

A Primer for Fighting Pants

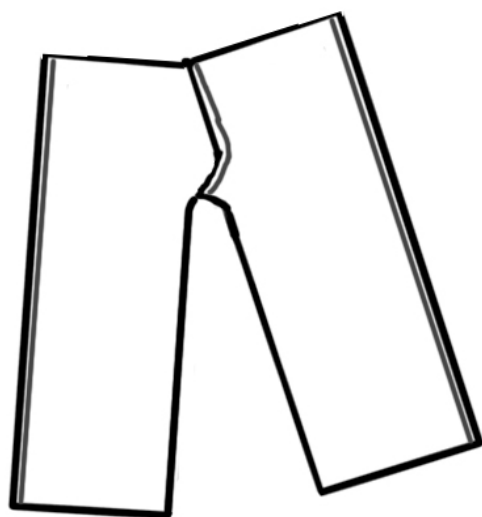
Alara the Drake

Fighting pants are probably one of the last items any Amtgarder adds to his or her personal event kit. Weapons, a tunic or tabard and the critical class sashes are commonplace, but pants are much less so. The reason I usually hear is making pants is too hard. Given the general lack of regard for jeans under a tunic, and the fact that here in Texas they are just plain hot, I'm endeavoring to take the "too hard" issue out of the equation entirely.

The Scrub or P.J. Pant

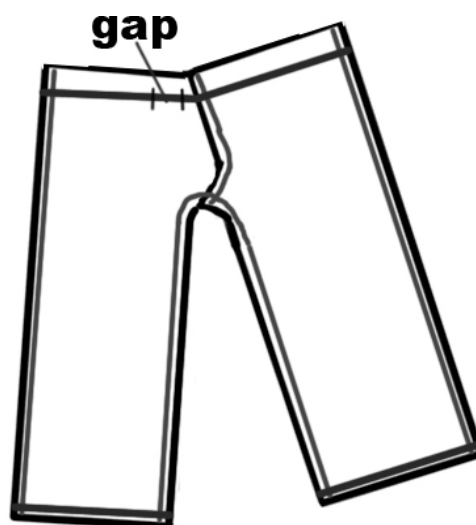
The most common pants to get used for fighting pants after jeans and sweats are pajama or scrub pants. They are cheap, easy to find and relatively durable.

For sewing your own they are also inexpensive, a pattern can be gotten for under \$5 routinely and under \$2 on sale. Fabric requirements are relatively light, 2 1/5 to 3 yards of 45 inch wide fabric covers all but the largest and tallest fighters.



Pre-wash your fabric (this saves a later shrink to an unusable size disaster from happening) and fold it in half across the width (which make a long narrow layout.) and lay out your pattern. (The Pre-wash and fold in half widthwise is an almost universal pair of steps for pants.) I use a soft chalk pastel to trace my patterns out, but pinning it to the fabric is also a common way to transferring the pattern to the fabric. Cut your pattern out. You should have two front legs and two back legs.

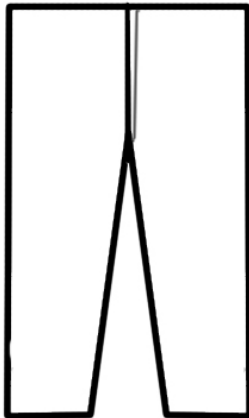
One common variation is to use just the pack pattern piece and to lay it out on the fold



made when you fold the fabric in half widthwise. This results in a slightly looser pair of pants and eliminates sewing side seams.

Sew the short curved crotch seams. Front to front and back to back, then layer the fronts on the backs and sew the side seams. Then sew the long seam beginning at one cuff through the crotch seam to the other cuff. Hem the ankle cuffs and fold over a wider hem for the waistband (called a casing). Make sure to leave a small gap so you can insert elastic. Cut your elastic an inch or two shorter than your waist measurement. If you want your pants tighter you can cut it shorter. Insert the elastic into the folded over top section and sew the ends together (make sure the elastic isn't twisted first.) Finally sew the gap closed and you have a basic set of pants. If you want to use a drawstring you can sew a buttonhole before folding over the top section cutting it open, then folding over and sewing your casing. You can then thread your string through the buttonhole and not have to leave a gap.

