

# BIKES AND BLOOMERS

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

## #2 CYCLING SEMI-SKIRT

A cycling costume inspired by  
Madame Julia Gill's 1895 UK Patent #6794



## PATTERN #2

# CYCLING SEMI-SKIRT

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### DESIGN FEATURES

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This A-line skirt features a decorative lower flounce with a concealed cord threaded through a series of rings. To convert the skirt, the wearer lifts the hem to the waist, creating a semi-skirt, and uses the cord to secure the material. The fullness of the skirt is tucked away, thus eliminating the danger of material getting caught in the moving wheels. The lower flounce, when made from similar material to the jacket, creates a stylish double peplum.

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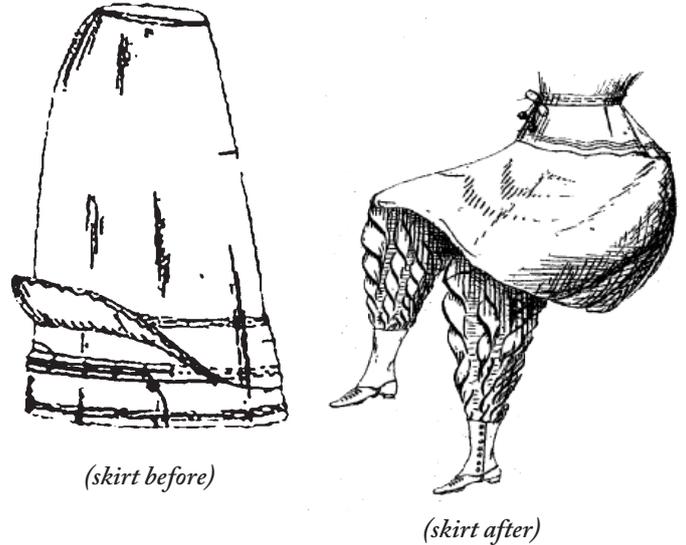
### THE INVENTOR: MADAME JULIA GILL

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**MADAME JULIA GILL**, Court Dressmaker, 56 Haverstock Hill, N.W. lodged her patent for 'A Cycling Costume for Ladies' on 16th February 1895. Court Dressmakers were hard working, often independent small business owners. Middle and upperclass women would commission them to make their new wardrobe for major events such as the London Season - an annual period spanning Dec to June when people flocked to the city for political, social and cultural activities.

Cycling was the 'new cult' in the mid 1890s and many middle and upperclass women with the resources for leisure time, a new bicycle and specialised costumes drew reference from an abundance of new media and ideas flowing into Victorian society - from local cycling periodicals to colour fashion plates from Paris and exotic tales from foreign travellers. These new cyclists were willing to defy public opinion and push at the edges of social convention, even when it resulted in verbal and even physical assault as parts of society struggled with new forms of female independence.

Small business owners like Julia furnished women not only with brand new cycling costumes, but also with new ideas and imaginaries of being in and moving through public space. Convertible costumes like this cycling semi-skirt enabled wearers to occupy multiple modal identities - giving women choice and control over when and where they cycled and tools to minimise the potential for harassment in public. These kinds of garments materially intervened in discussions about women's engagement and rights in public space, both for newly independent mobile citizens and also for women as business owners carving out space for their cutting-edge designs in a rapidly expanding retail sector.



**“My invention has for its object to provide a suitable combination costume for lady cyclists, so that they have a safe riding garment combined with an ordinary walking costume for use when dismounted.”**

*Madame Julia Gill (1895)*



*(A hand cranked sewing machine of the era)*

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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!

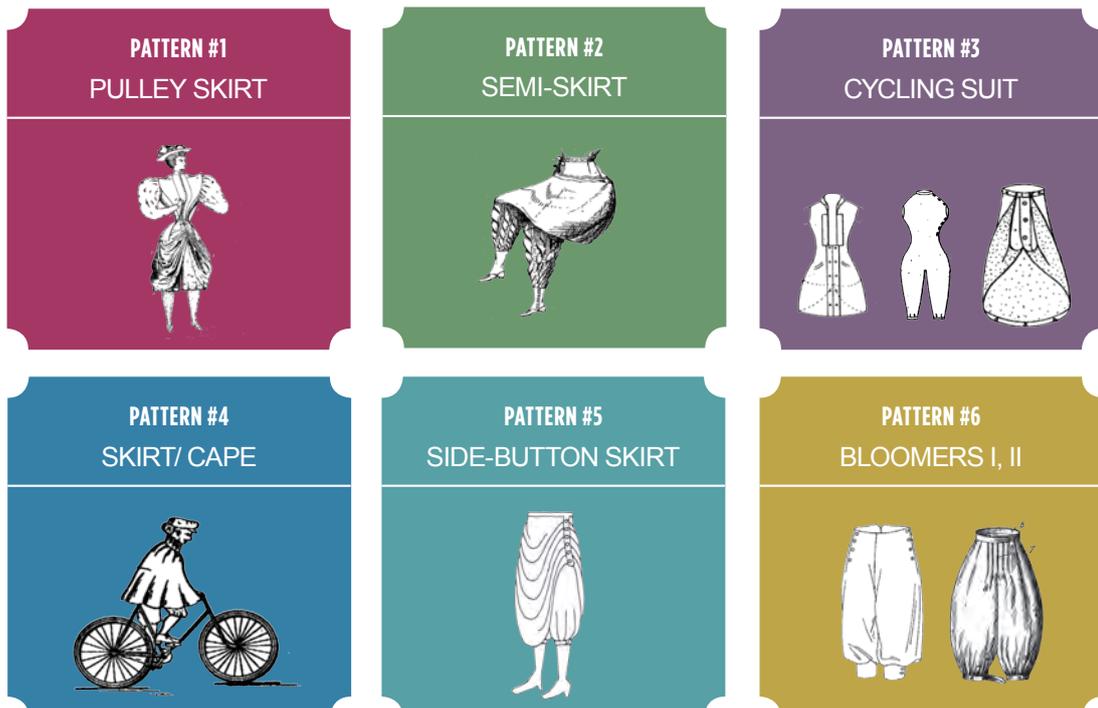
Six sewing patterns in this collection (comprising a total of nine different garments) are inspired by convertible cycle wear patents lodged in the 1890s by inventive British women. They form part of an ESRC funded **Bikes & Bloomers** sociology project led by Dr Kat Jungnickel at Goldsmiths, University 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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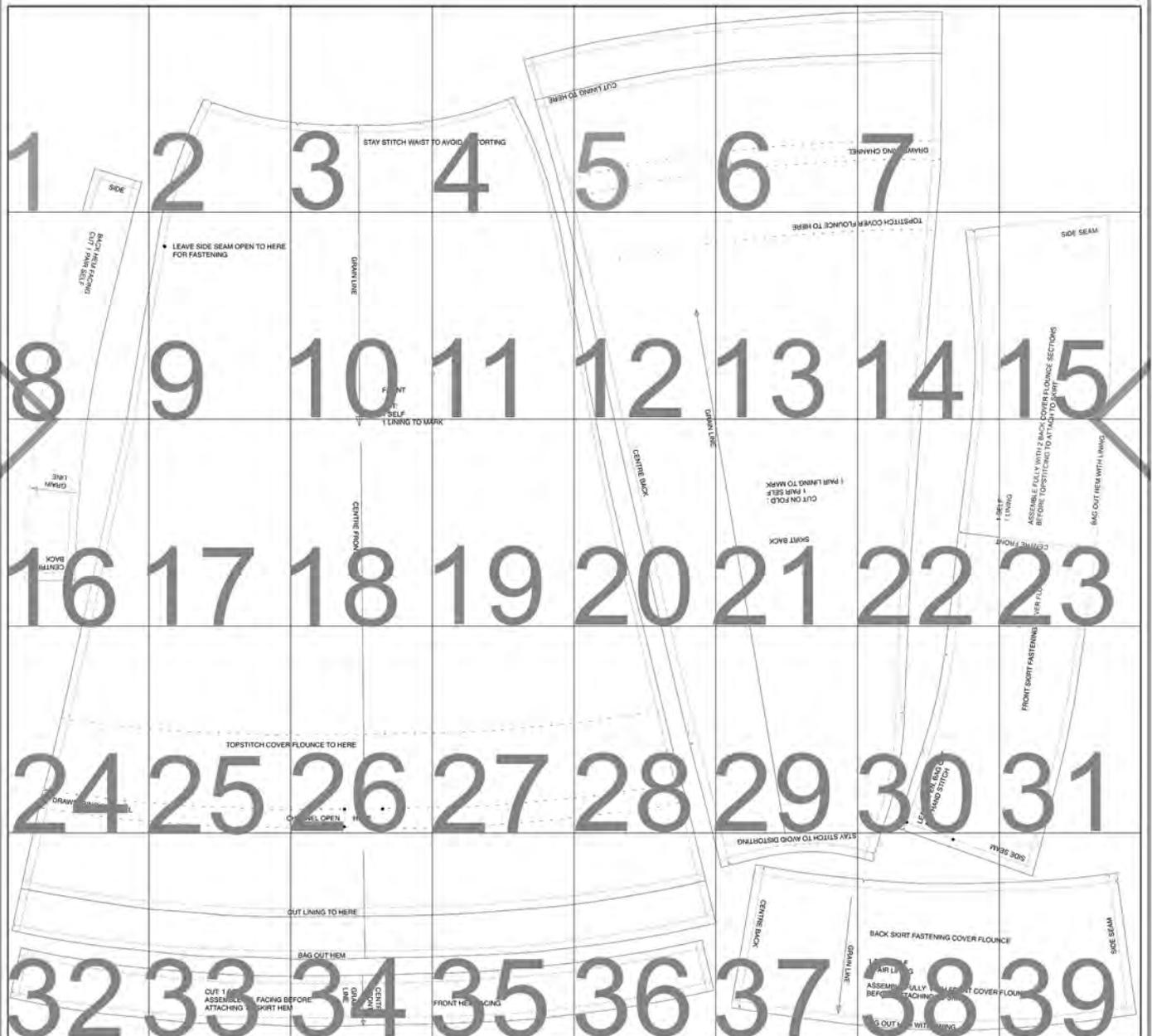




