

Petite Plus Patterns for the Under-Tall!

BY YVONNE KEEN

Stand aside all you tall, slender Aphrodite types so beloved of commercial pattern companies, now someone has very sensibly decided to make patterns especially for us ... you know Venus de Milo without the long legs and long torso. Too good an opportunity to miss, Yvonne has decided to trial these patterns, as good-fitting clothes made with a minimum of fuss has long been but a dream.



We shorties make up a significant proportion of the population and for too long have been ignored! Yes, of course the commercial patterns have lines to shorten their patterns and yes, there are whole libraries of books available on how to alter patterns to fit the shorter, more curvaceous figure. But my goodness, by the time you alter the pattern in numerous ways, cutting,

spreading and pasting, and adding, the whole exercise becomes a trial of patience and stamina. By the time you get the pattern right and fitting correctly you need to make it up at least 10 times to repay yourself for the time spent doing all the alterations. Wouldn't it be nice – just once – to make something up and have it fit without spending hours and hours altering the pattern and using up the budget of a small country in sticky-tape?

Kathleen Cheetham, finding herself in such a position, started a small, independent pattern company to provide basic patterns that catered for those with similar needs to herself.

These patterns are specifically designed for those of short stature, 158cm (5ft 2in) or less, who have a full bust ('D' cup bust size). Also add narrow shoulders, short waist length, rounded tummy, short crotch depth and short legs to the list.

Does this sound like you; certainly me to a 'T'! The patterns are multi-sized from size 14 to size 24, which is wonderful if you are not consistent in size from neck to knee.

There are several pattern styles available; from a short-sleeved shell top with neckline variations, a flat-front pant pattern with elasticised sides, a button-front blouse, as well as a straight-front skirt with variations, to dresses and nightwear. To see the full range visit the Petite Plus Patterns website at www.petitepluspatterns.com.

I've decided to trial the shell top and flat-front pant patterns as finding good-fitting clothes, particularly pants made with a minimum of fuss, is like discovering the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. These pieces will be a good test as, while both had fairly simple lines, if both these garments fitted reasonably well I could be assured that buying more patterns in the range would be a good investment.

Great Tip

Trialing patterns in calico can be very beneficial but at the end of the day, you cannot and probably would not want to wear calico. Hence, I would rather trial a pattern in inexpensive dress fabric, because if it works I have a garment that can be worn. I found a soft navy blue rayon fabric with a nice drape that would be a practical addition to my wardrobe. At \$1.95m and 150cm (60in) wide, it actually became cheaper to trial in fabric than in calico.

To really trial the patterns I took my measurements, compared them to the chart for each pattern, did the necessary alterations and then made up the garments without any fittings. By doing this I could clearly determine whether they had worked or not.

Shell top

There are four neckline variations and I chose view D, a scoop neck. The first thing I realised, that as a 'D' cup bust size it would not be necessary to do a bust adjustment to the pattern. However, the pattern does come with comprehensive instructions



on how to alter for a larger bust measurement or indeed, how to alter for a smaller bust. There are also great instructions on neck and shoulder adjustments and refitting the neckline. The directions for garment construction are clear and comprehensive.

There is a comprehensive measurement chart provided for comparison purposes; including a high bust, full bust, waist, tummy, hips, back waist length and back shoulder width, making the comparison between both the pattern and measurement relatively easy. My measurements indicated that I was a size 18 at the bust and high bust point graduating to a size 16 at hip and tummy levels. As my waist measurement is quite thick I chose to cut out the size 18 patterns all over, rather than graduating to a smaller size at hip level. The top was then made up following the pattern instructions, omitting the optional under bust tucks as I felt the tucks would not suit my figure type.

Verdict

The top fits amazingly well. The shoulder length and armhole position is good and the neckline is just right. The darts actually sit at bust level (in most commercial patterns they are generally closer to my waist!) and the sleeves are a comfortable fit.

Any drawbacks are few and relatively minor. I usually wear shoulder pads and the top fitted nicely with shoulder pads in the garment. If I wanted a top without shoulder pads, minor shoulder adjustments would be necessary. The top is also a little shorter than the length I prefer, but lengthening the top at hem level next time will be relatively simple. In all, I would say this top was a success, particularly considering the time saved in not having to do complex pattern alterations.

Flat-front pants

Again, the pattern instructions are comprehensive and easy to understand. The pant pattern is darted front and back with a centre-back zipper closure, and side elastic in the waistband. There are also instructions to alter the pattern to a pull-on elastic-waist pant. As with the top, there is a comprehensive measurement chart and a simple method for measuring the crotch depth. To measure the crotch depth, a piece of string or elastic is tied around the right thigh at the crotch level and another piece of string or elastic is tied at the waist. A measurement is taken over the hip curve between the two elastic or string pieces and compared to the measurement chart for the hip size. I found this an extremely easy way to independently take my own crotch depth measurement and the explanation on how to alter the pattern very simple to understand. The pattern guide sheets also contain excellent instructions for altering for a full or flat bottom, or abdomen.

My measurements indicated that I required a size 16 in the hip and tummy area, but a size 20 for my waist measurement. I used the graded pattern to cut from a size 20 at the waist to a size 16 over the hips. The pants were completed following the pattern instructions.

Verdict

The pants fit remarkably well. The front and back crotch lengths are excellent and the waistband is a comfortable fit. When I make this pattern again, I would shorten the side seams at waist level by 1cm (3/8in) which is a problem I have in all pants patterns, caused by lack of hip curve. Although I followed the length measurement instructions, the pants still needed shortening by a further 1cm (3/8in) before hemming. Apart from these two things, the pants are a good fit, comfortable and will be easy to wear.

At last, someone has recognised the dilemma facing those of us who are curvaceously gorgeous but, unfortunately, somewhat challenged in the height department, and has provided us with realistic, well-drafted patterns to make life 'sew much easier'.



Approximate cost per pattern is \$25 plus p&h.
 Petite Plus Patterns are available in Australia from:
 Perpetual Patterns, PO Box 52, Camberwell Vic 3125.
 Phone (03) 9809 2585 - Fax (03) 9809 2586
 Email p_patterns@yahoo.com
 Website www.perpetualpatterns.com.au