

# *SAGA Dogwood Chapter*

## Construction of a Wee Care Gown

*Note: These directions are for a bishop gown made with side seams. Gowns are made with Imperial Batiste. Imperial Batiste comes 60" wide.*

Supplies needed to construct a Wee Care gown:

- Sewing Needle should be a 60/8 or 70/10 Sharp or Microtex (Microtex/Sharp Needles are specifically made with an extra-sharp point to precisely sew through delicate fabrics)
- 50 or 60 weight cotton thread to match fabric. #60 Mettler Silk finish Cotton ), DMC Broder #50, Dual Duty XP Fine
- A straight foot, a zigzag foot
- Use #7 Darner for smocking and #7 Milliner for bullion embroidery and/or beads
- Fabric/wash out marking pen



**Mettler  
Silk Finish  
#60**



**DMC  
Broder #50**



**Coats and Clark  
Dual Duty xp**

### *Prepare the Fabric*

Tear off selvage from both ends before proceeding.

Tear fabric for 1 Front, 2 Backs, and 2 Sleeves. Cut a neckband according to the charts below. *Please make sure the lengthwise grain matches the measurement length below.* Separate instructions for reduced bulk neckband construction are available.

| <b>Step 1<br/>Gown</b>            | Wee Care Gown<br>with Side Seams<br><b>Length x Width</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Newborn ( 7 pounds and up)        | 22" x 55"   |
| Premie ( 5-6 pounds)              | 20" x 45"   |
| Small ( 3-4 pounds)               | 18" x 37"   |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)                 | 16" x 37"   |
| Extra Tiny ( less than one pound) | 12" x 29"   |

| <b>Step 2<br/>Gown</b>            | <b>Front<br/>Tear 1<br/>Length x Width</b> | <b>Back<br/>Tear 2<br/>Length x Width</b> | <b>Length of lace<br/>for hem (if<br/>desired)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Newborn ( 7 pounds and up)        | 22" x 26"                                  | 22" x 14.5"                               | 52"  |
| Premie ( 5-6 pounds)              | 20" x 21"                                  | 20 x 12"                                  | 43"  |
| Small ( 3-4 pounds)               | 18" x 17"                                  | 18" x 10"                                 | 35"  |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)                 | 16" x 17"                                  | 16 x 10"                                  | 35"  |
| Extra Tiny ( less than one pound) | 12" x 13"                                  | 12" x 8"                                  | 27"  |

| <b>Step 3<br/>Sleeves</b>           | <b>Smocked with<br/>Decorative Edge<br/>Length x Width</b> | <b>Smocked with 1"<br/>turned up hem<br/>Length x Width</b> | <b>Boy Tucked Sleeve<br/>Length x Width</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Newborn (7-8 pounds)                | 7 ½ "x 11"   | 8 ½ "x 11"  | 8 ½ "x 11"                                  |
| Preemie ( 5-6 pounds)               | 6" x 10"   | 7" x 10"  | 7" x 10"                                    |
| Small ( 3-4 pounds)                 | 5" x 9"  | 6" x 9"   | 6" x 9"                                     |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)                   | 4" x 9"  | 5 " x 9"  | 5" x 8"*                                    |
| Extra Tiny<br>(15 ounces – 1 pound) | 4" x 7"  | 5 "x 7" *   | 3.5" x 7"*                                  |

**\*Note difference in length of sleeves for the different sleeve finishes (decorative edge vs 1" hem vs boys pleated)**

| <b>Step 4<br/>Neckband</b>   | <b>Length<br/>of bias<br/>strip</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Cut Neckband 1 ¾" on bias<br>The length given for the bias strip is <b>not</b> the length of the neckband! This bias will be trimmed when making the neckband. |                                     |
| Newborn (7 pounds and up)  | 15"                                 |
| Preemie (5-6 pounds)   | 12"                                 |
| Small (3-4 pounds)   | 11"                                 |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)  | 10"                                 |
| Extra Tiny (less than one pound)   | 9"                                  |

## *Prepare the Sleeves*

### **Mark the Armhole:**

Mark (or trace) armhole cutting line on sleeve. Note that the solid line is the cutting line not the stitching line.  
**Do not cut out the armhole yet.** You will sew the sleeves to the gown before cutting the armholes.



This is the cutting line. **But do not cut** until after you have stitched ¼" away from this line!

