

Merry Christmas, Bébé!



My mother fondly recalls the special Christmas when she received a pretty doll complete with many pieces of clothing and accessories. The gift was from Santa, of course, but the clothing, she learned much later, had been hand sewn by her mother and grandmother. These two industrious ladies, like many women of that era, sat companionably for hours in the evenings sewing piece after piece of the wardrobe they envisioned for the new Christmas doll. They created dresses for many different occasions such as school, party, and church. Drawers, petticoats and nightgowns were meticulously sewn with rows of tiny tucks and pretty lace. My mother recalls several of

those dresses and especially a coat, which was fashioned in navy blue wool with a deep collar and buttons down the front.

These may have been the dreams of a Christmas long ago, but whether Santa places a new doll under the tree this year or not, we can still add a new costume to the trousseau of a favorite doll.

If you're like many of us, you have a doll on your shelf begging for a new outfit. Is she in an inappropriate, temporary costume, or is she mostly naked and waiting for something special? Whether your doll has no dress or perhaps would like a new one, we are offering three classic bébé looks from which to choose for your sewing pleasure. Merry Christmas, bébé!



Classic Jumeau Bébé Drop Waist Frock Directions

11 Inch French Bébé - Circa 1880

Denise Buese & Janet Hollingsworth



Denise Buese has created the classic drop waist costume that was so popular in the 1880s for Jumeau Bébés as well as other French dolls. As always, Denise selects just the right fabric and trims creating lovely costumes in period styles and construction. This dress is hand sewn with the inside as finished as the outside.

Please read all the pattern directions completely including the notes on the pattern pages before starting.

All materials, patterns and directions are for an 11 inch Bébé doll.

PATTERN

The following pattern pieces are included:

- 4 for the bodice: 2 back bodice, 3 front bodice including the embellished front panel and the sleeve.
- The skirt is a rectangle 31 inches long and 5 inches wide. (pattern drawing for this is not included)

MATERIALS

The color choices are yours. For an 11 inch Bébé for following are the materials. (The yardage is generous.):

- 1/3 yard (maybe 1/4) silk fabric depending on the width (need enough for the pleated skirt of 31X5 inches)
- 1/4 yard silk or fine cotton batiste for lining of bodice and sleeves.
- 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 yards of 3/4 inch lace

- 6 inches of 1/4 inch lace
- 1 yard 2-1/4 inch silk ribbon
- 4 small hooks
- Matching silk or cotton thread

SEWING TECHNIQUES

By the late 1860, the sewing machine was in wide use in most households in Europe. A combination of machine sewing and hand sewing would be appropriate. Long straight seams lend themselves to machine sewing. Armholes, trim and small bodice seams are best done by hand along with loops for hook closures. The choice is yours.

Pressing is so very important to producing a finished costume. Pressing is different from ironing. With pressing you are using the steam heat to form the costume and mold seams, hems and pleats into the costume so they are relatively "seamless." In pressing gathers, you are shaping costume embellishment to replicate techniques of the doll makers of the 19th century.

Use a clean pressing cloth, especially when working with silk fabrics that can easily be water stained.

Please note: With pressing, the iron barely touches the fabric or is placed so close the steam and heat going through the pressing cloth changes the fabric to the desired form. Patience with pressing pays off.

Please note: Hems "folded over twice" do not include the lining. Trim the lining so it is not included in the fold over and does not add bulk to the hem.



SIZING & FITTING

Doll bodies have great variances. Cut a muslin or paper towel of the pattern and fit to your doll. French doll costumes are made in expensive silks and other fabrics. Better to fit and cut once than have to cut twice in expensive fabric.

If you are re-sizing, do the following on a copy machine or a printer feature for enlarging and reducing:

Enlarging Example

Pattern for 11 inch doll enlarged for 20 inch doll: 20 divided by 11 = 1.82 or X 100 = 182%. Enlarge 182% on the copier.

Reducing Example

Pattern for 11 inch doll reduced for 9 inch doll: 9 divided by 11 = .82 or X 100 = 82%. Reduce 82% on the copier.

FRONT PANEL

The front panel is an integral part of the bodice and needs to be finished and sewn to the bodice before sewing on the skirt.

1) Following the pattern for the front panel:

- Cut 1 fabric & 1 lining (6 inches wide by 7 inches long).
- Sew the fabric and lining of the panel as one.
- Hem all four side as follows:
 - **Side hems:** Fold fabric over twice, pin, press and sew a **1/4 inch** finished hem on each side. Remember to trim the lining before folding over the fabric and hemming.
 - **Top hem:** Fold fabric over twice, pin, press and sew a **1/4 inch** finished hem at the top.
 - **Bottom hem:** Fold fabric over twice, pin, press and sew a **3/4 inch** hem.
- Press the hems on the inside of the fabric and the outside. Test the iron temperature on a fabric scrap and use a clean pressing cloth.
- At this point the hemmed panel should be approximately 6-1/2 inches long by 4-1/2 inches wide.

