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making know how

1950s party frock

'50s style but on-trend,
this easy dress can
be made fancy or
workaday – it's all down
to the fabric choice.

By Jeanne Spaziani



You will need

2.25m of 145cm wide fabric for included pattern size
 Fabrics with some body to them are most suitable ie brocade, taffeta, velveteen, crisp cotton, firm wool, corduroys
 3m double fold seam binding (plus more if you want to use it on the hem)
 18in zip (set-in or invisible as preferred)
 Small hook and loop for top of zip
 Sewing equipment

1. Print out the pattern on page 146 and cut the following from your fabric: one front bodice, one front facing, a pair of back bodices, pair of back facings, one front skirt, and a pair of back skirts.

2. Begin sewing by stay-stitching the neckline and armhole areas of all bodice and facing pieces close to the 1cm stitching lines. This is particularly important on the back neck 'V' but will help all areas keep their shape.

3. Sew the six bodice darts – press all vertical darts towards the front and back centres and the side bust darts down. Attach the front to the backs at the side seams of the bodice and sew the facings side seams with the 1.5cm seam allowances. These seams are all best pressed open. For fabrics that fray the seam allowances can be clean finished with some of the bias binding. Other fabrics can simply be pinked or zig zag stitched along the edges. Leave the shoulder seams open until after the facings are sewn on.

4. Attaching the facings is the next step – with right sides together pin each in place at the bodice neck lines and armholes and sew with a 1cm seam allowance. Be sure to sew the back necks all the way to the centre back edges.

5. Edge stitch each section on the facing side. Clip curved areas well and grade

the seam allowances if they are feeling thick. Turn the facings to the inside of the bodice sections and press the neckline and armholes flat.

6. The shoulder seams are attached next. Pin each shoulder right sides together and hand baste if necessary to keep the facings from rolling out, then machine sew. Press the seams open and hand stitch the raw edges in place onto the facings with close stitches so they look neat and no fraying will occur.

7. Attach the front skirt to the back skirts and the centre back seams up to the zip notch. Press these three seams open and neaten the edges in a way appropriate to your fabric. Form the eight 5cm pleats and the centre front 15cm box pleats by following the direction of the arrows marked on the pattern. Stay stitch the entire skirt waist so the pleats are held in place and won't push out when sewn to the bodice.

8. With right sides together, pin and sew the skirt to the bodice matching the side seams and centre front notches. Cover the seam allowance edges with a piece of the bias binding to clean finish and help from stretching. Press the seam allowance up towards the bodice. Catch stitch it in place on the bodice side seams to hold.

Tips

1. If your fabric is on the soft side consider interfacing the entire bodice with a medium weight iron-on interfacing and mounting the skirt onto organza or net to give it more body.
2. The bodice can be used with different skirt patterns – add a tight pencil skirt for a wiggle dress or a circular skirt for a rockabilly style. The skirt pattern can be used on its own too – just add a waistband.

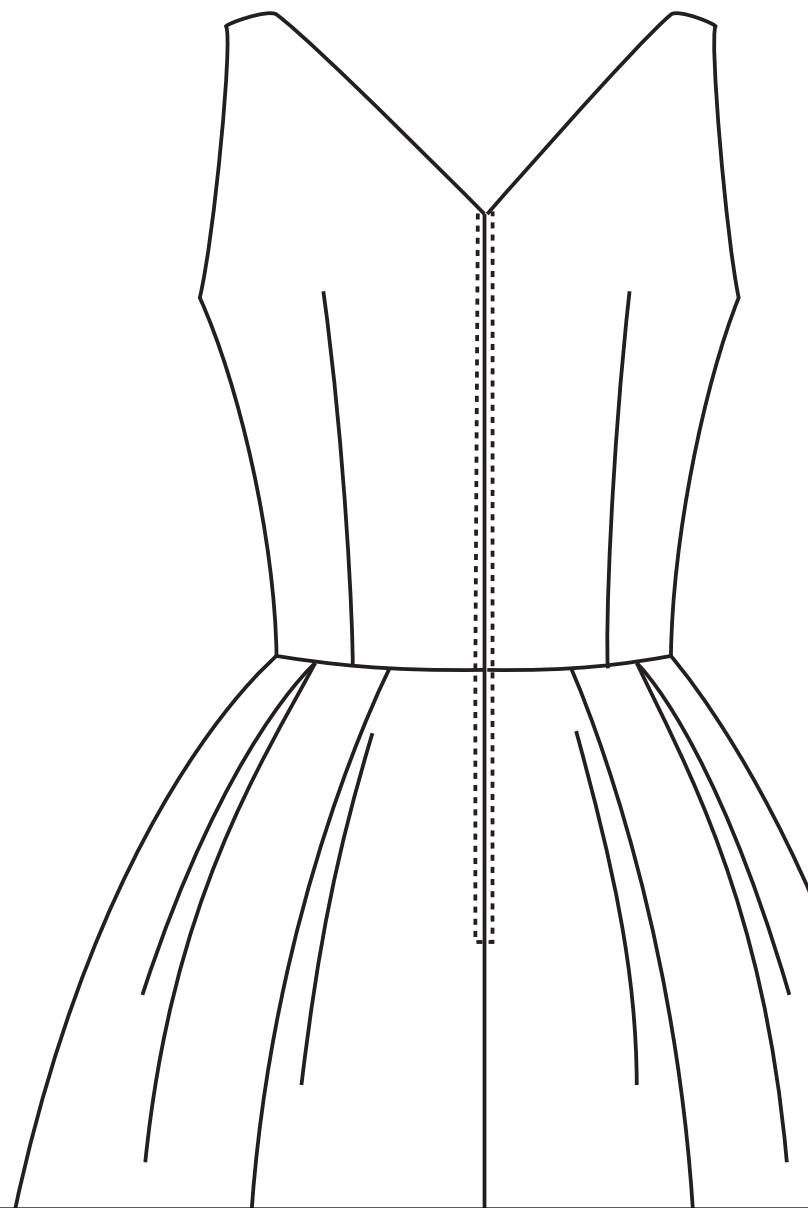
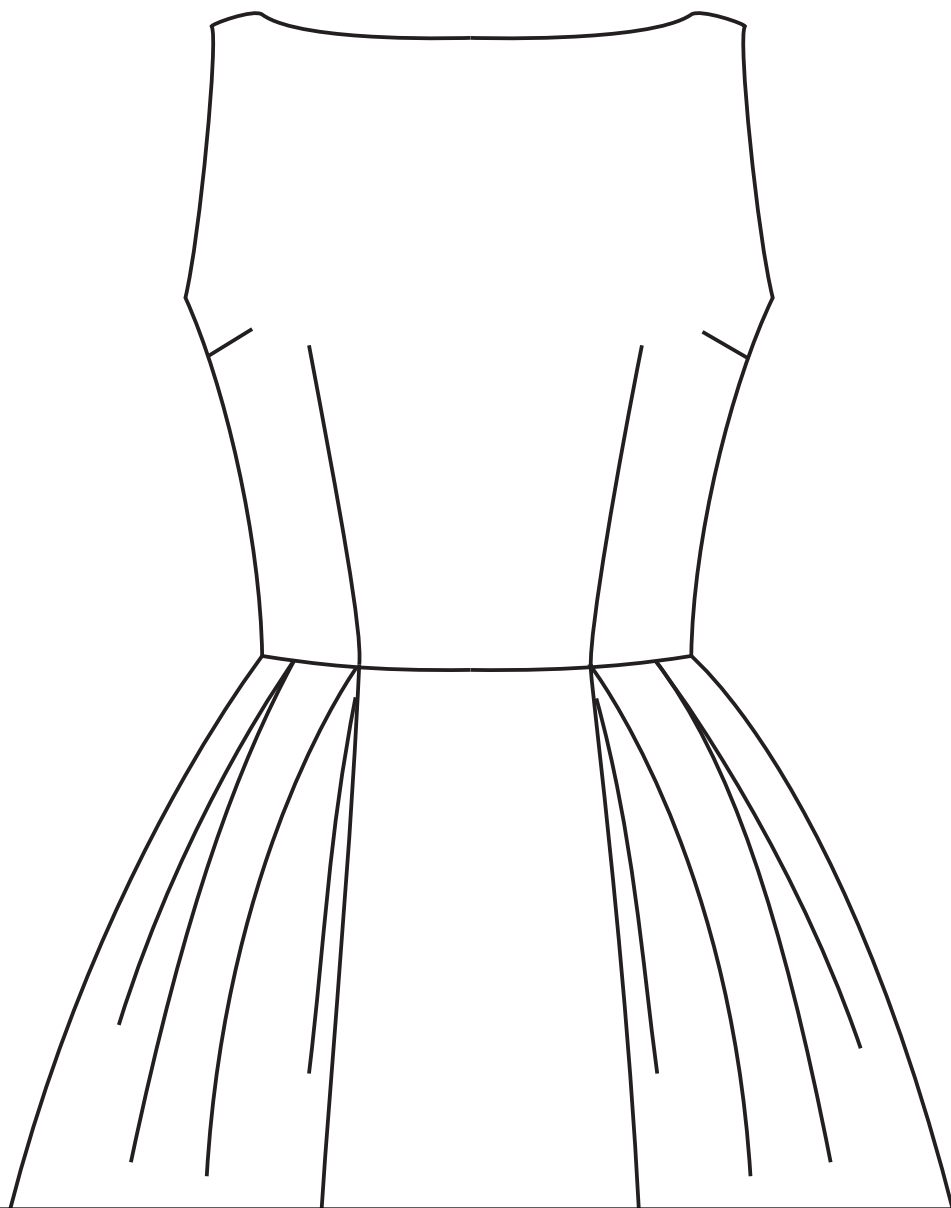
9. Insert the zip in the centre-back seam using 1.5cm seam allowance. Best not to sew the facing in with the zip, it gets hand stitched in place after. Place so the zip head is 7.5mm below the finished top edge. The seam allowance section below the facing can be clean finished with bias binding or pinking as you think best. After the zip is sewn in the seam allowances of the facing get turned back and slip stitched in place along the zip tape.

10. Sew the small hook and loop in place above the zip. Tack the facings in place at the bodice side seams to keep them from flipping up. The hem turning allowed on the pattern is 5cm. Adjust as needed. The hem can be machine or hand sewn in place as your fabric needs or time allows. Thread belt loops can be worked at each side seam to hold a pretty ribbon or purchased belt in place.

