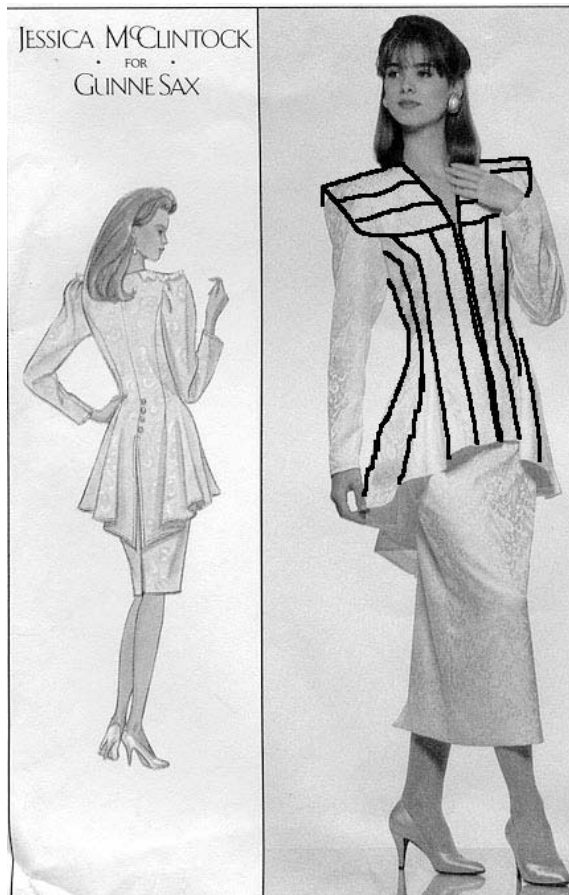


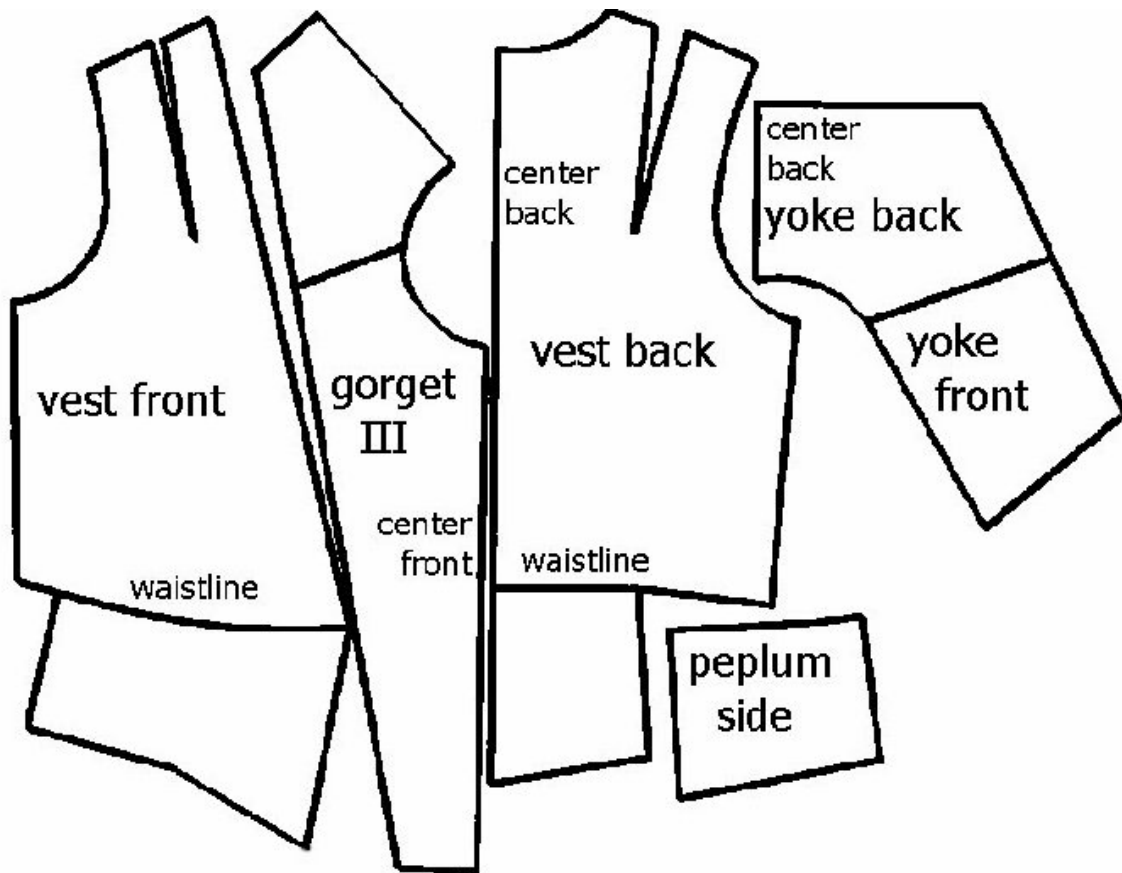
BATTLE VESTS, The Zen of Stripes

I promised this chapter next, then realized I hadn't dealt with the pattern itself. The patterns I'm using as examples are based on ones I have used for uniforms, and are to scale. I will talk about patterns next time. For now, let's assume you have a pattern that fits you and just deal with how to plan the stripes.

