

# Making a Simple Pleated Tartan Skirt

A guide developed for [www.marksthescot.com](http://www.marksthescot.com)

Alan Hebert, April/May, 2007

OK, let's start off with a quick discussion about what this skirt is, and what it is not.

## It IS:

ultra-mini-length to knee-length

Light

Inexpensive

Quick to make

## It is NOT:

A real "kilt skirt"

Traditional

With that in mind, this little skirt is also a great first project for someone thinking of making a "real kilt skirt", or a kilt for a man, and wants to practice before tackling the "real thing". If you've sewn before, but never dared to make something without having a pattern, then this is a great project to tackle that does not use a pattern. If you've never used a sewing machine, then this is a good project to try because it's easy and doesn't require advanced skills. When you are done you will have a skirt you can wear in the summer around town, to parties, out clubbing (if you do that) or to the Highland Games.

What do you need to make this skirt?

1. 1.5 - 5 yards of fabric...depends on the length of skirt you want, and the pleats
2. a sewing machine that can sew straight-stitch and zig-zag
3. a spool of thread to match your cloth
4. a cloth measuring tape or a nice ruler...or both!
5. box of straight pins
6. Some white chalk
7. 6- 8 inches of Velcro
8. 6 inches x 30 inches (roughly) of canvas or other substantial non-stretchy material

OK, let's get started.

## Step One: Choose your fabric

You are going to need a length of fabric 12 – 26 inches wide and 3 – 5 yards long. The width of the fabric is going to correspond to how long the skirt is, and the length is going to correspond with the parts of the skirt that disappears into pleats, and wrap around you.

Fabric generally comes in "bolts" which you can inspect at any fabric store. These bolts are usually 45 or 60 inches wide. Since your skirt is going to be 12 – 24 inches wide, then obviously that's not the width of the whole bolt, is it? You don't have to buy 3 – 5 yards of cloth, you can buy half of that (1.5 – 2.5 yards) and you will have enough. What you will be doing is cutting a section out of the piece that you buy, measured up from the finished edge. Then you'll move to the other side of the cloth and cut out another section,

measuring up from the finished edge on that side. You'll join the cloth, edge to edge to make one long strip. This is exactly what happens when a kilt-maker makes a mans kilt.

Listen up.... If you buy material that is on a 45 inch wide bolt, and you buy "half the length", thinking to join the two halves, you will be limited to making a skirt that is about 20 inches long. Why? It's because you will need a strip of cloth that's between 3 and 4 inches wide for the waistband. Don't forget to factor in that waistband piece in your figuring.

However, you know what? This whole thing is supposed to be EASY, right? You could save time and hassle by buying 3-4 yards of material and NOT joining pieces, like I described above. Buy 4 yards if you're little and buy 5 yards if you're medium-sized. That'll be plenty and you'll have extra left over for a project like maybe a cute set of flashes to wear with knee socks for that Scottish Schoolgirl look. Har! If you're a "woman of substance" and you want a skirt with lots of pleats, buy 5 or even 6 yards if the size of the tartan pattern is really big (like 6 inches or bigger) and you want lots of tiny, little pleats. If the material you select is \$5 - \$20 a yard, maybe it's worth it to pay a few extra dollars to simplify the whole process. If it's \$65 a yard, then it's not, eh? You decide.

OK, what kind of cloth should you buy? You can certainly make a skirt like this one out of solid-color cloth, but I'm going to suggest that you save that for your second skirt. My instructions are going to tell you how to pleat tartan cloth, so get some real tartan for this.

Now, "tartan" really means "plaid" in American Lingo, but an awful lot of "plaids" out there are woven so that the repeating pattern of the stripes is really small, like an inch or two. Don't buy that! Hunt around until you find a plaid/tartan that you like that's made so that the repeating units of the plaid pattern are at least four inches apart. Five inches is better and the prototypes of this skirt that I made used material that had a tartan where the repeating units were 7 inches apart. The bigger the tartan, the deeper your pleats are going to be, but remember that this is not a traditional kilt skirt where we are trying to get 20 or more pleats and go for snob effect. By the way, this concept of "the repeating units of the pattern" is called the "**sett**" by kilt-makers.

So now that you know about the sett size and the tartans/plaids, what KIND of material should you buy? You could buy outrageously expensive, 13 or 16 ounce kilting wool from Scotland, \*ouch\* that stuff is expensive. Save that for your drop-dead beautiful kilt skirt. For this skirt, get 10-11 ounce stuff. Wool is fine, but wool/polyester blend is sure a lot easier to take care of! You can make this skirt out of something called polyester-viscose ("viscose" is what the British call "rayon"). That sounds terribly artificial, but in fact it's quite comfortable. Do NOT buy polarfleece tartan..yuck. Don't get-shirt weight cotton or poly-cotton. Finally, don't get the lightweight tartan shirting flannels that stores like JoAnne's fabric sell. Honestly, I can't find good skirting or kilting plaids/tartans at any of the fabric stores where I live here in California. I've had to buy all my stuff online. <http://www.thescottishweaver.com> sells a bunch of nice wool and wool-blend lightweight tartans that will work beautifully. The Scottish Weaver is the USA outlet for

the Fraser and Kirkbright weaving company, in Victoria, British Columbia. Fraser and Kirkbright will sell USA citizens material from their remnants selection, directly though. So go online and check out F&K's remnants. I made the four prototype skirts for these instructions from Fraser and Kirkbright wool/poly blend remnants. I bought 6 yards of the stuff for \$50 and made four of these skirts and had enough left over to give to the F-H.C.A.G to make herself a \*serious\* 6 yard kilt skirt.

You can also watch ebay for a tartan that you like. Finally, you can go to <http://www.xmarksthescot.com> and buy "poly-viscose" tartan from one of the vendors there. The Kilt Store...<http://www.thekiltstore.com> sells poly-viscose tartan in 10.5 ounce weight for about \$20 a yard, plus a blistering shipping cost to the USA. You might try the other vendors, as well and see if they'll sell you some PV. If you click through to the Kilt Store from X-Marks you'll get a ten percent discount!

This is how I buy most of my tartan fabric. Now you know all of my secrets, except my kinky ones about 16 ounce wool! Eeeek!

How much should you buy? Well, hopefully this stuff will cost you less than twelve dollars a yard because we're trying to make something cheap and easy, here. That means, buy a little bit extra, "just in case". You might be able to make a sash out of the leftovers to wear to more formal Scottish occasions, with a formal dress.

Here's a guide. I've made four of these skirts. I used about 3 yards of material, 16 inches wide for a woman whose hip measurement was 34 inches. I used 3.5 yards of material for two skirts for women whose hip measurements were 40 and 42 inches. I used 4 yards of material for a woman whose hip measurement was 48 inches. The sett size on this material was 7 inches, and each skirt wound up with 10-11-12 pleats that were about two inches wide. That's about right for a flirty miniskirt, which these were. If you're aiming for knee-length and a little more conservative I'm going to guess...because I don't know... that you will want more like 15 -18 pleats and you'll want to show about 1.25 - 1.5 inches of the pleat rather than 2 inches. If your miniskirt winds up with 15 pleats, don't stress, it will look just fine! If you want deeper pleats, and more of them, buy more material. Look at it this way. For every repeat of the sett pattern in the cloth, you get one more pleat. So if a sett is six inches wide, you will get 6 pleats out of a yard of that cloth.

