

16th century Spanish Breeches

by

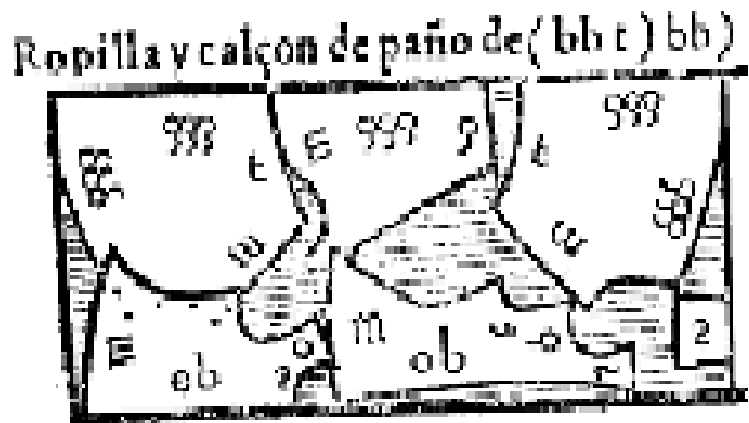
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Introduction:

This article will take a look at drafting a pair of 16th century breeches, more particularly a style of breeches often referred to as Venetians. The pattern period pattern pieces that we are using as a guide are from a tailoring manuscript from 1588 by Diego de Freyle, also similar styles of breeches can be seen from another Spanish tailoring manuscript from 1618 by Francois de la Rocha de Burguen. Both of these books provide us with basic measurements and a drawing of how the leg pieces should be cut. Unfortunately there are several pieces of information not given to us in these books. For one we do not know how they were drafted, also there are no drawings for the waistband or cannons for the bottom of the legs. This though was quite common practice in the tailoring books from the time, whether from Freyle, Burguen or even Alcega.



I will not claim this is the only way, or the correct way to make breeches, the goal here is to give you the ability to quickly and easily draft and make breeches for yourself or your clients, but to also produce a finished product that would look like what was worn in period. The breeches will be broken up into four areas, the main part of the breeches / the legs, waistband, cannons, the lining, followed by a discussion on assembly. We'll also look at different finishing options at the end. I recommend reading through the instructions a couple of times, and don't let them scare you, seeing them laid out in a step by step list of instructions they seem to be a lot of steps, once you read through and understand the concept I'm going for you'll see you can quickly chalk them out on the fabric with just a rule.

The legs:

Luckily the leg pieces are the one thing that are provided to us in the period patterns, so we have an idea to what the cut piece should look like. This means we do not have to go by a painting or drawing where we might not have enough information to go by. When looking at the breeches from both Freyle and Burguen, the simplicity will strike you. They provide you with a quarter panel, and that all four pieces are the same. The edge on the outside of the leg is straight and the inside is tapered, the top is a slight curve that is larger than needed, since there are cartridge pleated into the waistband. When looking at paintings that show these styles of breeches, they are knee length, and bell out at the waist and are full at the hip. They then taper down to the knees that are close fitting.

To draft these leg panels we need to know 4 measurements. the length of breeches, your hip, your crotch depth, and the diameter around your leg where the breeches end.

1. The length of the breeches (LB): This measurement will be how long the leg pieces are on the outside leg. it is important that when you make this measurement, to place the tape about 2 inches

below your waist. Do not hold the tape straight against your body and taught, as if you were taking the outer seam measurement, but instead you want include the fact that the breeches bells out from the hip. If you do measure the distance close to the body add about 5 or so inches to the measurement.

2. hip measurement (HP): This measurement is taken around your hip
3. Crotch Depth (CD): There are several ways to get this, the easiest is to measure your outer seam and subtract that from your inseam.
4. Leg Width (LW): this is the diameter measurement around your leg, where the breeches are going to reach to.

That's all we need to draft the leg of the breeches, don't worry if your pattern piece looks a little skewed from the one in Freyle's pattern, his pattern wasn't drafted for you, and you might not proportionally the same as the personal that his was drawn from, but you should see a basic similarity between them.

