

*Drafting*  
*a*  
*15<sup>th</sup> Century*  
*Loose Gown*  
*(Houpelande)*

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## Introduction:

A houpelande is a style of gown that comes into fashion in Europe around the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Though starting out as an outer garment, it did become the height of fashion in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and can continue to be seen in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in both as a houpelande and in the Spanish ropa's. A basic houpelande has a lot in common with a cote, The main differences is, where as the cote comes in around the waist and flairs out at the hips into the skirt. The houpelande instead flairs out at the chest, even to the extreme of flaring out at the shoulder, including the armscye. It should also be noted that the houpelande is not a foundation or supportive garment. For woman in particular, a lot of the the looks and styles with houpelandes are going to be achieved with the Cote underneath it, The houpelande should not be what is supporting the bust.

There's only a couple of examples of extant houpelandes, from Greenland there is the Herjolfsnes 63, that is an 8 panel houpelande, you can also see a similar style houpelande from an Andrea Da Firenze mid 14<sup>th</sup> century Fresco in Cappella Spagnuolo, Santa Maria Novella, Florence called "Way of Salvation". There is also another extent houpelande that is made up of multiple panels. Other than that, I do not know of many examples of surviving houpelandes, or any tailor layouts. The closest that we come are with Alcega's ropa's in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century that are 4 panel constructions and look similar to a style that is often referred to as a swing coat houpelande. This leads us to using mostly paintings and illuminations for our research into how we want our houpelandes to look.

A Burgundian gown, is a style of houpelande that gets it's name from examples found from paintings and illuminations that trace there origins to Burgundian France. The main characteristic difference between what most people refer to as a Burgundian, is the "narrow upper body shape and a V-neck in either the front or back, or a square neck. More informations about these and other stylistic choices for the houpelande will be discussed later

One last point of discussion before we continue, I will often be discussing how many panels a houpelande body is made up with. What I mean here, is how many pieces are used to make the body of the garment. A four panel garment is made up of 4 pieces, A front right, and left, and a back right and left. Some times in cotes gores are added to add width in for the skirting. Unlike adding a gore to just the skirting, they would divide the body into more panels, you could evenly divided the garment into 8, 12 or 16 (or more) panels to increase the fullness of the overall garment, this allows it to naturally drape evenly, instead of mostly at the sides.

## Drafting the Houpelande Body:

There is no one way to make a houpelande, just as there is no one way to make spaghetti. As mentioned above there are extant examples of houpelandes with 8 panels. I've also seen plenty of good looking houpelandes done with just 4 panels. Though it is important that if you are trying to make a 8 panel houpelande like the Href 63, don't be tricked by the fact that with modern fabric, that you can easily do it in 4 panels. The fact that there is 8 panels, will effect the drape and look of the garment. There are two things at work here, one is the fact that though you are making 4 panels out of 8. You are sewing a straight edge to a bias cut. This will effect how the fabric hangs. Also the seam it self will effect the hang. If you finish the seam by either flat felling or just pressing opening and sewing the ends down, you are strengthening the fabric there. And will stiffen it, effecting the hang. Fabric wasn't just limited to 30inches, looms ranged in size and style through out period and regions of europe. Also in The guild systems, the tenters were told sizes to stretch fabric to after fulling or face fines .

No matter how we are going to lay out the body though, we start at the same spot. That is with a simple body block, to give us our center line, neck, shoulder, and armscye. We will manipulate this block to give us the body style of the houpelande that we want. One way of doing this to an extreme, is once we have the simple block cut out, we might lay it on another piece of and trace the center line, and the neck, then rotate the pattern so the shoulder line is a little shallower, then rotate it again, so the armscye is laid out on the same angle as the side of the garment, meaning that the skirting flare starts at the point of the shoulder. We can even take it to the extreme that the shoulder, armscye and side are all on the same plane to give you the circle houpelande. But after we have the simple block drafted I will go more into how we will use it.