Unlike a mans kilt, where up to a rather extreme point...more pleats is "better"... 10 wide pleats is just fine for a pleated miniskirt. However, to get a 2 inch wide pleat reveal (meaning that 2 inches of each pleat shows to someone looking at the skirt while it's on you) you'll want tartan with at least a 6 inch wide sett. Trying to make a 2 inch wide pleat reveal with tartan that's got a 4-inch sett.....well, you can DO it, but it won't look all that great because the pleats won't be very deep. Figure that the pleat reveals will be roughly 1/3 the size of the sett, more or less and you'll be looking good. That's why I told you to find tartan with at least a 4 inch sett. A four-inch sett would pleat nicely giving you 1.25 to 1.5 inch pleat reveals. The 7-inch sett I had for the prototype skirts pleated nicely to give a 2-inch reveal and really nice, deep pleats.

Remember that you will be dividing those material lengths in half, eh? You might need 4 yards of material to get right 'round your bum, but you're going to BUY 2 yards. Hey if you buy 4-5 yards, skip the "join in the middle" step and the first skirt comes out great, then you can make another skirt for your best girlfriend or a vest for your man and go out together and just think how people will stare at the weird people all dressed alike.. What ~FUN~! \*ahem\*

OK, you need more than just fabric to make this skirt. You also need thread and you need Velcro. Nearly all fabric stores sell a huge selection of thread. Get one medium-sized spool of cotton-covered polyester, "all purpose" thread that matches the predominating color of your tartan. That'll work great. Also, get six-eight inches of two-inch-wide Velcro. Black or white Velcro is fine, it doesn't matter, so you pick. Finally, if you don't have any straight pins, buy a box of 'em. 30-50 small straight pins is plenty. Oh, and chalk, if you don't have any. Buy a box of white chalk.

## **Step Two: Your Measurements**

You'll probably want to draft someone to help you here. You certainly can do this yourself, but your results will be more accurate if you stand in front of a full-length mirror and coach a friend through where to wrap the measuring tape! A half an inch isn't the end of the world but an inch is going to be kind of a lot.

The first thing to do is decide where you want the skirt to ride. A traditional man's kilt actually sits at his natural waist, which is slightly above his navel. You probably won't want that. Aiming for an inch and a half to two inches below the navel is probably good for many women. For you hotties looking for a more contemporary (read "racy") look measure just above your haunch/hip bone. That will give your skirt a more "hip-hugger" look. Remember that you can tug this thing up and down a couple of inches, either way.

OK, when you've decided where you want the waistband of the skirt to sit, wrap that measuring tape around you and measure to the nearest half inch. Write down that number and label it "waistline" (even if it isn't, technically, at your waistline).

Now have that friend HONESTLY look at your fanny and wrap that measuring tape around you at the largest part of your rump. BTW, a \*real\* friend that measures you here will not cheat and tell you that your rump measurement is three inches smaller than it really is. Ha! OK, write down that measurement and label it "fanny".

Now you need the distance between your waistline circumference and your fanny circumference. In other words, the distance up-and-down on your body from where you measured 'round yourself for the waistline circumference, and where you measured the fanny circumference. OK, write that number down and label it "drop". Kiltmakers will call this the "fell" measurement..

Finally, you're going to decide how long to make your skirt. Measure from your waistline circumference straight down the front of your leg to where you want the skirt to end. Now, this part is important, as I found out when making the first three prototypes of this skirt..... If you are making a short skirt, something that's going to end more than 5-6 inches above the knee, then add an inch to this measurement if you are long-legged or over 5' 8" tall or want to err on the side of modesty. . Why? Because most of the taper you are going to sew into this skirt will be in the back half, and the skirt has to ride up and over the curve of your buttocks. That means this skirt has to cover a bit more of you in the back than it does in the front. If you are living dangerously with this skirts length in the front, you might discover that you are showing a bit more of you from behind than you wanted if you didn't add that extra inch. Trust me, I learned this the hard way on two of the prototypes, which the women were originally delighted to receive, but won't wear because they came out too short even though I measured them very carefully.

Just a word to the wise. Remember when choosing skirt length....you can always hem it and make it an inch or two shorter, eh? But it's not so easy to make the skirt longer!

OK, write down those measurements, here so you still have them even when you lose the Post-it you used to write them down on, the first time.:

**Waist:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fanny:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Drop:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Length:** \_\_\_\_\_

None of the above about adding the extra inch applies if you're going for a knee-length, or just-above-knee-length skirt. Ditto if you have a very small fanny and there's less than 5-6 inches difference between your waist and fanny measurements.

OK for a rough guideline, here are some skirt lengths and my decidedly Male Piggy and irreverent take on their implications. This is for your "average" woman who's about 5'6", 115-130 pounds and has medium-length legs and is making a non-"hip-hugger" skirt.

14 inches: short and dangerous, but marginal in terms of what your mother will say to you when you get home. Note: You WILL turn heads with a skirt this short, so if that's what you want, go for it. The 14 inch skirt that I made for a very cute, 5'4" 30-year old friend with a great figure and great legs is not getting worn because even though she loves to have fun, she feels it's too short. Be warned! *Personally, I think she would look great in it, but then I'm the Male Pig, right? Oink!*

16 inches: short and fun and flirty, and probably safe enough, but don't do back flips unless you're dressed for it, under the skirt. The emphasis on "flirty" with a bit of an edge to it. For X-Markers, the skirt I made for the F-H.C.A.G is just shy of 16 inches long, so go look at the pictures of the Belmont Kilt night for March 2007 and you'll see some pictures of her with it on, slightly wrinkled. The F-H.C.A.G. is pretty tall (5' 9", I'd guess) and slender and has great legs, so judge accordingly. By the way, she doesn't know I'm writing this. I bet she'll have my head at the next beer and kilts night!

18 inches: not “sedate” and shows a lot of leg and all the knee. SportKilts “regular” mini kilt is 18 inches long. This is a good length for a lot of women who want to wear an above-the knee skirt. \*Recommended\*

20 inches: Shows all the knee, and some of your leg. Good if you’re long-legged and the 18-inch is too short for your taste.

22 inches: will probably cover most of your knees unless you have a very long femur bone. You’re getting into Mens kilt lengths, here. This is something you can wear to more serious occasions. Think; Office Attire.

24 inches: This is a standard mens kilt length, and this will be below the knee for most women and very respectable.

My wife has a purchased kilt skirt that looks great on her. She doesn’t much like it because she’s feels it’s too “dowdy” looking. However, I think it looks great, in its own way. “Hot little number” it isn’t, it’s more conservative than that, but it still looks great. It hits her significantly below the knee, but is far from “Hostess” length.. She’s 5’8” and this skirt is 29 inches long. The construction of this skirt is beyond the scope of this project. Stick to knee-length or higher with these instructions!

For starters, go to your closet and drag out a couple of skirts that you like and measure them. Between that and my “Male Pigs Guide to Womens Skirt Lengths” above, you should do just fine.

All right, you’ve got your material, you’ve got your Velcro and thread. You’ve got your measurements and you’ve figured out how long you want your skirt to be. Let’s get started on the sewing!

## **Preparing Your Fabric**

OK, before you start...wash your fabric. OK, OK, listen up...if it’s worsted wool, don’t do this. You’ll ruin it! You are going to have to get your skirt dry-cleaned. But if it’s wool/polyester blend, or cotton or polyester-viscose, toss it in the washing machine, once. Don’t wash it with anything else! If any of the dye bleeds in the washing machine, it’ll ruin your ninety dollar blouse from Nieman Marcus. Ouch! So don’t do that...just wash it by itself, and then dry it on a medium setting in the dryer. You want the material to shrink NOW, \*before\* you spend a lot of time making a skirt that fits you. OK, when it comes out of the drying, tidy up the raw ends that have frayed in the machines. Then put the stuff on the ironing board.

