

# BIKES AND BLOOMERS

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

## #6 CYCLING BLOOMERS I, II

A cycling costume inspired by  
inventive Victorian women cyclists

## PATTERN #6

# CYCLING BLOOMERS I, II

### DESIGN FEATURES

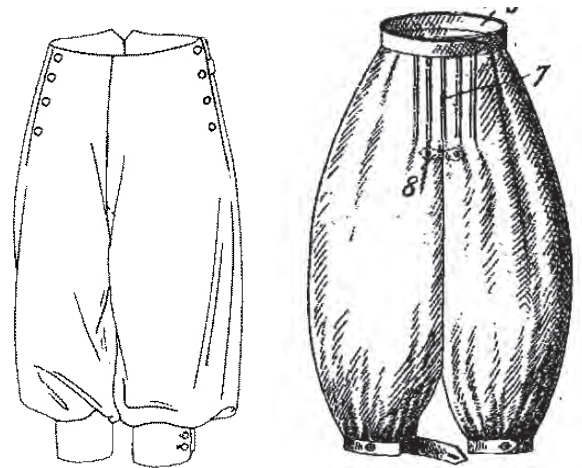
Cycling bloomers took many shapes in late nineteenth century Britain. This pattern is for one of two versions: **I. Tailored Bloomer** and **II. Full Bloomer**. The first features two pockets, four buttons on each side of the waist and two on the cuffs. Tucks at the knee and waist reduce the fullness of the material while still delivering freedom of movement. A back buckle can be added to adapt the fit. The second version has more voluminous proportions. It is fitted to the wearer via pleats at the waistband and cuffs. It could be worn in place of a skirt as it gave the impression of one. The bifurcation enables the wearer to move her legs unimpeded and also (marginally) conceal this action from the view of others.

### THE BLOOMER: A SHORT HISTORY

**BLOOMERS** played a pivotal role in enabling women to undertake more active lives - replacing hot and heavy layered petticoats and sometimes full length skirts. They were initially associated with American writer and social activist Amelia Bloomer in 1850s. The garment became popular and also deeply divisive in Britain in the late nineteenth century. It was adopted by dress reformers who advocated 'rational' dress over 'irrational' fashion. Amongst other problems, skirts became waterlogged, dragged in the dirt and easily caught alight. While the bloomer helped to popularise dress reform politics, it also polarised society. The image of a cyclist in bloomers swiftly became a site for debate more broadly about women's role in society, which meant that in some circumstances wearers had to be very brave to wear them.

**“The idea was almost entirely new and the British Public was dead against it. Hooting and screeching were then the usual accompaniments to every ride. Caps, stones, road refuse—anything was then flung at the hapless woman who dared to reveal the secret that she had two legs. And the insults were not confined to the lower classes. In fact, cycling in rationals in 1894 was a very painful experience.”**

*Irene Marshall. The Rational Dress Society Gazette (1899)*



*(I. Tailored and II. Full Bloomer)*



*(While cycling in bloomers was a safer, more comfortable option for many women, it exposed them to verbal and sometimes physical abuse from onlookers).*

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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!

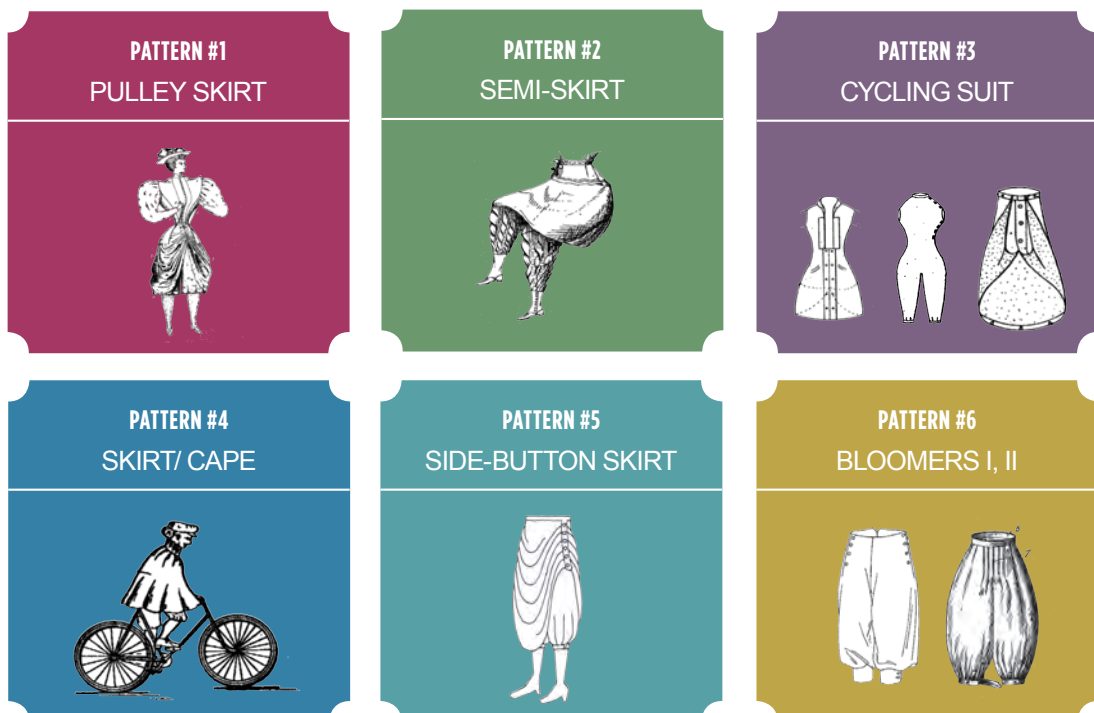
Six sewing patterns in this collection (comprising a total of nine different garments) are inspired by convertible cycle wear patents lodged in the 1890s by inventive British women. They form part of an ESRC funded **Bikes & Bloomers** sociology project led by Dr Kat Jungnickel at Goldsmiths, University 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 #6

# CYCLING BLOOMERS I, II

(I. TAILORED OR II. FULL)



**Pattern #6** is for one of two bloomer patterns. **Version I** is a tailored bloomer with concealed pockets, buttons at both sides of the waist and cuffs, tucks at the knee and an optional back buckle to adapt the fit. (An extra twist at the outer knee is required for high-wheel riding.) **Version II** is a full bloomer fitted to the wearer via pleats at the waistband and cuffs. The voluminous proportions provide ample space for moving legs. Concealed pockets can also be sewn into this garment. **Requirements:** See individual patterns for details.