If you plan to use narrow striping material, such as upholstery braid, or prefabricated vinyl welting, planning stripes is relatively easy. Choose a princess style pattern that has four relatively even pattern pieces to work from and run stripes down each seam. Then you can divide the remaining space into 2 or 3 parts and sew the stripes so that they are evenly spaced. Tapering to accommodate the figure naturally occurs. Choose an average spacing to do the stripes across the yoke. I usually start on each side of the outer shoulder line and run the shoulder stripes parallel to the bottom edge of the yoke--voila! This scheme is the easiest one to use. All you need is a ruler and a calculator or a little math skill. It is also the easiest to sew, since you just sew or zigzag down the center of each stripe.

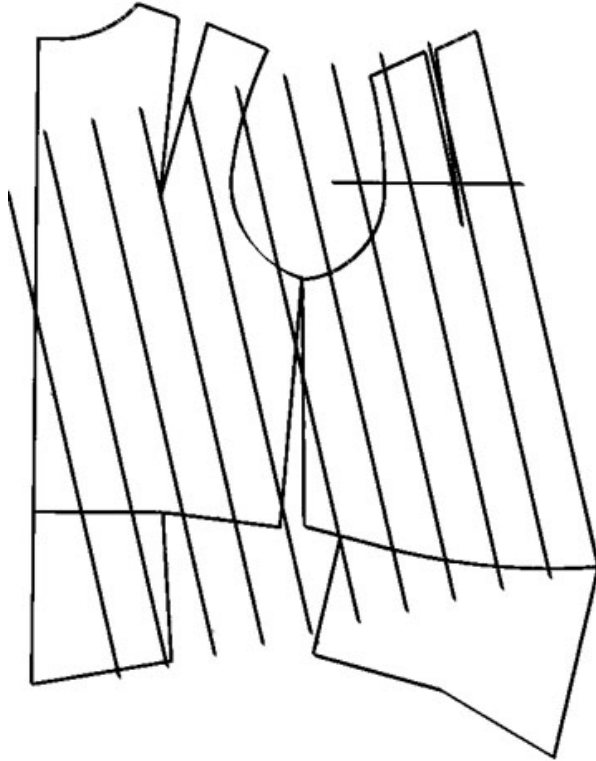


The more complicated stripes could be individually shaped, but this requires drafting a pattern for each pair of stripes--I've done it and it's very time consuming. The next best thing is to use parallel stripes and do some fudging under the arm and down the center back, where it won't be too obvious.

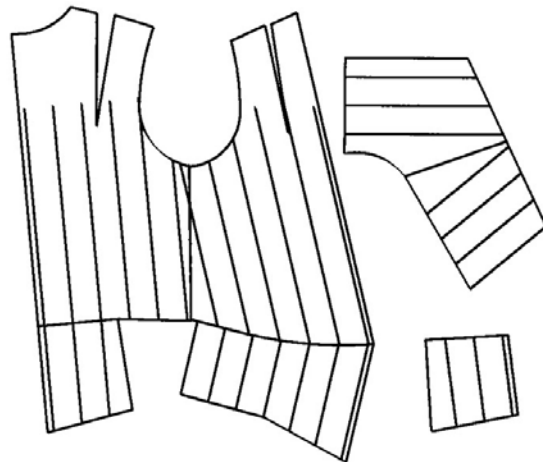


Here's the basic pattern for a command vest. I included the gorget because it shows the original neckline. You will notice that I have moved all of the darts out of the way to the shoulder seam. That way you won't have to sew the stripes over darts and the darts are hidden by the yoke. There is one peplum piece that is separate from the top. This is to accommodate the dart that went from the waist to hip in back. There will be a little strangeness in stripe at this point, too. The last thing to notice about the pattern is that the shoulder line of the yoke follows the shoulder line of the vest itself. There will be a wedge shaped area at the shoulder line on the yoke. This is consistent with Kruge's uniform in STIII.

