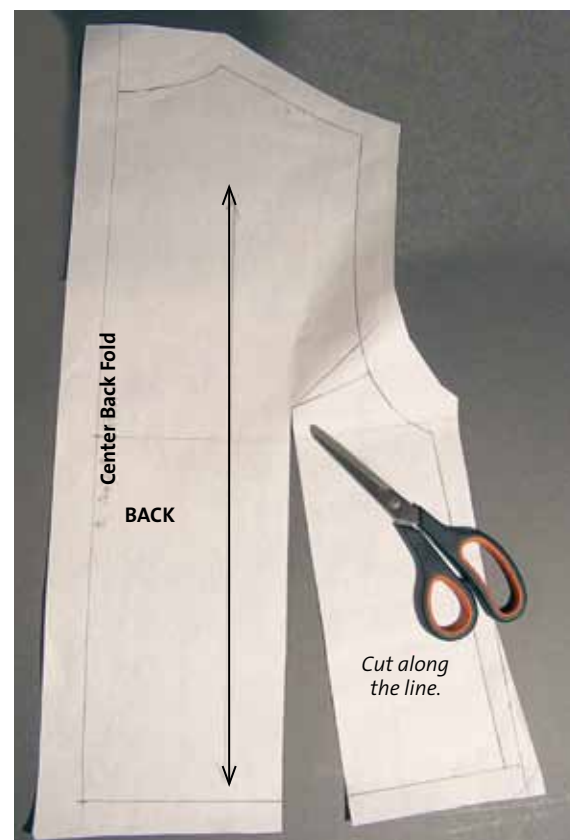
Then, alter the back armhole

Next, transfer the alterations from the muslin to the paper pattern. These alterations are represented by the red tracing paper marks. This is a net loss adjustment.

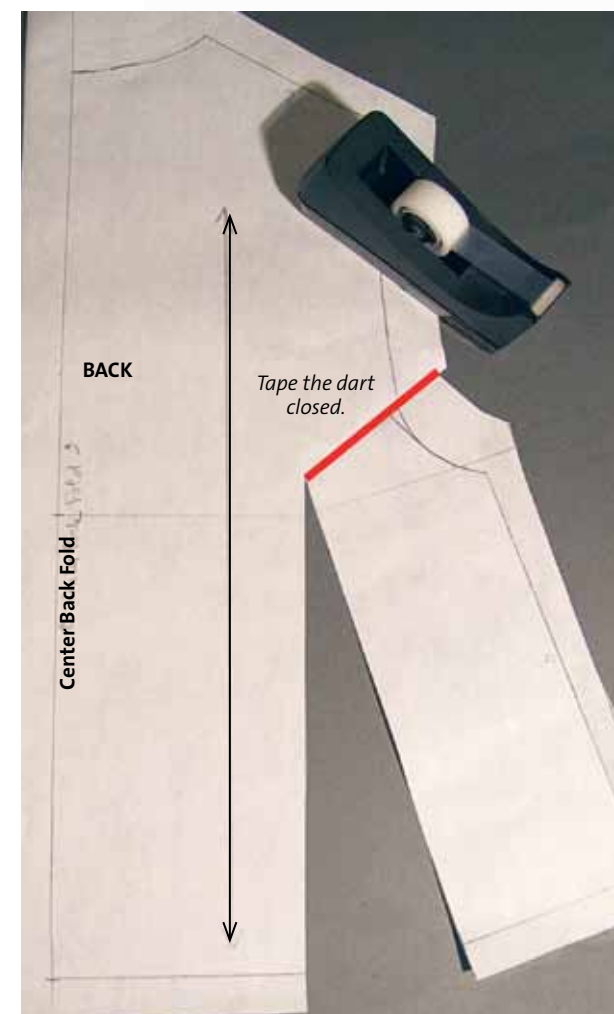
- 1 Transfer the information from the muslin to the pattern. The alterations are highlighted in red. These are the areas where the net loss occurs.
- 2 On the back, draft a line from the dart point to the hem, and parallel to the grainline.



- 3 Cut on the line. Cut up from the hem to the dart point. Notice how the pattern buckles at the armhole when the pattern is spread.



- 4 Fold out the armhole dart. Tape the dart closed. The net loss in the armhole has rotated to where the paper was cut and spread. Spreading the paper pattern in this case causes the side seam to flare.



- 5 Correct the flared side seam. Measure the distance of the spread at the hem.