2) Gathering/Ruching Front Panel

- **Between the dots shown on the pattern** sew 3 sets of running stitches to gather lined fabric. Make your gathering stitches similar to doing small size cartridge pleating.
- Again, sew the fabric and lining as one on the gathering.
- Gathering stitches (running stitches) will be sewn on the inside of the panel not the outside. Use thread matching the dress fabric.

Please note: The gathering stitches will start 3/4 inches from the panel hem at the doll's right and 1/4 inches from panel hem at the doll's left. This allows for positioning and attachment of the panel to the dress on the right side and serves as the dress opening on the doll's left side.



Top gathers: Sew running gather stitches at the top hem and a row on the lined fabric closed to the bottom of the hem but not on the hem itself. See pattern marks and notes.

(Leave 1-1/2 to 2 inches of thread tails at each end of the gathers for pulling the gathers.)

Middle gathers: Approximately 1-1/8 inch from top gather, sew 3 rows of gather stitches 1/4 inch apart.

Bottom gathers: Approximately 1-1/4 inches from the middle gathers sew 3 rows of gathering/running stitches 1/4 inch apart from each other.

- All 3 sets of gathering stitches are to be evenly pulled to a measure of 1-3/8 inches wide.
- Suggest pre-measuring 1-3/8 inches on piece of tape or paper as a guide for pulling the gathers.
- Starting with the middle gathering: Gently pull all 3 gather stitches at the same time being careful not to break the threads. Work each side of the gathers gently pulling one side then the other to evenly create gathers.
- Once you have the gathers even and they measure 1-3/8 inches, knot the gather threads at each end separately for each of the 3 threads in the set.
- Follow this same process for the bottom gathers and then the top.
- Read the Pressing in the Sewing Techniques section before pressing the gathers. Take a close look at how the gathers are pressed in the pictures of this costume and other antique costumes.
- Set aside the Front Panel until it is ready for assembly to the bodice.

DROP WAIST BODICE

The bodice is designed to have a coat-like style of the period.

The front has 2 side panels and the separate front panel.

The back has 3 pieces that contour the bodice.

The sleeves are long with a few gentle gathers at the shoulders.

The lining has been sewn separate from the fabric for a finish appearance with the exception of the sleeves. If desired, you may sew the lining as one with the fabric - your choice.



1) Following the pattern pieces, cut fabric and lining:

- Front bodice sides, cut 2 fabric & 2 lining
- Sleeves, cut 2 fabric & 2 lining
- Back bodice center, cut on fold, 1 fabric & 1 lining
- Back bodice sides, cut 2 fabric & 2 lining

2) The following are instructions are for sewing the bodice pattern pieces of fabric and lining separately:

- **Sew bodice back sides to the back bodice center piece** at the side seams. Sew fabric pieces together and then sew lining pieces together. Sew 3/16 inch seams and check that the lining seams line up on top of the fabric seams. Trim seams and press to seams towards the armholes.
- **Sew bodice front sides to bodice back sides** at the side seams and shoulder seams. Sew fabric pieces together and then sew lining pieces together. Sew 3/16 inch seams and check that the lining seams line up on top of the fabric seams. Trim seams and press to side seams open and shoulder seams towards back center piece.
- Fit bodice to doll and make adjustments if needed.
- Suggest tacking (running stitch) the bodice lining to the fabric around the outside and the armhole. This will keep the fabric and lining together while you do more sewing on the bodice.

3) Sew Sleeves:

- The fabric and lining of the sleeves are sewn as one. Pin sleeve seams to make sure when sewn, that the sleeve goes easily over your doll's hand.



- Sew the sleeve seams together on each sleeve and press.
- Verify the center shoulder point on each sleeve and mark. Sew 3 to 4 gathers at the top of each sleeve.

- Fit to doll to check each sleeve length and trim if needed.
- Position and pin each sleeve into the bodice armhole, starting with the center shoulder mark. The sleeve seam is to be positioned at the bodice back almost under the arm.
- Fit to doll again.
- Sew sleeve into armhole with whipping/overcast stitch.
- Again, fit bodice with sleeves to doll. Make sure both sleeves are the same length. Trim at cuff if needed.

