

SEW VERA VENUS
"A modern make on vintage style"
VeraVenus.com

CIRCULAR KNICKERS

Drafting & Sewing instructions



Full circle knicker style based on an early 1930's black silk georgette and lace pair in my collection.

This tutorial is an update of the first Circular Knicker tutorial I posted in early 2012. It's been popular and I felt was due an rewrite as I (like to) think my tutorial style has improved since I began blogging.

These knickers have a set in crutch gusset, a very narrow waist band and a left side continuous placket opening. Being a complete circle they are very full and are not modest! Best worn under long skirts or for boudoir wear. For for swing dancing or gardening choose a closed leg style instead, perhaps my 'Granny Pannie' pattern, or adapt my French Knicker pattern into bloomers.

Fabrics: approx. 1metre/1 yard of very,very soft woven fabrics such as: cotton batiste, cotton lawn, silk charmeuse, silk crepe de chine etc. Stiffer fabrics such as taffeta, crisp cottons will not work well at all.

*Try the pattern out in a cheap soft fabric to see if you want to make any pattern alterations such as changing the length or moving the gusset higher or lower.

Prepare your fabric before cutting to eliminate any possible fabric shrinkage when you first wash your knickers by hand washing, hang drying and finally ironing it.

Drafting the 1/2 circle pattern: (diagrams on p.2)

You need a large piece of paper for the pattern pieces, at least 60cm top to bottom x 120cm side to side (24" x 47")

1- Main pattern piece: Fold your paper in half side to side. The fold becomes the centre front/centre back line. Near the top of the paper draw a line at a right angle to this fold. This is the side line.

2- Take your waist measurement and divide it by 6.3. This gives you a radius measurement to draw your waist line with from the point where the side line meets the cf/cb centre line. Add 1/2cm (1/4") seam allowance onto the waist line. Mark where the cf and cb are on the waistline as well.

3- For the hem line draw a line 36cm (14") below the waist. To allow for the fabric dropping on the bias grain adjust the hem up about 2cm (3/4") see dashed line on the diagram on the next page. Some fabrics will need more than this but you can correct the hem further when trying on in fabric. The 36cm/14" is an average length. Bear in mind the style doesn't work well if made too short or the gusset fits too close to the body.

4- Placket opening: On one side only mark a point at least 18-20cm (7-8") below the waist.

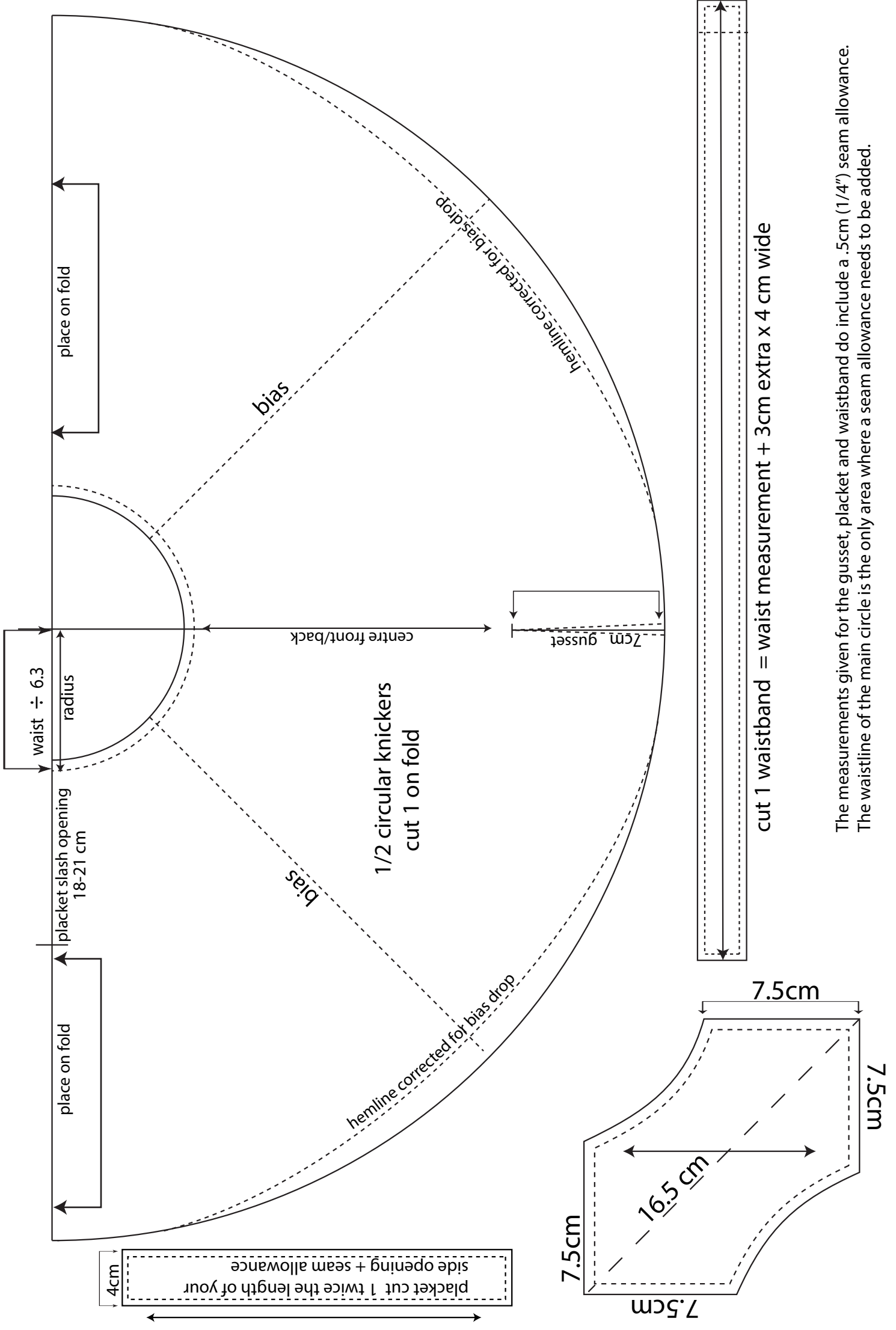
5- Gusset opening: On the cf/cb fold mark a point 29cm (11 1/2") below the waist. Mark from the hem up to this point. This will be where the gusset is sewn in. When sewing the gusset in .5cm (1/4") is allowed at the hem up to this point.