**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)

**RESEARCH PROJECT**  
Kat Jungnickel  
**SILK LINING ARTWORK**  
Alice Angus  
**COVER PHOTO**  
Eoin Norton

**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

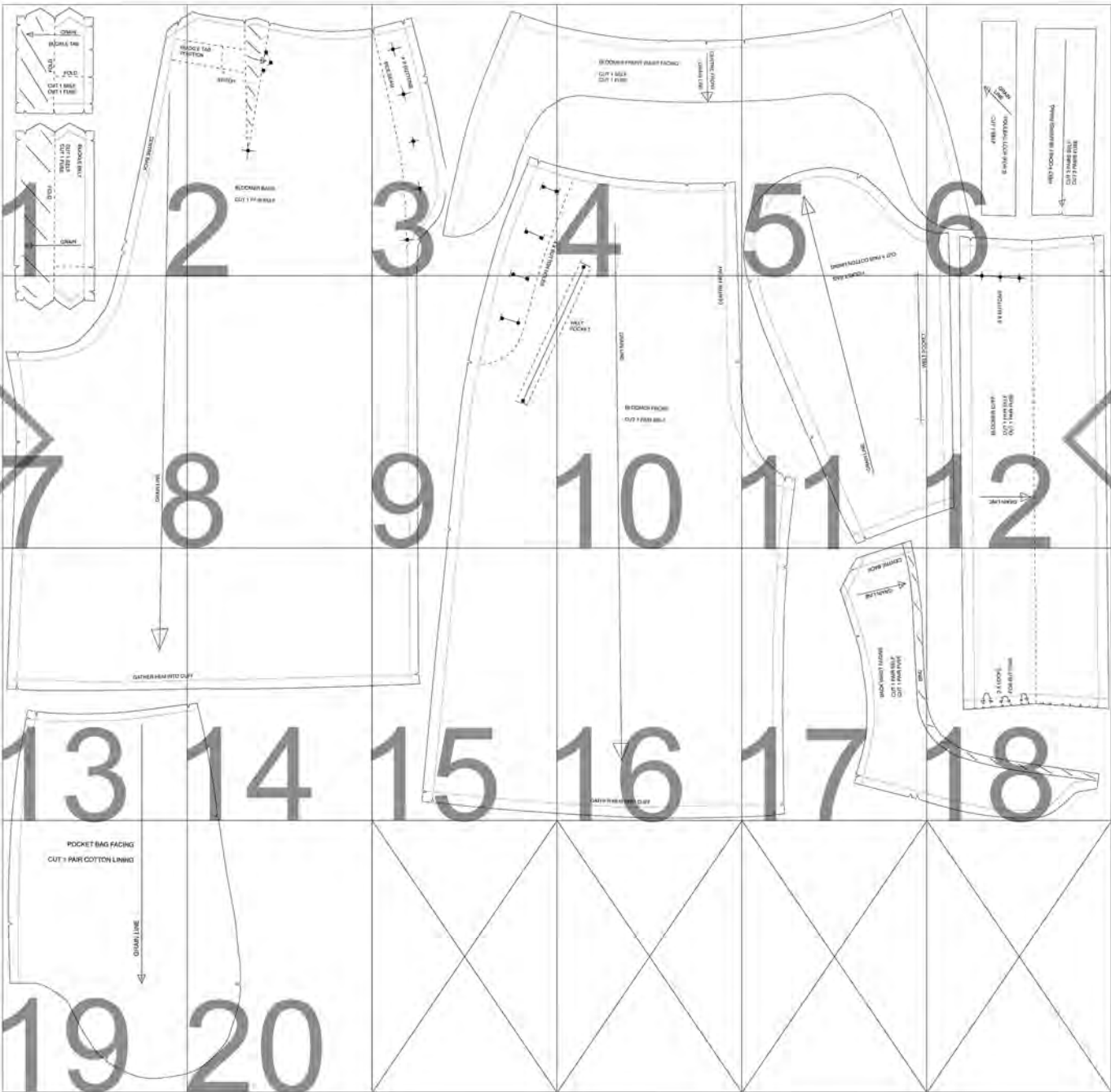
All sewing patterns are free to download. Profits from the sale of printed patterns go to the London Bike Kitchen, a DIY workshop. Please share your cycle wear creations with us on [Twitter](https://www.instagram.com/bikesandbloomers) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bikesandbloomers) [#bikesandbloomers](https://www.instagram.com/bikesandbloomers)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

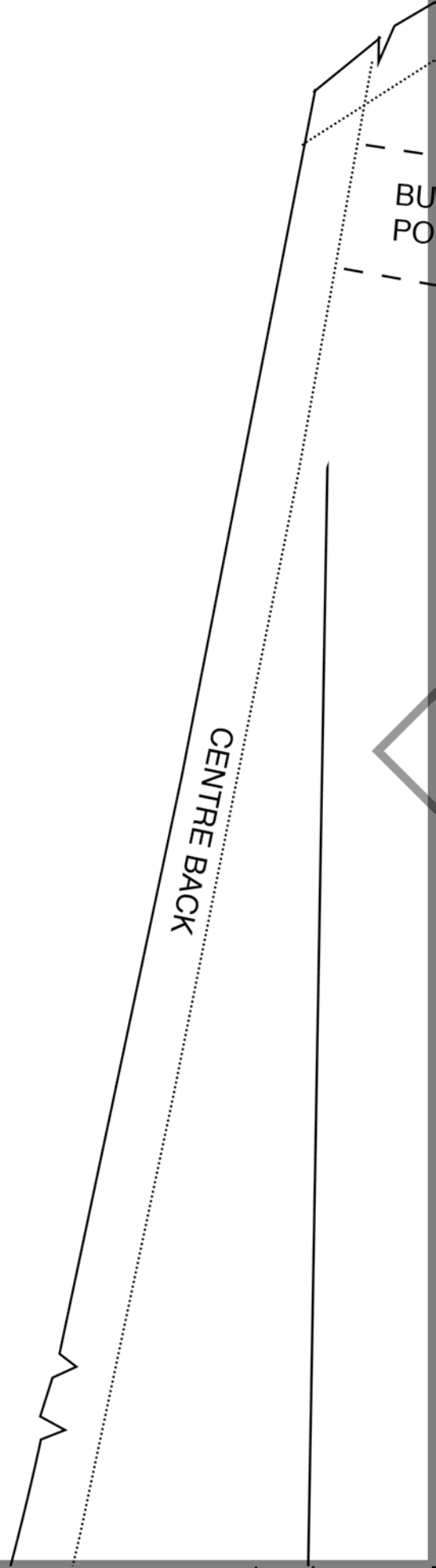
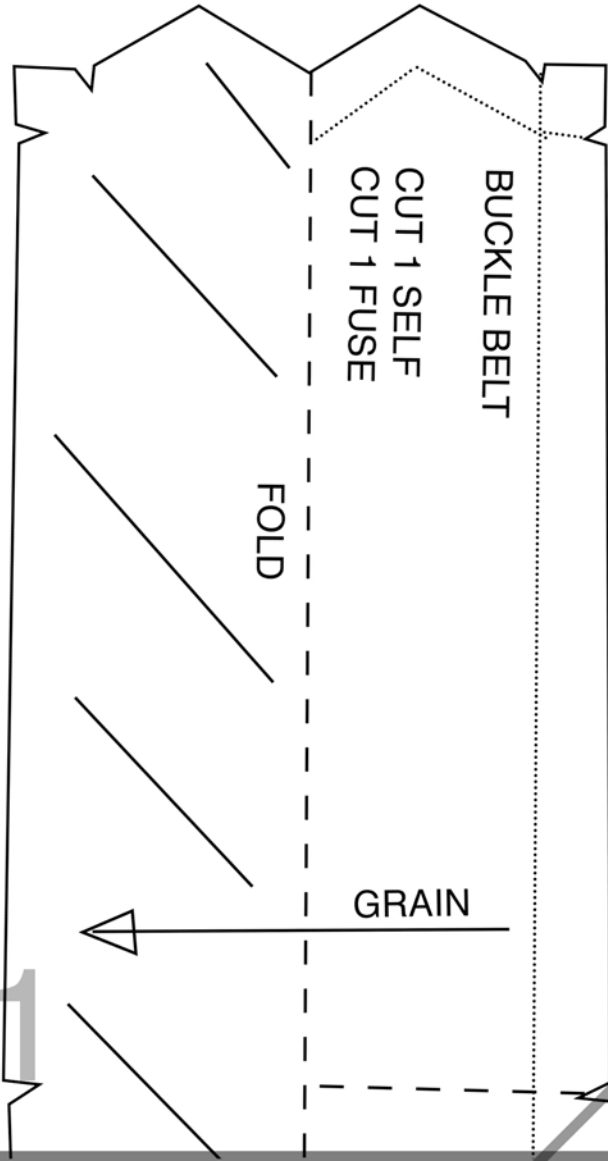
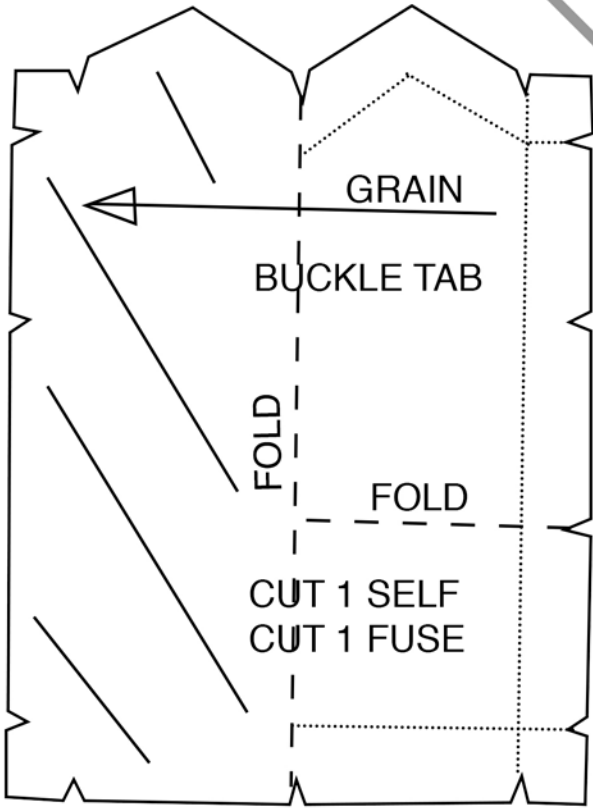


