

# Regency Spencer/Pelisse Pattern Instructions

*Sette and Semblable patterns...  
of Regency Spencer Jacket &  
Pelisse Pattern*



**Note: These photo instructions work for both the women's and girls' Spencer/Pelisse patterns.**

## Notes:

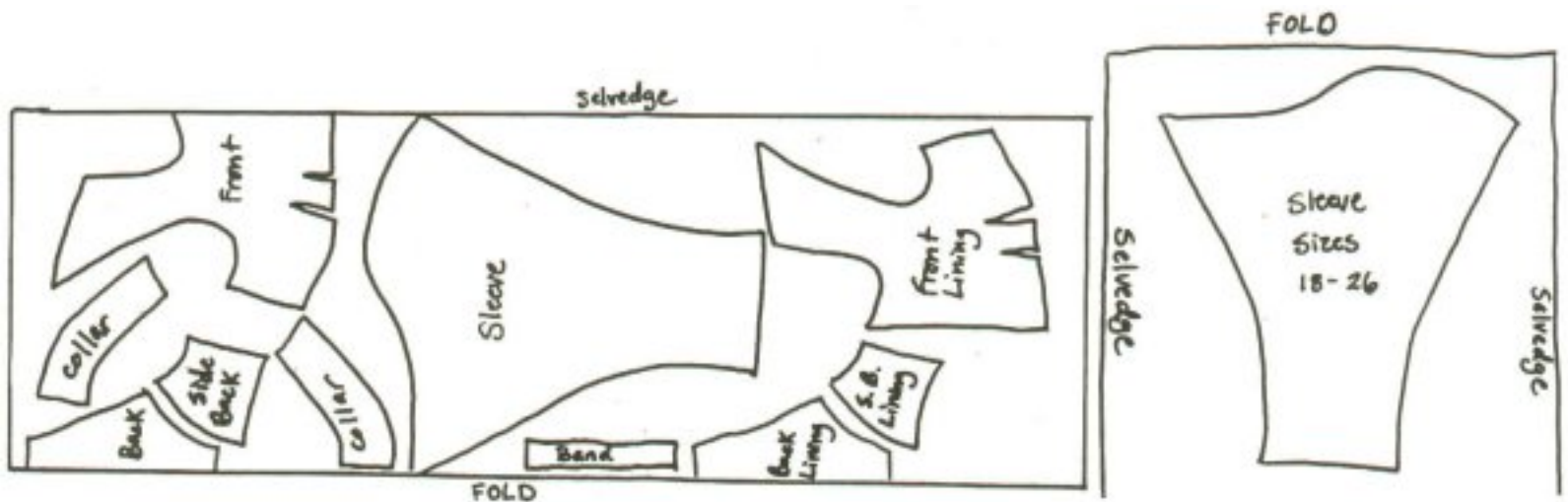
The Spencer jacket actually started out as a fashion for men around 1795. It was named for the Earl of Spencer, who popularized the short jacket, and it was quickly modified for women. The jacket and its variations became a popular accessory for the following 30 years. I created this pattern by studying several extant Spencer jackets and pelisses in three different museum collections as well as Janet Arnold's excellent pattern notes. This pattern may be used in many different ways. I have designed the pieces to allow for a maximum number of style options, and, truly, your imagination is the only limit! The pattern cover cannot show you all the possibilities, but I hope to give you some idea of the versatility of the pattern itself in these instructions. What you see on the cover are only three variations on a theme. First is a double-breasted pelisse (coat), which can, of course, also be made up as a Spencer jacket without the coat "skirt." Second is a Spencer jacket that does not overlap in front and features "frogs" at the closure. Finally, you see a sleeveless pelisse that closes in the same manner. You can, of course, combine any of these options to come up with other variations, including a double-breasted sleeveless pelisse with or without the upper collar, a long coat with a non-overlapping front, etc. [Note: The "DD" pattern option has been made with a single overlap or non-overlapping closure only, since the double-breasted option did not flatter the "DD" figure.] Pattern pieces for pelisse "skirts" have not been included, since they are extremely simple and easy to do, and leaving them out cut printing costs in half. I provide instructions on how to measure for your skirts and determine how much fabric to purchase below.

