

# Dress for a Rohmer Doll

designed using a 16-inch doll on a 13-inch leather body

By Sheryl Williams

One of the joys of sewing for antique dolls is learning from the study of antique doll garments. Not only is the construction different from contemporary construction techniques, but the cut of the garments is also fascinating to study and reproduce.

I was fortunate to be introduced to an enchanting, unusual garment from the wardrobe of an antique doll by Leontine Rohmer. This garment was graciously shared by Michael Canadas and David Robinson from the Carmel Doll Shop.

This one-piece dress consists of an underskirt with an attached ruffle. Five wedge-shaped pieces are sewn together to form a more shaped ruffle that is attached to the lower edge of the underskirt. Another skirt layer is overlaid consisting of six pie-shaped panels. As typical of the period, the skirt is slightly longer in the back than the front. The panels are basted together and attached to the simple sleeveless bodice by means of twill tape at the waistline.

A coordinating unlined jacket sits over the dress bodice. It is constructed with three bodice pattern pieces plus the sleeves. The unusual design eliminates the bodice side seam, incorporating the side back pieces into the jacket front.

The dress and jacket are trimmed with a woven decorative tape that edges most of the pieces. Mother-of-pearl buttons grace the skirt panels.

The antique costume was made from a very sheer, lightweight wool. The decorative tape appears to be made from silk and wool.

Reproducing an antique costume is not only challenging in duplication of the design but also in obtaining suitable fabric and trims. So many of the fabrics from the last centuries are no longer being manufactured. It was necessary to find a lightweight substitute for the sheer wool but even more difficult to come up with a substitute for the decorative tape so generously used for the trim. After a long search, I decided to use a lightweight cotton voile for the dress with black cotton twill tape for the decorative trim. The woven twill tape provided the slight give needed to make the curves on the design.

Lightweight wool, challis, silk, voile, lawn, and muslin cotton prints certainly could be utilized for the design. It is not a difficult pattern to construct but the necessary hand sewing does take time to properly execute. Measurements from the doll I used are included so that you may make the needed adjustments for your doll.

*Always construct a muslin bodice from your pattern as bodies and seam allowances sewn can vary widely. Also measure your finished skirt length with under garments on your doll before cutting the skirt pieces. The bodice is the important part of the garment for fitting but the skirt length can also vary.*

*It is recommended to construct this dress by hand stitching it. You will find the fabrics and trims drape better. Fine 50 weight thread and small needles will help make your stitching easier.*

RST= right sides together

WST= wrong sides together

F=front and B = back

CB= center back

CF= center front

*Flat line: baste the underlining and corresponding main fabric piece together so that they form a single unit.*

*Follow seam allowances marked on patterns*

## **Supplies:**

Fine batiste: 5" x 15"

Sheer muslin, lawn or voile: 1 yard

¼" cotton twill tape: 4 yards

¼" Mother of Pearl buttons: 31



Photos courtesy of  
Carmel Doll Shop



## Instructions for dress:

### Bodice:

1. Flatline the bodice F and B with fine batiste.
2. Place bodice RST and sew shoulder seams of bodice. Press seam toward the back and overcast.
3. Turn  $\frac{1}{8}$ " to the right side along neck edge and armhole edges and baste flat.
4. Turn back seam allowance at CB and check for fit on doll. A  $\frac{1}{4}$ " overlap had been allowed. Turn CB under again. Slipstitch this turn backed fabric to the bodice lining.
5. Place decorative tape over the armhole edge and neck edge and stitch in place with a small running stitch on both outer edges of the tape.



6. Place bodice front and back RST and sew side seams of bodice. Press seams toward the back and overcast.
7. Press up the lower edge of bodice to the wrong side and baste.
8. Check fit of white twill tape on doll and adjust the tape to fit waistline of doll plus  $\frac{3}{4}$ " ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " turned back on each end for finish the twill tape ends and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " overlap allowed at bodice back).
9. Place bodice and twill tape on the wrong side of the bodice and whip stitch together. Check fit again.