Sarouilles

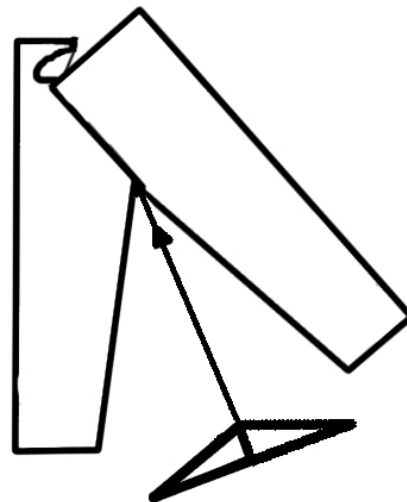


For Sarouilles (a North African style) Layout and assembly are very similar. The change is Sarouilles are cut on the fold (so you have two solid legs and no side seams) and have a two part crotch gusset.

Just like in the P.J. pants you sew the crotch seams together. Then you sew together the two parts of the gusset and will end up with a long triangular section. Match the seam of the gusset with the seam on the pants, pin one side and sew, then pin the other side and sew. Only then pin and sew the rest

of the legs. I have found this order makes things go together better and keeps the bottom point of the gusset from gapping.

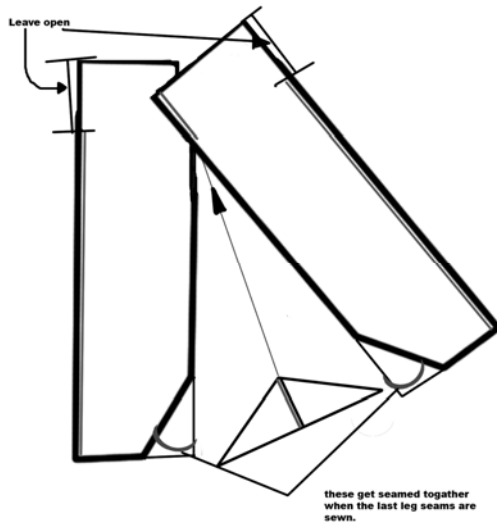
Hem the ankle cuffs and turn a waistband casing for a drawstring or elastic just like you did with the P.J. pants. I like the Sarouilles pattern a bit better than the P.J. pattern because it is less likely to split out at the crotch under normal combat stress.



A variation for Sarouilles is to use the

full width of the fabric. You simply expand the leg so it takes up all the width and sew in the same order as regular pants. A little elastic in the ankles and you have a harem style. Another variation is to use a stretch fabric (like a heavy spandex) and cut the legs narrower. Cutting them an inch or so smaller than your thigh will make not to tight to fight in tights. (Measure your thigh, divide by two and round to the nearest inch. Seam allowance will take up about an inch and a half and snug things plenty.)

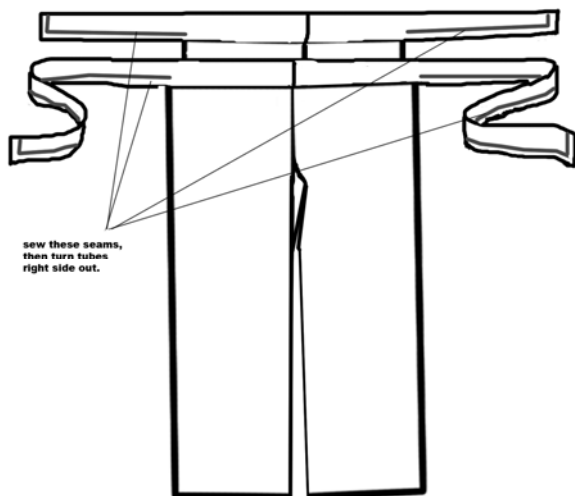
Mompie, Japanese Peasant Pants



Mompie (Japanese peasant pants or field trousers) are assembled very like Saroules. The main difference is you leave the top 10 – 14 inches of the side seams un-sewn (hem them though) and you use waistband ties rather than a waistband casing. The front and back crotch seams go together just like the Saroules and P.J. pants, and the gusset goes in just like the Saroules. When you get to sewing the last of the legs in place match the straight sections of front and back, when you get to the odd angled section you just pivot the back onto the front (it will not lay flat) and sew. The ankle cuffs have a narrow casing for elastic; this gives them their

characteristic blousing.