Recommended fabrics for Spencer jackets and pelisses include linen, silk, velvet, broadcloth, wool, lightweight brushed denim and other fabrics of similar weight. Jackets from this time period were typically lined with silk or muslin. Those with collars that fold out are self-lined or at least self-faced in the front (as you will see demonstrated below). You do not need to line the sleeves, but I have seen lined sleeves from this time period (particularly for winter wear with heavier fabrics like wool). However, the lining yardage requirements given do not include the sleeves. If you wish to line those, you'll need to add the correct amount to your lining allowance (measure the sleeve pattern piece, then double it if you are using 45"-wide material, which must be doubled to fit the sleeve). The lining for the bodice front can be done in one of two ways if you'll be using the foldout collar option. Self-lining is the easiest option, but if you are using an expensive fashion material and wish to save on costs, you might choose to face the front of the jacket rather than self-line it. You can then cut your facing out of the leftover fashion material

instead of purchasing enough for the full bodice lining. Cut out an inexpensive lining and sew the facing over the front of the lining at the collar extension. This method is illustrated below.

You can make your Spencer/pelisse as plain or as fancy as your taste dictates. Sturdy outerwear for fall or winter was not often trimmed heavily, but many of the lighter-weight jackets and long vest-style pelisses featured tassels, braid, cording, ribbons and piping. I've also seen fashion plates depicting fur used on the edges of collars, cuffs and around the bottom of longer coats. Military-style Spencer jackets seem to have been especially popular in the early Regency-right after this style was adapted from the man's fashion. I've also seen military braiding and cording used later (the extant example I studied was circa 1819). There are so many possibilities, and you can have a fantastic time trying them all out as you expand your Regency wardrobe!

## Pattern layout:



Here is the suggested layout for the pattern pieces on 54"-wide material. Layout is essentially the same for 45"-wide material except that you have to open out the fabric and double it to fit the sleeve pattern (selvages along each edge rather than folded to meet each other).

## Assembly Instructions:

- 1. A Quick Note on Measurements:** Make sure you have your measurements taken over whatever undergarments you'll be wearing. You do not need to measure over a gown, however, even though the jacket/pelisse will be worn over a dress. The pattern was designed with enough ease to fit comfortably over your dresses, so just go with the size that best matches your measurements taken over your undergarments. As always, I recommend sewing a muslin toile together first so you can check the fit. This is especially important if you'll be wearing your jacket/pelisse over top of modern underthings rather than period stays, etc. I designed the Spencer/pelisse to be worn over Regency stays (corset), but it will also work over a regular bra with careful fitting of the darts. You'll note that there are different cutting lines for different cup sizes. These apply whether or not you'll be wearing period-correct underthings. (Obviously, the most important measurement for this pattern is the bustline measurement, since the jacket/pelisse is empire-waisted. So go by your bustline measure when

you choose your size. Waist and hip measurements are given for each size to help you if you plan to make a long coat, but, even then, the bustline measure is the most vital.) Sewing together a toile of inexpensive material always saves time in the end, since you can adjust the fit to suit without sacrificing any fashion material. Once this is accomplished, you can take apart the toile and use it as your pattern, and you can also use the toile as a lining if you like.

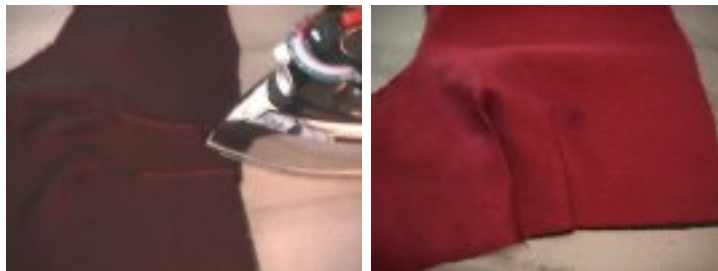
## 2. Bodice

A. Sew the darts in the front of your fashion material, using a 3/8" seam. Press toward side seam.



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

*These photographs show one dart being sewn from bottom to top. Note that the 3/8" seam is kept all the way to the end, and that the top of the dart follows a slight curve before ending at the edge of the fabric.*