Creating the simple block:

To create the simple block, we need to know a couple of measurements. These measurements you can either take if you have the person that the garment is made for there, or calculate if you prefer that way (I have calculations needed in the appendix or go to <http://www.chesholme.com/sator.php>)

Chest: This measurement is the circumference of the persons chest.

Back Waist Length: This is the measurement from the top of the back of your neck to your natural Waist.

Chest Line: This is the measurement from the top of the back of your neck to your chest.

Front Width: This measurement is from the inside of the shoulder to the other inside of the shoulder.

Shoulder Length, This is the measurement from the side of the neck to the point of the shoulder.

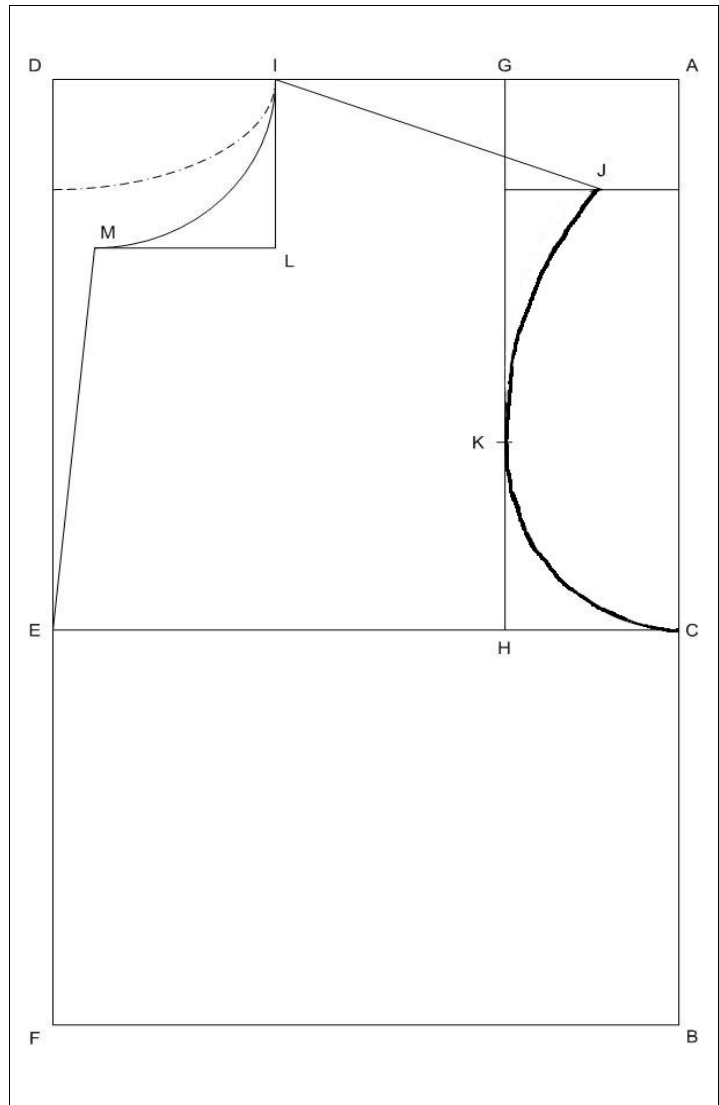
Ease: This is not an actual measurement but is a number to your chest so that the garment will fit comfortably over your clothing

Once we have those basic measurements we can layout our simple block, that we will use

To make the houpelande body.

To draw the simple body block,

1. Draw a vertical line equal to the BWL, Mark the Ends A and B
2. Mark your ChL down From A, label this point C
3. Square out from A,B,C by your Chest plus the amount of Ease divided by 4, label these points D, E and F
4. Connect D, E and F to complete your box
5. On line A-D Measure out From D your  $\frac{1}{2}$  of your FW and Label G
6. Draw a vertical line from G to the Line C-E and Label H
7. Your Shoulder line is  $\frac{1}{5}$  line D-E, and should be drawn to connect Line D-E to Line G-H
8. On Line A-D Measure out from D  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Line D-G, Label I
9. From Draw a line that ends on your shoulder line that equals ShL, Label The end of the line J
10. Measure up from H  $\frac{1}{3}$  of line G-H and label K
11. Draw your Armscye connecting J, k and E
12. Draw a line down from I equal to Line D-I minus  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch, label end point L
13. Draw a line perpendicular to line I-L that is equal to line I-L, label the end of the line M
14. Draw a curve line for the neck connecting point I and M
15. Draw a line From M to E
16. For the back neck Curve, draw a curve line from point I that falls on line A-B equal to the Shoulder Line.