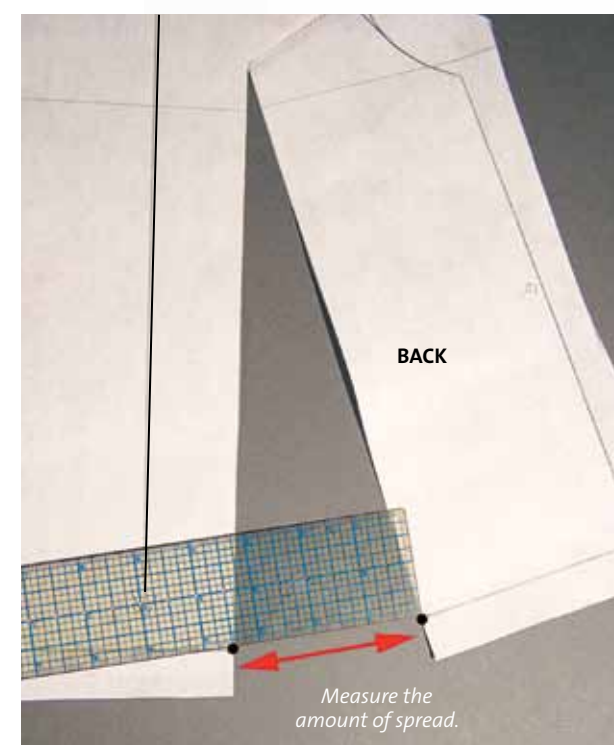
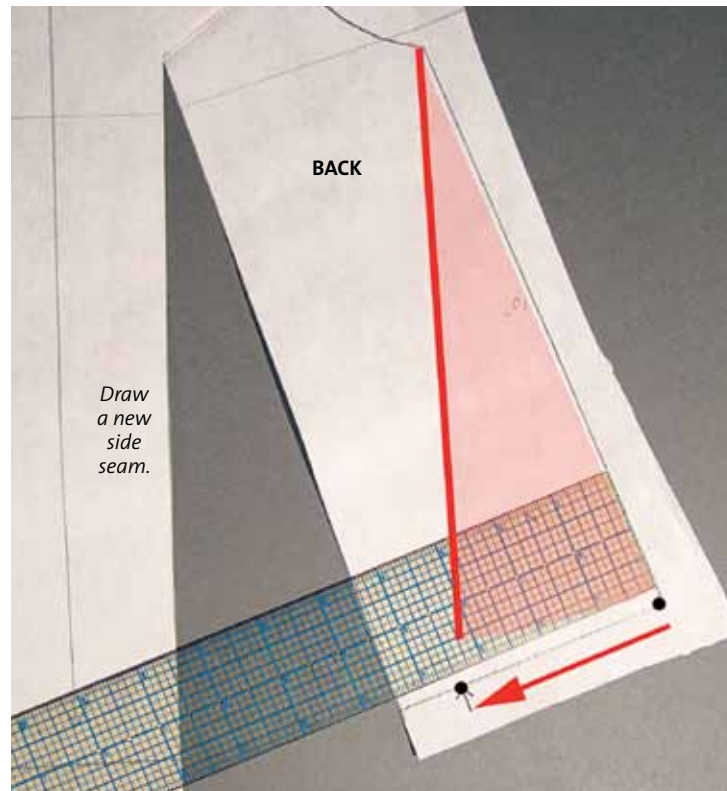


Photo credit: here

continued >>>

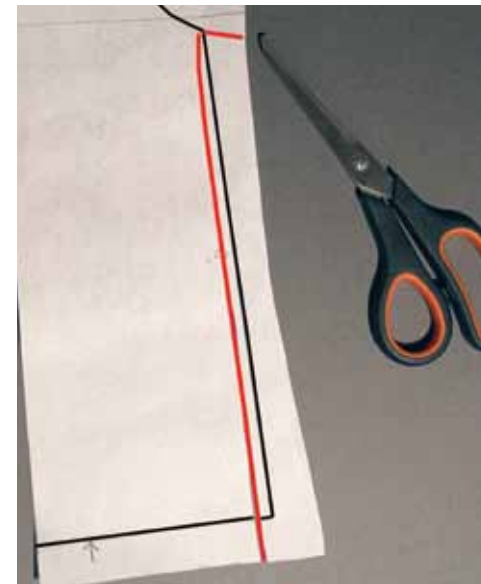
continued from page tk

6 Measure the distance from step 5 from the side seam in along the hem. Mark the amount you just measured. Return the hemline to its original length. The shaded area in this photograph represents the amount to remove from the side to correct for the distortion.

