

Basic Kosode Instructions

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Overview

Kosode (koh-soh-day) are the basic upper-body “tunic” type garment in Japanese clothing (*wafuku*). There are different styles of *kosode* to accommodate the fanciness of the outfit, the layer of the outfit that the garment occupies, and/or the social status of the wearer. Other garments have similar parts or construction, but have different purposes and different names, such as *hitatare* over-garments, or *dobuku* jackets. They are not considered to be *kosode*.

Kosode are often compared to modern *kimono* or *yukata*. These garments are descended from *kosode*, and are similar to *kosode* in many ways, but their differences from *kosode* make them less than suitable for SCA wear. Their parts can be often used to construct a *kosode*, however. Learning how to make *kosode* from scratch will teach you skills you can use to reconstruct other garments into *kosode*, or construct other types of garments based on what you can see in images.

This document is intended to accompany an in-person class on constructing basic *kosode* of a style common in the SCA period. As such, it does not contain fully-detailed instructions or process diagrams. It is intended to serve as a reminder, but cannot serve as a replacement for detailed instructions.

Take your measurements

- Length of body panels = 2 x distance from shoulder to knee or ankle = _____ inches
- Width of neck opening = _____ inches
- Length of sleeve panels = desired height of sleeve x 2 = _____ inches

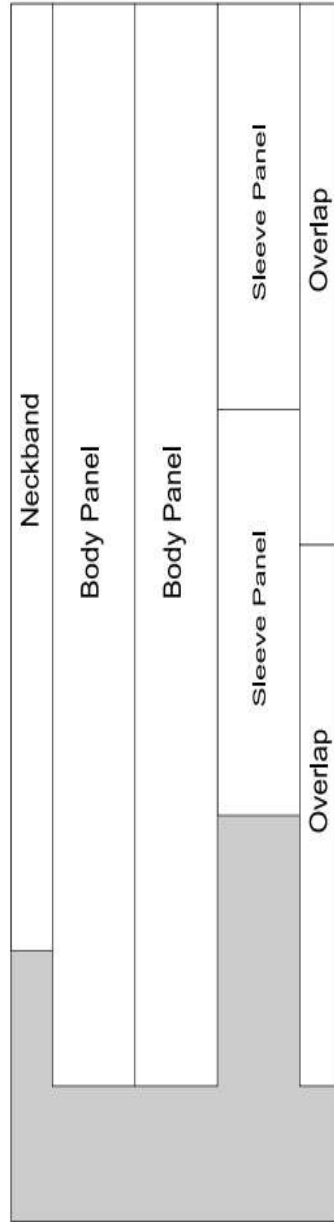
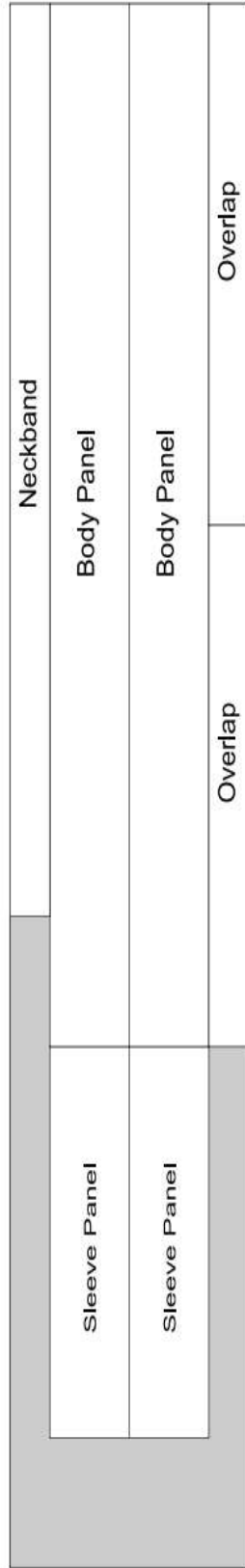
Buy fabric

For basic *kosode*, I recommend light weight linen or cotton in a light solid color. Your first *kosode* should be white, probably from inexpensive bleached cotton muslin. Other good fibers are ramie or silk, though price may be a factor. Once you have your method down, you can branch out into fancy prints, *ikat* weaves, shibori dyeing, heavy brocades, etcetera.. You will usually wear more than one layer, so no fabric is too light. Save heavier fabrics for other garments, though. There will always be room in your wardrobe for at least one more white *kosode*. Keep making white *kosode*,

- For 45” wide fabric = Length of body panel + Length of sleeve panel + 1 foot
- For 60” wide fabric = Length of body panel + 1 foot

This document assumes a 15” panel width, which is a good width for average-size people. If your body is wider or narrower than average, adjust the panel width to accommodate your body shape. Do not be afraid to make your panels a bit wider than you think. Japanese clothing is not form-fitting.

Cutting patterns



Sewing instructions

1. Cut fabric into panels & half-panels, and serge all cut edges.
2. Cut neck band, fold into three layer band, turn in ends, and iron flat.
3. Cut 2 body panels to length, fold in half width-wise and iron shoulder fold.
4. Cut 2 sleeve panels to length, fold in half width-wise and iron shoulder fold.
5. Cut two overlap half-panels.
6. Sew body panels together, half length (shoulder to hem).
7. Attach overlaps, one to either side of front opening.
8. Pin center of neckband to center of body back, with edge along shoulder seam.
9. Attach neckband to back of body, centered, for width of neck opening.
10. Snip seam allowance to ends of stitching.
11. Angle neckband ends toward shoulder seam, pin for about 1.5", and sew.
12. Snip seam allowance to ends of stitching.
13. Angle neckband ends towards front opening, pin, and sew to attach the neckband.
14. Place one sleeve at one side of body, shoulder folds aligned, right sides together.
15. Pin most of height of sleeve to body edge and sew. Leave room at ends if desired.
16. Turn garment inside out, right sides together, with shoulder fold reversed.
17. Mark curves or angles at bottom corners of sleeves, and pin sleeves shut.
18. Sew from end of sleeve opening, down, around bottom, and up pit to stitching.
19. Close side seam.
20. Repeat process for other sleeve and side.
21. Straighten out neckband, fold 2/3rds to inside, and pin in place from outside.
22. Sew stitch-in-ditch from outside along edge of neckband to close neckband.
23. Hem openings of sleeves.
24. Hem bottom of garment body.

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