



# MAKING A CAPARISON FOR YOUR HORSE (MULE, PONY, ETC.)

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University of Atlanta Session #107 (6/12/21)



# INTRODUCTION



Full Caparison



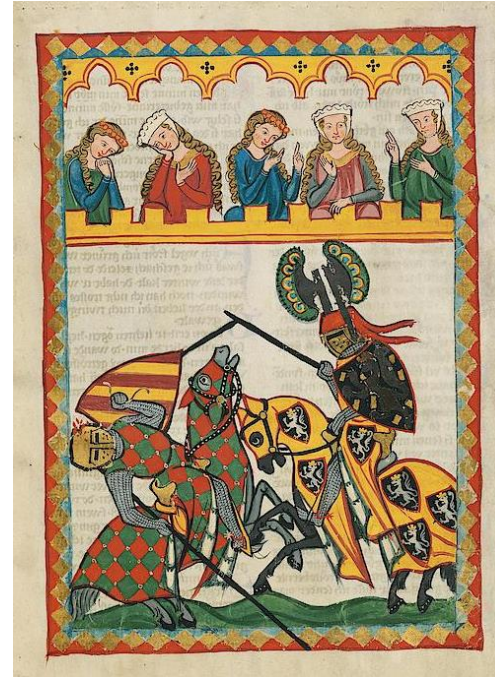
Partial Caparisons



Half Caparisons

# What is a Caparison?

- Cloth covering for animals (Horses, elephants, etc.).
- Popular in tournaments, parades, and other ceremonies during the 13-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, throughout Europe.
- Full caparisons cover the animal entirely, and include hoods, front, and rear pieces.
- Partial caparisons cover the front and rear, but not the head or neck.
- Half caparisons cover the rear only.
  - A great way to start if you don't want to sew a full one.



# Inspiration: Manesse Codex

- [Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63868-p0071-7)  
[Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift \(Codex Manesse\)](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63868-p0071-7)  
[Zürich, ca. 1300 bis ca. 1340](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63868-p0071-7) ([uni-heidelberg.de](https://uni-heidelberg.de))



# Inspiration: Capodilista Codex

- [20 foto e immagini di Capodilista Codex Manuscript - Getty Images](#)



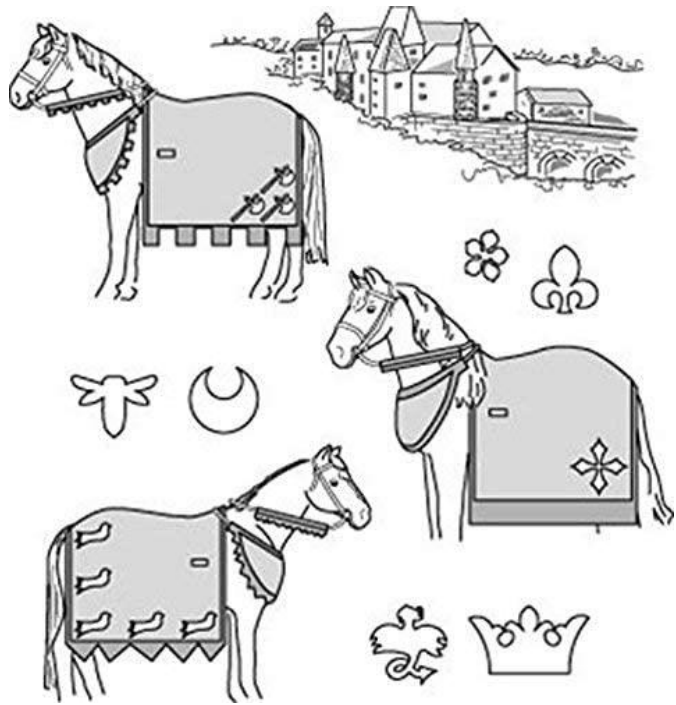
# Inspiration: Album of Tournaments and Parades in Nuremberg

- [Album of Tournaments and Parades in Nuremberg | German, Nuremberg | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](#)