VICTORIAN WOMEN'S  
CONVERTIBLE CYCLE WEAR  
**SEWING PATTERNS**

**#2 CYCLING  
SEMI-SKIRT**

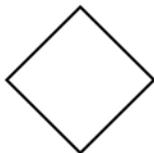
www.BIKESandBLOOMERS.com



CUT OR FOLD TO PRINT SAFE BOX

LINE UP SHAPES

STICK TOGETHER

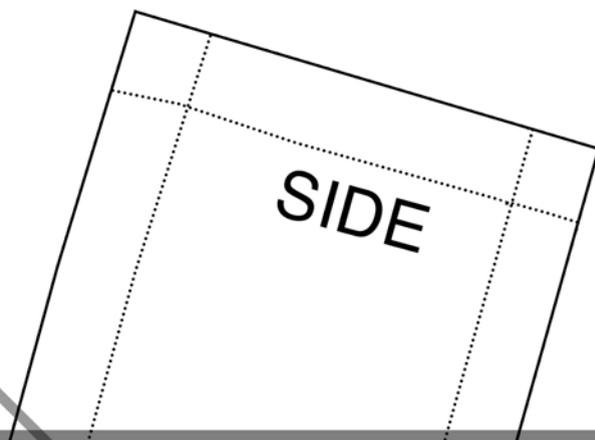


CUTTING LINE \_\_\_\_\_

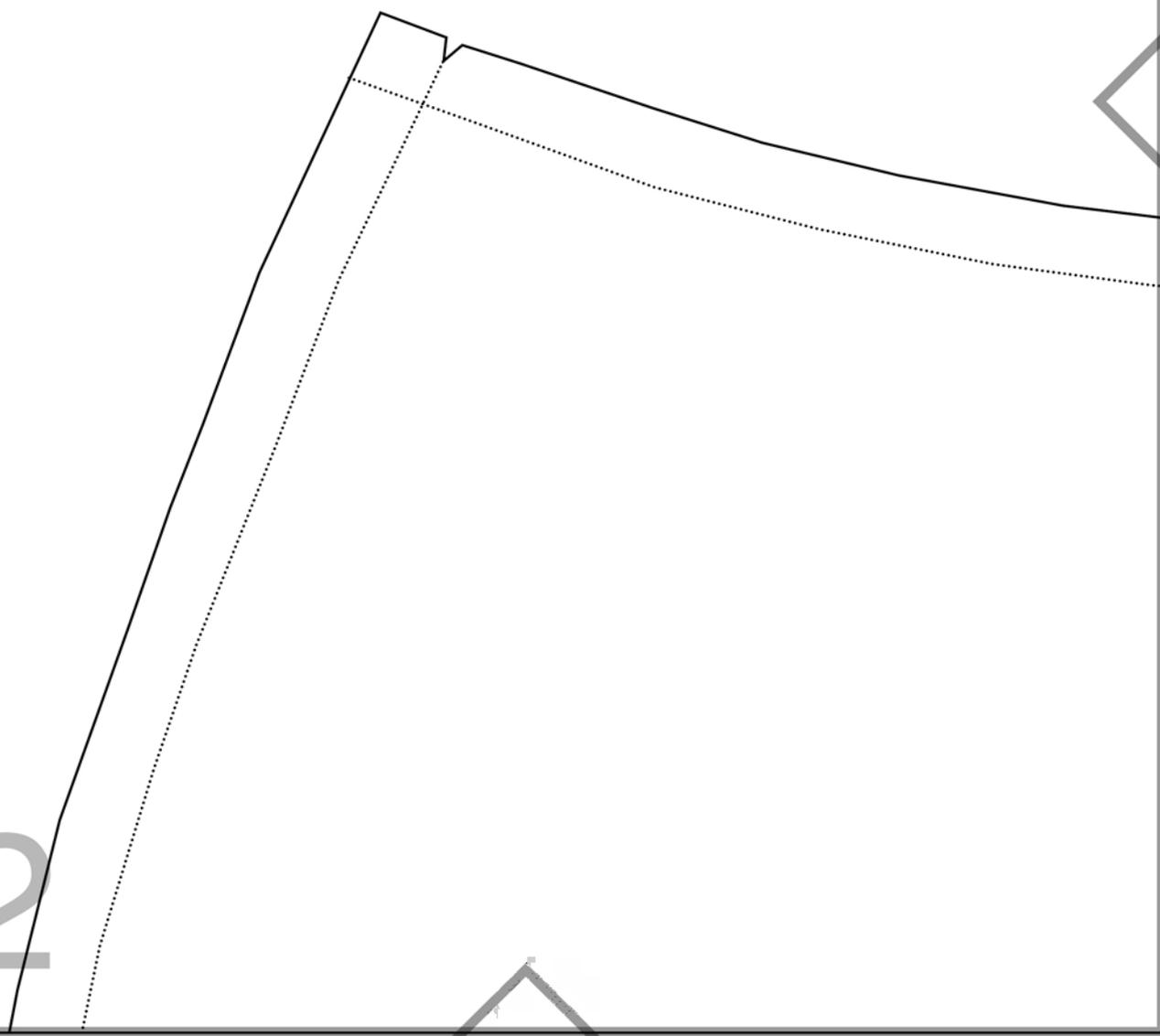
SEAM ALLOWANCE .....

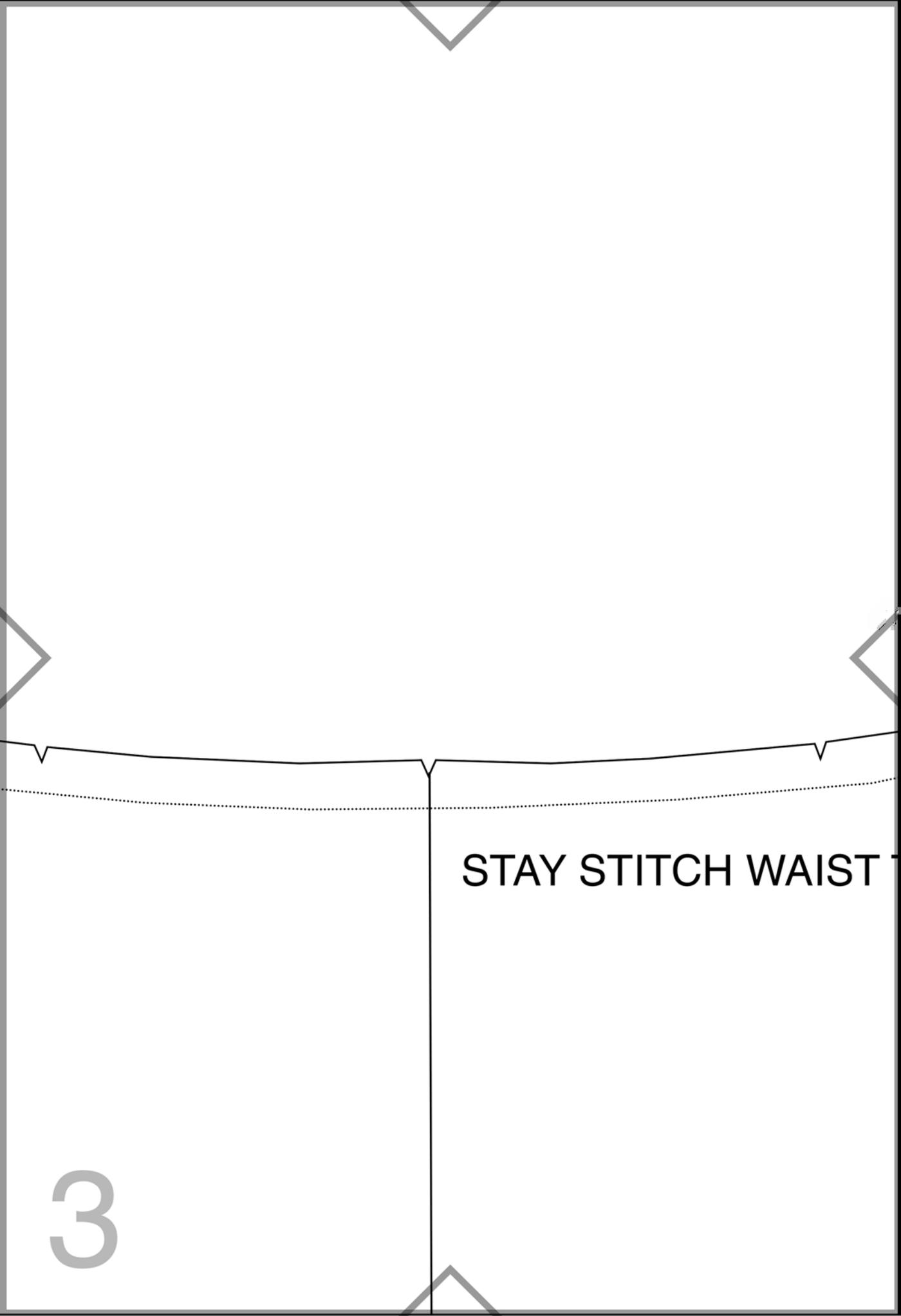
ADD FACING AND FASTENING OF YOUR CHOICE ON SIDE OF SKIRT  
FOR WAISTBAND USE GROSGRAIN TAPE OR STRIP OF SELF FABRIC  
USE RIBBON OR CORD FOR DRAWSTRING  
PULL THROUGH CHANNEL USING SAFETY PIN  
REPLACE CHANNEL WITH SMALL RINGS FOR VISIBLE FASTENING  
BAG OUT SELF AND LINING TO MAKE FLOUNCE AND FIT TO OUTSIDE OF SKIRT

