

Corset for the Business Professional

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Intro: Corset for the Business Professional

Estimated Cost: ~\$30-\$50 (more if you don't already own the necessary tools)

Estimated completion time: 15-20 hours

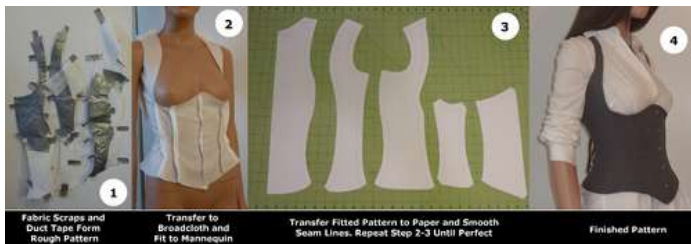
Difficulty: Moderate - Challenging (dependent on skill level)

I designed this corset for my wife who loves wearing corsets but did not yet own one that would be suitable for a business environment. The end result is a light corset made with a quality suiting material, a slight slimming effect on the waist and loads of back support.

This corset is considerably more challenging than my other corset instructable and will require a fair amount of hand sewing. It will also require several iterations of mock-up, fitting and adjusting to get the correct fit. If this is your first time making a corset I recommend starting with my other instructable [How to make a Steampunk Corset](#) as it is far more basic and it is much easier to fit properly.

You can see the evolution of this pattern from a mess of fabrics scraps and duct tape, through several stages of mockup and redrafting, to its current state in **Figure 3**. *Note: I am using a mannequin not a naked person.*





Step 1: Tools

Tools You Will Need:

1. Straight-stitch sewing machine or hand sewing materials (Not for the faint of heart!)
2. For a sewing machine you will need a zipper foot
3. Scissors
4. Awl
5. Marking tool (Preferably something non-permanent like a chalk pencil)
6. Fray Check (If you use a fabric with a tendency to fray)
7. Lighter or other heat source
8. Grommet Setter
9. Pliers
10. Ruler or seam gauge
11. Dressmakers pins (Ones that won't snag on a sewing machine)
12. Steam Iron
13. Hole punch

Tools that will Make the Job Easier

1. Rotary Cutter
2. Cutting Mat or other razor safe surface (office chair mats work great)
3. Seam Ripper
4. Weights (I make my own with bags full of steel shot)



Figure 2-1: Tools

Image Notes

1. Awl
2. Caulk pen
3. Fray Check
4. Grommet Setting Tool
5. Seam Gauge
6. Weights
7. Pins
8. Seam Ripper
9. Rotary Cutters
10. Hole Punch

Step 2: Materials

Note: Some of this information is re-posted from my Steampunk Corset instructable. If you want a long winded overview of the many materials options available for corset making I recommend giving it a look over [here](#).

PART 1: Fabric

Coutil Fabric ~ (1) Yard: This is the structural layer of your corset. If your corset were a house this layer would be the foundation. It must be very strong and have minimal elasticity. This is the most important component in a corset! Coutil and is the only thing you should use for any corset you want to last more than a few hours. If you insist on using another fabric, make sure it has the qualities I mentioned above and a very tight (preferably herringbone) weave. **Figure 2-1**

Fashion Fabric ~ (1) Yard: This is the outer layer of the corset and exists for solely cosmetic purposes. I selected a charcoal gray suiting material **Figure 2-2**.

Lining Fabric ~ (1) yard: The purpose of this layer is to make the corset looks nice on the inside and to add a small degree of additional comfort. Any lining material will do. I used a sport lining that is supposed to transfer sweat to the surface faster **Figure 2-3**.

PART 2: Bones (Figures 2-4 & 2-5)

I will be using combination of spring steel and spiral steel for my corset. You'll need to measure your completed pattern to know what lengths to purchase. Bones come in pre-cut and continuous lengths. If you buy continuous lengths you will need a bone cutting tool and a way to tip the sharp edges.

Spring Steel (white steel): This should be used in the front and back of the corset, over the abdomen and the spine respectively. Spring steel has only one degree of flexibility so it's perfect for maintaining the vertical lines around the busk and lining up the grommets. Also, since it can't flex to the sides, it will more evenly distribute pressure along its length than other boning types. The absence of this quality would make the corset both uncomfortable and quite possibly a health risk.