### For a Girl's Sleeve:

Turn under 1" on lower sleeve edge and press. Pleat sleeves with 5 half spaces (2 holding rows and three smocking rows). The lower holding row should be 2 half spaces from lower edge.  *Holding rows usually match the color of the gown.*  **Do not tie off sleeve pleating threads until you have finished back edge.**

### For a boy's sleeve:

Do not pleat sleeves for a boy's gown. Boy's gowns have tucks on sleeves.

Complete the tucked sleeves. Refer to separate instructions for correct measurements and sewing directions for the "Tucked Sleeves."\*

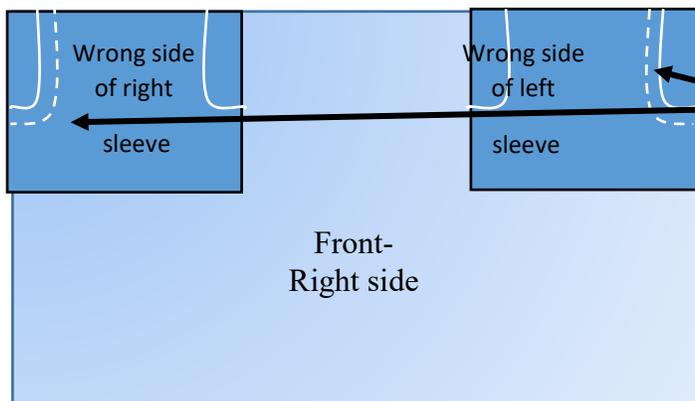
\* Directions for marking and constructing these tucks can be found at <https://www.charlottesmocking.org/> You will need to log in as a member to access these files.

## Assemble Gown

Seam allowance 3/8"

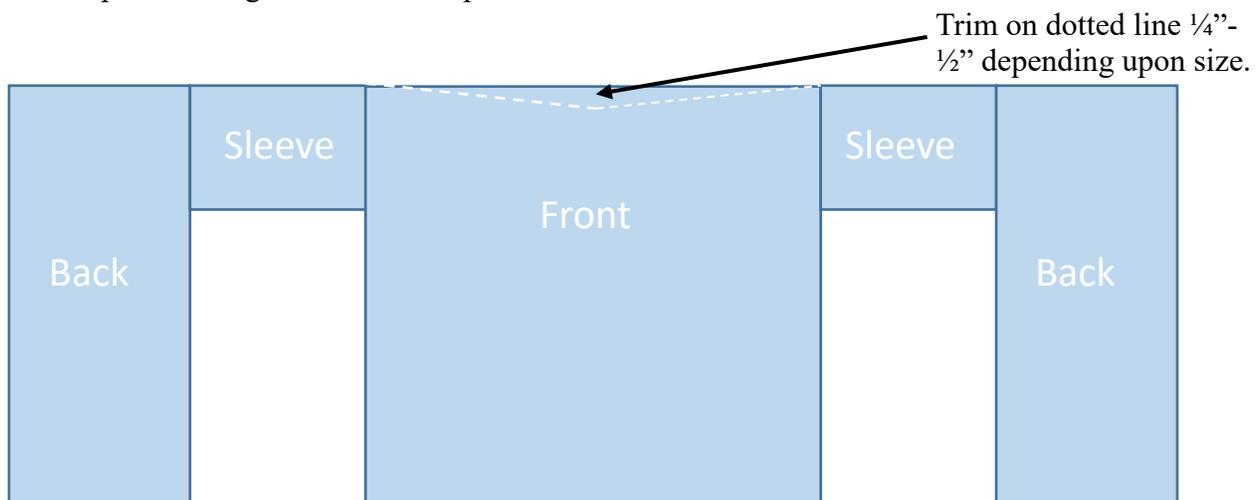
Set stitch length to 2.0 mm for straight seams

1. Sew sleeves to both sides of front with right sides together. Sleeve seams must be *tiny*. This means less than 1/8". You may use a **tiny** French Seam or a **tiny** roll and whip seam. If using French seam, first sew wrong sides together with 1/8" seam.



For rolled and whipped seam, stitch sleeves to both sides of front (stitching 1/4" away from traced line with a 2.0 stitch length. (Dotted line is stitching line.) right sides together) Stitch a scant 1/8" away from 1<sup>st</sup> stitching line and trim close to second stitching line. Zig-zag (3.0 W 1.5L) to **roll and whip edge**. Needle should go off edge of fabric on one side and touch seam line on the other. The 1/8" seam allowance should roll down to 1/16".

