

## *We Dress Bleurette*

### **Dress Trimmed with Soutache--1925--Robe Soutachee**

First, are Suzanne Rivière's fabric suggestions for this dress: taffeta, crêpe de Chine, light wool, wool serge, velour, linen, or cotton Ottoman (a corded fabric like faille, but with larger cords). The colors she suggests are: dark blue, black, tobacco, hazelnut, or oyster shell. For the trim, of course, narrow soutache braid, or large-size crochet cotton, [#3, like Speed-Cro-Sheen, or Lustre Sheen] or #3 pearl cotton. [A long crocheted chain of #20 or #30 crochet cotton, or of #12 pearl cotton could also be used.] The trim is couched onto the dress using a light-weight sewing thread in a color to match the trim. Also, it is suggested that if you use a dark or neutral fabric for the dress, gold or silver trim would look nice—but only if you use a subdued fabric, nothing flashy, after all it is not a costume for Mardi Gras!

It is suggested that you trace the designs for the dress fronts and sleeves onto tissue paper, which is basted in place, and then the trim worked over the designs on the paper, sewing through the paper and the cloth below; when finished, tear away the tissue paper.

Alternative fabrics and trims: for a dressy version, silk (either light or crisp), faille, or even cotton velvet can be used effectively, but for a day dress, most solid color cottons or linens are suitable. Beading has been used effectively to trace the design, or chain stitch embroidery could be used, or stem stitch embroidery. The embroidery could be replaced with colorful woven braid used in strips down the front and across the sleeves. Even entre-deux lace could be used in strips as the trim, if it had ribbon of a contrasting color under it, or if the dress fabric was dark.

One of the unusual and frustrating aspects of this pattern as originally conceived is that the center front is slit and a ribbon is meant to be stitched to the slit, and turned inside as a kind of box pleat, yet no seam allowance is provided for this. It is possible to use the barest amount of seam allowance, which has to taper to nothing at the top, but it is difficult to do well, and not entirely satisfactory.

We are providing an alternative which involves a short seam in the center front from the neck to the top of the pleat, but if you prefer the original concept, use the seam and pleat fold line as the center front fold-line, cut the front of the dress on this fold, slit the fold from the top of the design to the hem, and sew ribbon or a strip of the dress fabric (no size is given in the original, but 2" to 2.5" wide by 4.5" long works well) to the slit edges of the center front opening, which will form the pleat.

If you care to follow the alternative method, cut the dress front on the new fold line, and cut the backs with seam allowance. Also cut the shoulders on the fold so as to eliminate seams where you are applying embroidery or trim. This was a feature of the original pattern. Sew the short seam at the top of the dress front with right sides together, and if you wish, trim the seam allowance away and press the seam open. If your fabric is light weight, you may want to leave the large seam allowance to avoid raw edges. Press the remaining center front along the fold lines, making a box pleat. If you have trimmed away the extra seam allowance, invisibly tack the corners of the pleat to the dress, so it does not droop.

At the center back, either hem both seam allowances, and apply snaps or hooks and loops, lapping right back over left, or sew a short seam from the hem upwards, and hem the remaining seam allowances and apply closures.

While the dress may still be laid flat, apply all the trim to the front and to the sleeves—working whichever method of trimming you have chosen.

Next, finish the neckline. The original pattern suggests that you clip the corners, and turn the raw edges to the inside, where they will be secured by the application of trim all around the edge of the neck opening. Alternatively, if your fabric is not transparent, you could use a facing that is a square of dress fabric (approx. 2” to 2.5” square), slit at the center back, with the neckline shape cut out of the center. With right sides together, sew from center back around the neck to the opposite side of the back. Clip into the corners of the seam allowance, turn the facing to the inside, finger press to push out the seam allowances, press, and turn the raw edges of the facing under all around. Tack the facing invisibly to the dress. Apply the single line of trimming around this square neck, or, if you have used braid trim, chain stitch a line of trim around the neckline with a suitable embroidery floss.

If you wish, hem the sleeves before sewing the side seams, or if you prefer, hem them afterward.

Sew the side seams and finish them, if you wish. Press open or to the back.

Hem the dress, including the box pleat. Press the pleat.



