

BETA QUERY: Is your Skirt Block Balanced?

In Skirt Skills, where we placed our side seams was mostly arbitrary and without much guidance. In the Measuring Guide, I suggest that using the front of the ankle and/or the back of the ear is often a good placement. Dividing the Half Cylinder is also a good starting place. But mostly you were left to add side seam tape wherever seemed good to you at the time...

My current trouser and jeans drafting systems seem to possibly offer better results quicker for those with balanced (or nearly balanced) skirt blocks. This is something that I will be keeping an eye on during this session for possible revision, for both skirts and pants drafting, if it has a positive impact for various bodies. *I appreciate your feedback on this topic!*

When balancing a skirt block, the fit will likely not be impacted at all. (At least in theory,) the volume and shaping will not change. It will simply move your side seam placement to the center of your Cylinder (when viewed from the side).

If the blocky bottom of your front and back skirt block pieces are more than an inch difference in width, consider balancing the front and back! (Anything under an inch of imbalance, likely won't make any difference. *For reference in the videos, my skirt block is 3/4" larger in front.*) Please Note: I'm not confident that your skirt block needs to be balanced. But, after running four sessions of Smarty Pants Beta, I've been heavily pondering whether many students might unknowingly positively benefit from a balanced block, in both skirts and pants, if they were encouraged to give it a try!

If you try balancing your skirt block, please let me know! And if you feel strongly that your unbalanced skirt block is correct for you, I'd love to know more about that too! Please share!

Taking the time to try skirt balancing *now* could save you lots of pants fitting puzzles and do-overs *later*. (Spending time prepping almost always saves time in the long run.)

In this BETA QUERY, I'll share a couple of examples of *how* to balance your skirt block! I hope you'll find them easy and interesting!

Balancing the Skirt Block

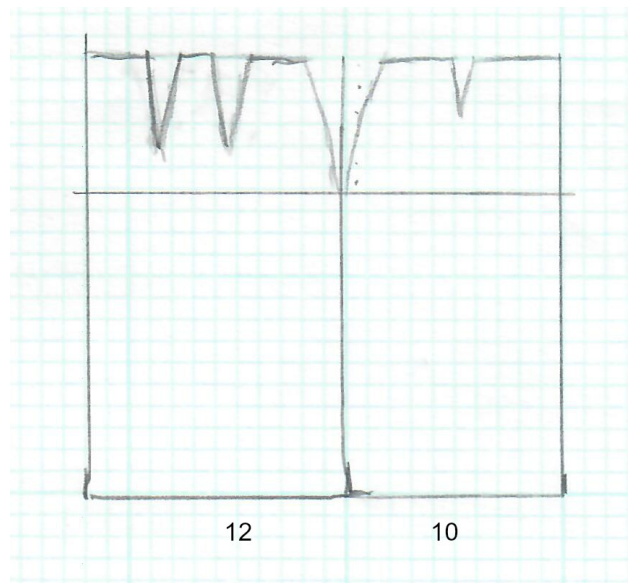
Balancing Marcia's Skirt Block

In this example, Marcia's skirt block worked fine for her skirts but we discovered (after struggling through pants) that it was unnecessarily unbalanced. The back half of her skirt block was 2" wider than the front half and, upon further observation, her skirt's side seam seemed a little far forward on her body.

Our goal in this experiment is to widen the front slightly and narrow the back slightly for a better balance. We don't want to change the volume or shaping, we simply want to move the entire side seam stitch line a small amount.

Currently the back of Marcia's skirt block width measures 12" and the front measures 10". If we take 1" away from the back and add it to the front they will both become an even 11". This seam shift of a single inch should be inconsequential in fit, but it could look even better for her skirts and could make my pants drafting system work out closer to a great fit when drafting (which could offer less trial and error fitting experiments).

Here's a quick version of Marcia's block. It is currently unbalanced with the front 2" smaller than the back..

