

Sewing Instructions - White Day Dress

By Sonia Scott

This dress combines the traditional lines of a Federal or Regency Era day dress with the personal preferences of Sarah “Sally” Bradley. If you are recreating this dress for display no alterations to the pattern are needed. If you are creating this dress for a modern interpreter, please adjust the pieces using measurements from the intended wearer. A grid method can be used for the initial scaling, but a full muslin mock up is suggested for a most accurate fit. Instructions for both scaling a pattern with a grid and creating a muslin mock up are readily available on the internet. Once you have your pattern pieces sorted out assembly can begin. All seams should be completed using a felled seam technique unless otherwise stated.

1. Begin by drawing your pattern pieces on your fabric using tailor’s chalk or other washable medium. The Bradley’s were very thrifty people so try to configure the pattern pieces so that you make the most use out of your fabric, cut 2 pieces that are not symmetrical and should be cut as mirror images. Be careful to pay attention to grainlines and any pattern your fabric might have. Then proceed to cut your pieces out.
2. Once your pieces have been cut, begin by assembling the large pieces, Pieces A, B, C, and D. Sew pieces A and B together, matching points A2 with B2 and A4 with B4. On the opposite side of piece A match points A1 to C2 and A3 to C4. Finally match points B1 to D7 and B3 to D6, C1 to D4 and C3 to D5.
3. Using a rolled hem stitch, hem D1 to D2 and D3 to D2. On the wrong side of the fabric place piece E at D2, turn edges under and whip stitch in place. On the right side of the fabric use a tight running stitch to secure piece E in place.
4. For the upper half of the dress, there are two options for the back pieces. Some mending on option 2 piece G caused the pattern piece on that side to be altered, but I believe option 1 piece F was the original shape and suggest using that for both back pieces unless you are trying to replicate the later mending.
5. Sew points I3 and I4 to points F3 and F4 on both sides of piece I.
6. Sew piece H to piece I, matching H4 to I5 on each side.
7. Sew piece H to piece F, matching H1 to F6 on each side.
8. Sweat shields have been added on the original garment, see images for details.
9. The sleeves¹: sew sides J1-J3 to J2-J4, leaving room to fit a hand through the bottom of the sleeves at J3-J4 (these points may shift). Use a hem stitch to turn

¹ Sleeves are just hard, and have always been tricky, this garment has several sleeve alterations that can be seen clearly in the images of this dress. I have attempted to

the sides under at the end of the sleeve, then on the wrong side, fold the fabric back toward the top of the sleeve and sew three channels, as indicated on the pattern with dotted lines.

10. When attaching the sleeves to the completed bodice, match point J7 to the I-F seam on each side. Ease the sleeve into the bodice along both sides until you get near the top of the shoulder, this should be near points J5 and J6. The extra fabric between these two points should be gathered using stroke gathers and then sewn to the bodice.
11. Once you have set your sleeves, find the center front of your bodice on piece I, and 2cm down from the edge of the fabric, sew two eyelets close together for your front drawstring. On the back sew a 1cm hem side F1-F2 on each side of the bodice.
12. Then fold the fabric of the front and back neck line in to form 1cm channels using a whip stitch. Do not include piece H in these channels, simply fold the fabric in and sew a 1 cm hem.
13. While both ends of each channel are open, use a yarn needle or other blunt needle to feed your front and back drawstrings through. The draw strings should be long enough that they will not slip inside the channel when the fabric is pulled flat. On the front tack the draw strings in place at the junction of pieces I and H.
14. On the back again tack the drawstrings at the junction of pieces H and F. These drawstrings should be slightly longer than those on the front of the gown.
15. Attaching the skirt and the bodice. Match points D1 and F2 on one side, and D3 and F2 on the other side. Find the center point on piece A and line it up with the center point on piece I (this should be between the two eyelets on the top of the bodice). Fold down 3cm of the skirt and baste piece I to piece A between the two I6 points. Use stroke gathers between points I6 and I7 on piece I to create bust cups, then baste the rest of piece I to piece A. Starting at the side seams of piece A, create a 1-2cm channel along pieces B, D, and C and finally using stroke gathers to attach to piece F on each side. Lastly tack lower drawstring at the side seam of piece A and tread it through the channel to exit at D1 and D3 respectively.

capture those additions in piece J, but I recommend creating a muslin of the sleeves during all creations of this dress because the area under the arm may need to be adjusted no matter who or what will be embodying this dress.