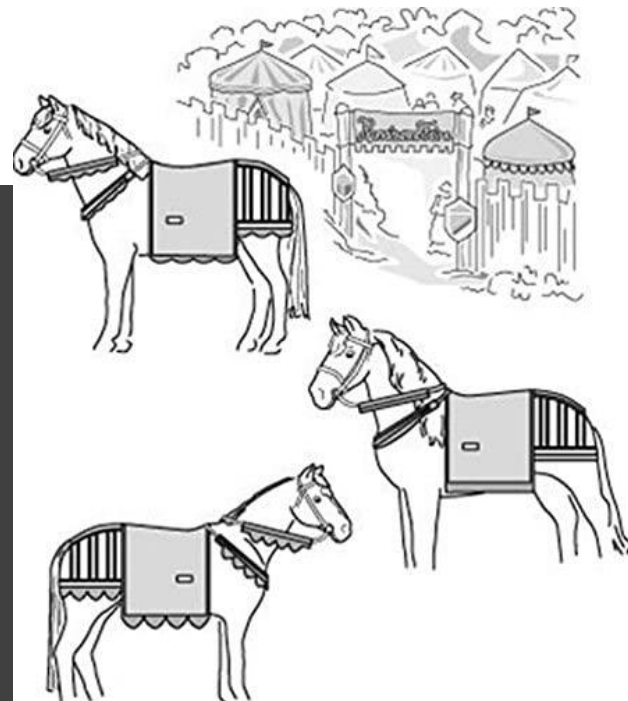
# Fabric considerations

- Will take 6-10 yards depending on size of horse and if doing a hood. More if lining.
- 55-60" width is best.
- Make sure it is sturdy and machine washable.
  - It WILL get pooped on, dragged in the mud, etc.!
- To line, or not to line?
  - Consider climate
  - Will drape better, but will be hotter to wear.
- Avoid synthetic fabrics for better breathability.
- Don't use knits.

Types	Pros	Cons
Linen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathable</li> <li>• Period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Can stretch out, especially when damp with horse sweat</li> </ul>
Silk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathable</li> <li>• Period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive! See notes below.</li> </ul>
Wool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathable</li> <li>• Period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very hot!</li> </ul>
Cotton (Broad cloth, or heavier trigger or canvas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathable</li> <li>• Comes in wide widths</li> <li>• Inexpensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not period</li> <li>• Can be too thin/flimsy</li> </ul>
Poly Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Light weight</li> <li>• Washes well</li> <li>• Does not fade</li> <li>• Fairly sturdy</li> <li>• Comes in wide widths</li> <li>• Does not wrinkle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not as breathable</li> <li>• Not period</li> </ul>
Velvet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looks nice!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot!</li> </ul>



Suitability 9130



Suitability 9460



# Commercial Patterns

Suitability 9130 Medieval Horse

- [\(Amazon.com: Suitability 9130 Medieval Horse Costume \(With Rump Cover\) Equestrian Sewing Pattern \(Pattern Only\): Home & Kitchen\)](#)

Suitability 9460 Medieval Horse

- [Suitability 9460 Medieval Horse Costume \(with Breeching\) Equestrian Sewing Pattern \(fieldsfabrics.com\)](#)

Pros:

- Available
- No measurements or patterning needed
- Beginner friendly

Cons:

- "Costumey"
- Not historically accurate
- Hard to customize fit



# Patterns available online that I have tried...

Half circle caparison pattern with breast band from Madrone Equestrian Guild Web site

- [Half circle caparison pattern wi \(equestrianguild.org\)](http://equestrianguild.org)

Saito and Ise's website (Calontir equestrians)

- [Patterns \(saitosdojo.com\)](http://saitosdojo.com)

DravonWorks Free pattern download

- [Basic Horse Caparison Tutorial - Free PDF Download - DravonWorks](#)

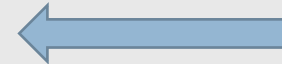
A pattern for full fabric Horse Caparison by Mistress Isabeau Pferdebandiger:

- [Middle Kingdom Equestrian College - Resources \(midrealm.org\)](http://midrealm.org)

Master Terafan's pattern:

- <http://www.greydragon.org/Equestrian/Caparison>

Best Pattern to use in my opinion.