Spiral Steel: This should be used for all the bones between the spring steel ones above. Spiral steel has two degrees of flexibility and can thus more elegantly and comfortably conform to one's contours while maintaining the strength, elasticity and durability of spring steel.

PART 3: Closure (Figure 2-4)

I will be using a spring steel five hook busk. The busk is a steel hook and loop mechanism placed at the front of the corset that permits the corset to be put on and taken off with relative ease. I will be using a straight busk in this instructable (a.k.a standard busk).

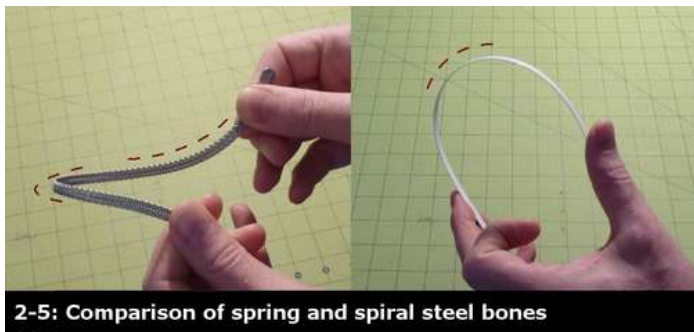
PART 4: Thread (Figure 2-6)

Any thread will do so long as it is strong and feeds well through your sewing machine. For this instructable I will be using Coats and Clark Dual Duty XP for the internal (hidden) stitches and Gütermann Sew-All thread for the external (visible) ones.

PART 5: Grommets

I recommend size 00 (pronounced: double ought) two-piece grommets. I required 46 black grommets for my corset.





Step 3: Cutting and Preparing the Fabric

Part 1: Make your pattern

You can print a copy of the pattern [here](#). Currently I only have the pattern in one size so it will be incumbent upon you to resize it your own measurements. Feel free to message me if you need some tips on how to proceed.

Part 2: Cut the Coutil and Fashion Fabric Pieces

Cut two copies of each pattern piece from your coutil material and your exterior fabric **Figure 3-1a & 3-1b**. You will need to flip your pattern piece over for the second copy so you are creating a mirror image of the first.

If you are using a patterned fabric take a moment to visualize how the panels will compliment each other and plan your cutting accordingly. Consider **Figure 3-2**, there are depicted three possible orientations for the front panels. The pair on the left looks relatively bland and unbalanced. The middle pair don't compliment each other; one side is dominated flowers and the other leaves. The pair on the right would be my choice.

I like to use weights to hold my patterns in place while cutting. Not only is it much quicker than pinning, it also keeps the fabric from shifting. The blue things you see in the images are zip-lock bags, filled with about three pounds of steel shot, wrapped in duct tape.

If your fabric has a tendency to fray, apply a small amount of Fray Check to the edges.

Part 3: Baste the Fashion Fabric to the Lining fabric

Machine baste each fashion fabric piece to its complimentary coutil piece, wrong sides together **Figure 3-3a & 3-3b**. If your sewing machine lacks a walking foot you might find it better to hand baste the pieces together or else risk the pieces slipping and creating untidy bunches in the material.

When all of your pieces are joined press with a steam iron. Each pair can now be treated

as a single piece of fabric that is structurally suitable for corset making.

You will inevitably have a small amount of overlap on you basted pieces. Trim the exterior fabric to the shape of the coutil fabric. Do NOT trim the coutil fabric. **Figure 3-4**

Part 4: Cut the Lining Fabric

Cut two copies of each pattern piece from your lining material. You will need to flip your pattern piece over for the second copy so you are creating a mirror image of the first.



