

Tips for Sewing Your Sencha Top

By Louise of www.anenthusiast.wordpress.com

For me the Sencha Top pattern by Colette Patterns is a bit of a love affair. When I started looking at independent pattern companies and sewing blogs online this blouse captivated me. It has lovely lines, buttons up the back, pretty variations and a timeless quality about it. One of the Downton Abbey ladies would no doubt be perfectly at ease swanning palely about the mansh in one of these.

I was not especially confident starting this project but I learned a lot by going through the process. At the time I wished for a bit of a hand-holding for some techniques, so over the next few pages I offer up a few ideas of how to get started too:

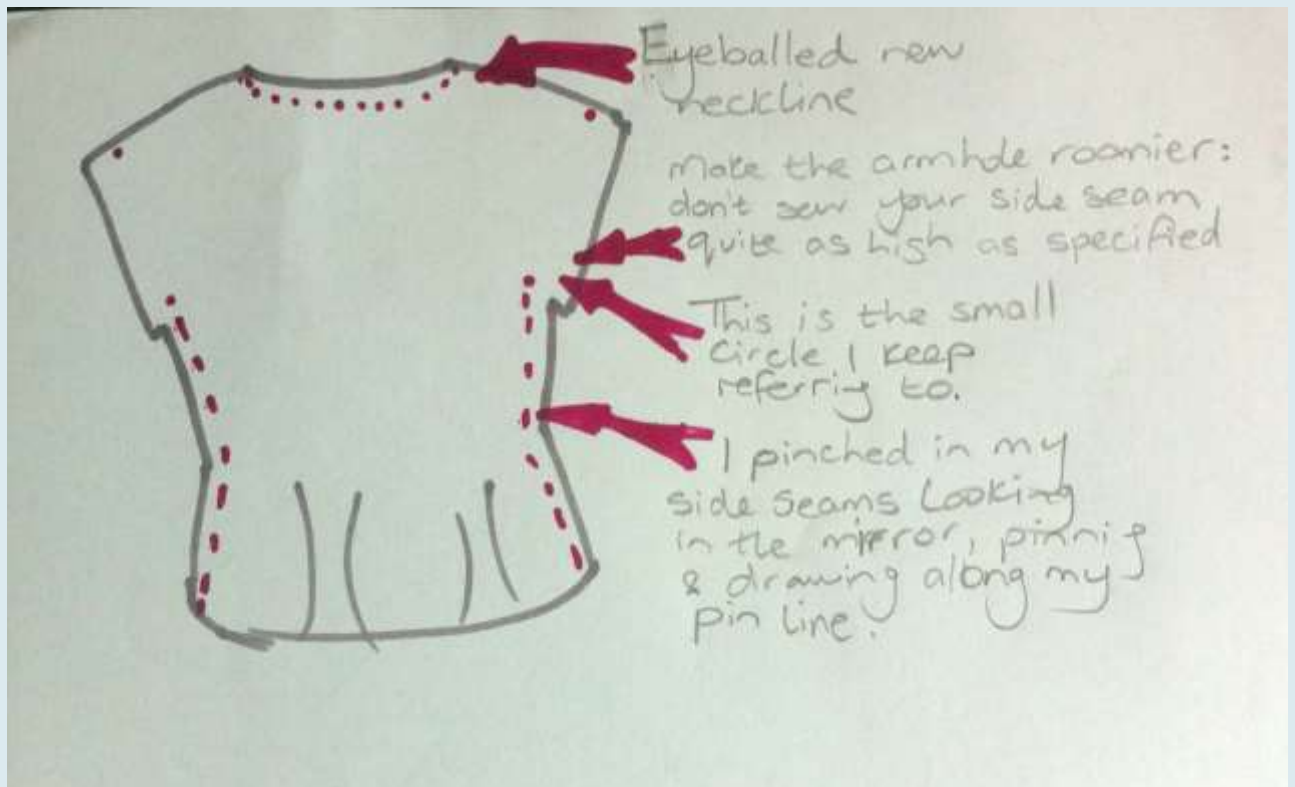
1. *making changes to a test garment*
2. *turning the muslin pieces into the pattern for your fabric*
3. *neatening the insides with French Seams*

1. Making changes to your muslin

When I started fitting my Sencha muslin I was a bit stymied. I turned to sewing blogs to help and encountered similar fit problems to my own muslin- my fit problems (and the ones I'll be addressing here) were:

- A very high neckline- this is part of the beauty of the blouse but it needed to be more comfy around my throat!
- vertical fabric lines dropping down the back- an indication of too much room at the back
- horizontal fabric crease lines across the bust- an indication of too little room in the front around the arms and/or bust
- the armholes just felt too tight.

If any of these sound familiar then read on to see what changes I made and if they could help you.



A rough idea of the changes I made to my muslin

Let's start by putting that muslin on. Grab a marker, pins and stand in front of a mirror. Work in the following order:

1 If the neckline is too high: simply draw a roughish line where you think the neckline would fit better at the front and still look nice.

Once all changes are marked, check with a measuring tape that your line is relatively even around and add a seam allowance back on, above your new line (you could try a different colour so as not to confuse).

2 If the back has loose, drapey vertical creases: Pinch those side seams with your fingers, pin, and do the same amount of pinning the other side (probably easiest to do this second side with the muslin off). Try it on again and continue this process until you're happy with the fit and can see those droopy lines at the back are less obvious. Draw your pin line with a marker on both sides and front and back, adding a seam allowance.