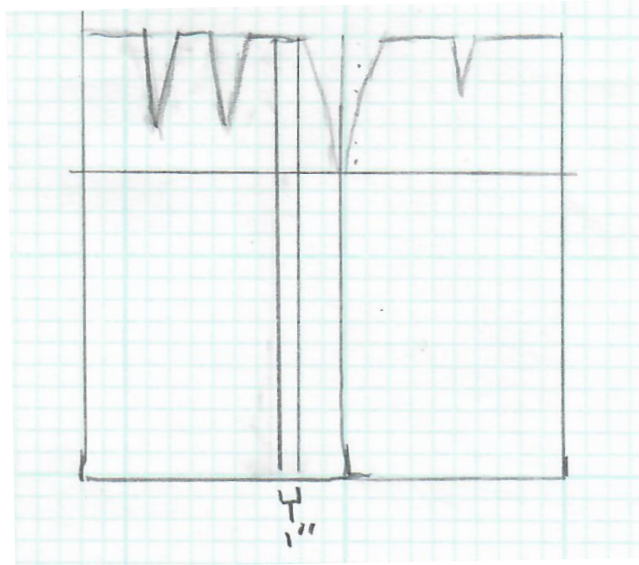


There are many ways to accomplish these goals. I'll share two examples! The first example is the one that I think explains the concept the best visually. Then, I'll follow it with another example that may be an even easier way to accomplish the exact same thing!

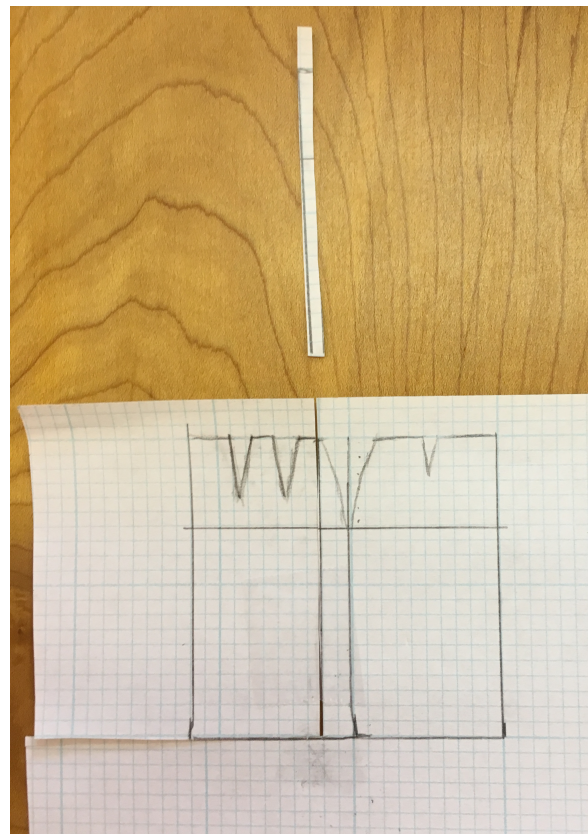
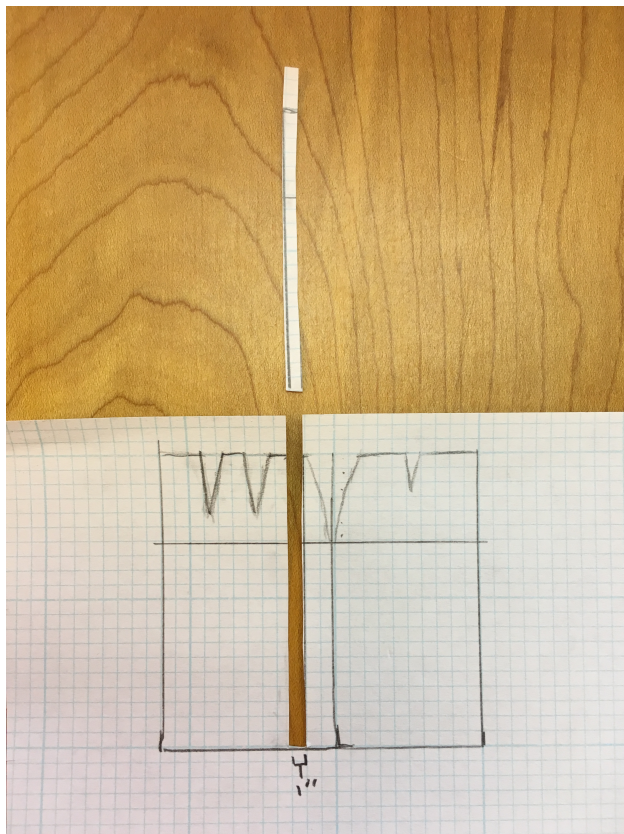
Balancing the Skirt Block

