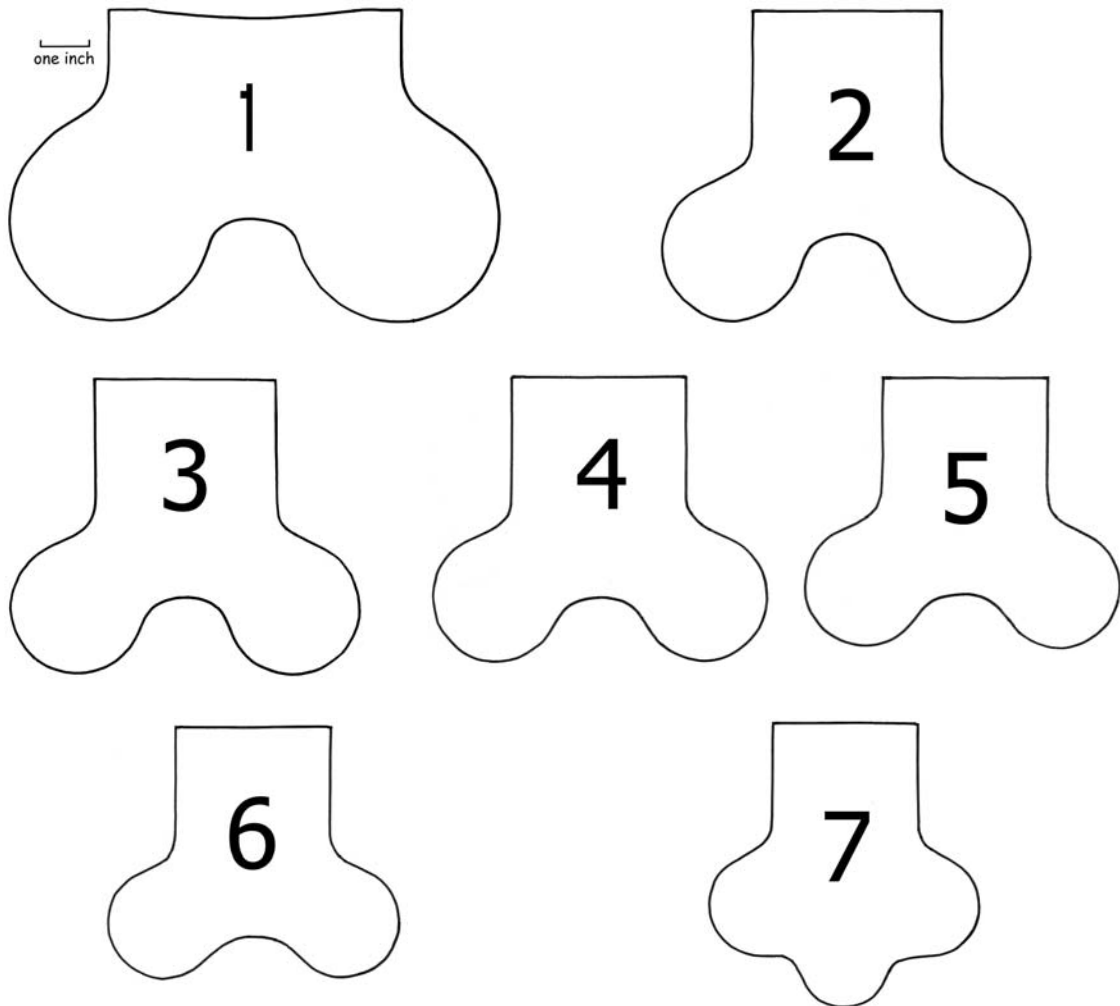


ACCESSORIES, Spine Armor

I think it's time to look at accessories in more detail, starting with spine armor. The pattern is one I have used for several years. The images are to scale, just print them out and enlarge them with a computer or copier until the mark on piece 1 equals one inch. Make sure you enlarge all the pattern pieces the same amount.