How to add a seam allowance

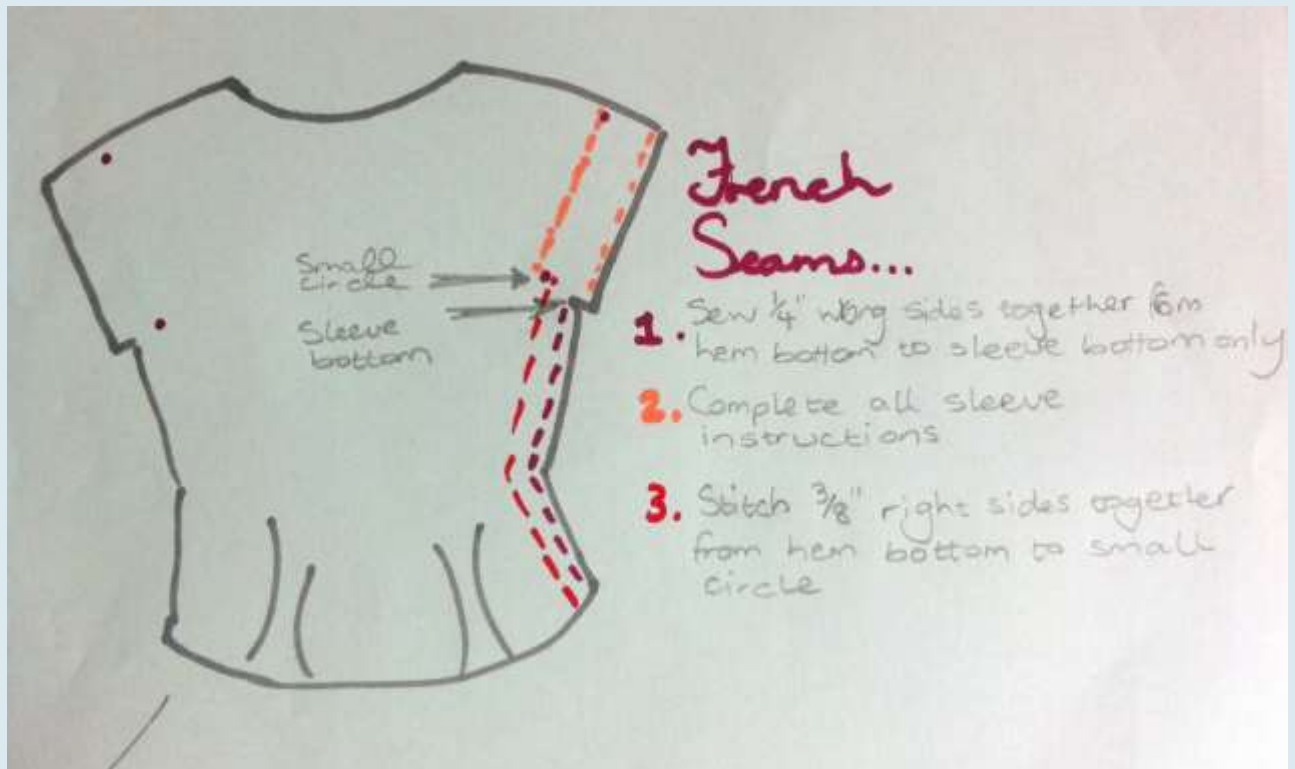
This pattern calls for a 5/8" seam allowance. Mark 5/8" along the stitching line (the new line you've drawn in to your spec) closest to the cut edge

3 If the front has pinched horizontal pulls: This means our lumps don't have enough room! Some fabric will need to be let out- if the tightness is around the bust and in the armholes I would try increasing the size of the arm hole. This may be enough to fix the trouble area if you don't usually need to do a FBA (full bust adjustment).

To do this remove a few of the stitches at the top of the side seam. If this works then adjust the small circle placement (if you're making this blouse you'll find this marking on your pattern piece) to account for the change to the side seam (i.e. seam starting at a lower point = small circle placed at the beginning of the seam). Once this tightness is eased out those creases will, hopefully, fall away.



3. How to finish your blouse with French Seams



If you want your seams to look neat on the inside and to last longer you'll want to choose a seam finish. One such is the French Seam, useful for fabrics that are very lightweight, perhaps a bit sheer or prone to fraying. I'm not going to tell you how to do French Seams- youtube will adequately provide for you there if you want to try it- but how to French Seam this pattern.

1. **Sew your shoulder seams-** at this step in your pattern instructions, sew a French seam at each shoulder.
2. **Sew your side seams-** First sew your seams **wrong sides together** at $\frac{1}{4}$ " - do not sew as high as your small circle (*this is different to the given instructions*) but sew from the hem to the top of the side seam (see the dodgy sketch above). Don't sew into your sleeve; just stitch your side seam. *We'll return to our French Seam later.*
3. **Now complete your sleeve as per instructions** (*press & stitch sleeve hems $\frac{1}{4}$ "; fold your sleeve in around the armhole folding at the small circles top and bottom & invisibly catchstitch sleeve to bodice along the sleeve hem*).
4. **Complete your French seam-** turn your side seams **right sides together** and press. Stitch your side seams at $\frac{3}{8}$ " sewing this time from your hem **all the way up to your small circle**. French seams done!

I hope these tricks will help you if you're making this beautiful blouse pattern! Do let me know if you used them and found them helpful. You can drop me a line on abitofanenthusiast@gmail.com or tweet me @enthusiastlou