About ironing...if you are working with a wool/poly blend or poly/viscose, don’t iron it too hot. Set up the iron just hot enough to make some steam. Anyway, do a thorough once-over on the material and get it nice and flat. It doesn’t have to be \*PERFECT\*, but get all the significant wrinkles out so that it lays flat on the table. This is also a good time

to look it over and spot any weaving flaws that might have snuck in there and see if you can work around them.

## Cutting Out Your Fabric

All the books about kiltmaking talk about tearing your tartan instead of cutting it out. Personally, I cut it, myself, and don't worry about the few random threads that wind up lying around. The dustbuster handi-vacuum takes care of those, but if you \*really\* want to rip your tartan, and you bought 10-11 ounce real kilting wool, then go ahead.

First up, inspect the selvedge. What's selvedge?

OK, the weave of the fabric has to end, out at the edge of the fabric, right? The weaving company has to do something to stabilize those edges, or else the stuff will unravel on the bolt and make a mess in the store. So the looms that weave fabric have various features built into them that finishes off the edge in various ways. Take a look at the fabric you bought. Does that edge look good to you? Traditional kilting fabric has an edge that is carefully prepared to look almost identical to fabric from the middle of the bolt. Cheap stuff may not look as good. OK, so inspect your cloth and decide if the selvedge looks good enough to you, or if you want to turn up the edge (which will be the bottom of your skirt) and hem it. If you want to hem it, decide where the hemline will be, and measure up from the actual edge....edge to future hemline.

Write that number here: **Hem:** \_\_\_\_\_

OK, now take you fabric and lay it out on a big clean surface. Personally, I use my hardwood floors, but I sweep, vacuum and clean the floor carefully before I do this. Maybe you have a gigantic work table you can use. Anyway, lay it all out as best you can. Refer back to your numbers on how long you want your skirt to be.

Are you going to hem your skirt? If YES, then add the Hem depth to skirt length:

**Hem:** \_\_\_\_\_ + **Length:** \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_ **total width to cut**

Take note of the total width of cloth you are going to need. Now go to your cloth on the floor, or wherever, and carefully measure up from the edge of the cloth, exactly that amount. Put a pin in there, or a chalk mark. Now, do it again...Measure twice, cut once! Take careful note of the tartan pattern. Your pin will be right next to, or on top of some stripe or thread line in the tartan pattern. Take careful note of that pattern bit. Fire up the scissors, and cut out your cloth, cutting right on that stripe in the pattern. Go right down the whole length (or as far as you need to go, if you bought oodles of cloth).

If you bought enough material to make your skirt out of one strip, then you're done with this step. If you will be combining cloth cut from the two edges into one long strip, you need to repeat the above step, only measuring from the OTHER SIDE...measure from the other selvedged edge, and cut out your second strip.

WHEW! Scary! But now you have your “stuff”. You will have a bunch of material left over, unless you are making a 22 inch long skirt out of material that’s only 45 inches wide!

## Combining the Two Pieces and Planning Your Pleats

*If you bought enough cloth that you could cut out your skirt in one continuous length, then skip this step.*

OK, now you’re going to combine the two pieces you just cut out into one long piece.

The first thing to do is to trim off any stray, hanging threads from the edges. Re-cut that edge nice and straight. But before you do this, read ahead...

You are going to be joining the two pieces so that the tartan matches up, right? You want to join them so that the line of stitching you’re going to make is buried in a pleat, not out there on top of a pleat where it can be seen. So that means you have to decide, NOW, what part of the pattern of the tartan you want to show in your pleats.

I’m going to recommend that you pleat your tartan to stripe...or to “no stripe”, rather than trying to pleat it to sett. This means that one part of the tartan pattern will be revealed in each of the pleats. This is much easier to carry out for a quick and easy skirt than trying to match and taper the tartan pattern. Pleating to stripe means to choose a strong part of the pattern, one strong stripe in the tartan and centering that stripe in the middle of each pleat.

Pleating to “no stripe” is exactly the same as pleating to stripe, except that you pick part of the tartan pattern that is mostly solid color, without a big stripe in it. See the picture.



That skirt is made from the Lindsay tartan, with a 7-inch sett. It’s exactly the same material as in the first picture. X-Markers, this is the F-H.C.A.G. She asked me to emphasize the green in the tartan to go with her red hair, so I pleated it to “no stripe”, and to the strong green area in the tartan.

You can do this too, if your chosen tartan has a broad area of solid color.

All right, after you have decided which part of the tartan pattern is going to show in your pleats, and which will be hidden in the “buried” part, you can decide where in the cloth to stitch your two pieces together. Make the join in an area that will be hidden deep within a pleat.

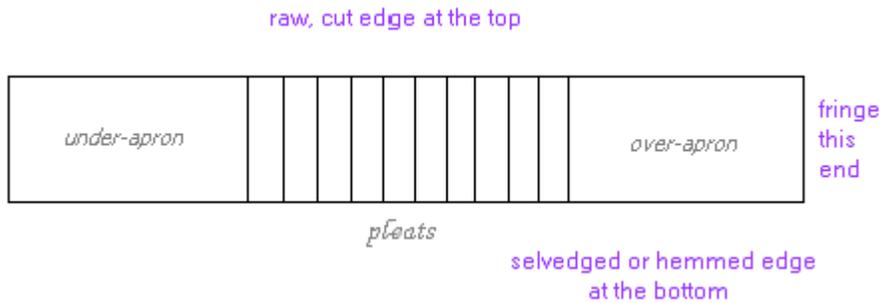
- 1.) First, mark a chalk line on each piece of the cloth, right where you want the join to be. Hold the pieces up next to one another, folded along those lines to check to see that you chose wisely and marked it right. If you bought cloth woven in a twill weave, look closely at the material. There will be diagonal threadlines in the cloth...up-close, the pattern will have a “lean” to it. Make sure that the lines of the twill weave in the cloth are running the same way in both pieces! If you didn’t happen to buy twill weave cloth, this may not matter. Whatever the case, look \*CLOSELY\* at the cloth and flip the pieces over in you have to, to make a good match.
- 2.) Now trim your pieces of fabric, one inch away from that chalk line. Keep the remnant around in case you want to make some flashes to go with knee sox
- 3.) Now take these two pieces of cloth to the sewing machine and run two lines of zig-zag (or an overlock stitch if you have one on your machine) right up on those raw edges. The goal is to lock down those edges so that they won’t unravel. When I do this, I make on line of zig-zag a bit on the small side, with 6-7stitchesper inch. Then the next line of zig-zag is significantly bigger, with 5-6 stitches per inch. Sometimes I run a line of straight-stitch right smack down the middle of those overlapping zig-zags. Now those edges will NEVER unravel!
- 4.) OK, now join the two pieces of fabric. To do this, get out some pins.....lay the fabric “right side to right side” up against one another. This means that the side of each piece that is going to be on the outside of the skirt is lying flat up against the other piece. Match them right up, and peek underneath to perfectly line up your chalk lines. When it’s totally perfect, then stick pins through both layers of fabric to hold the pieces together while you sew it. The pins should go PERPENDICULAR to the chalk lines, not parallel to them! Put in a pin about every 4-6 inches.
- 5.) OK, take your pinned-together fabric to the sewing machine and run a line of straight stitching right smack dab down that chalk line. You should probably double up the stitching at the very bottom and the very top of the fabric for strength.
- 6.) Now, take your fabric off the machine, pull the pins and open up your stuff. Now you have one long piece and if you were super-careful, the “join” doesn’t interrupt the regularity of the tartan pattern at all. Hey, if it does, by, say ¼ or an inch or less then don’t worry about it and keep on going. If it’s off more than that you should probably get out the seam-ripper and take the stitching out and try again.