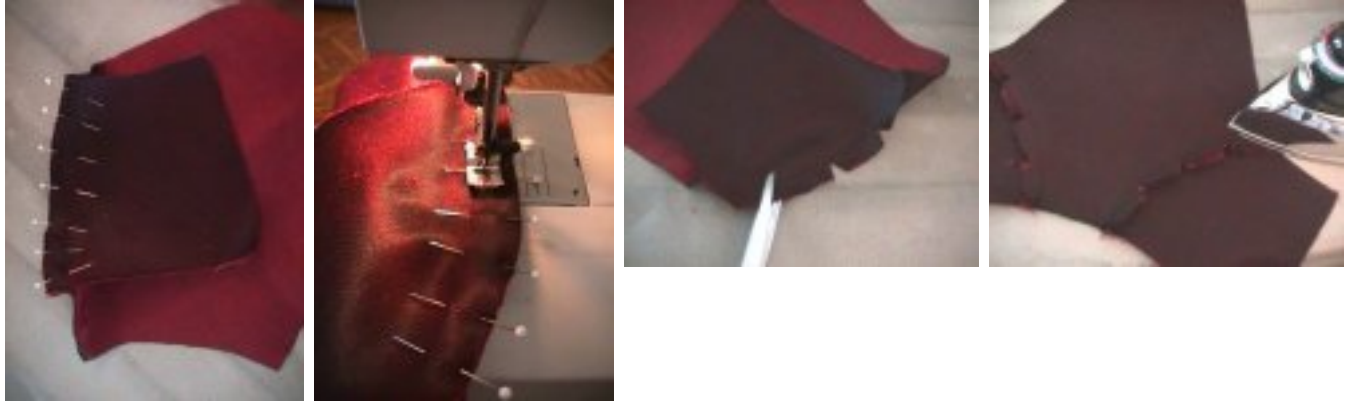


(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

*Darts are pressed to the side in the photo at left. At right, you see the finished darts.*

B. Pin the side backs to the center backs, matching notches. If you are using a very stretchy material (like a wool blend or linen), you will need to ease the side backs into the curve of the center back piece. (If you don't, you'll end up with "leftover" material at the armhole. You can just trim away any excess without harm, but if you like things to match exactly, I recommend running the easing stitches.)  
Stitch. Press seams toward side.

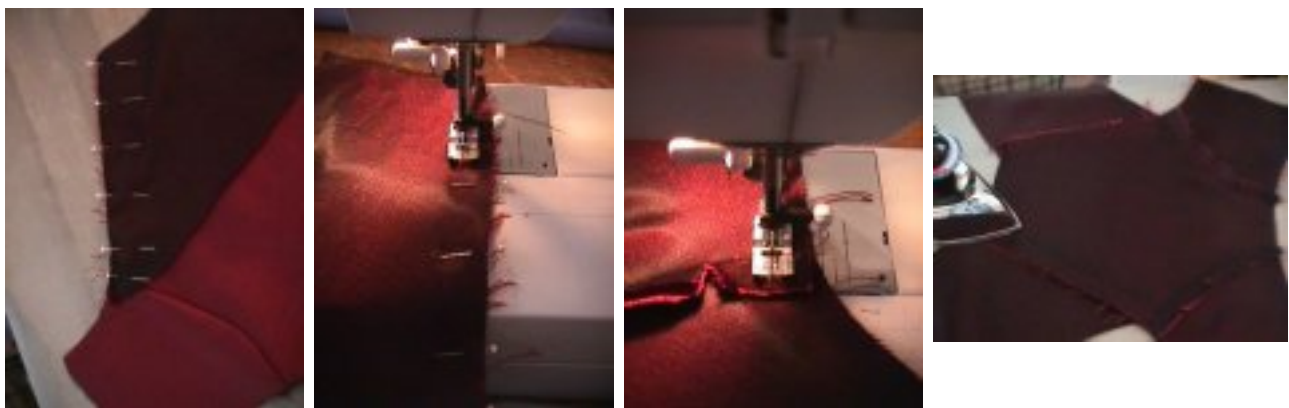




(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Side back pinned; stitching the side back seam; clipping curves; pressing seams down.*

C. Pin shoulders to bodice back, matching notches. Stitch. Press seams upward.



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Shoulder seam pinned; beginning to stitch the shoulder seam; terminating the shoulder seam at the side back seam; pressing seams up (away from back).*

D. Repeat steps A-C for lining. If you'll be using a facing made of your fashion material, finish the raw edges along the curve with an overlock stitch or narrow hem. Pin facing to the lining front as shown below, then stitch in place.



