

Beginning Smocking

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Source for Linen:

Fabrics-store.com
They have a new ultra-lightweight linen

Always wash fabric before proceeding; recommend Synthrapol, available at www.prochemical.com

Prep

Determine width and height of area to be smocked
Take-up is about 1-5, so multiply width by 5
Leave extra room above and to both sides of the area to be smocked when cutting fabric

Top edge: Either use selvedge or finish; if finishing the edge, this must be done before proceeding
Typical finished edge is overcast (or blanket stitch, unclear) in black or occasionally gold

Mark a ¼ inch grid (or ½ inch grid for thicker fabric)
Mark an extra row above and below area to be smocked
Mark extra column to left and right of area to be smocked
Mark the grid in an even number of rows, even if not all rows will be smocked
Mark lightly with a graphite pencil on the wrong side of the fabric
Do not use disappearing, air-dry, or wash out pens, as the inks may damage the fabric

Phase I

Use doubled thread, waxed, at least 12" wider than cut fabric
Choose two bright colors; alternate rows
Leave long unknotted tails on left and right sides

Sew with wrong side toward you
Sew under the dots – majority of thread stays on the wrong side surface

Keep stitches aligned vertically and horizontally – in this case, neatness counts

Once all rows are sewn, knot pairs of threads to each other along one vertical edge: Tie Row 1 to Row 2, Row 3 to Row 4, etc.

Then pull up the pleats and knot the other side in the same sequence.

Do not pull too tightly – you will need to be able to see the bright threads in between the pleats

Phase II

Switch to thread that is the same color as the fabric; waxed

Sew with wrong side facing you

Use a back stitch aligned with each row of colored stitching

Thread must always be below the needle, or always above

How tightly you back stitch determines tightness of pleats

Even tension counts – doesn't matter how tight or loose, just stay consistent

When all rows complete, tie pairs of rows as before

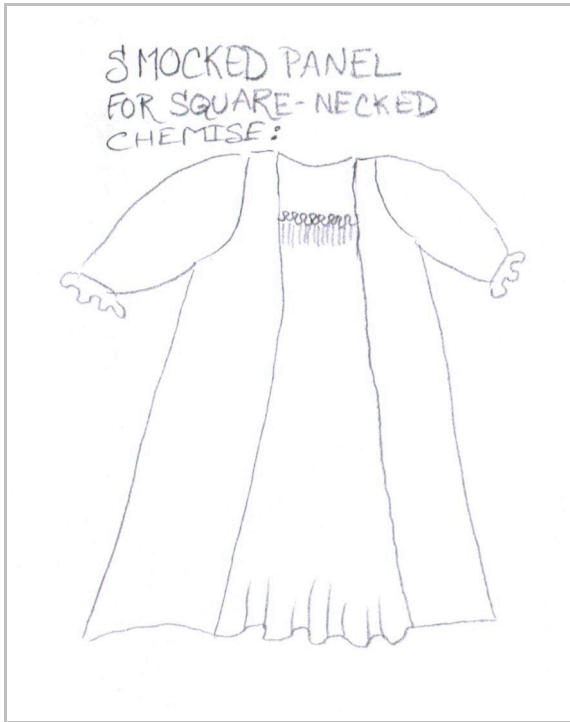
Carefully cut out and remove bright threads from Phase I

Take care not to cut Phase II threads

Finishing

On wrong side, whip stitch rectangle of fabric, using same fabric as garment, turning in edges as you whip-stitch; this protects the smocking from abrasion

Then construct the garment



One possible layout for square neckline with smocked panel – compare to Italian chemise which is smocked all the way around the neckline



Compare to all-around-neckline smocking on chemise in painting by Titian