1



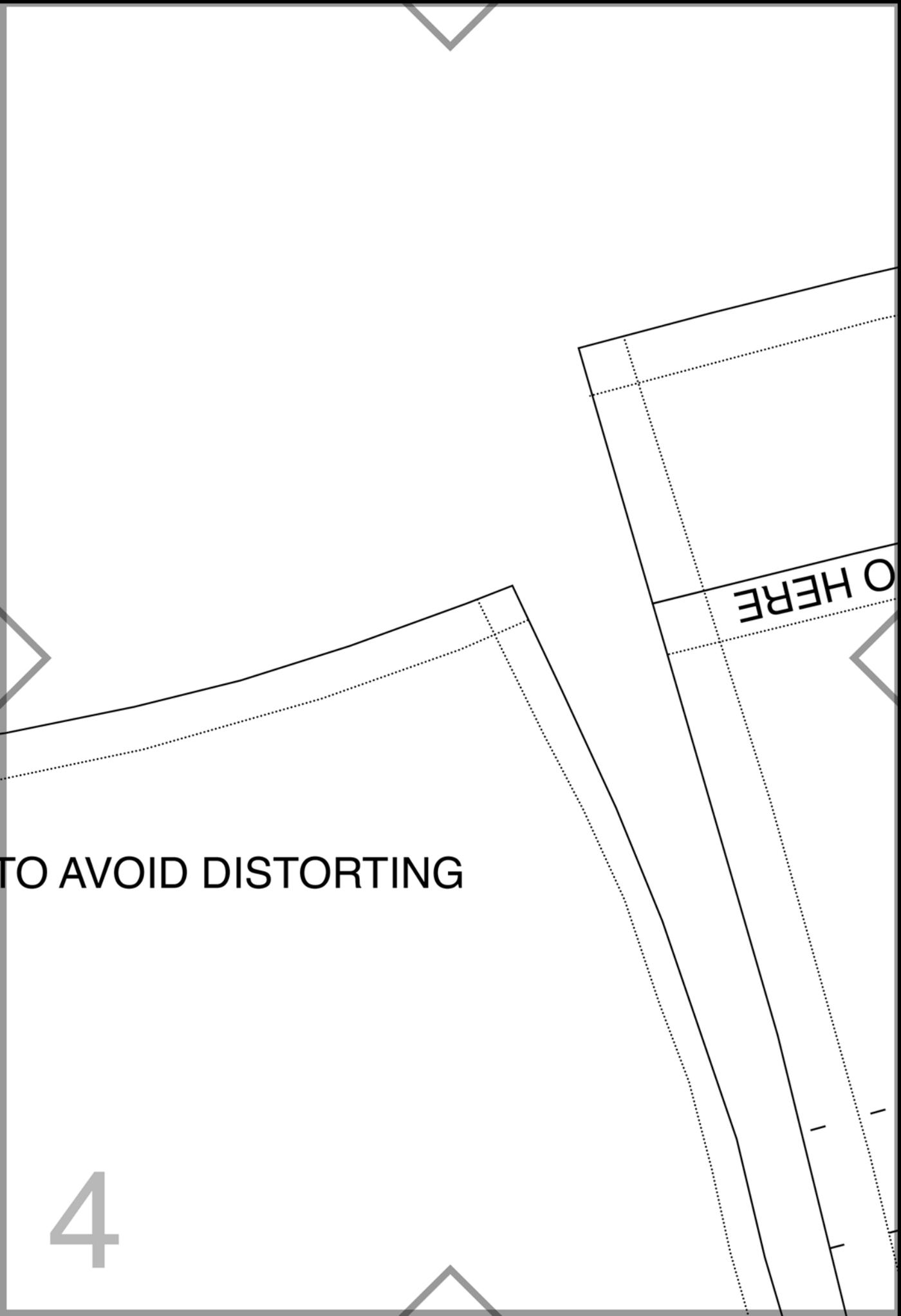
2





STAY STITCH WAIST

3



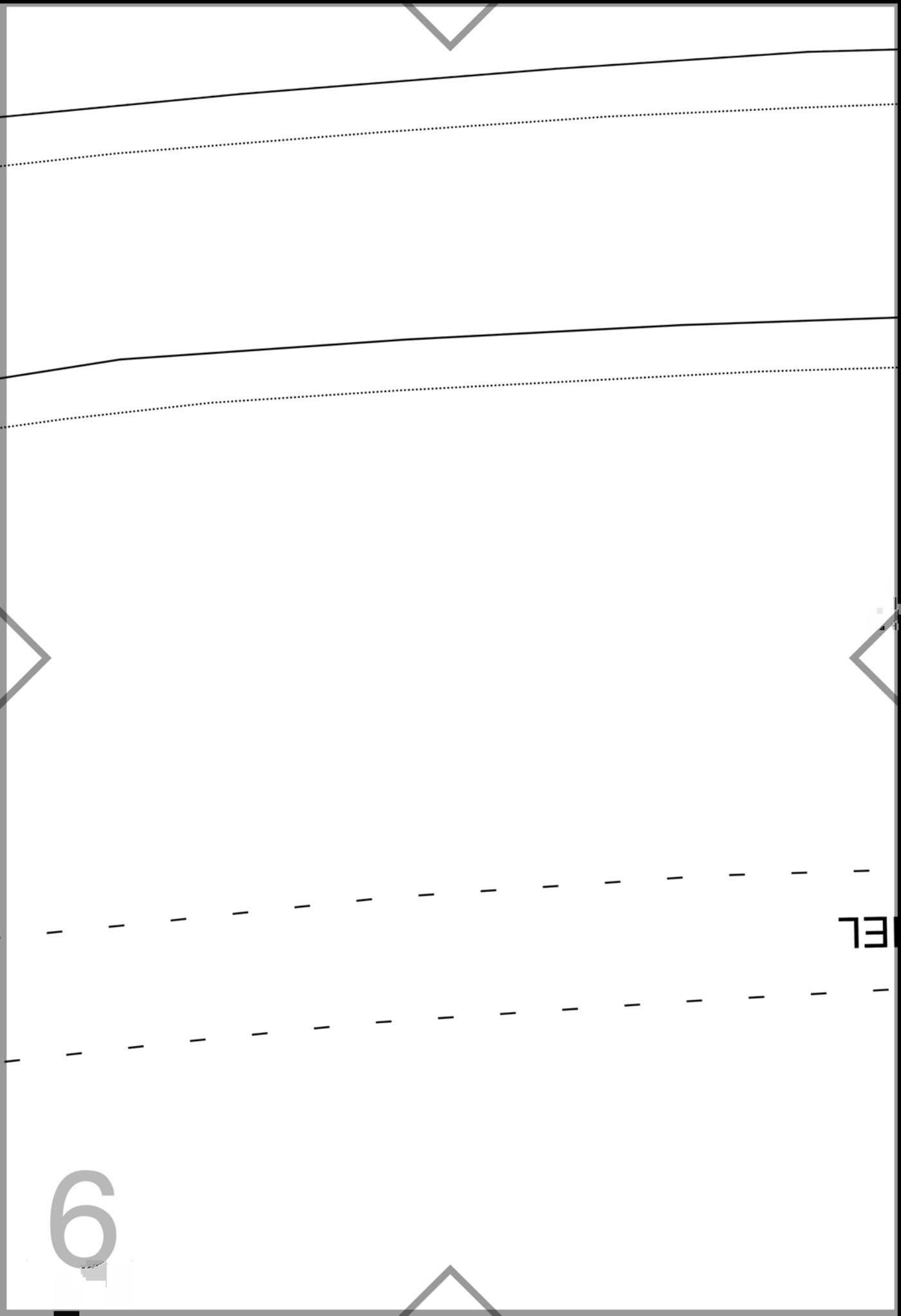
TO AVOID DISTORTING

O HERE

4

CUT LINES TO

5



6

73

DRAWSTRING CHANN

7

BACK HEM FACING  
CUT 1 PAIR SELF

- 
- LEAVE SIDE SEAM OPEN TO HERE FOR FASTENING

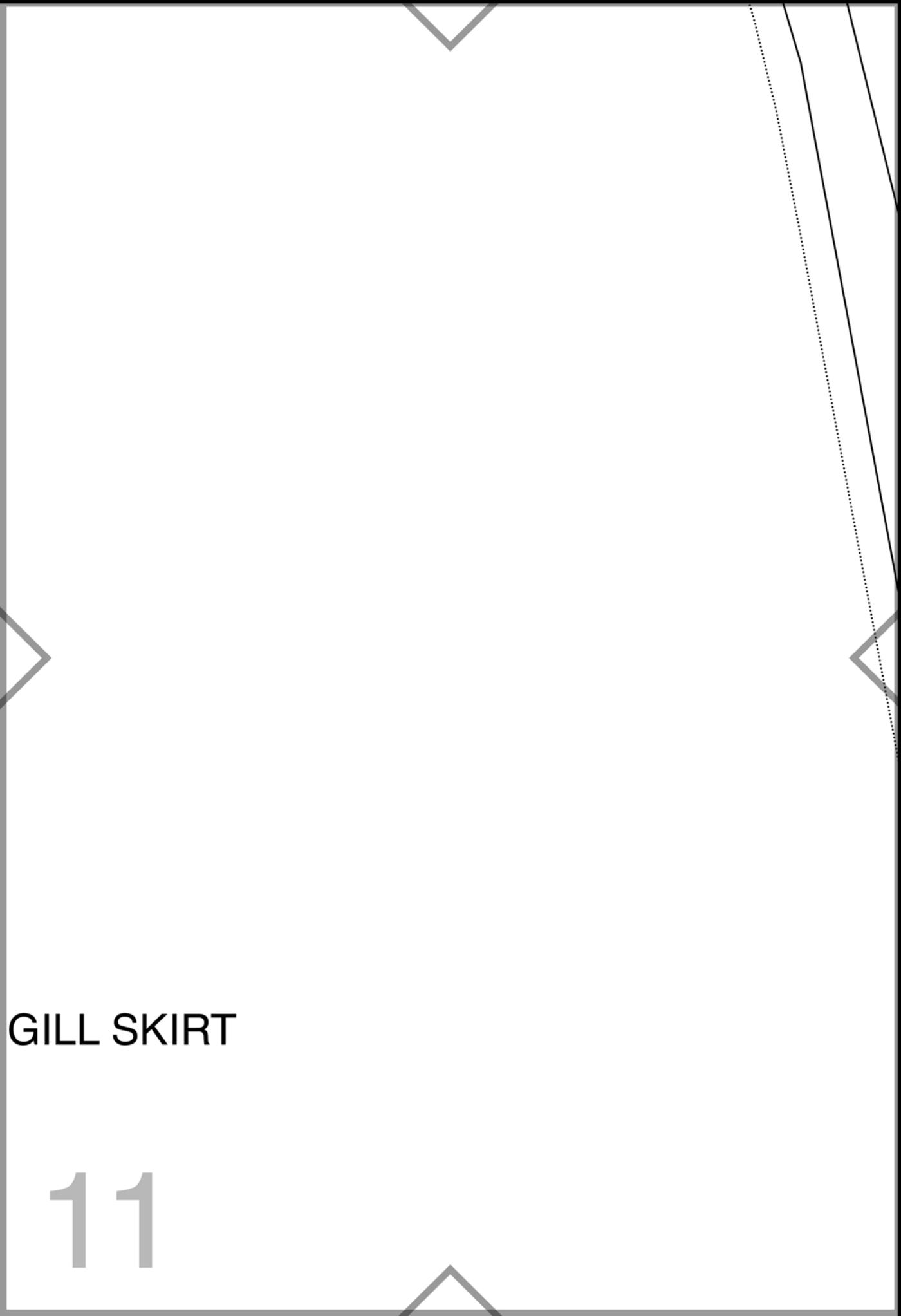