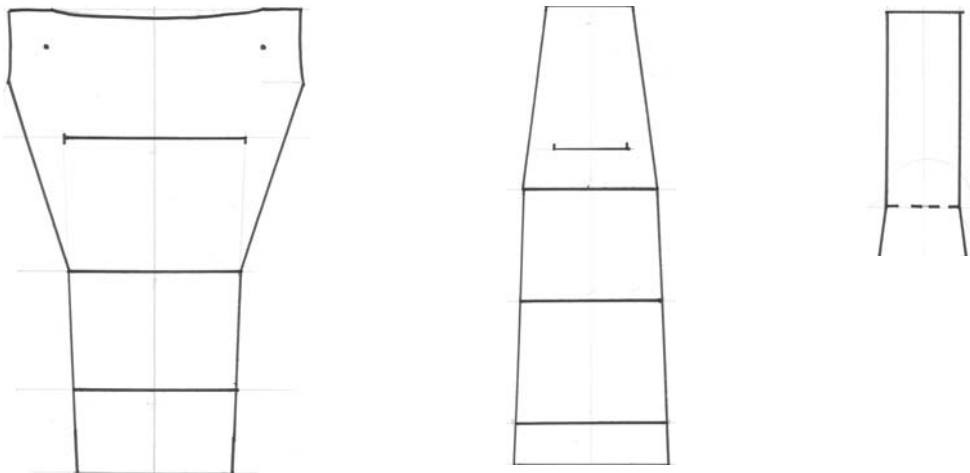
You'll need:

- Metallic or other color marine vinyl (not fuzzy)
- 1/8 inch hardware cloth (poultry netting—it looks like screen, but soldered at the corners)
- Utility scissors to cut the hardware cloth—don't use good ones!
- Vinyl spray paint (optional)
- Sewing machine with walking foot, Teflon™ foot, or foot wrapped in Teflon™ tape
- Heavy duty snaps, and tools to install them

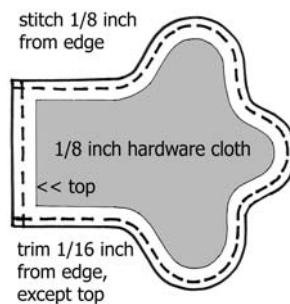


I make my spines from metallic vinyl reinforced with 1/8 inch hardware cloth. It is a method I developed thanks to the ideas of Keeve, the Budget Quartermaster of old. Thanks, Keeve wherever you are! If you cannot find metallic vinyl, you may substitute other colors, and spray them silver with SEM vinyl spray (found in automotive supply stores, and some upholstery supply places).

Cut out two each of the spine plates. I suggest that you flip the pattern over for the second set—my drawings may not be perfectly symmetrical. The spine base pattern is in three parts. Enlarge them before you tape them together and then check to see that it is the proper length. It should be 1 1/2 inches longer than the distance from the neck of your uniform to your waist, when the belt loop is folded up. Cut out one.



Before you sew, mark the plate patterns 3/8 inch from the outer edge. This is the size of the reinforcing hardware cloth piece to be imbedded in the spine plates. Lay the hardware cloth on the pattern and then trace the outline of the piece to be cut with an old Sharpie™ marker. Cut out a reinforcing piece for each spine plate.



Lay the reinforcing plate in between the two vinyl pieces. Make sure the sew the reinforcing plate is perfectly centered, then sew the plates together 1/8 inch from the edge, leaving the top open. Trim 1/16 inch away from the stitching. That should remove any irregularities on the plate edges.

Fold the bottom 4 inches of the base piece under and stitch in place. Starting with the smallest plate (#7) lay the plates in position on the base piece and make sure they are evenly spaced. Remove them one at a time and mark the backing where each plate should be attached. Starting again with the smallest plate, sew them onto the base piece. Sew piece 1 in place only across the top.

Install the female pair of snaps to the base piece, at the marks, facing down. If you use the non-decorative rivet normally used for the male part of the snap, the top will be flat and you can stitch the sides of plate 1 to the base piece. The male parts of the snaps go onto the uniform.

Once the spine is fully assembled, fold it down the center, then bring the sides out and curve them slightly, either convex or concave, to fit the curves of your back. You're all done! Qapla'!!!