Example #1:

On a copy of Marcia's block, I drew two lines one inch apart from waist to hip parallel to the Center Back on the larger back block.

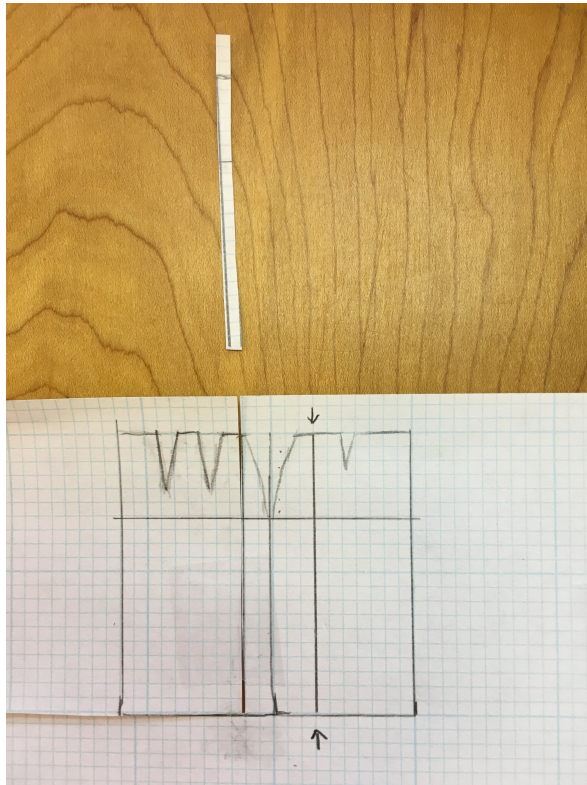


I cut along both lines to remove the inch strip and then taped the two block pieces together along the cut lines.

