



CORSET MAKER'S WORKSHOP

Part 2

Pattern & Fit: Are you missing a step?

BARBARA PESENDORFER - ROYAL BLACK COUTURE & CORSETRY - VIENNA, AUSTRIA



© "Silver Thistle" by Royal Black



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It's common for beginner and intermediate makers to have trouble fitting the mock-up of their corset. This can often be because they've missed a step...

Instead of cutting the mock-up in the pattern size that's closest to your measurements, why not look closely at your body and the pattern and make some adjustments to the pattern first?

Working on the pattern before you mock it up is more intuitive than you might think, and it may do a lot of the heavy lifting for you, so that the mock up becomes much easier to fit. Here's Barbara's process at Royal Black...

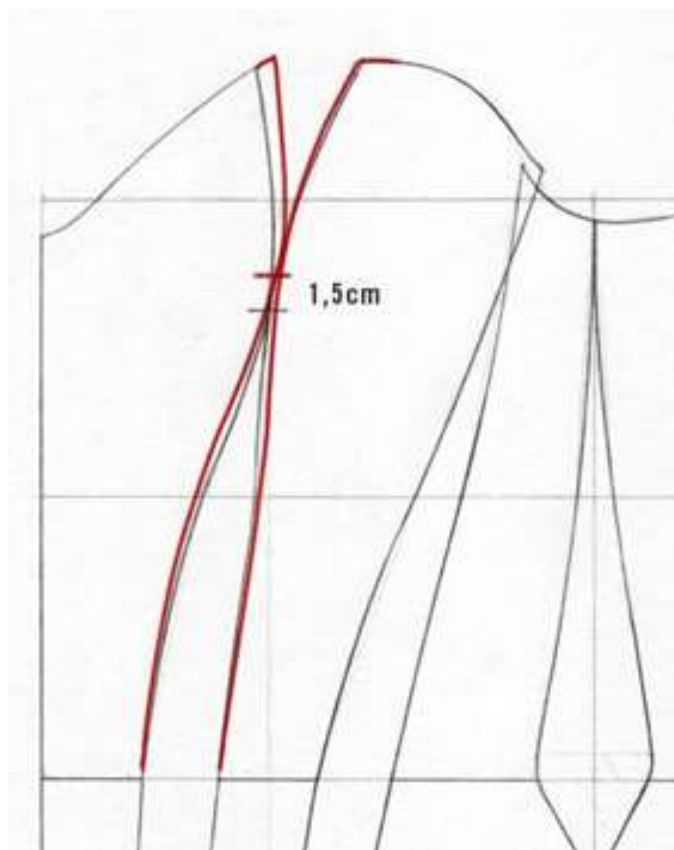
Look at the body shape and proportions first of all.

- Bust: cup size, volume and distance between breasts?
- Waist and torso: hourglass/athletic/fuller figured?
- Hip shape: flat, curved, is the volume on the back or at the sides?
- Look closely and take notes

Measure the front and back of the body separately – a woman with small breasts and a large back could have the same overall bust measurement as a small framed woman with large breasts, and you need to notice those proportions, not just the overall measurement. Compare the back and front measurements to the measurements of the pattern pieces and you'll begin to see where you can already make some adjustments to make the pattern better match the shape of the body.



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© Royal Black - push up effect

Bust adjustments

- You'll need more panels to shape a larger cup size. (As a guide, Barbara often uses three panels over the bust area for even a standard size figure.)
- For a small bust, you may want to give a “push up” effect. This can be done by shifting the bust point and the swell of the bust upwards a little – try 1.5cm - and perhaps also opening the pieces a little wider at the top to accommodate the breast tissue that's shifted upwards.
- Correspondingly, a large bust can be shifted downwards a little by moving the curve of the bust down a little at each panel edge.



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© Royal Black - adjusting the waist for an athletic figure

Waist adjustments

- An athletic figure can't lace down as much, so you may need to adjust the lines at the waist outwards, to give a larger waist with less reduction. You'll probably need to do this mostly at the side seams, but the back panels also might be a good place to add a little at the waist, because a too-tight corset can pinch the nerves there.
- For a fuller figure you may be able to do the opposite and take the waist area in. The fuller the figure, generally speaking, the greater hourglass effect they'll be able to achieve (but not always.)
- If you or your client is new to wearing corsets, you might want to stick with a standard shape at the waist. These adjustments are more for an experienced wearer of corsets who can draw from their past experience to know what they need in more detail than a new wearer.