GRAIN LINE

MADAME JULIA

FRONT

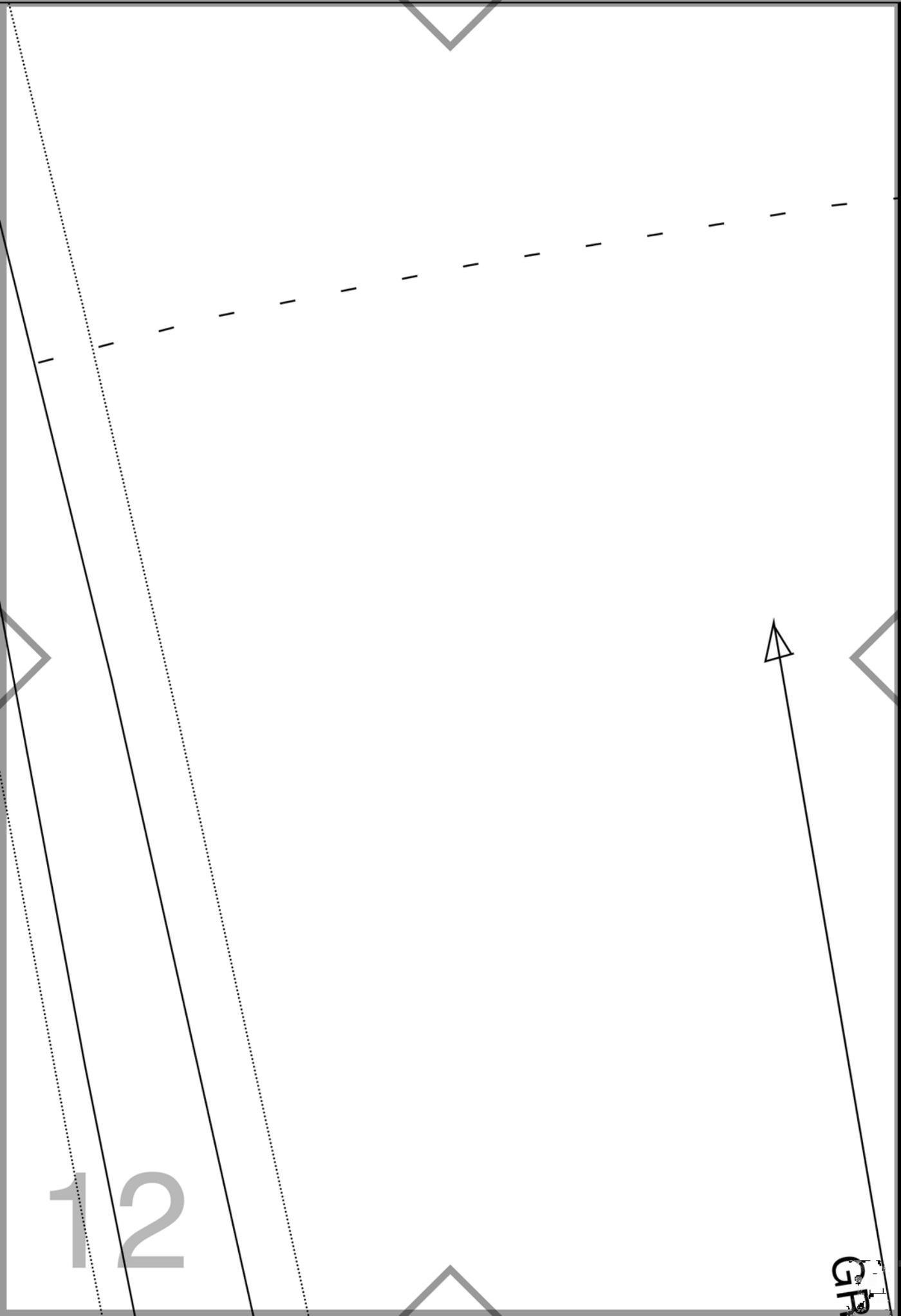
CUT:  
1 SELF

10



GILL SKIRT

11



12

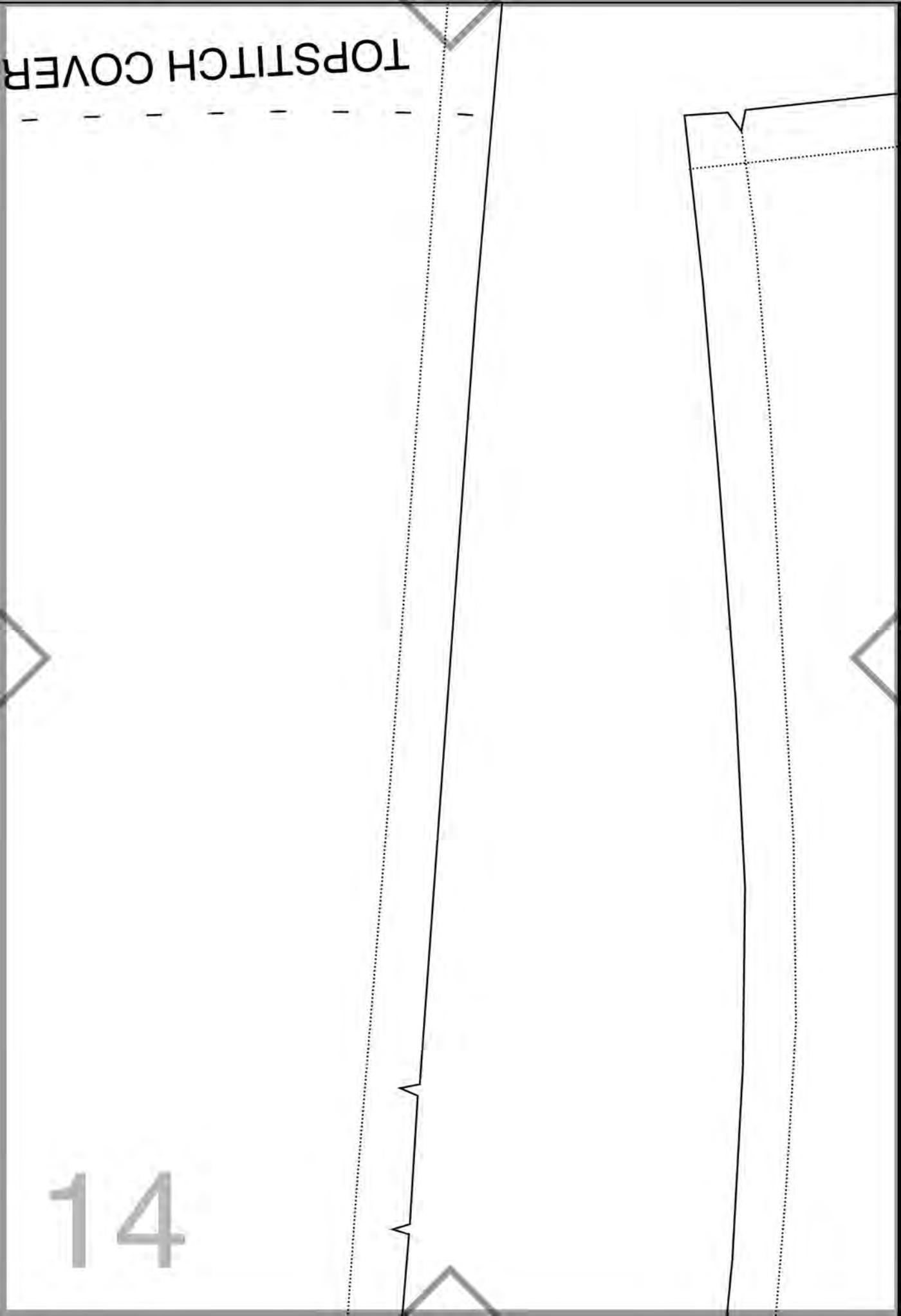
GP

FLOUNCE TO HERE

13

TOPSTITCH COVER

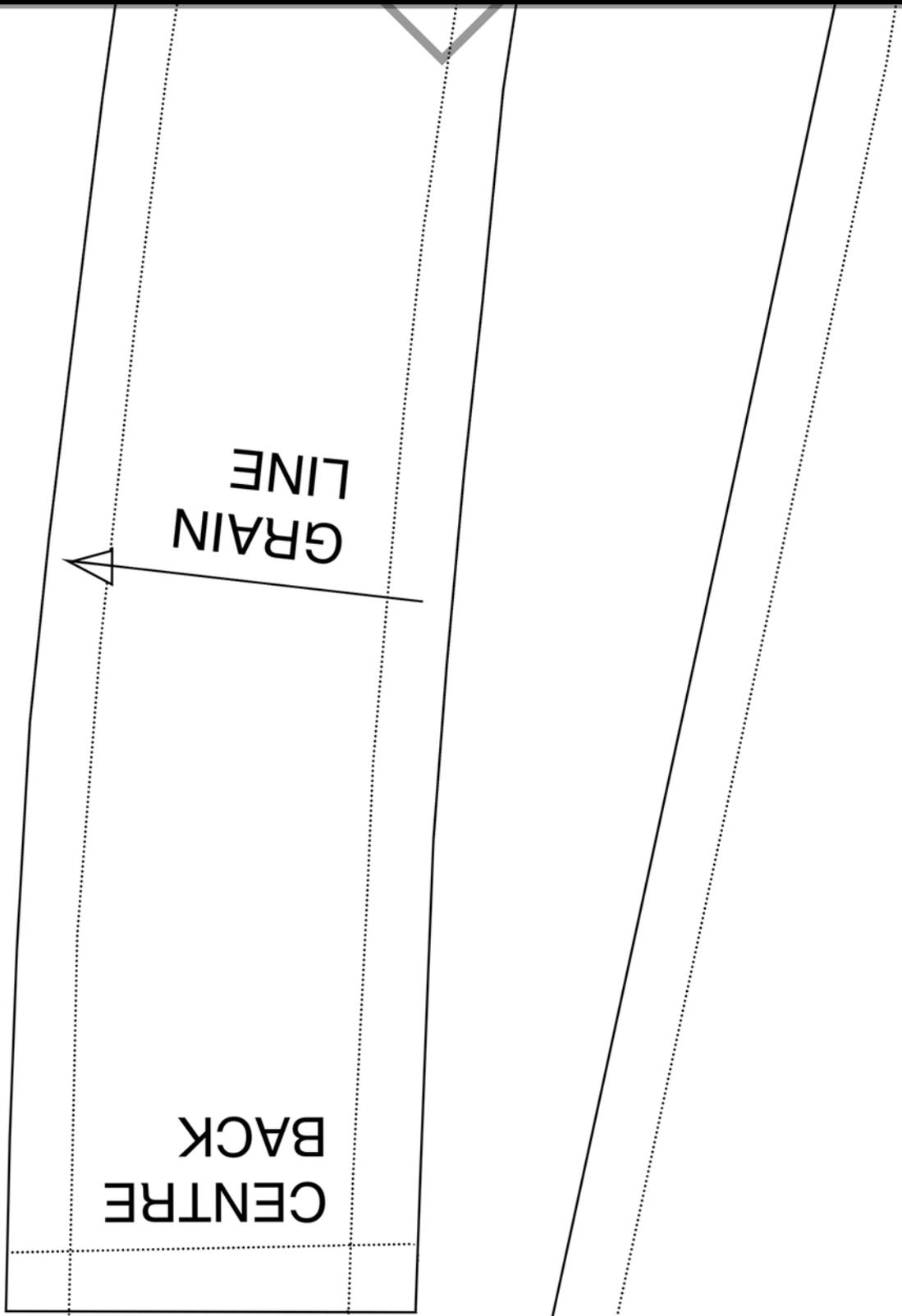
14



SIDE SEAM

15

COVER FLOUNCE SECTIONS  
H TO SKIRT



1 LINING TO MA

CENTRE FRONT