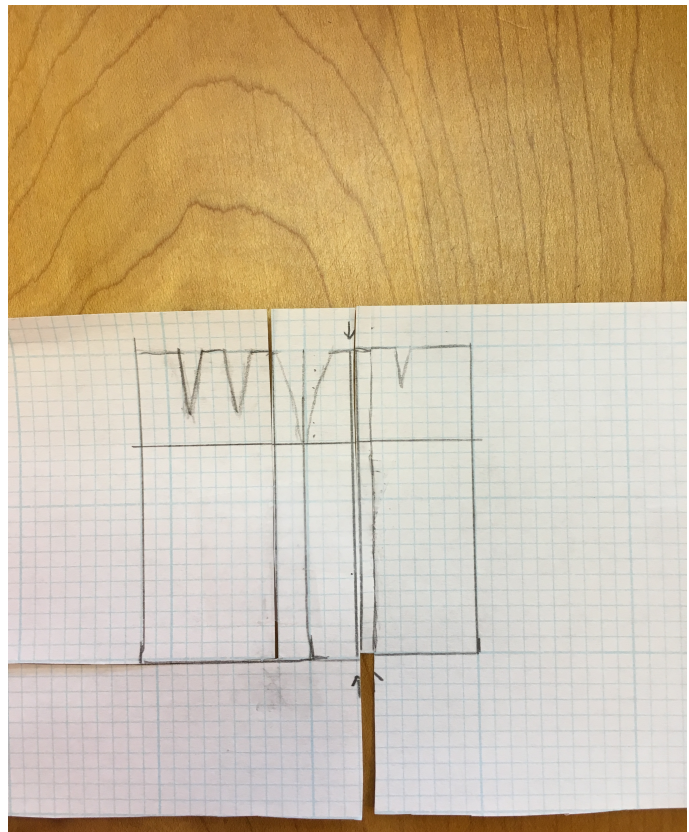
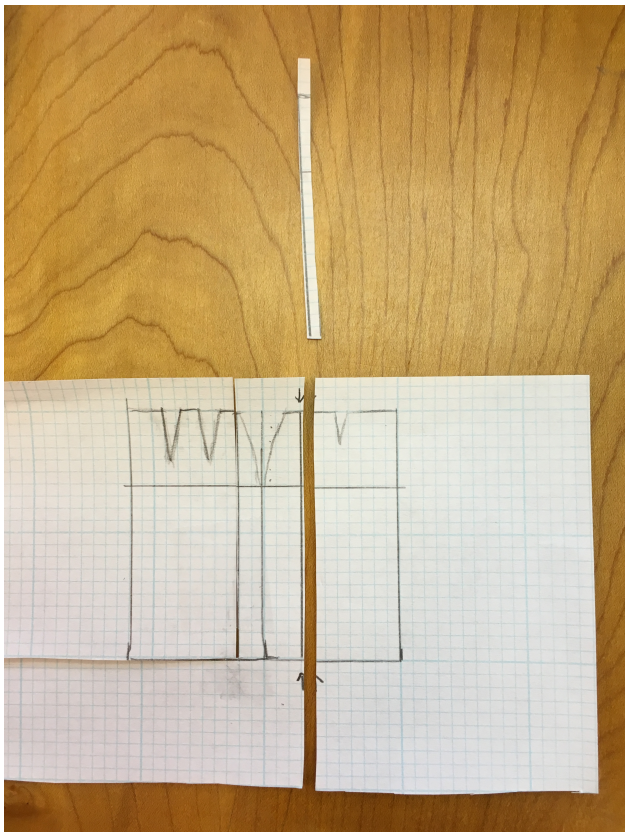


Balancing the Skirt Block

This makes her block 1" too small. I needed to add this inch back into the draft so the fit stays the same. To accomplish this, I drew a single line on the front block copy in the same manner as before.



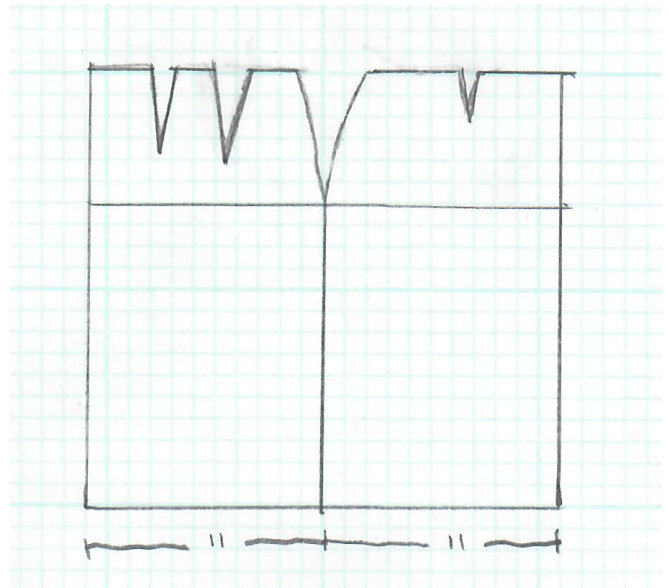
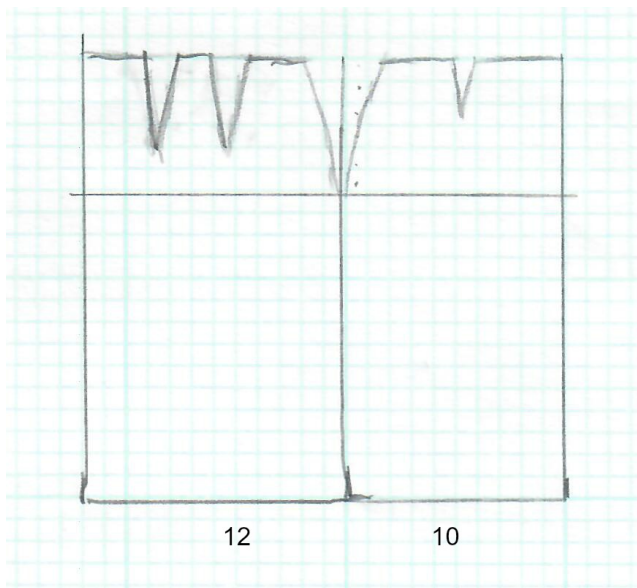
I cut along this line and spread the two parts apart. Then I added the strip that I removed from the back into the new space on the front.



