

# BIKES AND BLOOMERS

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S  
CONVERTIBLE CYCLE WEAR  
**SEWING PATTERNS**

## #5 SIDE-BUTTON CYCLING SKIRT

A cycling costume inspired by  
Mary Ward's 1897 UK Patent #9605

## PATTERN #5

# SIDE-BUTTON CYCLING SKIRT

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### DESIGN FEATURES

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This A-line skirt is made up to two 'aprons' joined at the waist and along the sides via buttons and button-holes. The convertible system comprises two decorative straps sewn into the waistband, that are hidden from view until required. To convert the garment, the wearer uses the straps to tether the skirt at intervals via the side buttons, gathering it up and out of the way of the wheels in a ruche manner.

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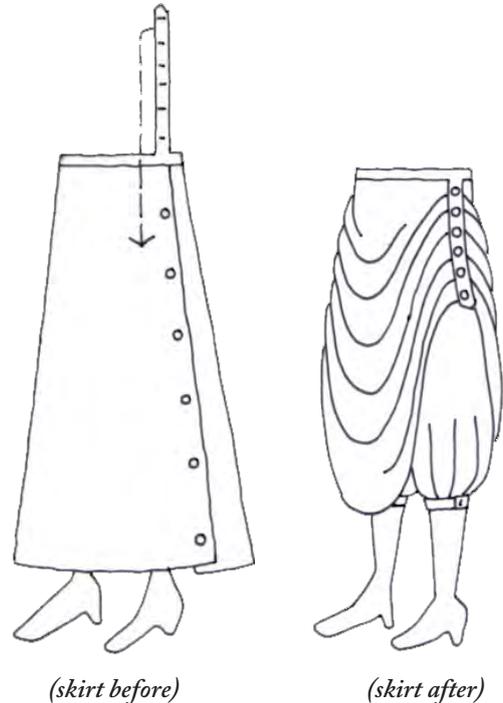
### THE INVENTOR: MARY ANN WARD

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**MARY ANN WARD** of 92 Thomas Street, Bristol, in the County of Gloucestershire, registered her patent for 'Improvements in Ladies' Skirts for Cycling' on 27th March 1897. This is not a radical transformative garment, like others in this collection. Research suggests this was not Mary's intent. Rather, she appeared to be interested in producing a convertible costume that was more subtle and site-specific for an upmarket urban client. This wearer wanted to look fashionable, and be safe, while undertaking social visits and public forms of city cycling.

Mary's patented skirt was known as 'The Hyde Park Safety Skirt', which firmly locates its use and users in a highly public arena. Places like Hyde Park, especially during popular periods such as the annual Season, were important sites where ideas around gender and class were being performed and re-negotiated on a daily basis. Mary's invention was apparently well received. It seemed to inhabit a space between the binaries of 'ordinary' and 'rational' dress. As such, she managed to garner support for her patent from both the cycling and dress reform communities.

Opinions like this mattered, because even towards the latter part of the decade, there was still no single broadly accepted style of cycle wear. Women were in the process of working out what they should and could wear while engaging in this new means of moving in public. New ideas were circulated, discussed and debated within the media, in cycling, fashion and dress reform communities and via formal and informal channels. Here for example, (on the right) the skirt is discussed in personal correspondence between Lady Harberton and Sydney Savory Buckman of the Rational Dress League.



*(Cycling in Hyde Park was very popular)*

**“I wonder if Mrs Buckman knows of the thing called “The Hyde Park Safety Skirt”. For it is an invention whereby the Rational Dress can be made into an ordinary looking skirt at once. It was made by Mrs Ward and I have seen it and though I don't want it myself, it might be convenient for anyone paying calls who wants to leave their cycle and walk about. It would not prevent a person riding a diamond frame.”**

*Lady Harbeton to S.S. Buckman,  
of the Rational Dress League (1898)*

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# VICTORIAN WOMEN'S CONVERTIBLE CYCLE WEAR SEWING PATTERNS

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Victorians enthusiastically took to the bicycle. Yet women had to deal with many social, political and material challenges to their freedom of movement. Cycling in 'ordinary' dress could be dangerous as it wrapped around pedals and caught in wheels. Wearing more 'rational' cycle wear, such as shorter skirts and bloomers, was more comfortable, but not necessarily safer as some parts of society were threatened by the sight of this progressive 'New Woman' carving new modes of gendered independence in public space. Onlookers sometimes hurled abuse and stones! However, nothing was going to stop women from cycling. In response, some creatively protested against restrictive ideas of how a woman should act and move in public through their clothing, by designing **convertible costumes** that enabled wearers to switch from street wear to cycle wear when needed. Luckily for us, these inventive women not only imagined, made and wore radical new forms of cycle wear - they also patented their designs!

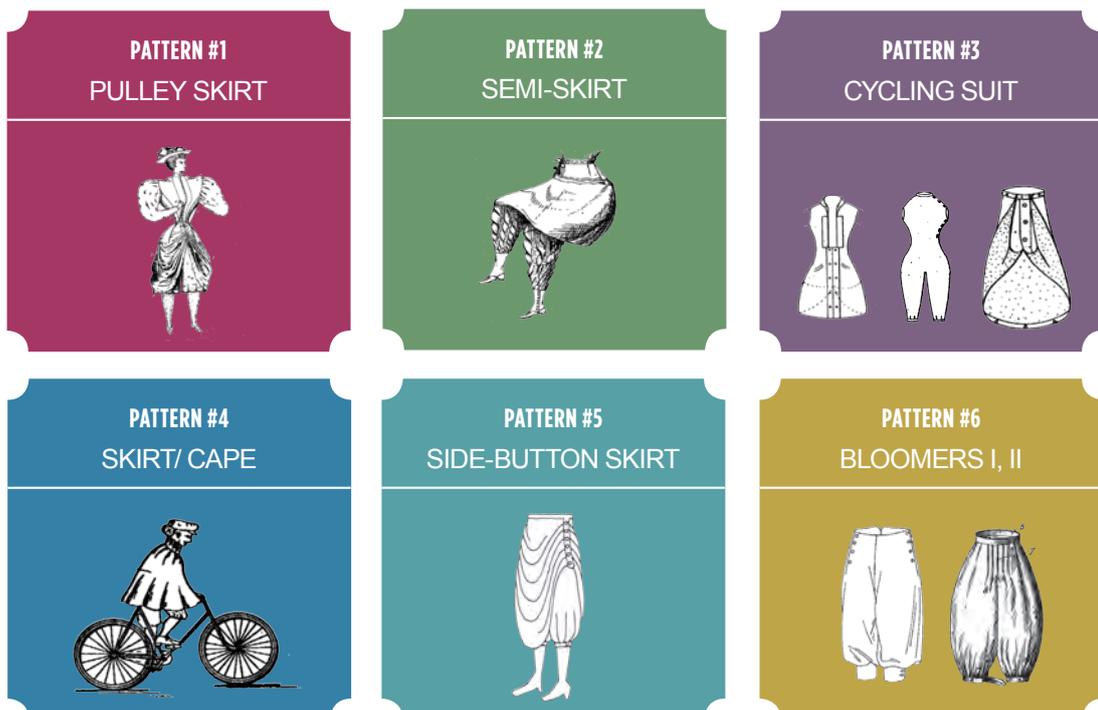
Six sewing patterns in this collection (comprising a total of nine different garments) are inspired by convertible cycle wear patents lodged in the 1890s by inventive British women. They form part of an ESRC funded **Bikes & Bloomers** sociology project led by Dr Kat Jungnickel at Goldsmiths, University of London, with Rachel Pimm, Nadia Constaninou, Alice Angus and Britt Hatzius. More about the lives of these fascinating inventors is in *Bikes & Bloomers: Victorian Women Inventors and Their Extraordinary Cycle Wear* (Goldsmiths Press). Along with the book, these patterns bring to life some of the inspiring cycling, sewing and suffrage stories that have helped shape how we cycle today. They also (still) provide useful ideas for functional clothing that works on and off the bike. We look forward to seeing what modern sewing cyclists make with them.



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## PATTERN COLLECTION

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# SEWING PATTERNS

## PATTERN #5

# SIDE-BUTTON CYCLING SKIRT



**Pattern #5** is for an A-line skirt made of two 'aprons' joined at the waist and along the sides via a series of buttons /holes. Two straps are sewn into the waistband. To convert the garment, the wearer tethers the skirt with the straps at intervals via buttons, which gathers it up out of way of the wheels. **Requirements:** 2.5m fabric, 50cm contrast for straps, 3m decorative trim and 14 buttons.