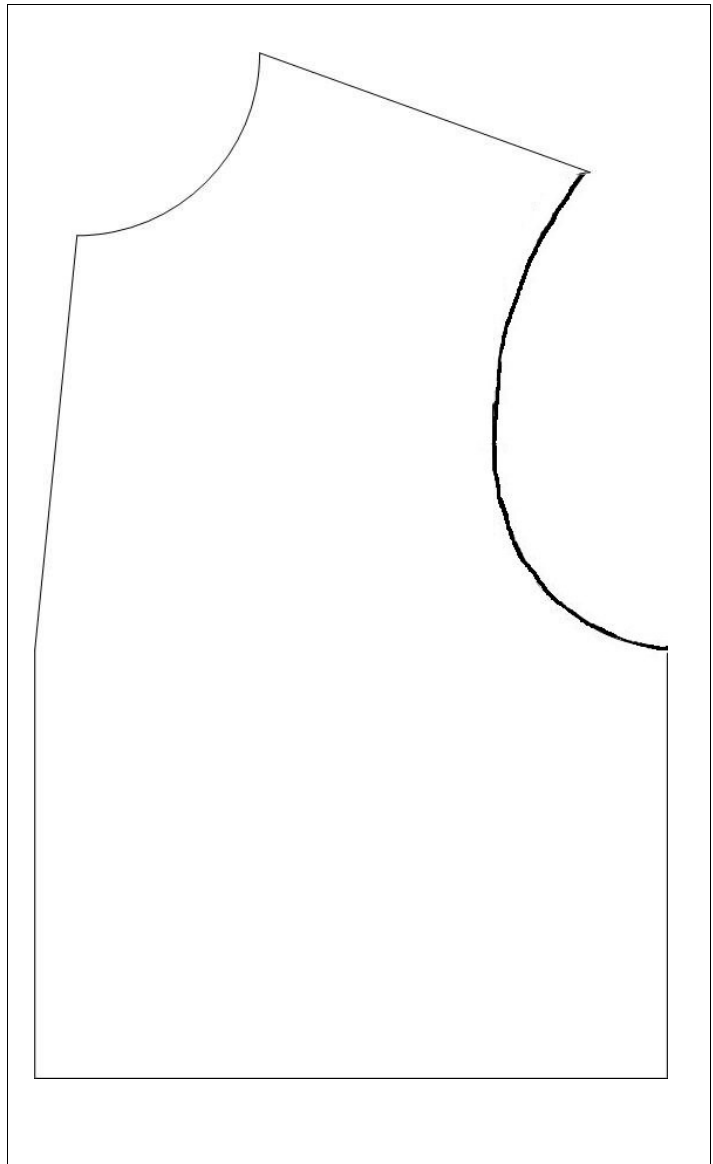


#### Four Panel Houpelande.

Once you have our simple Block pattern, we want to go ahead and make the cutting pattern for the body of the houpelande. For a 4 panel houpelande we can either lay this out on folded fabric, or if you want to keep or modify the pattern to use more than once, lay it out on another piece of fabric.

At this point we need to know two more things that we didn't use to make the simple block. One is how long you want to make the garment, and the other is how much hem will the garment have. As a minimum I like to have my hem be 2 the amount as the length of the garment. So if your houpelande is going to be a short 45 inches, you would want a hem of at least 90 inches. The thing to note though, this is not a hard and fast rule, it gives you what I would at least want to start with. Once the mock up is done you might decide to get the look i want to increase this, but that is subjective. Simply adjust your pattern and try again.