### Underskirt:

10. Sew CB seam of underskirt to dot using a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance. Press open seams all the way to the top. Turn under seam allowance  $\frac{1}{4}$ " and slipstitch along the folded edge.



11. Place underskirt front and back RST and stitch side seams being careful not to stretch the side seam. Press seams toward the back and overcast seams together.
12. Make underskirt flounce by placing the 5 skirt flounce pieces RST and stitch together at the side seams. Press seams to one side and overcast together.
13. Press  $\frac{1}{8}$ " up to the right side along the lower edge of underskirt flounce. Baste in place. Sew decorative tape along the lower edge of underskirt flounce stitching along both sides with a running stitch.
14. Sew 2 rows of gathering at the top of the underskirt flounce and pull up gathering to fit the lower edge of the underskirt. Place flounce and underskirt RST and sew flounce to the bottom of the under skirt. Press seam up and overcast seam.



### Overskirt:

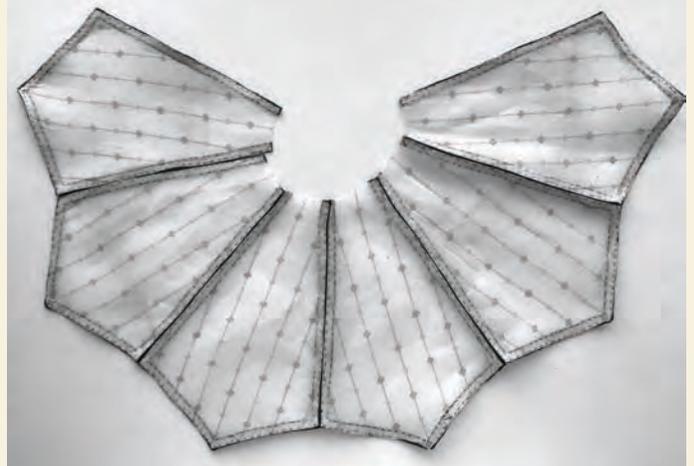
15. Press side and bottom edges of the overskirt panels  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the right side. A template of cardstock is very helpful in making accurate pressed edges. Line up the template even with the waistline edge and center the template at the sides and lower edge. Press over edges and baste in place.



16. Using a small running stitch, sew decorative tape onto 6 overskirt panels on the outer edge – down the side, across the lower edge and up the opposite side, mitering the turns. After stitching the outside edge, trim the inner seam allowance of the panel to  $\frac{1}{8}$ " before stitching down the inner edge. Remember the upper edge of the panel has no tape applied.



17. Join the 6 overskirt panels together by placing the panels RST and whip stitching together through the decorative tape edges on the back side. Leave one seam with a 3" opening at the upper edge. This will be the CB opening.



18. Place the wrong side of the joined overskirt panels onto the right side of the underskirt, matching the center backs. Baste together at the waistline edge.
19. Baste down  $\frac{1}{4}$ " on the upper edge of the skirts to the wrong side. Check to see that the skirt fits the twill tape on the bodice lower edge. Use a running stitch to ease the skirt to the bodice if needed by pulling up running stitch to fit the twill tape.
20. Fit the skirt to the twill tape RST and whipstitch the skirt to the lower edge of the twill tape. Press well.



21. Place two 9" pieces of decorative tape RST and whipstitch together along one long edge to make the decorative tape double wide. Open out and press flat. Sew this piece of decorative tape on the right side of the lower edge the bodice and skirt covering the waistline seams and white twill tape, turning back at the ends to the inside at the CB. Sew with running stitches on upper and lower edges to secure to the bodice.



22. Sew 2 hooks and thread bars at bodice CB for closure.
23. Sew small buttons on the overskirt evenly spacing 5 buttons on each of the decorative tape strips. Refer to photos for placement.



**Jacket:**

24. Join the jacket front to back along the short-curved seam on the back. Press seam toward the front, trim to 1/8" and overcast.
25. Join shoulder seams and press toward the back. Trim to 1/8" and overcast.
26. Press 1/8" to the right side all the way around the jacket and baste.
27. Sew the entire edge of jacket with decorative tape sewing close to both edges with a short running stitch.