## Why is this the best pattern?

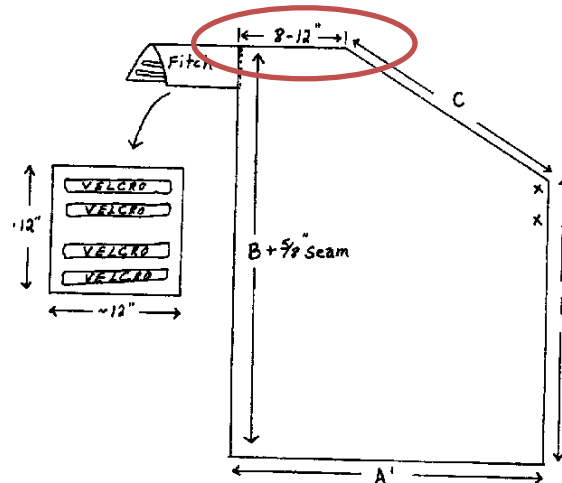
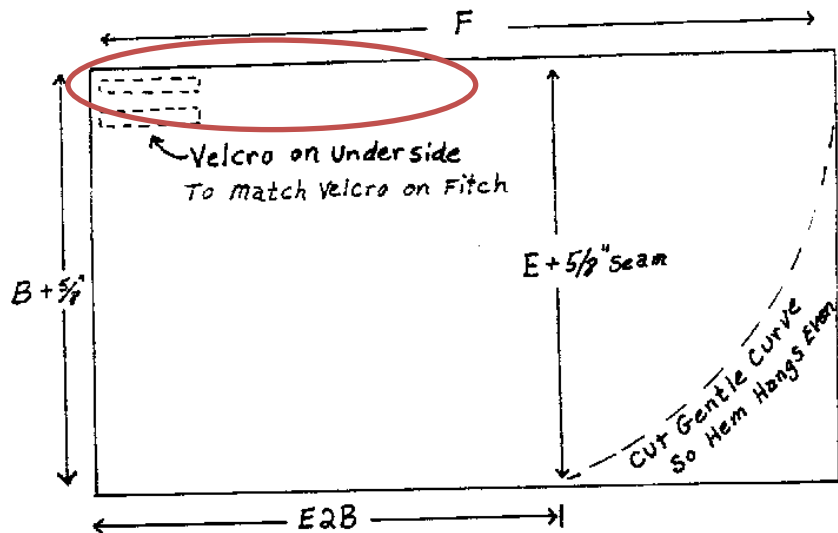
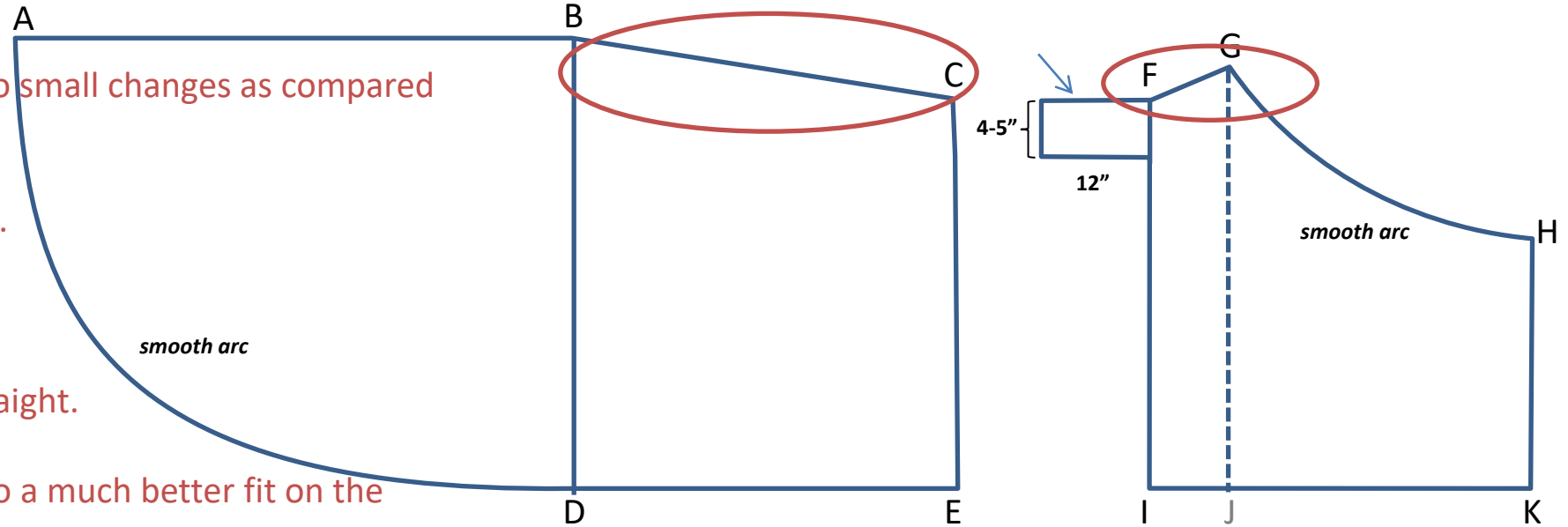
The fit is much improved by two small changes as compared to the other patterns.