4) Lace trim at sleeve cuff:

- Press the lace with a pressing cloth to make sure it is flat.
- Measure around the sleeve cuff and cut 2 pieces of the 3/4 inch lace for each sleeve adding 1/2 inch for seam.
- The lace will cover the raw edge of each sleeve with approximately 1/8 inch on the inside of each sleeve and the remaining folded over the cuff edge to outer sleeve.

- Fit the lace to the sleeve cuff. Pin and sew the lace seam first making sure it fits smoothly around the sleeve fabric including the 1/8 inch fold over the raw sleeve edge to the inside. Trim seam before sewing lace to sleeve.
 - Positioning of Lace: The lace seam is positioned to line up with the sleeve seam. Make sure the lace pattern at the cuff center (top of the doll's arm and hand) is the same for each sleeve. For example, the scallops on the lace use on this costume are evenly positioned in the same way for each sleeve.
 - Pin lace in place and sew outer lace edge to the sleeve fabric first, on both sleeves. Then fold over the cuff edge 1/8 inch and sew the inside to the lining.
 - Press the sleeve being careful to avoid creasing the top.
- 5) Sew lace trim to bodice:
- Place bodice with sleeves on doll and make sure the bodice bottom is even and trimmed if needed. Lace will be sewn at the bottom with a fold over the raw edge of 1/8 inch.
 - Press all lace to be used on the bodice.
 - Measure, cut and pin a piece of the 3/4 inch lace to the bottom of the bodice. The scalloped or decorative side of the lace will be placed up (towards the shoulder).
 - Approximately 1/8 inch will be folded over and sewn to the inside lining thus finishing the bottom of the bodice. Leave room for the 3/4 inch lace to be placed up the front and around the shoulders and neck.
 - Measure, cut and pin a single piece of 3/4 inch lace to be sewn from the bottom of each side of the bodice and around the shoulders and neck. Pin a 1/8 inch fold of the lace to the inside of the bodice lining.
 - The 1/8 inch fold over covers and finishes the bodice edges. Examine the photos of the bodice inside.
 - Position this lace so the pattern of the lace on each front side matches. In this costume the scalloped lace edges line up evenly.

- Pin lace in place including the fold over of 1/8 inch to the inside lining. Sew the outer lace edge to the fabric. Then sew the 1/8 inch fold over to the inside of the lining. Press.
- **Please note that the photos show the front panel in place. That comes at the next step.**



- Where the lace on the front sides and around the neck meets the corner at the bodice bottom of each side, it should overlap the edge of the lace at the bodice bottom by 1/8 inch. See photos.
- Fold 1/8 inch of the lace on each side under the raw edge of the bottom of the bodice and hem.
- Press.
- Please note that the first layer of lace on this costume is the lace at the bodice bottom. The second layer of lace will be lined up when the pleated skirt is attached. See Pleated Skirt section of these directions.

FRONT PANEL TO BODICE

- 1) Pin completed Front Panel to bodice: On the bodice at the doll's right side, pin the right side of the front panel. Pin the bodice edge to the front panel at the edge of the gathers.
- Sew in place with a running stitch on the inside.



- 2) There will be about 3/4 inches on this side of the panel that will need to be pinned in place and also sewn in with a running stitch on the inside. Make sure the positioning, pinning and sewing matches how the photos show the front panel on both the outside and inside. Also, see pattern labeling.
- 3) The other side of the front panel will be the dress opening and was hemmed earlier in the front panel steps.
- 4) The pleated skirt will need to be sewn to the bodice before completing the front closure.

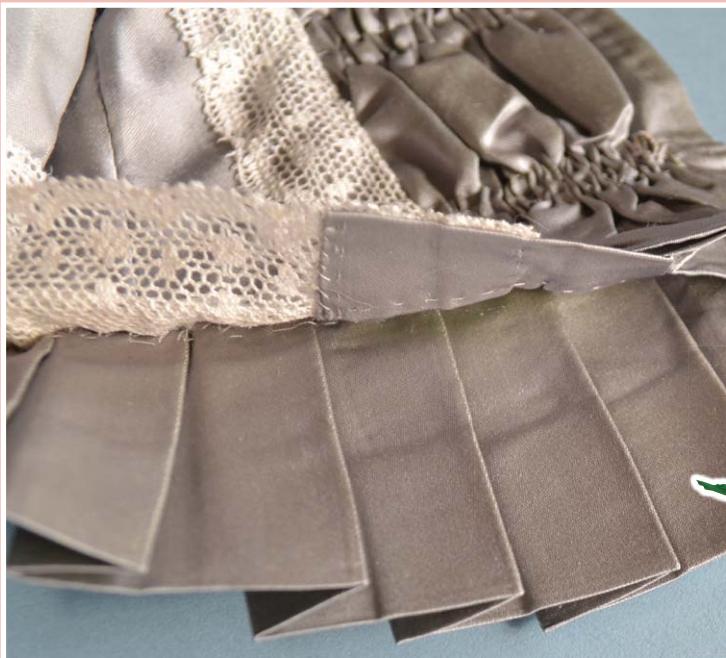
PLEATED SKIRT

The silk fabric used in this costume is of light weight. Therefore, the fabric was doubled over creating a very nice finished hem line at the fold for this pleated skirt. If you are using a heavier fabric, you might consider a lighter lining or hem without lining.