VICTORIAN WOMEN'S  
CONVERTIBLE CYCLEWEAR  
**SEWING PATTERNS**

**#6 CYCLING  
BLOOMERS I - TAILORED**

www.BIKESandBLOOMERS.com



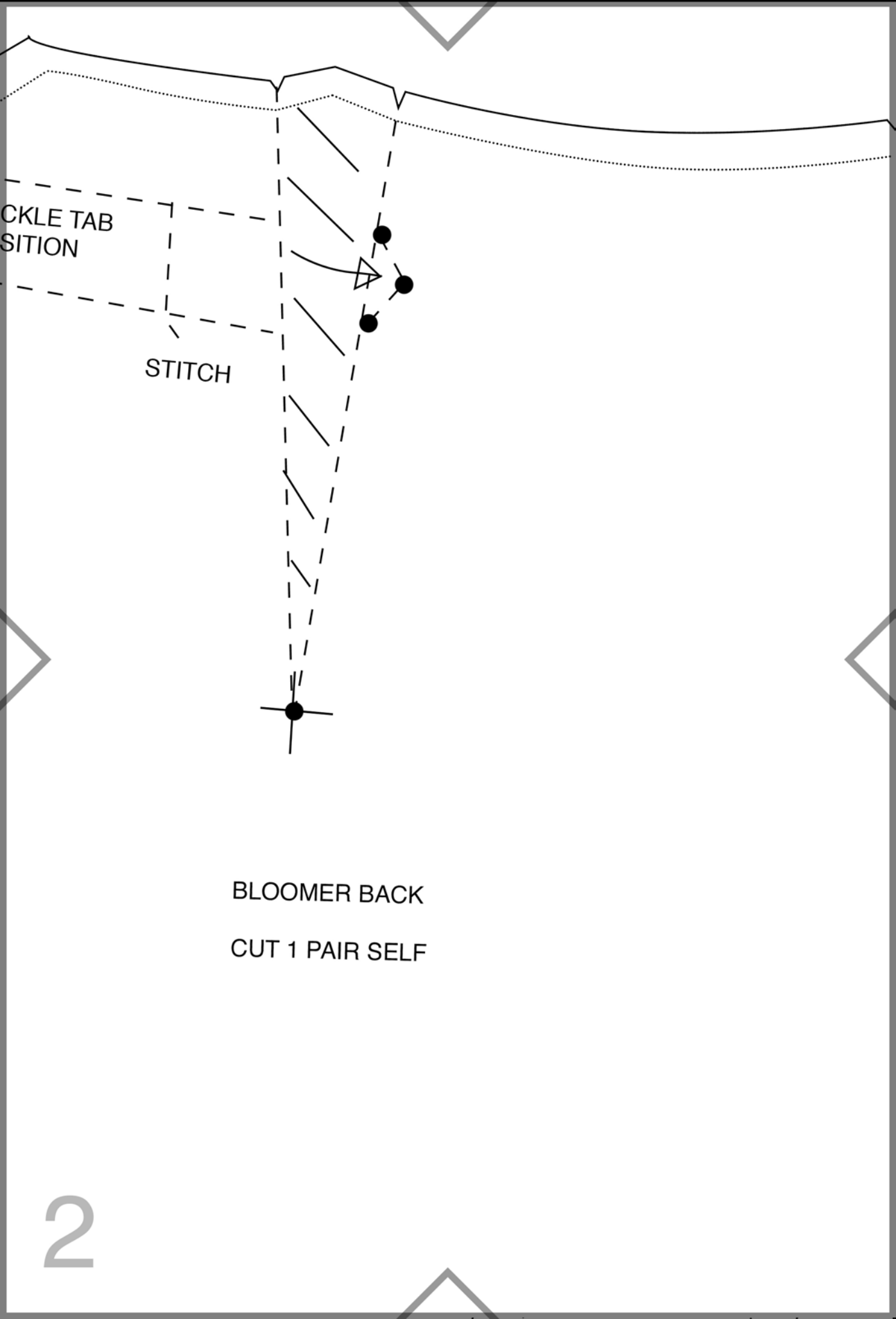


ANKLE TAB  
POSITION

STITCH

BLOOMER BACK  
CUT 1 PAIR SELF

2

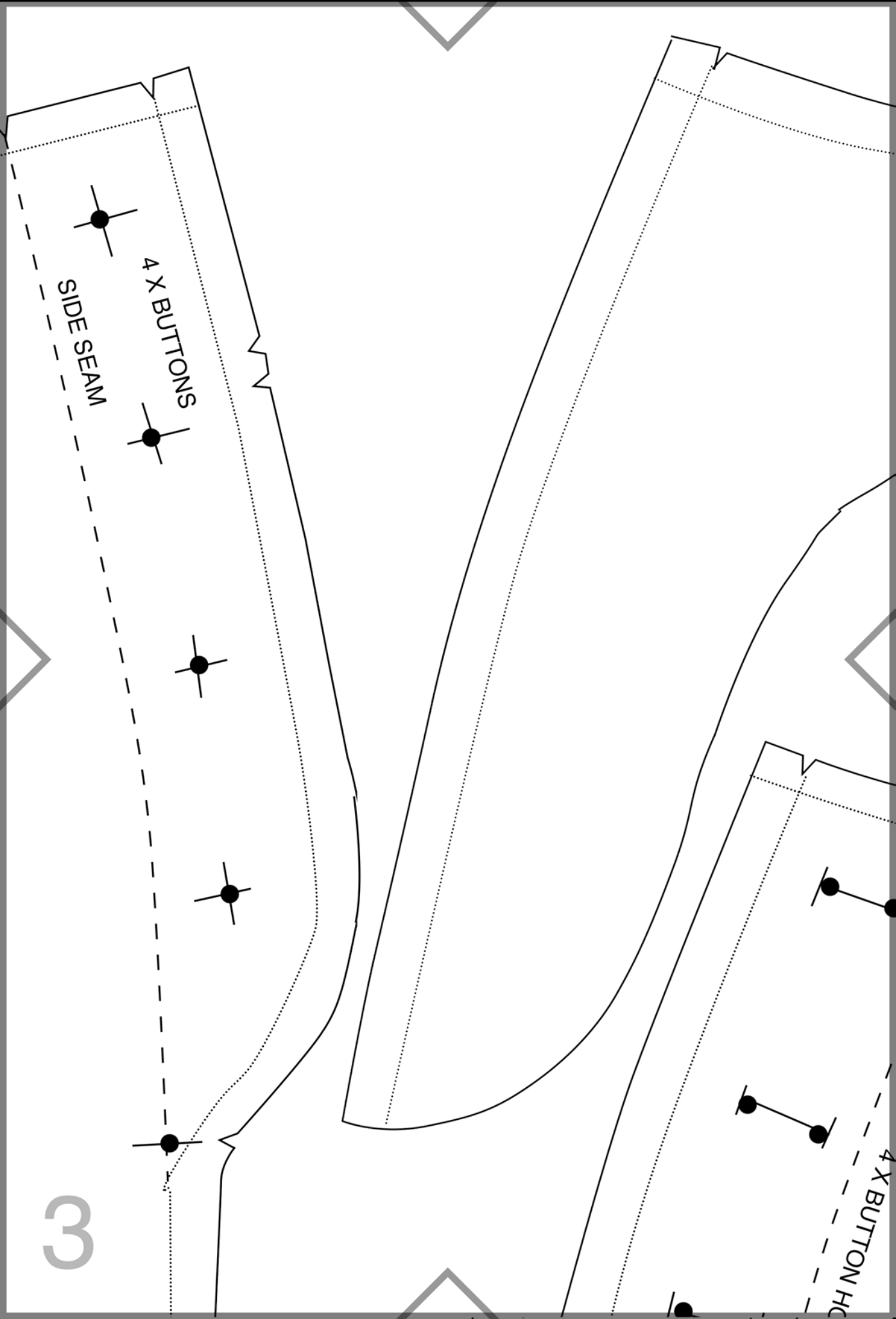