When Drawing out our full pattern, first lay out your center line again, this time at the length of your garment. Next take your simple block and trace the neck curve from your pattern, next if you want a narrow fitting chest, trace the shoulder, if you want more material in the chest, rotate the pattern up at the point that the neck meets the shoulder then trace your shoulder line. You can even curve your shoulder up a little more if you like, this will give you a nice pleat down the chest in the body as the shoulder seam lays flat on your shoulder.



Before I draw my armscye and side, I like to get an idea how the overall panel is going to look. One trick is to take a piece of string and tie to your pencil or chalk, and anchor the other end to the top of your center line and draw your quarter circle, this will make up your hem, you can either eyeball where you want your side panel to flare to or measure out one quarter of your hem you are shooting for on this line. Again this is not an exact science, and also what mock ups are for. The other option, is to square off from the center line by one fourth your estimated hem, and then around 8 inches from the center line start to slightly curve your hem line up to give it a shallow arc. Then remark the quarter of your hem, on this arced line.

Now we have our top, the center line, and the hem roughed out, the next is our armhole and the side of the houppelande. You can either draw a straight line from your shoulder to the end of your hem line that you have marked, then lay the armhole over it so that it starts and ends on the line. This would put your armhole and side seam in the same plane, and usually add more room in the chest. Or play with the armhole of the point of the shoulder to where you like it to lay, then from the base of the armhole draw your side seam.

We now have a body pattern for our houppelande, at this point, adjust your neck to the style that you want and then you can make a mock up, see how it looks and decide if you need to modify the pattern, or not.

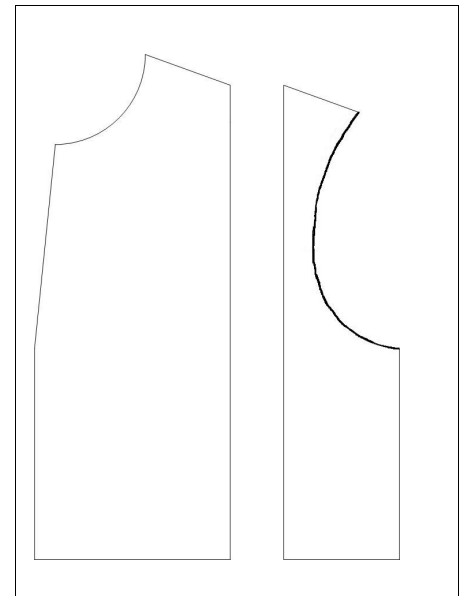
#### Multi Panel Houppelande:

Laying out a multi panel houppelande, is just about as easy as laying out a 4 panel one. First though you need to decide how many panels you want. Obviously you want more than four, one rule though is that you must add panels symmetrically, if you add a panel back right, then you should also add one to back left. If you want the back to be fuller and to drape differently than the front, you could add more panels in the back than the front, or add equal amounts to the front and back.

Once I know how many panels I'm going to add, I want to mark where I want the seams to be on my simple block pattern. If you're adding more panels to the back than front, you might want to cut out a simple pattern for the back so you can mark it up differently. If I'm making an 8 panel houppelande. I like to place a mark on the shoulder in the center of the shoulder line. Then square down from this mark so that it runs parallel to the center line, then cut your pattern into two pieces along this line.

Now that I have your two pieces, start with the one with the neck curve on it first. On another piece of paper lay out a center line the length of your garment. Then match up the neck piece to the center line, and transfer the neck curve. Like with the four panel you can either directly copy your shoulder line, or rotate it on the point that meets the neck. Next at the bottom of your center line square out from it, by one eighth of your hem. Connect this point to the end of your shoulder line, you will want to measure this side line. You now have your first panel that makes up your side piece. Elsewhere on the paper or on a new piece, draw a center line, that is equal to the side that you drew on the previous panel.