The waist band ties I tend to do last because otherwise the length makes them annoying to move around. I tend to wind up with them cut in 4 or 6 inch wide strips

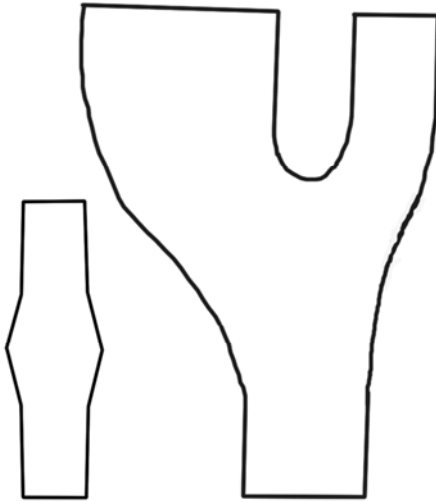


(it's easier) with the back ties being 2 strips of the full width of the fabric and the two front strips being about 8 inches shorter. Seam the two fronts and the two backs together then attach to the waist section of the pants. Make sure the longer ones go on the front (so the wrap all the way around and tie in the front) once they are sewn in place, fold them over away from the seam you just sewed and sew the edges. This will result in long tube on either side of you pants. Turn them right side out (and tuck you top seam into the gap) and topstitch all the way around to complete your waistband ties.

Hakama

The assembly order is the same for Hakama, but the front section is wider than the back and you have to do some fiddly sewing for the side gaps. (This pattern you don't fold the fabric in half widthwise, you fold it lengthwise and get a shorter wider layout, to get both halves of your pants cut at once.) You also have to pleat the front and back sections down to fit. This is a process that is very individual and is far easier to demonstrate in person than to diagram. Ask me to teach you one on one if you really want Hakama. Be aware that this style requires 60 inch wide fabric (unless you want your front panels to be pieced) and take at least 4 yards of fabric, 5 makes it much easier to do the layouts.

Crusader

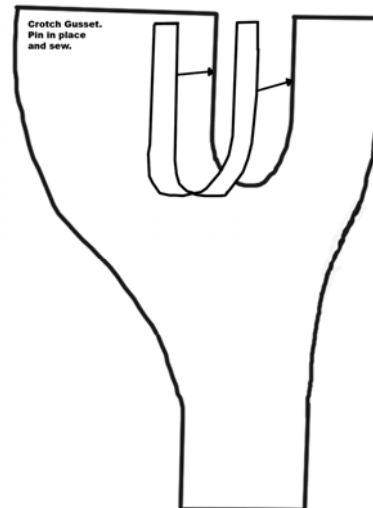


The last style I'm going to cover is the Crusader. This is another style where 60 inch wide fabric is helpful in laying it out. If you are smaller in stature you may be able to get by with 45 inch fabric. This is another pattern where you do not fold your fabric in half widthwise, but use a lengthwise fold to get both halves of your pants cut at the same time. You can lay the crotch gusset piece of the fold to save space.

This style has the leg seam running up the back of the leg, a close fitting calf section and a very loose waist section. With the crotch gusset in place this style is very difficult to split.

You begin by inserting the gusset in the leg sections. It's easier to do this one leg at a time. Once both sides are attached you fold the legs in half (not together) and match up the leg seam. This can be a cloth origami game to get everything right sides together and all the seams going the same way. (If you get your legs pinned and don't see the cut edges of your crotch gusset you've managed to get things backwards. Just unpin and refold. It's an easy mistake I make routinely if I'm not careful.)

This style has the leg seam running





This is roughly how the leg folds over. There would be the other leg and the crotch gusset in the way so this is the view on the left side, what will become the right leg.

Hem the ankle cuffs and fold over a waistband casing. Elastic of a drawstring is inserted just as in the P.J. pants.

A variation is to use a stretchy fabric and to have another person pin fit the legs to fit closely to your legs. Alternately a woven fabric cut on the bias can be used. This variation gets you a pair of pants that resembles Viking or older English style hosen.

Things you can do to make your pants last longer:

Use good quality fabrics. Sometimes the \$1 a yard table is a good deal, sometimes it isn't. Look for tightly spun threads and tightly woven fabrics. If you can afford to and there is a community college near you that offers one, a basic textiles class will do wonders for your ability to identify fabrics.

Stitch all your seams twice, once going one direction (like down the legs) the other going the other direction (up the legs) this reinforces the seams. Don't use cheap thread. The 10 for \$10 stuff is only good for hand basting things. It is too linty for most machines and breaks very easily. Spend the dollar or so a spool to get better thread and you won't have to re sew your seams after washing your pants.

