

BASIC SEWING INSTRUCTIONS FOR BABY BURIAL GOWNS

As you make these, you will refine your own method of construction. These basic instructions are to get you started. Please feel free to email me should you have questions, comments, tips or ideas!

I do not take any credit for the creation of the patterns; they have been handed from seamstress to seamstress and have had multiple adaptations made along the way. The patterns are just outlines of the patterns I am using, nothing fancy but they do the job! Line up the lines, tape together and cut out. I have copied mine over onto heavy weight interfacing since it holds up to repeated pinning and accidental clipping better than paper – then when those start to wear out I just copy another.

*If a dress I receive is visibly soiled or has a musty smell I wash the dress in the washing machine on the gentle cycle, hang dry or tumble dry on a very low heat cycle (honestly, I usually tumble dry). For discolored fabrics you can try soaking overnight in the bathtub with water and BIZ. (Caution, a wet wedding dress can weigh a ton and be a *little* difficult to hand wring!) **However I moved to asking donors to send only clean gowns.**

*I cut the skirt from bodice, and then separate each section at the seams. Much easier to work with as the bodice of the dress typically has too many seams to use for a gown, but often there is often a lot of lace or beads that can be removed and applied to other parts of the gowns.

*The bottom of the skirt is a great place to line up the bottom of your pattern with for an easy no sew and beautiful hemline.

*You'll have odd size pieces left from which you'll cut a neck facing, approx. 4"x4" round. Larger or smaller depending on the size of the gown you are sewing – I don't really measure, I just cut out a circle with pinking shears to help stop fraying.

1. Sew shoulder seams and press open. (I prefer to serge this seam, press it over one direction and top stitch it down).
2. Neck facing (see drawn tutorial). Lay right side neck facing to right side fabric and pin in place and sew around neck opening. You may need to go around more than once to make it even, sometimes sewing in the opposite direction helps to get an even seam as the space is so small. Trim facing inside the neck hole, clip curves, turn facing, press, and top-stitch about ¼" from edge. Then with pinking shears trim facing to a suitable size.
3. At this point you may want to add trim to front bodice. (I most often choose to do it afterwards and sew trim all the way around the bottom of the gown instead of just on the front. For lace appliques and bows etc. I will often use fabric glue like liquid stitch or 444 super glue spray (which I like very much, permanent, flexible, odorless after drying). Sometimes I'll hand sew. Sometimes machine sew. Sometimes I sew a chain of beads around the neck... your creativity along with trial and error will tell you when and how to add embellishments.
4. Hem sleeves. Or add lace. Then sew ¼" elastic on wrong side about ½" from sleeve edge if desired.
5. Pin side ribbons (8-12 inches depending on dress size, you need to have enough to tie a bow) in side seam about 2-3" down from underarm.
6. Sew side seams, attaching gown front to gown back, matching hemmed sleeve edges and bottom edge of gown. Clip underarm seams fairly generously so that when turned right side out, they lay flat as possible. (Again, after sewing I serge this seam then clip, turn and iron).

7. Hem bottom if a raw edge by turning up and topstitching, or adding lace.
8. Turn center back edges under, press, topstitch, and adding a ribbon on each side just below the neckline. The gowns are open all the way down for ease in dressing the babes.

Angel Wraps –

These wraps are for the very small or very fragile infant that cannot be clothed.

There isn't really a pattern for me to share with you; I cut three squares, roughly 10 x10 with a square quilter's template.

The first square I iron diagonally in half and either sew a seam along the finished edge or sew lace along the finished edge.

The second square I sew a length of ribbon twice the corner to corner length of the square diagonally to the right side of the fabric. I zigzag it onto the fabric about half an inch in the center of the square at the center of the ribbon.

Sandwich the three layers together

The bottom square with the ribbon right side up in the middle, the triangle right side down towards the ribbon on the bottom piece (make sure that the ribbon runs the same diagonal as the triangle piece)
The top square you place right side down.

Pin edges together and sew. I sew starting just prior to a corner that does not contain the triangle piece, and go around to just past the fourth corner.

Turn right side out so that the ribbon is on the back and the pocket is in front and press. Tuck in the raw edges at the opening and sew a seam close to the edge all the way around to finish the wrap and seal the opening.

Add any further embellishments you desire (lace to edges, front of pocket or the side corners that show when wrapped up).

The baby is tucked into the pocket, the sides are folded over the front (like wrapping in a blanket) and the ribbon is tied in the front.

Thank you so very much for giving your time to provide such a precious gift to families during times of extreme sorrow.

Michelle Matthews

Angel Gowns By Michelle

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