A to B = LB

Line C falls 3 inches below point A and is perpendicular to Line A-B

Line D falls 2 inches below point B and is perpendicular to Line A-B

A to E = $(3 \times \text{HP}) / 4$

*A-E is a curve line where point E falls on Line C

E to F = $\text{CD} + 1''$ note: Line E-F is perpendicular to curve Line A-E

F to G = $(\text{Hip}/16) + 1''$ note: Line F-G is perpendicular to Line E-F

H is a $1/2''$ from Point G on Line F-G

F to I = F to H

Connect H to I

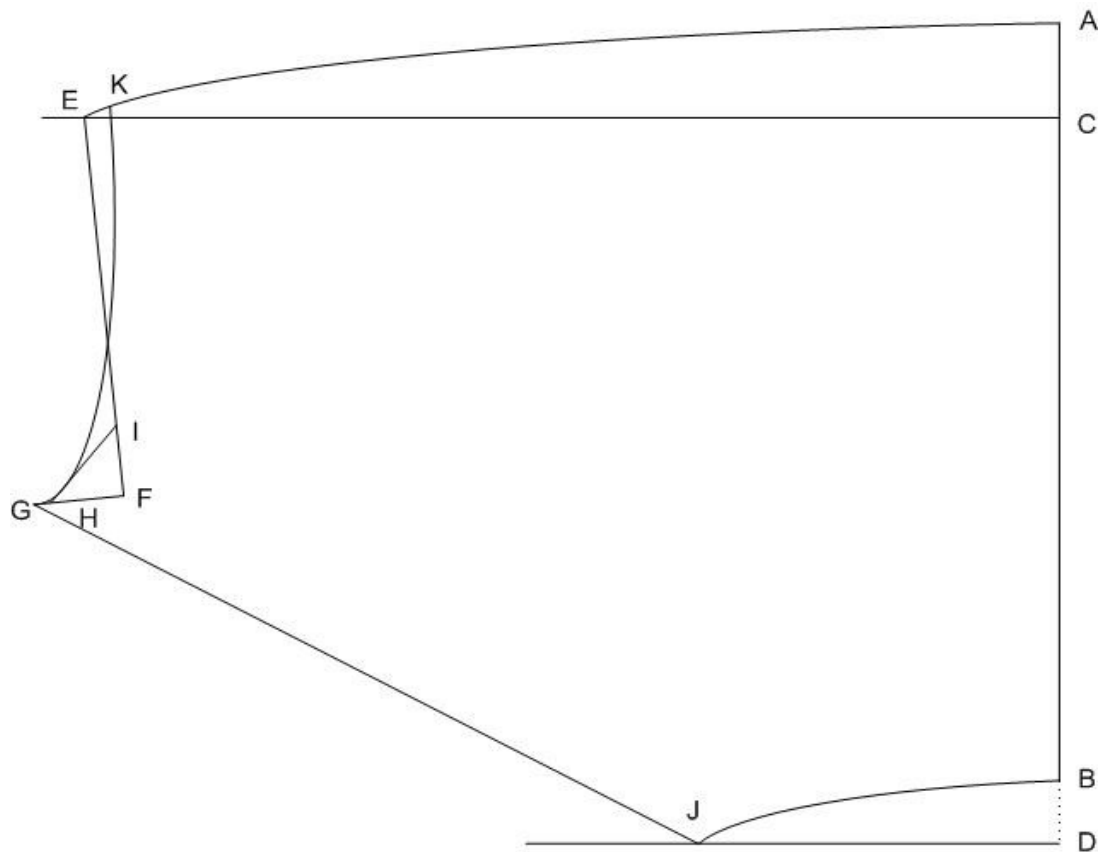
B to J = $(\text{LW}/2) + 2''$

* B-J is a curve line where point J falls on line D

Connect G to J

K is $3/4$ of an inch from Point E on Line A-E

Connect G to K as shown with curve centered on line H-I



Waist Band:

