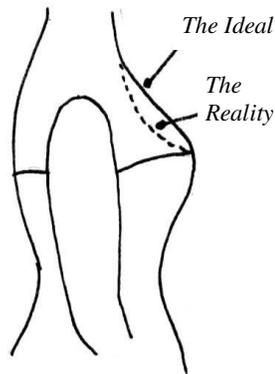


# Judicious Padding: Making Bust Pads for Optimal Fit

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Have you been terminally frustrated with the fit of your bodices? Are you finding little horizontal and diagonal folds above your bust line, with no way to remove them? Take heart: our Foremothers took seriously the adage to “stuff with cotton what God has forgotten”—though they typically used wool, and were using it to refine fit, not create bosoms.



“Bust padding” is perhaps a misnomer. It can be added to any dress, to fill in the hollow that results when softer flesh is corseted and create a smooth silhouette from shoulder to bust.

While women with larger breasts are more likely to need this padding, the need is created by the softness of a person’s flesh, rather than the abundance of it. Even very slight-busted women may need this little bit of padding.

## Signals You Need Padding:

- Horizontal and/or diagonal folds of cloth above the bust
- A “shelf” look to the bosom
- Concave hollows above the bust, through the upper chest (fabric just bags there)
- Unable to get a nice fit above the bust, regardless of trying.

You can opt to add padding after a dress is fully constructed, or to add it directly into the lining of the dress during construction. You can even create pads that baste into the armseye of your dresses, and change them out after each wearing. (Though this takes a small amount of effort, you will have better success laundering cotton dresses with the wool pads removed.)

You will be able to make your pads at home, with just a bit in materials. You will need:

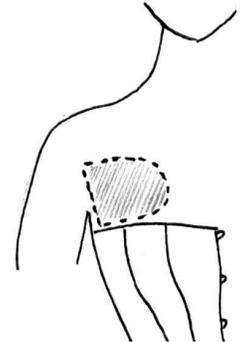
- ✓ About one yard of wool batting, available in quilting stores. This will yield more than one set of pads.
- ✓ Cotton thread for basting
- ✓ Basic bodice in muslin, with your best efforts at fitting.
- ✓ Paper for patterns, pencil
- ✓ Cotton muslin for a cover, if desired
- ✓ Needle, thimble, scissors, pins

It is easiest to make your first set of pads while laced into your corset or stays, as you will need to try them on your corseted shape as you go. You may find you need different amounts of padding for each side of your body.

The padding does not cover the entire chest. Were you to warm your fingers in your armpits, the position of your palm and heel

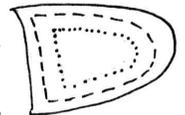
of hand will usually correspond with your padding needs.

Start by tracing an oval about the size of your hand. Stand before a mirror, and hold the paper oval to your body, covering your hollow area. The area should be covered entirely; usually, the padding will not reach much past your bust mid-line; it will not typically reach the center front.



Trace the approximate armseye line (you may need to try on a bodice muslin to get this line.) Trim away the excess extending past the armseye line. If this remained, you would have very bulky armpits!

Trace graduated oval shapes, each between ¼” and ½” smaller than the next, onto paper. These do not have to be perfect! Cut one large oval in wool batting. This will form your outermost layer.



Smaller ovals are stacked on top, and face the body to fill the hollow. Wool batting can be easily split into thinner layers, for a great deal of flexibility in the form of your padding.

Use plain sewing cotton to lightly baste/quilt the layers in place. The edges of each layer can be “crushed” or “feathered out” to blur the delineation between each.

Depending on your figure needs, you may need completely graduated ovals; or, you may need one outer layer, two of the next oval, one of a third, and one of a fourth. They may or may not be placed precisely one atop the next; it is okay for the ovals to sit more to one edge than the others.

Try your padding after the addition of each layer; this is where a fitting muslin becomes useful, as you’ll be able to slip the padding beneath the muslin, and see just how much improvement the padding makes, and whether more is needed.

When your pads are finished, you can either baste them to the lining of your dress (between lining and fashion fabric), or cover them with a bit of muslin; cut one oval the size of your outer layer, plus seam allowance, and another a bit larger; seam together, leaving the armseye edge open. Turn right sides out and slip in the padding. Make a pleat, tuck, or dart in the cover to fit it smoothly on the pad. Close the opening by hand, and baste with large stitches to the armseye seam allowance of your dresses. Enjoy your new look!



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