3

SIDE SEAM

4 X BUTTONS

4 X BUTTON HOLES





BLOOMER FRONT WAIST FACING

CUT 1 SELF  
CUT 1 FUSE

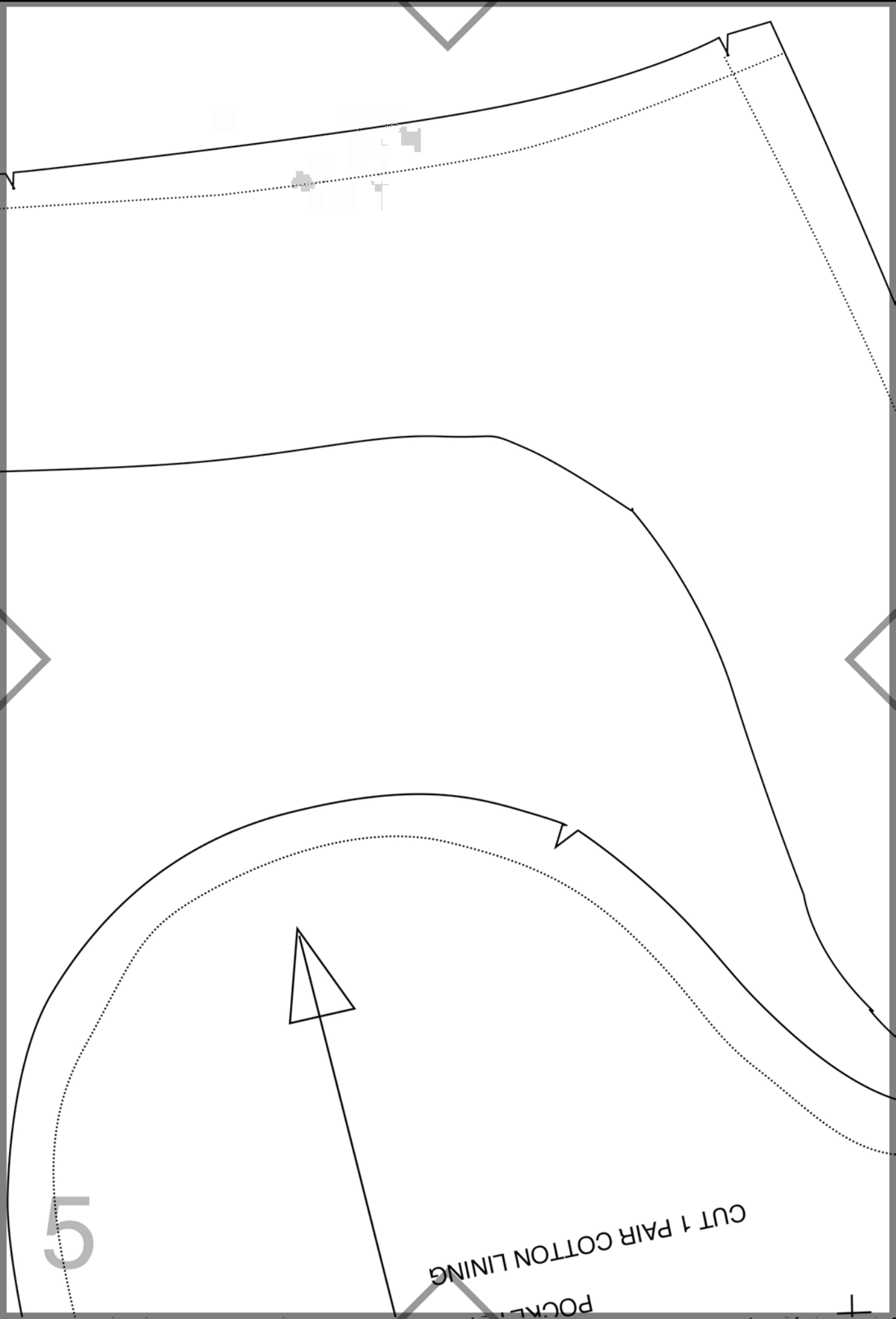
GRAIN LINE  
CENTRE FRONT



4



ONT

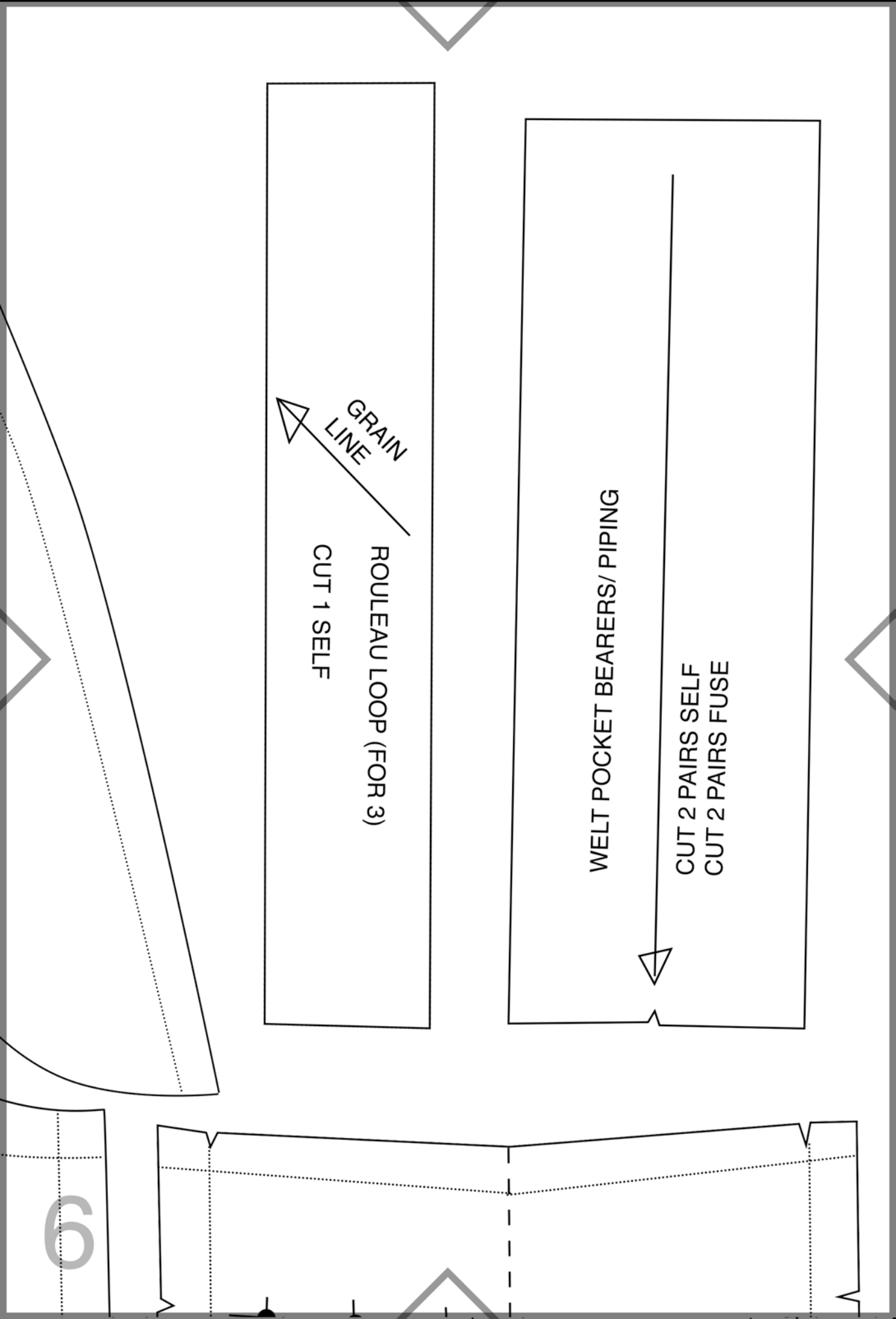


5

CUT 1 PAIR COTTON LINING

ПОКРЕ...