### **Laying Out the Under-Apron and Over-Apron**

All right, to over-simplify the basics of kilt and kilted skirt construction, think of it this way. It’s a long piece of cloth with an unpleated section at each end and a mess of pleats

in the middle. The lengths of the unpleated sections are one-half the circumference of your rump, and the length of the pleated section is one-half the circumference of your rump.

Make sense? Like THIS....

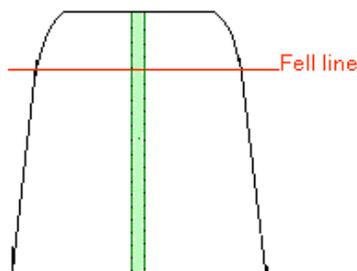


OK, so what's the circumference of your rump? You measured it, and wrote that number down, way back at the beginning. Divide that number in half and write it down here:

**Half Rump:** \_\_\_\_\_ and while you're at it **Half Waist** \_\_\_\_\_

OK, so measure down from the raw, cut edge of your strip of cloth, the distance you measured for your "drop". Put a chalk mark on the fabric at the far left edge (where you're going to fringe, if you want) that's at the length of your drop. Add another about a foot into the fabric, and then another about 20 inches into the fabric. This will be the line that you use to lay out the width of your over-apron.

OK, so look at the area of the cloth that's going to be your over apron. Your over-apron is going to be approximately your half-rump measurement wide, minus an inch. It will increase from that measurement, going down to give the apron some A-shape. Up above the chalk like (which will be called the fell line, soon) it's going to taper (depending on your body shape) to half of your waist measurement. That means your over apron is actually going to look like this...



strong line in tartan pattern centered in the middle of the over-apron

My measurements are this:

**Half-Waist: 21      Fell: 8**  
**Half-Rump: 24      Length: 25**

The difference between 24 inches and 21 inches is three inches. I have to split that amount of taper between both sides of the over-apron, right? So that means I taper each side about 1.5 inches above the fell.

This is UNLESS you have a “tummy”. Look at yourself in the mirror.....be HONEST. Does your abdomen/lower stomach stick out so that there’s significant curve of tummy sticking out between one haunch bone and the next? Sure, there will be SOME, everybody has SOME. The question is, do you have LOT? If you do, and you must be honest, now, not hyper-critical or unduly sloppy, then ease up on that taper I just described by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch, maybe an inch, depending. If you’re 17 years old and on the track team running the 440 meters, you do NOT have a curve here. If you can wear a mini-skirt with supreme confidence, you do not have a curve here. OK, got it? In the above example, I would work like this...

<b>Half-Waist: 21</b>	<b>Fell: 8</b>	The difference between 24 inches and 21 inches is three inches. But my tummy sticks out so I’m gonna make that two inches. I have to split that amount of taper between both sides of the over-apron, right? So that means I taper each side about 1.0 inch above the fell.
<b>Half-Rump: 24</b>	<b>Length: 25</b>	

How much A-shaping to put in? It depends on the tartan and what looks nice and seems to lay well but for a guideline, I usually put about 1.5 inches of A-shaping from the fell line to the hem in a man’s kilt. Mind you, that’s 1.5 inches on each side, for a total of 3 inches. So my kilts, made for me.....the bottom of the over-apron is almost 6 inches wider than the waistline! In fact, it works out FOR ME...it may not, for you, that the A-Shaping line and the hip/fell taper are not that different from a straight line. Lay it out with chalk marks and see.

For the skirts I made to prototype these instructions I put in about an inch of A-Shaping, for a 15-16 inch long skirt. If you’re making a knee-length skirt, then 1 – 1.5 inches is about right. If it’s a micro-mini, then  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch might be better...on each side!

OK, in the section of cloth that’s going to be your over-apron locate a strong line in the tartan pattern. If your tartan has one line that’s super-contrasty with the rest of the tartan, then pick one of those and use that as the center-line of your apron. Alternatively, if you’re desperate for cloth and can’t waste an inch, you can use a spot that’s exactly halfway between two of those strong-contrast lines as your center-point. The idea is to arrange the over-apron so that the tartan is symmetrically laid out on your body. I strongly, strongly urge you to lay out your over-apron, symmetrically. In really subtle tartans like the Lindsay I was working with on the prototypes to these instructions it doesn’t matter so much, but many plaids and Scottish tartans have some really strong, contrasting stripes in them. If they’re wildly off-center, it will make the skirt look quite odd.

You are going to want to leave about 3 – 6 inches of excess material on the far left edge, beyond the edge of the over-apron to fold under and then fringe. Do NOT lay out the outline of your over-apron right up to the edge of your cloth!!!

OK, with all those instructions in mind, take a piece of chalk and your tape measure. Locate your center-line, and draw out the lines for your over-apron in chalk, right on the material.

## The Right-Hand Edge of the Over-Apron and the Deep Pleat

OK, you've got your over-apron chalked in. You've eyeballed it fourteen times and think it's all right. Now fold over the right hand edge of the over apron (not the edge you're going to fringe, later!...the OTHER edge) right along the chalk line. Fold the excess UNDER the over-apron! Remember that your skirt is pleated in the opposite direction from a mans kilt. A mans kilt "opens" on the right side, and the pleats flow from a first pleat on the left, 'round his rump to the opening on the right. Your skirt is going to open on the left, your pleats will flow 'round your fanny from a first pleat on the right to a last pleat on the left.

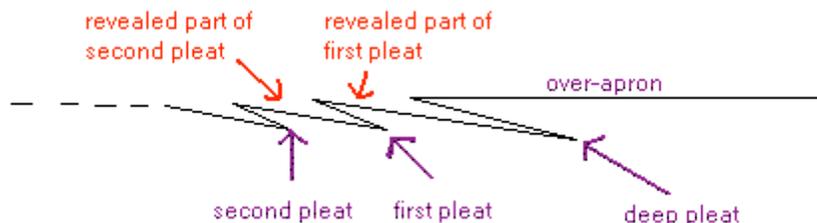
OK, back to setting up the right hand edge of the over-apron and the deep pleat.

Pin the fold in place with enough pins, aligned perpendicular to the fold, so that you have a pin about every 3-4 inches. Put the pins in pretty close to the folded edge, but make sure the heads of the pins aren't right next to the folded-edge. They can stick out, that's OK...

Now take your skirt to the sewing machine and run a line of straight-stitch, with a relatively small stitch-size, right up the folded over edge. Try hard to keep the stitching line straight and within 1/8 of an inch of the edge. You're trying to stitch-in a permanent fold in the fabric. Go over the bottom inch twice, just for strength.

That wasn't so bad, was it?

Now comes the all-important deep pleat that lies under the over-apron. This picture is an edge view of the over-apron, deep pleat and first two pleats, from the edge of the pleats, like the selvedged edge.



See how the deep pleat is a lot deeper than the other pleats? You want that pleat to be at least 3 inches deep, which means that between the fabric heading into the fold, and the fabric past the fold and heading into the rest of the skirt, you're going to use up 6 inches of material. That's a MINIMUM! Use more if you can! 4 or 5 inches is better!