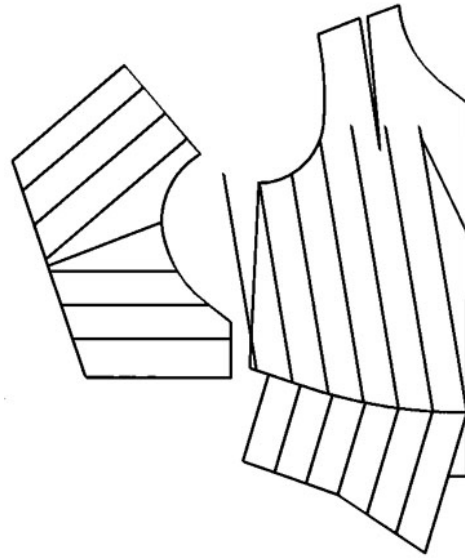
Always start planning the stripes from the center front. As you can see, even if I was to rotate the vest back pattern so that the seams meet, the stripes in the back would be slanted inward at the top. I used to make uniforms that way, hiding the slanted stripes with the spine. Now, I try to do the back stripes vertical and put an adjusting wedge under the arm. The front vee in both the command vest and the grunt vest allow the chest measurement to be 2-3" bigger than the waist. That's great for actors, who are usually fit, but lousy for most of us real life folks. Most of us have tummies. So usually a wedge pointed up is needed under the arm. For shapely women, the wedge may point down, and the dart at the back hip may be wider.



I plan the stripes so that at the waist seam, the bottom of the wedge is either one stripe wide or one space wide, depending on the adjustment needed, so it doesn't interrupt the stripes of the peplum. This means shifting the vertical back stripes until this spacing is achieved. I also like the rear darts from the waist to hip to happen inside a stripe. I may have to do some fudging with the location of that dart to make that happen. I may have to make the back peplum flap a bit wider and the added side flap narrower to get optimum effect. The center back stripes may be wider or narrower than the others. Here's how the sample pattern stripes out, using stripes that are 1 3/4" wide with 1/8" spacing:



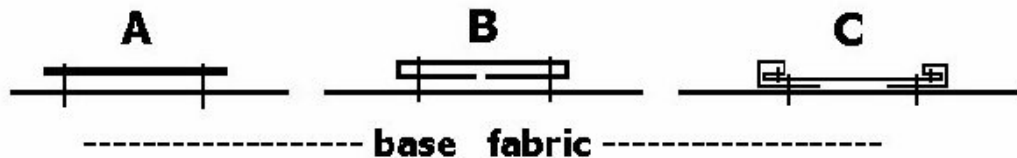
The wedge crosses over the side seam line. It would probably be better if the seam line were shifted under a stripe or wedge. You could also cut both pattern pieces together and just have a center back seam. (I'd lay the pattern so that the straight of the grain was on the stripe line, though. It doesn't stretch that way.) You can also see the wedge at the shoulder.



In the closed front uniform the first stripe still goes from the point where the shoulder seam hits the neckline. That's how I determine the angle. The little V stops where the chest tube will be. The yoke pattern opens in the back, instead of the front, but otherwise the back pattern would be the same as on the command vest.

OK, now you know how to lay out the stripes. Let's move onto the stripes themselves. Here are several construction methods:

stripe construction



- A) Heavy vinyl stripes can be sewn down to the base fabric at each edge. This is the most economical way to make wider stripes.
- B) Thinner vinyl can be folded or serged into a tube, then stitched to the base fabric. This takes about double the vinyl and takes more time, but the edge of each stripe is more finished.
- C) Using higher quality, more supple vinyl,
 - 1) Fold the stripes inside out and stitch each edge 1/16-1/8" from the folded edge.

- 2) Turn the stripe right side out, fold the edges under and stitch the stripe down "in the ditch". This method takes even more vinyl, and twice the time, but the results are really authentic looking!

Before you get started on your uniform I have a few final tips about stripes. I have sewn vinyl stripes to many different types of fabrics, and except for very heavy denim and duck, the base fabric will shift, pucker and pull in. This effect can be lessened by using a walking foot attachment, by using a Teflon™ presser foot, if available, or by wrapping Teflon™ plumbers' tape around a regular presser foot. This keeps the vinyl from sticking and helps the vinyl move at the same rate as the fabric underneath. There may still be the "quilting effect" as a result of the many lines of stitching needed to apply the stripes. This narrows the base fabric from side to side. The best thing to do is to draw the pattern on the base fabric in chalk, sew the stripes down using an inch or two more than the chalk lines suggest, then lay the pattern down and cut out the garment. You'll be surprised at the change in shape that occurs just in the process of sewing the stripes down. You may have to reposition the wedge and back peplum dart. Cut that part last.

That's it! Now you know what I know about stripes. If you're asking, "What's a dart?" or can't find a suitable pattern for a decent fit, e-me with questions by visiting my website <http://www.qidar.com>.