

# How to make a keyhole neckline

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The keyhole neckline makes use of the “reverse facing” technique. It can be used on a variety of garments from the more tailored tunics and gowns to the more common “SCA-modern” tee tunic. The key is to do all of your neck work before sewing the side seams, working with a flat piece of fabric.

The first step is to cut out your garment. If the garment has any attached sleeves or gores, sew them on later. When working on the neckline you want to deal with the least amount of fabric possible.

For visual clarity, I am using the modern SCA tee tunic as the base for the neckline. (Fig 1)

To cut the neckline, have your body piece folded in quarters with the shoulder line at the top.

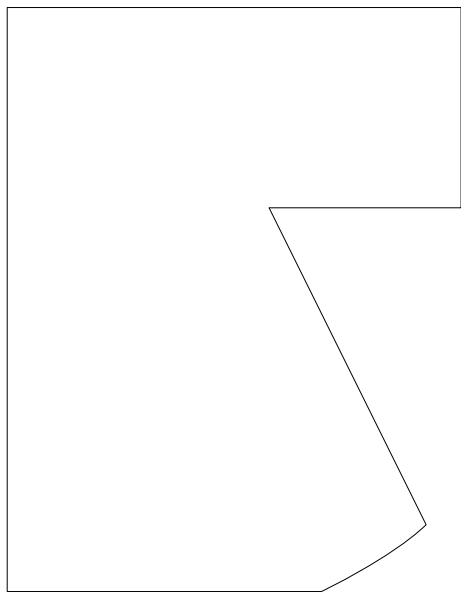


Fig 2

It should look like this.  
(Fig 2)

This neckline will be based on a 6” diameter neck hole, with an additional inch taken off the center front. This works well for most adults. The keyhole will create an additional slash down the front that will

accommodate most head sizes.

At the two-fold corner measure out 3” and mark, and measure 3” down from the corner and mark. Measure down an additional 1” and mark. To create the curved line, use your ruler or tape measure and measure out 3” from the center point in a radiating circle. (Fig 3)

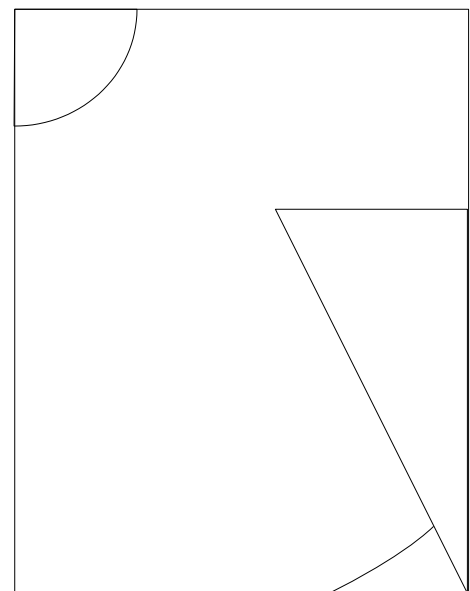


Fig 1

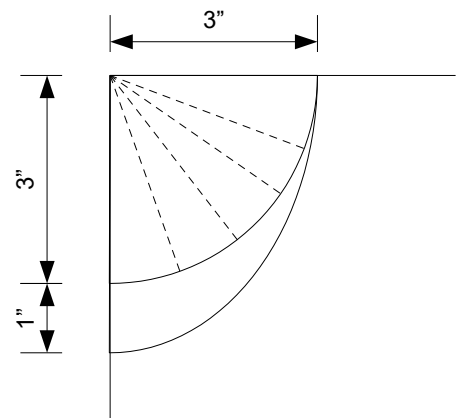
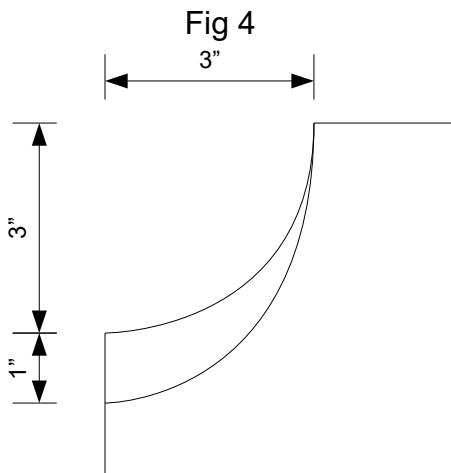


Fig 3

Next, draw the additional oval curve to the extra 1” mark. Start at the inch mark drawing away from the fold and slowly ease the line up until you meet up with the 3” mark on the top fold. This will require some artistic estimation.



Cut along your marked 3" curve through all four layers of fabric. It is very important that you do **not** cut along the additional 1" line. You should have a 6" diameter circle when the cut is complete. (Fig 4)

Now open the tunic and lay it flat with the center front facing you. (Fig 5)

Following the extra 1" line, which should be visible on the front right of the tunic, cut

from the shoulder of the circle down to the center front.

