

materials

1.5m fabric for the top or 2.8m for the long dress.

Choose fabric that drapes nicely.

A reel of matching thread.

I use good quality thread that costs around \$3 or so for 100m. It is stronger in the dress, and kinder to your machine, meaning both will last longer and the environment will thank you!

About 1.5m or so of string.

Kitchen string will do, it's just to help turn the straps through.

A square of felt or sturdy fabric for the shoulder piece.

Bibs and bobs such as matching fabric scraps, beads, fancy cord, old jewellery etc. to decorate.

instructions

1

Make the ties according to the illustration.

2

Make two short lengths of tie for the belt loops, and pin them to the side seams at waist level, with the raw ends matching the raw edges of the fabric and the loop facing the dress.

3

Sew the side seams from the notch for the split up to the armhole. Use a 1.5cm seam allowance.

4

Neaten the edges with a double-turned hem using a zigzag or an overlocker.

5

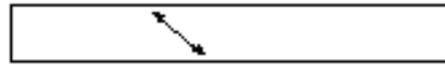
Make a neat hem below the split on each side.

6

Hem the lower edges and the armhole/neckline edges. If the fabric is very unstable along the diagonal edges of the armhole, iron a narrow strip of soft fusible interfacing along the very edge before hemming it.

7

Mark the strap attachment location according to the pattern, using pins, tailor's chalk, a few hand stitches in a contrast colour, or your favourite method.



Cut a bias strip 14cm long and 3cm wide for the belt loops.



Fold lengthwise over a long piece of sturdy string and sew 5mm from the folded edge, catching the string at one end.

Trim the seam allowance, tapering at the enclosed end.



Pull gently on the string, guiding it over the string at the enclosed end to turn the loop through, then cut off the string.

Make the belt and shoulder straps the same way, but cut the strips along the length of fabric, not the bias.

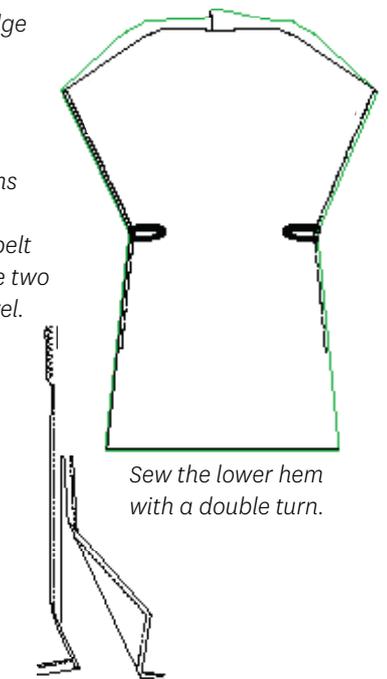
The straps need to be about 10-15cm long each, and either very narrow like the belt loops, or wider to suit yourself.

The belt can be as long as you like, but about twice your waist measurement gives you enough for a decent tie.

Neaten the top edge with a double-turned hem.

Sew the side seams to the notch, sandwiching the belt loops between the two layers at waist level.

Sew a double turn hem on the split opening.



Sew the lower hem with a double turn.

Topstitch the straps in place with the raw edges on the inside.

straps & shoulder piece

The front and back dress pieces are designed to have a strap about 10cm long. How the strap is made can vary according to your own ideas. At the simplest, you can make a tube of fabric and attach it neatly by topstitching, and if you intend to create a more elaborate shoulder decoration, I would recommend making a simple strap like this and sewing or pinning the fancy piece onto it, making it easy to remove any delicate ornamentation when it needs washing.

Found objects make nice straps, for example lacy doilies, metal chains, or short lengths of braid or ricrac. I like to rummage in the mysterious corners of op-shops, where I often find bundles of cool haberdashery leftovers.

The short tunic top has a shoulder piece made from an unusual handbag. It was made of flat wooden discs in graduated shades of orange, with coordinating string encased in plastic tubing for handles. I carefully unpicked it, saving as much of the structure as I could while making it fit the shoulder shape I wanted. I stitched it onto felt for support and comfort, and used the string handles, without the tubing, as tassels.

The long caftan has a shoulder piece made from assorted fabric scraps chosen to match the colours in the print, and in the same proportions.

I made yo-yos from circles (there are plenty of tutorials on the internet) and stitched them to a felt backing.

I then added some buttons and beads to fill in the gaps. I attached it to the dress with press studs.

Because the dress is so simple to make, the shoulder piece is worth spending some time on. It took me less than an hour to sew each dress, but more than three to make the shoulder pieces!

the how-to...

The following sequence shows the basic method I use to make the shoulder pieces. Of course, if yo-yos aren't your thing, you can attach anything to the felt layer. Go wild!



I arranged and stitched the yo-yos onto a felt backing, then stitched on the buttons, beads and a thread for extra detail. I used a second piece of felt to cover up the messy first lot of stitching, and add a little more oomph.



Most of the yo-yos are attached unobtrusively, but I wanted to give the solid cream yoyo a bit more definition. I used a large stitch in a contrasting colour thread to tie it in with the other colours.



I used press studs to attach the shoulder piece to the dress. I wouldn't like to put the felt through a washing machine, but the rest of the dress will be no trouble.