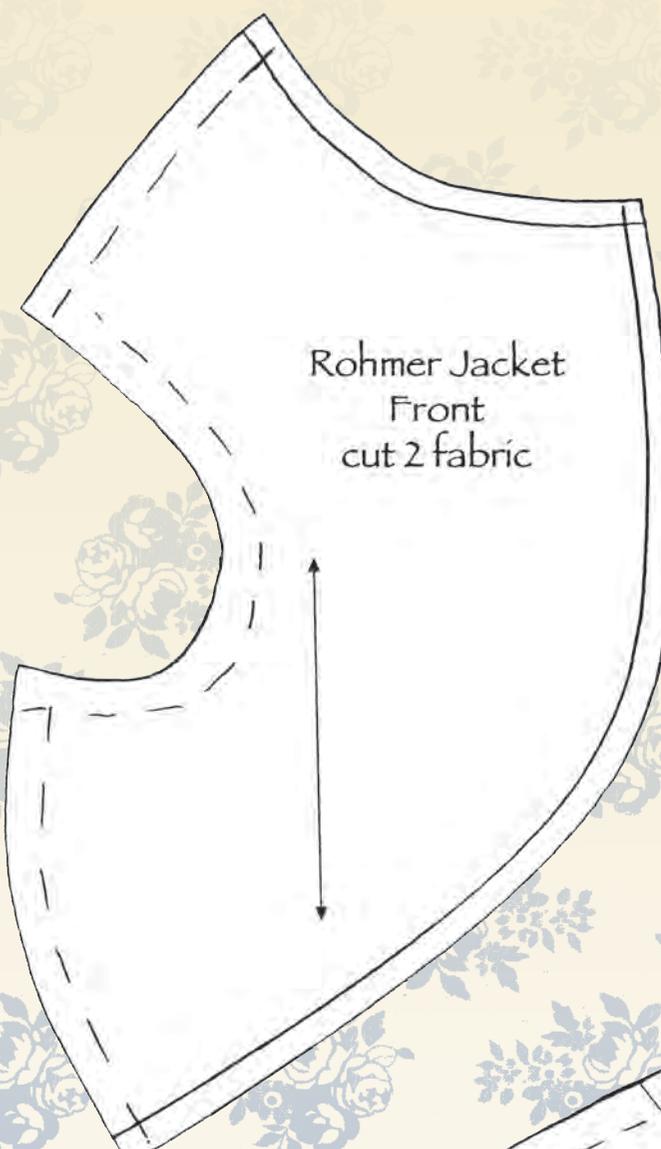
28. Join the sleeve upper and lower RST along one seam only. Press seams toward the lower sleeve and overcast.
29. Press up 1/8" at the lower edge of the sleeve to the right side and sew decorative tape over the lower sleeve. Fold sleeve RST and sew remaining seam.
30. Sew the sleeve into the jacket armhole. There will be little easing at the sleeve cap. Trim seam to 1/8" and tightly overcast.



31. On the right side, place decorative tape over the sleeve seam and stitch in place with small running stitches.
32. Sew a small button and thread loop at neck of jacket front.