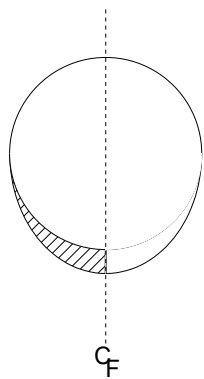


Fig 6

Fold the resulting flap over to the left and use it as the line to cut the other side of the neck's front. (Fig 6)

Now you should have an oval shaped opening, elongated to the front, in the center of your body piece.

On the **RIGHT** side of the tunic mark a 3" line down the center front, but do **not** cut at this time. (Fig 7)

The rest of the measurements will be based on the end result of 3" visible facing. In order to increase or decrease the visible facing size remember to adjust the center front line as well.

Take the fabric for the facing and cut into a 15 x 15 inch square. This fabric will end up as 'trim' so contrasting fabrics, plaids, and other weaves are good. Be creative.

Place the **RIGHT** side of the facing on the **WRONG** side of the tunic. Put the corners of the facing at CF and CB of the tunic. The center of the facing should be at the center of the neckhole. (Fig 8)

Pin the four corners of the facing fabric to the tunic. Turn the entire tunic over.

Pin around the neckline, including both sides of the 3" line down the front. Remember to pin with the point of the pin facing the needle

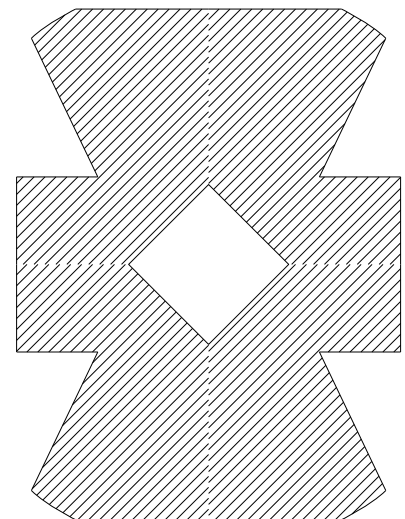
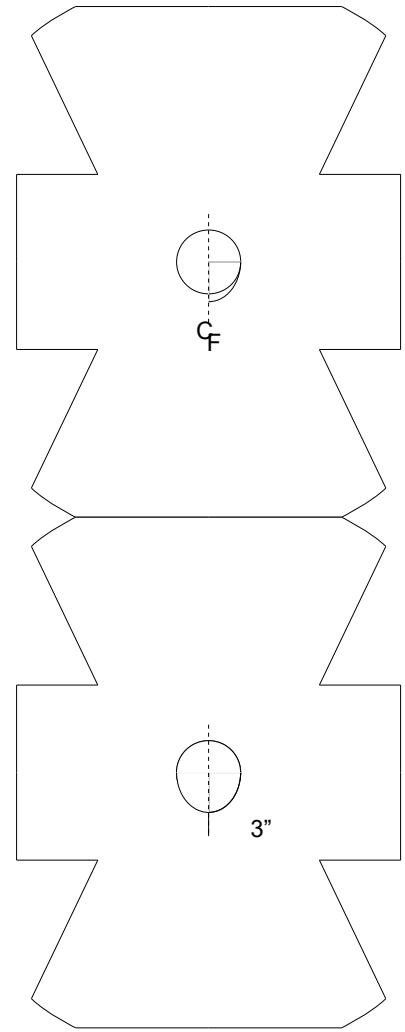


Fig 8

Sew around the neckline one presser foot width away from the edge of the tunic fabric. This is approximately 1/4" of seam allowance. Be careful to sew only the two layers of tunic and facing, all excess tunic fabric should be woodgled to the right of the machine. Repeat the stitch around the neck, trying to get on top of the line you just sewed. (Fig 9)

Cut out the facing fabric in the neckhole, being careful to just cut one layer of fabric. Keep the four pins that anchored the facing. This helps manage all your layers of fabric. Cut close to the seam line leaving about 1/8" seam allowance. The double stitching will secure the seam. The close trimming will provide the ease in the curve when the facing is turned right side out. With this technique the curve isn't clipped and the final product has a smoother line.

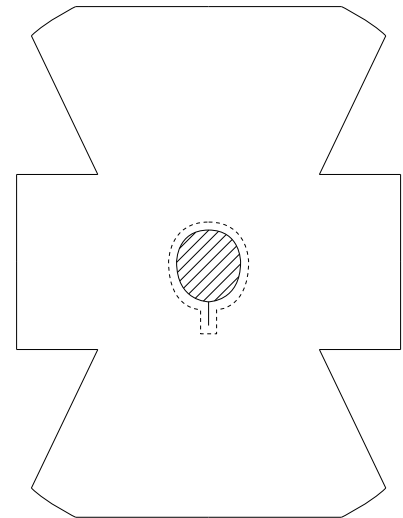


Fig 9

Clip the corners of the T and the inner corners, being careful not to cut the stitch lines.

