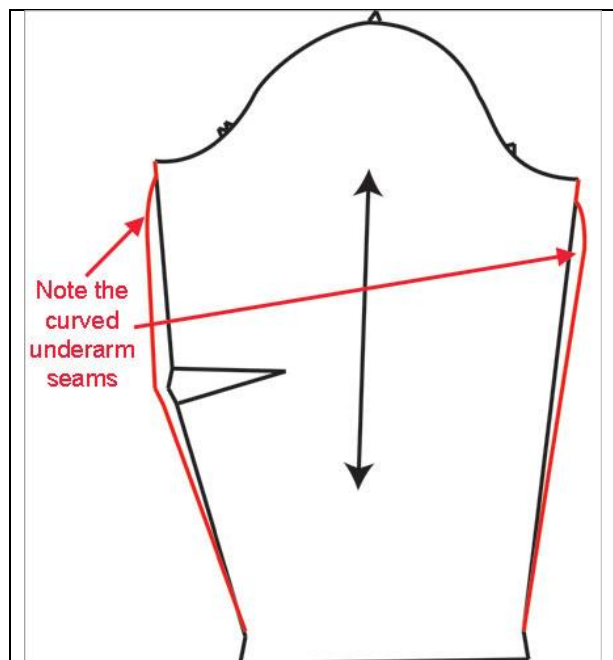


Large Upper Arm Pattern Alteration – Unique Alternative

Those of you with large upper arms (large biceps) in relation to the bodice armscye opening, often struggle to make the sleeve cap fit nicely into the bodice. The wider you make the underarm width of your sleeve pattern, the longer the sleeve cap becomes and this in turn can result in a gathered sleeve cap. If you don't want a gathered cap, then you're often instructed to widen the bodice at the underarm thereby making the armscye curve longer to accept the widened sleeve. But this means that the bodice circumference becomes excessively large for you.

In a recent Fit & Sew Retreat, we incorporated a different alternative so that extra width was added for the large upper arm, but it did not require either widening the bodice or gathering the sleeve cap. Here's what we did. We widened the underarm seam by curving it outward a sufficient amount to equal her bicep circumference measurement plus about 2" of wearing ease. The minimum amount of ease in a sleeve is 1 1/2". Without this ease, the sleeve will feel way too tight.

The following illustration shows how the underarm was drawn. For clarity, this illustration does not include seam allowances. Notice how at the underarm point as you would sew from there to the hem level, the new red stitching line would initially follow the original seam line. But at the 5/8" level, it then begins a curved journey outward to allow for the fullness of the bicep plus wearing ease.



It's kind of a novel approach, but it works very well...as you can see in the following photos.



And when set in to the armscye, the sleeve looks like this. This is definitely an acceptable alternative to traditional techniques for widening the upper arm of the sleeve pattern.



Here's what her actual sleeve pattern looked like. You'll see the red lines on either side of the underarm which indicates where she actually stitched to begin the underarm curve. We kept the remaining underarm extension on the pattern just in case we didn't like the result so that's why it looks a little different from the illustration above. And of course, this sleeve pattern has the seam allowances in place and we needed to make one other minor tune-up for the re-positioning of the sleeve cap notch due to a forward-thrusted shoulder bone. I'll cover that tune up in a different article.



If you happen to have a large upper arm and the sleeve pattern needs widening for your wearing comfort, next pattern you draw you might want to give this a try.