

Becoming an SCA Clothes Horse; Making a T-Tunic

Introduction

You've been coming along to events for a while now, borrowing garb from Hospit. But you're starting to think it would be good to get your own stuff... and Hospit's starting to make some pointed general comments about getting gear back. Maybe it's time to start on that wardrobe you're always promising yourself. But where do you start; you've got no idea about sewing. Hopefully, this collegium will give you that start you need.

Getting Started; Your Measurements

	What's measured	Measurement
A	Shoulder to ground or ankles if a girl, shoulder to knees if a boy, multiplied by 2 + 5 (<i>body length + hem allowance</i>)	
B	Circumference of chest divided by 2 + 3 (<i>body width + seam allowance</i>)	
C1	Circumference of head at nose divided by 6 (<i>round neck</i>)	
C2	Circumference of neck divided by 6 (<i>keyhole neck</i>)	
D	Armpit to ground or ankles if a girl, bottom of ribs to knees if a boy + 5 (<i>gore length + hem allowance</i>)	
E	Under arm (<i>gusset</i>)	
F	Shoulder to wrist + 5 (<i>sleeve length + seam allowance</i>)	
G	Circumference of arm at shoulder + 3 (<i>width of sleeve at shoulder + seam allowance</i>)	
H	Circumference of hand at the base of the thumb + 3 (<i>width of sleeve at wrist if tapered + seam allowance</i>)	

Fabric

In an ideal world, at the least, everyone would use linen for their undergarments and woollen fabric for the over garments; or velvet or silk if late period. However, this isn't an ideal world. Linen and woollen fabrics aren't always easy to find in Australia, and wool often comes at a price that makes you freak (ditto silk and velvet). Not only that, wearing woollen clothing in an Australian summer is rarely comfortable.

When you're making your first garb, there is absolutely nothing wrong with cotton fabrics. You will no doubt find that as your Authenticity Meter goes up, you'll move away from cotton, but for a beginner, cotton is cheap and easy to find. However, try and avoid cotton/polyester mixes. They aren't as easy to work with, don't look as nice and tend to get smelly. And avoid pure polyester (unless you get into garb that uses brocade, because natural fibre brocade generally comes at around \$100 a metre).

For starting, my recommendation is to get cotton lawn for underclothes (a very lightweight cotton) and homespun or broadcloth for outer clothes. You can also find some nice cotton in quilter's shops as well. I must confess, I'm not a big fan of drill for most garb. It's very stiff, so it doesn't drape particularly well. Also, even though the weave used is highly period, it's very tight, so looks too "modern." I've also found it gets very hot and uncomfortable. That said, it's a popular choice for gambesons and other fighting garb, and makes a good lining for late period bodices (which I'm not going to talk about further).

A Last note on Linen

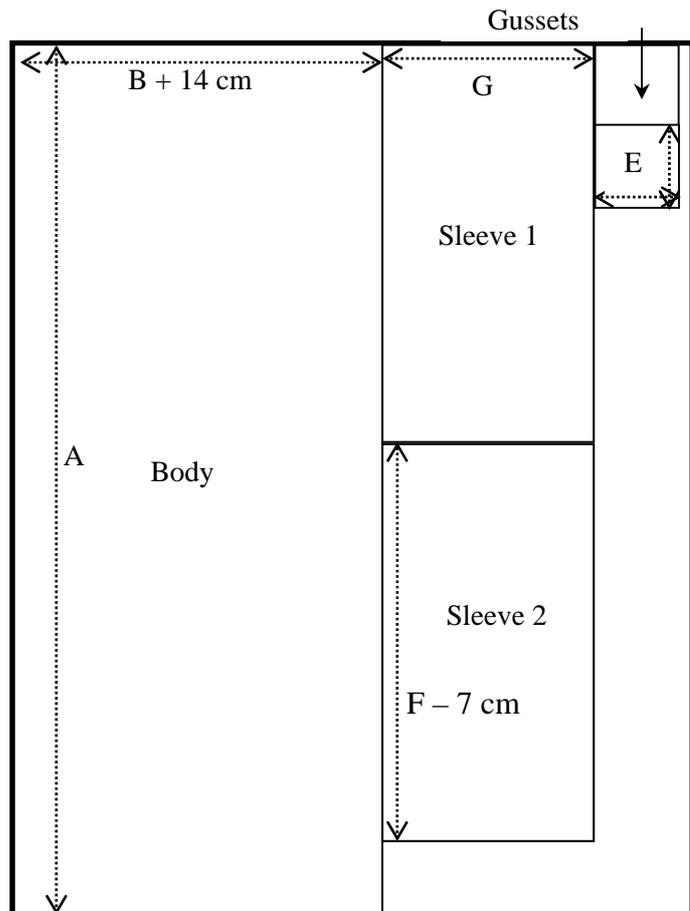
My favourite fabric for garb is linen. It wasn't used much in period for outer clothes, as it doesn't take natural dyes well, but it's lovely to work with, wears well and doesn't smell much. It does crush, but I think this improves the look. It can be expensive if you look in Australian stores; my recommendation would be to visit www.fabric-store.com, which has good quality linen, in a number of weights, in a great range of colours. Even though the postage can be steep, the fabric itself is around \$US6 a yard, and if you buy in bulk, it works out to less than \$AUS10 a yard even when you factor in postage.