**This pattern is approx UK size 12** and will need to be customised to fit as required. Minimal instructions are provided. See our mistakes, workarounds and suggestions at: [bikesandbloomers.com](http://bikesandbloomers.com)

### BIKES & BLOOMERS CONVERTIBLE CYCLE WEAR SEWING PATTERNS:

- #1 – Pulley cycling skirt
- #2 – Cycling semi-skirt
- #3 – 3-piece cycling suit
- #4 – Cycling skirt/cape
- #5 – Side-button skirt
- #6 – Cycling bloomers I, II

All sewing patterns are free to download. Profits from the sale of printed patterns go to the London Bike Kitchen, a DIY workshop. Please share your cycle wear creations with us on [Twitter](https://www.instagram.com/bikesandbloomers) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bikesandbloomers) [#bikesandbloomers](https://www.instagram.com/bikesandbloomers) & [www.bikesandbloomers.com](http://www.bikesandbloomers.com)

**RESEARCH PROJECT**  
Kat Jungnickel  
**SILK LINING ARTWORK**  
Alice Angus  
**COVER PHOTO**  
Charlotte Barnes



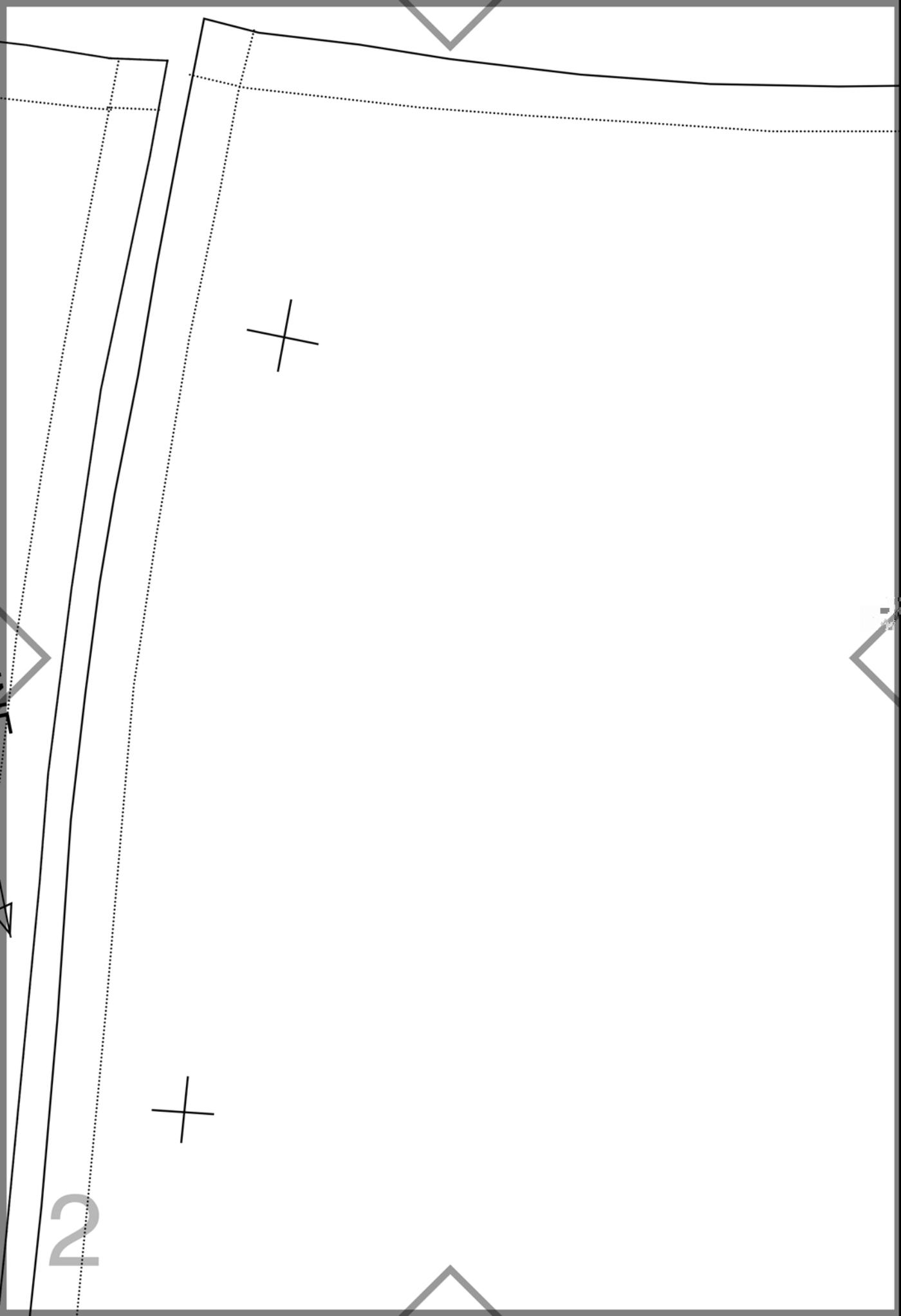


GRAIN LINE



SIDE FASTENING PLACKET



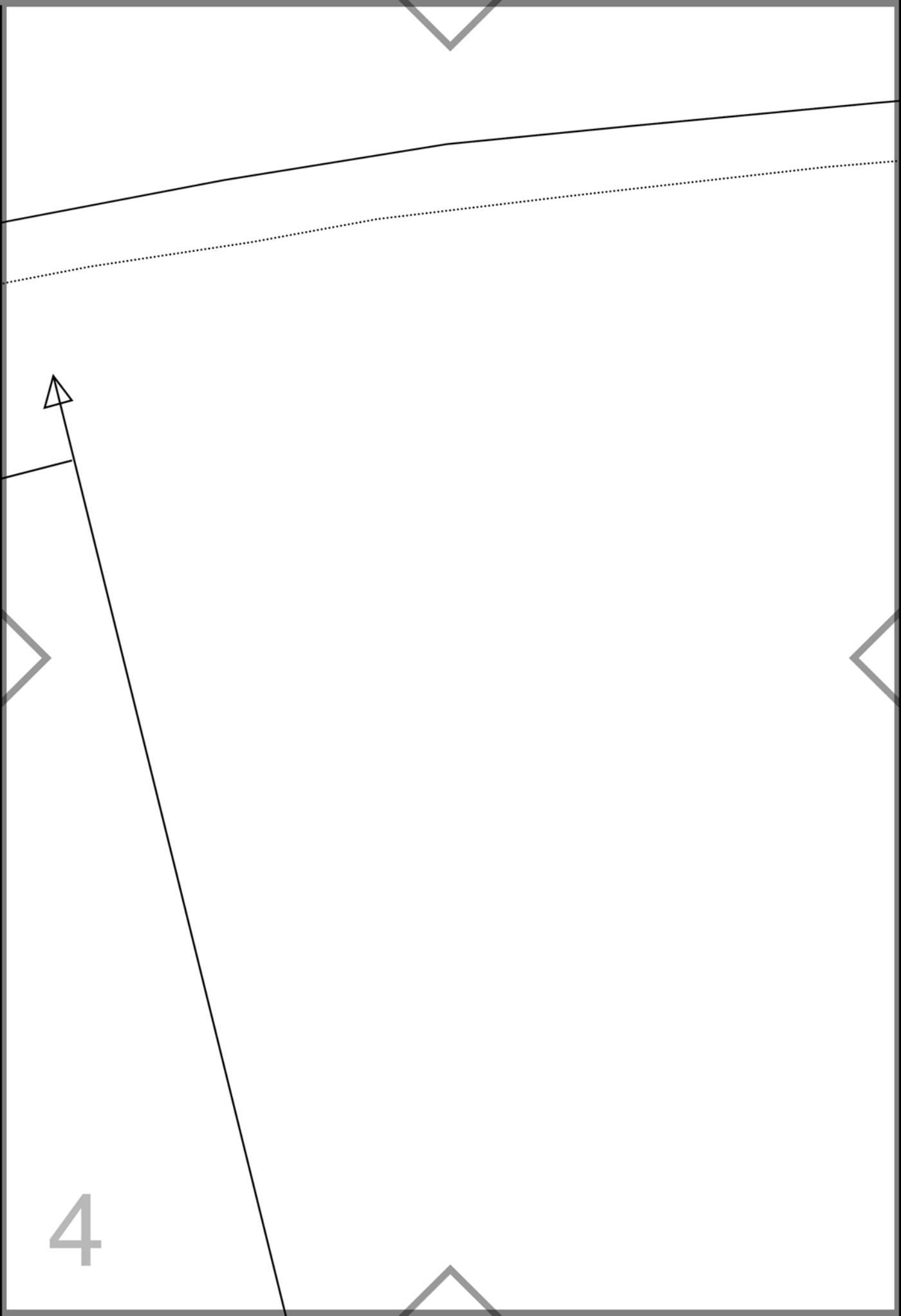


2

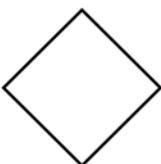
CENTRE  
BACK



3



4

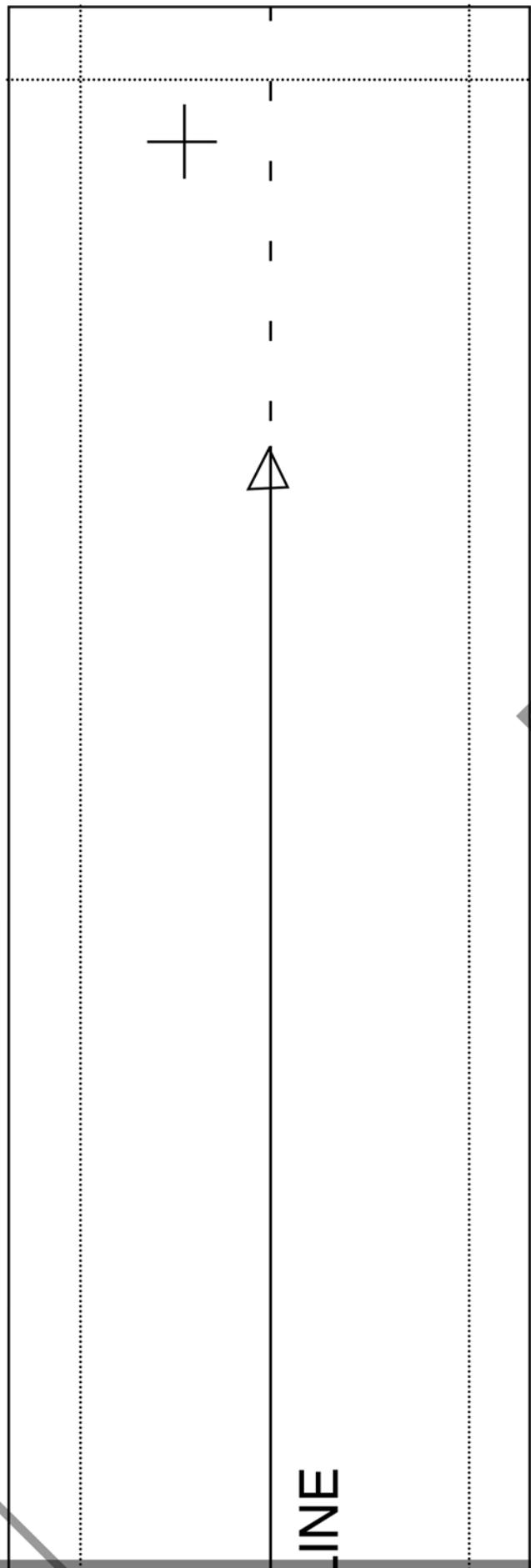
CUT OR FOLD TO PRINT SAFE BOX  
LINE UP SHAPES   
STICK TOGETHER  
CUTTING LINE \_\_\_\_\_  
SEAM ALLOWANCE .....

STAY STITCH THE WAIST ON THE SELF TO AVOID DISTORTING  
CONSTRUCT FACING  
MAKE BACK AND FRONT SKIRTS SEPARATELY LIKE APRONS  
FULLY LINE BY HANDSTITCHING  
TACK TO WAISTBAND  
INSERT PLACKETS OVER JOINS AND ATTACH WAISTBAND  
MAKE BUTTON HOLES  
SEW ON BUTTONS

