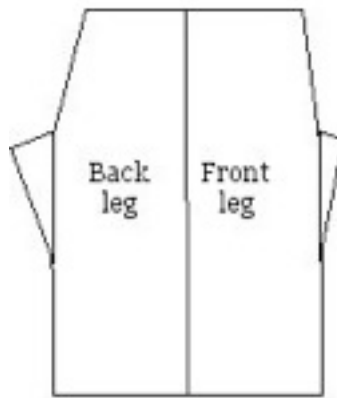


The Japanese Monpei: Design & Construction

The *Monpei* (1), shown right, is a garment of everyday wear, typically made of handwoven cotton fabric on a narrow (18" or less) loom. It is constructed of four long rectangles for two front leg and two back leg pieces. Shaping for the crotch is accomplished by cutting away a triangle and then repositioning it to add extra width in the thighs and allow the fabric to go between the legs. No fabric is wasted with this design.



This diagram below shows the arrangement of pieces for one leg:



Notes about the construction diagrams that follow:

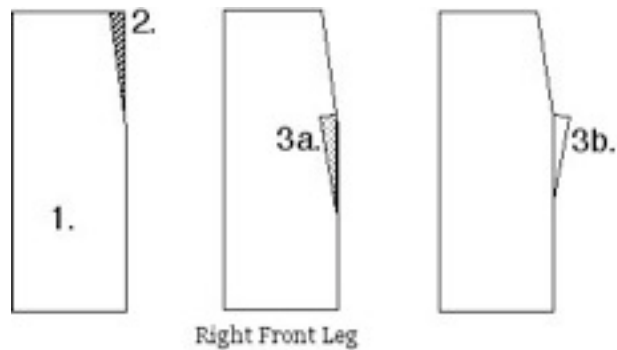
Note that pieces shaded with dots indicate the wrong side of the fabric; those shaded with diagonal stripes are cut away (but reused). All seams are 1/2 inch and are sewn with the fabrics positioned right-sides together. Hems and drawstring tunnel are folded to the wrong side.

To avoid confusion, 'right side' (vs wrong side) refers to the face of the fabric that is visible when the garment is worn; R-side refers to the right (vs left) side of the garment, and L-side refers to the left side of the garment.

Constructing the legs

The *monpei* requires a simple trick to allow the fabric to fit between the legs to form a crotch. This trick involves the use of narrow triangles cut from the top of the pant leg rectangles, which has the added benefit of providing a slight angle to the center front/back needed to accommodate movement of the hip. This use of triangles is shown below in the following sketches and steps for the right front leg.

Japanese Monpei (Pant) Design & Construction



Step 1. Cut 4 rectangles from the width of fabric, each the desired length of the pant plus 4 inches (3 inches for drawstring tunnel at waist, and 1 inch for hem). This creates 2 front and 2 back pieces.

Step 2. Cut off triangle shape on each front piece: from the upper R corner of the R-front leg, and the upper L corner of the L-front leg. Determine triangle length & width:

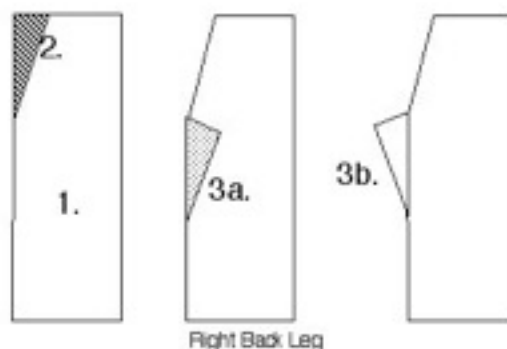
- For length: sit on a low table and measure along the side of the body from waist to the table. This is called the 'crotch depth.' Add 5 1/2 inches to this length (3 inches for drawstring tunnel at waist, 1/2 inch for seam allowance, and 2 inches for wearing ease).
- The width of the front triangles (at the top) is 1 1/2 inch.

Step 3a. Invert the triangle and reposition it with its right-side facing the right-side of the main leg piece, and so that the slanted side of the right triangle (the hypotenuse) aligns with the vertical part of the main piece, and the short horizontal side of the triangle is level with the bottom of the slope of the main piece, as shown in the diagram. Sew the triangle, as positioned, to the main piece (1/2" seam allowance).

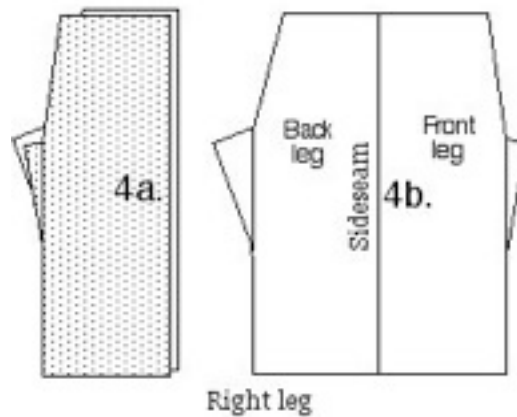
Step 3b. After sewing the triangle to the leg piece, fold it out so that the right-side of the leg and triangle are facing you.