Resources

Brocade from author's stash

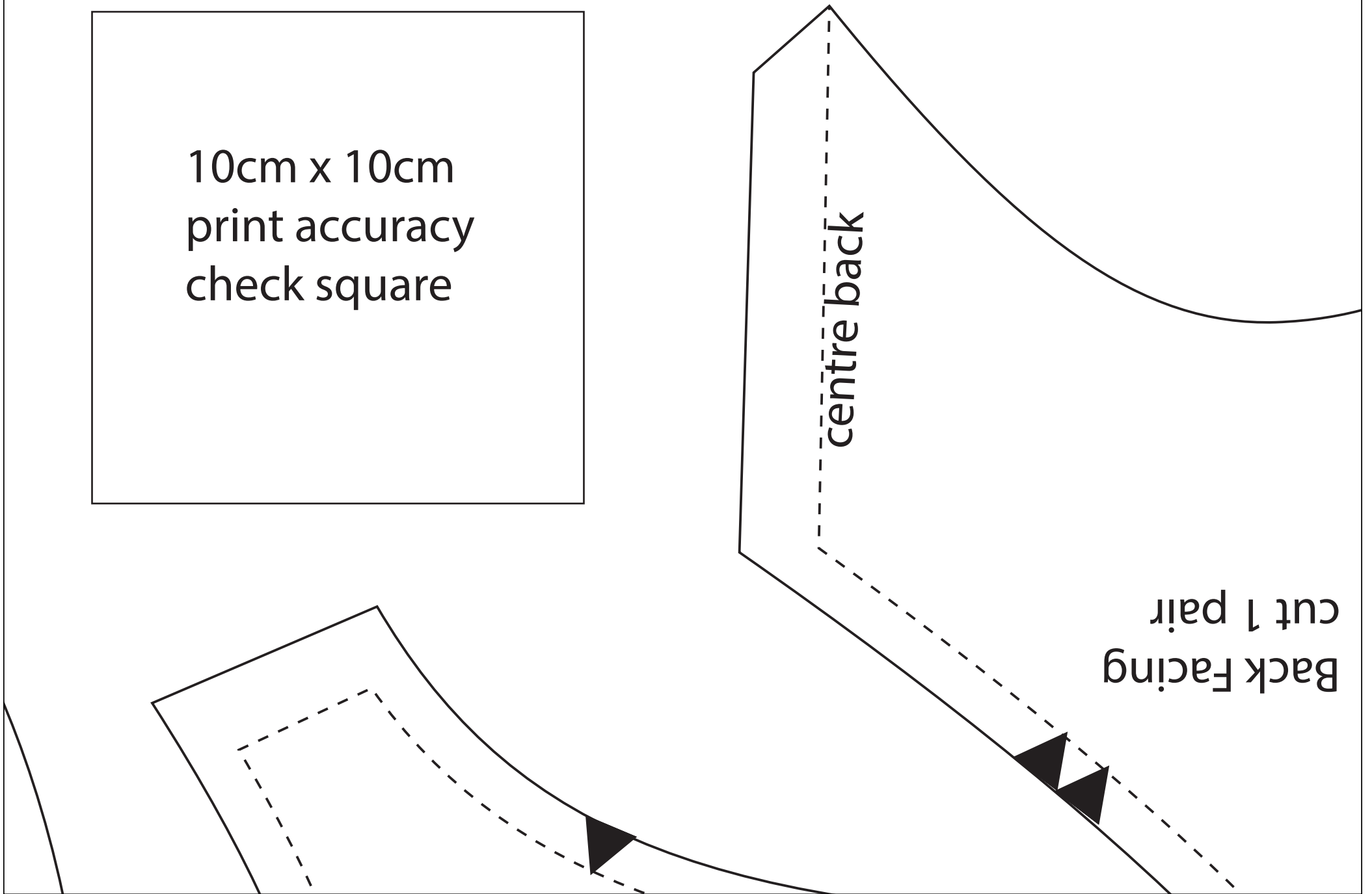
Dress fits bust 88 cm, waist 69 cm (M&S size 10)
Hem circumference: 230 cm, Skirt length: 61 cm