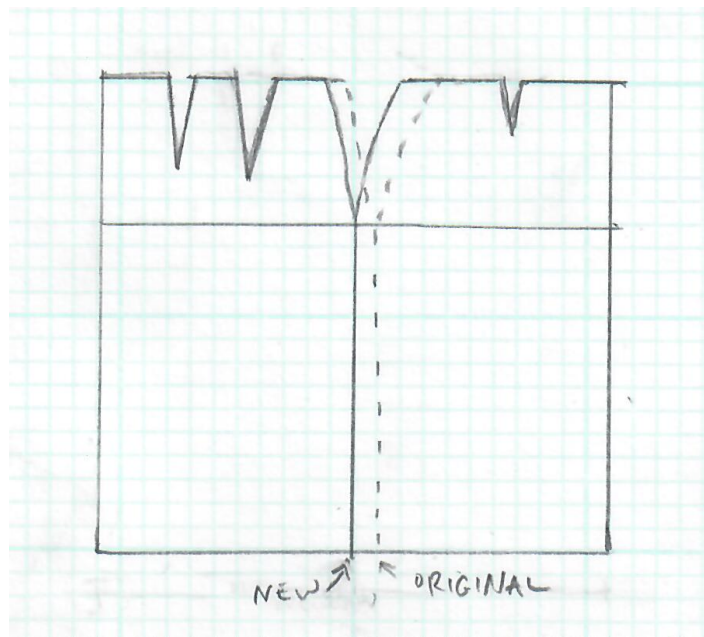
Balancing the Skirt Block

The fit will be almost exactly the same: No volume has been added or subtracted, and the darts have not changed. The only difference is that the entire side seam moved backwards one inch.

The cleaned up version will look very similar to the original, only now it is balanced front to back.



With the new block on top of the original block, you can see how the change affected the side seam only, which was our goal.



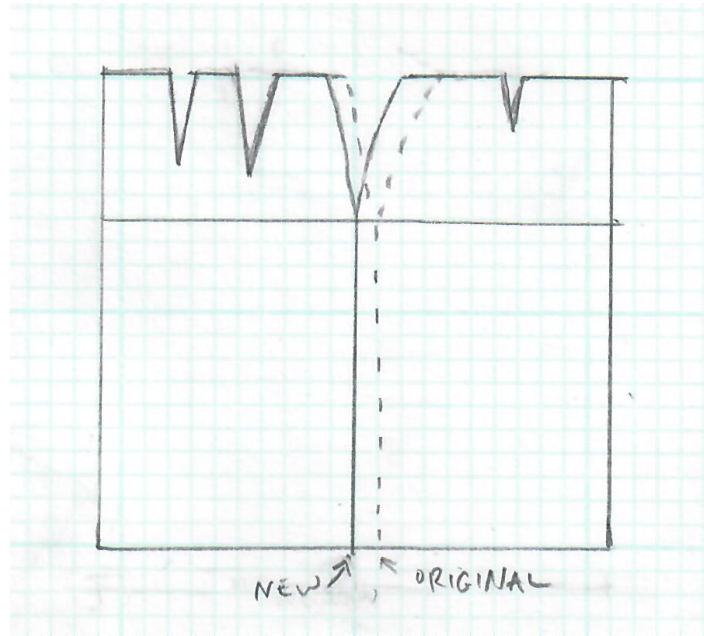
Which brings me to Example #2...