Repeat with the left front leg.

Repeat also with the right and left back leg pieces, as illustrated in the following sketch. The length of the back triangle is the same as that on the front; however the width of the back triangles is 2 1/2 or more inches (depending on your body's shape).



Now you sew the R-front and R-back leg pieces together.

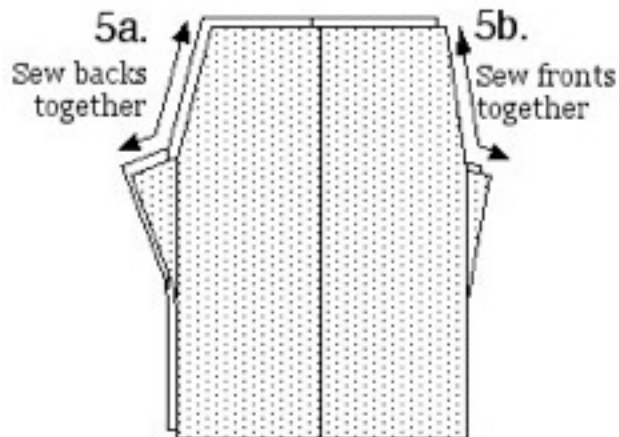


Step 4a. As shown in the sketch above, lay R-front upside down over a right-side up R back (right sides together), so that the long straight edges are aligned. Sew together along this edge to create the side seam in the right leg (1/2" seam allowance). Repeat for the L-back & L-front pieces to create the left leg.

Step 4b. Fold out the front leg so that you can see the entire leg piece, with the side seam in the middle.

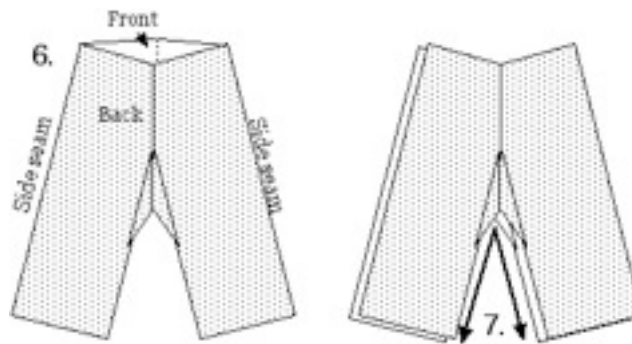
Sewing the legs together

First you stitch the center back & crotch seam; then the center front & crotch seam so that the upper legs are joined. This is illustrated in steps 5a & 5b as shown and detailed below.



Step 5. Lay right leg over left leg, right sides together; sew together along the slanted edges of the main leg pieces and the horizontal edges of the inverted triangles, forming the center front & crotch seam, and center back & crotch seam.

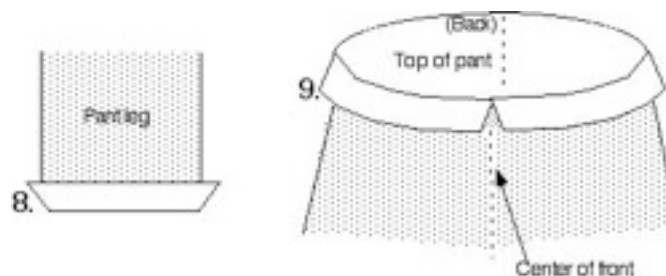
Next stitch the front and back inseams together as shown and detailed below, in steps 6 and 7. (The inseams are the seams along the inside of the leg, from crotch to hem).



Step 6. Realign so the just sewn center front & back seams are in the center; backs on top of fronts, right sides together.

Step 7. Sew the front and back pieces of each leg together along the shorter straight edge and the slanted edge of their respective triangles.

You're almost finished. Just the hem and the drawstring tunnel remain, as shown and detailed below in steps 8 and 9.



Step 8. With pant wrong-side out, fold up 1" hem at along bottom of each leg. Stitch in place.

Step 9. With pant still wrong-side out, fold over 1 1/2" to the inside at the top of the pant and sew it down to form a tunnel for a draw-string, leaving an opening to the tunnel at the center front. Insert drawstring; when the pant is worn, the string is tied in the front, as shown in the finished sketch at the beginning of this article.

You can use a length of ribbon or cord for the drawstring, or make it out of your fabric by sewing a long tube.

Wear your *monpei* with pride!

References

1. Folkwear Pattern #112: [Japanese Field Clothing](#)