

# The Pattern-Free Wardrobe Fabric Measurement Guide



## How to Work Out How Much Fabric You Need

Because pattern-free projects are drafted from your own measurements, fabric requirements will vary from person to person.

### The amount you need depends on:

- Your body measurements
- The length you choose
- The width of your fabric
- Any added details, such as pockets, ties, ruffles or waistbands
- Directional prints, checks, stripes or fabrics with nap

## The basic idea

You are working out how much length you need from the fabric roll. Think of your fabric like this:

**Fabric width** = side to side  
**Fabric length** = down the roll

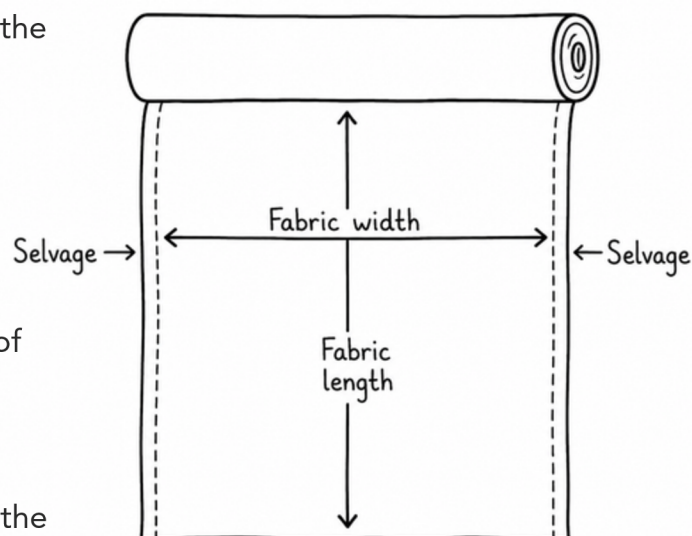
Imagine your fabric laid out in front of you. The width of the fabric runs from side to side, and the length runs down the table or floor.

Some pattern pieces may fit next to each other across the width of the fabric. If they do, you only need the length of the tallest piece in that row.

Other pieces may not fit next to each other. If they do not fit across the width, they will need to be placed below each other, which means you need to add those lengths together.

## Step 1: List your pieces

Write down every piece you need to cut for your garment.



**For example, for a simple top, you might have:**

- Front bodice
- Back bodice
- Sleeves
- Neck binding or facing

**For a skirt, you might have:**

- Front skirt
- Back skirt
- Waistband
- Patch pockets
- Optional ruffle

**For trousers, you might have:**

- Two front leg pieces
- Two back leg pieces
- Waistband
- Patch pockets

## Step 2: Work out the size of each piece

Next, work out the rough size of each piece using the instructions in your project.

You do not need to draw everything perfectly at this stage. A quick sketch or list of measurements is enough.

For each piece, write down the width and the length.

### For example:

Front bodice: 60cm wide x 65cm long

Back bodice: 60cm wide x 65cm long

Sleeve: 45cm wide x 40cm long

piece	width	length	how many
front	60	65	cut 1
back	60	65	cut 1
sleeves	45	40	cut 2

Remember to include seam allowance, hems and any extra allowance mentioned in the instructions.

If the project includes gathered pieces, make sure you are using the full gathered measurement before it is sewn. For example, if your skirt panel is cut at twice your waist measurement, use that full cutting measurement when working out your fabric.

## Step 3: Check your fabric width

Before estimating how much fabric you need, check the width of the fabric you want to use. This is usually listed on the fabric bolt or in the product description if you are buying online.

Common fabric widths are:

**112cm wide** - often used for quilting cottons and some craft cottons

**140cm wide** - often used for dressmaking fabrics such as linen, viscose, cotton lawn, chambray and twill

**150cm wide** - sometimes used for wider dressmaking fabrics

## Step 4: Plan a simple cutting layout

You can do this on paper, on the floor with a tape measure, or by using small paper rectangles to represent each piece.

Now imagine placing your pieces across the fabric width.

Start with the largest pieces first. These are usually bodices, skirt panels, trouser legs or sleeves.

Place the first large piece across the fabric width. Then see if another piece can fit beside it. If two pieces fit side by side, you only need the length of the longest piece.

### For example:

Front bodice: 65cm long

Back bodice: 65cm long

If they fit side by side across the width of the fabric, you need 65cm of fabric length for both pieces.

If they do not fit side by side, they need to be placed one below the other.