The second thing that has to happen is that the deep pleat transitions directly into the "reveal" of the first pleat. So you have to design your deep pleat so that the first pleat

shows the tartan design element...the stripe or the sett-item or the “no stripe” that you chose to show on all your pleats.

Think about this....the deep pleat has to satisfy two requirements:

1. be deep enough
2. transition into the first pleat reveal

So use your head and \*think\* and fold up your cloth until you get something that makes sense. Work with the outside of the skirt facing up, towards you, don't work from the “inside” of the skirt. When you're done, put in four pins perpendicular to the folds you just made, to hold everything in place. Put one pin in at the very top of the skirt, one pin right at the fell line (the distance from the top of your skirt equal to your Drop measurement), one that splits that distance in half, and then the last pin 3-4 inches below the fell.

## How Many Pleats?

You figure out how many pleats you will have by counting the setts. Remember, you get one pleat per sett.

OK you will need a length of cloth roughly equal to your half-fanny measurement to make your under-apron. So move to the other end of the cloth from where you've been laying out the over-apron and the deep pleat and measure back from that edge, your half-fanny measurement. You might as well put a rough chalk line there as a reminder. Now, count back from that chalk line, towards the deep pleat, and keep track of the number of setts you count. Write that down.

## Number of setts in the pleated part of my fabric \_\_\_\_\_

That's how many pleats you can have. If you want to play it extra safe, subtract one. That'll give you a few extra inches for your under-apron. If you are afraid that you won't have enough pleats, then leave them all in there. Now you do a little math.

A = your half-fanny measurement

1 = 1 (doh!)

B = number pleats you can have

BRACE YOURSELF>>>.here comes the math, It's a FRACTION! Get it right to within an sixteenth of an inch

$$(A + 1) / B = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

That number is the width of each pleat reveal! See, you're going to cover your backside with some number of pleats, right? So to figure out how big each pleat is, you just take the measurement of your backside and divide that by the number of pleats. Simple. The extra one inch is a kiltmakers trick

## **Pinning in Your Pleats**

All right, now go back to the other end of the fabric, where the first pleat is. Work your way down the cloth, with the right side (what's going to be the outside of the skirt) facing up. Fold in pleats as you go, and take care to center the tartan element you've chosen in the middle of each pleat reveal. Use your ruler to make SURE that the pleat reveals are exactly what you calculated above. They have to be right, within a 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch, or the skirt will come out too small or too big. If you are going insane trying to make them PERFECT, well then if you get one that's a sixteenth of an inch too narrow, make the next one a sixteenth of an inch wider to compensate. Nobody will notice 1/16<sup>th</sup> inch variations. They WILL notice 1/4 inch variations!

REMEMBER, *unlike a man's kilt, your skirt is going to "close" on the left side.* That means that the over-apron is going to be the unpleated piece of cloth that's at the right end of the pleated section. The section on the left will be the under-apron. Your pleats flow from right to left...OPPOSITE from how a mans kilt is pleated. Another way to say this is if you were to stick your hand inside a pleat (the outside of the skirt is sitting face-up on the table) you'd push your hand into it, coming from the LEFT. Make sure that you pleat your skirt with the pleats going the correct direction! This is IMPORTANT.

Pleat your way right down the length of the skirt until they're all pinned in. Now you're going to double-check yourself. First of all, are the pleats pointing the right way? Review the previous paragraph and stick your hand "into" a pleat.

Take your yardstick or your cloth tape measure and lay it out right across the pins at the fell line. Measure the distance from the edge of the over-apron (by the deep pleat, not the far edge) to the end of the last pleat. It should be within a half-inch of your "half-fanny measurement plus one inch". If it's not, then go back and readjust...check your math, measure those pleats again and re-pin.

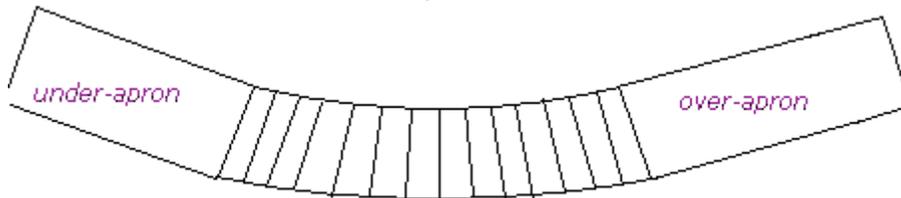
Get it right, lass!

OK, something to note, here. A proper mans kilt has a "reverse pleat" over at the edge of the pleats that run right 'round his bum. If you look at a real Scottish kilt you'll see this. However, this skirt we're making is going to be fun and easy, so we're going to skip the reverse pleat. BUT.....if you have a mans kilt to look at, or a "real" kilted skirt and you want to put in a reverse pleat right here, go for it. It's up to you.

When you're all done with your pleats and the double-checking them so that the width of the entire pleated part of the skirt equals your "half-fanny plus one inch", it's time to taper the pleats.

## Tapering the Pleats

All right, your body tapers, at least to some degree, from your waist to your hips. Some guys, and some women are almost the same measurement 'round their waist as they are at the 'fanny, but most people are smaller-waisted and bigger-fannied. That means you're going to have to adjust the pleats of the skirt so that it's smaller at the top (the waistline) than it is at the fell. Look at the picture.



You make the "top" of the pleats smaller than the size of the pleats at the fell. The question is, how much? Here's an example

Beulah has a fanny measurement of 44 and a waist measurement of 36. That's an 8-inch difference, right?  $44 - 36 = 8$

Let's say that her skirt is working out so that she'll have 16 pleats in it. That means she has to take up that 8 inch taper in 16 pleats. Eight divided by sixteen = one-half.... so each of Beulah's pleats has to taper by  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch.

Here's a harder example, that I needed a calculator to figure out.

Astrud has a fanny measurement of 32 and a waist measurement of 28. That's a four-inch difference....she's an 11 year old girl. Her skirt is going to have fourteen pleats in it. Four divided by fourteen equals 0.2857 inches. OK, OK, I used a calculator!

A quarter of an inch is 0.25 inches.  
Three eights of an inch is 0.375 inches  
Half an inch (or four-eighths) is 0.5 inches

So that 0.2857 is going to lie in between a quarter of an inch and three eights of an inch. A quarter inch is the same as four-sixteenths...and three eights of an inch is the same as six sixteenths, so how big is five-sixteenths?...Answer: 0.3125. So Astrud is going to taper each pleat in her skirt between a quarter of an inch and five-sixteenths of an inch and it'll work out just fine.

OK, so how much do you need to taper YOUR pleats?

**TAPER** \_\_\_\_\_

Go through each pleat, unpinning and tapering each one so that the pleat reveal gets smaller as the pleat goes from the fell up towards the waist. You will need to move the pins that are below the fell, too, as you work, or the skirt will bunch-up big time and not sit nicely on the table. Focus on working in a nice, even taper into each pleat, and keeping the tartan element that you picked, nicely in the middle of each pleat reveal.

