

HOW TO MAKE A PROM DRESS FROM OLD VELVET CURTAINS

A complete, step-by-step construction guide



SECTION 1 — PREP & MATERIALS

Materials

- Old velvet curtains (ideally lined)
- Lining fabric (reuse curtain lining if intact)
- Invisible zip (22–24")
- Interfacing for bodice
- Boning (optional but recommended)
- Matching thread
- Sewing machine + heavy-duty needle (90/14 or 100/16)
- Chalk, pins, scissors, iron

Before You Begin

Velvet has:

- Nap (direction of pile) — all pieces must face the same direction
- Weight — bodice must be stabilised
- Bulk — seams need grading and pressing with a velvet board or steam only

SECTION 2 — PATTERN CHOICE

Choose a simple, structured silhouette that works with heavy velvet:

Recommended shapes

- Strapless sweetheart bodice + A-line skirt
- Princess-seamed bodice + full gathered skirt
- Fitted bodice + circle skirt (if curtains are wide enough)

Why these work

- They use large panels, perfect for curtain yardage
- They avoid fussy details that fight velvet's thickness
- They create a dramatic, formal silhouette with minimal seams

SECTION 3 — CUTTING THE CURTAINS

1. Deconstruct the curtains

- Remove all hems, header tape, hooks, and weights
- Separate lining from velvet
- Press lightly with steam hovering above the pile (never iron directly)

2. Lay out your pieces

- Place all pattern pieces **in the same nap direction**
- Use chalk, not pens
- Pin inside seam allowance to avoid crushing the pile



3. Cut carefully

Velvet shifts. Use:

- Sharp scissors
- Slow, controlled cuts
- Pattern weights if possible



SECTION 4 — MAKING THE BODICE

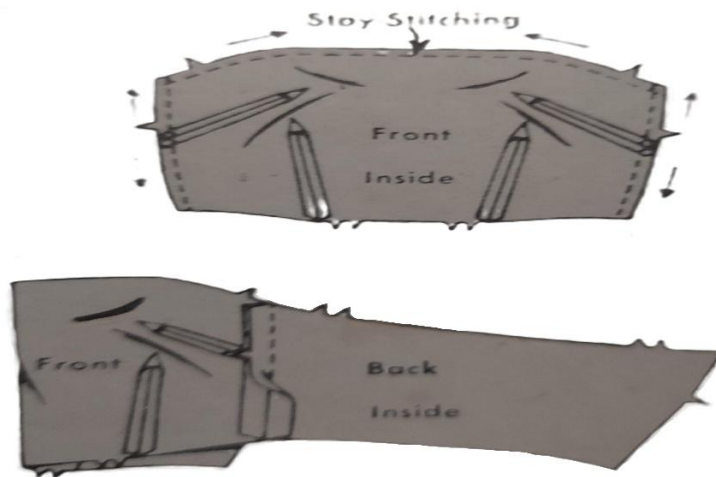
1. Interface the bodice

Curtain velvet is heavy — stabilise the bodice with:

- Medium-weight fusible interfacing
- Or sew-in cotton organdie for a couture finish

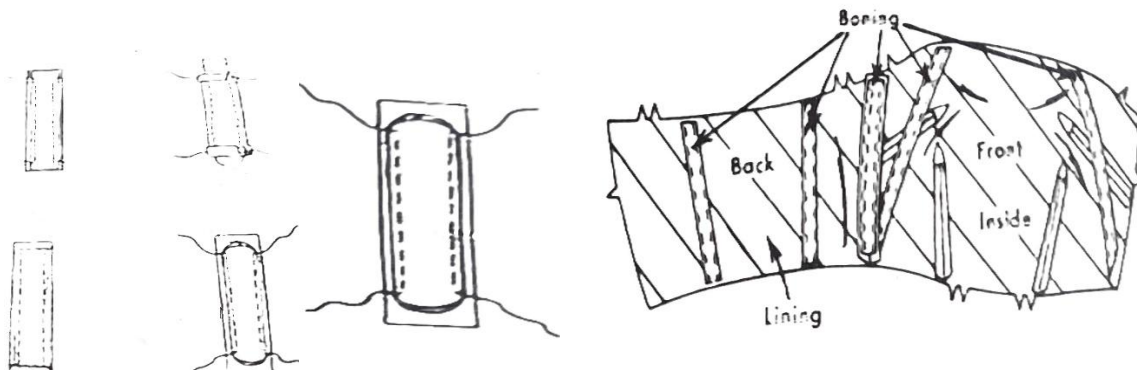
2. Sew bodice seams

- Use a long stitch (3–3.5 mm)
- Press seams open using steam only
- Grade seams to reduce bulk



