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Opening Extract from...

Freehand Fashion

Written by Chinelo Bally

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CHINELO BALLY

FREEHAND FASHION



LEARN TO SEW THE PERFECT WARDROBE

NO PATTERNS REQUIRED!



CHINELO BALLY

FREEHAND FASHION

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ABOUT ME

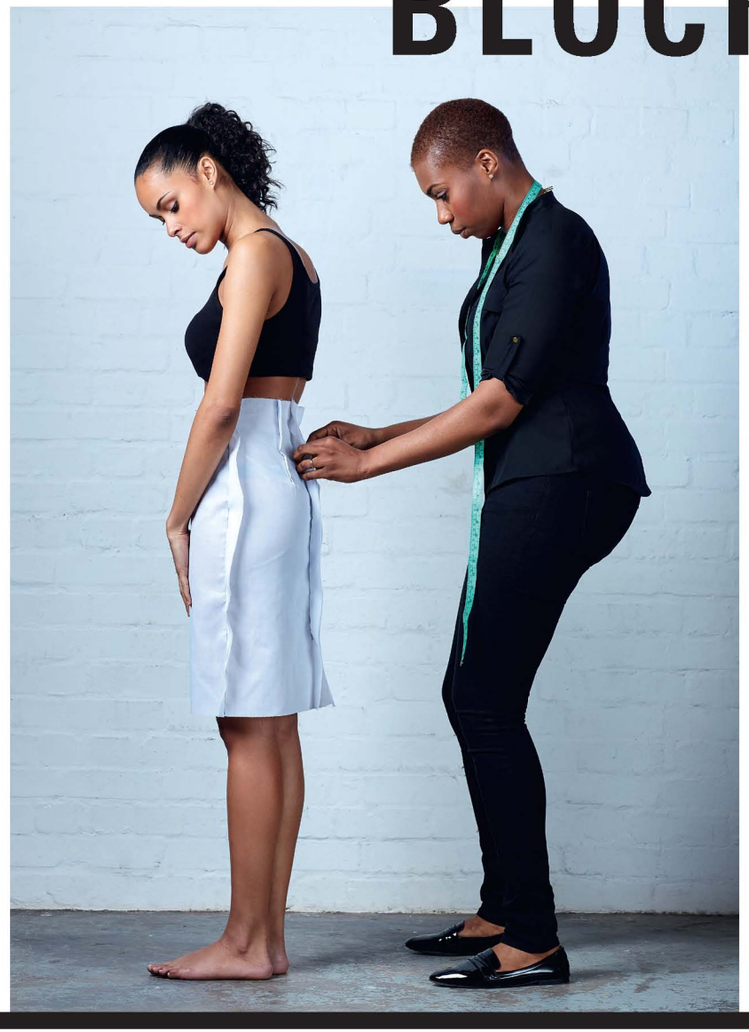
I am a Nigerian-born Brit with an overly healthy appetite for fashion and sewing. I have always loved fashion, but I began my dressmaking journey just four years ago. After buying my first sewing machine and failing woefully at a couple of attempts at off-piste sewing, I decided to go to my aunty, who is a dressmaker, and watch her in the hope of picking up her magic tricks. Her freehand approach appealed to me because I had many ideas in my head and was itching to bring them to fruition! It took me three months to learn the freehand technique, but I was determined and fell passionately in love with the process of dressing myself this way. The seeds of daring to venture into the fashion industry were – ahem – sown.

I was eager to understand how to make beautiful clothes that fit women of all shapes and sizes and, after only three months of sewing for myself, I began designing and making clothes for family members and friends. I have since made clothes for private clients from all walks of life. In 2014 I took part in the BBC's *The Great British Sewing Bee*, where I learned so much from the judges and my fellow sewists. It was lovely to be surrounded by like-minded people, and to spend so much time sewing!

This is not your conventional sewing book; if you watched the *Sewing Bee*, then you will know that I am not a conventional sewist. This book is all about producing beautiful, elegant and stylish garments using the freehand cutting method. It's aimed at anyone with an interest in dressmaking, and especially the growing numbers of young people who are venturing into sewing for the first time. I want to offer beginners a fresh take on home sewing, one that is fashionable and trendy, and I also want to entice seasoned sewists to step away from traditional rules and try the exciting freehand method. I learned this method without any prior knowledge of sewing; before I appeared on the *Sewing Bee*, I had never used a pattern. This is a technique that everyone can learn, and I look forward to walking you through it, step by step.