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Finishing edge of lining with overlock stitch; facing pinned to lining; stitching the facing to the lining; facing stitched to lining.*

E. If you are making a jacket or pelisse with a collar, now is the time to put your collar together. If you are using stiff

material or prefer a floppy collar, you will not need interfacing. If you'd like your collar to hold its shape well, though (or would like it to stand up in back), use interfacing. Sew the center backs of the collar pieces together, using a 5/8" seam. Press seam open. If you're using interfacing, use the stitched collar as a pattern piece to cut out your interfacing in one piece. Pin interfacing to collar and baste, using a 3/8" seam. (The piece with interfacing sewn to it will be the bottom of your collar when you pin the collar to your neckline.) Pin collar pieces, right sides together. Stitch down the short side, around the curve, and back up the short side, using a 3/8" seam. Clip corners and curves. If you've used interfacing, grade the seam allowance. Turn right-side out and press.



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Center back of collar pinned; back collar seam pressed open; collar pieces pinned, right sides together; collar curves clipped.*



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Clipping collar corner; grading collar seam allowance; grading complete; pressing completed collar.*

F. Pin collar to neckline of jacket, matching center back of jacket with center back seam of collar. Baste in place.



(Click thumbnail for larger image.)

*Collar pinned to jacket neckline.*

G. Pin lining over jacket (and collar if you're using it), right sides together. Stitch up from the bottom of the front opening all the way around to the bottom of the other side. Grade seams, then clip corners and curves (taking great care where the collar ends, since it is a bit tough to clip that curve). Turn right-side out and press. (If you're making the sleeveless pelisse, you'll turn the bodice right side out by pulling the fronts through the shoulders and out the back.)



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

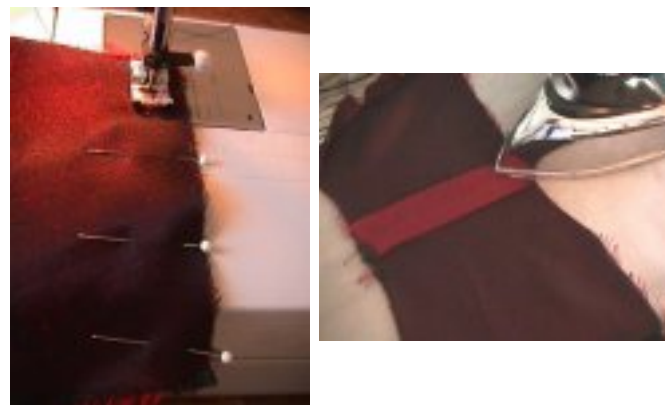
Left to Right: *Lining pinned to jacket; clipping corners; clipping neckline curves.*



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Second curve clipped at neckline (close to collar); neckline seam allowance graded; jacket turned and pressed.*

H. Sew side seams of jacket/pelisse together. Repeat for side seams of lining. Press seams open. Now you can have a try-on to see how you're doing!



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Stitching side seam; side seam pressed open.*





(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

*Testing the fit!*

### 3. Sleeves

A. Sew wristbands by folding in half and stitching across the top and down the long side with the presser foot at the very edge of the fabric (scant seam). Clip corners, turn and press. Turning can be tough with stiff fabric. I recommend using a bodkin.

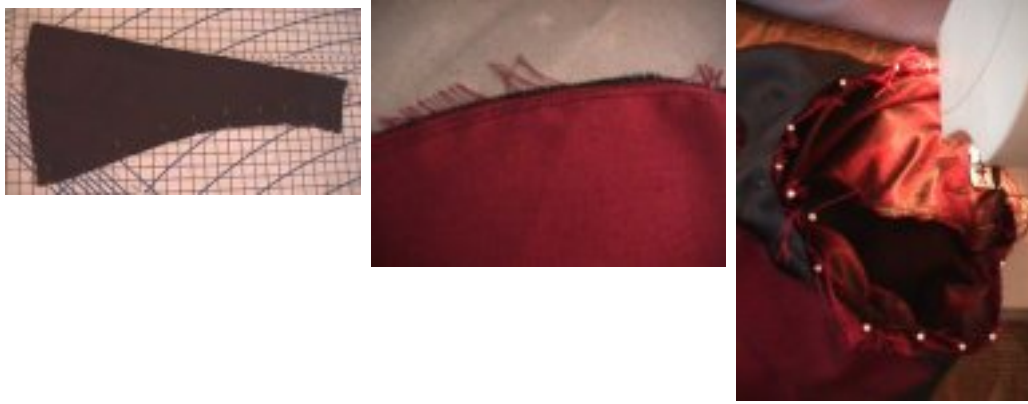
B. Pin wristbands to “star” marking on sleeve and baste in place. Pin sleeve seams together, making sure you catch only the basted end of each wristband. Stitch. Turn sleeves right side out and run gathering stitches in the top of the sleeve as marked.