Un-pin the four anchor pins and pull the facing to the RIGHT side of the tunic. The RIGHT side of the facing should now be on the RIGHT side of the tunic.

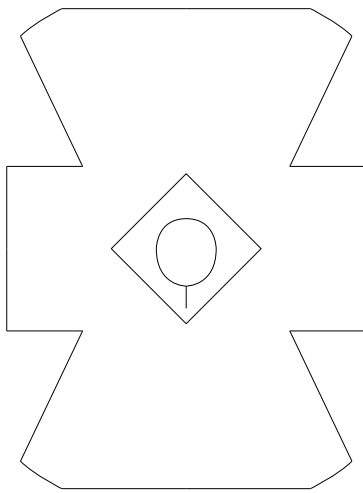


Fig 10

Press the neckline flat, paying extra attention to the top and bottom corners of the slash. (Fig 10) Using a ruler, mark out 3" from the curve of the neckline. (Fig 11)

When you get to the T measure 1 1/2" in each direction from the line. The point will be 1" from the bottom of the front slash.

Measure and mark 1/2" away from your marked line. (Fig 12) Cut on this line, it is now the seam allowance for the facing.

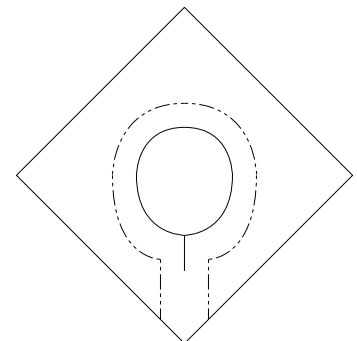


Fig 11

For the key, cut 1/2" at the corner where the straight line meets the curve on a 45 degree angle. This cut enables you to fold the seam allowance under in the correct shape. The fabric at the corners that doesn't have seam allowance will be reinforced with the top stitching. (Fig 13)

Starting with the curve of the neckline, fold under and pin the seam allowance perpendicular to the folded fabric.

Don't start at one side and go around. Pin in quarters going back and forth around the neck. The facing should lie flat on the tunic with no bubbles.

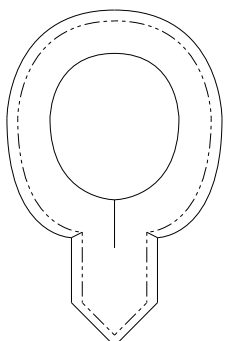


Fig 13

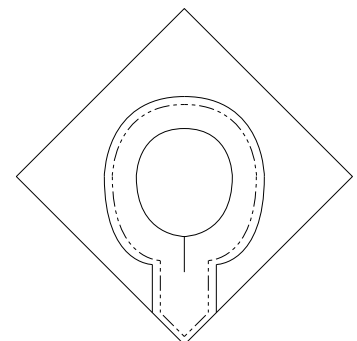


Fig 12

Top stitch over your neckline as close to the edge as possible, 1/8" maximum away from the edge, removing pins as you go. (Sewing over pins runs the risk of broken needles, broken pins, and damaging your machine's timing.)

As before, start the stitching in the back of the neck so your overlapping stitching and back-tacking won't be visible in the front.

Remove the tunic from the machine and iron the new and beautiful keyhole neckline. (Fig 14)

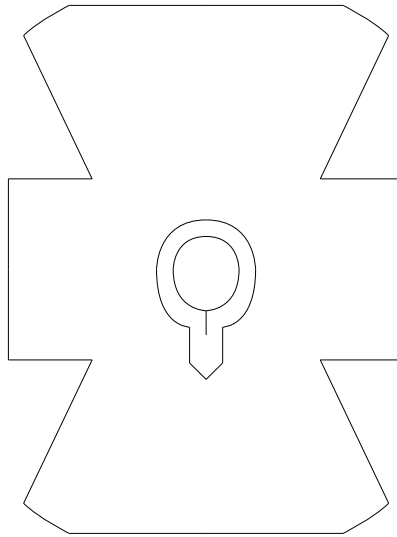


Fig 14

### **Added bonus**

To add matching trim bands at the cuffs and/or hem of the tunic cut 4" bands a little longer than your cuff widths. Sew the bands RIGHT side to WRONG side with 1/2" seam allowance. Turn your trim band over and press with the iron. Measure 3" from the bottom of the cuff, you should have 1/2" seam allowance. Fold under and pin at the 3" mark. Top stitch your trim band down as close as possible to the edge.

Turn your tunic inside out and sew the side seams. Make sure to line up your trim bands so they meet when you sew the seam. Reinforce the armpit point with a double stitch. This is so far the only seam that isn't finished 3" in either direction on the inside. There are a number of options here.

- Press open the seams and hem the bottom.
- Serge the interior seam, cutting at a 45 degree angle at the armpit point.
- Make the seam a french seam.
- Make the seam a flat felled seam.

In period, it most likely would have been stitched down decoratively with the stitches showing.

You have now successfully completed your keyhole neckline tunic!