Cutting Your Fabric

There are a number of patterns you can use for T-Tunics, but they are all based on rectangles and triangles. All you need are the measurements you took earlier, a straight edge and something to mark your fabric, and you can cut it. However, you will find there are certain pieces it's easy to make a pattern piece for, such as sleeves, gussets and necks.

1. The "Big Rectangle" Tunic

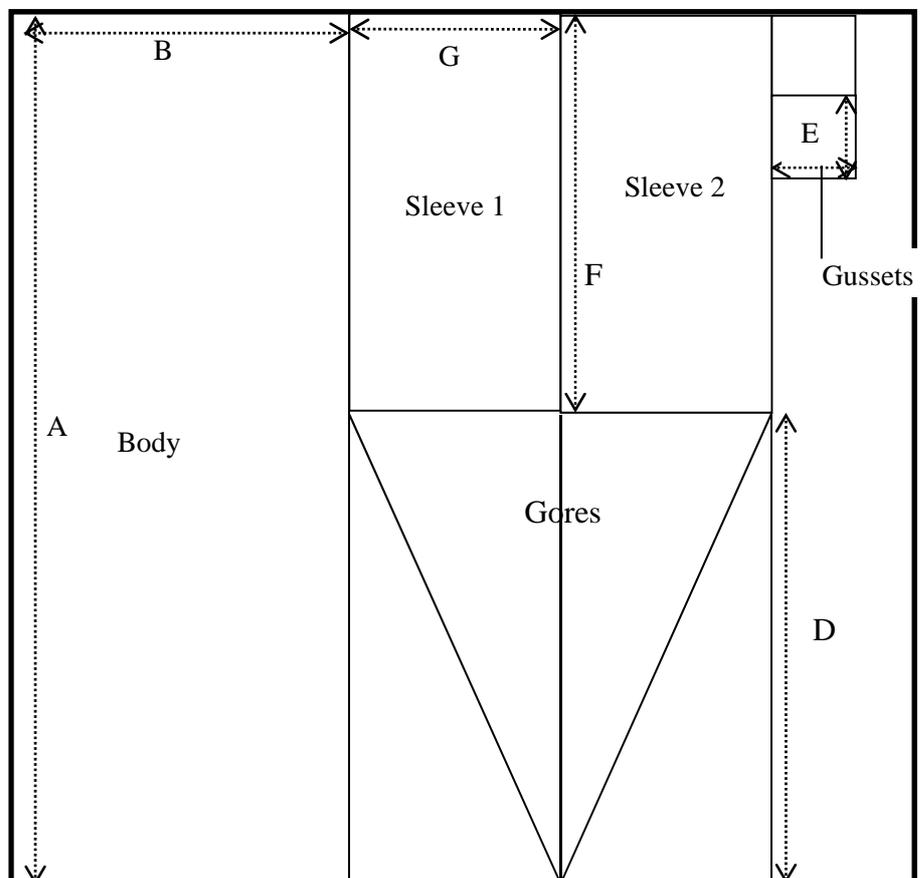
This is the most simple form of tunic, and can be dated back to about C2 AD. It's easy to cut and sew, and economical of fabric. But it's really, really baggy.



2. Tunic with Side Gores

This type of tunic really represents the beginning of shaping the garment to the body, even if it's still pretty basic. It can be dated to as early as C3 AD.