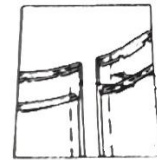
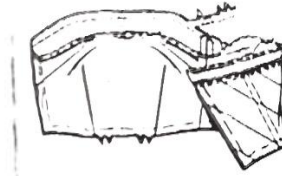
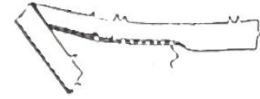
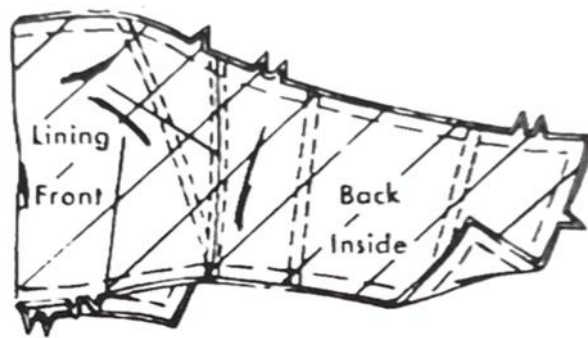
3. Add boning (optional but ideal)

Insert boning into the lining seams for structure.



4. Attach lining

- Sew lining to bodice at neckline
- Under-stitch to keep lining inside
- Turn and press with steam hovering



SECTION 5 — MAKING THE SKIRT

Choose one of these depending on curtain width

A. Full gathered skirt (easiest)

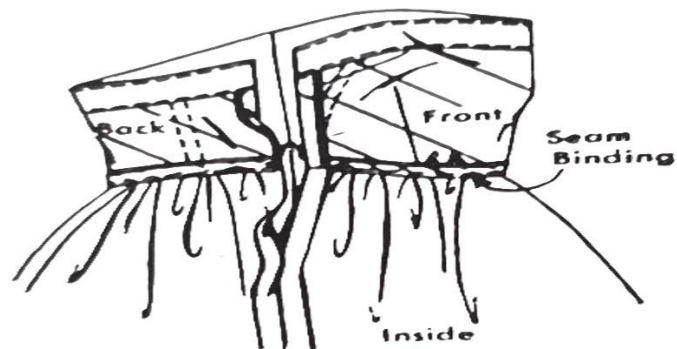
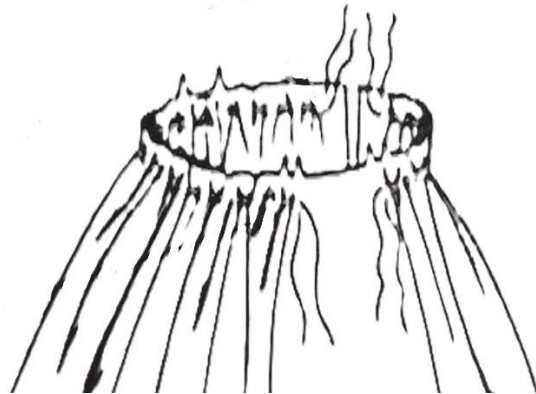
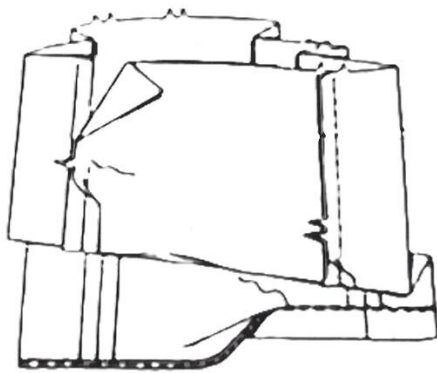
- Cut two large rectangles (front + back)
- Gather top edge evenly
- Attach to bodice

B. A-line skirt

- Cut front on fold
- Cut two back panels
- Sew side seams
- Attach to bodice

C. Circle skirt (if fabric allows)

- Fold curtain into quarters
- Cut waist curve + hem
- Attach to bodice



Lining

Reuse curtain lining if it's smooth and intact.
Cut lining pieces using the same pattern.