Balancing the Skirt Block

Example #2:

You can do exactly this! Trace your front and back draft onto a full sheet of paper. Then use your ruler (similar to how you draw in seam allowances) to follow the side seam shape drawing new lines equidistant from the originals- taking away from the wider side and adding to the narrower side.

The results will be exactly the same as the first example!



The darts haven't moved or changed, the volume remains exactly the same. The side seam keeps the exact same shape and is simply moved backward a bit.

Pretty cool huh? These are great pattern making lessons to show how you can make changes, like moving a seam, without changing the fit. You can move darts too!

If you think balancing your block might be an experiment worth giving a go, I hope you'll give something like these examples a try (and I hope you'll share with me about your experience)!

I also hope that this offers insight into how you can use your block to change up designs without changing the fit when pattern making. Your blocks are fantastically versatile tools that allow for extensive custom-fit possibilities!

NEW NOTES!

Balancing the Skirt Block

In exploring the unanswered untested query of what happens with balanced vs. unbalanced skirt blocks, I just had another idea to explore...

The instructions in this BETA QUERY document apply to those whose skirt blocks already achieve the block-fit goal without any need for improvement. When balancing, the fit will not change (for better or worse)- there will simply be a slight shift in the placement of a seam.

If your back skirt block is quite a bit larger than your front skirt block, try your skirt block mockup on and consider if you could use a little more cylinder volume in the front. Does the front fabric fall straight down from your belly perpendicular to the floor- or are there still some wrinkles, cupping under, or angling inward? Adding more width to the front block panel instead of simply moving your current seam placement could accomplish a more balanced block- AND fix some unaddressed fit puzzles at the same time!

ALSO- If you are reluctant to balance your skirt block, *that's okay too* and something I *really* want to learn more about! You don't *need* to balance or change it. I don't *know* if it will be helpful at all, Your idea to keep it as-is is just as valid as my idea to ask for a change and **I am extremely interested to learn more about exactly *why* you don't want to change it.** Your decision not to balance could offer me exactly the information I'm seeking to learn. I'm planning to revise both Skirt Skills and Smarty Pants really soon so learning about your experiences and opinions are very important to the future of all of my courses!

I'd love to know more about if your skirt block was originally balanced, nearly balanced, or if there was over an inch of unbalance. Then let me know your opinion on making the slight shift! Did you try it? Did you decide to keep it as-is? What was the reasoning for your decision? Inquiring minds want to know!

For reference: In the videos, none of the skirt blocks are balanced. My block and Rebecca's block were *nearly balanced* with our fronts ~3/4" larger than the backs. Jennifer's block was *unbalanced* with the back being almost 2" larger than the front. I created (what I think are) very successful blocks for all 3 of us without considering balancing (until now- years later). There's no reason why you won't achieve the same success without balancing!

(Among other curiosities of mine,) I am currently wondering if some of the differences between the methods I used in my drafts vs. Jennifer's drafts weren't so much about the difference in our *body shapes* but that maybe *the differences in balance* played a small role. Jennifer is no longer available, so I can't try everything back on her to test this theory. I'm asking all of you for input!

Also- When I first had this idea (late in the previous session), I asked a few students who were struggling about the possibility of balancing- and *all of them never contacted me ever again* (including Marcia). I'd love to know if this is just a fluke (life got in the way or whatever) or if there is some reason why some may be strongly opposed to the idea of balancing their skirt blocks. I don't think there is a right or wrong answer. I just want to hear about your body/ideas/questions/concerns...