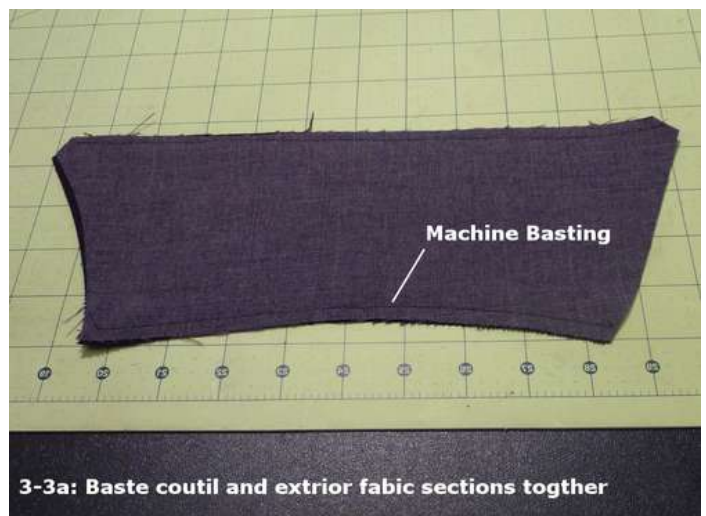
3-1a: Cutting Pattern Pieces



3-1a: Cut 2xCoutil and 2xExterior Fabric



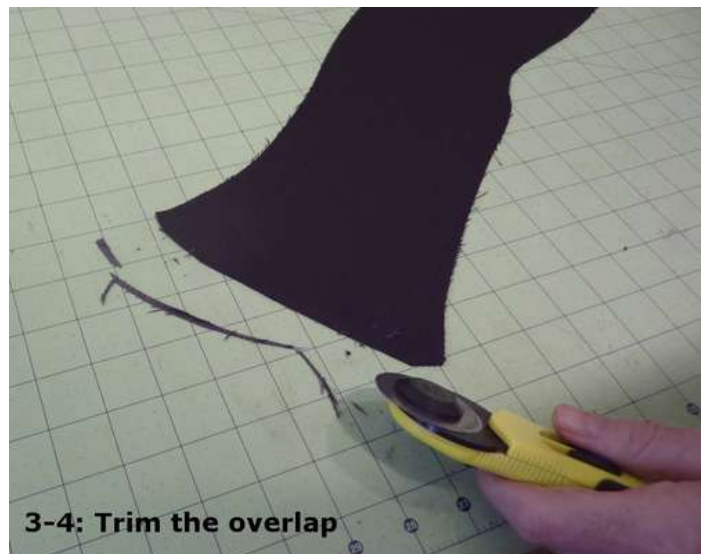
3-2: Cutting Paterned Fabric



3-3a: Baste coutil and exterior fabric sections together



3-3b: All sections basted together.



3-4: Trim the overlap

Step 4: Join the Panels

Part 1: Stay Stitch

Stay stitch the edges of back and side-back (SB) panel where indicated in red on **Figure 4-1**. Do this for both your exterior layer and your lining fabric pieces.

Part 2: Join Panels

Join the exterior panels together by pinning them together (right side facing in) in the order displayed in **Figure 4-1**. Sew together leaving a 5/8 inch seam allowance.

When joining the back, side-back and side pieces together you will need to clip the fabric every inch or so the curves or you wont be able to pin them **Figure 4-2**. Clip a small V-notch all the way to the stay stitching you added in part 1.

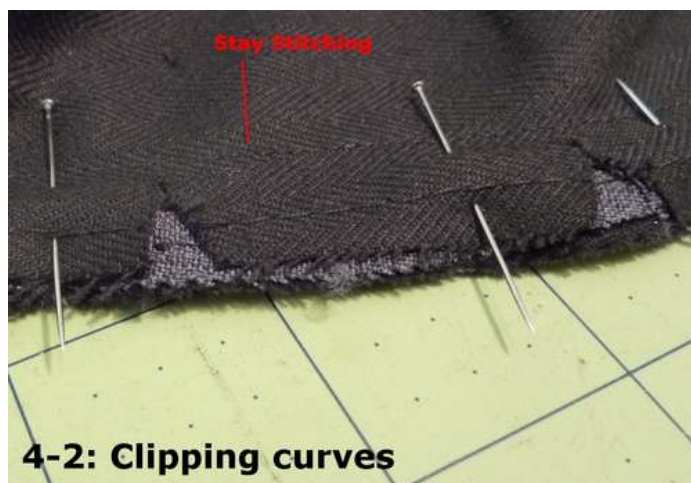
You should end up with something similar to **Figure 4-3**.