The manuscript doesn't show the waistband. But luckily there are extant pieces to go by. Drafting the waistband is going to depend on the style of closure used on the Breeches. If the Breeches are going to button closed you will want them to tightly fit the body, if you are lacing the Breeches to the doublet you will want them to match your doublets waist and its edged curved front. Also remember that a lot of period doublets end at the waist (though skirting does extend down), this means that are breeches are going to ride higher then your average pair of jeans and slacks that we are used to. You can compare to either painting or the lengths of doublets in Freyle and Alcega to see this.

to draft the waistband, you need to know the measurement around the waist or where you decide to have the breeches sit. For our waistband, it will be made up of two halves. There are example of some waistbands made up of more pieces and you can do that if you wish. Just remember to include seam allowance on each piece. First thing to consider with the waistband is, are you going to overlap the front and button them close, or is the waistband going to butt up against itself in the front, and laced into the doublet. If you are overlapping the front to button, make sure to add enough into your waist measurement for the overlap. The next thing to consider is the style of the waistband. On plunderhosen you see a rectangle waistband, where the top and bottom are parallel to each other, you also see them on some other styles. if you are lacing the breeches into the doublet, you'll want to have the bottom of the waistband much the bottom of the doublet where it will be lacing into, this can easily be done with using the doublet as a guide to draw the line. The third style that we are going to look at here, is

somewhat similar to the waistband that is laced into the doublet, but is not based on the doublet itself. One last thing, you will want a waistband that is at least 2 inches in width.

A to B = $\frac{1}{2}$ of waist (remember to include any overlap length if need for buttons)

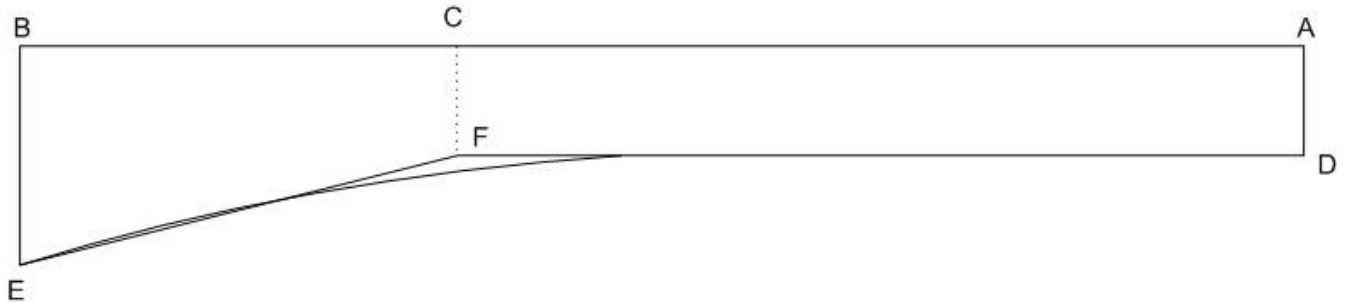
C = $\frac{1}{3}$ of line AB

A to D = C to F = 2"

B to E = 4"

Connect Points D to F to E

Gently curve the portion between E to F as shown



Seam allowance only needs to be added to line AD. It's also a could Idea to test fit the waistband especially if you are buttoning. If you need to shorten, simply take it out of the back seam, if you need to add, you can simply cut a piece to add into the back seam of the waistband or re-cut the waistband.

Cannons:

Cannons are leg bands, are the piece of the garment that the leg pieces are pleated into. Like the waistband there are many options available to you, again you must decide if you are butting the ends of the leg bands together, or overlapping them and buttoning them. If you are just butting them together, you'll use hook and eyes to fasten them shut. The length of the cannons can vary from an inch and a half, to several inches long, I would recommend look at painting and extent pieces for the style you or the person that you are making the breeches for likes. If the you want a simple leg band, you just need to measure around the leg where it will be at, (don't forget to add to that measurement if you are buttoning) and cut a rectangle of fabric that is that measurement by 1.5 to 2 inches. If you are making longer cannons, the easiest thing to do is to drape the cannons. take a piece of scrape or mock up fabric, and wrap it around the leg. Use a marker to mark your seam locations and cut lines for the cannon, again if buttoning close do not forget your overlap for the buttons. This will be your pattern for long style cannons. one thing to note though, when draping or measuring for the simple rectangle leg bands, to account for the hosen or knitted stockings that it must fit over, I.E. don't make it skin tight.