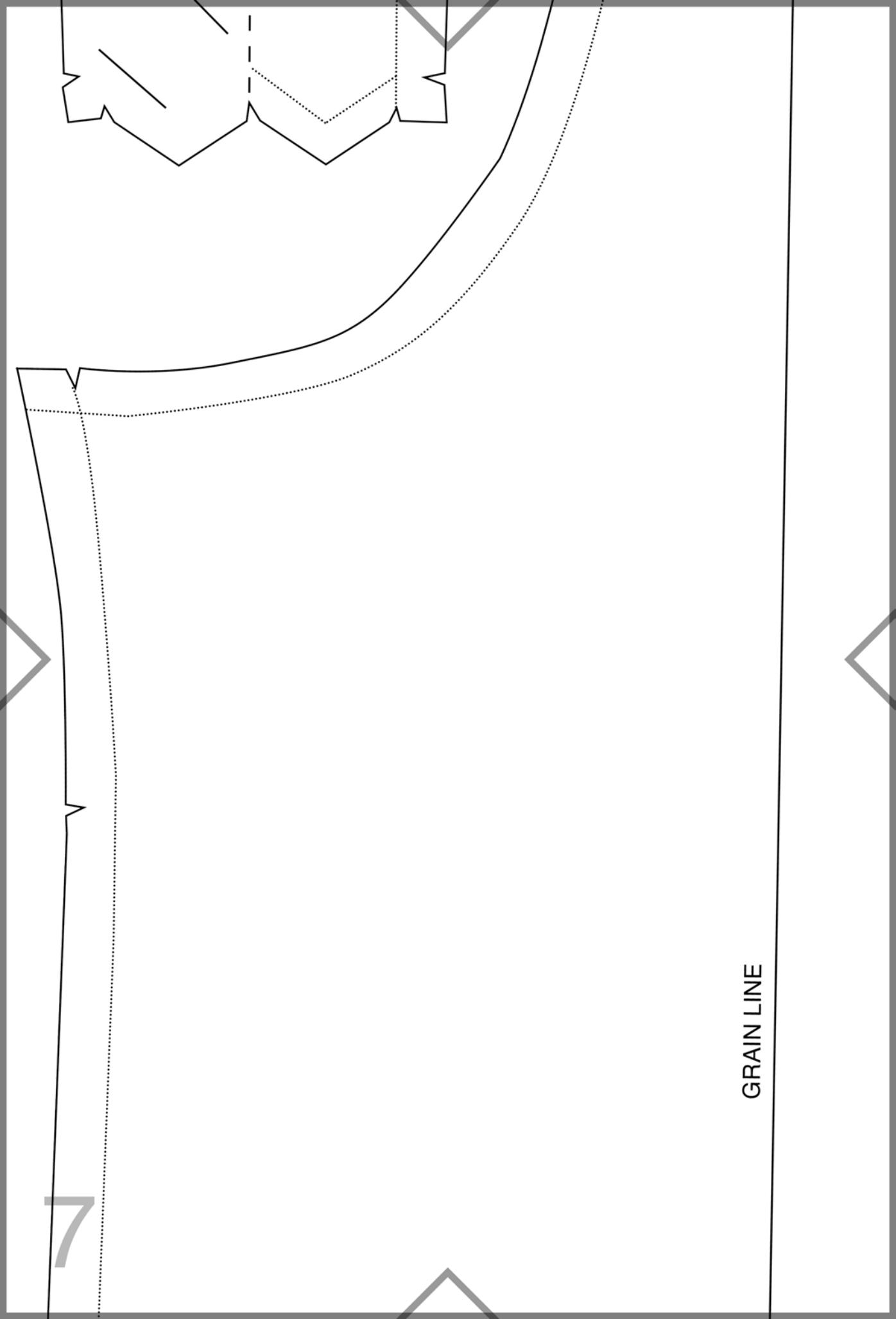


GRAIN  
LINE

ROULEAU LOOP (FOR 3)  
CUT 1 SELF

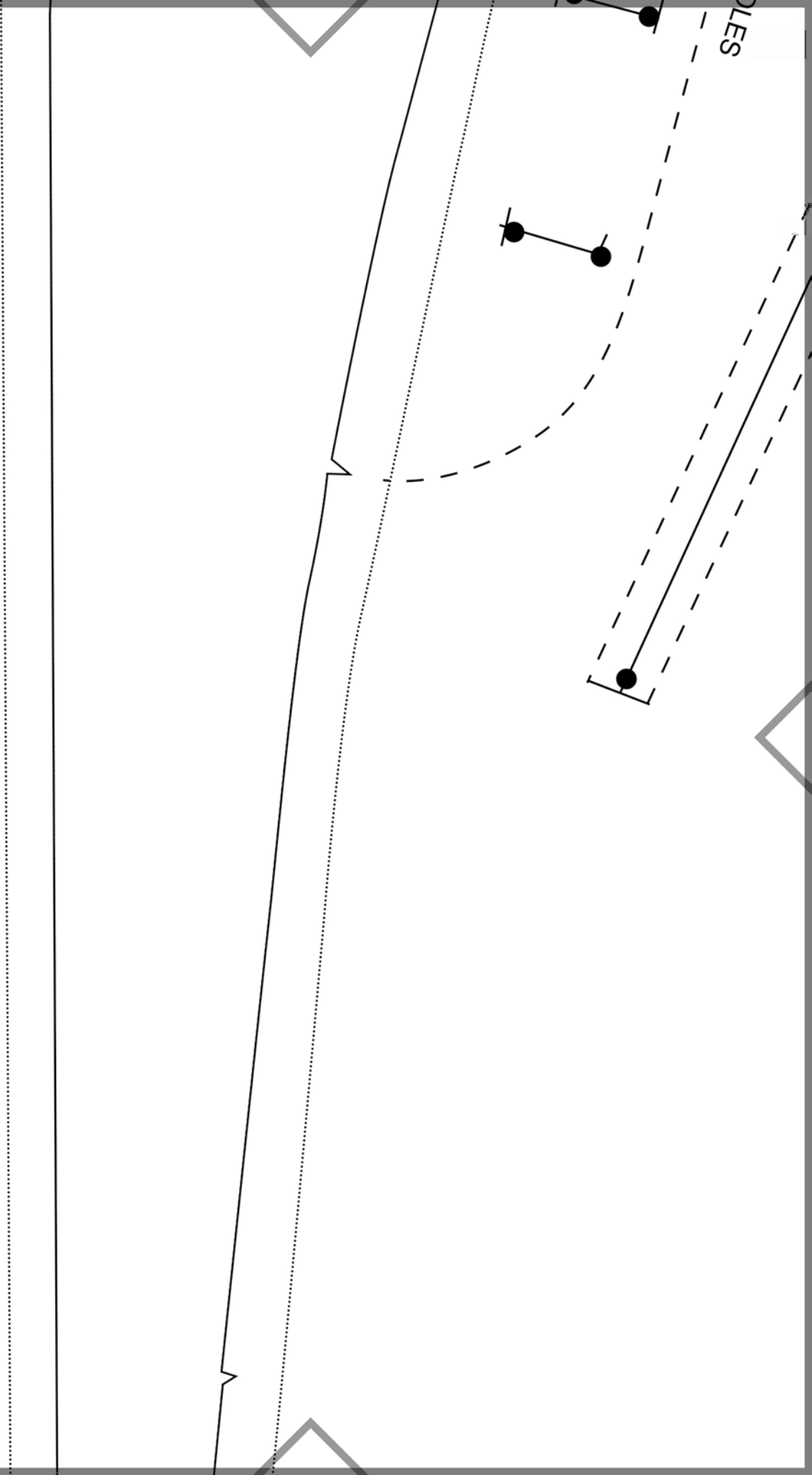
WELT POCKET BEARERS/ PIPING

CUT 2 PAIRS SELF  
CUT 2 PAIRS FUSE



7

GRAIN LINE



PLES

CENTRE FR

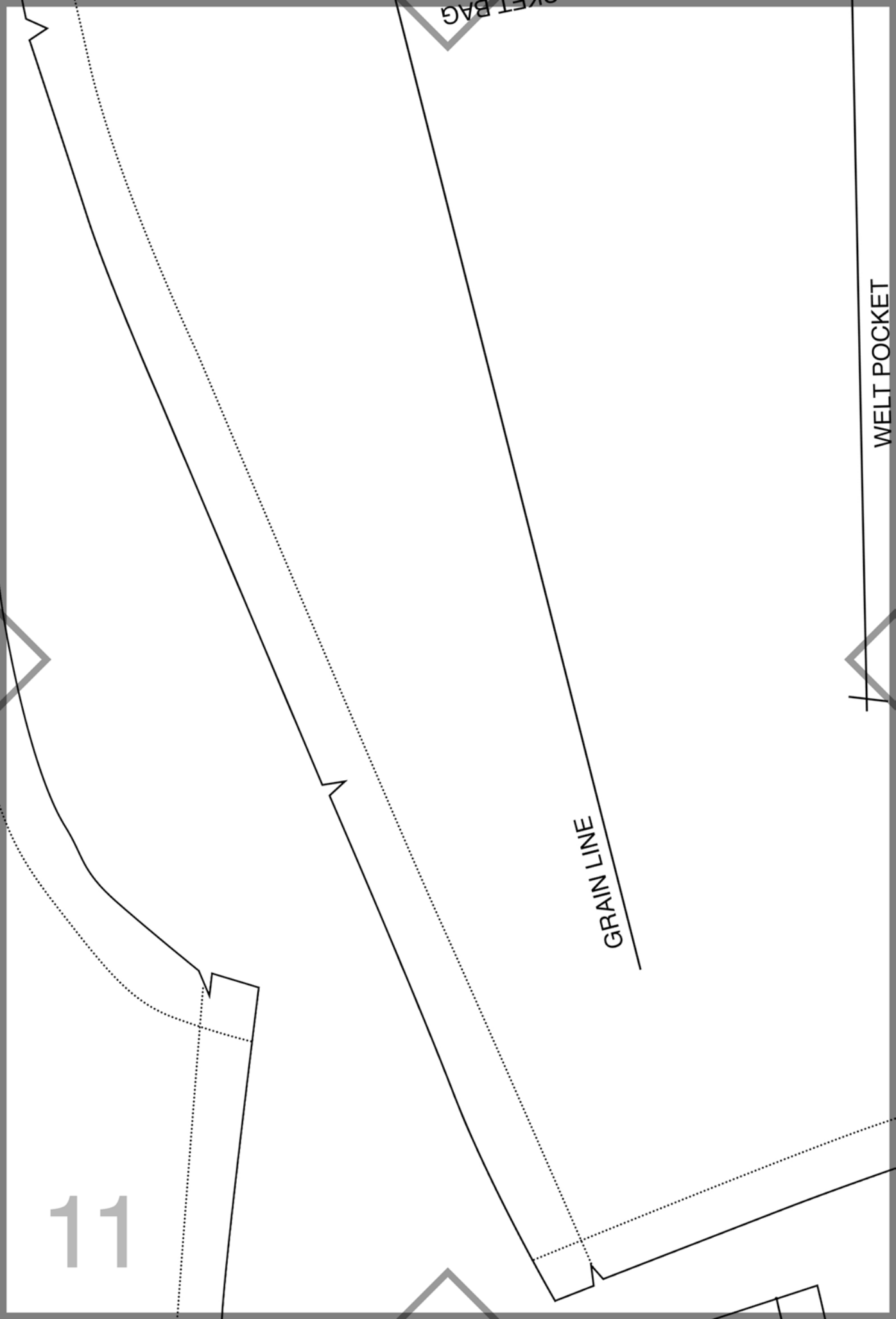
WELT  