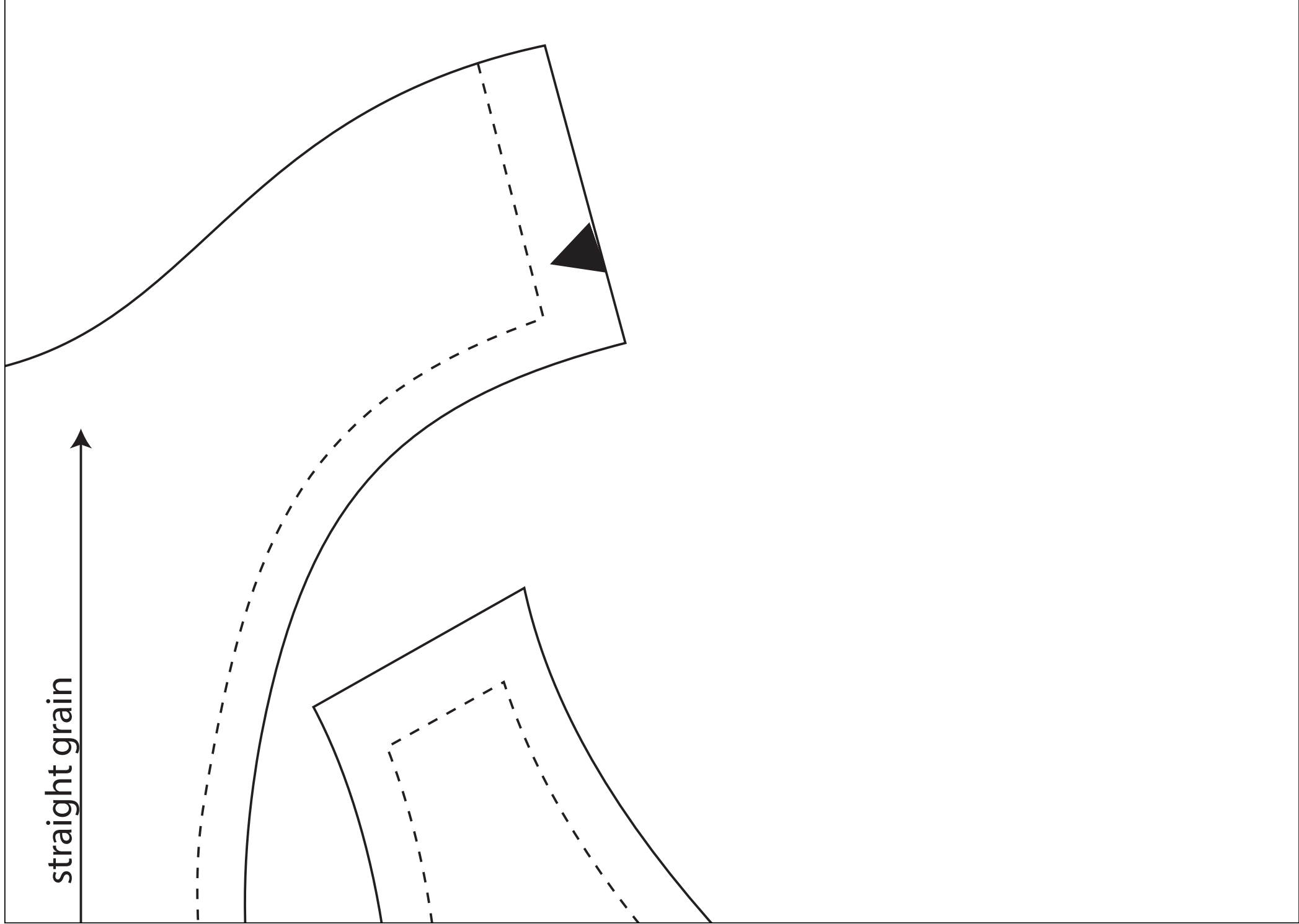


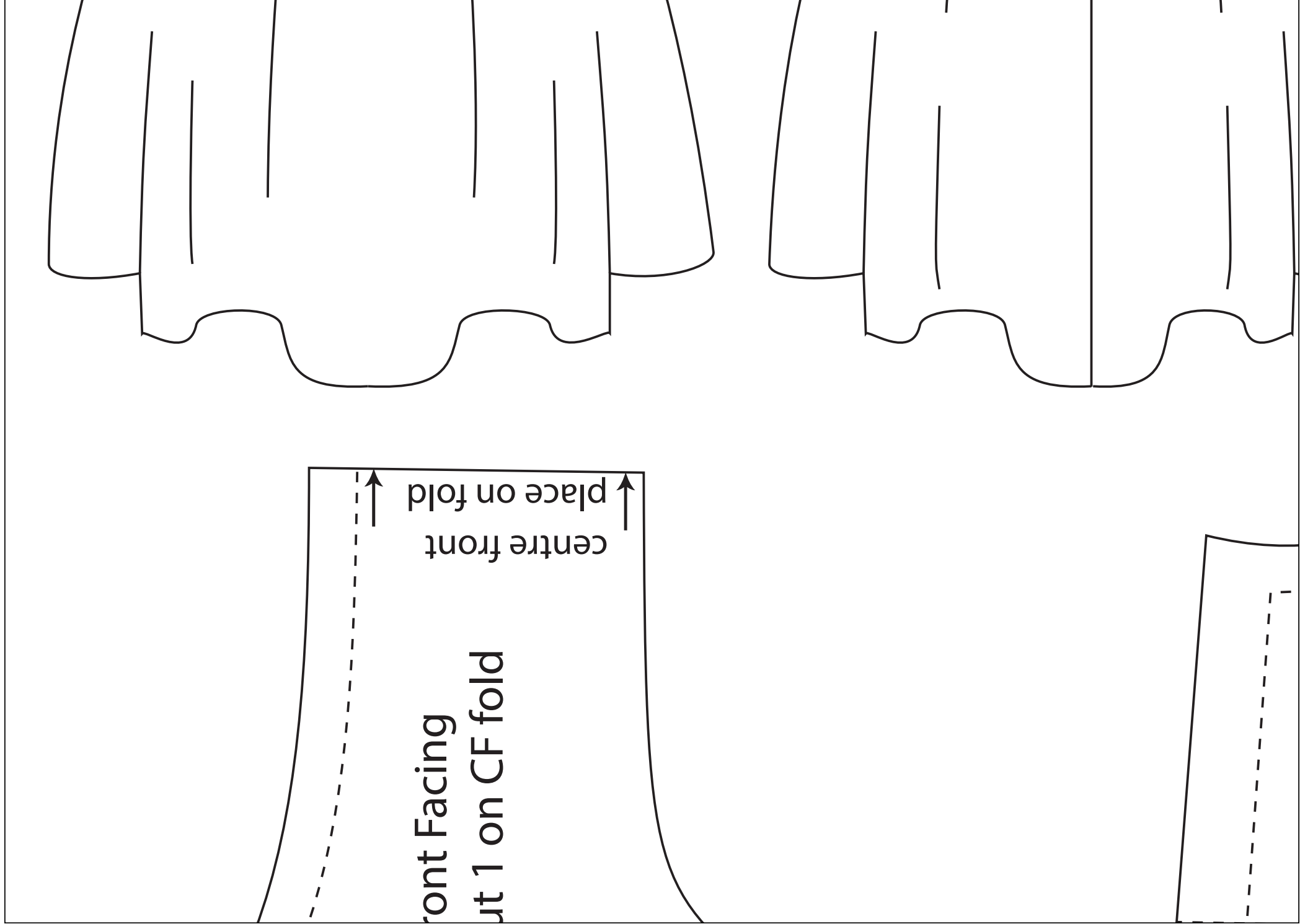
10cm x 10cm
print accuracy
check square

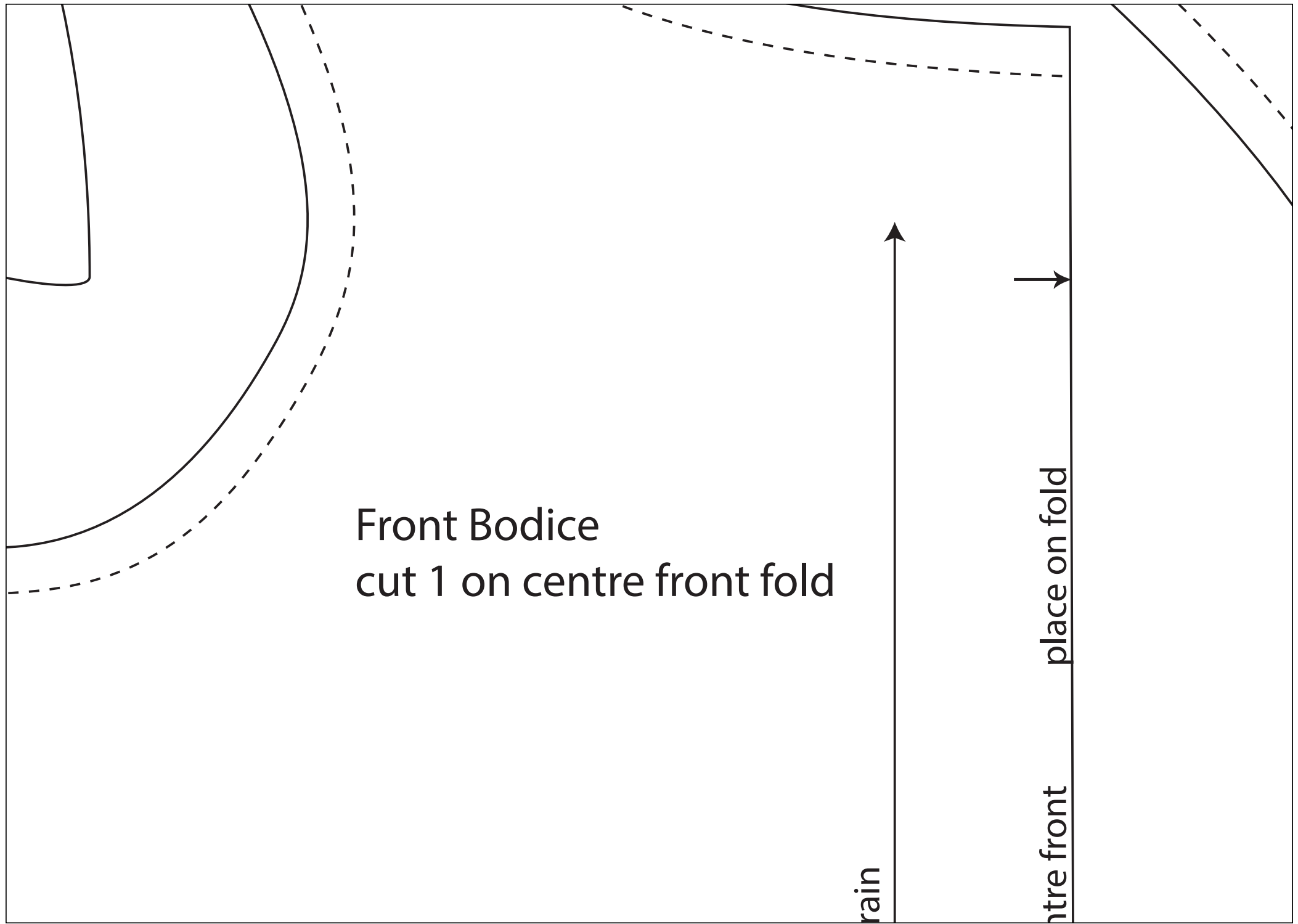
centre back