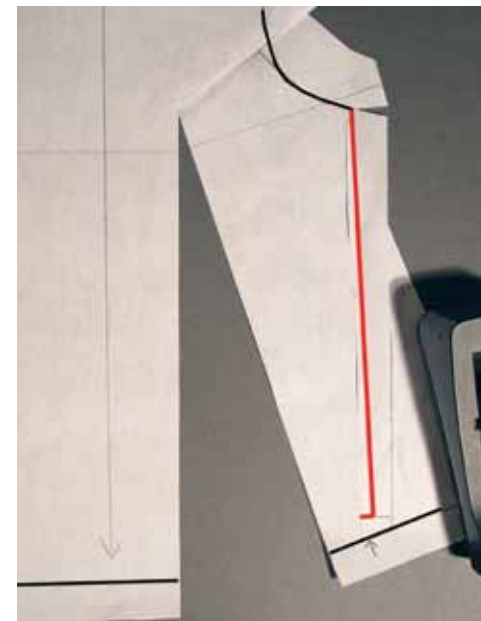


Draw a new side seam.

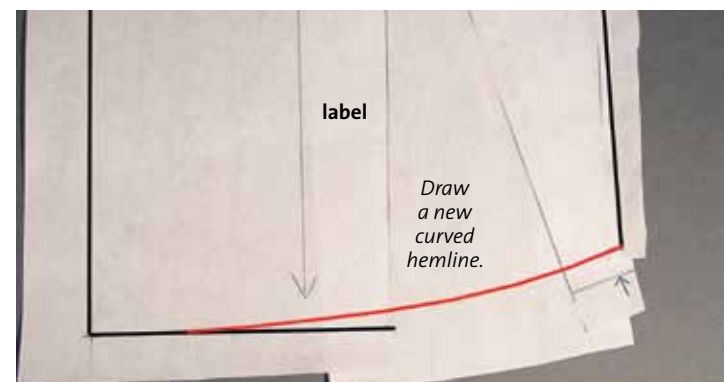
7 Cut the pattern from the left of the side seam to the armhole. Stop at the armhole seamline. Clip through the seam allowance at the same seamline, leaving a connecting hinge. This allows you to pivot the side seam hem toward the center back.



8 Pivot the side seam to the mark you made earlier. By restoring the hem circumference, you remove the flare.



9 Draft a new hemline. Make a gentle curve from the side seam, blending the original hemline toward the center back. Note how the hem curves up towards the side seam—this amount represents the net loss. The excess amount at the armhole is shifted to the hem at the side, where it falls off the pattern.



Draw a new curved hemline.

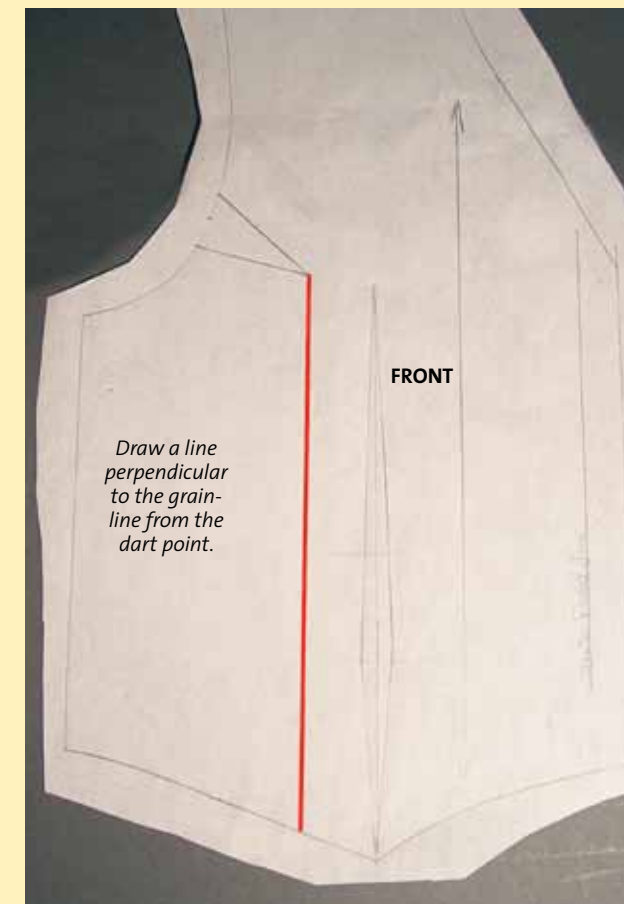
Tip

TIP Lead In. incil ulput nibh etum in heniam, conulla am, quis nim zzrit am irit alis niamcon ullaor alit lor ipsulla am, quis nim zzrit am irit alis niamcon ullaor alit lor ipsusci liquisc iduipsusto exusci liquisc iduipsusto.

