

Empire Dress

Follow our step-by-step tutorial and sport a stylish empire dress.

Material Required

3 meters of fabric for the dress with a width of 60"
Template for the Empire dress which you can download from our website www.ushasew.com.

Chalk

Scissors

Beaded Pins

Scale

Measuring tape

Matching thread

8 inch concealed zipper

Usha Janome Zipper Foot

Usha Janome Gathering Foot

5 meters embellishing lace of your choice

Usha Janome Piping Foot (required only if you choose a lace with piping)

In this tutorial we will learn how to cut the fabric according to the template. We will Prepare the upper torso pieces, join the front and back pieces together, finish the neckline, attach the sleeves, prepare the skirt portion, sew the side seams, attach the zipper and attach lace to the sleeves and the bottom.

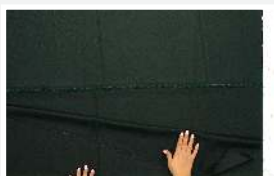
Step 1 Template Marking & Fabric Cutting

Open the fabric completely. Fold width wise from the bottom and then from the top as shown in the tutorial. This is the wrong side of the fabric and this facing us; is the right side of the fabric.

Place the front template on the bottom half of the fabric as shown. Pin the template to the fabric. Ensure the pin enters all the layers of fabric. As you can see the front template is kept on the fold of the fabric.

Now with a piece of chalk trace out the entire template. Be careful while working on the curves, a steady hand is necessary. Once you are done tracing the entire template, unpin it. Keep the template aside and then pin the fabric again to hold the layers in place while cutting. Carefully cut on the traced line and again go slow on the curved path to ensure a perfect front fabric piece. Remove the front piece and keep it aside.

Now place the back template on the top fold of the fabric as shown and ensure its placed correctly on fold.





Repeat the same steps as the front template. Pin.... Trace....and cut. Keep the back piece aside as well.

We will now cut the skirt option. Open the fabric and again fold it into half like shown. We still have the right side facing right. Take a ruler and mark a straight line across the width of the fabric. From the straight-line measure 28" and mark. Mark 28" on regular intervals which will help us draw a straight line. Now with a ruler make a straight line. Cut on the lines. While cutting ensure that you cut both the layers of fabric. We will 2 pieces of fabric for the skirt.

Next comes the sleeve. Take the remaining fabric and place the sleeve template on it. Pin the template to the fabric. Ensure the pin goes through both the layers of the fabric. Now trace the outline of the template onto the fabric with a piece of chalk. Be careful on the curves. Unpin the template. Keep the template aside. If required, you can re-pin the fabric to ensure stability while cutting. Cut on the marked lines. This cutting is very important as it can make or break your design.

We will need a bias strip for the neckline. Take the remaining fabric. Keep the scale at a 45-degree angle as shown. Draw a straight line with the chalk. Now measure 1 1/2 inches from the drawn line and mark the point. Mark 1 1/2 inches at various points on the fabric, these will help us draw a straight line. Once done, take the scale and draw a line joining the marked points. Cut out the strip with the help of a scissor.



the shoulder stitch will look like.

Step 4 Finishing the neckline

Open the fabric like shown. We will now finish the neckline with the help of a bias strip by attaching it to the neckline. Let's get sewing. Fold the bias strip into half wrong side facing wrong. Place the folded bias strip on the right side of the neckline like as shown. We have left about one inch of bias strip at the beginning. Adjust the fabrics under the presser foot and begin sewing from the shoulder line. Be extra careful while sewing. Stop and keep adjusting the bias strip along the neckline. Go all around the neckline. As you come near the end stop. Remember the extra bias strip that we left at the start. Fold the extra strip as shown and place the other end of the bias strip over this fold and sew. Once you reach the end, cut the thread. The extra bias strip left at the end can be easily cut off using a pair of scissors. This is how the stitches will look. Now we will give notches to the edge like shown. Be careful not to cut over the stitch line. Give notches all through the neckline. The notches will help the neckline sit comfortably, while wearing the empire dress.

Now fold the bias strip like shown, an edge stitch will be required to hold the fold in place. Align the fold under the presser foot and begin sewing. Again go all around the neckline. Keep adjusting the fold as you go along. Cut the thread.

This is how the edge stitch will look like. Now we will fold the bias strip onto the wrong side which is the inside of the dress like shown and sew on the edge. Adjust the fabric under the presser foot. Begin sewing. Ensure the fold is placed correctly throughout the neckline. Cut any excess thread. Done! We have a neat neckline. This is how it should look once finished.

Step 5 Attaching the sleeves and finishing the sleeve hem

Open the fabric once again. Bring in our sleeve pieces. Fold the sleeve pieces into half as shown and give a notch on the top. Take one sleeve piece and match the notch to the shoulder stitch. Align the stitch line and the notch and pin the sleeve right side facing right as shown. Pin all around the arm hole. The same step will be repeated on the other side as well. Match the notch to the shoulder stitch line and pin the sleeve to the arm hole. We will be sewing the pinned fabric and also hemming the sleeve.



Place the pinned fabric under the presser foot. Start sewing slowly. Keep removing the pins as you go. Once done, cut the thread. This is how the sleeves will look. Sew the other sleeve a similar manner. Let's move onto the sleeve hem.

Fold the fabric by half an inch twice like shown. Place the fold under the presser foot and start sewing from one end to the other. Keep pausing and folding the fabric to ensure we have a neat sleeve hem. This is how the hemmed sleeve will look. We will hem the second sleeve in the same fashion. Fold by half an inch twice and sew. We have now attached the sleeve and hemmed it.