6- Gusset: draw a paper gusset pattern based on the diagram measurements. Compare the 7.5cm gusset sides to the gusset opening on the main pattern piece and adjust so they are the same length. 1/2cm (1/4") seam allowances are included on this gusset piece.

7- Placket: Cut the pattern 4cm wide x twice your placket opening length including the waist seam allowance. Seam allowances of .5cm are included in the 4cm width. The placket is a generous 1cm(1/2") finished width. and is cut on the straight grain of the fabric.

8- Waist band: draw the pattern piece on paper or directly on your fabric with chalk and a long ruler. It should be waist + 3cm (1 1/4") x 4cm (1 1/2") wide. This can be cut on the straight grain or on the bias if you prefer. I've shown it as straight. It also finished a generous 1cm (1/2") wide.

So you now have a 1/2 circle knicker body pattern, the gusset pattern, the placket pattern and a waistband pattern.



The measurements given for the gusset, placket and waistband do include a .5cm (1/4") seam allowance.
 The waistline of the main circle is the only area where a seam allowance needs to be added.

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On to cutting out:

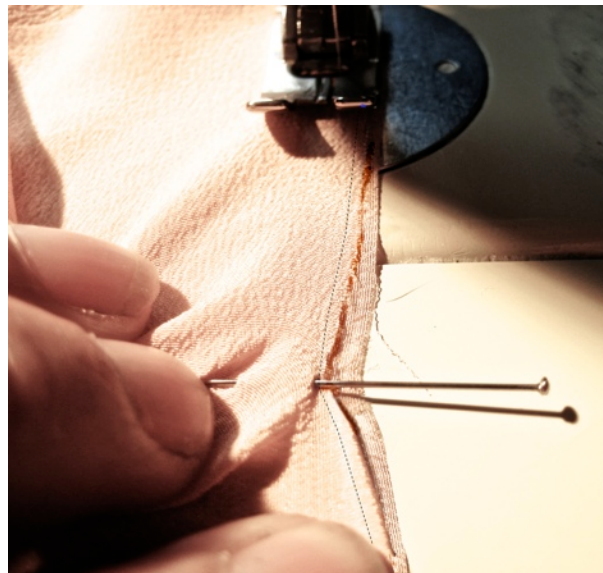
- Fold your fabric in half and pin the ½ circle pattern on to it with the long straight edge on fabric fold.
- Push pins right through your pattern piece into the fabric to mark the gusset points and the lower point of the left side placket.
- With tiny snips notch the top of the placket slash & the centre front and back line at the hem. Also snip-notch the waistline at right side fold and at the centre front and back waists. These notches will help evenly pin the waist to the waistband .
- Unpin and open out the full fabric circle and carefully cut open the gusset and placket openings*. Be sure to stop your cutting .5cm before where the pins mark the end points. * because the seam allowances here are so small you might prefer to lightly pencil mark the line and stay stitch carefully either side to a point before cutting the slashes open.
- From a single layer of fabric cut 1 x gusset, 1 x waistband and 1 x placket. It can be difficult to cut a very straight strip so frequently I tear my fabric into the correct width strips for plackets/waistbands and cut them to the correct length. That gives me a perfectly straight grain to fold narrow edges on.