**Information on the doll used for pattern design:**

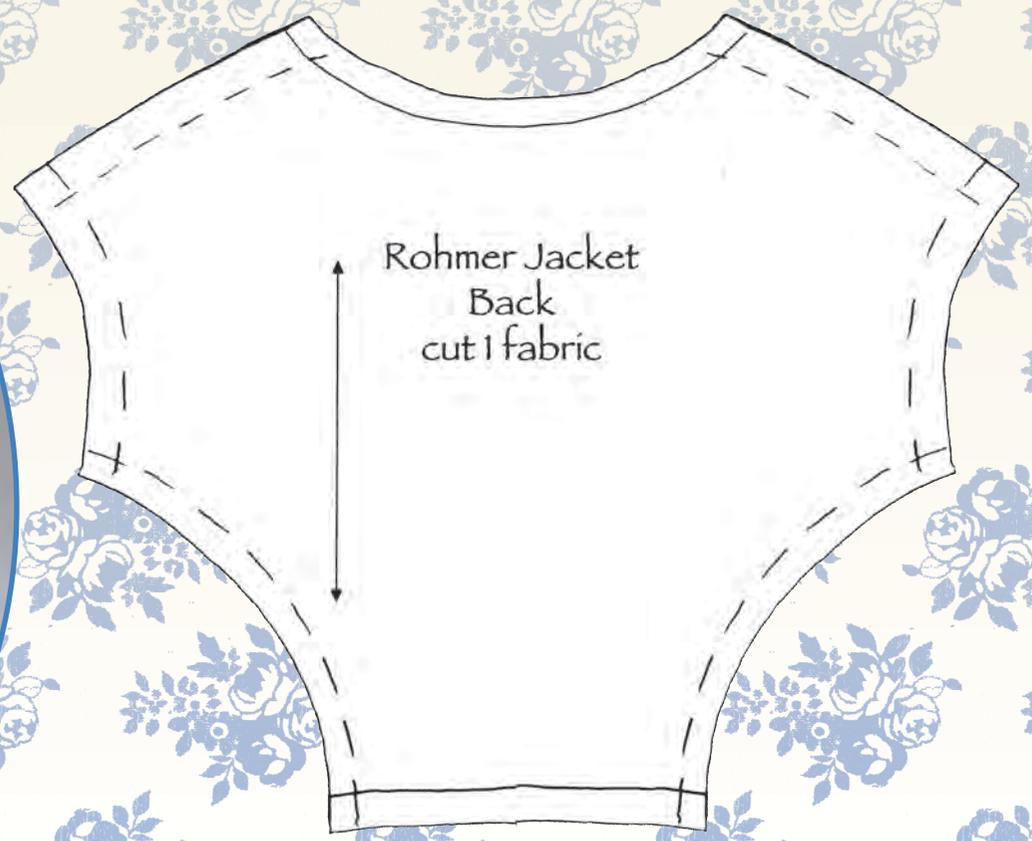
Reproduction Rohmer doll "Leontine" with cup and saucer neck on leather body  
 Total doll height from top of head to bottom of foot: 16 inches  
 Body height: 13 inches  
 Head circumference: 6.75 inches  
 Chest circumference: 8.5 inches  
 Waist measurement: 6.5 inches  
 Hip measurement: 10.5 inches  
 Arm length from shoulder: 6.25 inches  
 Foot size: 1.75 inches long x .75 inches wide 🧚