Note tapering between B and C.

Note rise between F and G.

On other patterns these are straight.

These slight adjustments lead to a much better fit on the horse.



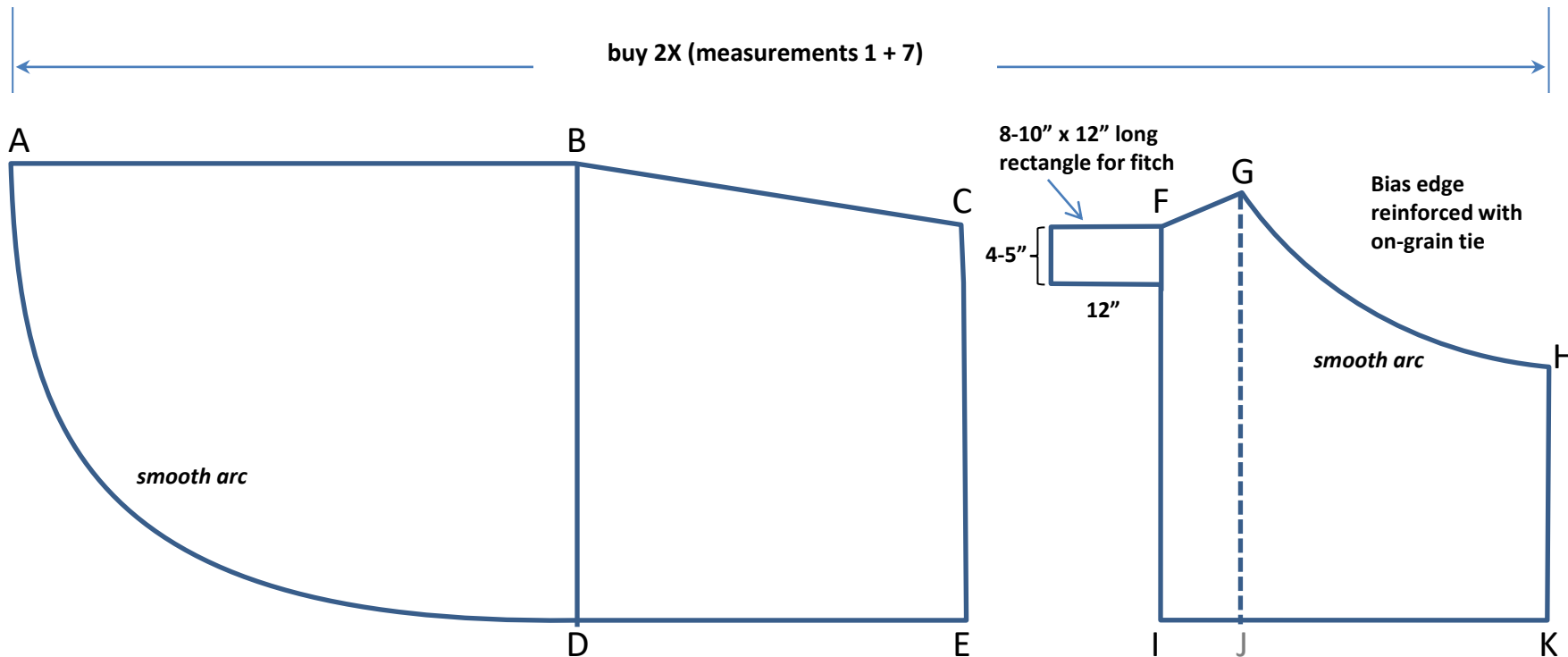
## Other patterns:

The rump piece is completely straight across the whole top.

The front piece is also straight across with no rise for withers.

The fit could be better.