**FRONT FASTENING FACING**

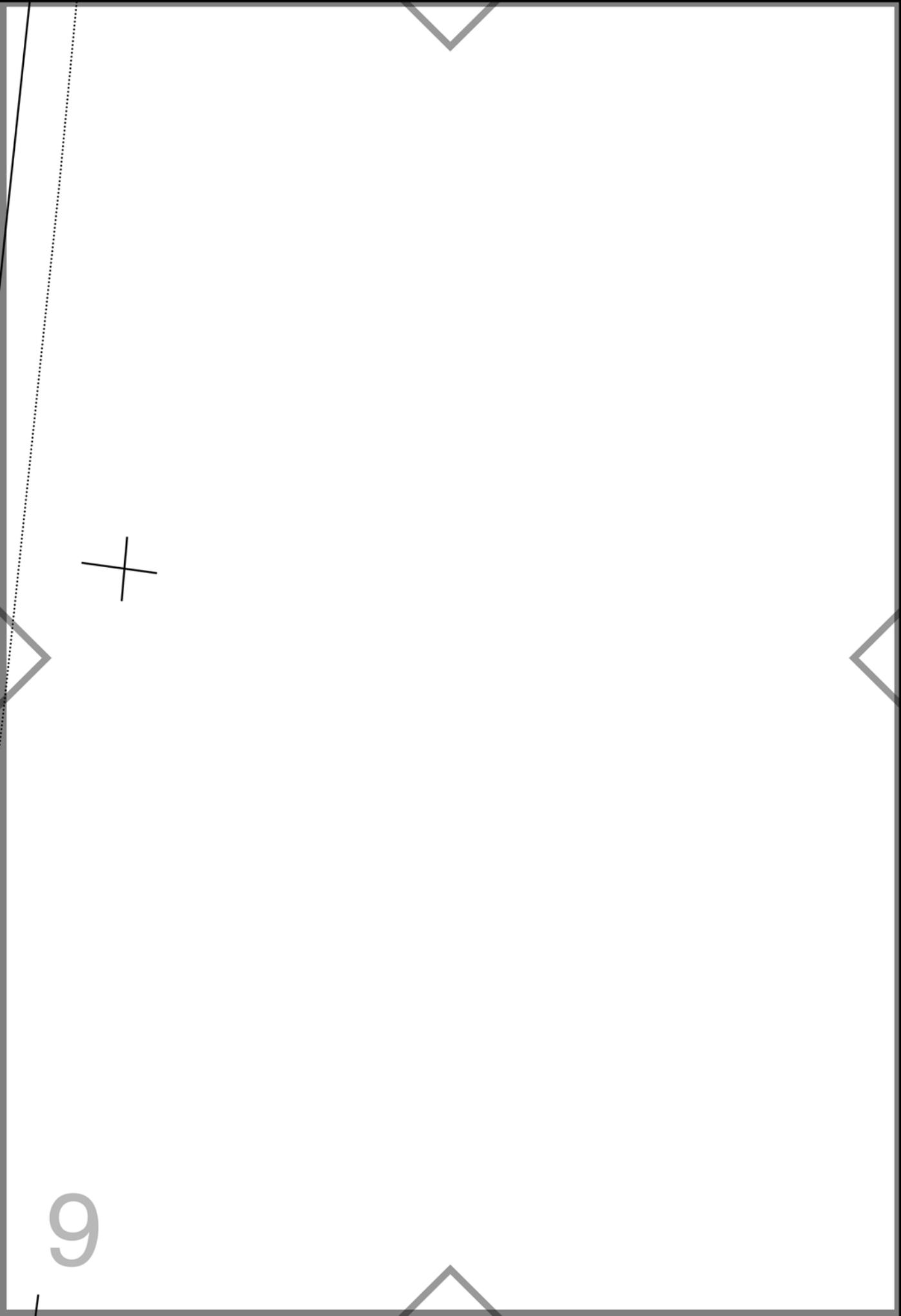


7



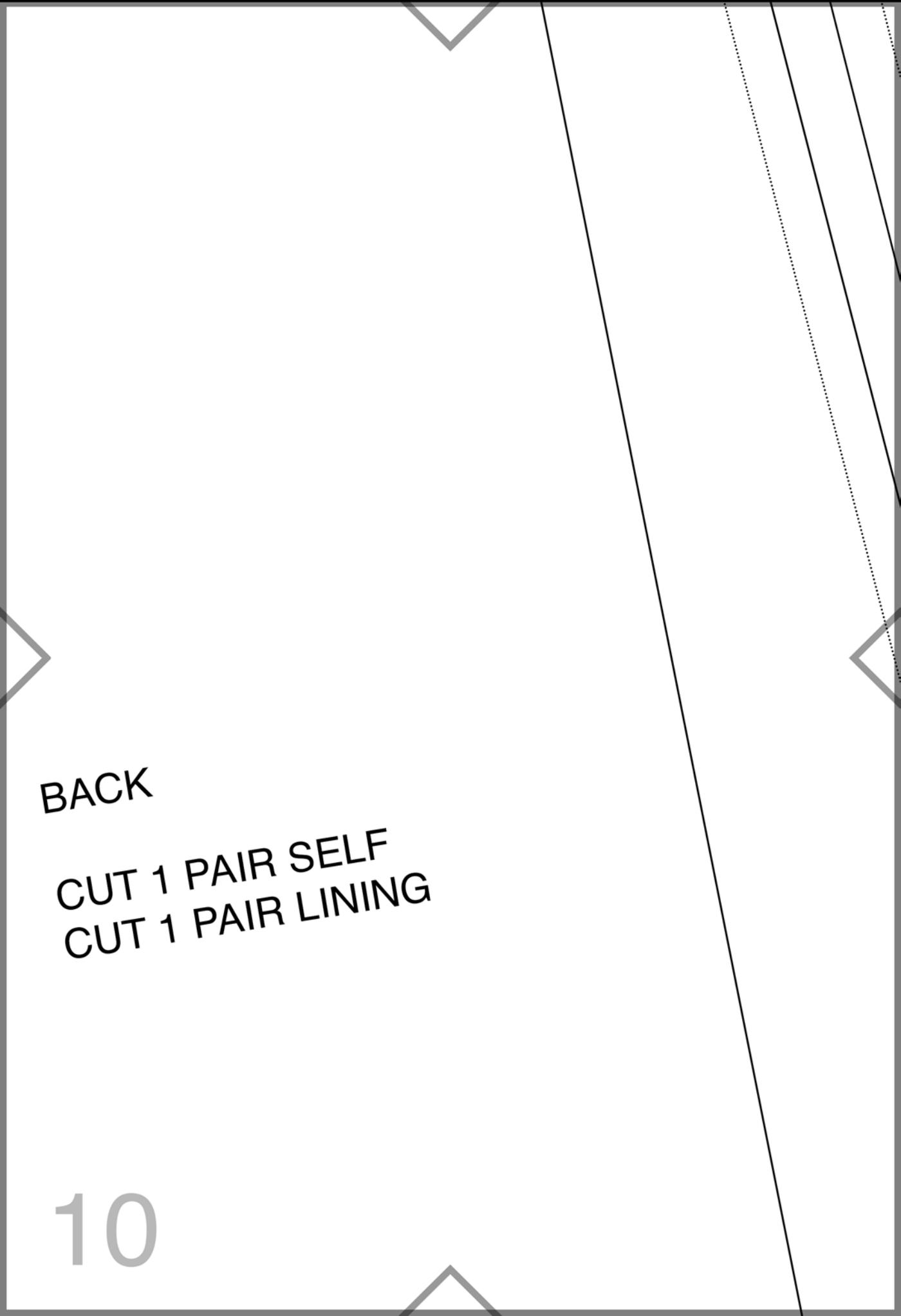
LINE

CUT 2 SELF  
CUT 2 LINING  
CUT 2 LINING



9

+



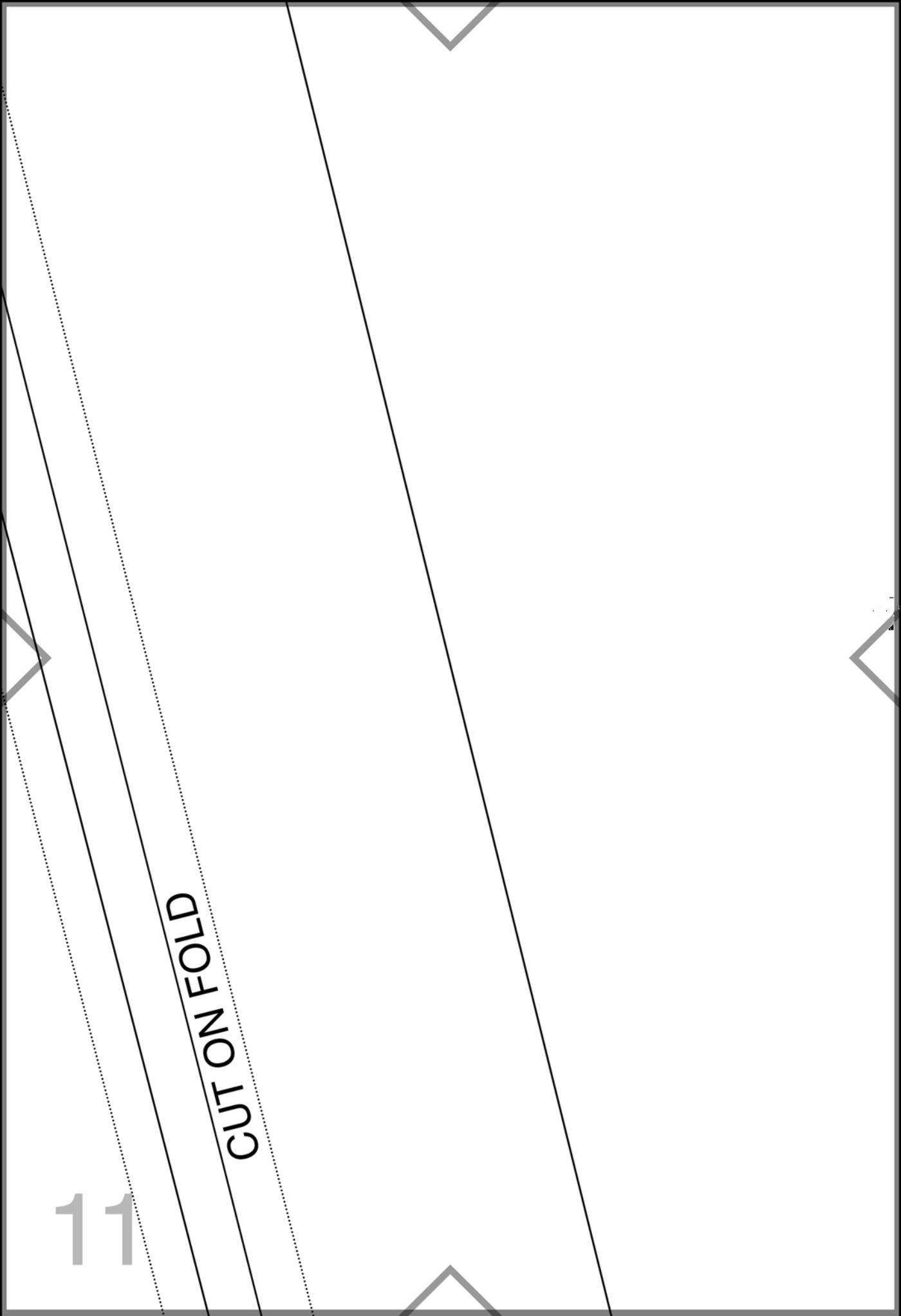
BACK