Finish all your seams. I roll all my raw edges under and topstitch them. For the legs I start at the narrow part of the pants and work up toward the waistband. I do crotch seams before inserting gussets and the gusset right after I set it in place. One side will be finished before I set the other side of the gusset in place. Then I finish the legs. Then I double roll my hems and turn a narrow single hem in when I fold over the waistline casing.

Fabrics I use for pants are by preference natural fibers (cotton, linen and wool) because they breathe better than synthetics. Blends work as well; they just tend to be a bit warmer. When in doubt burn a little swatch. The following table has a general listing of what to expect from each fiber type when you burn it. Do this outside. I use a set of forceps and a long nose lighter, but a pair of pliers and a regular lighter will work just as well.

Table 3-15 Identification by Burning

<i>Fibers</i>	<i>When Approaching Flame</i>	<i>When in Flame</i>	<i>After Removal from Flame</i>	<i>Ash</i>	<i>Odor</i>
Cellulose Cotton Flax Rayon	Does not fuse or shrink from flame	Burns	Continues to burn, afterglow	Gray, feathery, smooth edge	Burning paper
Protein Silk Wool	Curls away from flame	Burns slowly	Usually self-extinguishing	Crushable black ash	Burning Hair
Acetate	Fuses away from flame	Burns with melting	Continues to burn and melt	Brittle black, hard bead	Acrid
Acrylic	Fuses away from flame	Burns with melting	Continues to burn and melt	Brittle black, hard bead	Chemical odor
Glass	No reaction	Does not burn	No reaction	Fiber remains	None
Modacrylic	Fuses away from flame	Burns very slowly with melting	Self-extinguishing, white smoke	Brittle black, hard bead	Chemical odor
Nylon	Fuses and shrinks away from flame	Burns slowly with melting white smoke	Usually self-extinguishing	Hard gray or tan bead	Celerylike
Olefin	Fuses and shrinks away from flame	Burns with melting	Usually self-extinguishing	Hard tan bead	Chemical odor
Polyester	Fuses and shrinks away from flame	Burns slowly with melting; black smoke	Usually self-extinguishing	Hard black bead	Sweetish odor
Saran	Fuses and shrinks away from flame	Burns very slowly with melting	Self-extinguishing	Hard black bead	Chemical odor
Spandex	Fuses but does not shrink from flame	Burns with melting	Continues to burn with melting	Soft black ash	Chemical odor

I tend to use heavier weights, think Trigger or denim. Heavy “bottom weight” cottons are also good. Lighter fabrics can be used like a good cotton shirting (chambray works) but tend to be less durable. Anything lighter I tend to use only for Harem styles and the added width counters the lighter weight fabrics. Do not use sheer fabric. Anything you can see your hand through two layers of is to sheer for pants unless you are always going to wear either tights under them or a skirt over them. I tend to avoid brocade and velvet for pants, but that is a personal preference and not a hard fast rule.

Fabric choices otherwise are pretty open. Stripes, plaids and checkerboard patterns are all found in our time period, as are polka dots. Doing one leg in one color and the other in a different one was done as was patch-working stripes and solids together in varying (and sometimes eye blinding) combinations. Woven patterns are commonplace in many cultures. Japanese Ikat can be boxes, little plus signs or X’s, dots, diamonds, crosshatching or even like this example, pictorial. For all intents your imagination is your only limit.



This handout is intended as a general set of directions, not a complete step by step tutorial. If you need help, please ask. I have all of the patterns used to make this handout. I do encourage people to purchase their own copies as they can afford to if only to keep the smaller pattern companies in business.

Patterns used in the article:

P.J. / Scrubs from Simplicity

Sarouilles from Folkwear pattern #119

Japanese Field Clothing from Folkwear pattern # 112

The Crusader is a modification based on Period Patterns #101 Military Garments view IV marketed by Mediaeval Miscellania.

The Hakama pattern I use is a combination of:

Men's Japanese Kimono and Hakama by Costume Connection and Japanese Hakama and Kataginu from Folkwear # 151.

They can be found on the Web at:

<http://www.folkwear.com/index.html>

<http://www.sewingcentral.com/>

<http://www.mediaevalmisc.com/> unfortunately this company does not sell via the web, but they do list "brick and mortar" vendors. Many can also be found on the sewing central site.

Happy Garbing,
Alara the Drake