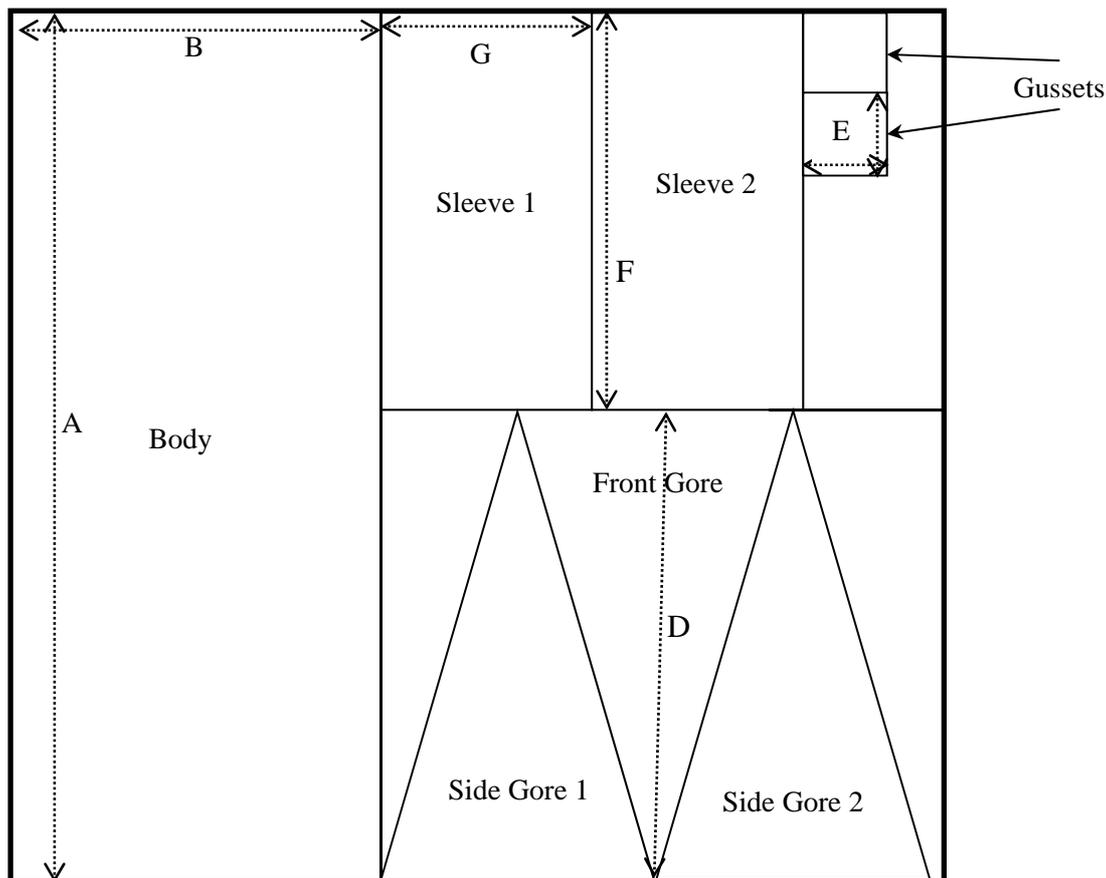
Instead of cutting four right angled triangles which you then join together, you can cut two isosceles (equal sided) triangles, but this way is



easier to cut from the first go, and may be the more authentic way of cutting. You also wind up with two gores which are more equally sized. When cutting the gores, you can make them as wide or as narrow as you like.

3. Tunic with Side and Front and Back Gores

This represents the most sophisticated incarnation of the T-Tunic, and can be dated to C12 AD.



When cutting the gores, you can make them as wide or narrow as you like. The 2 right angled triangular bits at the side are joined to become the back gore.

The “Right Side” and the “Wrong Side”

When you’re cutting your fabric, you need to determine which is the “right side” and which the “wrong side.” The right side is the side that faces out when you’re wearing it. With a patterned or textured fabric, this will be obvious. But with a plain weave, both sides look pretty much the same. However, you may find one side reflects the light slightly differently, so make sure you always mark which is the “wrong side,” say with dots in the corner of each piece. Pencil is best for this – ink tends to bleed through so you have no idea which is the right and wrong side, and chalk tends to rub off.

Putting it Together

In general, when you are putting your pieces of fabric together, you want the same “sides” to face each other when you put them together to stitch. This is why I will generally say right side to right side – you lay the pieces of material together so the right sides face each other. Then, when you have finished, all your seams will be on the same side.