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© Royal Black - adjusting for fuller hips

Hip adjustments

- You can reduce or expand the panels at the hips according to your observations of the body you're making for.
- You can also pad the hips to fit the corset if the wearer wants a more pronounced hip curve than s/he has naturally, eg for the drag queens whom Barbara sometimes works for.
- A spoon busk can be useful for round bellies.
- If you've made the waist smaller, it's a good idea to expand the hips a little to accommodate the extra movement of flesh.



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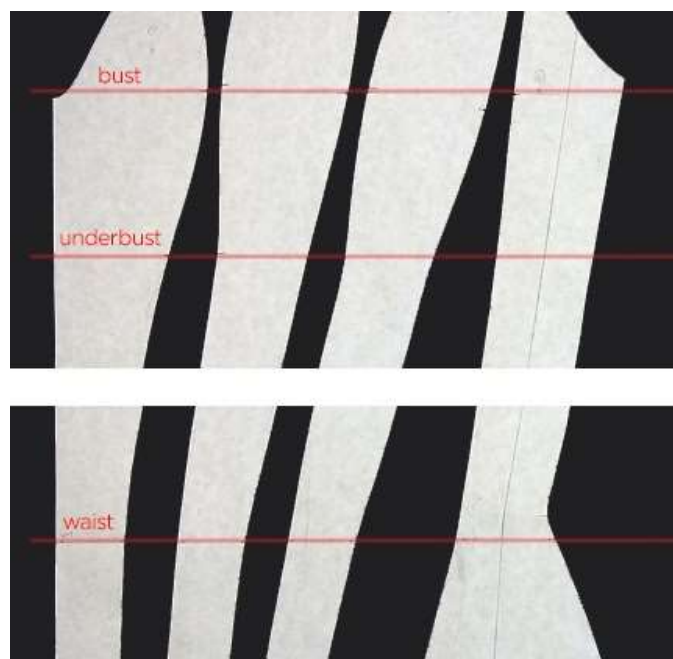
© Royal Black - adjusting for protruding ribs

Protruding ribs

- Some people find that a corset digs into their ribs at the front - you can increase the size of the panels in this area to give the wearer a little more room. Some people prefer this look from a design perspective.



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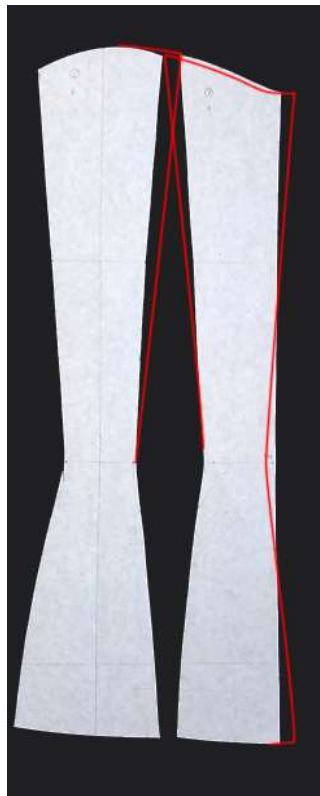
© Royal Black - slashing the pattern and spreading apart for a longer underbust-to-waist measurement

Vertical adjustments

- Find the underbust line and the waist line on the pattern, and notice the distance between those two lines. Compare that to your own underbust to waist measurement (measure at your side). If the measurements differ, you can cut the paper pattern horizontally between the two lines and either spread the two halves apart or overlap them to match your measurement, then smooth out the lines at the sides of the panels.
- Watch out for the length of the corset at the front - sit in a chair in your mock up to check that it won't dig in, and shorten if necessary.



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© Royal Black - adjusting for a sway back (lordosis)

Sway back

- The centre back of a corset pattern is traditionally a straight, vertical line, but this rule can be broken for a sway back. You can either take a horizontal dart out of the centre back panel at the waist, as some makers do, or just give more room at the top back and side back at the same time as curving the back edge, so that the back of the corset curves in a way that matches the exaggerated curve of the back.

In all cases, use your intuition – when you've made your adjustments, do the curves look neat and even?



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© Royal Black - mock ups of various designs

Making creative patterns out of a well fitting basic pattern

Don't be afraid to trace an existing, well fitting pattern and draw new design lines to create an interesting new design! You can easily adjust...

- the shape of the top and bottom edge,
- the degree of plunge at centre front (you may need to curve the centre front panel inwards to prevent gape)
- or any other design adjustment you'd like to make!