POCKET

GRAIN LINE

BLOOMER FRONT

CUT 1 PAIR SELF

10



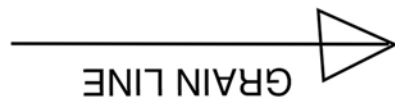
POCKET BAG

WELT POCKET

GRAIN LINE

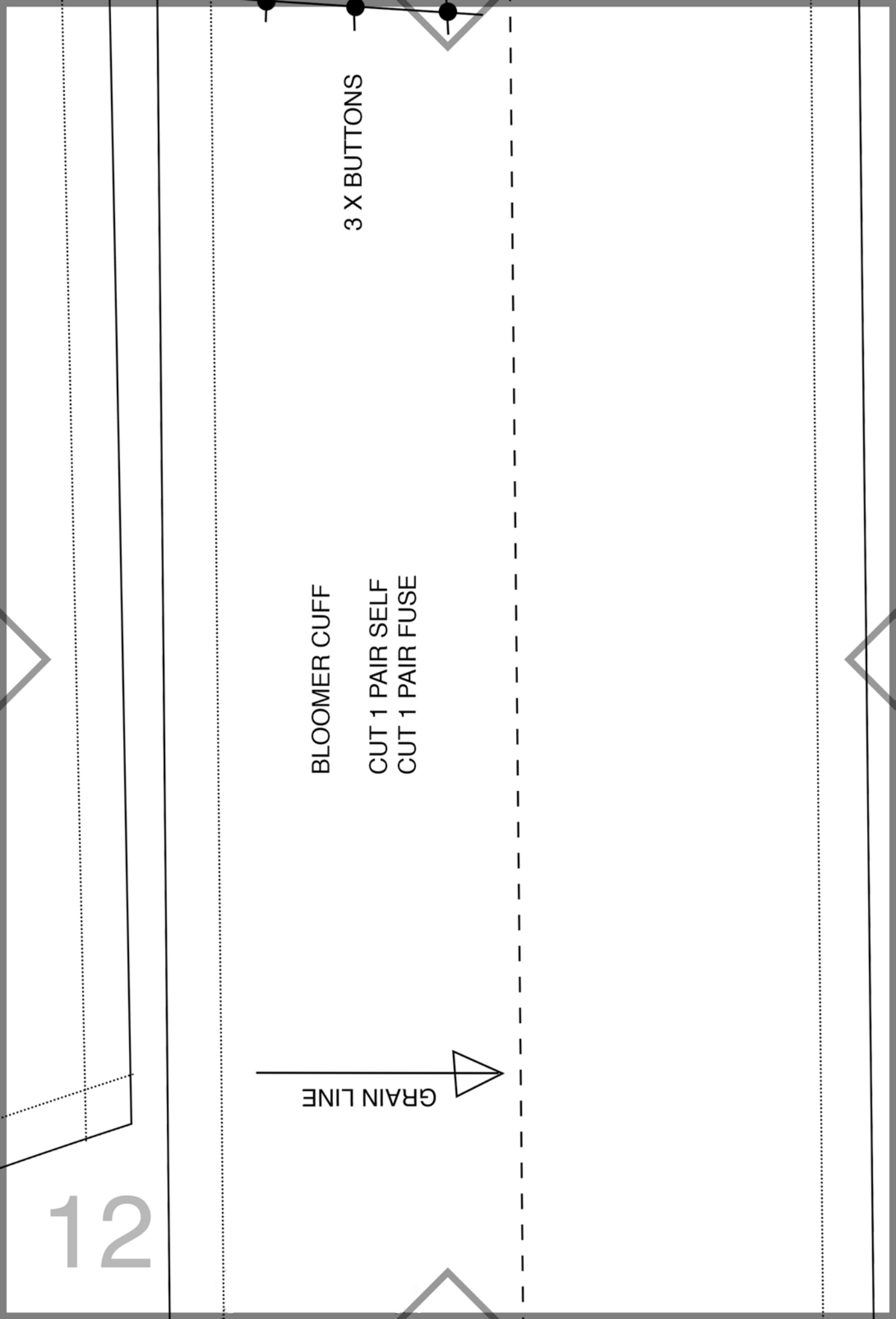
11

12

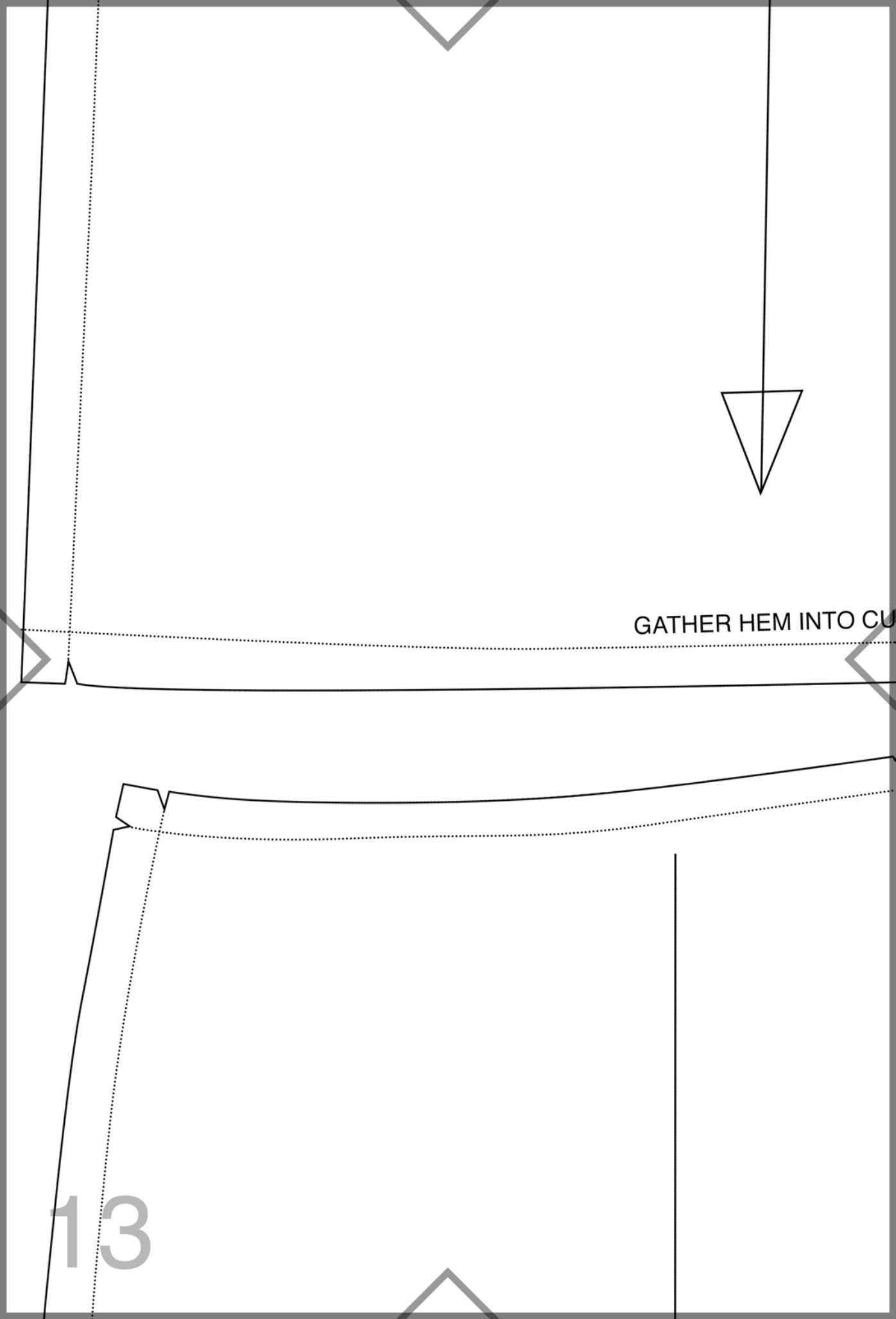


BLOOMER CUFF  
CUT 1 PAIR SELF  
CUT 1 PAIR FUSE