Rohmer Jacket  
Front  
cut 2 fabric

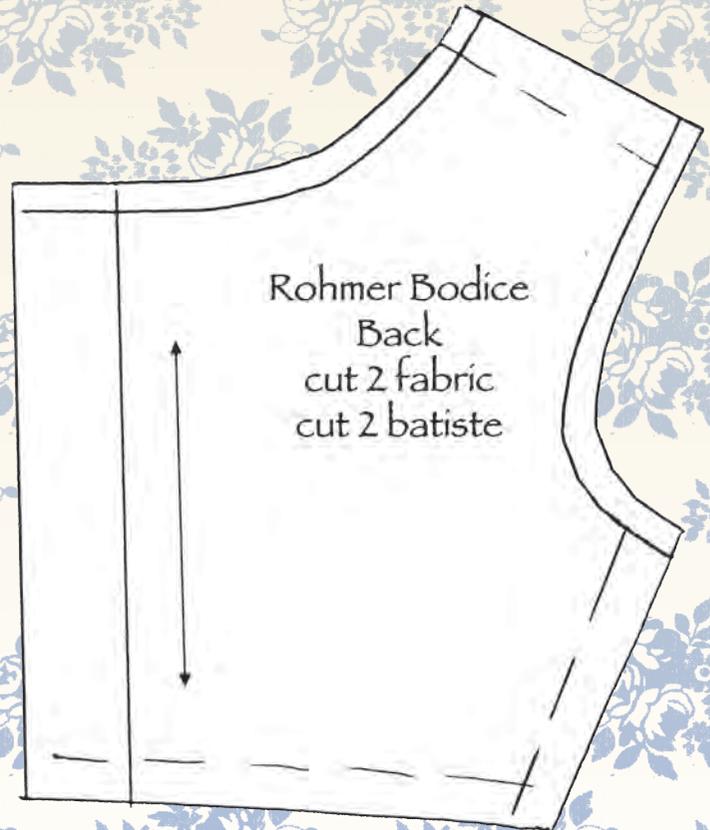
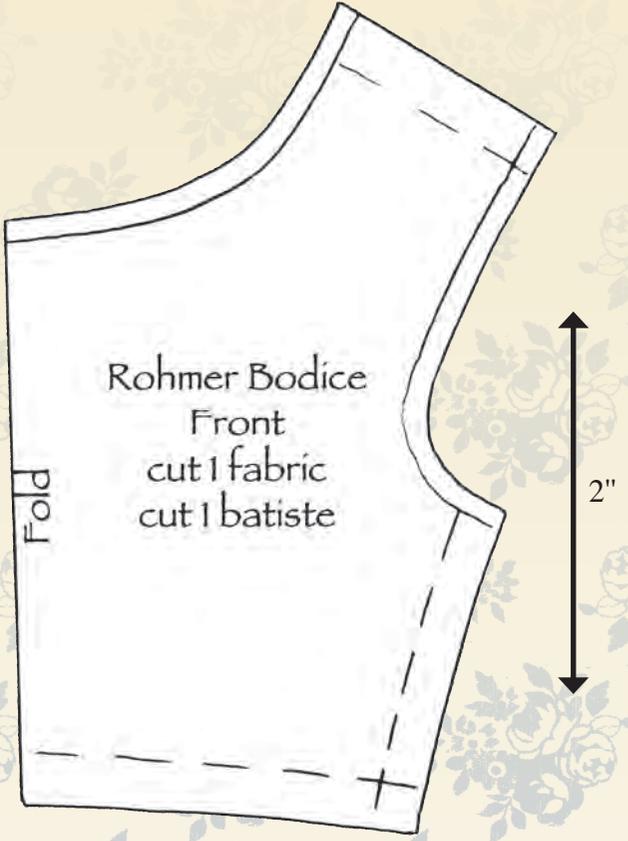
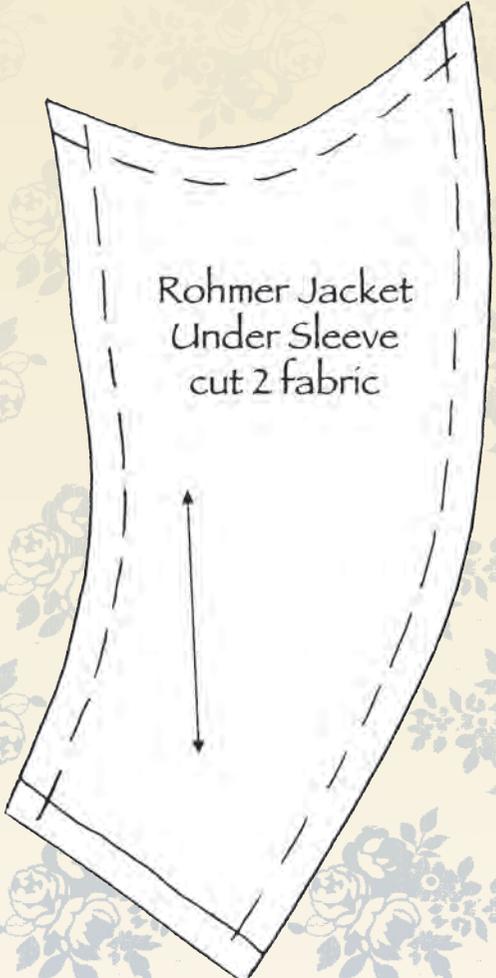