At the top of the line, continue your shoulder line at the same angle from the previous piece. At the bottom of the center line, square out again by one eighth of your hem. Connect the points of the shoulder and the hem again, then at the top of the shoulder draw in your armhole so that it starts and finishes on the side seam. If you are doing more than 8 panels, just repeat these steps, and don't forget that you are dividing the hem by how many panels you have, though if you are having more panels in the back than front, to figure your hem per panel according, since the front and backs won't be the same. Also don't forget to adjust your neck and make your mock up if needed.



### V-Necks:

A very popular style of houpelande is called the Burgundian Gown, it's name is closely associated to an area of France that it was commonly seen in paintings. This does not mean the gown was called this in period or the only location you would have see this dress, It's just a could modern classification. What's sets the Burgundian apart from other houpelandes is a v cut neck line in the front or back or a deep,square neck. The sleeves for the most part are fitted and straight, often having a turn back cuff. the neckline often has a dark color or fur facing showing on the out side.

When laying out a a v-neck there are to important things to remember. First, whether the V opening is in the front or the back you want to make to place the opening on the selvage of the fabric and have your seam allowance be your selvage. This is important to hold the crisp shape of the V opening and keeping it from stretching over time. The other thing to remember, to keep the V opening from falling off your shoulder, you want the other sides neck line to be rather high. if you cut a shallow neck line the garment will be constantly sliding off your shoulders.

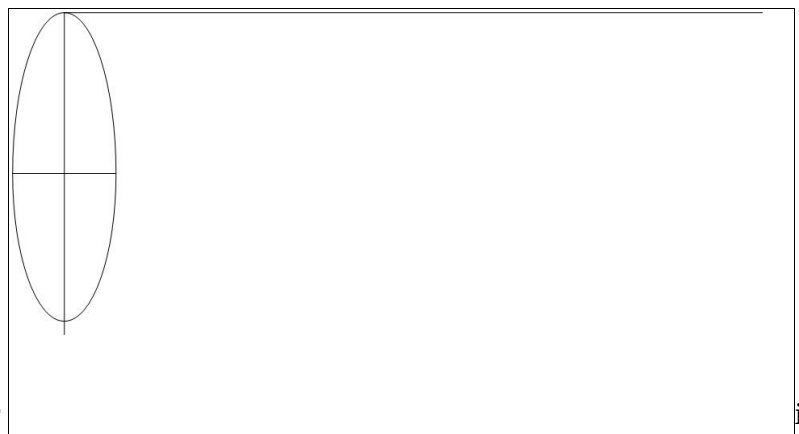
To actually draft the panel with the V neck line. you want to take your basic pattern piece from about and place where the shoulder meeting the neckline onto the center line of the panel. You will not be cutting a V shape. draw your shoulder from the center line and lay out the rest of the garment like any houpelande. The oppsite side will be laid out the same way as a regular houpelande.

When you sew together the houpelande, so together the center of the non V side first. then sew the sides of the V Neck opening side to the the side of that piece. Next you want to sew the shoulders together. at this point you will want to sew together the center of the panels with the V neck, up to the point you want the V opening to start, and reinforce this point. The V neck line will fall open naturally and you should not have to reinforce the neck line to hold it's shape.



### Sleeves:

There are many different options when choosing sleeves for houpelandes. The majority of these can be laid out with just drafting half the sleeve. These include The belled style sleeves, the Bag sleeve, and the Trumpet sleeves. Other sleeve types like the cape sleeve or draped trumpet sleeves, need to be draft completely. These are not the only sleeve options or names out there, but you will find that either they are similar style to one of the sleeves listed here, or can be easily modified and made from one of the pattern given here.