Sewing next:

There is generally more than one way to sew most anything. The following guide is just how I like to make these knickers for myself.

I set a small stitch length, ie 2.5 on my sewing machine.

- Having stay stitched the placket slash and cut it open pin the right side of the placket strip to the wrong side of the slash opening. Use as few pins as possible or they can get in the way. I only pin at the waist and the bottom point. On your machine, with the knicker body uppermost and the placket underneath, begin sewing from the waist down to the point of the slash. You will see as you near the point the seam allowance on the knicker side is getting extremely small. This is why you sew with the knickers on top so you can keep an eye on this area. Sew down to the point where the bottom pin is, place the needle into the fabric, pivot the material slightly and sew back up the other side of the opening. The black dotted lines in the image show my sewing line. With small scissors snip the knicker fabric only, not the placket fabric, close to the bottom of the slash... but be very careful not to cut into the actual stitching!



- Gently press the seam allowances towards the placket. Fold the placket towards the right side of the knickers so the

opposite unsewn edge touches the edge of the seam allowances. Then fold the placket again, completely in half this time. This gives you 3 layers of placket fabric for sewing your snaps or buttons onto later which is better than just two layers in a thin fabric. Pin the placket edge in place so the first fold just covers the line of stitches and topstitch very close to the fold. Press.

- With this opening on your left fold the front of the placket back behind the front of the knickers and staystitch in place. The rear edge of the placket remains extended as the opening underlap.



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Waistband:-Stay stitch the entire waistline of your knickers to help control the stretching. In some fabrics it can stretch out quite a bit.

Using .5cm (1/4") seam allowances pin the waistband strip to the waist- right side of strip to wrong side of waist. Leave a scant 1cm seam allowance extended at either waist end. Check the quarter sections of the knicker waist are distributed evenly along the band and double check that your waist is measuring what you want it to be. Sew the waistband on.

- Press the seam allowance up into the waistband and press the allowance at the ends into the waistband so the front end finishes flush with the turned back placket and the back with the edge of the extension.

- Fold the entire band over to the right side of the waist, turn and pin under .5cm and topstitch it in place so the first line of stitching is hidden by the fold. I usually then machine stitch all the way around the top and ends of the waistband to give it a firm finish.

* Tip: You can cut your waist band pattern to finish a couple of inches longer than your actual waist measurement and then thread a very narrow lingerie elastic through the waist band tunnel before top stitching the ends closed thereby making a waist finish with some stretch to it. If you opt for this it isn't necessary to cut the actual knicker waist any bigger... there is usually enough natural bias stretch in the fabric to allow for a sewing on the slightly bigger band.

Gusset:

Here again stay-stitching a scant .5cm in from the sewing line helps as a guide. At least in this knicker style both the gusset and the slashes are on the straight grain. In other styles it is on the bias and even more of a fiddle to do if you have never done insertions into a slashed opening before.

-So, starting at the hem with the knickers on top so you can see the slash point, sew carefully to the point, pivot the needle 45 degrees in the point and sew the other side. To neaten and secure the small seam allowances overcast the raw edges by hand or do a tiny machine zigzag stitch. Repeat on the other end of the gusset. Ideally there will not be a pleat in the gusset point.

*Tip: something I've often seen on vintage knickers is that the seam allowances are pressed away from the gusset and towards the body of the knickers then topstitched a hairline away from the first sewing line thus hold the allowances on place and reinforcing the seam.



1- gusset pinned in place



2- showing gusset topstitched near the first seam line

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Hems:

This circular knicker hem doesn't do well for sewing on lace trim. I tried once and it was an exercise in total frustration!

A plain baby rolled hem works best though. You can do this all by machine or the first turning by machine and the second by hand like a scarf hem. I tend to do mine all by machine by the following method. With practice and patience you can make lovely really narrow hems.

- Working from the wrong side finger turn .5cm allowance in, stitching as close to the fold as possible. Take great care not to pull the fabric as you sew. Some stretching is inevitable but let your machine do the work and don't pull the fabric as it feeds under the machine foot.

- Next with small sharp scissors trim the excess seam allowance as close to that stitch line as you can. Go slowly.

- When all trimmed away press the edge with your steam iron, smoothing any stretching.

- Back at your sewing machine, again working with the wrong side facing up, finger turn that pressed edge in as small as you can and stitch again practically on top of the first row. Then steam back into shape with your iron when all sewn.



Finishing:

I'm just going to list a few options here.

at the waist itself:

1- a small hook and a thread loop worked over with buttonhole stitch

2- a tiny button and thread loop or hand worked buttonhole even!

and down the placket:

1- tiny snaps

2- tiny hook and bars.

So, there you have Circular Knicker tutorial.

If you have any questions or comments on this tutorial you can email me at sewveravenus@gmail.com

I hope your lingerie is a success and I wish you happy sewing!

- Jeanne aka VeraVenus