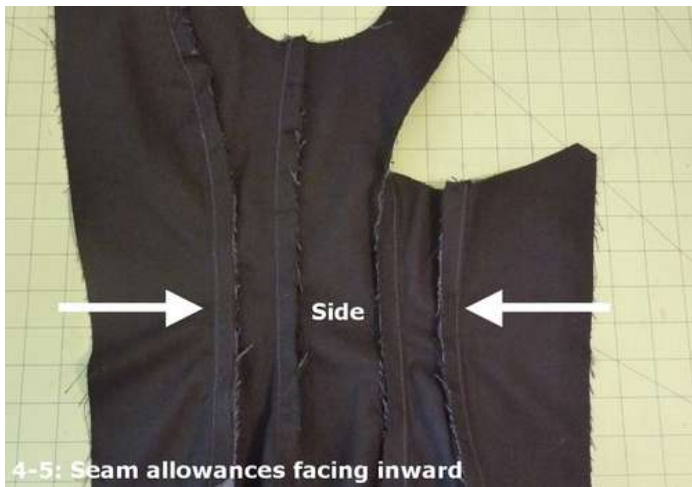
Part 3: Top Stitch

Switch to your external thread. Top stitch along the edge of each seam (approx. 1/16 inch from seam) catching the seam allowance **Figure 4-4**. Making sure the seam allowances are all folded toward the side panel **Figure 4-5**.

Part 4: Repeat for Lining

Repeat steps 1-3 for the lining layer. However in step three, top stitch the seams allowance so they are facing away from the side panel. This way they end up facing the opposite direction from their exterior counterpart.





Step 5: Insert Busk Closure

Part 1: Mark Loop Side Placement

Center the loop side of your busk on the wrong side of your right front panel, approximately 5/8 inch from the edge. Mark the location of the loops as shown in **Figure 5-1**. Mark lines perpendicular to the termination points of the previous markings as shown in **Figure 5-2**.

Part 2: Stitch Loop Side Pockets

Pin the external right front panel you just marked (right side facing in) to the lining right front panel.

Please watch the embedded video below before beginning.

Stitch a seam 5/8 inch from the edge, skipping over the pockets you marked in Part 1. You will notice that I start the seam at the midpoint between each pocket, back-stitch until I reach the top end, forward-stitch to the bottom end and then back-stitch again until returning to the starting point. This is very important. If you terminate your seam too close to the pocket the busk will slowly work its way loose when worn.

Part 3: Insert Loop Side of Busk and Stitch into Place

Fold open the seam allowance you just created and insert the loop side of your busk. Pay attention to its orientation. You want the side with the raised loops facing away from your body when you are wearing it. See **Figure 5-3**.

Fold the lining over the busk as shown in **Figure 5-4**.

Attach your zipper foot. Using your external thread, stitch 5/8 inch from the edge, catching the front facing and trapping the busk in place **Figure 5-5**.

Part 4: Attach the Lining to the Left Side

Pin the left front lining panel to the left front external panel (right sides facing in). Stitch a seam with your internal thread 5/8 inch from the edge. **Figure 5-6**

Part 5: Mark Placement of Hook Side

Fold over the left front lining and align with the front edge of the right half of the corset. Insert pins into the hook side, centered vertical between loops (horizontal position is irrelevant) **Figure 5-7**.

Mark sure your pins are secure and lift off the loop side of the busk. Flip the hook side over and mark a horizontal line perpendicular to the seam where each pin pokes

through **Figure 5-8**.

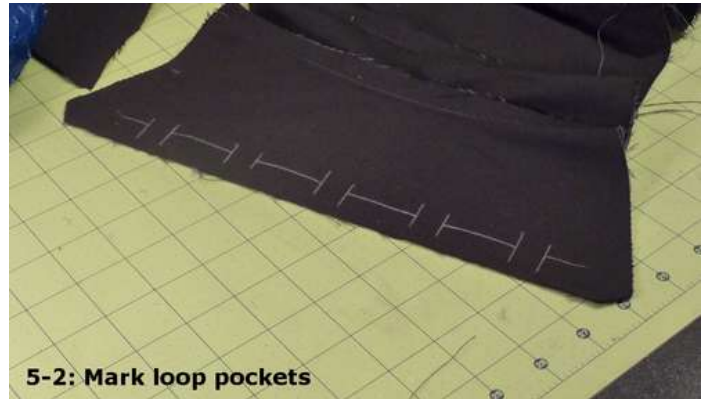
Measure the distance from the forward edge of the hook side of your busk to the center of a hook. Place a vertical mark on the lines you previously created, at a distance from the seam equal to what you just measured on the busk.