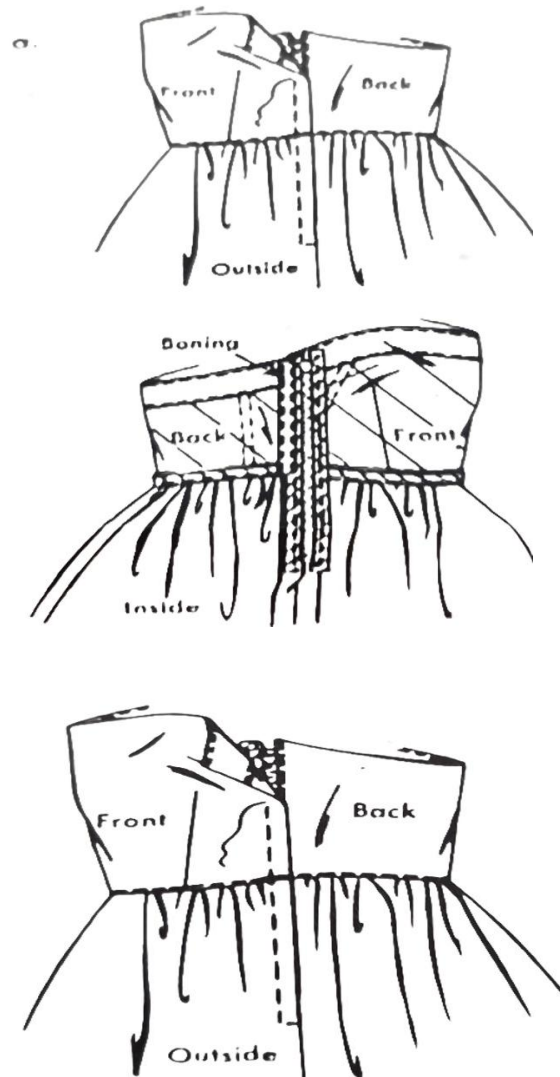
SECTION 6 — ZIP & CLOSURE

1. Insert invisible zip

- Place zip at centre back
- Use an invisible-zip foot
- Press zip coils gently before sewing

2. Close the back seam

Sew from bottom of zip to hem.



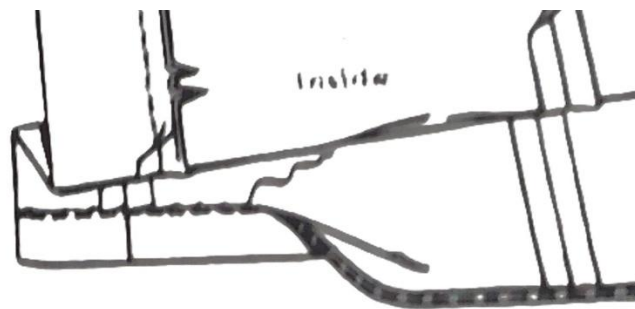
SECTION 7 — HEMMING VELVET

Velvet hems must be:

- Narrow
- Light
- Not over-pressed

Best method

- Turn up 1 cm
- Stitch by hand with a slip stitch
- Steam lightly from the wrong side



SECTION 8 — FINISHING TOUCHES

- Add waist stay (a ribbon inside the bodice) to support weight
- Add straps if needed for comfort
- Steam the entire dress on a hanger — never press flat



PATTERN-DRAFTING GUIDE

FOR A PROM DRESS MADE FROM RECYCLED VELVET CURTAINS

SECTION 1 — MEASUREMENTS YOU NEED

- **Bust**
- **Underbust**
- **Waist**
- **High hip** (optional)
- **Bust point to bust point** (nipple to nipple)
- **Bust point to waist**
- **Side seam length** (armpit to waist)
- **Back waist length**
- **Waist to floor**
- **Desired skirt fullness** (light, medium, dramatic)

These measurements drive the pattern geometry.

SECTION 2 — DRAFTING THE STRAPLESS BODICE

Velvet is heavy, so the bodice must be **structured** and **simple**.