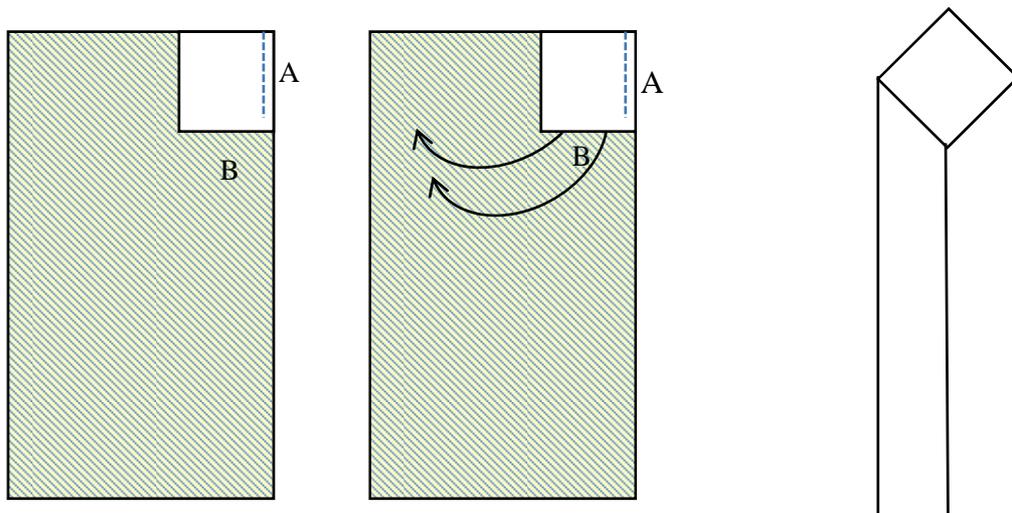
Neck

Cutting the neck can be tricky for a beginner – it’s very easy to make the blasted thing too big. This is one of those pieces, though, where you can cut yourself a template when you get it right.

1. Use your C1 or C2 measurement as the basis, depending on what sort of neck hole you want.
2. Then take 1 -2 cm off it for seam allowances, depending on how wide you want the neck hole.
3. Take a compass and draw a circle of this radius. Keep this template to use for all future tunics.
4. Fold your body piece of material in half. Mark the fold on both sides with pins.
5. To place the neck template, fold your circle template not in half, but 1/3 – 2/3. Then put the 1/3 bit at the back of the tunic and the 2/3 bit at the front. This will mean your tunic will sit comfortably on your shoulders. Cut the neck hole.

Sleeves

1. Lie the sleeve gusset to the sleeve, right side to right side. Sew along A, but not right to the edge of the gusset (you want to leave a little allowance).
2. Flip the gusset so edge B of the gusset is on the opposite side of the sleeve, and sew down. Then sew the rest of the sleeve.



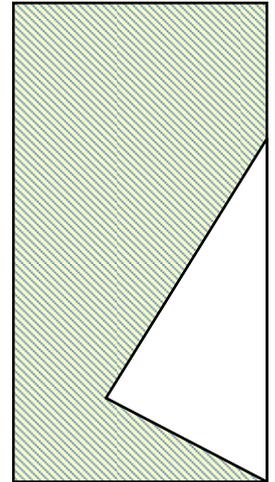
3. Turn the sleeve so the right side is facing out. Mark the fold of the sleeve at the shoulder with a

pin.

4. Turn the body of the tunic so the right side is facing in.
5. Insert the sleeve into the tunic body (right side of sleeve to right side of body) so the pin at the shoulder of the sleeve lines up with the pin at the shoulder of the tunic body.

Side Gores

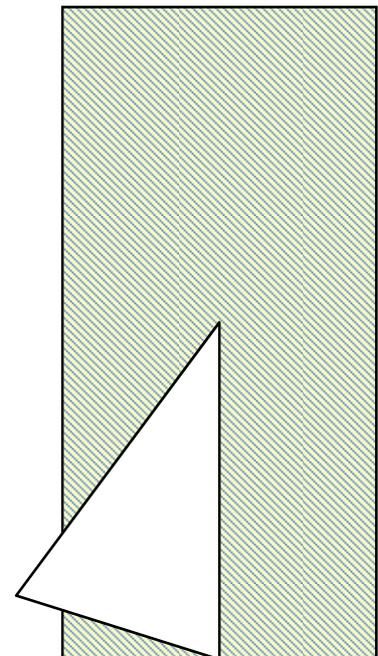
1. Lay the gore to the body of the tunic, right side to right side. Try and get the point of the gore as close as possible to the bottom of the sleeve. Don't worry if your gore is a bit longer or shorter than your body piece – you can tidy it up later.
2. *Starting from the arm and going down to the hem, sew the gore to the body.*
3. Pin the other side of the gore to the other side of the body, and sew from the arm to the hem.
4. Repeat for the other side.