18



AIN LINE

CENTRE BACK

20

CUT ON FOLD :  
1 PAIR SELF  
1 PAIR LINING TO MARK

SKIRT BACK

21

22

100%

F

# 23 JULIA

COVER FLOUNCE

CENTRE FRONT

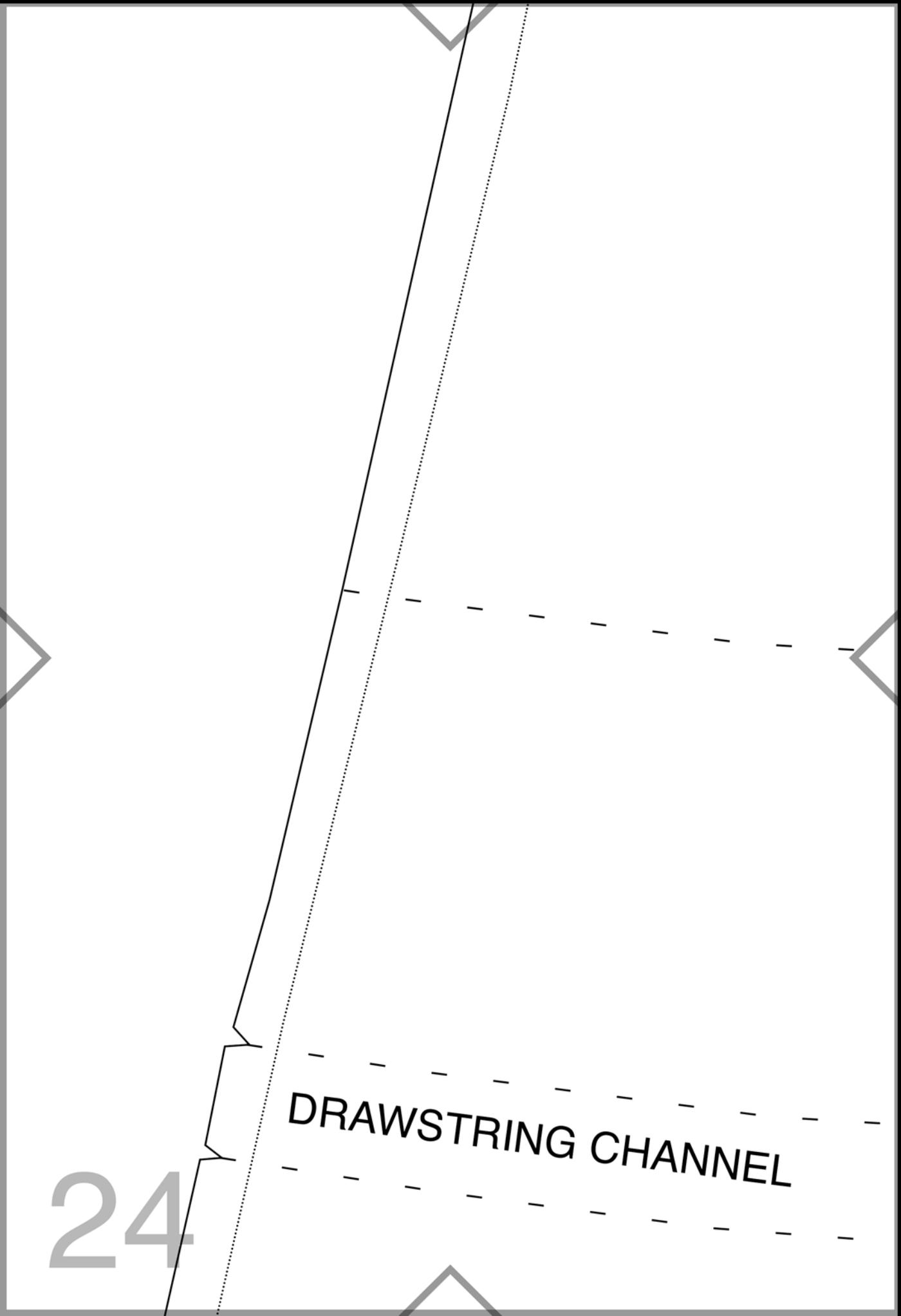
TO SELF  
1 LINING

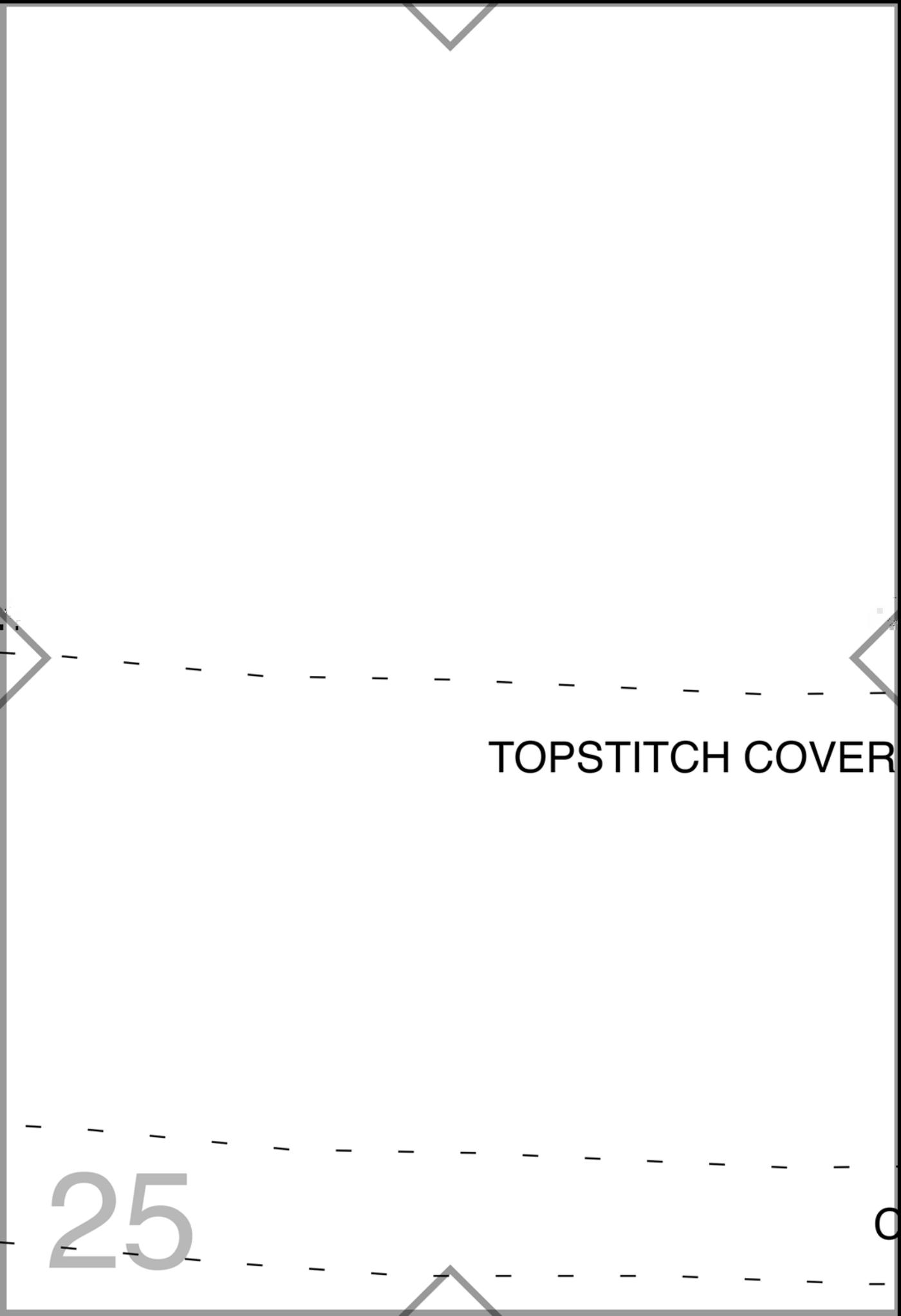
ASSEMBLE FULLY WITH 2 BACK  
BEFORE TOPSTITCHING TO ATTACH