CUT 1 PAIR SELF  
CUT 1 PAIR LINING

10

11

CUT ON FOLD

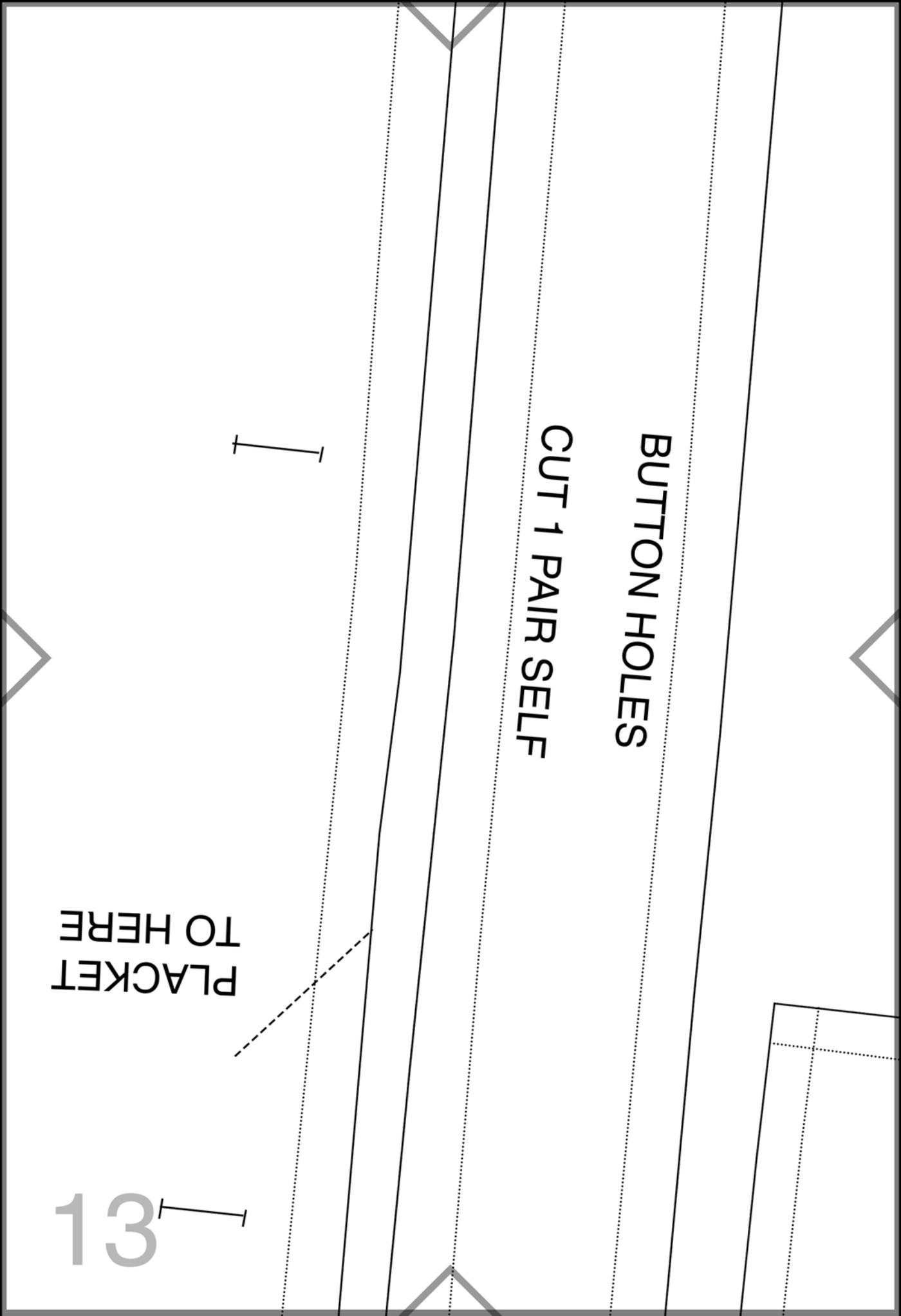


BUTTON HOLES

CUT 1 PAIR SELF

PLACKET  
TO HERE

13



GRAIN ↓

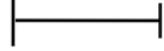


REFACING

