



“My shoulders are just so narrow”

BODY SHAPE triangle

Key characteristics: narrow shoulders with torso gradually widening to fuller hips and thighs

The query: What top styles should I be looking for to make my shoulders look broader, and how do I go about measuring my shoulders and adjusting patterns to ensure a good fit?

Elena says: Wear neckline styles that will elongate your small shoulders, such as bateau, off-the-shoulders, wide V and square necklines. Wide shoulder straps and gathered and ruched sleeves will also give the illusion of broader shoulders.

- Measure your shoulders from the base of your neck to the edge of your shoulder joint. Make the pattern adjustment for your sloping shoulders by lowering the shoulder seam and armhole by equal amounts according to the amount suggested by your fitting. To adjust patterns for narrow shoulders mark your personal measurement on the pattern's shoulder seam and redraw the armhole curve from your shoulder seam mark to the lowered armhole point.

The wide V-neck on Butterick 8985 will help to balance out narrow shoulders. Pattern from www.sewdirect.com priced £750 and available in sizes 6-22

CHOOSE
HORIZONTAL
STRIPES AND
EMBELLISHED
SHOULDERS

"I can never find a dress to fit me!"

BODY SHAPE

inverted triangle

Key characteristics: large bust, broad shoulders, slim waist, hips and legs

The query: My top half is a size 18 and nearly two dress sizes bigger than my hips. I have real difficulty finding dresses that look nice, so I want to make one that fits me perfectly. What would be a good style for me to start with, and which areas of the pattern will I need to pay particular attention to?

Lisa says: I would start with something like a simple shift dress. Choose a pattern that has a bust dart and a size that best fit your bust. Ideally the pattern will just be straight down from there and you will be able to remove some of the fullness from the side seams and the centre back seam. Using a metre stick, simply draw a gradual line from below the bust dart to the closer fitting size for the hem. If you are feeling more confident, then another great dress would be a fitnes-style pattern like our Betty dress. This will give more balance as the full circle skirt will give you more shape at your hips and make your waist look really small.



The shift style of the Simplicity 3853 has a real retro 60s vibe. Available in sizes 6-22, £4.08 from www.simplicitynewlook.com

How do you know if your back is broad or narrow?

ELENA PINTUS PROVIDES CLUES THAT WILL TELL YOU IF YOUR BACK IS BROAD OR NARROW FOR THE PATTERN YOU ARE USING

When you measure across the back pattern piece from the centre back to the side seam at the armhole notches and multiply this by two (excluding the seam allowances), if you have a narrow back, the overall measurement will be bigger than your back measurement. Another indication is the presence of vertical wrinkles down the back when trying on the garment.

NARROW BACK

Some patterns come with an adjustment line for narrow or broad backs drawn on. If your pattern doesn't, draw a vertical line down from the shoulder, starting 3cm from the armhole and ending just below the bottom of the armhole. Draw a second line out to the side of the pattern at a right angle from this point.

1 Cut along the two lines, and slide the armhole side over, lapping the paper. Stick in place. There are no hard and fast rules, but generally a 5mm adjustment is enough. Play around with this amount as you develop your skills.

2 Use a ruler and pencil to match up and redraw the side seam. NOTE You'll need to make the front shoulder a little shorter to match.

BROAD BACK

Measure across the back pattern piece from the centre back to the side seam at the armhole notches and multiply this by two. If you have a broad back, the overall pattern measurement is bigger than your back measurement by 2.5cm or less, so you will

need to adjust the pattern for a broader back. When you try on the tissue pattern or toile, you will know if you need to adjust your pattern to a broader fit it:

1 The upper sleeves at the front will feel tight when you reach forward

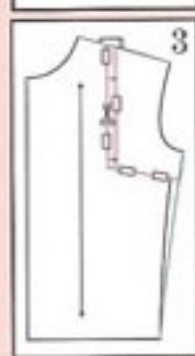
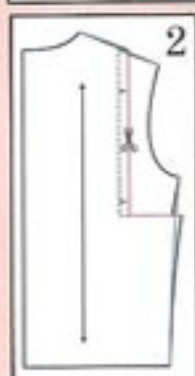
2 Your garment wrinkles at the sides

3 Your garment's back shoulder seam won't fall in line with the edge of your shoulder and falls inward instead.

1 Start in the same way as for a narrow back adjustment, drawing the two lines and cutting out the armhole section.

2 Instead of overlapping the cut pattern pieces, spread them apart. Again, there are no rules, but a 6-12mm adjustment is usually enough.

3 Fill in the space with some tracing paper and stick the pieces together. Use a ruler and a pencil to match up and redraw the outside of the side seam. Again, you'll need to adjust the front shoulder, making it a little longer to match.



When doing an alteration for a narrow back, the waist and hem remain unchanged. In case of a flat bottom, and a longer garment such as a dress, make the alteration all the way down to the hem by tucking in the amount to be taken in all the way along the vertical line.