THE BASIC BLOCKS

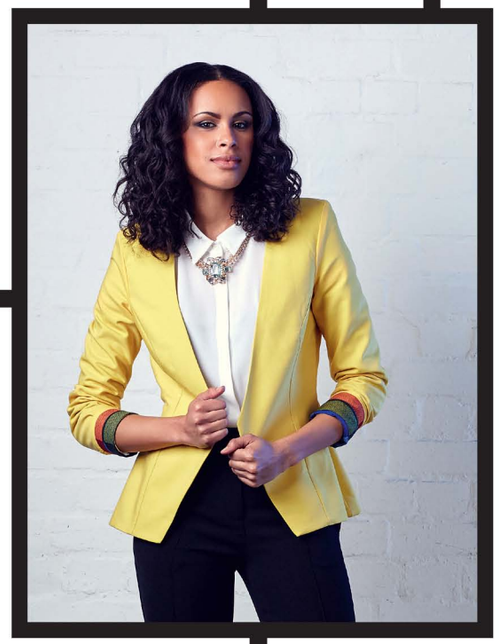


This chapter covers the drafting, cutting and construction of the basic blocks that are used – either singly or in combination – to make every item of clothing in the wardrobe. There are five basic blocks in my method – bodice, dress, skirt, flare and sleeve.

The **bodice block** is the standard piece that forms the garment from the shoulder seams to the waist seam; it includes princess line darts that give a smooth, body-skimming fit. The **dress block** is for a basic shift dress and contains side bust darts. The **skirt block** can be used as the basis for most skirt styles, from a simple A-line to a figure-hugging pencil skirt. The **flare block** features both the full flare (commonly used to create skater-style dresses or a peplum) and the half flare, which is normally used for maxi skirts and dresses to get a gloriously voluptuous drape around the lower section of the dress. All of these flares can also be used to create ruffles and fancy details in garments. Finally, there is the **sleeve block** – and I have given instructions for a basic fitted cap sleeve, as well as for fuller, puffed and pleated sleeves.

THE PROJECTS







Here you will find tops, skirts, dresses and jackets that I have designed to walk you through the freehand cutting method. If you are used to sewing with patterns, you may find this a bit tricky to get your head around at first, but trust me, it's easy when you know how! The simpler projects are at the start, followed by the more challenging ones. As you work through the garments you will pick up skills that will aid you as the tasks become more intense. For some items I have made two versions, to show you the different effects that can be achieved by choosing different fabric and making small design adjustments. As you grow in confidence you will want to experiment, making the clothes that you've always had in mind but couldn't find in the shops. I want to encourage you to try unusual fabrics and embellishments to make the clothes suit your own style. I want to free you from the restrictions of commercial sewing patterns and inspire you to bring to life your own fashions. I warn you: you may never want to buy ready-made clothes again!





MAXI SKIRT

For me, nothing beats a romantic look in the summer, and what's more romantic than a beautifully floaty maxi skirt. This one is an absolute winner with all body shapes because it hugs closely at the waist then flares out skimming the rest of the lower torso and legs. The great thing about this cut is its versatility; you can use all kinds of fabrics and achieve very different looks. A stiffer cotton fabric will fall with more structure and lend itself to a fuller silhouette, whilst a soft silk-satin will give you a deliciously liquid drape. If you don't fancy the full-length version, just make it shorter. Remember, you are the designer, so play with fabrics, lengths, embellishments; let your imagination run free.



MEASUREMENTS NEEDED

Waist • First radius (see page 49)
Second radius (see page 49)

BLOCK NEEDED

Flare Block (see page 48)

AMOUNT OF FABRIC NEEDED

Width = second radius x 2 + 91.5 cm (1 yd)
Length = fabric that measures at least 145 cm (58 in.) across from selvedge to selvedge

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Fabric • Fusible interfacing • Straight ruler
Tape measure • Fabric marker
Iron and ironing board • Sewing machine
Sewing thread to match fabric
Invisible zip • Fabric scissors