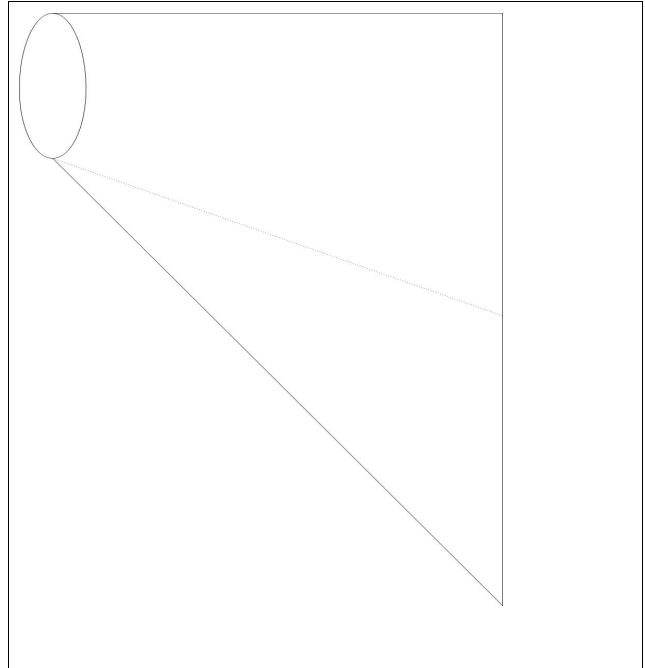
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To draft any of our sleeve types that need only half of the sleeve laid out, we start by drawing a straight line equal to the length of the sleeve we want, next we will place the armhole, where the cap of the armhole is placed will effect how the sleeve hangs from the garment, you'll find that to get your sleeve to hang correctly you do not want to place the cap of the armhole at the center top of the sleeve.

Rotating it off the centerline of the sleeve will cause the sleeve opening to naturally hang as we see in the Picture. So to place our armhole in, we draw a perpendicular line at the one end of the centerline of the sleeve that is at least equal to half the measured armhole, this is a reference line. Now on this line we want to draw a line that crosses it, 2 inches on either side of the reference line. This will give us our sleeve cap and then the depth of the armhole cut. Once we have these reference lines we will draw our s-curve starting at the top of the centerline, to the guide points on the half way line. Then back to our vertical reference line. We should cross our vertical reference line when our curved lines equal half of the armhole measurement.

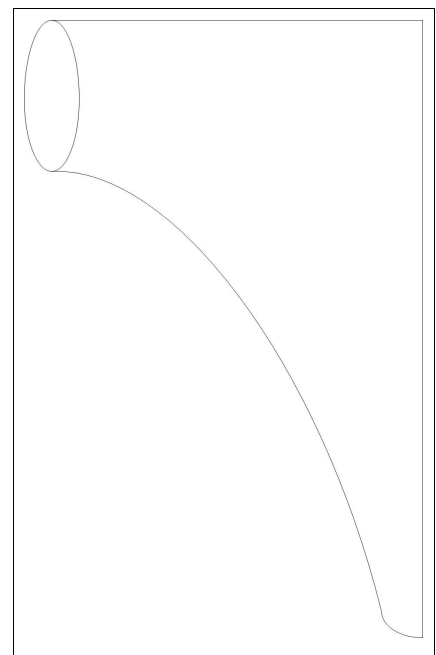
### Bell sleeves:

The bell style sleeves, are very common in houppelandes and transitional cotes. From our sleeve pattern we have drafted so far, we next want to decide on how deep we want the mouth of the sleeve. The end of the sleeve can open to a narrow flare, or all the way to the ground, or any points in between. To do this take our sleeve pattern we laid out above and at the other end of our sleeve pattern from the armhole, we want to mark how deep we want the bell sleeve to open. We draw this line perpendicular to the center line based on this. Next we draw a straight line back to the base of the armhole.