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Sewing wristband; wristband turned and pressed; basting wristband to sleeve.*

C. Pin sleeves into armholes, matching the sleeve seam with the jacket side back seam at the armhole. Pull up gathers to fit the armhole between the side back seam and the top of the shoulder (marked on the pattern). Distribute gathers evenly within this area, since this allows for maximum movement and a comfortable fit. Stitch sleeve into armhole, taking care to give the side back seam a little bit of a “wide berth” so that you don’t end up with any raw edges sticking out.



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Sleeve pinned; gathers in top of sleeve; stitching pinned sleeve into armhole.*



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left: *Incorrectly sewn armhole seam, showing raw edge sticking out.* Right: *Correctly sewn armhole seam, all neat and fine!*

#### 4. Finishing the Jacket

A. Turn up the bottom of the jacket and the lining so that they face each other. Slipstitch closed. (If you're making a pelisse, skip this step and see skirt instructions below.)



(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Left to Right: *Pinning jacket lining to jacket at bottom edge; bottom edge pinned; view of jacket back with bottom edge pinned.*

B. If you're making double-breasted Spencer, try it on and mark four buttonholes for the overlap, using the buttonhole guide given on the bodice front piece. Make buttonholes and sew buttons that correspond on the opposite side.





(Click thumbnail for larger image.)  
*Buttonholes completed on spencer jacket front.*

C. Make one buttonhole in each wristband and pull each around your wrist to determine where the corresponding button should go.



(Click thumbnail for larger image.)  
*Buttonhole on wristband.*

D. Hem sleeve ends with a narrow hem (whipstitching in place). If you lined your sleeves, you can simply slipstitch the sleeve ends to the lining as you did for the bottom of the bodice.

E. If you're making a non-overlapping jacket or pelisse, sew your frog closures in place on the front of the jacket.

*Voilà!*



*Click thumbnails for larger images.*

- **Creating a Skirt for a Long Coat or Pelisse** [Photos shown are for girls' long coat.]

A. The first thing you need to decide is how long you want your skirt. This will determine exactly how much fabric you will need to purchase. Simply hold your measuring tape directly beneath your bustline and let it fall to the floor. Mark the point on the tape where you'd like the hemline of your coat or pelisse to hit. (Vest-style pelisses were often knee-length rather than ankle-length like the coats of the time.) Take this measurement and add enough for a hem (one inch is plenty). Double this number (for front and back), and that's how much fabric you'll need (either 45"-wide or 54"-wide).

B. Skirts on most long coats of this period were rectangles cut to the proper length. This is the easiest way to cut your skirt pieces, but if you prefer a bit of an "A" line at your natural waist and over the hips, you can use my Regency Gown pattern skirt front piece as a guideline or use the hipline indicator on a French curve tool. Whatever you decide to do, you will need to measure properly to figure out how wide to cut your skirt front (the skirt back is meant to be gathered or pleated and can be cut the full width of your material). If you are starting from the beginning and haven't already made your bodice, go ahead and sew up the darts of your toile now. This will eliminate the darts from your figuring (far easier than trying to subtract the seam allowance for your cup size along the proper line!). Now measure the toile from the front edge to the side seam. That is how wide you need to cut your skirt front pieces, allowing for a 5/8" seam at the side and 5/8" to turn under for a hem at the front edge. (Note: if you are making a heavy-duty coat, I strongly recommend lining the skirt. This eliminates any hemming stitches on the front of the coat skirt and gives the coat a wonderful drape.)

C. Cut out your skirt front and back according to the length you've determined.



*Left: Front of coat skirt cut to desired length; Right: Back of coat skirt cut to desired length on fold.*

(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

Sew skirts together at the side seams, then run gathering stitches across the top of the skirt back (eliminate the gathering stitches if you plan to pleat the skirt back--my example here is pleated). Pin skirt to bodice, matching side seams and center backs and keeping lining free. Pull up gathers or place pleats. Stitch.



*Left: Pinning pleats to fit across back of coat; Right: Finished coat back with pleats in place.*

(Click thumbnails for larger images.)

D. Finish by turning lining under and whipstitching over waistline seam allowance. If you didn't line or face the skirt, turn under your allowance on the front edge and stitch in place. Repeat for hem.

***Enjoy your new creation!***

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