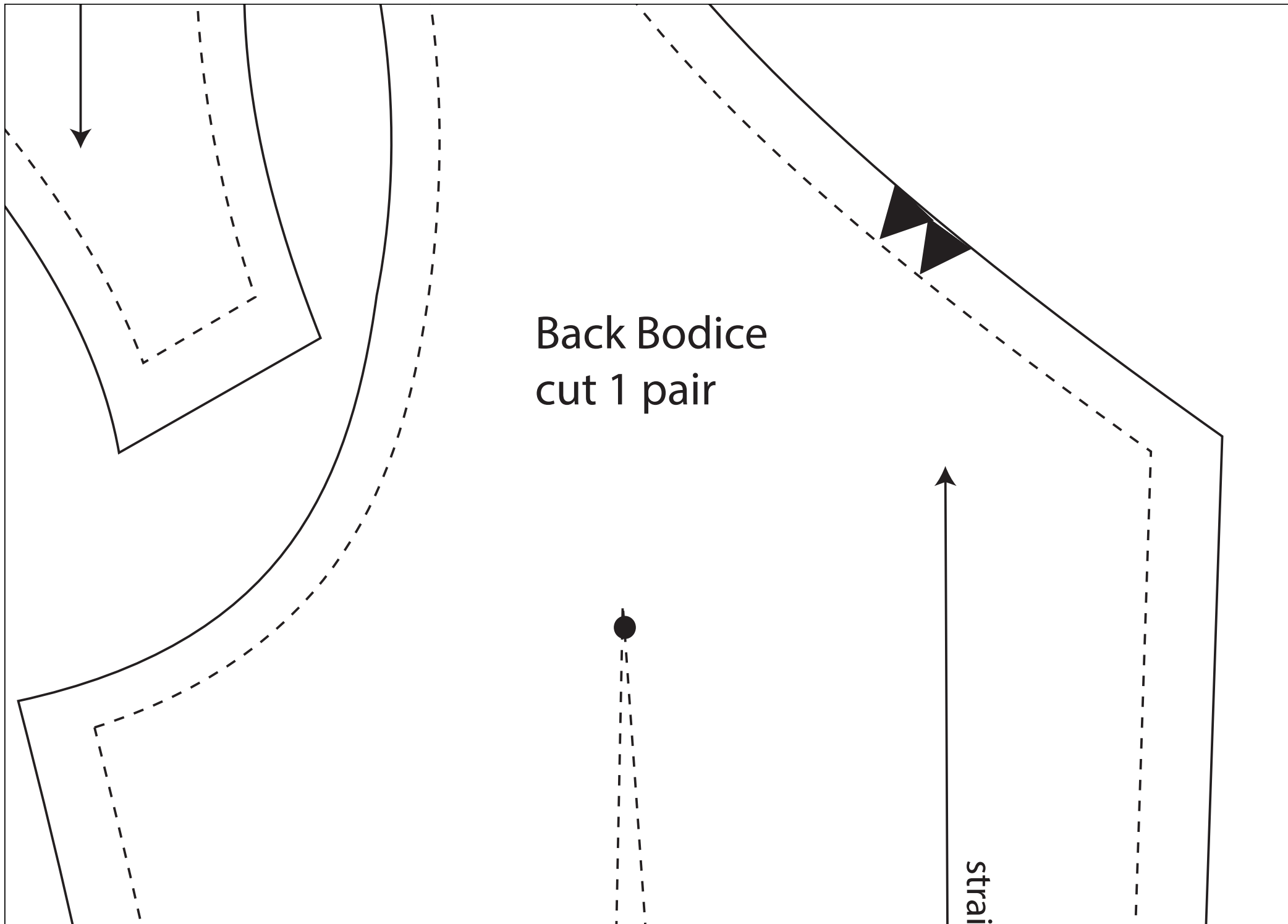
Back Facing
cut 1 pair





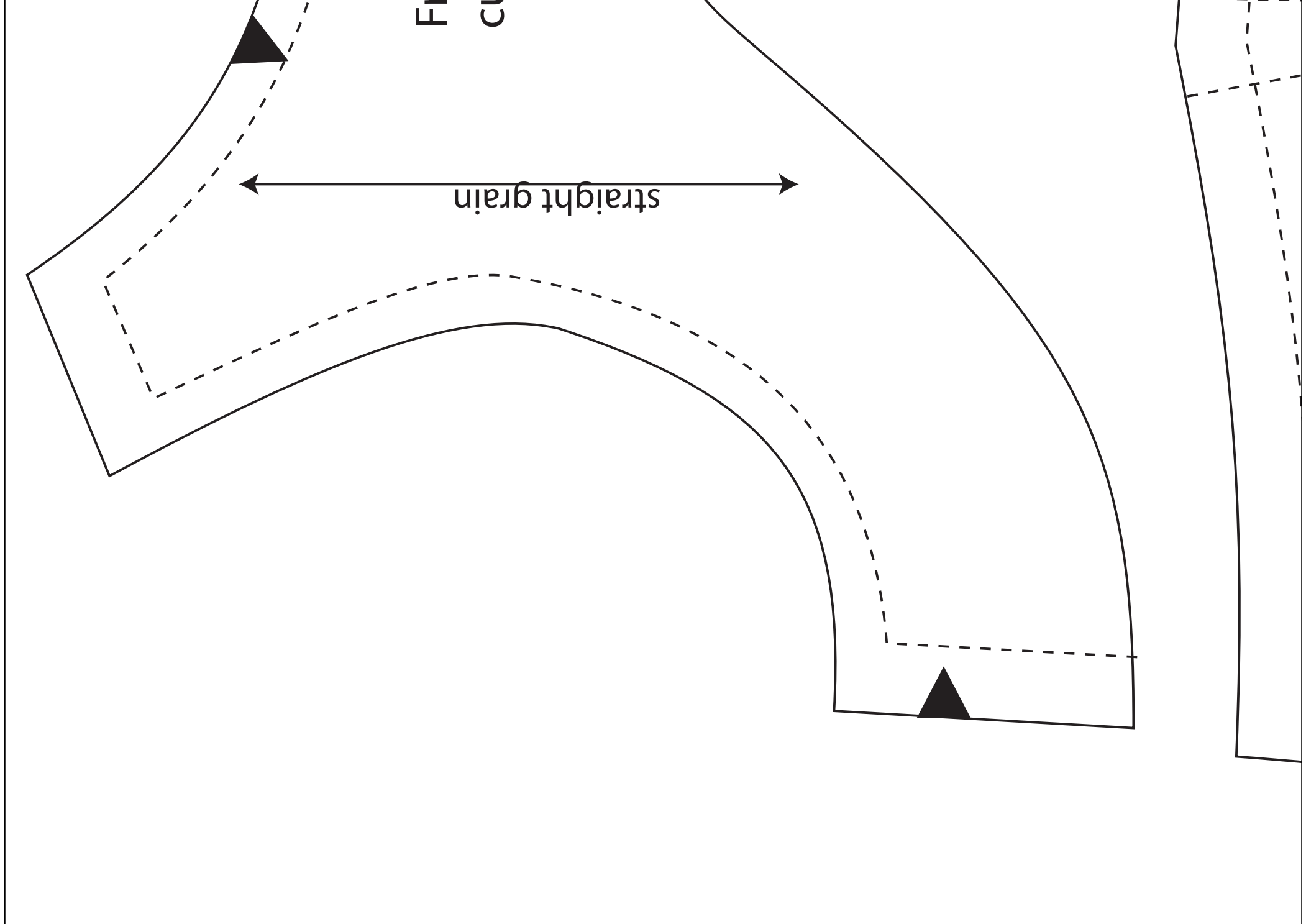


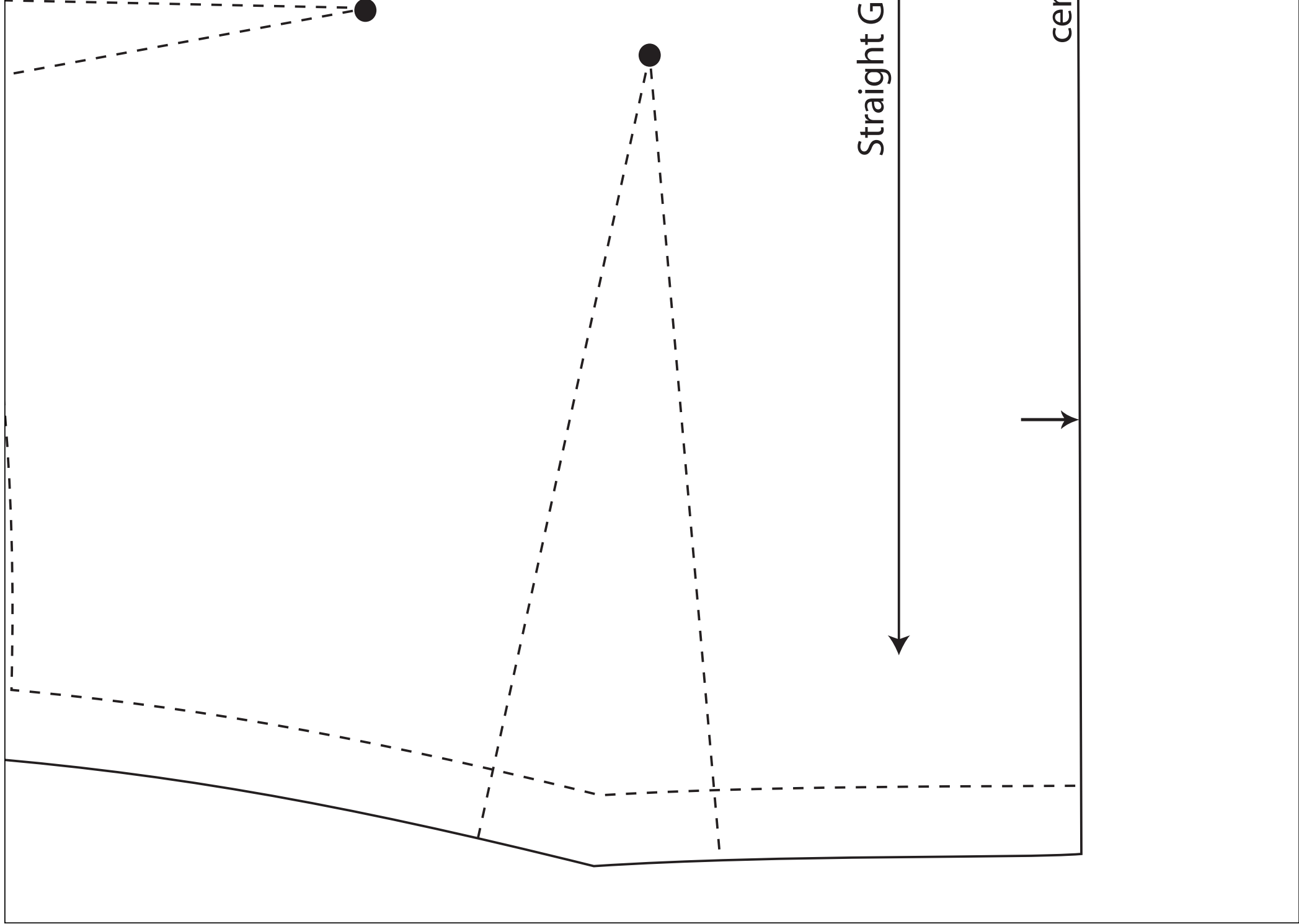


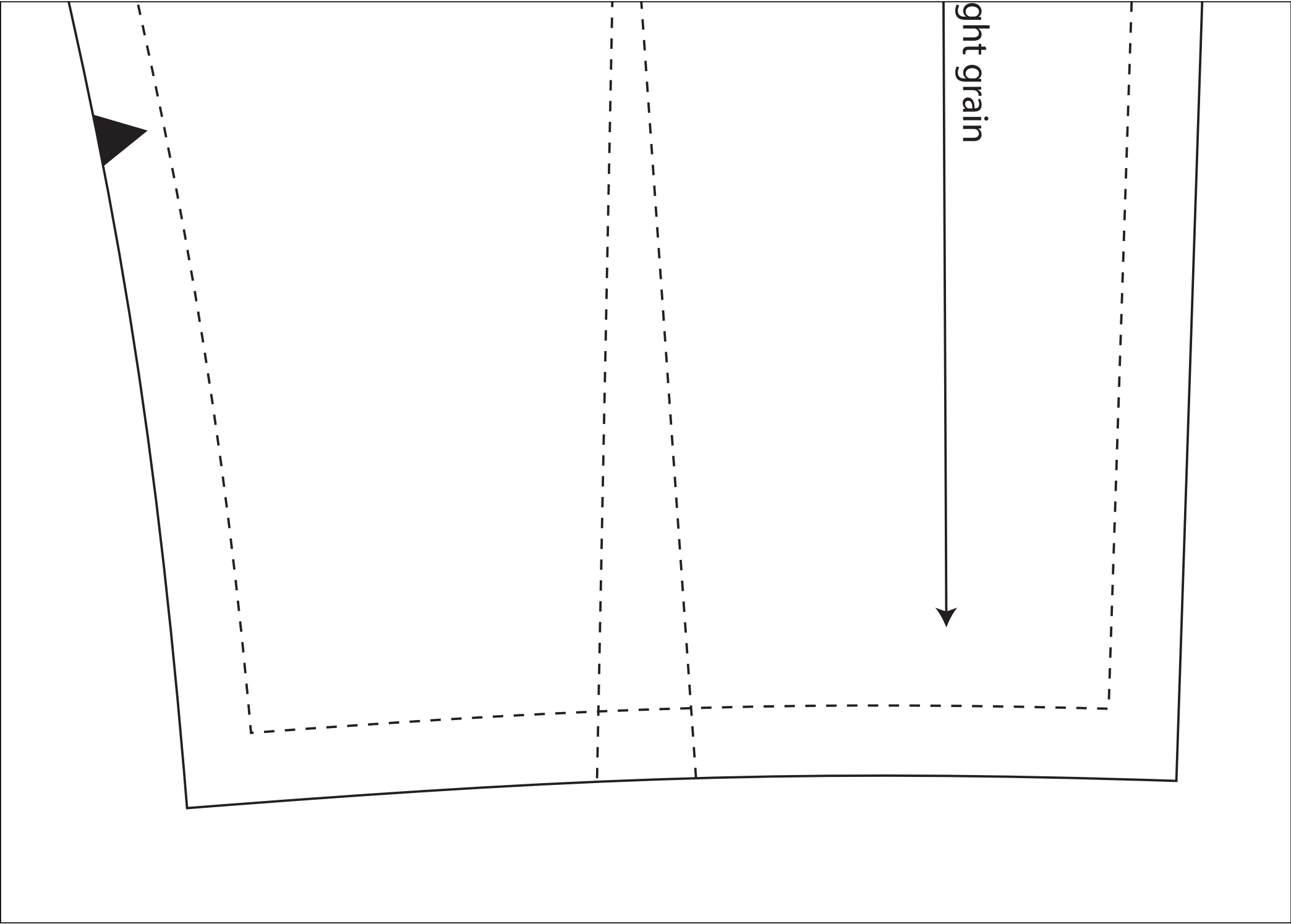