CENTRE  
BACK

14

15



BUTTON STAND

CUT 1 PAIR SELF

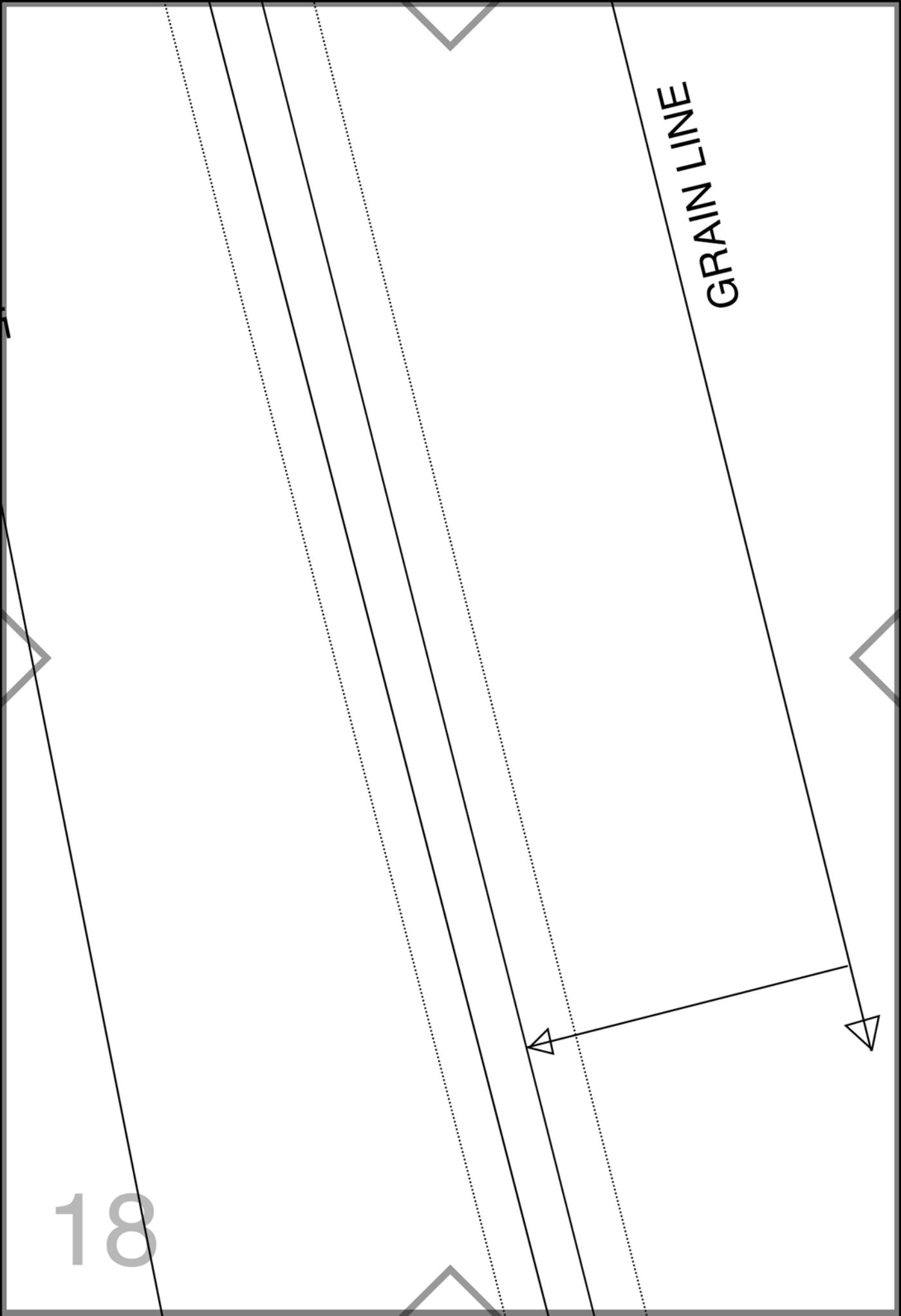




GRAIN LINE

18

GRAIN LINE

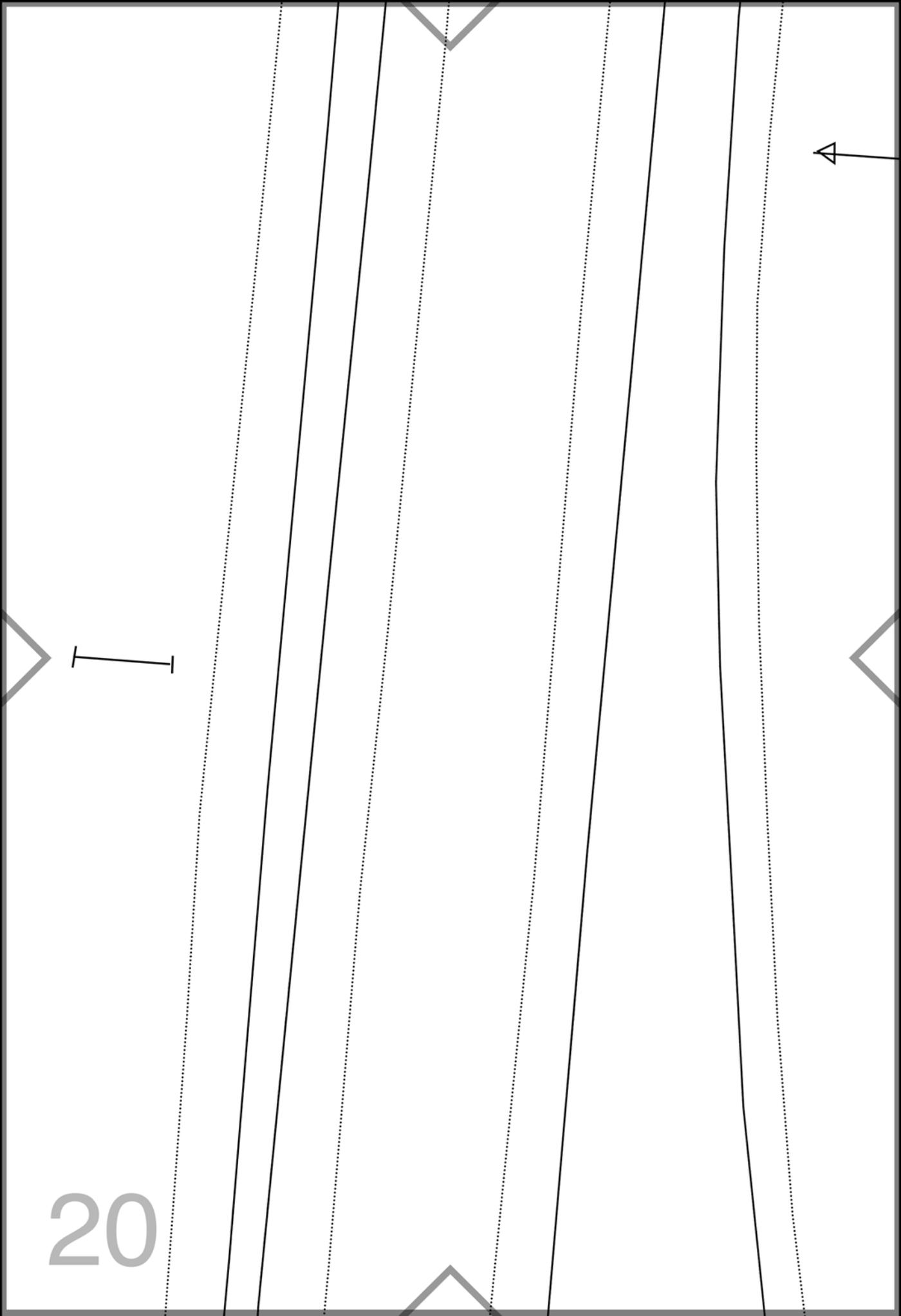


19

CUT 1 LINING  
CUT 1 LINING

20

I