In that case, you would need:

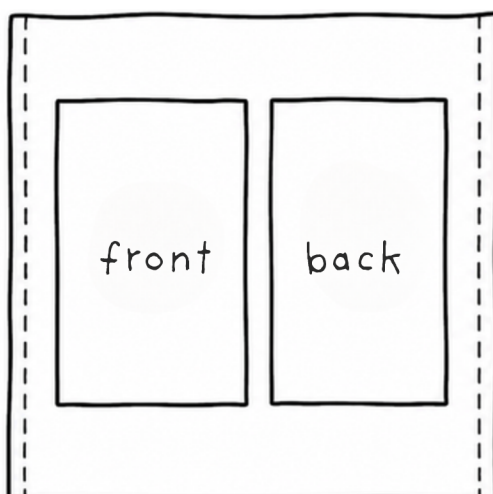
65cm for the front

65cm for the back

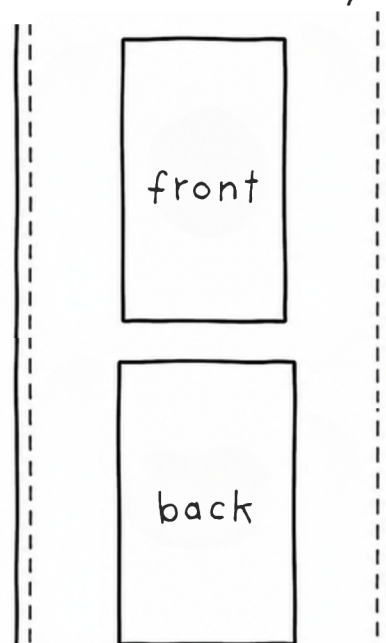
Total so far: 130cm

This is the main thing to understand when working out fabric requirements.

*fits side by side*



*does not fit side by side*



## Step 5: Add up the fabric length

Once you have planned which pieces fit together across the fabric width, add up the lengths of each row.

### Here is a simple example.

If you are making a top and your pieces are:

**Front bodice:** 60cm wide x 65cm long

**Back bodice:** 60cm wide x 65cm long

**Two sleeves:** 45cm wide x 40cm long each

**Neck binding:** 6cm wide x 70cm long

If your fabric is 140cm wide, the front and back bodice will fit side by side.

That means they need 65cm of fabric length.

The two sleeves will also fit side by side. That means they need 40cm of fabric length.

The neck binding may fit beside another piece, or it may need to be cut from leftover fabric.

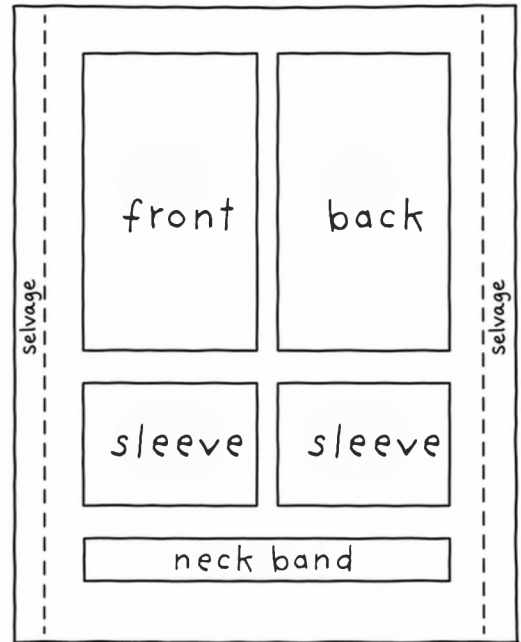
So the estimate would be:

65cm for the bodice row

40cm for the sleeve row

10cm extra for binding and small pieces

**Total: 115cm**



Then add extra for safety.

I would round this up to around **1.3m**

## Add extra fabric

Once you have your basic estimate, always add a little extra.

This gives you room for cutting, straightening the fabric, small mistakes, fabric shrinkage or changes you may want to make as you sew.

As a general guide, add at least:

10–20cm extra for simple projects

25–50cm extra for larger garments or anything gathered

Extra fabric again for directional prints, checks, stripes, nap fabrics, matching patterns or if you are unsure about fit

It is always better to have a little bit left over than to be short by a few centimetres.

Leftover fabric can be used for pockets, binding, patchwork, hair ties, small bags or matching accessories.

# Tips

## Things that may increase the amount of fabric you need

- You may need more fabric if:
- You are making the garment longer
- You are adding ruffles, gathers or extra fullness
- Your fabric is narrow
- Your fabric has a one-way print
- You need to pattern match checks or stripes
- You are using corduroy, velvet or another fabric with a nap
- You are adding large pockets, ties, straps or belts

If you are unsure about the fit, **make a toile** first using an old sheet, calico or inexpensive fabric. This lets you check the size, length and overall shape before cutting into your chosen fabric. You can then make any adjustments and feel more confident before sewing the final garment.

## A simple formula to remember

A helpful way to think about fabric requirements is:

**Fabric needed = the length of each row of pattern pieces + extra for small pieces + extra for safety**

Or even more simply:

Check what fits across the width, then add up what needs to sit below it.

You are not trying to calculate the exact square area of fabric. You are working out how much length you need from the fabric roll.

If you are new to working out fabric requirements, keep it simple.

Draft or sketch your pieces first, check the fabric width, and then do a rough cutting layout before buying or cutting your fabric.

You do not need to get it down to the exact centimetre. A careful estimate with a little extra added is usually much more useful than trying to make it too precise.

Pattern-free sewing is about understanding the shapes you are making and giving yourself the confidence to adjust them. Once you get used to seeing garments as simple pieces of fabric, it becomes much easier to work out what you need.

And if in doubt, buy a little extra. Future you will almost always find a use for the leftovers.