BAG OUT HEM WITH LINING

24

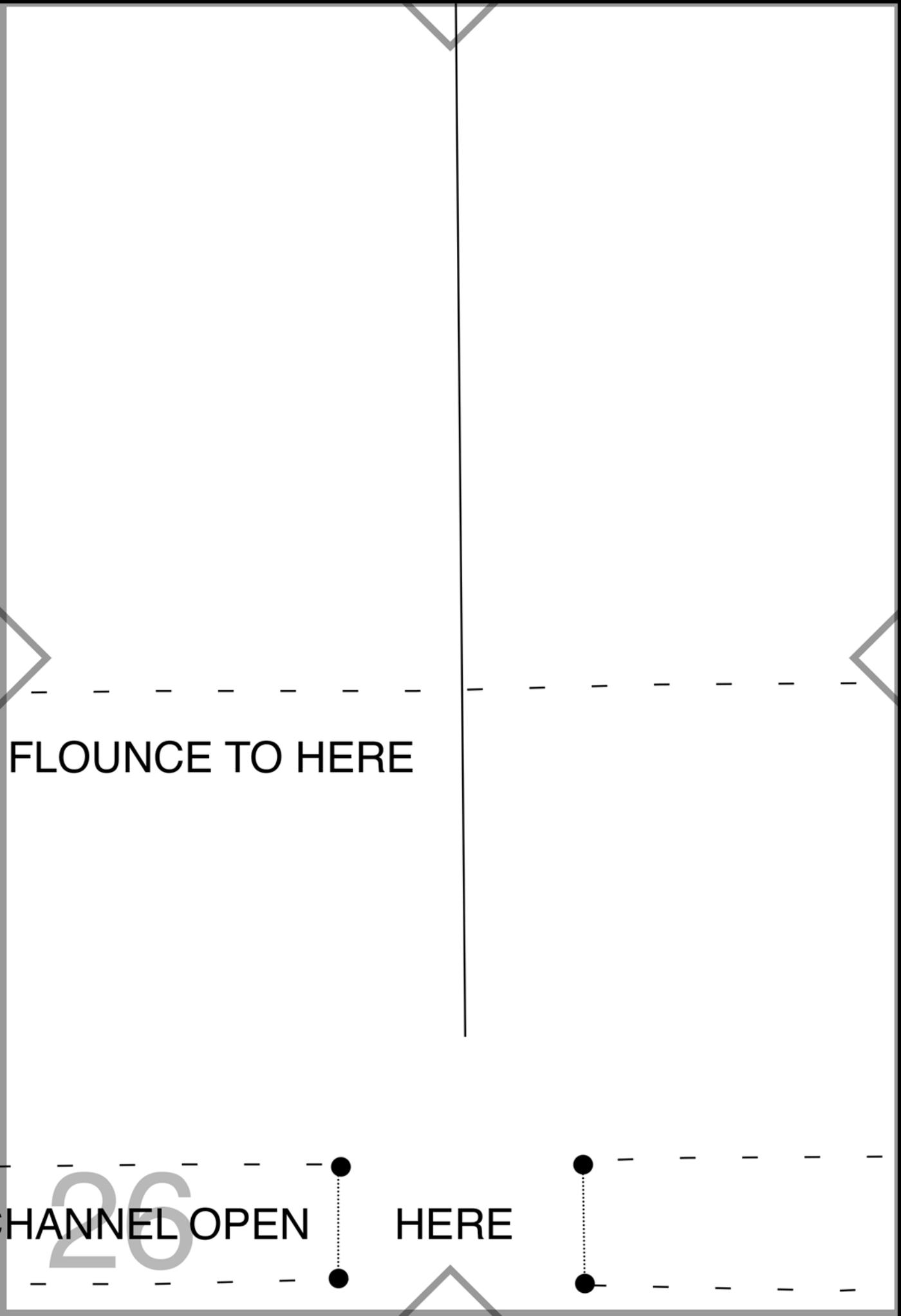
DRAWSTRING CHANNEL





TOPSTITCH COVER

25

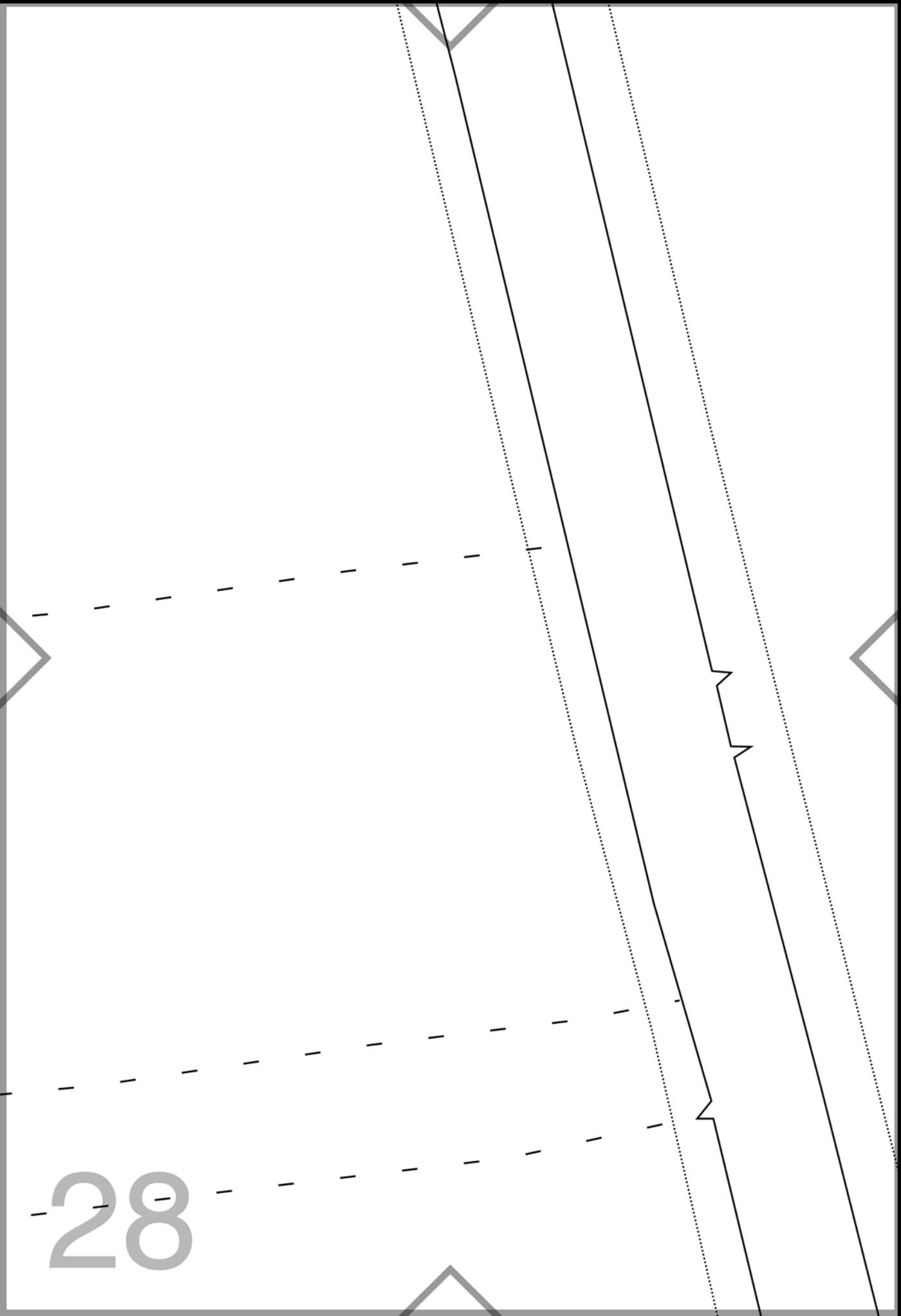


FLOUNCE TO HERE

CHANNEL OPEN HERE

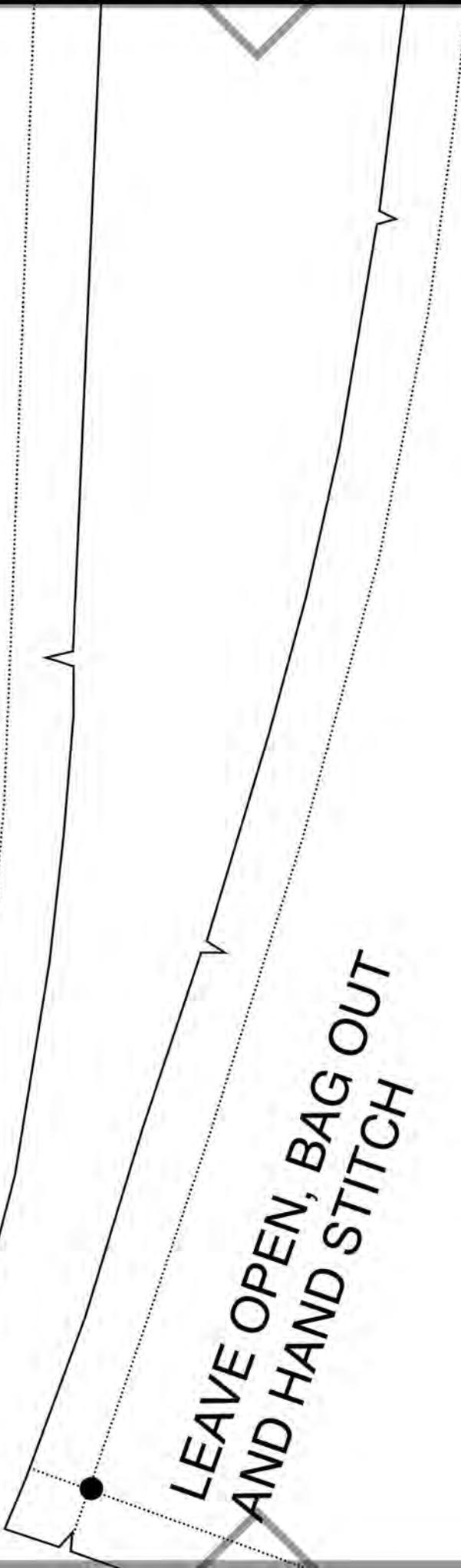
26

27



28

29

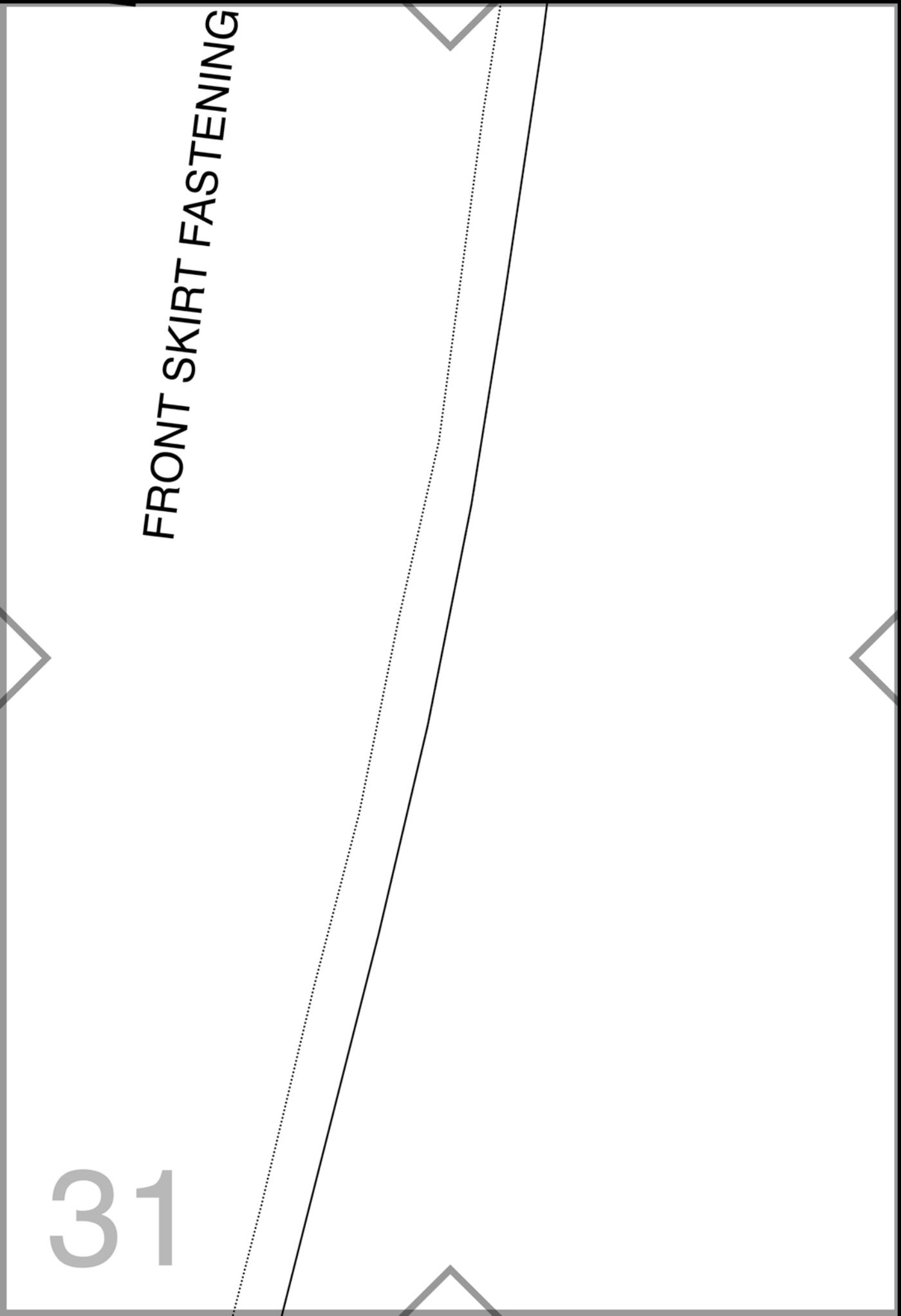


LEAVE OPEN, BAG OUT  
AND HAND STITCH