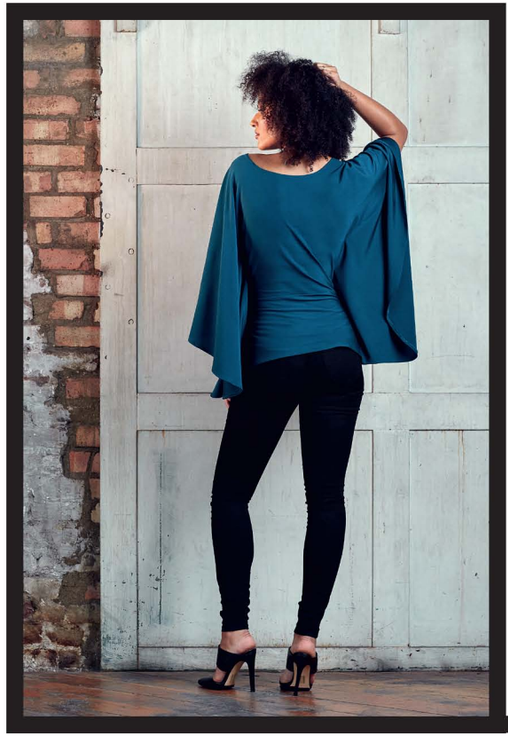
NOTES

Always fold fabric right sides together unless otherwise stated. It is important to press every fold to create definite creases. Take a 1.2-cm (½-in.) seam allowance throughout unless otherwise stated.

BATWING TOP



I love an easy sew, a project that only takes a couple of hours and can be jazzed up by using a fancy fabric such as velvet, can be embellished for extra wow factor, or made in a more casual fabric for lazy-day chic. I am always last minute with my outfit choices for evenings out with the girls, or sometimes I just want something new to wear to work the next morning. Whichever your preference and whatever the reason, this project is so versatile and so quick to make, and it's ideal for getting you into a cordial relationship with stretchy fabric. I recommend a two-way stretch fabric, because it is easy to handle and is more predictable, fit-wise. You will need to follow the horizontal and vertical measurement mapping system in the bodice block with the stipulated adjustments. This top can also be made as a tunic or a dress.



NOTES

Always fold fabric right sides together unless otherwise stated. It is important to press every fold to create definite creases. Take a 1.2-cm (½-in.) seam allowance throughout unless otherwise stated.

MEASUREMENTS NEEDED

HORIZONTAL MEASUREMENTS (SEE PAGE 18)
Nape to Sleeve Hem • Bust • Waist • Hip

VERTICAL MEASUREMENTS (SEE PAGE 19)
Shoulder to Waist • Shoulder to Hip

BLOCK NEEDED

Bodice Block (see page 24)

AMOUNT OF FABRIC NEEDED

This project requires a two-way stretch fabric.
Make sure the width is along the stretch of the fabric.
Width = Nape to Sleeve Hem x 4 + 5 cm (2 in.)
Length = Shoulder to Hem + 2.5 cm (1 in.)

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Fabric • Pins • Fabric scissors
Needle and contrasting sewing thread
Tape measure • Fabric marker
Overlocker (optional) • Sewing machine
Twin needle • Sewing thread to match fabric
Iron and ironing board

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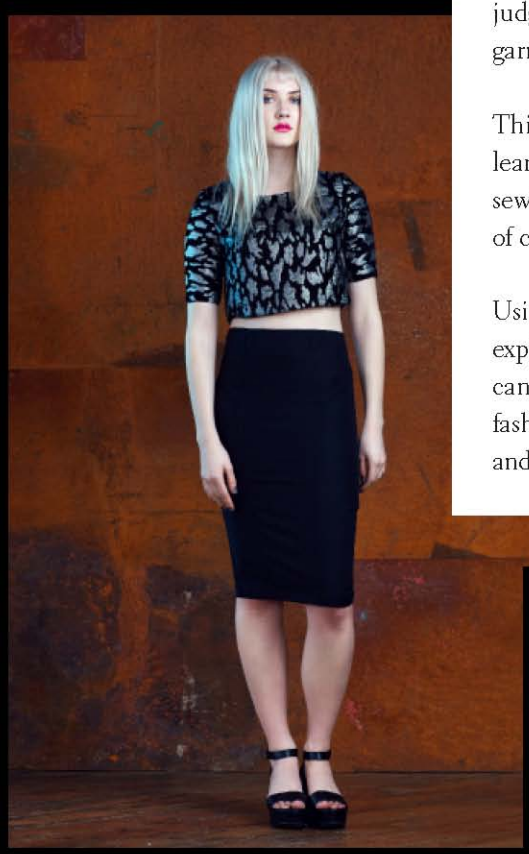
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Before appearing on The Great British Sewing Bee, Chinelo Bally had never used a sewing pattern. She wowed the judges with her ability to create stylish, fitted garments using her freehand cutting method.

This is a simple technique that anyone can learn. No fancy equipment is needed – just a sewing machine, measuring tape, chalk and of course a good pair of scissors.

Using a series of basic garment blocks, she explains how this innovative technique can be used to create a whole wardrobe of fashionable clothes that will fit every shape and size – with no patterns required.





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