### Trumpet Sleeve:

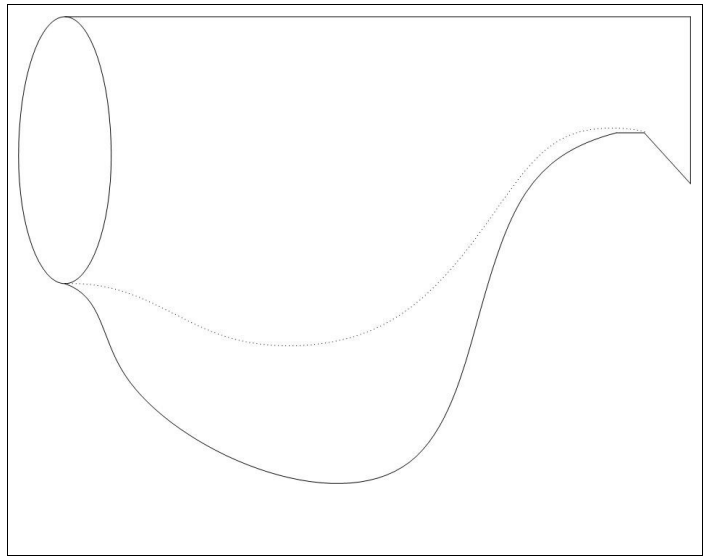
A trumpet sleeve is very similar to a bell sleeve, except that the sleeve starts more fitted around the upper arm before flaring into the wide opening of the sleeve. Like the bell sleeve we need to decide how deep the opening of the sleeve will be and draw a line perpendicular to the center line. Instead of a straight line connecting the bottom of the sleeve opening to the base of the armhole, we want a gentle taper that starts to curve out to the bottom of the sleeve opening, just like the horn of a trumpet. This can be done to taste, where either the curve starts around the elbow or more extreme closer to the hand.





## Bag Sleeve:

a bag sleeve, unlike the trumpet and the bell, is more fitted around the hand and closer to a normal sleeve pattern. But its difference from your normal sleeve, is its fullness and curve like bag under your arm. This is again something that is done to taste. But we again start with our basic sleeve pattern from earlier and lay out the cuff of our sleeve. The base of the armhole to the cuff is connected with a curved line to produce the fullness, even to the extreme of creating a deep bag.



If you want to pleat in these style of sleeves into the armhole there are two methods you have available. You can simply draw your armhole deeper, and pleat the sleeve, though this might throw off the rest of the look of your sleeve making the upper portion too bulky. Another solution is that you cut a gore and place it in at the center line of the sleeve. This gives you the extra material to pleat in the sleeve, and keeping it in the top of the sleeve like a lot of the paintings, but also keeps the look of the sleeve we want without looking overly large.

## Collars:

Like Sleeves, you have a wide range of collars available to you with houppelandes. From collars that lie flat, like the yoke-shaped or a rounded collar to a butterfly shaped collar. To stand up collars that can either look fitted or flared out. It is important though that if you want the collar to stand up on its own, to cut the back of the collar into the back panels of the houppelande.

## Other finishing Details:

To dagg or not to dagg? That really is up to you, but if you are going to dagg a sleeve you want to make sure you have fabric available beyond where you want the sleeve to open. If your houppelande is made from a fulled wool, you can get away with not lining your dagges, though you might want to do some type of protective finishing stitch. All other materials I would line your dagging, this may affect how complicated you get.

Next question you might want to consider is setting your pleats. You do not have to do this, you could simply belt your houppelande and have the pleats held in with the belt, this is very common. If you want to sew your pleats in, the best way to do this especially if you are not lining your garment, is to sew the pleats from the back side, you just need to sew about 1 to 2 inch back stitch about 3/8 of inch back from the roll of the pleat. Next you want to whip stitch the back of the pleats together, to hold the pleats square. I prefer this method over using a pleating strip.

#### Actual Measured

Height (Ht)

Chest (C)

Waist (W)

Hip (Hp)

#### Calculated Measurements

Cape Length (CL) =  $Ht - 9$

Correction Ratio (CR) =  $CL / 63$

Standard Chest (StC) =  $.635 * CL$

Chest Deviation (ChD) =  $C - StC$

Front Width (FW) =  $(C / 4) + (6 * CR)$

Back Waist Length (BWL) =  $(2 * CL / 7) + (CR * 2)$

Shoulder Length (ShL) =  $(C / 16) + (3.75 * CR)$

Chest Line (ChL) =  $(BWL / 2) + (CHD / 4) + CR$