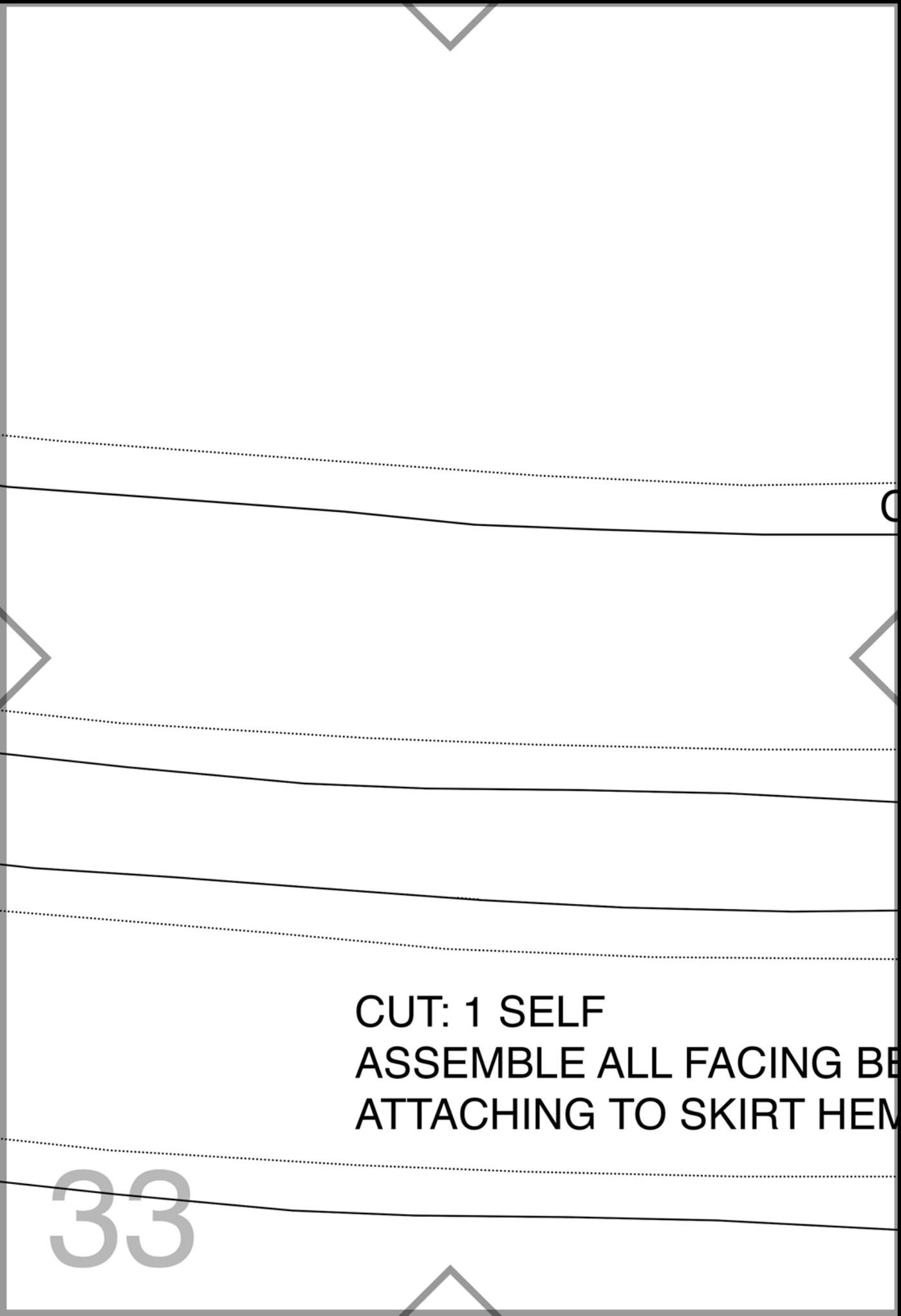
30

31

FRONT SKIRT FASTENING







CUT: 1 SELF  
ASSEMBLE ALL FACING BE  
ATTACHING TO SKIRT HEM

CUT LINING TO HERE

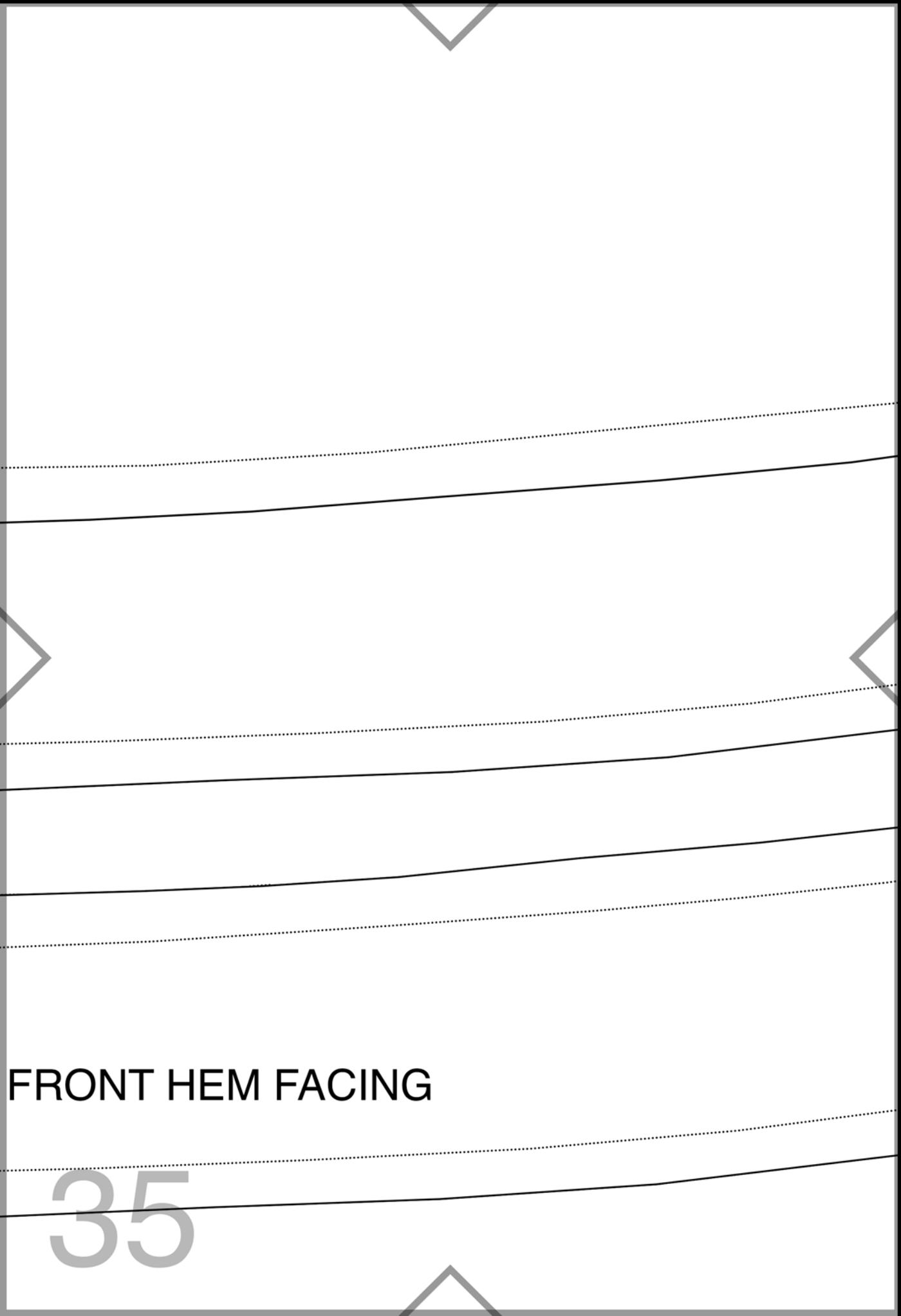
BAG OUT HEM

BEFORE

GRAIN  
LINE

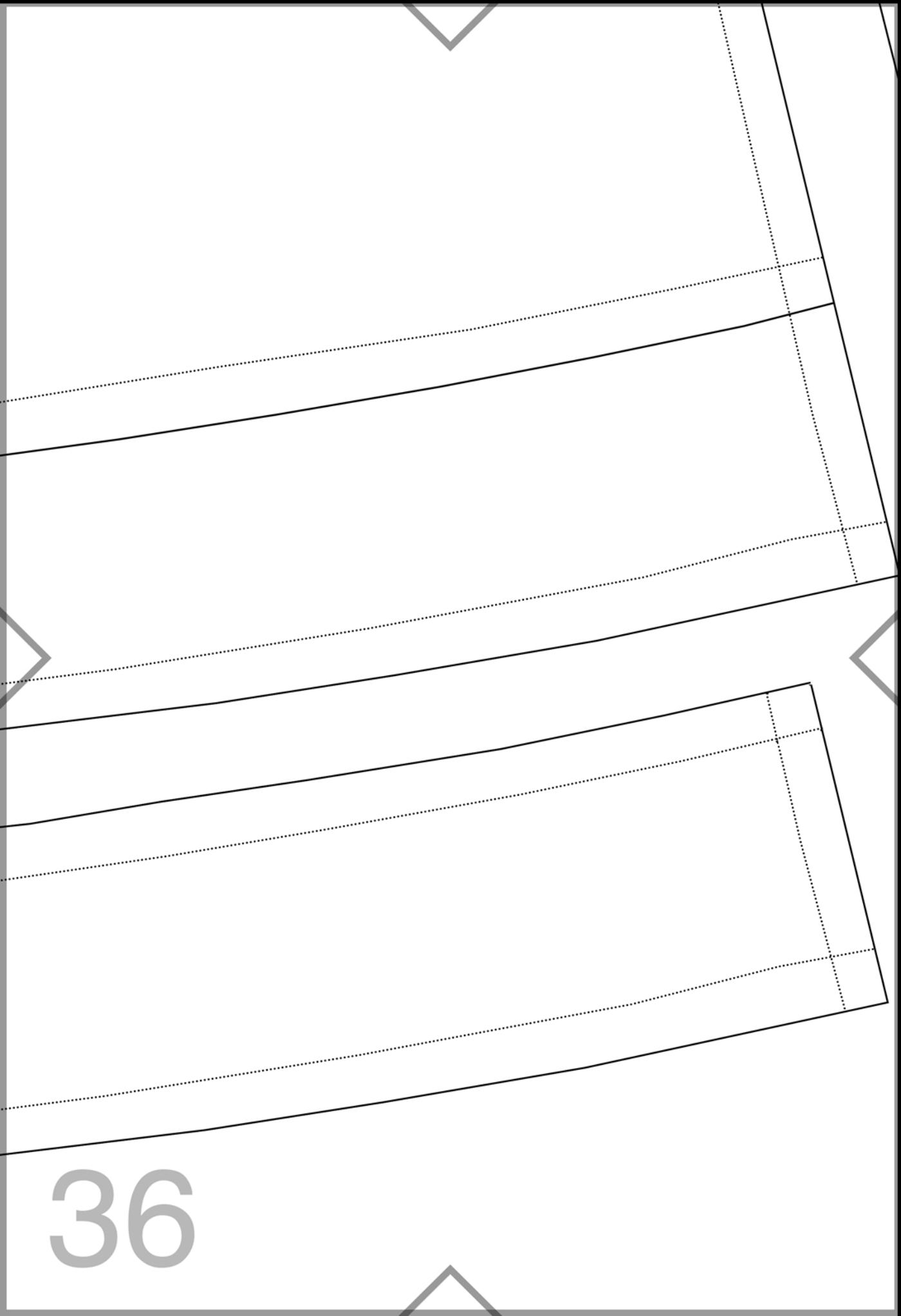
CENTRE  
FRONT

34



FRONT HEM FACING

35