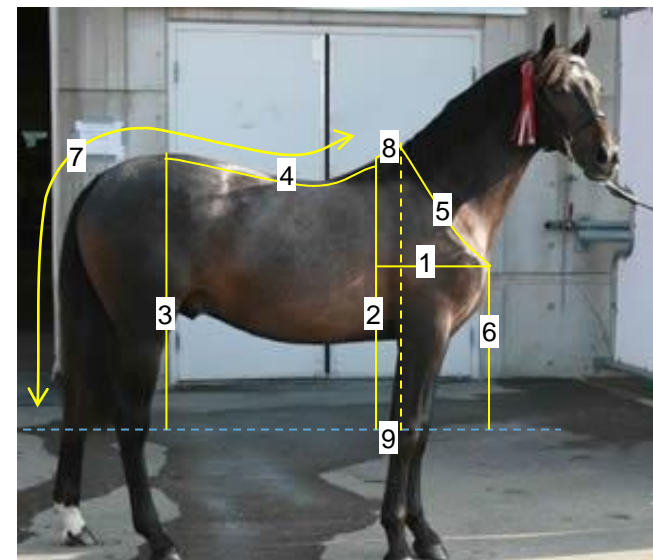
# Measurements for the Caparison:



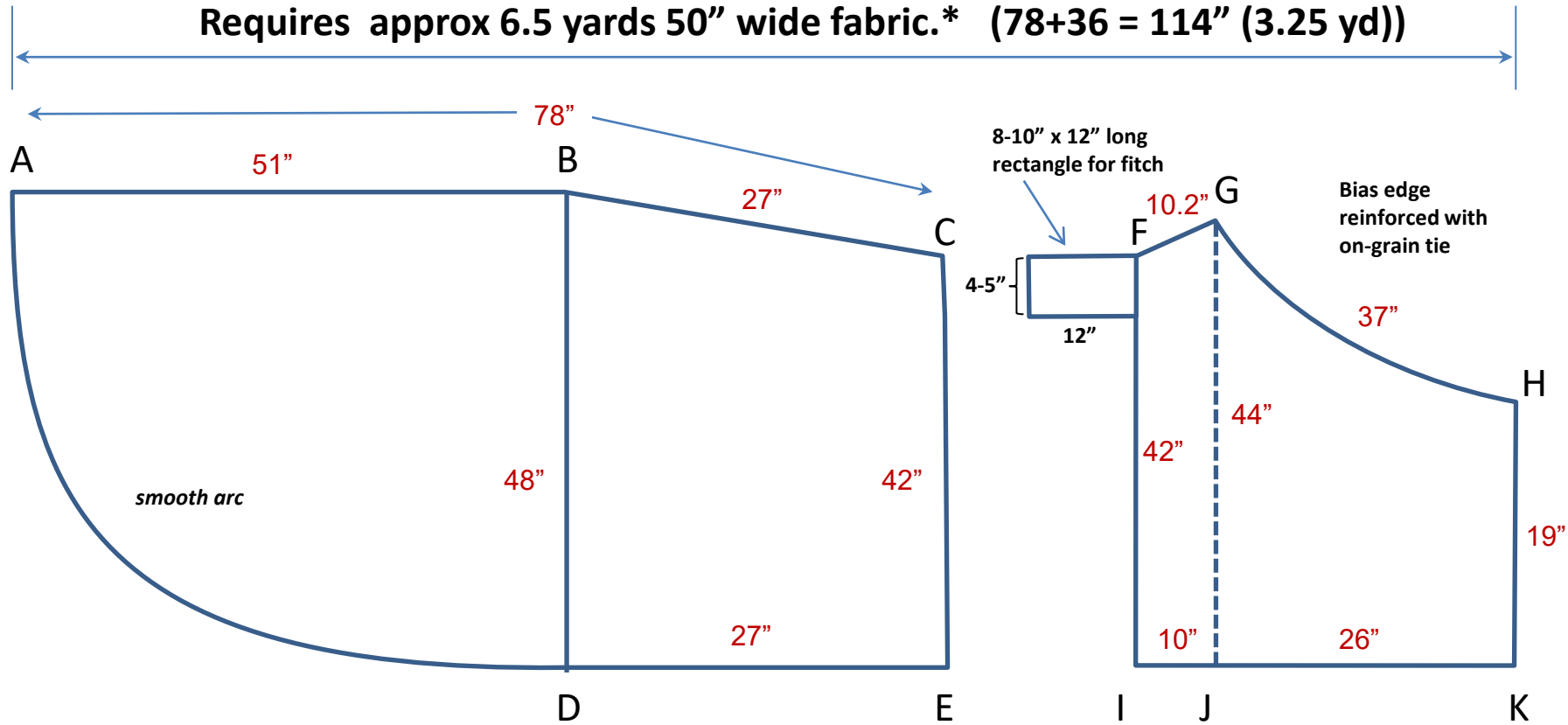
**TIPS:**  
 1) Make sure horse is on flat surface and standing still.  
 2) Get help from a friend.