CUT 1 SELF  
CUT 1 FUSE INTER

WAISTBAND

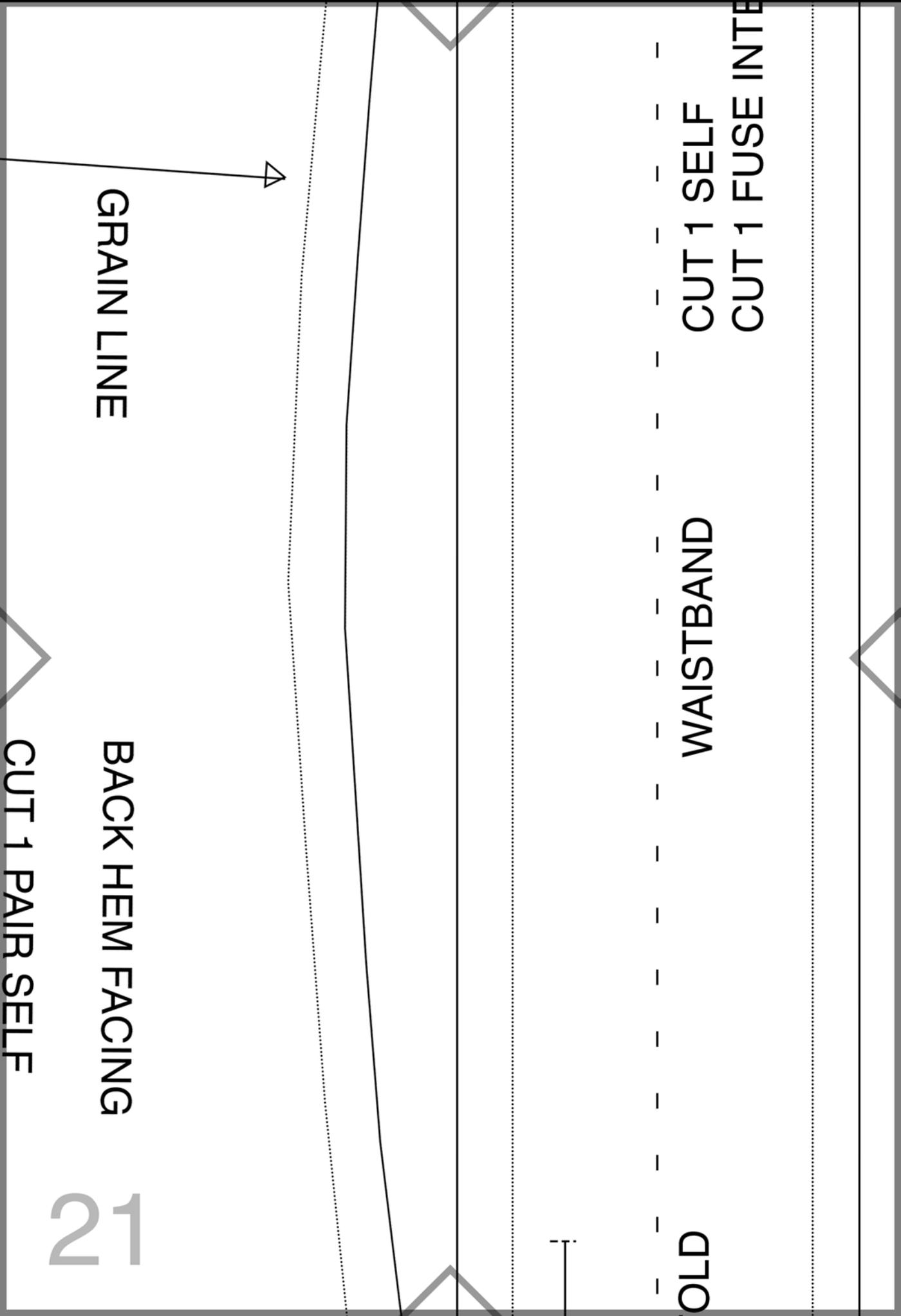
OLD

GRAIN LINE

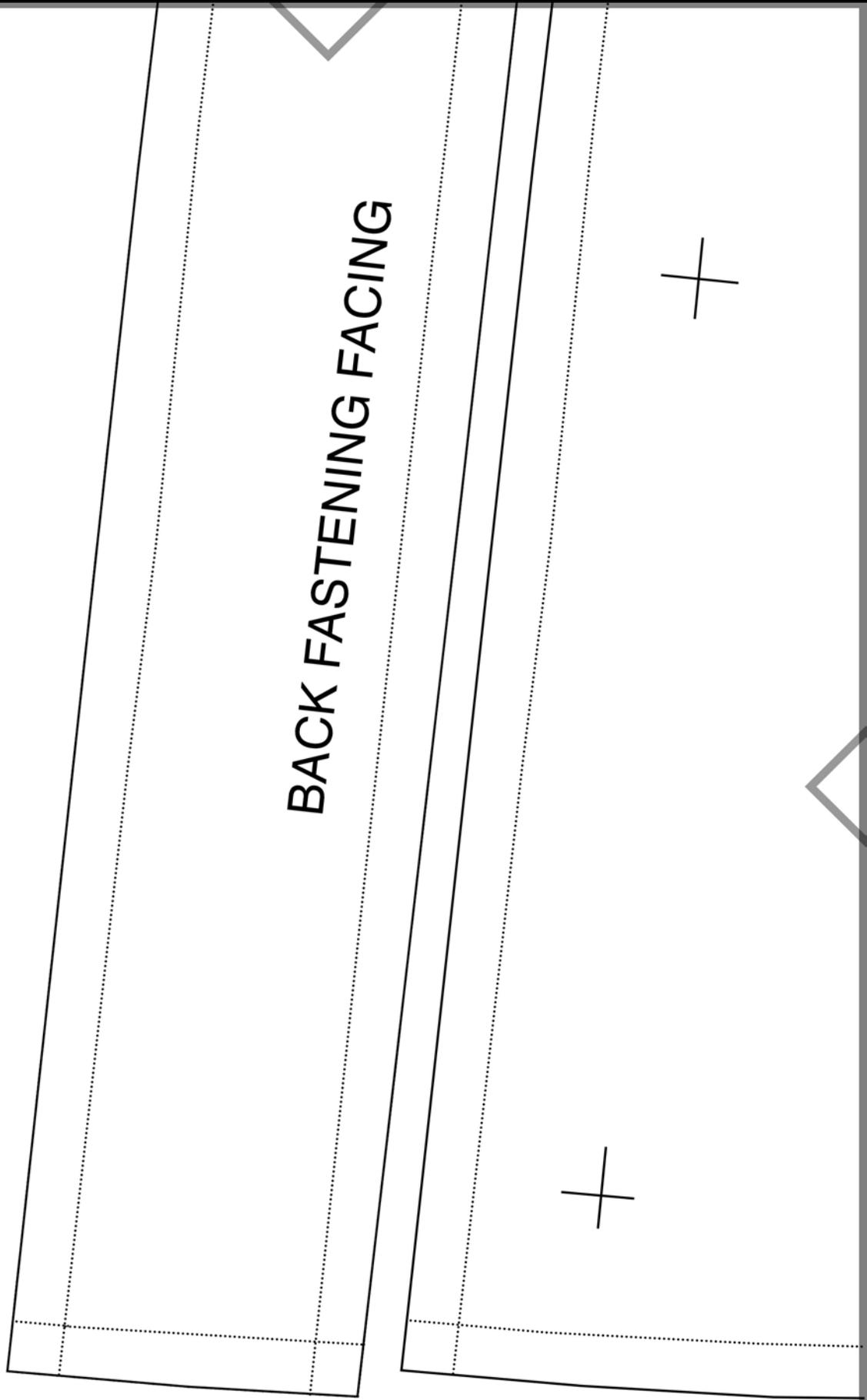
BACK HEM FACING

CUT 1 PAIR SELF

21



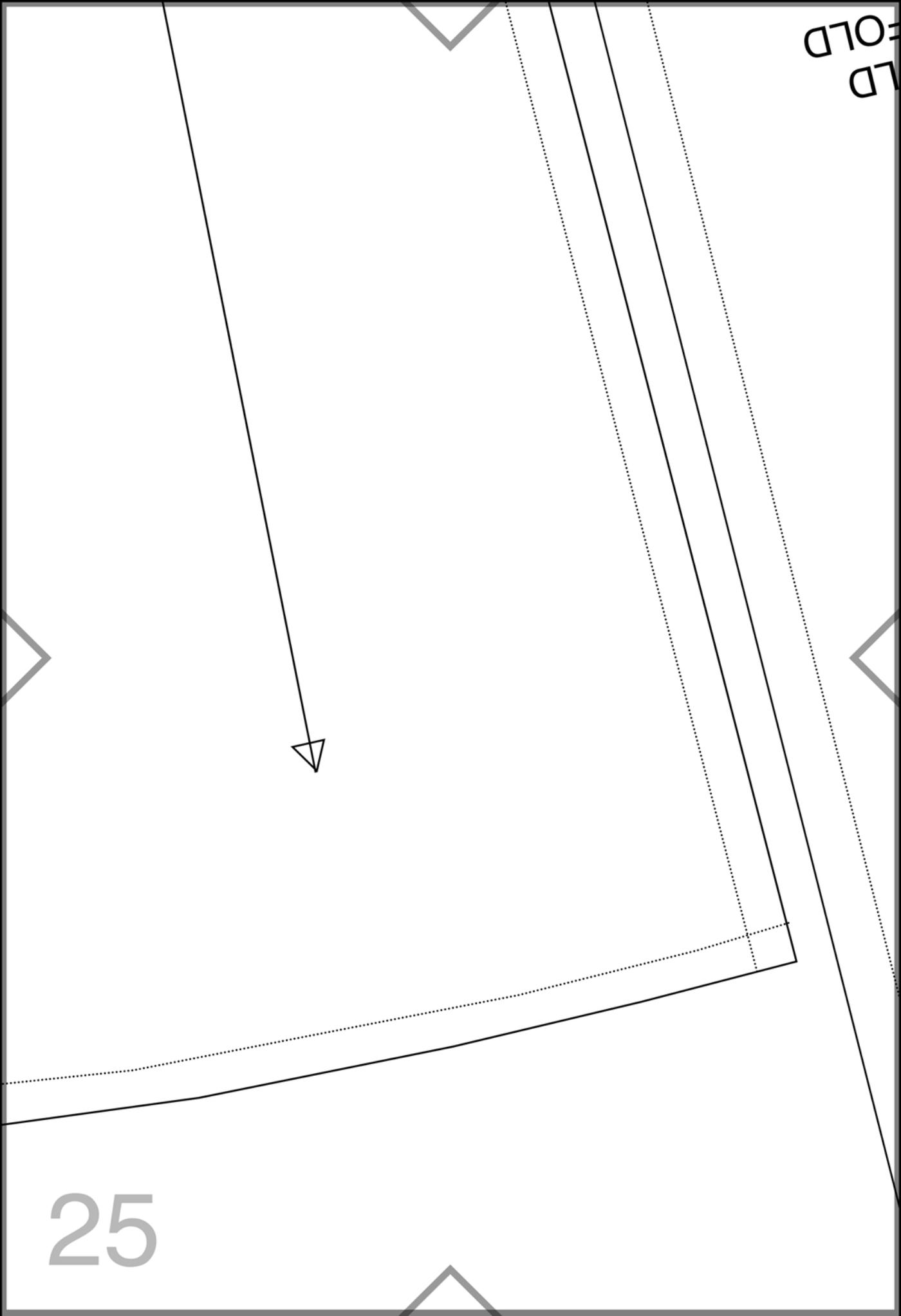
