

Belle de Lautrec and Tallulah— Important reading!

The pattern pieces are only suggestions. You can design your own doll, in any shape or size as long as she's about 12" to 14" tall, and—this is the important part—**she has a waist that's about six inches around.** (See my WILD suggestion at the foot of these tips, for an alternative, shampoo-bottle based doll.)

The basic doll pattern is on a page called "Belle-pieces" and the instructions—including optional face designs—are on the "Belle-instructions" pages.

In creating this pattern, I'm assuming that you have basic sewing skills, or are clever with fabric glue or hot glue. There are easier alternatives to almost everything that I suggest. For example, you could turn the top of the petticoat to make its own casing, and run a ribbon or elastic through it for the waistband.

I realize that purists will turn pale when I suggest shortcuts that involve glue. However, some people *hate* to sew but *love* dolls. And, these dolls may have minimal handling. If they're mostly displayed, most viewers may never realize that the assembly involved glue instead of sewing.

Snaps, elastic of all kinds, fabric glue, fusing, hot glue... all of these can be put to use, to give you more time to embellish your doll instead of sewing it.

Then again, if you're enormously proud of your sewing, you may want to sew the entire doll and her wardrobe.

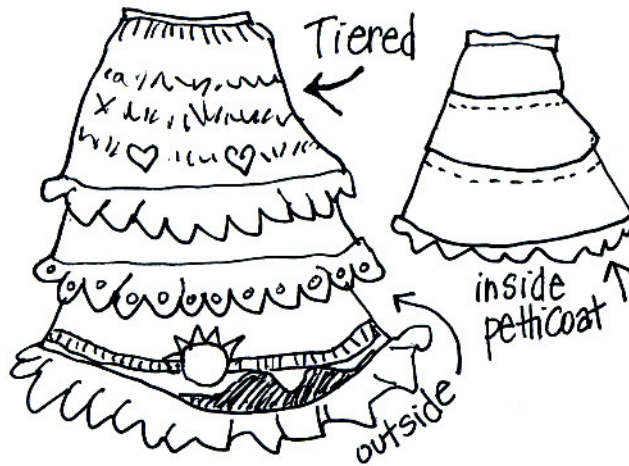
One note about sewing: If you don't have a sewing machine, that's okay. Hand sewing produces softer seams. A petticoat that's sewn by hand will drape more elegantly than one that's sewn on a machine.

The pattern is also only a suggestion... it's just a starting point for your own designs. I recommend doing a quick, very rough version of Belle in muslin or other cheap fabric, and then you can alter the pattern to suit your creative tastes. You may prefer a smaller head, jointed limbs, longer legs... etc!

If you're going to use this pattern in a petticoat (or ruffle) swap or round-robin ("RR"), keep the following in mind:

If Belle is wearing more than three petticoats at her waist, the bunched fabric is going to make her h-u-g-e from the waist down. Consider tapering the petticoat pattern so that there is less fabric at the waist. This would be a trial-and-error process. Since each person will use a different weight of fabric, it's impossible for me to give you exact measurements. If you're making an embellished polyester lace petticoat, you can use far more fabric than someone who's using a heavy brocade.

If tapering the petticoat isn't enough for her to wear lots of swapped petticoats, consider tiering them. That is, remove the waistband on the "underneath" layers of petticoats. (This is one reason why I suggest not embellishing the petticoat all the way to the top.) Stitch the second petticoat to the first one, about an inch or two below the waistband on the main petticoat. Add the third one the same way, an inch or two below that, and so on.



Or consider, a petticoat *ruffle swap/RR*. You each make your own doll. You each make the basic, unembellished petticoat.

Then, you each make a ruffle. Each ruffle should probably be about 1 1/2" deep, and about 12" around. Sew the ends together; if you know how to do a French seam, this is probably best. (There are instructions online. I'll add them to my website, but—until I do—see <http://www.sewneau.com/how.to/french.seam.html> for illustrated instructions, or search on "French seam instructions" at Google.)

Finish the bottom edge of the ruffle, and run a line or two of basting around the unfinished top edge, but do NOT gather the top.

Embellish the ruffle, and send it.

When you receive your ruffles from the others in the swap/RR, layer your ruffles to suit your own tastes. (I recommend starting at the bottom, and placing each ruffle so it only slightly overlaps the one below it.) Pull the basted stitches to gather the ruffle to fit, and glue or sew in place. (Optional: Turn the top edge so that the raw edge is concealed. Or, see my suggestions, below.)

You can cover raw edges with ribbon, lace, or other trim. Even tee-shirt paint—especially dimensional paint such as "puffy" paint—can cover raw edges. And, if you're working with dimensional paint, you can set lace, small beads or sequins into it while it's wet.

WILD variation: Use an hourglass-shaped bottle as the basis of a papier mache (or other materials) doll. My bottle of *got2b curl-vacious shampoo* (I buy it at Ulta) has a seven-inch "waistline," and if I cover the gap at the back of the petticoat with a big bow, this bottle could be a FINE doll torso!