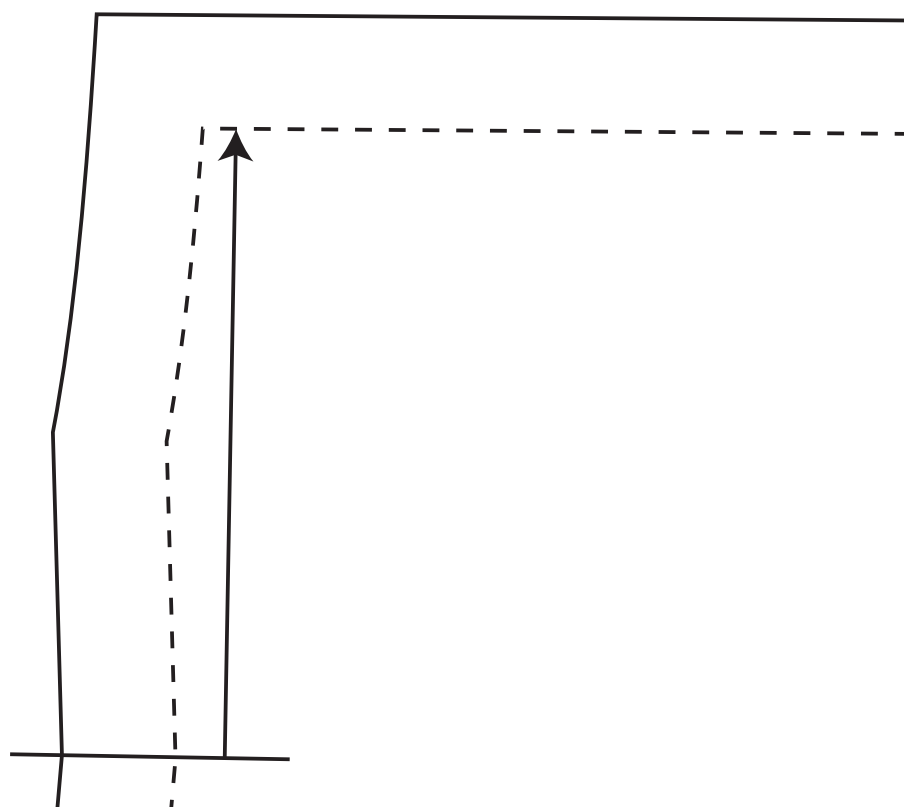
Back Bodice
cut 1 pair

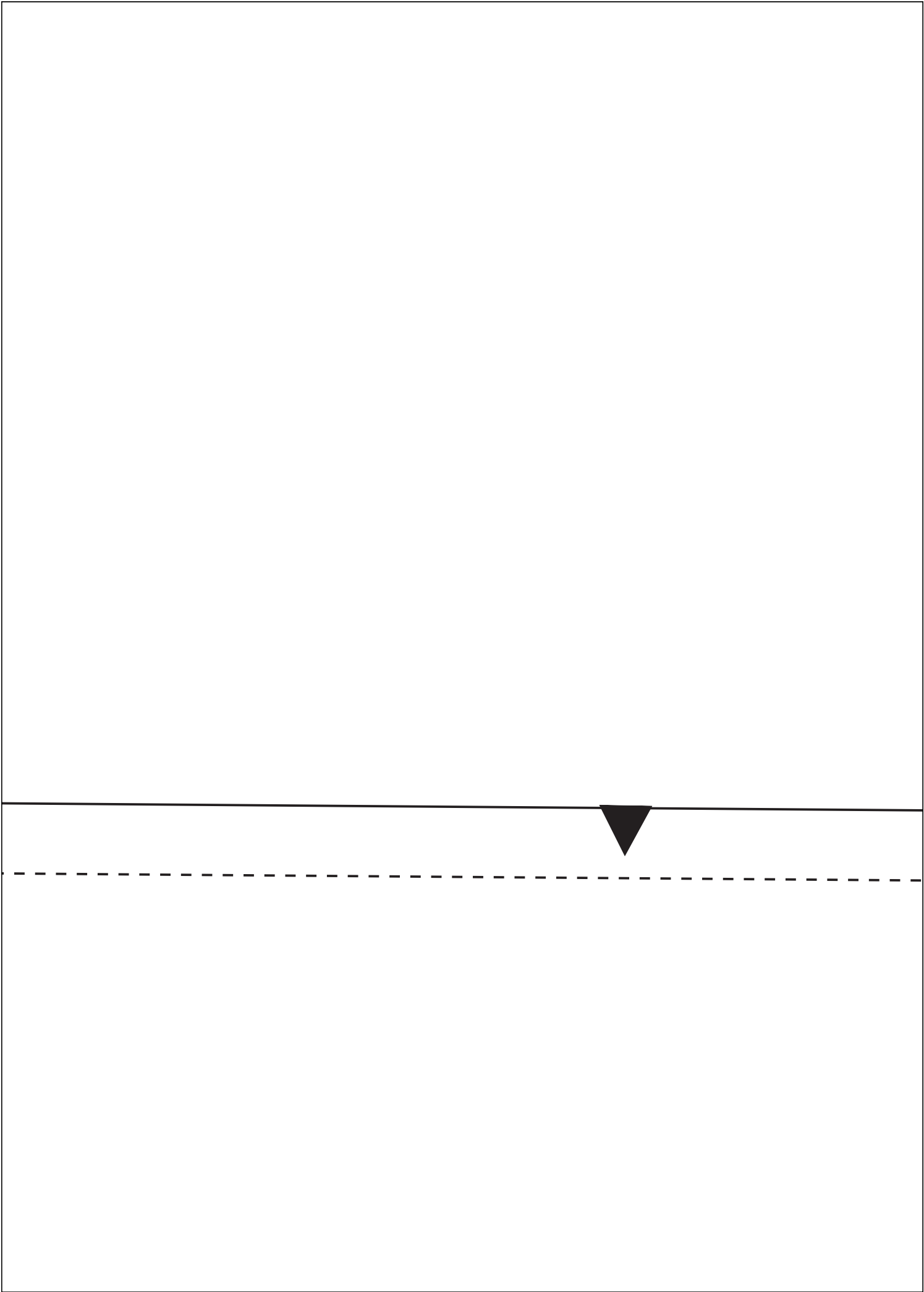
strain

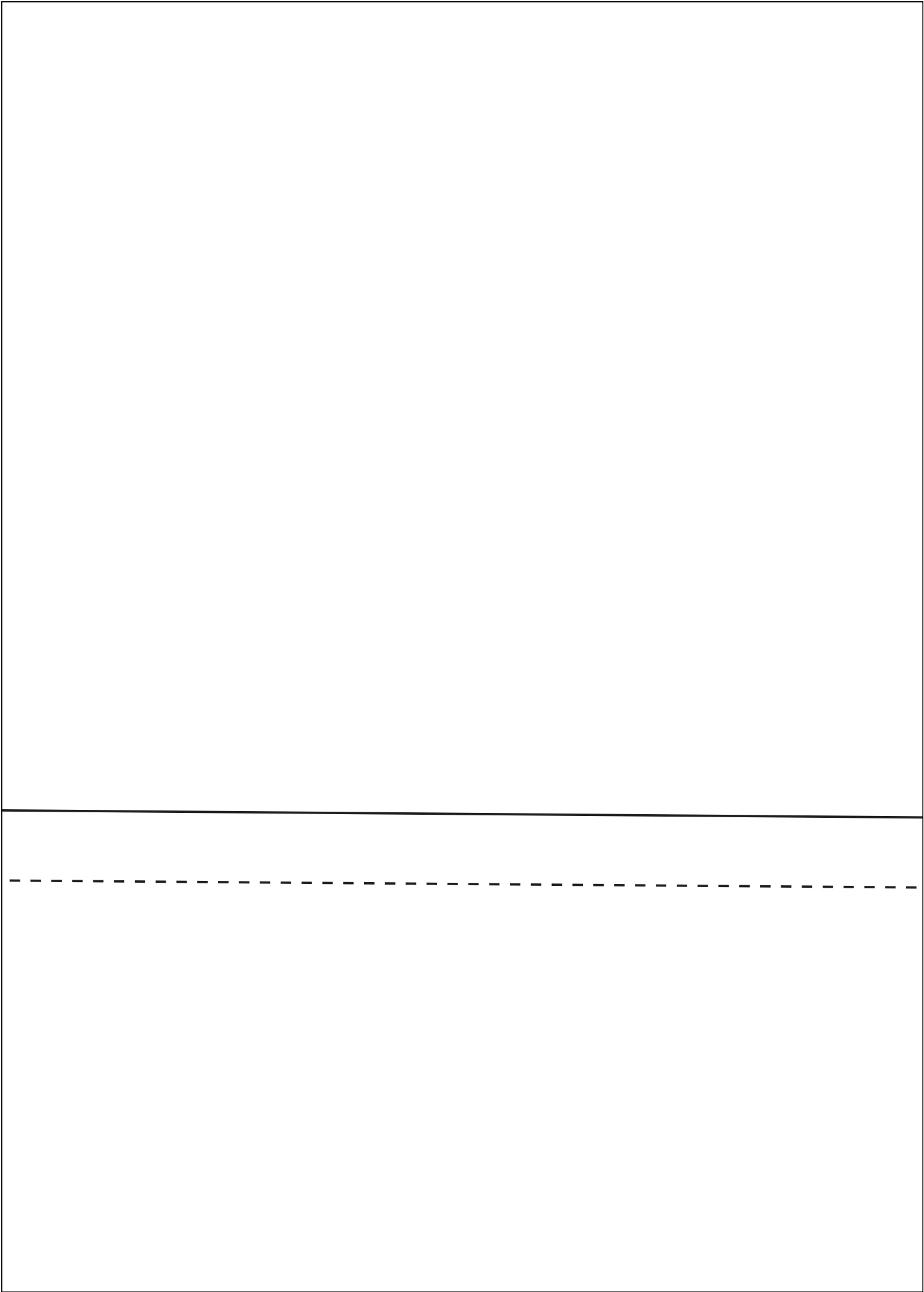