2. Stitch other side of sleeves to **back** sections – right sides together. (See diagram below) Finish with a rolled and whip edge (see above).
3. Trim top center of gown 1/2" for 5/6 pound and NB and 1/4" for other sizes.



Trim on dotted line 1/4"-1/2" depending upon size.

## *Pleat the Gown*

Pleat with the half spaces based on the size chart below. The 1<sup>st</sup> holding row of the gown should be 2 half spaces (3/8") from the neck edge. **Use pleating thread that matches the fabric in the row closest to the neck edge (holding row) so it can be left in for ease of construction.**

|                          |                      |                      |                      |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Less than 1 pound</b> | <b>1-2 pounds</b>    | <b>3-4 pounds</b>    | <b>5-6 pounds</b>    | <b>7-8 pounds</b>    |
| <b>6 half spaces</b>     | <b>6 half spaces</b> | <b>7 half spaces</b> | <b>8 half spaces</b> | <b>9 half spaces</b> |

## *Finish Back Edge*

### *Block and Smock Gown and Sleeves*

- Finish back edges:** Remove pleating threads from 1 1/8"-1 1/4" on both back edges. Count pleats. There must be an even number of pleats. If there are an odd number of pleats, remove a pleat from one back edge to ensure that there are an even number of pleats. **Mark the two center pleats with a colored thread. Do not tie off pleats until after step 3.**
- Girl's Sleeve:** On the sleeve, remove the pleating threads 3/4"- 1 1/4" from each edge. Count the pleats to make sure you have an even number. If there are an odd number of pleats, remove a pleat from one edge to ensure that there are an even number of pleats.
- Finish back edge.** It is easier to finish the back edge before tying off the pleats. You can spread out the pleats and turn the back edge under to the wrong side twice (3/8" – 1/2"). The folded edge should just touch the last pleat. Press and top stitch close to edge.
- Pull up the gathering thread and tie off the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> row, leaving the holding row free. Please note, the chart assumes you have finished the back edges of the gown.

|                                   |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                   | <b>Finished edge to finished edge</b> |
| Newborn (7 pounds and up)         | 10 1/2 "                              |
| Preemie ( 5-6 pounds)             | 8 1/2 "                               |
| Small ( 3-4 pounds)               | 7 1/2 "                               |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)                 | 6 1/2 "                               |
| Extra Tiny ( less than one pound) | 5 1/2 "                               |

- Backsmock the 1<sup>st</sup> row (Holding Row) with **sewing thread** (not floss) in the same color as the gown on both the right and the wrong side. You may use a stem/outline stitch on the wrong side. This row will be

used as a guide when applying the bias neckband. On the right side you may use a outline/ stem stitch. This should be done a needle's width **above** the holding row.

6. The neckband may be attached at this point or you may wait until you have completed smocking the gown. You may use a plain neckband (directions below) or a reduce bulk neckband.
7. To avoid a “turtle neck” appearance, fan out the gown in a circular shape. After blocking the gown, tie off the remaining gathering threads.
8. **Smock the gown**- beginning on the second gathering row making sure to center design. Use either 2 or 3 strands of floss for smocking.
9. **Smock the sleeves:** Smock the sleeves on a girl's gown using the middle three rows. Top and bottom rows are holding rows.

## *Finishing the Gown*

Separate direction can be found at <https://www.charlottesmocking.org/> in the member only section for a reduced bulk neckband. Directions below are for a regular neckband.

1. **Attach neckband:** Cut your neckband to size using chart below..

|                                   | Cut measurement of neckband |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Newborn (7 pounds and up)         | 11 "                        |
| Preemie ( 5-6 pounds)             | 9 "                         |
| Small ( 3-4 pounds)               | 8 "                         |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)                 | 7 "                         |
| Extra Tiny ( less than one pound) | 6 "                         |

2. **Neckband:** Attach neckband, right sides together. Stitch neckband to gown using a basting stitch (3.5mm) sewing directly on the outline stitch on holding row. Once you a satisfied with the attachment of the neckband, stitch over the basting stitch with a 2.0 mm stitch. Stitch another row, 1/8” away. Trim excess close to the second stitching line. Fold neck band over turn under on each end and lower edge and hand stitch to wrong side.
3. **Side Seams:** Sew side seams with a narrow French seam. This pattern has a 3/8” seam allowance.
4. **Snaps:** Sew two small plastic snaps on the back edge. The top one should be on the neckband and the 2<sup>nd</sup> even with the bottom holding row. *Hint:* They are easier to handle if you leave them attached to the plastic piece while sewing them on.
5. **Hem Allowance:** 2” You may choose a 1” double hem or turn under ¼” and then turn up 1 ¾”.

