

# A Novice's Guide to Draping

By: joboenvogue

<http://www.burdastyle.com/techniques/a-novices-guide-to-draping>

---



This is from my own experience with draping, so it's only going to be advice for people like me who had to figure it out on their own! But my final product was beautiful, and so I thought I'd share my techniques for draping. NOTE: in this project I am using polyester chiffon. Gross, I know, but I needed to due to budget and contest requirements, but it still looks fantastic, so don't be afraid!

---

## Step 1 — Get inspired!



Go out and find images that will help guide you in the draping process. As a draping novice, I found a picture of a bodice that was similar to the bodice I wanted to create for the gown I'm making. This picture helped me tons when I got frustrated with the fabric. Look at how the fabric folds, look at the fabric's direction. Does it stay close to the body or flow freely away? Does it have a lot of texture or is it more fluid? Take these qualities into account for your own creation.

---

## **Step 2 — Prepare your foundation**



You need a strong foundation for a house, and it goes the same with clothing, especially for when you're hanging an entirely different piece of fabric onto your clothing. If your base isn't strong enough, the whole piece will flop over! I decided to underline my bodice with muslin first--that way my dress will be able to hold up the skirt, the draping, and so on. Unless you're already using a very sturdy fabric, I'd seriously consider underlining it. Pin your foundation piece to your dress form. [NOTE: it'll be hard to drape without one of these--even my horridly lopsided dummy worked wonders!] Now, onto the draping!

---

**Step 3 — Attempt to drape. Walk away. Try again.**



This is where things get difficult--now you actually have to start draping! For my piece I chose to match the colors exactly and got the foundation in as matte a color as possible by using the matte side of the dupioni. I'm anal about that. I think it looks cheap with the shine, but matte side up, it really looks luxurious. At least from afar! Look at your inspiration picture again. Choose a point right above the bodice where the folds are most prevalent, and pin your fabric a little bit above it. Make sure you leave plenty of fabric to reach each edge, you can cut it off later if necessary. This is the really REALLY hard part: copying the nature of gravity's force on a fabric. Ironically, it can take a lot of pins! You'll need to use trial and error for a while. Walk away a few times. But here's how I accomplished this bodice. Once I have one focal area pinned, I go to the opposite side of the garment and make a tiny pleat on the other side, and pin it. Go to the other side and make a pleat. The fabric acts differently based on where your pleats are! My pleats all go in the same direction--always folded upwards, but you can try different directions.

---

#### **Step 4 — Continue draping...in pieces**



See in this image how my front bodice is draped in pieces? This makes it so much easier to drape. If you run out of fabric in one direction, simply fold the raw edges of the first fabric over a new piece...it looks just like another one of the bodice folds. I had to do this on my dress on the left side, but you can't even see it! Continue playing with the body of the fabric. Sculpt it to the dress form at the sides and flatten it a little to make it more flattering. These four pieces took me at least 3 hours to drape in a way that pleased me.

---

## **Step 5 — Sew up the edges**



It's time to sew the fabrics together so that you can remove the pins! For the edges, I basted bright, strong thread into the seam allowance, making sure every pleat at the edge of the bodice is secured in the stitching. Go around the entire circumference in this manner, with a neat basting stitch. For the seam in the center of the bodice where the pieces meet, I used clear nylon thread. I discreetly sewed the right piece of the bodice and then folded the left piece over it, then sewing the left into place. This leaves no raw edges and looks very polished. Trim off excess fabric after you finish basting the draped fabric. Now you're ready to continue with your garment--all the raw edges in my gown will be hidden in the skirt and the lining. Once these pieces are sewn to the bodice, you may remove the bright colored basting. Remove the pins as you go, take your time. You'll get the feel for the fabric as you go! It takes time and patience, but it really pays off!

---

## BurdaStyle

A Novice's Guide to Draping