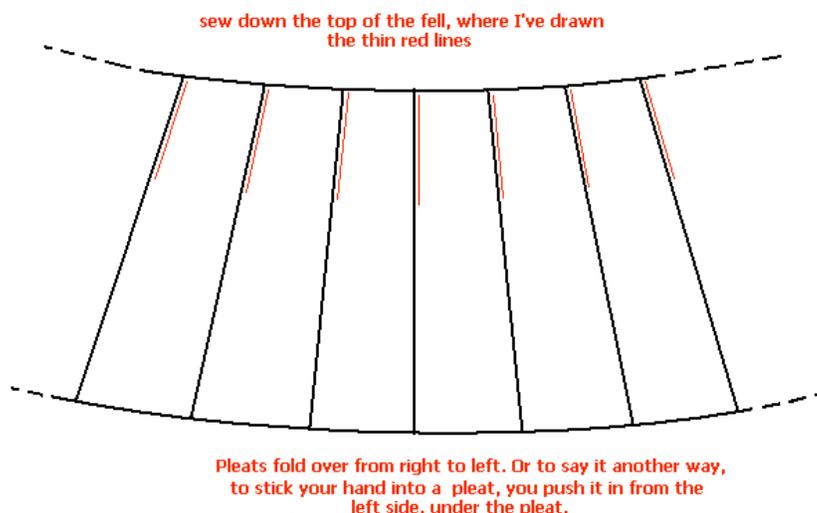
When you're all done, take your cloth tape measure, or fake it with a ruler, and measure the length of the waistband...the top of the kilt in the pleated section. It should be the same as half of your waist measurement, plus or minus half an inch. If it's not, go back and re-taper and think carefully. It's better to have the pleated section of your skirt an inch too big than an inch too small, so when in doubt, make it a little bit bigger. You can always pull the over-apron 'round a little bit more, if it's too big, but if it's too small and there's a big unpleated section showing, that looks funny.

Now that you've got the pleats in just right, take the skirt to the ironing board and VERY lightly press it, with the pins still in it. **WARNING...do not drag the iron back and forth over the pins, you will scratch your iron.** That stinks, double-so if your iron is a nice one with a teflon coating on the bottom. Just lay it out carefully on the ironing board, give it a shot of steam and lightly press straight down, once or twice to settle everything in.

You know what? This might be a good time to take that skirt, pins and all, and wrap it 'round your bum to see if you've got things pretty much right. So drop those trousers/skirt/shorts, go stand in front of a full-length mirror, wrap the skirt around you (folding over the edge of the over apron to more-or less where it should be) and give it a good look-see. Better to correct any mistakes NOW than have to rip out a dozen sewn-down pleats!

## Sewing Down the Pleats

OK, you are now going to topstitch down these pleats, so wind up a bobbin with the thread you bought, thread the machine and let's go!



You're going to start sewing at left end of your fabric, what will be the last pleat. Carefully roll the rest of the skirt so that it will fit under the arm of the sewing machine. You will slowly be unrolling the skirt, one pleat at a time as you work your way down the pleats, one-by-one.

Set the machine to a fairly small stitch, say 8-9 stitches to the inch, and sew down the first fell. You know how much to sew down, you worked it out when you did your measurements, so refer back to the beginning of these instructions. Here's a trick to lock down the beginning of your stitching..... Most sewing machines will sew forwards AND backwards. There's a button or something on the machine that you can push, or a lever to flip that will make it sew backwards. So when you sew down your fells, start at the bottom of the fell (not at the waistband) and sew up about 4-5 stitches. Stop the machine and reverse it and sew back down over those 4-5 stitches. Now put the machine in "forward" again and sew right back over those stitches a third time, and then proceed right up to the top. You don't have to triple-stitch the top by the waistband, 'cause that's going to be anchored by the waistband itself.

This technique is something you can practice on some scraps first, if you've never done it before. Might as well get that figured out on disposable material before you go do something haywire on your skirt and have to rip it out.

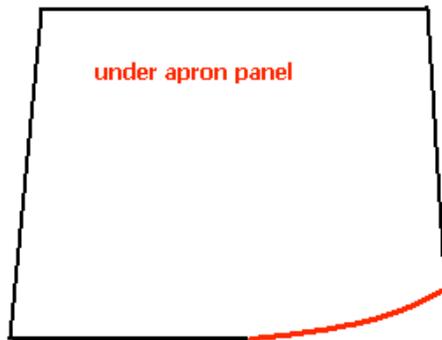
On the subject of ripping things out, I don't think I have EVER done a sewing project when I didn't have to take a seam ripper and rip out something so that I could re-do it. Sometimes I have to rip out a lot of stuff. So don't freak if you mess up or if a line of stitching isn't quite what you had in mind. Just get that seam ripper (sewing stores have 'em), pour yourself a wee dram, and CAREFULLY rip out the stitching that isn't right.

OK, proceed right on down the row of pleats and stitch them all down. This thing is starting to look like a skirt, eh? Time for another wee dram!

## **Finishing the Edge and Bottom of the Under-Apron**

OK, now that your pleats are in, let's take care of the apron edges. We'll do the under-apron first. If you have oodles of extra cloth, now is the time to trim it off. You want the under-apron width to be right about the same as your half-waist measurement. OK, so trim it to that, and then hem the edge.

Hem the edge? Just turn up (meaning fold over) about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch of that raw edge, and then turn it up again so that the raw, cut edge is buried in the folds. Pin it down with pins that run perpendicular to the edge. Put in a pin about ever 3-4 inches. If you make the fold-overs small, then pinning this thing is a nightmare so don't overdo it. The goal is to bury the raw edge, so it won't unravel. Once it's folded-over and pinned, run a line of stitching right down the hem you just made, locking it down. Do that "triple-stitch-at-the-beginning trick I explained earlier.

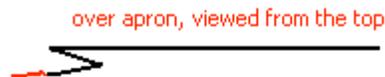


Fold up about 1/2 an inch of the right-hand edge of the under-apron and hem it.

Now you're going to do something that will keep the under-apron from showing from out from beneath the over-apron. I'm not even gonna' tell you what to do, you have all the skills you need, now. Just look at the picture on the left! The waistband is at the top and the left hand edge of the under-apron is on the right in that picture. **Make it sew!**

## Finishing the Left-Hand edge of the Over-Apron

You have options here. If you want to spend the time, you can double-fold under this edge, leaving about  $\frac{3}{8}$ <sup>th</sup> of an inch of fabric sticking out, top stitch down the left hand edge and fringe the  $\frac{3}{8}$ <sup>th</sup> inch of fabric that sticks out. Just a heads-up... if you do this, it's my experience that if you set up a chalk line of exactly where you want the outer fold to be, and then do the actual folding, and second-folding on the ironing board and THEN pin it, it comes out better. In other words, set the double fold and the soon-to-be-fringed-edge up on the ironing board. Pin it ONLY to sew it down. See the picture below...



Fold under twice, leaving the red part sticking out about  $\frac{3}{8}$ <sup>th</sup> inch... Now pin, and stitch the double-fold down. Then use a needle to fringe the red part.

Sound too complicated? OK, then just double-fold it over and hem it, just like you did to the under-apron. It'll look fine! Press it flat on the ironing board when you're done. Whatever the case, you'll want to make your stitches small, 8-9 to the inch, and keep them as close to the edge of the over-apron as you can, staying accurate. Try to stay within an  $\frac{1}{8}$ <sup>th</sup> of an inch of the edge, it'll look better.

Remember to A-shape the edge of your over-apron to match what you did on the other side. You know what? It might be a good idea to pin that left hand edge in place, and then put the skirt on again. Go and check it in the mirror. This is your last chance to make adjustments for any funny business in the measurements, or if your pleating is off by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. While you don't want the tartan pattern in the over-apron to be wildly off-center, half an inch won't matter. You just ootch the skirt around a little bit as you wear it. But if your over-apron is 'way too wide, or the pleats don't go far enough 'round your fanny and there's a big gap between pleats and the left edge of the over-apron, the skirt won't look right. You want to get the left-hand edge of the over apron within maybe  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch to to 1.5 inch of the edge of the pleats. So Pin it up, put it on, and check it in the mirror. Make any adjustments you need to make....