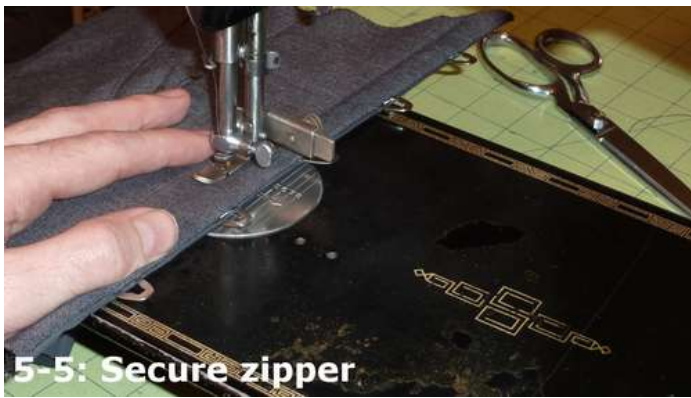
Part 6: Insert Hook Side and Stitch into Place

Press an awl through the intersection of the marks you made in the previous step. Ideally you do not want to break the fabric fibers. Instead, you merely spread the fibers enough that the hooks of the busk can pass through, allowing for the hole to close up cleanly around the base of the hook **Figure 5-9**.

Insert the busk hooks through the holes.

Fold the lining over and sew in place with a zipper foot and your external thread as you did in part 3 above for the loop side of the busk.





5-5: Secure zipper



5-6: Attach lining to left side



5-7: Mark hook placement



5-8: Mark where pins exit



5-9: Open hole with an awl and insert busk hooks

Step 6: Attach Lining & Shoulder Straps

Part 1: Attach Lining

Turn lining over the external fabric so that right sides are together and pin in place. **Figure 6-1.**

Stitch a 5/8 inch seam allowance around the back and top edges where it is marked in red in **Figure 6-1.**

Be sure to leave open the top edges of the shoulder straps and the last inch or so above the busk closure.

Repeat for the other half of the corset.

Part 2: Turn Inside Out and Stitch

Clip the curved edge of the seam allowance as shown in **Figure 6-2.** You will also need to trim the seam allowance of the shoulder strap nearest the busk to 1/4 inch.

Turn the corset inside out and feel along the edges you just stitched. If you feel any hard knobby bits then go back and clip the seam allowance a little more. Repeat until the edge turns smoothly and uniformly along its entire length. **Figure 6-3**

Hand baste along the edge of the corset so the the interface of the lining and external fabric are even and lining can not be seen from the outside. **Figure 6-4**

Edge stitch along the top and back edges leaving the top edges of the shoulder straps open. Remove basting. **Figure 6-5**

Repeat for the other side of the corset.

Part 3: Join Shoulder Straps

Open up the top of the shoulder straps 5/8 inch from the top edge (the white chalk mark in **Figure 6-5**).

Stitch the top edges of the shoulder straps together leaving a 5/8 inch seam allowance. Fold open the seam allowance and hand baste in place. **Figure 6-6**

Neatly tuck under and fold over the lining fabric. Hand baste in place as in **Figure 6-7**.

Slip stitch around the loose edges of the shoulder straps, joining the lining and external fabric. You should end up with something like **Figure 6-8**.





6-5: Edge Stitch



6-6: Join top edge of shoulder straps



6-7: Baste lining into position



6-8: Slip stitch loose edges

Step 7: Create Bone Casings

Part 1: Hand Baste External Fabric to Lining

Hand baste the seams of the external fabric to the corresponding seams of the lining fabric. **Figure 7-1**

Mark a line with some chalk 1.75 inches from side seam as shown in **Figure 7-1**.

Part 2: Stitch Casings

Stitch a seam 3/8 inch from the stitching of the seams you just basted. Make sure to catch the folded under seam allowance of the external fabric. **Figure 7-2**.

At the seam that joins the side and side front (SF) panels, stitch all the way to the chalk mark as in **Figure 7-3** and close it off by turn 90 degree and stitching to the edge.

Stitch a seam 1/2 inch from the back edge, and then stitch another 1/2 inch farther in.