- 1) For the pleated skirt: Cut one rectangular piece of fabric measuring 31 inches long and 5 inches wide. (Folded in half this will create a 2 inch long pleated skirt.)

Please note: If you are new at pleating add 6 inches to the 31 inches of length. This will insure you don't run short when pleating. If you are enlarging or reducing the pattern, use the percentage on the width and measure the doll for the hem length. Make a paper pleated skirt to test measurements. The pleat sizes need to be wider for larger dolls and smaller for small dolls.

- 2) Fold fabric in half, pin and press using a pressing cloth. Press for a sharp edge at the fold. Let the fabric rest and cool off before pinning the pleats.
- 3) Measure and layout the "knife" pleats - all going one way from the doll's right to left. The pleats for this costume are 1-1/4 inch wide with a 1/2 inch fold back/under.



- 4) Allow for 1 inch turn back with 3/16 inch hem at the opening of both sides of the dress bodice with the front panel sewn in place.
- 5) Pin the top and bottom of each pleat. If you are using a solid color silk as in this costume, use sharp, thin pins that will not damage the fabric. Those can be found at a source selling supplies for mounting butterflies and other delicate insects.
- 6) Suggest pinning 6 pleats at a time and press. Pause to cool and press again to mold the fabric to an almost permanent pleat in the fabric. Go on to the next 6 pleats.
- 7) Sew a running stitch at the top of the pleats to hold in place when sewing to the dress bodice.
- 8) Overlay a piece of the 3/4 inch wide lace to the top of the pleated skirt with the scalloped or decorative end point down toward the hem. Pin in lace in place and sew at skirt top with a running stitch.
- 9) Pin the pleated skirt with the lace overlayed to the bottom of the bodice including the front panel. See the front panel pattern showing where the pleated skirt is sewn to the bodice and examine photos. It is sewn on the inside about 1 inch under the bottom of the bodice and front panel.
- 10) Before sewing fit to doll and make any needed adjustments. Make sure the hem is even all around the costume.



- 11) Sew the skirt to the drop waist bodice with a whip stitch that sews the pleats together along with the lace.
Make sure your stitches are no more than 3/16 of an inch apart to hold all the fabric, pleats and lace together. The front panel will overlay the pleated skirt.



- 12) The pleated skirt is sewn to the bodice from the bodice opening at the doll's left side all around to the front panel opening. Where the skirt ends on each side, fold over fabric twice for a 3/4 inch hem at each edge of the skirt to finish.

FRONT CLOSURE & BOW

- 1) Fit costume to doll and measure and mark or pin where the 4 hooks & thread loops are to be attached.
- 2) Thread loops are sewn on the outside of the front panel and to the doll's left side of the top gathers, middle gathers, bottom gathers and near top of pleated skirt. Make sure thread matches fabric. (Thread loops are created by making a series of tight knots.)
- 3) Hooks are mounted/sewn on the inside of the doll's left side of the bodice and lined up with the thread loops.



- 4) Sew thread loops and hooks in place.

The bow at center back of the costume is 4 loops of ribbon approximately 2 inches in finished length (cut 4-1/2 inches for each loop).



The following are the bow directions:

- 1) The bow includes 2 tails approximately 2-1/4 inches in finished length (cut 2-1/2 inches each tail and trim to a finished length at skirt hem.)
- 2) Fold over the 4 bow loops and press flat. Press tails.

Note: Examine the photos of the bow and you will see that it requires some creative gathering, arrangement of bow loops, tails and pressing to achieve the elegant flat bow that is spread across the back of the dress.

- 3) Gather the tails at the top, press and sew to center top of lace at the bodice bottom. Trim the tails to line up with the bottom of the hem.
- 4) Gather the loops and sew to the top of the bodice lace on the top of the gathered tails. Mount and sew the loops so after sewing to bodice the loops are folded over to cover the stitches and pressed in place.

The costume is now finished. Examine it carefully and cut stray threads and touch up any pressing as needed.

More details and information on this costume and the others can be found at www.dollnews.org.