3 X BUTTONS







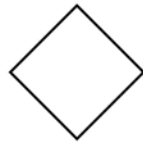
GATHER HEM INTO CURTAIN

13

CUT OR FOLD TO PRINT SAFE BOX

LINE UP SHAPES

STICK TOGETHER

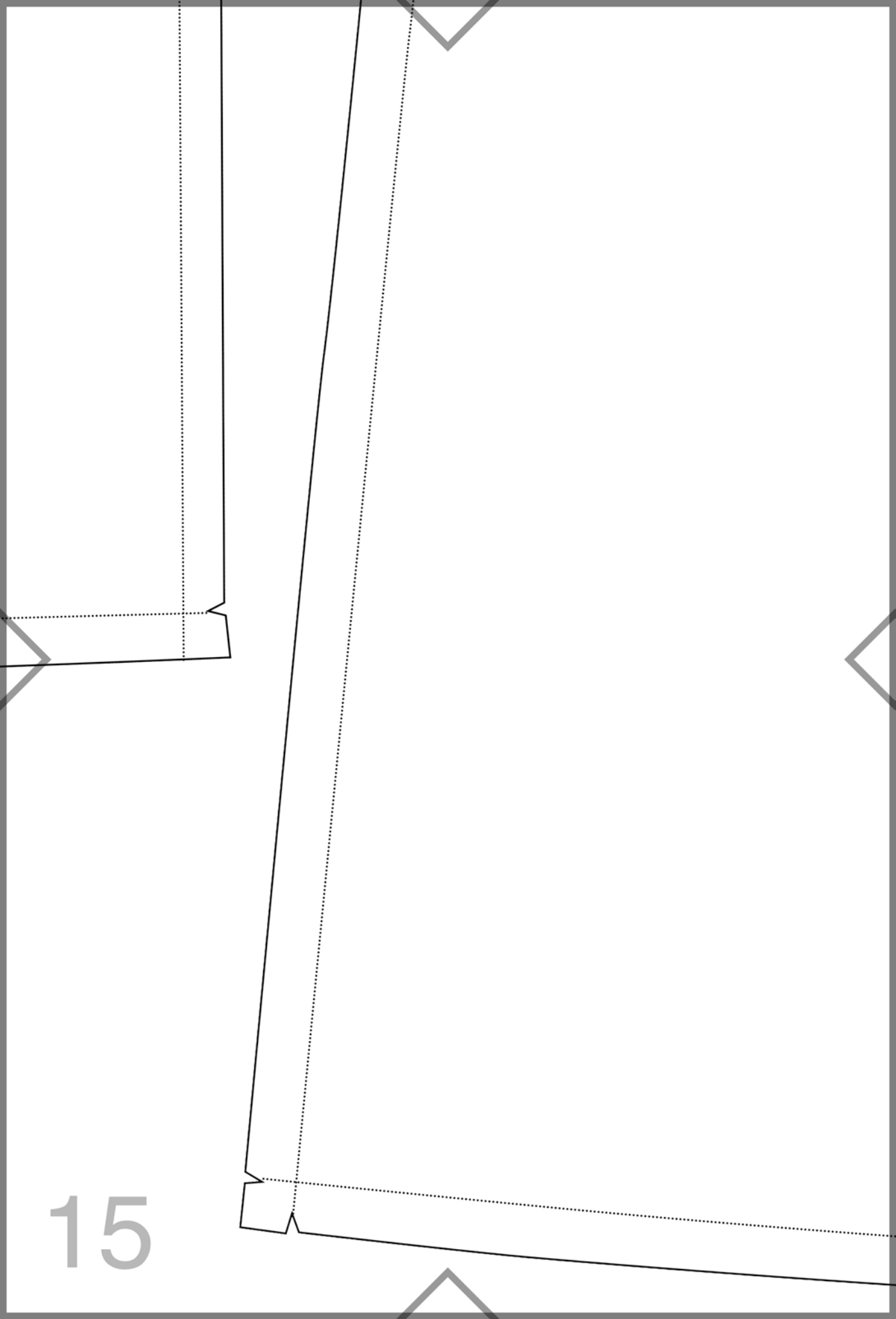


CUTTING LINE \_\_\_\_\_

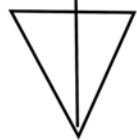
SEAM ALLOWANCE .....