## *Checking the Gown and Getting It Ready to Turn In*

1. Make sure all markings are removed by soaking the gown in water. Check the gown for scents (smoke, food, pets, etc.). When in doubt hand wash the gown and hang to drip dry.
2. Check that the gown meets the finished measurements in the chart below.
3. If your gown was a 'kit', please make sure you return it in the bag that was given to you along with all necessary paperwork.

| <b>Neck Measurement</b>        | <b>Center<br/>Back to Center<br/>Back</b> | <b>Finished edge to<br/>finished edge</b> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Newborn (7-8 pounds)           | 10"                                       | 10 ½ "                                    |
| Preemie ( 5-6 pounds)          | 8"  | 8 ½ "                                     |
| Small ( 3-4 pounds)            | 7 "                                       | 7 ½ "                                     |
| Tiny (1-2 pounds)              | 6 "                                       | 6 ½ "                                     |
| Extra Tiny (less than 1 pound) | 5 "                                       | 5 ½ "                                     |

*Thank you for your labor of love!  
These gowns are greatly appreciated by the families who receive them!*

## Suggestions for Embellishment of a Wee Care Gown

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
|   | Girl   | Boy  | Gender Neutral   |
| Lace  | Yes  | No   | No   |
| Floss color ideas (these are not exclusive) | Pinks, lavenders,  | Blues, greens  | Grey, yellow, beige, white, ecru   |
| Embellishment                               | Flowers- lazy daisy, bullion rose etc<br>Shadow embroidery   | Feather stitch, chain stitch, running stitch, Satin stitch, dot, Shadow embroidery, applique                                   | Feather stitch, chain stitch, running stitch, Satin stitch, dot,                           |
| Smocking Pattern                            | any  | Geometric pattern- no flowers  | Geometric pattern- no flowers  |
| Embellishments to sleeves                   | Smocking*<br>Contrast band to sleeve, madeira hem with or without scallop, decorative stitches, lace etc.<br>(no contrast bands for Be Not Afraid) | No smocking.<br>Pleated sleeve*,<br>contrast band to sleeve, madeira hem (no scallop)<br>(no contrast bands for Be Not Afraid) | Contrast band to sleeve, madeira hem (no scallop)<br>(no contrast bands for Be Not Afraid) |

If you are using your own fabric, please use soft colors such as light pink, light blue, light green. Please refrain from using yellow and peach as many of the babies have jaundice skin and these colors do not look good on them.

Some members like to include additional memory items such as quilts, diapers, and hats.

|            | <u>Weight</u>         | <u>Weeks</u> | <u>Head Circumference</u> | <u>Quilt Size</u> | <u>Teeny Tears Diapers*</u>   | <u>Stockinette Hat**</u> |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Newborn    | <u>7-8 lbs.</u>       | <u>38-40</u> | <u>13.4"-13.6"</u>        | 28x28             |                               |                          |
| Preemie    | <u>5-6 lbs.</u>       | <u>35-37</u> | <u>12.7"-13.1"</u>        | 26x26             |                               |                          |
| Small      | <u>3-4 lbs.</u>       | <u>30-33</u> | <u>11.1" – 12"</u>        | 24x24             | Teeny Tears – Larger Diaper   | 4" Stockinette           |
| Tiny       | <u>1-2 lbs.</u>       | <u>23-27</u> | <u>6"-10"</u>             | 22x22             | Teeny Tears – Larger diaper   | 4" Stockinette           |
| Extra Tiny | <u>15 oz. – 1 lb.</u> | <u>17-23</u> | <u>4.7"</u>               | 18x18             | Teeny Tears – smallest diaper | 3" Stockinette           |

\* <https://www.teenytears.org/diapers>

\*\* <https://www.teenytears.org/stockinette-hats>

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