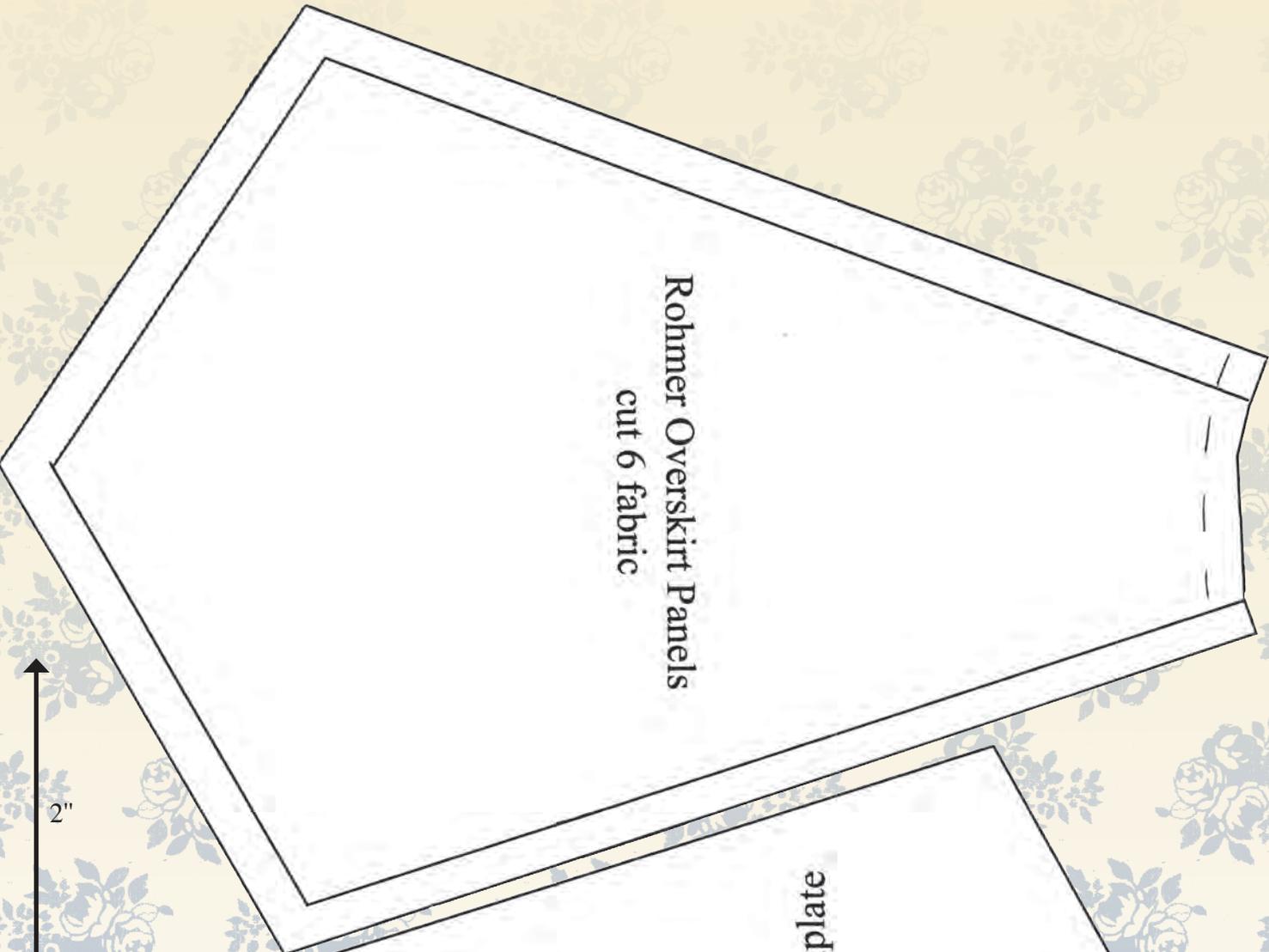
Rohmer Jacket  
Oversleeve  
cut 2 fabric



Rohmer Jacket  
Back  
cut 1 fabric







Rohmer Overskirt Panels  
cut 6 fabric



2"



Rohmer Overskirt Panel Template  
Cut 1 cardstock



2"



Rohmer Underskirt Flounce  
cut 5 fabric