1. Start with a basic bodice block

If you don't have one, draft a simple torso block using:

- Bust
- Waist
- Back width
- Front width
- Bust point

2. Convert to a strapless block

- Remove shoulder straps
- Raise underarm by 2–3 cm for support
- Lower neckline into a **sweetheart curve**
- Ensure the centre front is perpendicular to the waistline

3. Add shaping

Strapless bodices need **three shaping zones**:

- **Bust dart** (converted into princess seam or side seam shaping)
- **Waist dart**
- **Side seam shaping**

For velvet, the cleanest option is:

→ **Princess seams from the sweetheart neckline**

This gives:

- Better fit
- Cleaner lines
- Stronger structure for boning
- Fewer bulky darts in velvet

4. Add ease and support

- Add **0–1 cm ease** (strapless bodices must be tight)
- Add **boning channels** along princess seams, side seams, and centre back
- Add **1.5 cm seam allowance** (velvet frays)

5. Draft the lining

Copy the bodice pattern exactly.
This is where the boning will sit.

SECTION 3—DRAFTING THE SKIRT

OPTION A— FULL GATHERED SKIRT (EASIEST)

Pattern pieces

- **Front rectangle:** waist \div 2 \times desired fullness
- **Back rectangle:** same, but split into two for the zip
- Length: waist to floor + hem allowance

Why this works for velvet

- Curtains are wide
- Minimal seams

OPTION B—A-LINE SKIRT (MOST ELEGANT FOR VELVET)

Pattern pieces

- **Front panel on fold**
- **Two back panels**

Drafting

- Waist: divide by 4 for each panel
- Add flare from hip to hem
- Keep hem wide but not extreme (velvet is heavy)

Why this works

- Smooth, clean lines
- Less bulk than gathers
- Works with limited curtain width

OPTION C—CIRCLE SKIRT (ONLY IF CURTAINS ARE VERY WIDE)

Drafting

- Use the formula:
waist radius = waist \div 6.28
- Draw quarter circle on folded fabric
- Add full length from radius to hem

Why this works

- Dramatic movement
- Perfect for prom
- But requires very wide curtains

SECTION 4—JOINING BODICE + SKIRT PATTERNS

1. Align waistlines

Ensure:

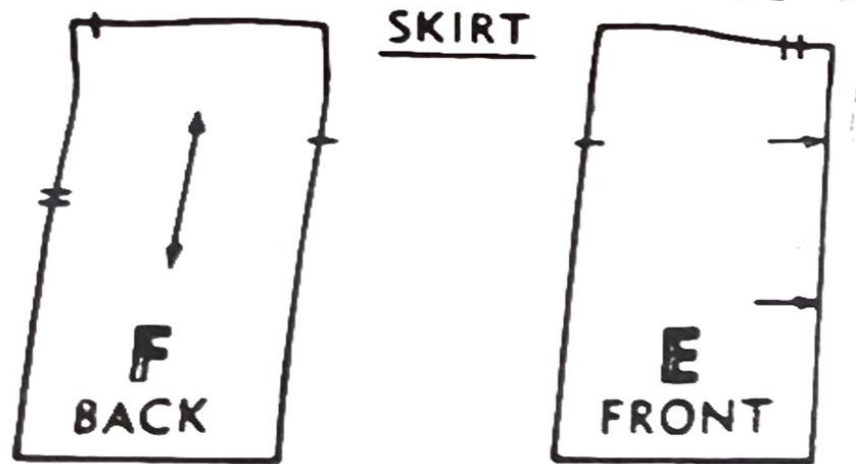
- Bodice waist = skirt waist
- Back opening lines up for zip

2. Add notches

- Centre front
- Side seams
- Princess seam points
- Zip placement

3. Add seam allowances

- 1.5 cm for velvet seams
- 2–3 cm hem allowance



SECTION 5—CUTTING LAYOUT FOR CURTAINS

Because curtains are rectangular, use this layout:

1. Bodice pieces

Place along the **straight grain**

All pieces must follow the **same nap direction**



2. Skirt pieces

Use the full width of the curtain

Place the largest pieces first (skirt), then bodice



3. Lining

Reuse curtain lining if smooth

Otherwise cut from fresh lining fabric

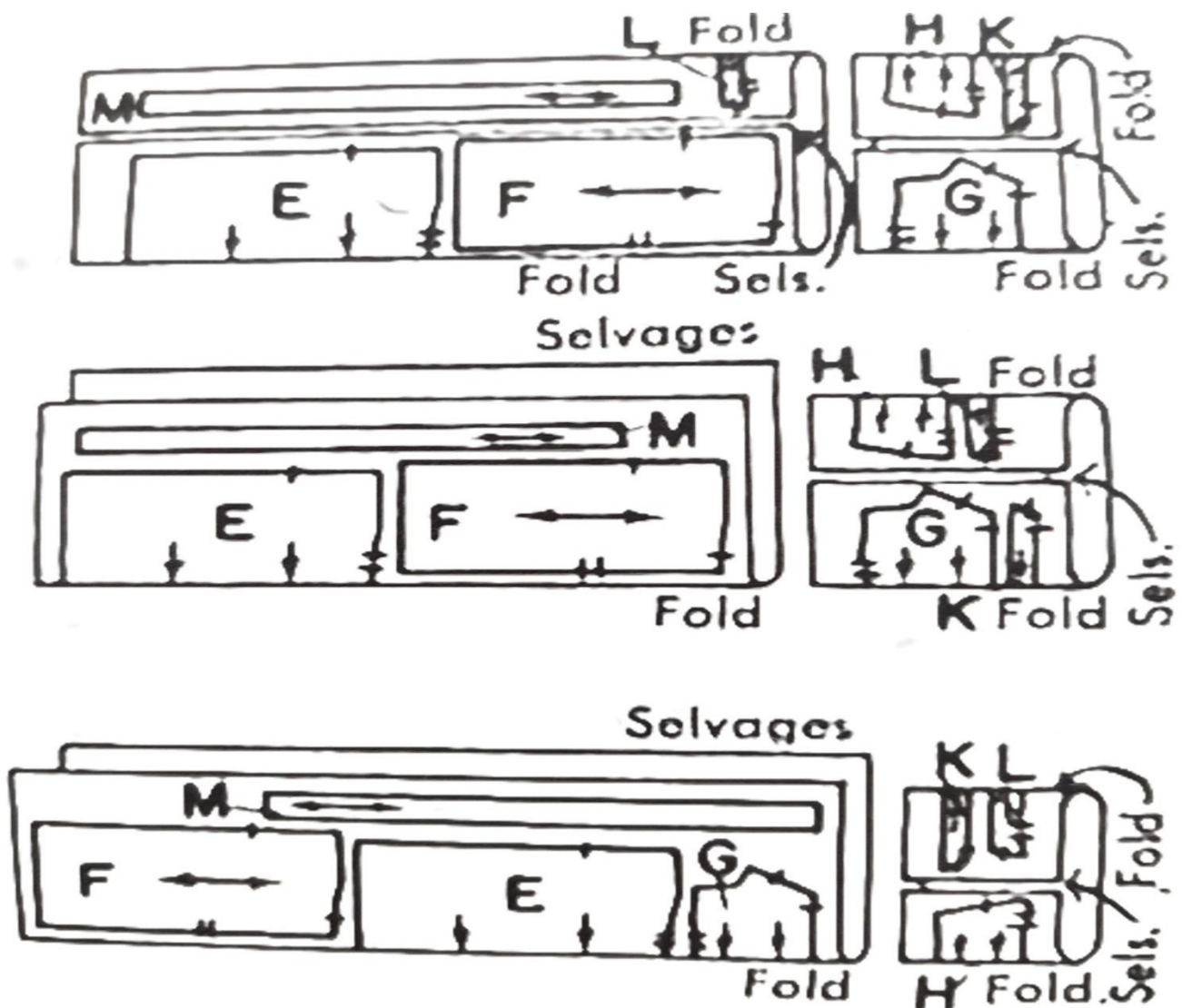
SECTION 6—CHECKING THE PATTERN BEFORE CUTTING

Make a quick toile (mock-up)

Use old sheets or muslin to test:

- Fit
- Neckline height
- Waist seam
- Zip placement

Adjust the pattern before cutting velvet.



Loveitstitchitkeepit.com

Don't Dump it, Swap it