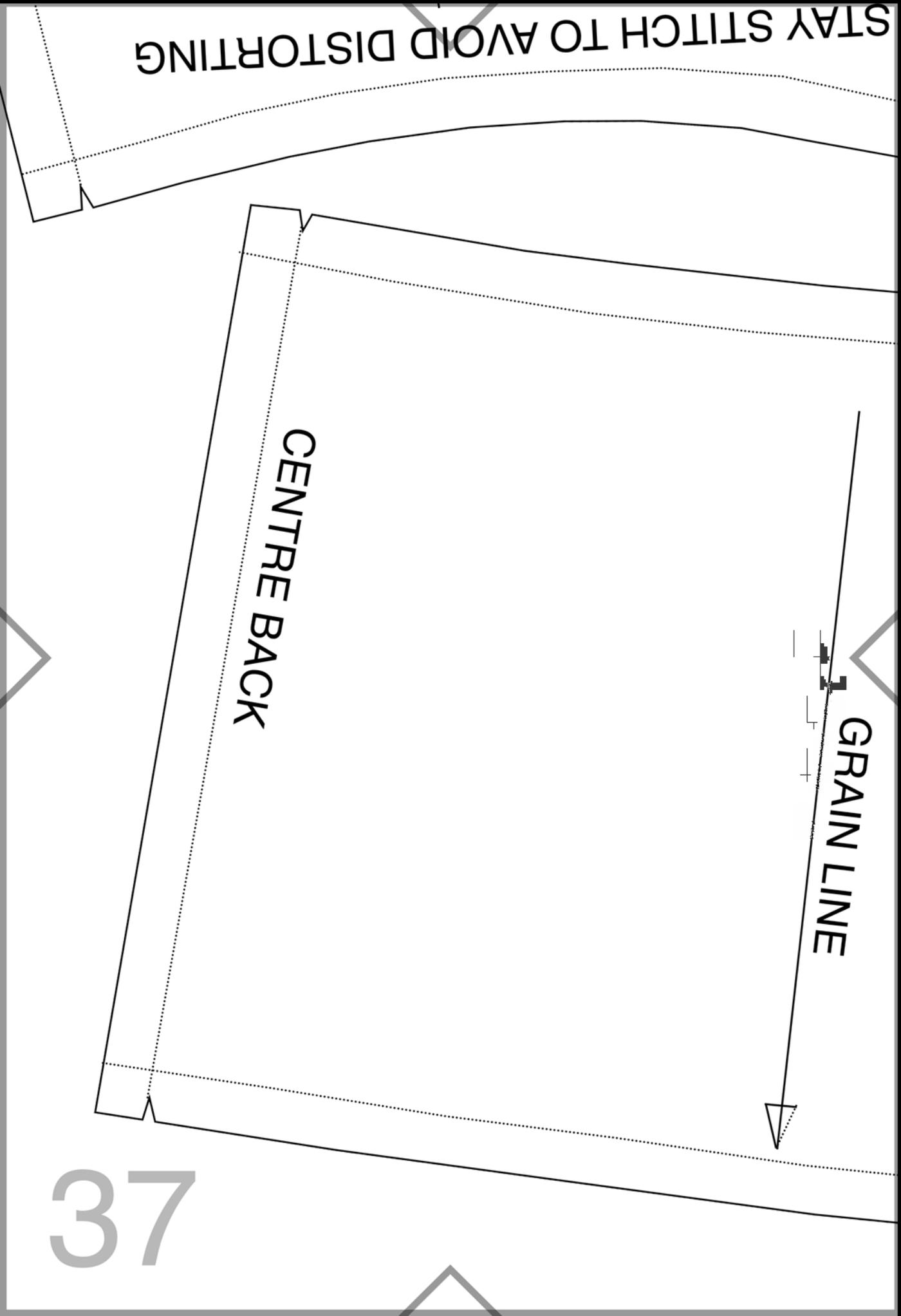
36

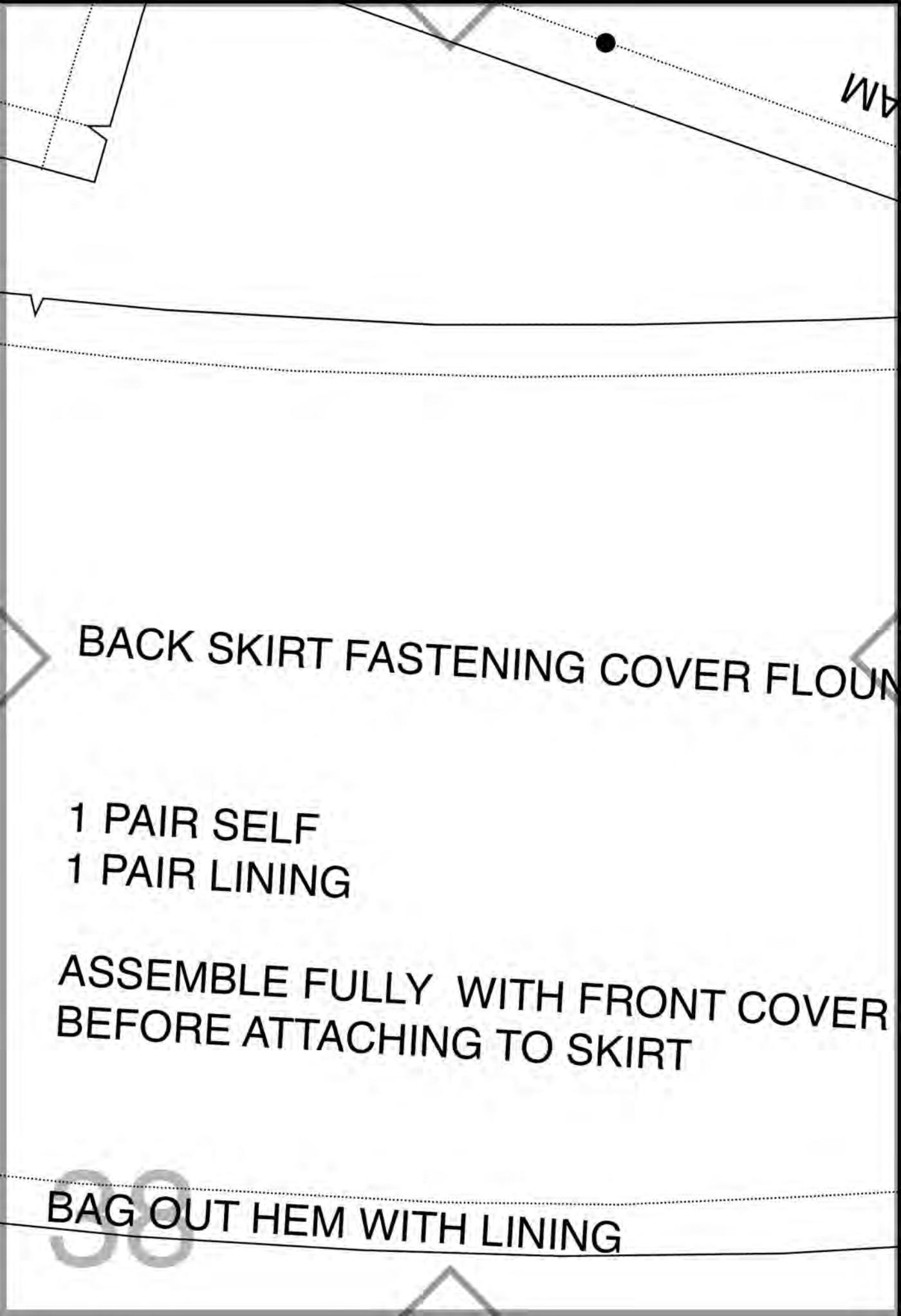
STAY STITCH TO AVOID DISTORTING

CENTRE BACK

GRAIN LINE

37





MM

BACK SKIRT FASTENING COVER FLOUN

1 PAIR SELF  
1 PAIR LINING

ASSEMBLE FULLY WITH FRONT COVER  
BEFORE ATTACHING TO SKIRT

BAG OUT HEM WITH LINING

SIDE SEAM

ICE

FLOUNCE

SIDE SEAM

39