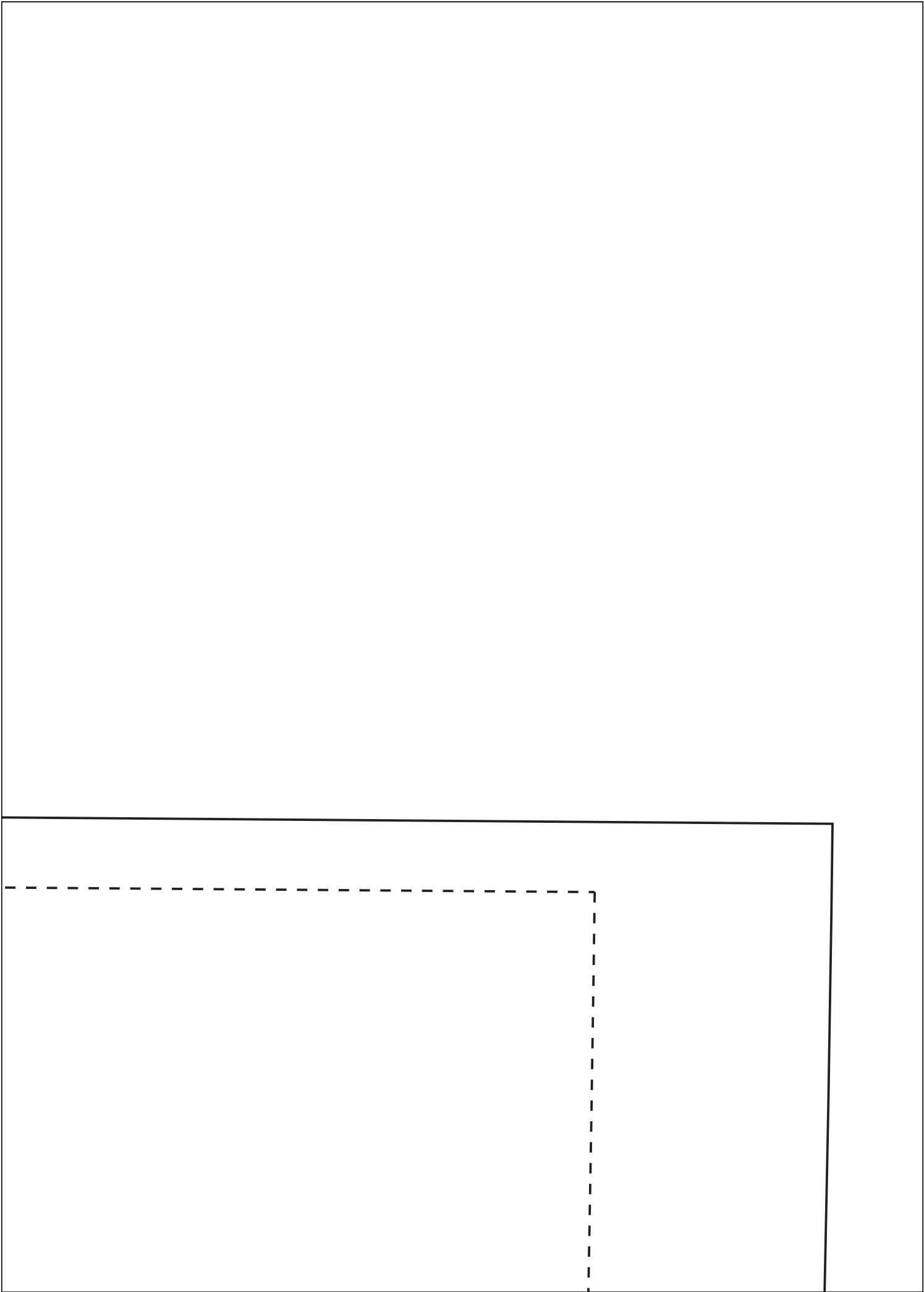


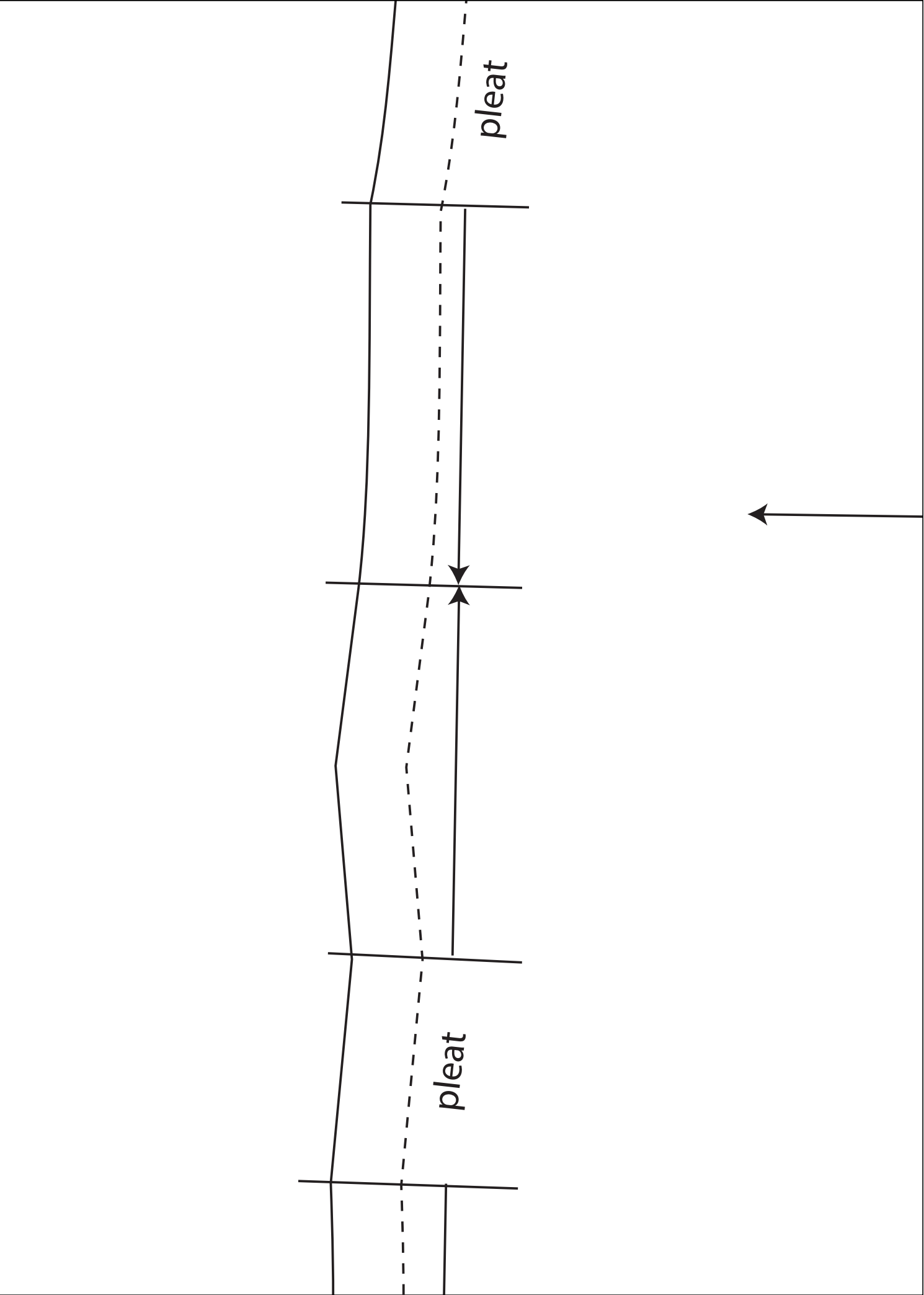






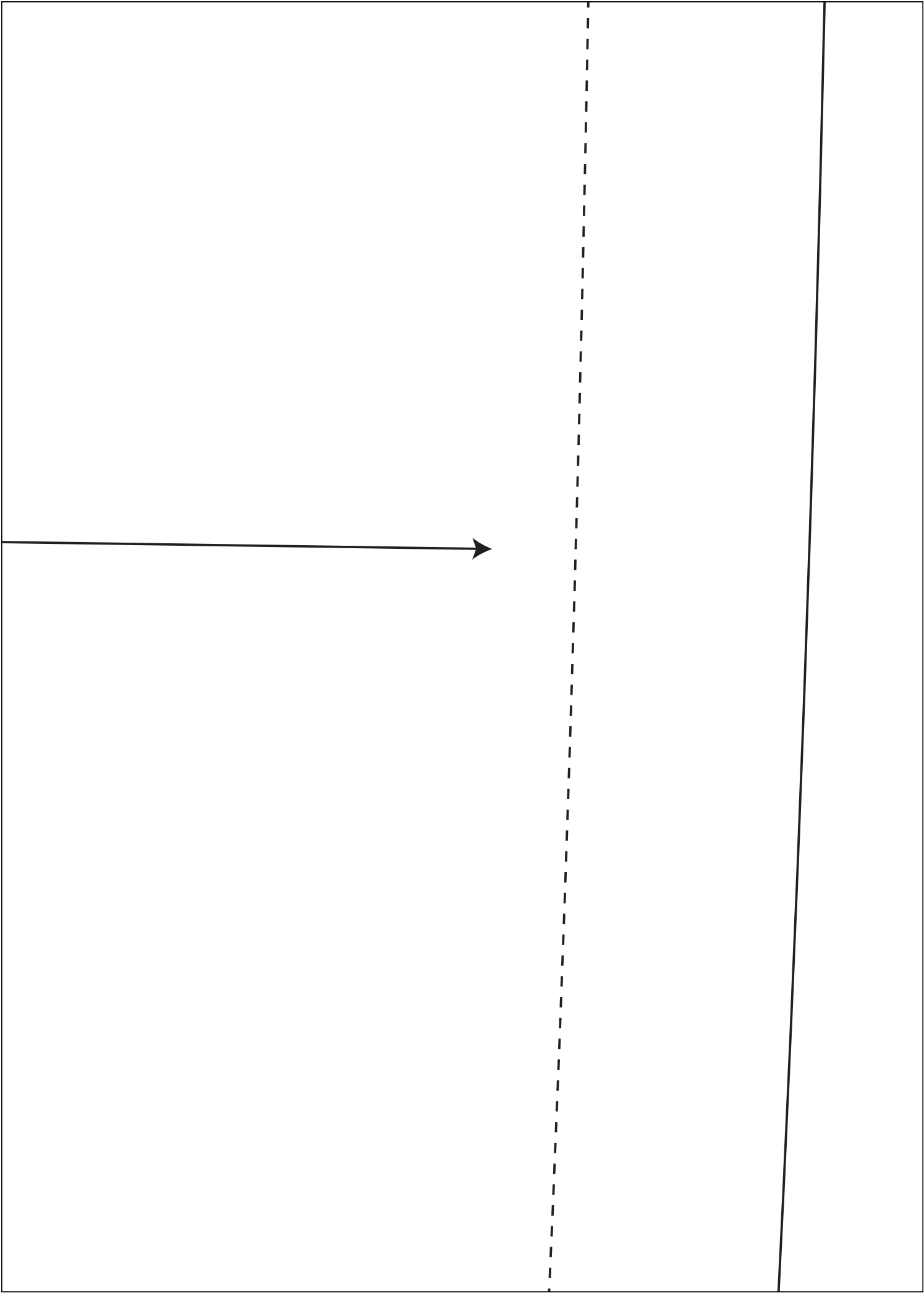


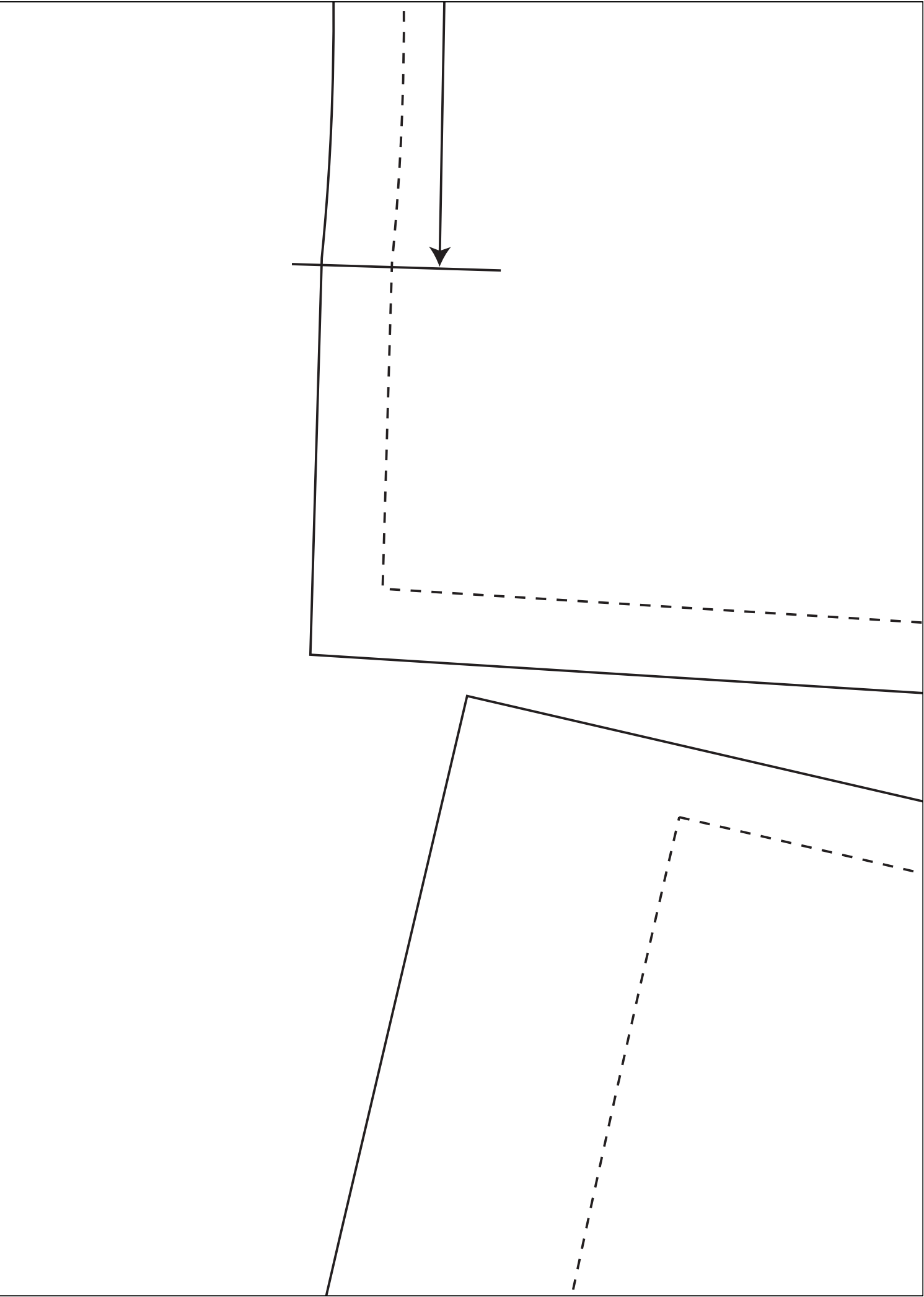


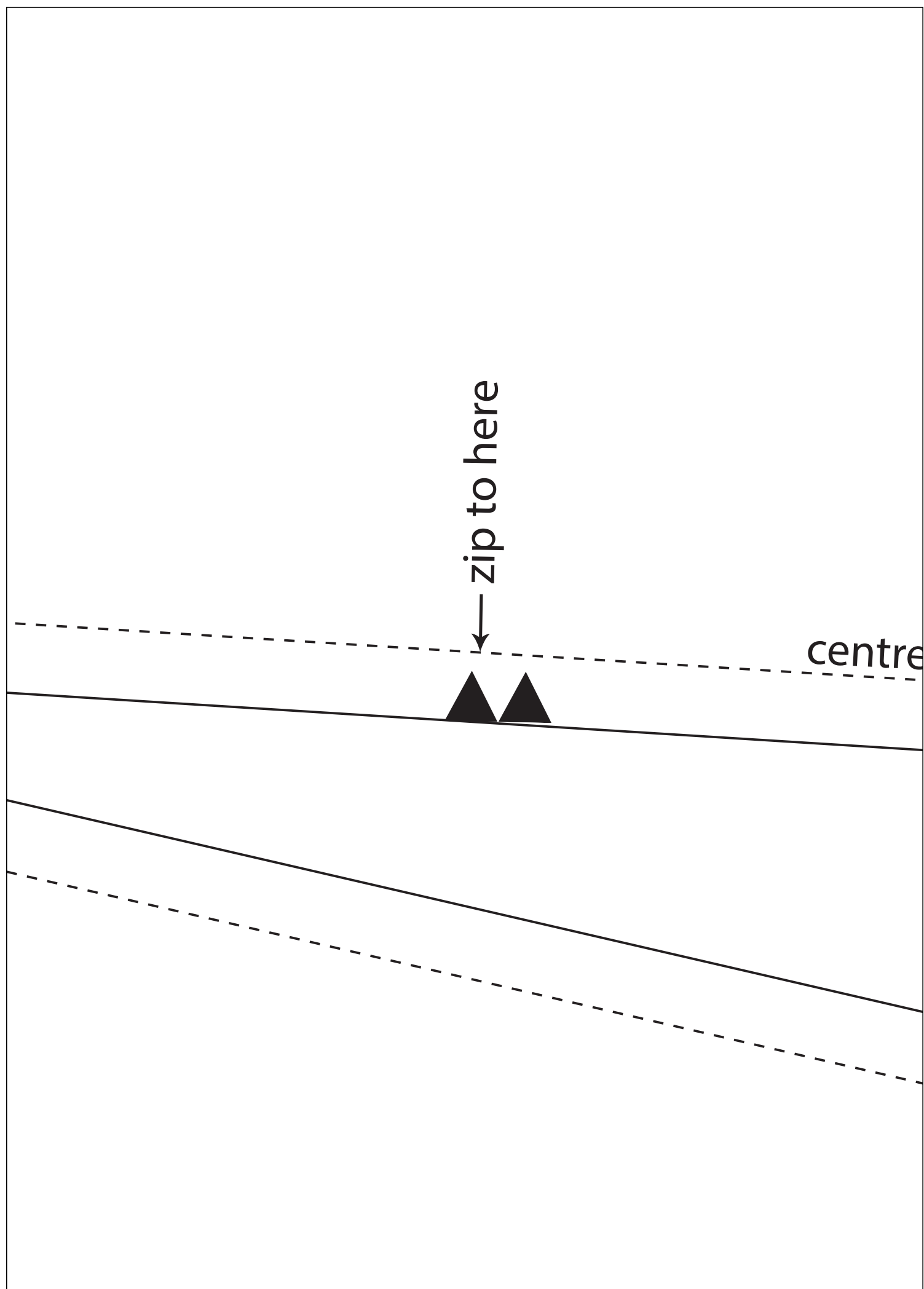