FF

14

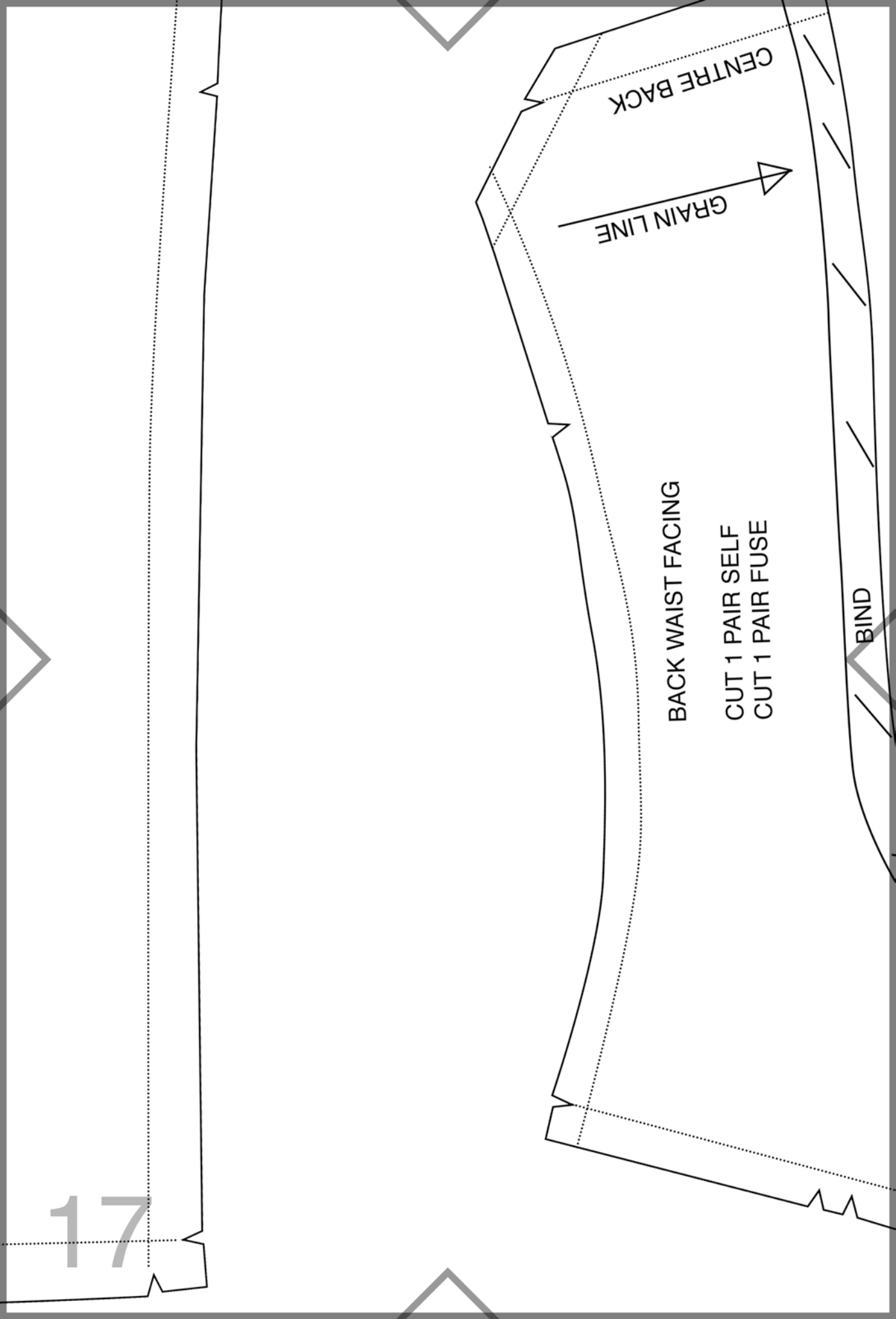


15



16 GATHER HEM INTO CUFF

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CENTRE BACK

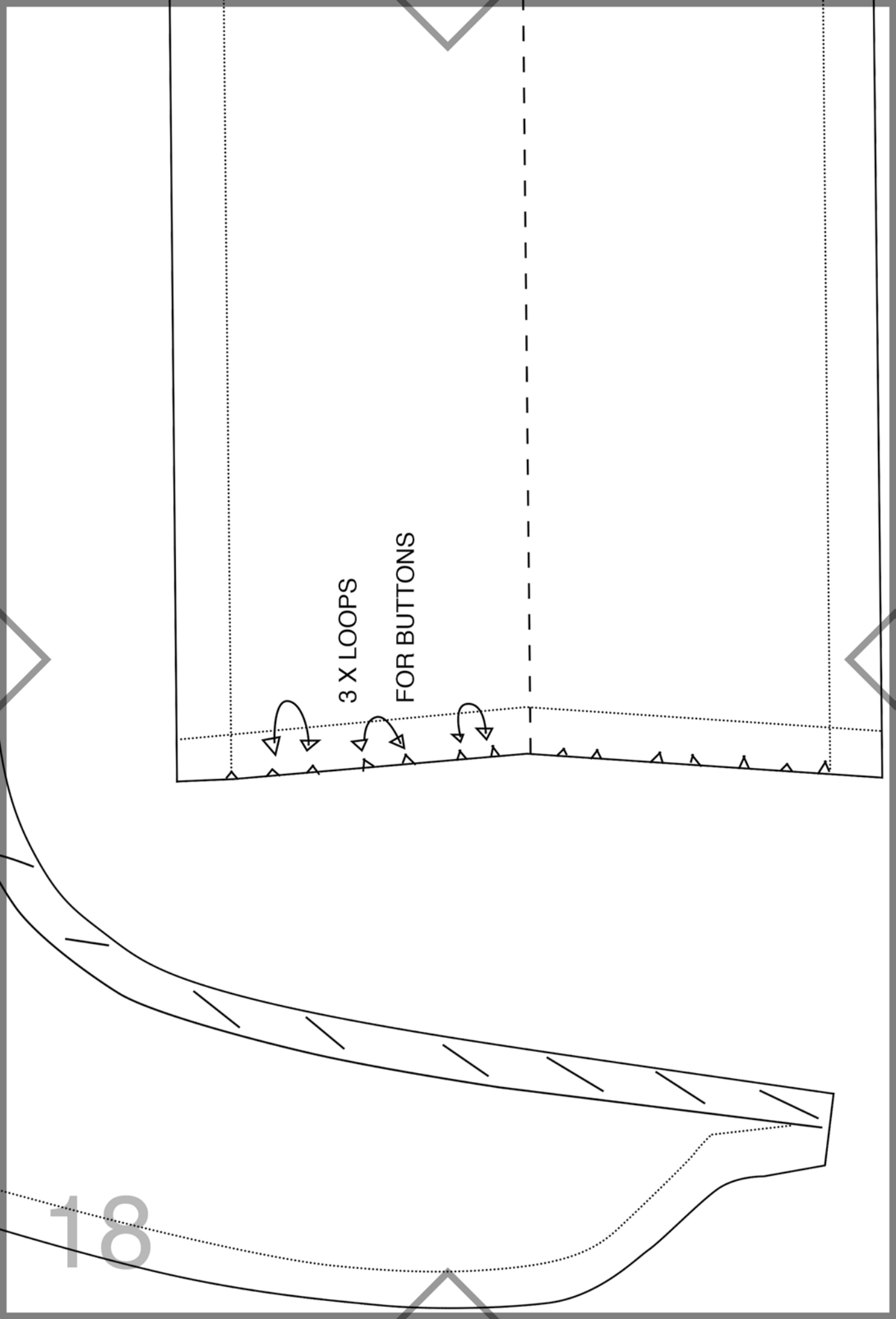
GRAIN LINE

BACK WAIST FACING

CUT 1 PAIR SELF

CUT 1 PAIR FUSE

BIND



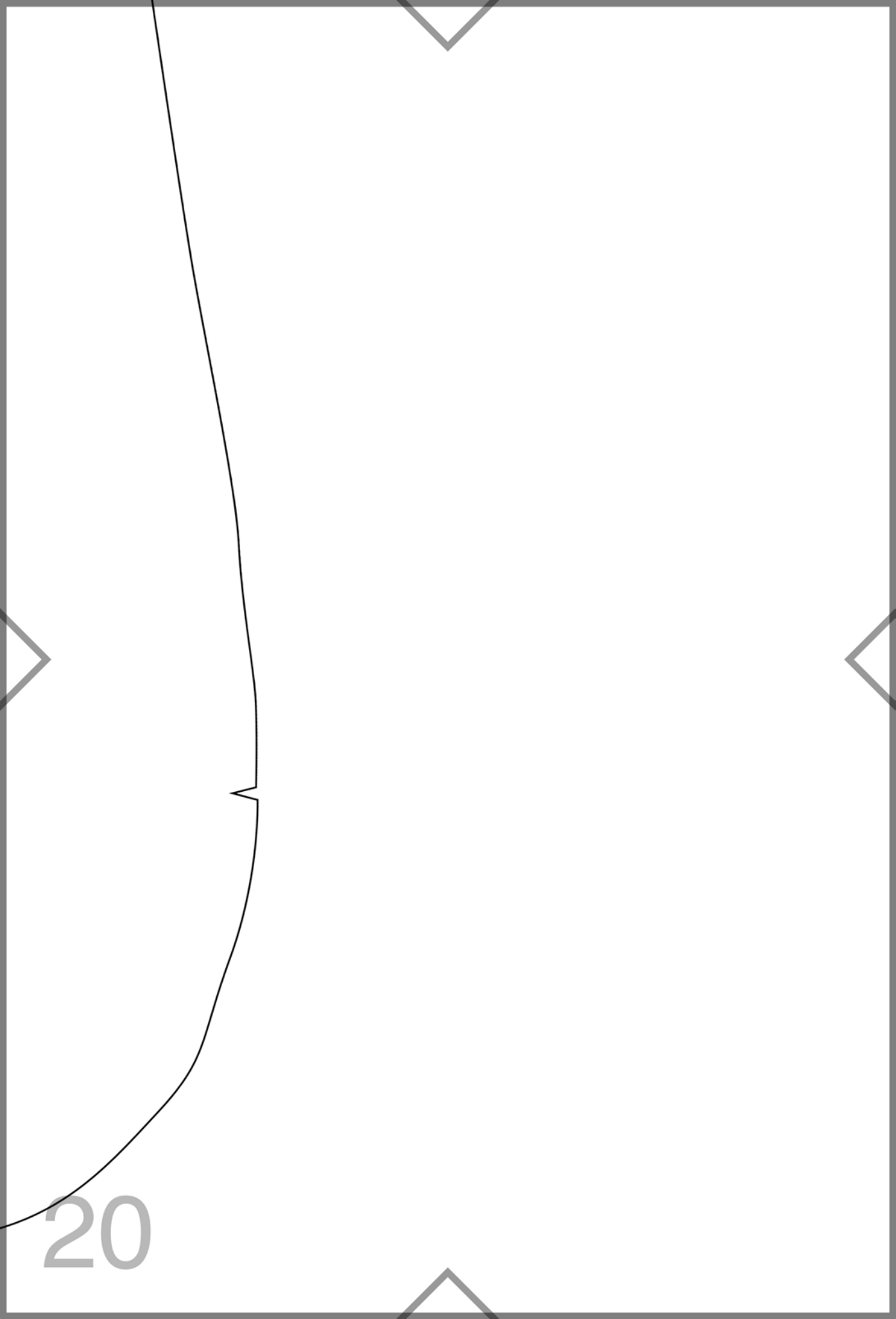
3 X LOOPS  
FOR BUTTONS

18

POCKET BAG FACING  
CUT 1 PAIR COTTON LINING

GRAIN LINE





20