Front and Back Gores (Optional)

Front and back gores can be tricky, and they are optional. But they make the finished tunic look nicer, and can make it easier to walk in the tunic. If you are going to add front and back gores, I find it's easiest to do before adding the sleeves and side gores. I would also suggest making some small practice gores before you try the real thing.

1. Sew the two right angled triangles that were left from cutting the gores along the straight edges, right side to right side. This will form the back gore.
2. Mark the centre of the body at the base, at the front and back. Draw a line up the centre as long as measurement D (ribs to ground or knees).
3. Check this line is not too small or too long by laying the back gore on it. The gore should be a little longer than the line. Make sure you use the back gore, as this will be slightly shorter than the front.
4. Cut this line to form the insertion point for the gore.
5. Lay the right side of the front gore on the right side of the front of the tunic, with one of the long diagonal edges along the slit.
6. *Starting at the top, sew to the base of the gore.* Starting from the top and working to the bottom means that if the fabric "wiggles around" while you're sewing it, the top won't be affected, and the



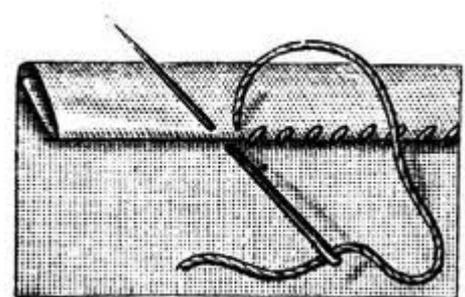
gore is more likely to be even.

7. Tuck the gore inside the slit, so the right side of the gore is facing out, then join the unsewn diagonal edge of the gore to the other edge of the slit. You may find it best to flip the tunic inside out so the seams you're trying to join are facing up. Make sure it looks even before you start sewing.
8. *Starting at the top, sew to the base.*
9. Repeat for the back gore, and make sure the seam down the front of the gore is centred with the slit in the body.

Finishing

Hems

You will need to hem the sleeves, and the bottom edge. When pinning a hem to sew, remember the gores are going to give a bell shape to the tunic. Don't hem the tunic straight across, otherwise when you wear it, the sides will hang lower than the front. Remember to keep the bell shape in the hem.



It's also best to sew hems by hand, as there will be a curve in the fabric as well, and you can "ease" the fabric so it's even. If you machine stitch, you'll wind up with pleats in your hem which can look weird.

The Neck

You sew the neck in a similar fashion to a hem – rolling the edge to the wrong side and sewing down. You may find it easier if you add the occasional small nick to the curved edge.

Finishing the Seams

So now you've finished... except all those seams on the inside are raw, with all the edges ragged. They'll fray, and can also make the tunic look lumpy when worn. A very neat (and period!) way of tidying up the seams is called a "flat felled seam." It adds extra strength to the seam, because it joins both pieces of material twice, and can be made decorative.

1. Cut along one of the seam allowances so it's about half the height of the other.
2. Fold this shortened allowance flat, then fold the other, longer seam over the top, and tuck it so the raw edge is facing in. It should completely enclose the other allowance.

3. Stitch it down.

For more information on flat felled seams, you can find a great online hand out at http://www.sewing.org/files/guidelines/11_330_flat_fell_seams.pdf.

Decoration

So it's done, but it's a bit boring... What can you do to tart the tunic up a little?

Contrasting Fabric

You can sew bands of contrasting fabric at the neck, cuffs and hem (not so much for girls – they drag in the mud). A band at the neck can be called “facing.”

If you are putting in a contrasting neck facing, you need to cut the fabric and then attach it to the tunic with the right side facing the wrong side. You then pull the facing out and the right side will be facing out.

Embroidery

You can further embellish the bands with embroidery, or embroider directly onto the tunic pieces – before you sew them up. Trying to embroider onto a garment that's already been sewn is possible, but it's not particularly easy.

Braid

You can also buy ready made trims from SCA merchants. You can get some great ones from <http://www.oddsods.com.au/>.