Back Skirt
cut 1 pair

straight grain

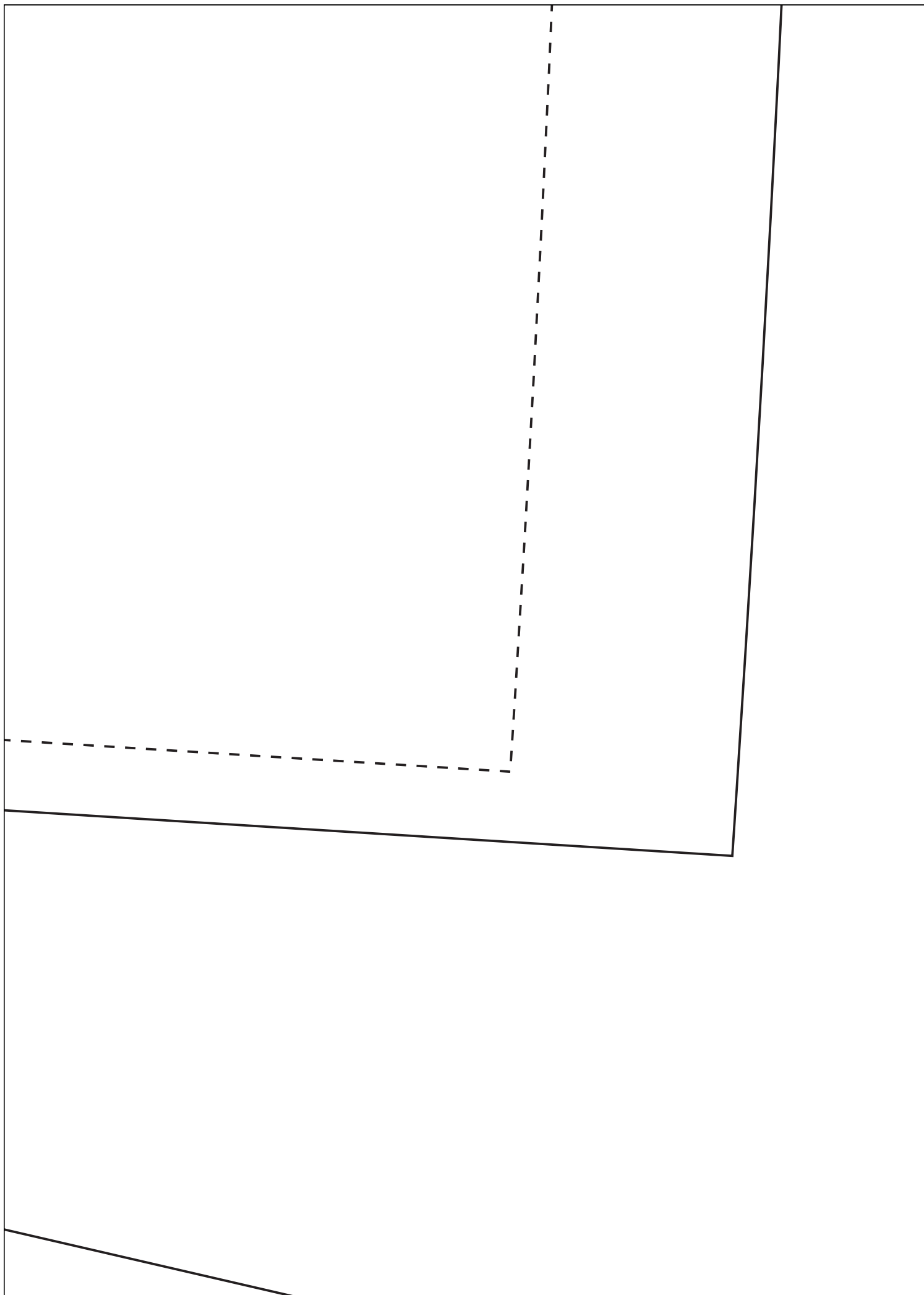


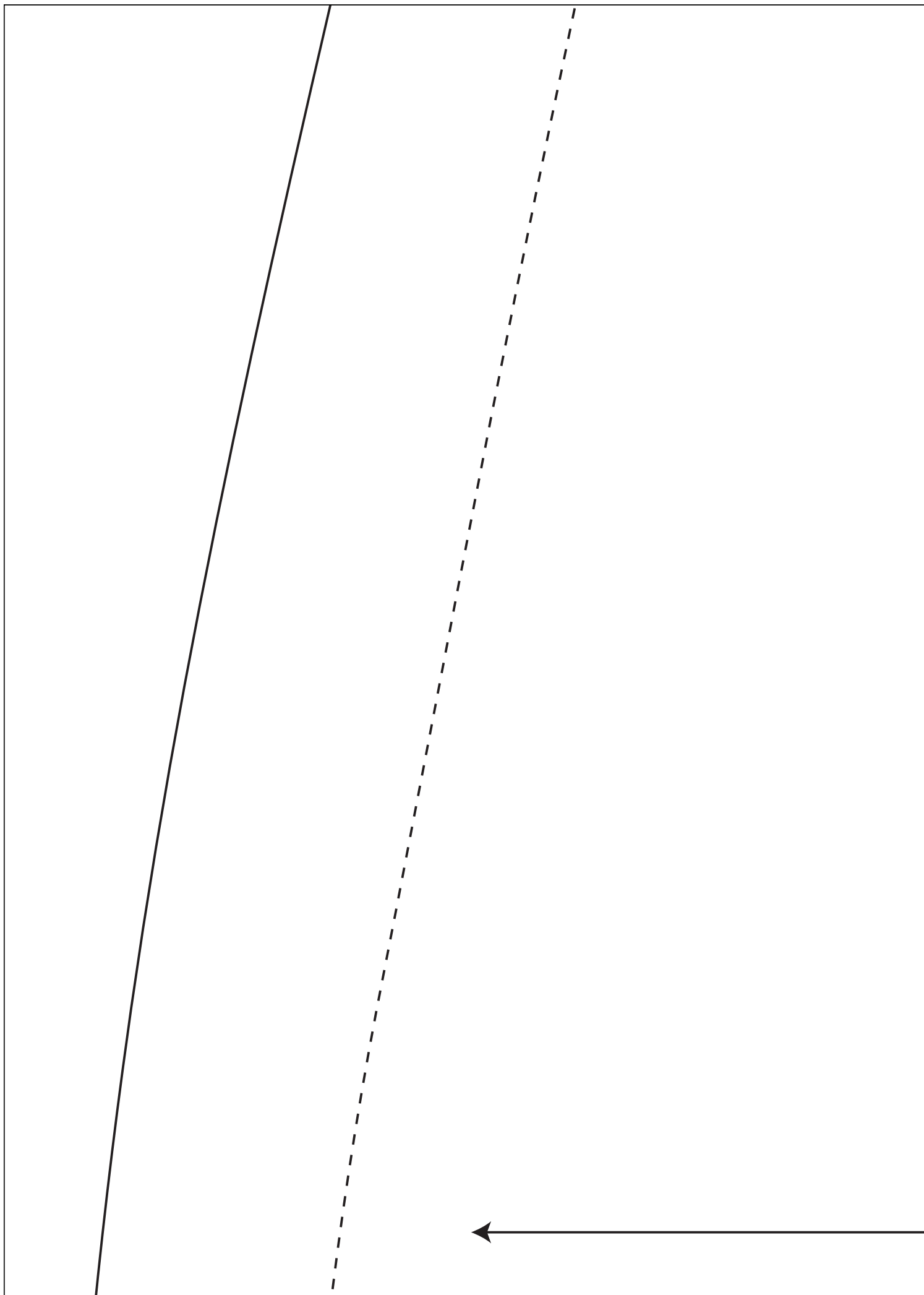




back



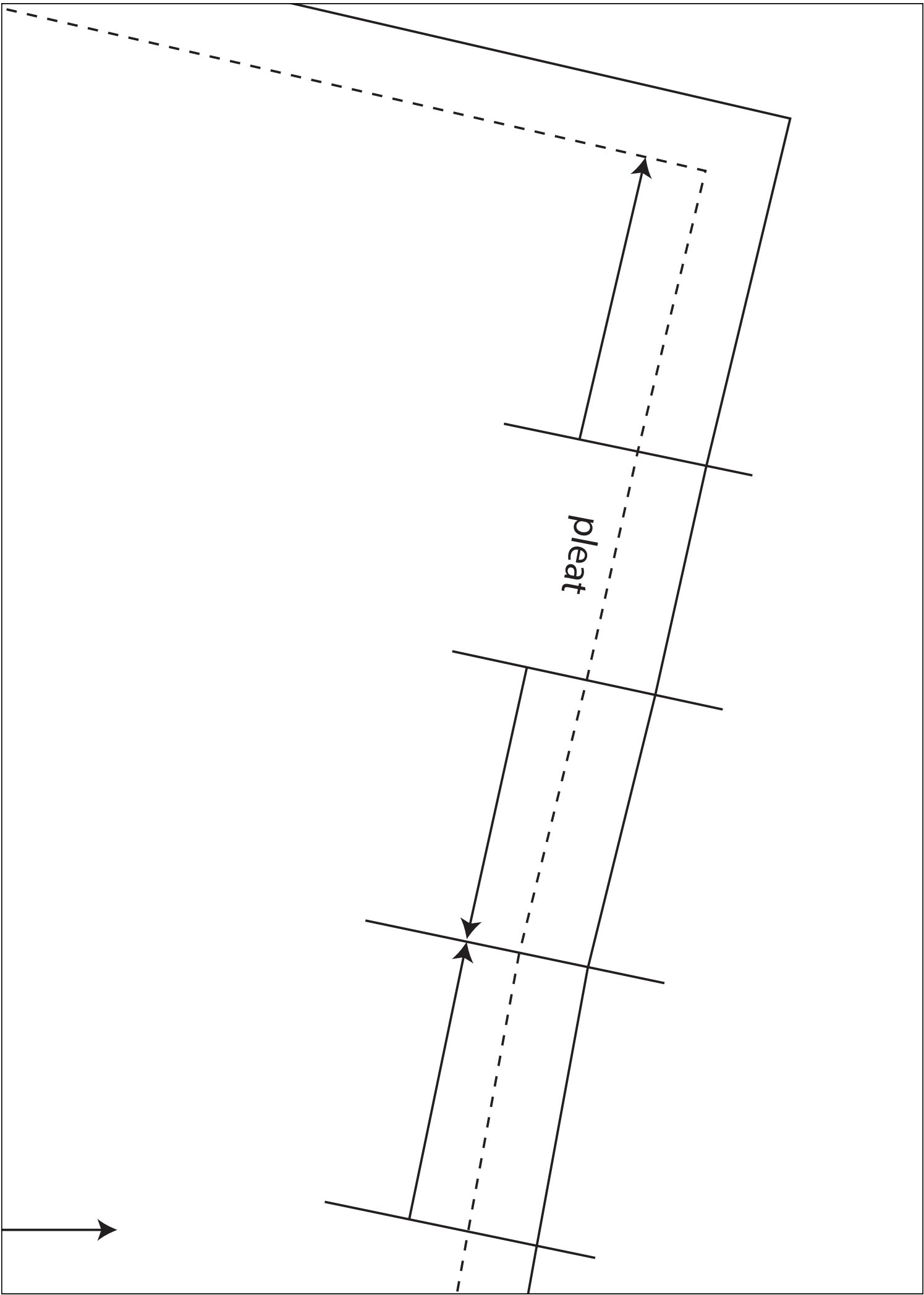