**Measurements:**

- 1. From the center front of the horse's chest to the saddle girth (K-I) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Center of back to knee/hock line at girth area (F-I & C-E) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Center of back to knee/hock line at highest point of rump (B-D) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Distance between highest point of rump and base of withers (B-C) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. From front of withers down to center front of chest (G-H)\*\* \_\_\_\_\_
- \*\* It is best to put a spot with magic marker on the withers and on the chest to measure to / from the same points, around both sides.
- 6. Center front of chest to knee/hock line (H-K) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Spine-line measurement from girth to hock (C-A) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Length of withers (F-G) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. Width of withers (J-I) \_\_\_\_\_



## EXAMPLE:



\*Note: If using narrower fabric, reduce the following measurements by the same amount, so that B-D fits across fabric.

A-B : 51  
 B-D : 48  
 G-J : 44  
 K-I : 36  
 F-G : 10.2

B-C : 27  
 C-E / F-I : 42  
 H-K : 19  
 J-I : 10  
 G-H : 37

Listed measurements are finished dimensions.

Add seam allowances for hemming before cutting fabric.

Cut 2 and sew together.



## Construction Tips

- Cut two of each: Front and Back.
  - (Cut 4 if lining)
- Consider making a toile/muslin for the front half.
  - Does not take much fabric.
  - Mock up will allow you to adjust fit on equine, especially the neck curve.
- Sew along the top of each, front and back.
- If lining, I would sew the pieces together at the middle seam. Or alternatively, you could sew each separately and then sew/connect them together along the top seam so the raw edges are hidden.
- I pressed the seams open and sewed a strip of bias tape over the raw edges to cover them and add strength.



# Construction Tips (Cont.)

- Before you hem / finish the bottom...
  - Put the caparison on the equine.
  - Make sure it is centered.
  - Safety pin / secure the front so it is closed.
  - Have the horse stand on flat, level ground. (Ex: cement barn aisle)
  - Using a yard stick and some tailor's chalk, mark on the caparison where you want the hem to be.
    - Generally, the hock or knee is a good place to measure from.
    - On Bingo, this was 16" above the ground.
    - Mark all the way around.
    - Trim bottom where marked.



# Construction Tips (Cont.)

- Fastest and easiest way to finish edges: use bias tape!
- Bias tape comes in large spools!
- No stopping and joining needed!
- Cheaper than pre-packaged tape.
  - 50-55 yard spools available online. \$15-\$20
  - [Bias Double Fold Tape 50 yards / 150 feet | Etsy](#)
  - [Bias Tape Doubled fold 1/2 Wide X 50 Yards per Roll 100% | Etsy](#)
  - [Amazon.com: Mandala Crafts Double Fold Bias Tape for Sewing, Seaming, Binding, Hemming, Piping, Quilting, 1/2 Inch 55 Yards](#)



# Construction Tips (Cont.)

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- Finish all edges with bias tape.
- Add ties to front chest piece.
  - Shoelaces
  - Twill tape
  - Grosgrain ribbon
- Add fitch w/ Velcro to front piece
- Sew Velcro on back piece