Finally, adjust the front armhole

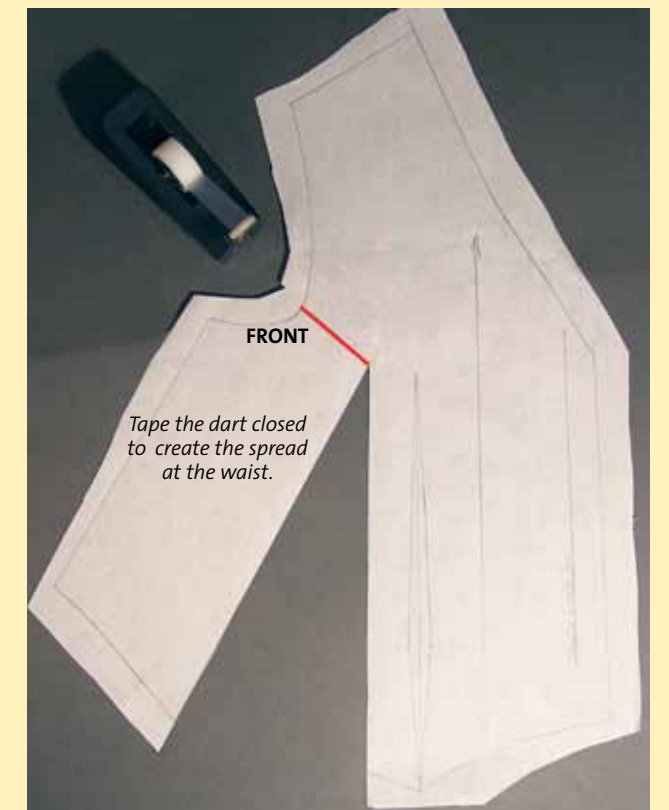
When fitting over a fuller bust, it is preferable to have multiple darts, rather than one dart. In this operation, we'll eventually create a second vertical dart on the front, which takes the net loss from the armhole. Start with the front pattern by marking the dart you pinned in the muslin coming off the armhole. This is the net loss amount.

1 Draft a line from the dart point to the hem. Make it parallel to the existing vertical dart if there is one. Cut along this line. Cut from the hemline to the dart point.



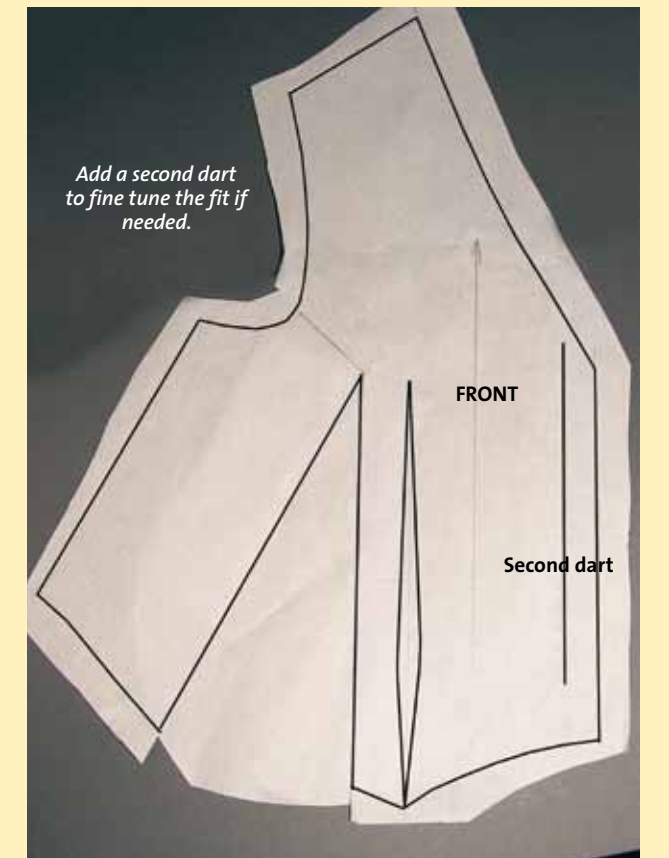
Draw a line perpendicular to the grain-line from the dart point.

2 Fold the dart closed and tape it. This causes the paper to spread at the line, rotating the net loss to the region where the paper spreads.



Tape the dart closed to create the spread at the waist.

3 Tape paper under the gap and draft the seam lines. The net loss here is removed when you sew the dart closed—the excess makes a second vertical dart, which shapes nicely over the fuller bust.



Add a second dart to fine tune the fit if needed.

If you missed any of Kenneth's Smart Fitting Series, look for the following articles in previous issues of Threads:

- Fit the sleeve and back, issue 147
- Fine-tune a bodice front, issue 148
- Fitting over layers, issue 149

Photo credit: here