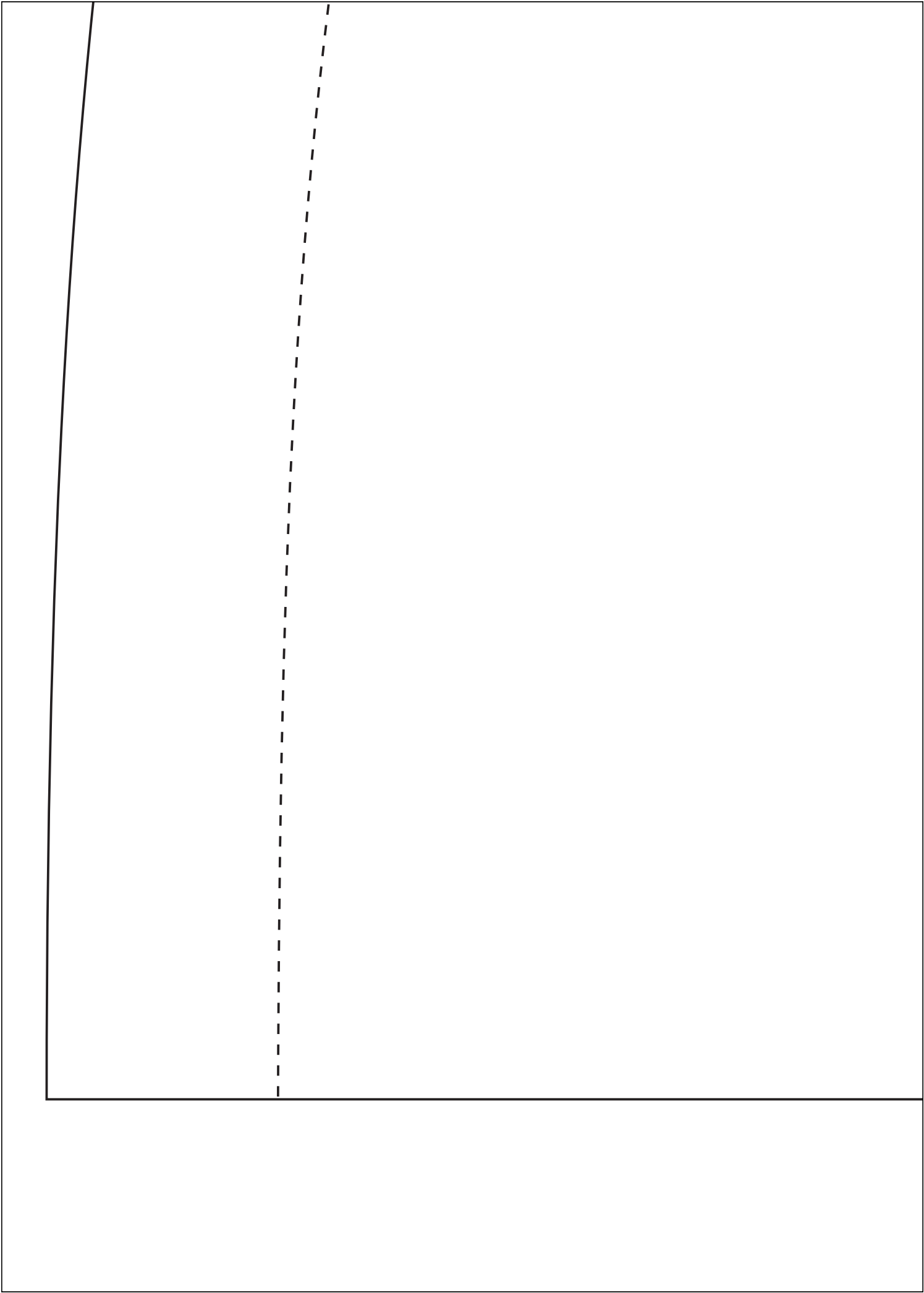


straight

Front Skirt cut 1 on fold of fabric

grain







Centre Front

cut on fold

10cm x 10cm
print accuracy
square