Fabric:

Making the breeches, you can choose from wool, to brocades and silks, if you use a duponi or other light weight silk, you will want to have an interlining for the leg pieces to help with the draping and hang of the breeches. basically you want to add weight and strength to silk material if needed to

accomplish the look you are going after.

usually when you are making breeches, you will also be making either a doublet or cassock to go along with it, in the same material. The amount need for just the breeches out of 60 inch wide material will depend on how you will cut the main leg pieces. If you can fold the fabric in half and cut out the quarter panel, you will only need twice as much fabric as the length you are making the leg pieces. so if your leg pieces are going to be 26 inches of length, you can make the breeches in a yard and a half. After you figure that add how much you need for your doublet / cassock and you have the amount of fabric needed. You'll be cutting the waistbands and cannons from the cabbage of the material. If your quarter panel won't fit on the fabric when folded in half, then you want to cut out each quarter panel from the unfolded fabric. This means you will need 4 times the length of the leg piece to make the breeches. Again if they're are going to be 26 inches long, you'll now need three yards of fabric. Now depending on the fabric you are using, and if there is direction or pattern on the fabric there are placement tricks to make the breeches out of less fabric, or you can also lay out your body and sleeve pieces in the cabbage from the leg pieces. It is important to remember when cutting to first cut your largest pieces, then work down from there. Also remember that piecing together panels is perfectly fine.

You are going to want bias tape for doing the facing on the breeches, you can either make the bias tape from the same material of the breeches or out of silk, I generally use duponi silk for bias tape. also linen could be used too if you want too, Bias tape is easy to make and recommend making it over store bought tape.

Cutting:

After figuring out how you are going to use your fabric, you want to first cut out the leg pieces. if cutting from wool or brocaded fabric, I would recommend cutting a 2" strip of linen or cotton to match the top of the leg piece, this will help with the cartridge pleating and will be discussed later. Next you'll want to cut the waistband and the cannons from the cabbage of the fabric. You'll also want to cut an interlining for the waistband and cannons, The interlining can be made from linen, or canvas (10oz duck) or sun forger. If you are using canvas or sun forger you will only need 1 layer for the interlining. If you are using linen you will need to cut multiple layers of linen, usually around 3 of 5 pieces.

Assembly:

The first thing you want to do when making your breeches is to assemble the waistband. once you have sewn together your waistband and the interlining pieces of the waistband, you want to baste stitch the outer-shell to the interlining. The next step will be putting the bias tape on around the three sides of the waistband. The side that the leg piece will be sewn to will not need bias tape. The inside of the waistband you do not need to turn the bias tape, after you fold it over the edge of the waistband, press it flat and whip stitch it done to the interlining, taking care that your stitches can not be seen on the outer-shell. Repeat these steps for assembling the cannons.

Next you want to assemble the leg pieces, first thing you want to do is sew together each leg, if you have four panels and you want to put in a pocket into the breeches please skip down to that section.

When sewing up the inside seams leave the last two inches un-sewn, don't forget to press your seams open and sew them down. Next you'll want to sew together the two leg pieces, start at where you want the crotch opening to be and anchor your stitch there and sewn up the rest of the crotch seam, and sew open your selvages. Next you want to take the two inch strip and bast stitch it to the inside of the top of the leg pieces, you then want to do a single fold along the top of 1 inch (should look like a 1 inch hem). you then want to sew in two lines of equally spaced running stitches, these are what you will pull for your cartridge pleats. Next you'll want to pin and space out your pleats to match the bottom of the waistband. After you have the leg pieces and the waistband fitted you'll first whip stitch the bottom of the pleats to waistband, then turn and whip stitch the top. The edge of the pleats should be perpendicular to the waistband. You are now ready to sew the leg bands to the breeches, just ease, or if needed use a couple of small box pleats to fit the bottom of the legs into the cannons. You want to remember to match the part of the legs left un-sewn to the edges of the cannons.