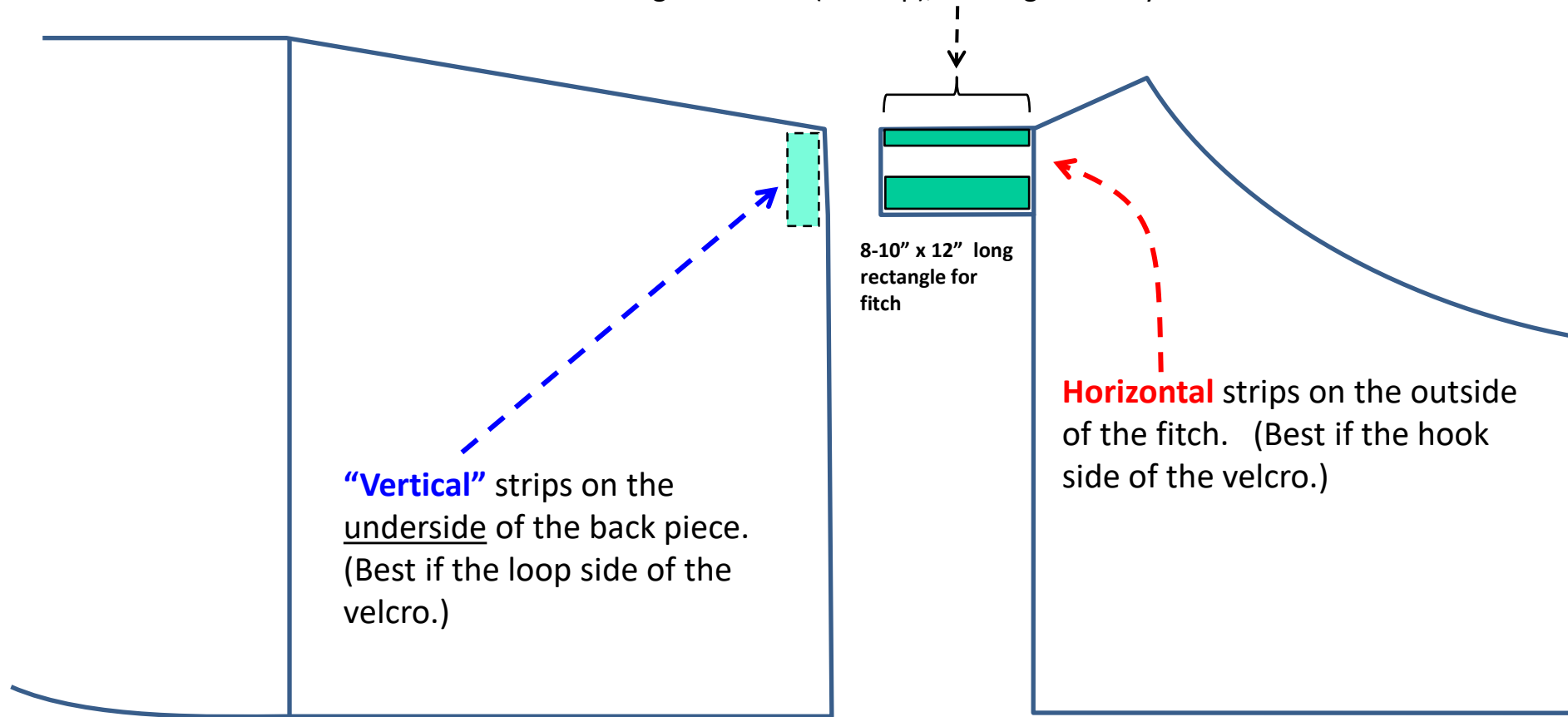




## Useful tip for the fitch overlap connection:

Put velcro strips on the top side of the fitch piece (and underside of the back piece) to enable the caparison to fit a variety of horses.

This distance is the difference in size (length) of various horses the caparison will fit. The longer the fitch (overlap), the larger variety of horses it will accommodate.



# Decorations/ Embellishments

- Block printing / Painting
- Dagging
- Embroidery
- Applique
- Stripes
- Use your imagination!



# Additional Resources:

- [Caparisons | Medieval and Renaissance \(larsdatter.com\)](http://larsdatter.com)
- [Horse Caparisons in the Manesse Codex \(coblaith.net\)](http://coblaith.net)
- [Weiner-Gozen's Blog Page: Heraldic Caparison or Full Barding Project](#)
- [horse barding \(medievalhorseandclothing.com\)](http://medievalhorseandclothing.com)
- [Microsoft Word - Horse Barding.doc \(bayrose.org\)](http://bayrose.org)
- [The Wardrobe of a 13th-Century Warhorse | THE WRITER-LY WORLD OF ANDREA CEFALO](#)
- [History of Horse Bards and Tack \(tripod.com\)](http://tripod.com)