BACK FASTENING FACING





24

FOLD  
LD



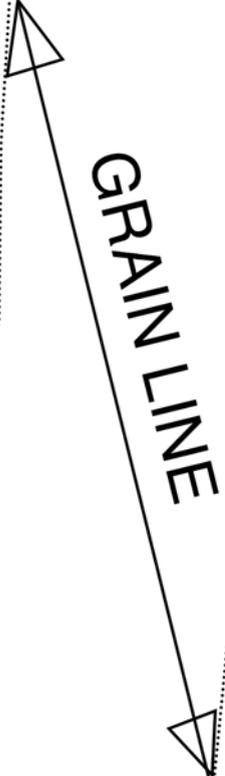
25

FRONT  
CUT 1 SELF ON FO

CENTRE  
FRONT

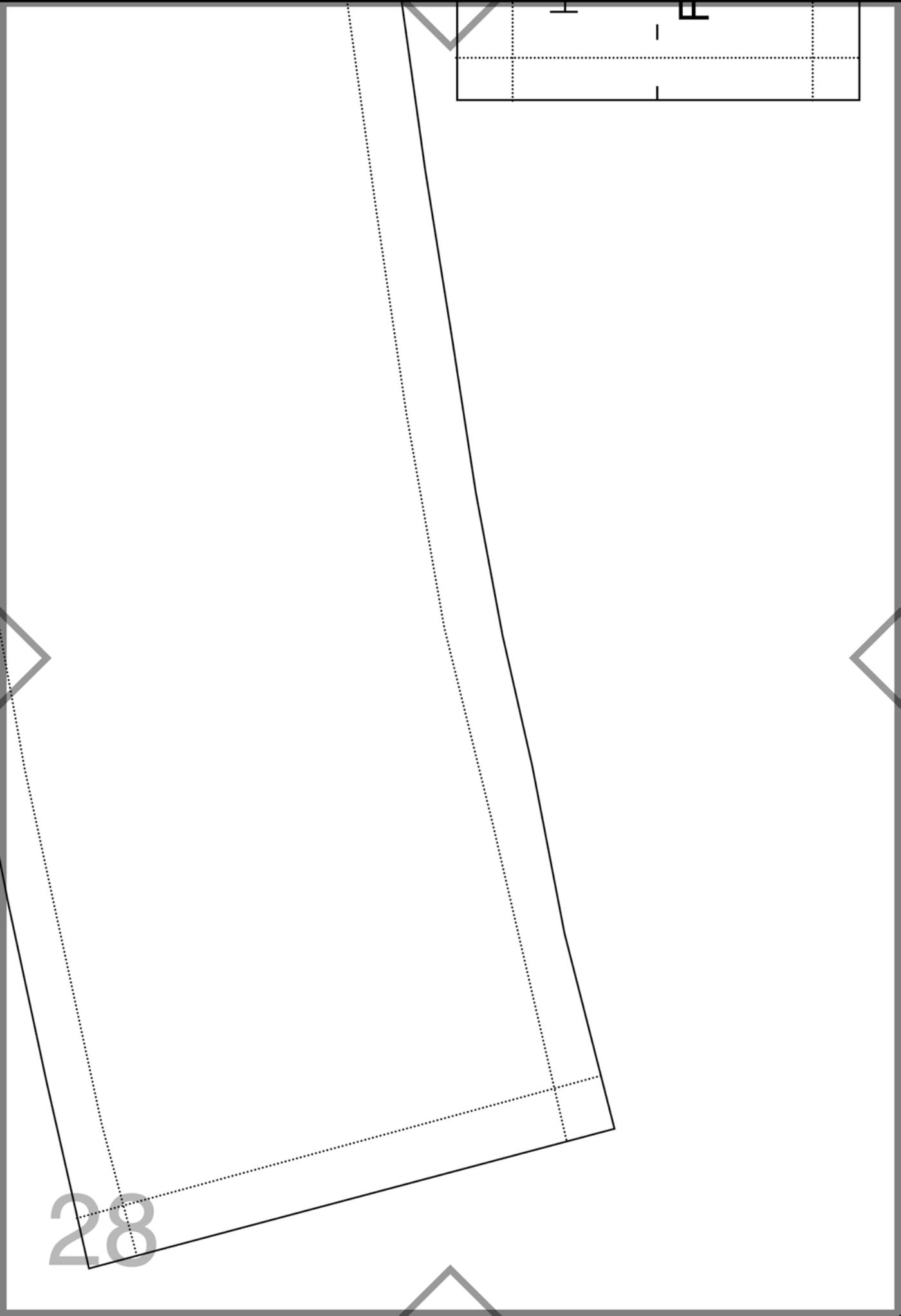
26

GRAIN LINE

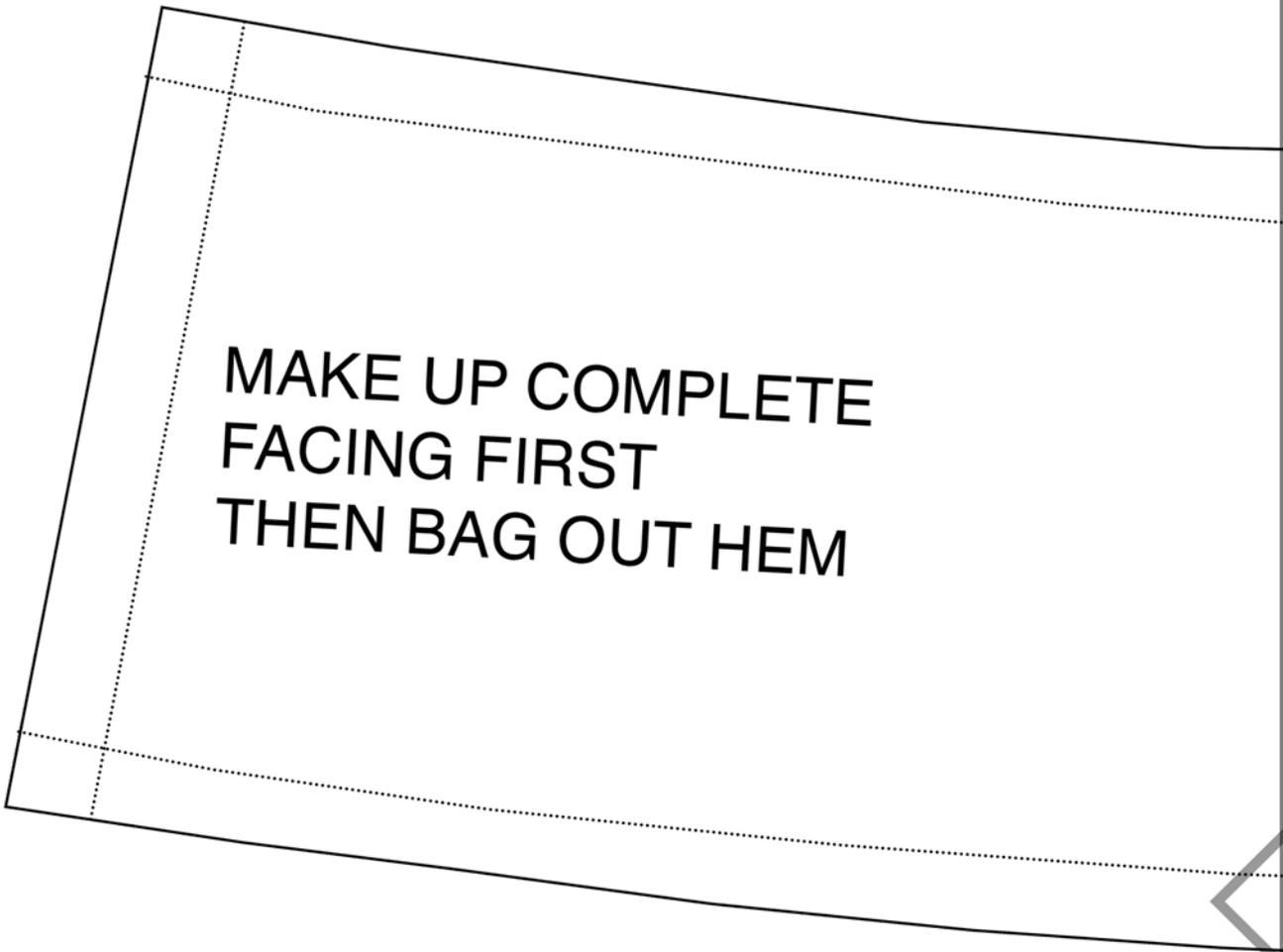