...THEN hem the left hand edge, or double-fold-and-fringe, as described above.

Whooooooaaaaaaahhhh.....you're getting close, here!

### **Putting on the First Bits of Velcro**

OK, take your velcro, and cut two, three-inch long pieces. Cut both the fuzzy and the hookie parts, and have them ready. Get out your chalk. You're gonna mark some stuff.

Go put the skirt on you and pull it 'round to about as tight as you'd want to wear it. DO NOT do this over a pair of pants, girlfriend! Strip down to your undies, or whatever you're going to wear under this thing...(I DON'T want to know!)...tuck in your blouse and approximate how you will actually be wearing it.

Now, this part is tricky. You want to mark, ON THE OVER-APRON, where the right hand edge of the under-apron lies, right near the waistband. Make a 2-inch long line, from the waistband, down, right where that edge is. Now, when you take the skirt off, you know exactly how tight to wrap it 'round on your sewing table to get it to set up just as how you'll be wearing it.

Now, with the skirt still on your bod, come back from that edge about an inch, and make marks on both the over-apron and the under apron, that correspond to one another. That means you have to wiggle the chalk in there under the waist, between the two layers and somehow get a chalk mark in there. Make sure to mark BOTH under-apron and over-apron.

Finally move 'round to the other side and make a chalk mark about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch back from the finished edge of the over-apron. Make this mark on the over-apron itself. Now, make a corresponding mark, right underneath that one, on the under-apron. Whew!!! I hope that made sense. What you've done is mark where the under- and over-aprons lie, relative to one another.

Take off the skirt, get dressed again (or not!) and proceed to the sewing machine. THINK! How does velcro work? You know how velcro works! Using those chalk marks as guides, sew half of the velcro bits on to the UNDER-APRON...do NOT sew velcro to the over-apron! Attach them about  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 inch below the very top of the skirt... $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch below the waistband edge. Remember that these bits of velcro are going to be yanked on a lot, so get 'em DOWN there. Personally, I zig-zag stitch twice over the unfinished, cut edge of the velcro to really lock it down and keep that edge from ravelling.

## **Making the Over-Apron Strip**

OK, in the above section you sewed velcro to the under-apron. You did that because the stitching won't show...the over-apron hides it. However, you can't do that on the over-apron because the stitching will show on the front of the skirt. So what you're going to do is make a strip of canvas about 4 inches wide, finish the edges, sew the velcro to that, and then hand-sew the ends to the inside of the over apron. If you couldn't find canvas, then just use a 4-inch wide strip of that tartan material. The nice thing about canvas is that it adds some stiffness and structure to the front of the skirt, analogous to what the layer of hair canvas does for a mans kilt, but a strip of tartan material (the same tartan as the skirt, please!) will be fine.

OK, lay out your skirt on the worktable, with the inside of the skirt facing up. Get out your measuring tape, and measure from the chalk mark closest to the left-hand edge of the over-apron (the fringed edge, if you decided to fringe it) across the inside of the over-apron to where the chalk mark is on the far side. Make a note of that measurement.

**A Note** \_\_\_\_\_ This is how far apart the outside ends of the velcro will be from one another, when the pieces are sewn down on the strip. You could double-check that by measuring from end-to-end, where the velcro strips are that you already put on the under-apron.

OK, now LOOK at your skirt. You're going to want to hand-stitch one end of the canvas strip to the folded-over edge of the over-apron, cleverly using small stitches that don't really show through to the outside. How big is your hem at the edge? Is there a fair bit of cloth folded over? You want the canvas to stop maybe  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch from the folded-over edge (or fringed edge, if you decided to fringe it).

Now look at the other edge of the over-apron. The inside of the last pleat-fold is over there, huh? Measure the distance from the edge of that pleat-fold, right across the top of the over-apron, to about half an inch from the finished (fringed?) edge.

To simplify all that, measure how wide your over-apron is, a little bit below the waist. There, wasn't that easier? Now, write down how long the strip has to be.

**How long the strip has to be** \_\_\_\_\_

Now cut the canvas strip so that it's an inch longer than that. You make it an inch longer so that you can fold over half an inch at each end!

Put the canvas strip on your sewing machine and finish the two short edges and one long edge by running two overlapping lines of zig-zag along the three edges. You might consider doing three lines of zig-zag, with one of those lines being pretty darned wide. This is the one un-hemmed edge in the whole skirt that's going to be exposed...though people won't see it when it's on you.

OK, now take your canvas strip and to go the ironing board. Turn back a fold that's 1/2 inch deep at each end and iron the befreezus out of that thing. You now have a canvas strip that is about 4 inches wide and exactly as long as your over-apron, from about 1/2 an inch back from the far left-hand edge to the inside of the last pleat.

Which edge of the velcro is going to be at which edge of the over-apron? Plan now! Now just use your sewing machine to attach the velcro to this strip, paying attention to the chalk marks on the skirt, and the spacing of the velcro, so that when the skirt is on you, the velcro fuzzies and hookies will line up. THINK! (it's not that hard.) Really stitch that stuff DOWN, remember that it's going to be yanked on a lot.

### **Attaching the Over-Apron Strip**

Once the velcro is attached it's time to attach the canvas strip to the inside of the over-apron. Pin the strip to the over-apron right along the very top edge of the skirt, so that by your measurements, the velcro bits on the strip and the under-apron will line up when it's on you. Use a pin about every 3 inches or so. What the heck, put it on again and see if you got it right. Try not to get poked by a pin!

When you've convinced that you've got it right and the velcro is going to line up, then put the skirt on the sewing machine. Sew the canvas strip to the inside of the over-apron with one line of straight stitch. Keep this line of stitching about 1/2 an inch from the very top of the over-apron, don't drift down from that edge any more than that. Now the strip is really ON there, but you have to anchor the ends, too. For that, you have to hand sew, but it's all of eight inches, so don't freak.

Thread up a needle and knot the end of the thread and with about 4-5-6 stitches to the inch, sew the strip to the folded-over parts of the over-apron. The stitches will show through at the pleat-end, but the over apron covers it up most of the time so it'll be OK. If your thread is nearly invisible in your tartan, you could opt to machine-sew these edges down. The stitching will show through, so you have to decide if that how you want to do it.

After you're done, put the skirt on again and make double-dead-dog sure that the velcro is in the right place and everything is sturdily anchored down.

The Last Step....the Waistband! This next part is lifted, almost word-for-word (with many edits) from My X-Kilt manual.

## **The Waistband; the Outside**

Go to your leftover fabric and cut a 3-inch wide strip of fabric off of it. That's going to be your waistband. The strip should be the length of the waistline (the top) of your skirt including both the aprons. Mmm-Hmmm; the whole thing; over-apron, pleats, under-apron... Add 4-5 extra inches onto that measurement, just to be safe.

Now leave yourself about a half-inch that sticks out past the left hand edge of the over-apron, and start pinning that strip to the outside of the skirt. Align one raw edge of the strip with the very top of the skirt and pin it about every 3 inches. You're going to need a lot of pins because the skirt curves through the pleat area and you have to induce the waistband strip to curve with it. So don't be shy with the pins. Pin that sucker down as accurately as you can, aligned with the very top of the skirt. Be SURE to pin it to the OUTSIDE of the skirt.