Lining:

The lining I like to cut from light weight linen, the waistband and the cannons are cut out the same as the outer-shell and interlining. For the leg pieces nearly everything is the same to the outer-shell, except for the length of the curve line AE. The lining to the legs are not as full as the outer-shell, instead of figuring it at $(3 \times \text{hip})/4$, you'll want to calculate it at either 1.25 or 1.5 times the hip divided by 4. this makes the width of the legs roughly half of the outer-shell. Whether you use 1.25 or 1.5 is up to you.

Before putting the lining into the breeches, you want to assemble the pieces together. First sew the leg pieces together, again leaving the last two inches of the inner seam un-sewn. After you have the waistband together, you can box pleat the legs into the waistband, Note you are not cartridge pleating the lining. finish the lining by attaching the cannons. Now you want to put the lining into the Breeches. To do this you want to single fold the lining so that it's about a quarter of an inch from the edge, then whip stitch the lining in.

Cod Pieces or other closers:

to close the front up once wearing them there are a couple of options available to you. you can sew in eyelets and lace them closed, or you can sew on buttons and button holes and overlap the closer. Either way is fine on it's own, or if you wish you can lace them up and then have a cod piece to cover the front. If you do not wish to wear a code piece, but still only want to lace it closed and you are worried what might happen if the lacing comes undone. you can make a d shape strip of stiff fabric that is connected to the inside of the one side, to create a modesty panel.

Pockets:

There are several paintings showing pockets in Venetians. These are usually seen in the outside, side seam and a couple of inches down. The exact shape I will leave up you, but when laying out my pockets I would like to make them large enough for modern use. IE, deep enough to hold my wallet or keys with out them falling out. The opening of the Pocket slit should be about 7 to 8 inches, though if you want

base this on the hand of the person the breeches are being made for. On how deep to make them I like to draw my rectangle for the pocket, but extend it past the pocket opening by several inches (usually based on the largest measurement of my wallet). The width of the pocket is either again based on my hand or the wallet, the main goal is that if we are taking the time to include a pocket, is to make it useful. Another trick, to help the stability of the pocket, is to extend the pocket above the opening so that it can be tacked down to the waistband. This does not mean the pocket is open that far up, but is there to make sure the pocket lays the same direction always. I add a three quarter of inch tab for the part of the pocket that is getting sewn into the side seam.

Once the pockets are cut out, place the right side of the pocket over the straight edge of the side seam of the breeches panel. the tab of the pocket should be placed where you want the pocket opening to be. Once pinned, Sew a 3/8th inch seam to secure the pocket to the panel of the breeches. Then press the pocket seam over like you are planning for flat fell the seam, but do not flat fell them. The goal is to have the pocket look like an ear hanging off the side seam of the breeches panel, with no distortion to the straight edge of the breeches panel. Once you have done this to both the front and back panels of the breeches, lay the right side of the breeches together overlapping both the leg panels and pocket pieces together. Sew a 5/8th inch seam down the side of the front and back panels and continue over the pocket for the amount of the seam allowance. Then turn the pieces to sew close the the pocket, then finish the side seam on the leg panels of the breeches. when you press the side seam open, if you want your selvage to lay flat where the pocket is, you will have to rip out a couple of the horizontal stitches then snip the selvage to have it lay flat. Afterwards make sure to re sew the couple of stitches you sniped to remove the selvage from the pocket sides.

Bibliography:

Tailor's Pattern Book 1589

by Juan De Alcega

Quite Specific Media Group; Facsimile edition (April 12, 1999)

ISBN-10: 0896762343

ISBN-13: 978-0896762343

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