20 CM SIDE OPEN FOR  
BUTTONS ON LEFT SIDE



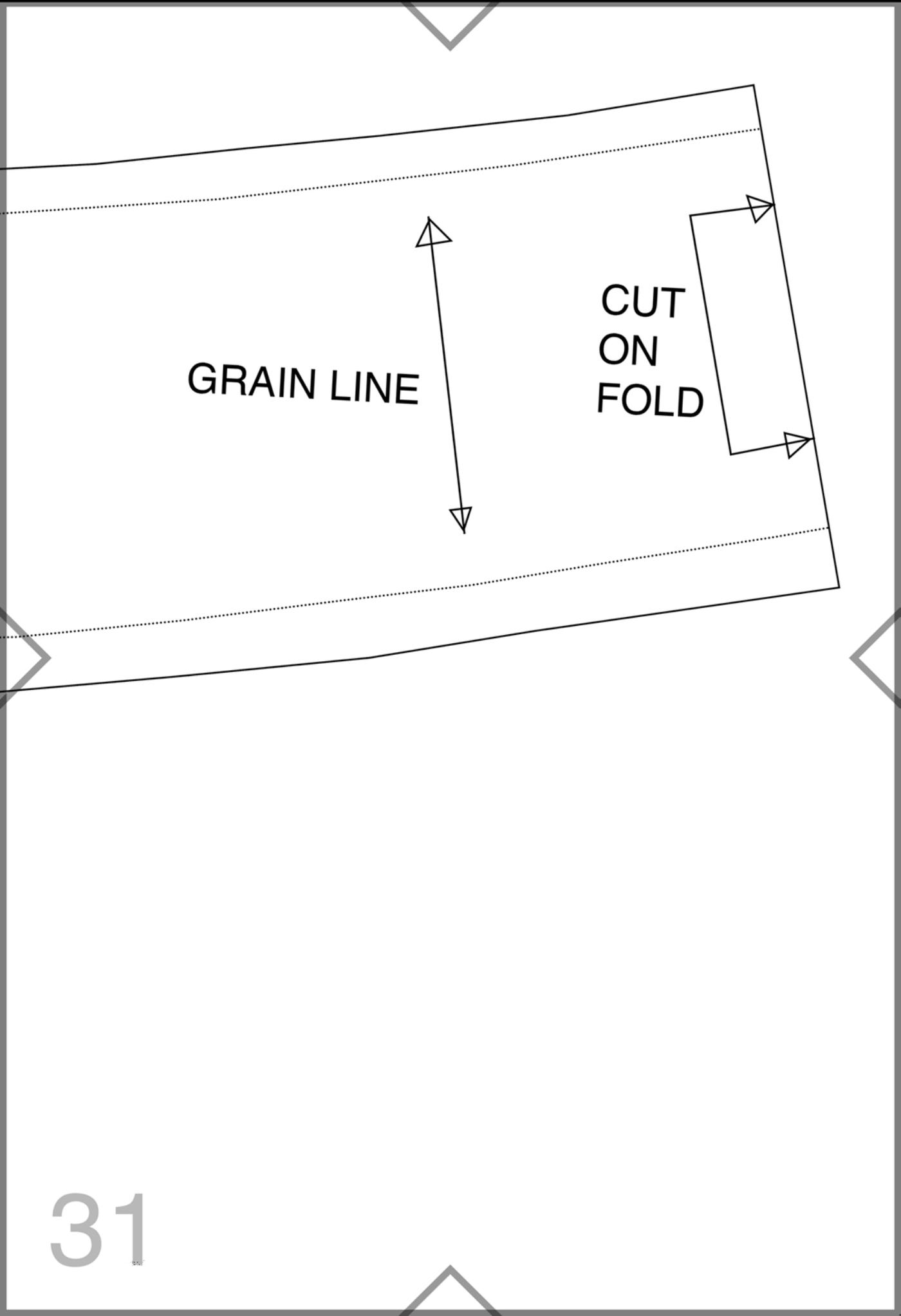


28



MAKE UP COMPLETE  
FACING FIRST  
THEN BAG OUT HEM

FRONT HEM FACING  
CUT 1 SELF ON FOLD



GRAIN LINE

CUT  
ON  
FOLD