The OUTSIDE of the skirt.

Here's the thing. If you want (mens kilts are like this) you can align the tartan of the waistband that's on the over-apron so that the tartan pattern lines up in front. That's tricky but it looks good. Just think about the vertical stripes and line up the waistband and pin it down...forget the horizontal part. You'll probably waste a little bit of tartan off the end of the waistband strip to achieve this, but that's OK. That's why you cut some extra. If you don't want to do this lining-up thing, then don't bother. This is a flirty skirt, not an Oh-My-Dog Man's Formal Kilt.

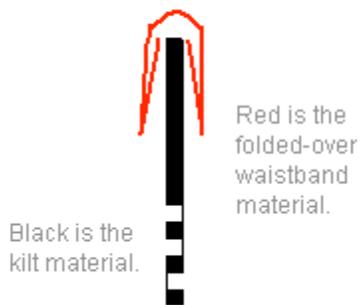
When you're all done pinning, put the skirt/waistband strip on your sewing machine, with the strip facing up. This means the outside of the kilt is facing up, right? Stitch the waistband strip to the skirt about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch from the top edge with a straight stitch. Put some effort into keeping your line of stitching really consistent all the way around the skirt.

You're halfway done with the waistband.

## **The Waistband; Inside**

Here's a picture of how you'll be folding over the waistband strip. It's an "edge view".

## waistband fold-over



Do you see how all the raw edges, both the skirts raw edge and the waistband raw edges are buried inside the fold-over? OK, so replicate that drawing, hiding all the raw edges inside the waistband, all the way around the skirt. Pin it down, and make it nice and neat. You could even give it a light ironing/pressing, taking care not to scratch your iron on the pins.

Now you have to choose how to sew it...

You can machine-sew it, going right 'round the top of the skirt and sewing through all the thicknesses of material. The other option is to get out a needle and thread and hand-sew the inner, folded edge of the waistband just to the inner surface of the skirt, making sure that your stitches don't go all the way through. They don't show so they don't have to be blinkin' PERFECT. This hand-sewing takes time, but it looks good. It's a good thing to do with a wee dram 'o whisky by your side and your favorite TV show on the tube.

Machine sewing is faster, but maybe not easier. If you plan carefully you can make sure that the INSIDE fold of the waistband is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch longer than the outside fold. Then, being utterly mind-bogglingly careful, you can machine sew it down, keeping the line of stitching just EXACTLY at the edge of the outside of the waistband. If you can do that, it's hardly noticeable at all, in fact only you will know it's there. I've done this and made it work, but it takes practice and care. It Always seems to show. That's no big deal to anyone but a mad perfectionist, but hey, maybe you have obsessive-compulsive issues.

If you hand-sew it, it takes a longer, but not THAT long. You may not have a choice, actually. Look, if it was a traditional skirt, you'd be hand-sewing it! The advantage is that the stitching won't show on the outside, and that's nice, especially for you compulsive types.

So take your pick...challenge your sewing machine, or get out a needle and thread and go to it. Hand-sewing the inside of a waistband is about an hours work. Try to do about 4-5 stitches to the inch; that's plenty. Keep them as small as you can stand.

When you're all done, pull the pins and iron down the waistband so that it's as flat as you can easily make it..

Finally finish off the raw ends of the waistband by folding the ends inside the waistband itself at the left-hand edge of the over apron, and at the right-hand edge of the under-apron. Basically, you're folding the waistband "tube" into itself so the raw edges don't show. Stitch the waistband "tube" closed, either by hand or with a few passes of the machine.

## **The Final Ironing**

OK, this is tricky but it's important, so don't ignore it. You're going to set your pleats forever with the iron.

Your natural tendency will probably be to continue the "fan" effect that tapering the upper part of your pleats in the fell has in the rest of the skirt. NO, NO! You want the skirt to hang straight down below the fell, not taper more. The pleats will look a mess if you splay them out by continuing the "fan" past the fell.

So lay the skirt down on the ironing board and take careful note of how wide each pleat reveal is **AT THE BOTTOM OF THE FELL**. **Take care to make the rest of the length of the pleat exactly as wide as it is at the bottom of the fell.** It takes me a good 45 minutes to iron one of my nice wool kilts. It might take you half an hour to carefully lay out maybe 2-3 pleats at a time, or maybe if they're wide pleats, just one at a time so that the pleat reveal is maintained from the bottom of the fell to the selvedge (or hemmed) edge. Once it's folded out just perfectly, then press the pleat in **HARD**. I mean, put some muscle into it, girlfriend. **LAY** on that thing, Steam it like crazy.

Just don't collapse your ironing board, or melt the polyester in your wool-blend material!

Work your way right 'round the pleats setting them in there and being compulsive about making them perfectly straight and consistent. When you're done, give the under-apron and the over apron an easy once-over, too just to make it look nice. No need to put down the hammer on the aprons, tho.

Brace Yourself.....

## **You're Done!**

Put it on! Dance around the house! Frighten the cat! Sing! Wear it with pride and tell everybody what a great skirt it is because **YOU MADE IT!**

## **ADDENDUM: Belt loops.**

I put this in here, just in case you wanted to add belt loops to your skirt. This is also lifted nearly word-for-word from the X-Kilt manual, with edits of course. Here's how I do it.

First, I cut a strip about 18 inches long and about two inches wide, of the material I'm going to use for the loops. I take that strip to the ironing board, and fold it lengthwise, in thirds. I make sure that the bottom third doesn't quite reach the edge of the strip. Now I have an 18-inch long, narrow strip of three-thicknesses of cloth. Then I iron those folds flat-down, hard.

I take this strip to the sewing machine and run a continuous line of straight-stitching down each edge, about 1/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch in from the edge. Finally I go back and run a wide zig-zag down the length of the strip, right down the middle. That anchors the raw edge underneath it and helps keep it from fraying. I just made a fabric strap, about 3/4 of an inch wide.

Now I look at my belt that I'm going to wear with my kilt (You insert "belt" – "skirt" here). With an *X-Kilt* I don't wear a traditional kilt belt, so I don't need 3 inch belt loops. I make 2.5 inch belt loops. That means I cut 5, 2.75 inch sections out of this 18 inch long strap that I just made. If you want to wear a traditional kilt belt, then make 4-inch long sections, probably 4 of them.

*Note for the skirtmakers: Ladies, are you gonna wear a little, thin traditional belt with your skirt? Then make narrow belt loops. Are you gonna wear a super-wide BoHo, retro 60's belt with this? Then make wide belt loops. Four loops is fine...two 'round the pleats, symmetrically distributed, and one next to each edge of the over-apron...but not ON the over-apron itself. You might even get away with just three loops. One goes in the center of the pleats and one right at the edges by the over-apron.*

I bar-tack these on to the kilt, using the zig-zag stitch on my machine. Tack them down hard at the top and the bottom so that the ends don't fray and make sure you've covered the raw, cut ends of those loops with lots of thread. I put belt loops at each edge of the over-apron, **but not ON the over-apron** right up at the waistband. Then I distribute the other belt loops 'round the pleated part of the kilt, so that they're symmetrical. Three belt loops 'round your backside is plenty. You could fold over the ends of those belt loops and tack them down, but that is a LOT of material for your home sewing machine to deal with, so I don't bother. If you're the meticulous sort, then cut your loops half an inch longer than you need them, fold them over, and hand-tack them down.