Steam press the entire corset to set the stitch and relax the fabric. I find the best method is to sandwich the corset is a damp towel while pressing. This prevents you from damaging the fabric and accidentally setting creases. **Figure 7-4**.



Step 8: Bind Top Edge

Part 1: Cut Edging

Click [here](#) to download a printable pattern for the edging. It also includes a guide for placing grommets in the next step.

Measure along the top edge of the corset, from the top corner of the side front panel where it meets the side panel to the front edge.

Also measure the the length of the bottom edge of one half of the corset.

Cut, put and tape together the edge pattern in the two length you just measured, adding 2-3 inches to both lengths.

Cut out two copies of each from your external fabric. However, cut them at a 45 degree angle from the grain of the fabric. **Figure 8-1**

Press over 3/8 of the edging as in **Figure 8-2**

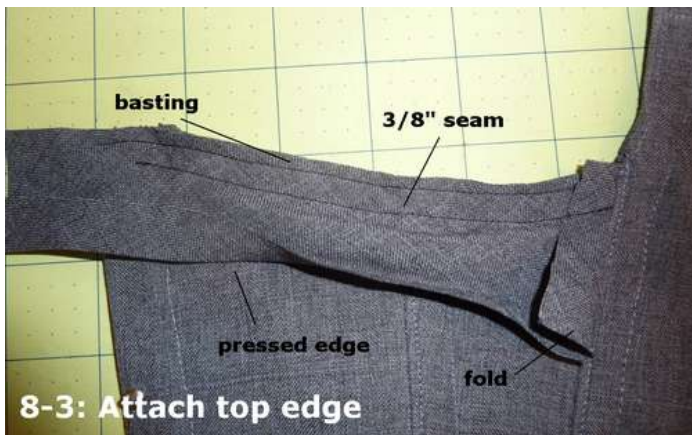
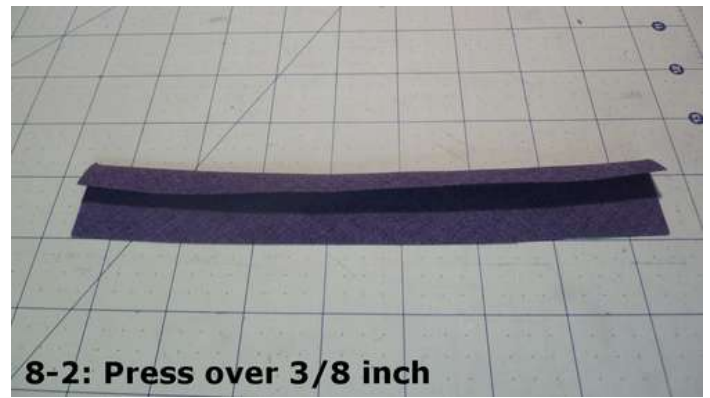
Part 2: Secure Top Edge to Corset

Machine baste edges in place as in **Figure 8-3**.

Stitch 3/8 inch from edge. Fold over and stitch down side edge **Figure 8-3**.

Fold edge over back and hand baste into position. Slip stitch along sides and press edge to secure in place. **Figure 8-4**.

Repeat for the other half of corset. You should end up with something like **Figure 8-5**.



Step 9: Insert Bones and Bind Bottom Edge

Part 1: Insert Bones

Measure your bone casing and insert the appropriately sized bones **Figure 9-1**. Make sure to leave at least 1/2 inch of space at the bottom to bind the bottom edge.

As mentioned in step two, make sure the you use spiral steel bones for the four side bone casings and spring steel for the back bone casing (5 total).

The inner channel near the back edge is for grommets. Do not insert a bone here.

Part 2: Bind the Lower Edge

Bind the lower edge exactly as you did the top edges. **Figure 9-2**



Step 10: Insert Grommets

Part 1: Mark Back Edge

Use the guide you printed out to mark the grommet spacing on the inner channel along the back edge. **Figure 10-1**.

Part 2: Punch Grommet Holes

Use a hole punch to punch out the holes for the grommets. **Figure 10-2**

Part 3: Affix Grommets

Attach the grommets by whatever means you have. **Figure 10-3**

You will need approximately seven yards of lacing to cinch it up.

Part 5: Your Finished

That's it!. Thanks for reading my instructable and I wish you the best of luck on making a corset of your own. Feel free to message me if you have questions or a suggestion.