Step 6 Preparing the skirt portion

Now let's work on the skirt portion. We have the two fabric pieces ready for the skirt. Open the fabric. The fabric will be attached to the top torso portion. Before we attach this the top of the skirt piece has to be gathered. Take both the pieces of the skirt to the sewing machine. For gathering we will need the Usha Janome Gathering Foot. Unscrew the regular presser foot and screw the gathering foot in position. Set the machine to straight stitch and stitch length to 4.0. For gathering the thread tension has to be set to maximum, which in this case is 9. Align the fabric under the presser foot and press start and watch how magical it looks. The machine creates perfect gathers. Create gathers till the other end. Once done cut the thread. We will repeat the same gathering process on the other piece of skirt as well. This is how the gathers will look. Aren't the beautiful.



Step 7 Attaching the skirt pieces to the upper torso

We will now attach the gathered fabric to the upper portion of the dress. Take one piece of fabric and align it with the bottom edge of the top piece, right side facing right. Pin this in place. Keep pinning all across till you reach the other end. Ensure that both pieces of fabric are aligned correctly. Once you are done with one side. Open the fabric and let's pin the other skirt portion to the back of the dress. Right side facing right and pin. We are now ready to sew. Align the fabric under the presser foot. We have already changed the foot back to the regular foot and set the machine to straight stitch. Begin sewing. Keep removing the pins as you go. Ensure both the fabrics are aligned correctly throughout the stitch. Once you reach the end cut the thread. We will repeat the same for the other side as well. Align the fabric and stitch. Cut the thread. Our top torso portion is now connected to the bottom as seen. This is how the stitches will look like.



Step 8 Finishing the sleeves, bottom and the sides along with the zipper

We will be embellishing the sleeves with a lace. Measure the length of the entire sleeve and cut the lace at measure. Pin the lace to the sleeve as shown. Repeat the same procedure for the second sleeve. Cut the lace at measure and pin.

Let's move to the side seam. Join the sleeves and match the arm holes. Pin the arm hole. Next move down and match the waistline and pin in place. Further keep matching the side seam and pin till you reach the bottom of the dress. Once you're done with this first side repeat the same steps on the other side.

On this side however we will be attaching a zipper. We are using a 8" concealed zipper. Measure 1 ½ inches from the arm hole and create a mark with a piece of chalk. This point will be the starting point of the zipper. Now on the other end of the zipper we need to make a mark 1 inch before the zipper ends. Use a chalk to mark this point. This will be our opening. Lets pin the zip.



The right side of the zip will be placed on the right side of the dress fabric. Pin one side of the zip to the bottom fabric as shown. The other side of the zip will be pinned to the top piece of the dress, right side facing right. Open the zip for the ease of sewing. This is how the pinned zip should look like.

Let's start sewing!

Let's sew the lace first and hence we will need to change the color of the thread to match the lace. We also need to change the regular presser foot and attach the piping foot. Once done. Align the fabric under the presser foot and begin sewing. Sew from one end of the lace to the other end. Keep the machine at a slow pace to get a perfect stitch. Once done cut the thread and repeat the process on the other side of the lace.

The two ends of the sleeves have to be joined together, for that remove a few pearls from the edge of the lace. This will help us sew the sleeve seamlessly. Change the presser foot, to the regular presser foot. Join the two sides of the sleeve, right side facing right and place it under the presser foot. Begin sewing. Do reverse stitches at the start. Keep moving from the sleeve towards the bottom of the dress. Slow down near the armhole and the gathers and ensure both the front and back pieces are aligned together correctly. Once done cut the thread. This is how the side seam will look. Let's now sew the other side of the dress.

Let's start from the bottom of the dress and move upwards. Once you reach the zipper marking. Stop and do a few reverse stitches. Cut the thread. Now start sewing again at the other mark and go till the end of the sleeves. Cut the thread once done.

The zipper is next. Replace the regular presser foot with the zipper foot. We will align the right edge of the foot with the fabric and hence will attach the foot accordingly. Place the fabric under the foot and start sewing. Keep removing the pins as you go. Once you reach the end of the zipper. Stop and cut the thread. Open the zip and let's sew the other side. Align the fabric under the presser foot and start sewing. Go till the end. Our first set of stitches for the zip are done. Now we need to stitch near the teeth of the zip. Align the zip under the foot and begin sewing. Sew as close to the teeth as possible. Go steady and make sure your stitches are straight. Once done cut the thread and repeat on the other side. This is how the zip should look like once stitched.



The last bit here is to lock the top of the zip by stitching across its width. Change back to the regular presser foot. Place the fabric under the presser foot and stitch across. This is how the stitch will look like.

Turn the empire dress inside out and we will work on the bottom hem. Fold by 1/2 inch twice as shown. Align the fold under the presser foot and begin sewing. Sew all across the bottom hem. Keep folding the bottom and ensure the stitches are neat. Once done cut the thread.

The lace will sit at the bottom of the dress as well. Place the lace at the bottom of the dress and begin sewing. Leave the end open. Cut the thread and move onto the other edge of the lace. Sew all across. Once you reach the end fold the end for about 1/2 inch and overlap it over the lace as shown. We will have to remove the pearls if required. Place the overlap under the presser foot and sew. Use pivoting on the corners. Cut the threads and done.

We have finished the neckline, the waist, attached the sleeves, hemmed the bottom and attached the zipper. Iron all your seams.

Wasn't that simple? Your empire dress is now ready. You now know what to wear on your next dinner date. Tell us in the comments below what you'd like to see next and don't forget to share the tutorial- with your tailor friends.