



# Knock Off Your Favorite Pants

*When the pants fit, make another pair!  
The original silver dupioni pants  
(AnnTaylorLoft.com) look so great that  
we made a carbon copy in pinstripes.*

Model photo: Jack Deutsch; hair and makeup: Christy McCabe, using tarte cosmetics; stylist: Johanna Laracuate.  
Styling credits: shirt and belt—A/X, ArmaniExchange.com; shoes—Paco Gil, PacoGil.com. Process photos: Scott Phillips

# Learn how to reproduce your favorite cut and style—without picking up a seam ripper.

BY MARY McCARTHY

**W**e all own them—a pair of pants that’s back on your body as soon as it comes out of the dryer or returns home from the dry cleaners. They seem to match every outfit. They fit like a dream.

They’re comfortable with a capital “C.”

Wouldn’t it be great to “knock off” another pair just like them? The following process will show you how to do just that in five steps. And, you never need to rip apart the beloved originals to do so.

The pants themselves become your guide as you trace each piece of them onto sturdy—but soft—pattern material. The resulting pattern can be used to make an identical pair or with a new fabric for an entirely new look, as we’ve shown here.

## Start simple

The pattern-tracing method outlined here works for all types of pants: dressy, casual, or tailored; however, if you are new to the pattern-making game, I suggest that you start with simple, unlined, flat-front pants with a waistband. As you become used to pinning and tracing the

pattern as described, you can progress to more complicated pants with lots of fun details, such as fancy pockets, yokes, pleats, belt loops, etc.

And then you can stretch your creativity and know-how even further by switching up the details: add unusual pockets, make them cropped instead of full length, add decorative seams along the leg—you name it.

## Choose similar fabric

Typically, it’s best to choose a fabric for your new pants that has the same weight and drape as your original pants. This ensures that the pants will fit and hang the same way.

That said, you might want to make a winter-worthy wool version of your favorite linen summer pants. Choosing a heavier or lighter fabric isn’t forbidden. It just requires some troubleshooting. For instance, with a thicker wool, you may need to add circumference in each leg to accommodate the fabric. If you go this route, I suggest that you also add an inch to the side seams. In no time at all, you’ll have a closetful of great-fitting, long-wearing pants.

*Mary McCarthy (MaryMcCarthy.net) is a custom clothier.*

continued ▶▶▶

## YOU WILL NEED

The right tools make copying your pants easy and ensure the accuracy of your new pattern.

### PATTERN MATERIAL

The pattern material should be easy to manipulate, resistant to tearing and stretching, and easy to write on.

**BEST BET:** My favorite is Tru-Grid by Pellon (JoAnn.com), a nonfusible interfacing material with 1-inch gridlines on it. The lines take the guesswork out of grainline placement, and the 1-inch markings are a great help

when verifying lengths and widths. Tru-Grid is 45 inches wide, so you’ll need about 1½ yards.

**OTHER OPTIONS:** Lightweight nonfusible interfacing also works well when placed over a cardboard grid surface. Woven fabric such as muslin is acceptable as long as it isn’t too flimsy.

**AVOID:** Tissue because it can tear easily and other types of

paper because they tend to be stiff.

### MARKING TOOL

Choose a tool that writes easily and leaves clear marks on your pattern pieces.

**BEST BET:** I prefer charcoal and graphite pencils because they don’t tear patterns or fade. Have a pencil sharpener on hand to keep your pencil point sharp.

**AVOID:** Disappearing ink or standard pens and markers that can stain your original pants.

### OTHER ESSENTIALS

- Seam gauge
- French curve ruler (CThruRuler.com)
- Clear ruler or yardstick
- Straight pins
- Tape measure
- Pants to copy



## Step 1: Find grainlines

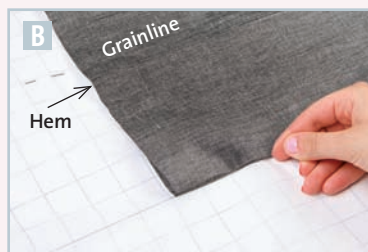
To ensure that your knock-offs fall correctly on the body, you need to identify and follow the grainlines on every piece.

**1 Pin one leg together.** To identify the grainlines on the original pants, flatten one leg right-side out, matching the side seam to the inseam. Pin the seams together up to the crotch curve. The fold created on the front and back of the leg is your grainline. Pin along the fold, as shown. Above the crotch curve, look closely at the fabric weave to find the grainline to the waist.



**TIP:** On lined pants, treat as one layer.

**2 Draw the grainlines on Tru-Grid.** Remove the pins that secure the side seam to the inseam. Reposition the pants so they lay flat as you would wear them. On Tru-Grid, draw a straight line 4 inches longer than the pants. Place the pant grainline along the drawn grainline. Pin the



pants to the Tru-Grid along the grainline, up to the crotch.

**TIP:** On most pants (unless the hem is shaped for heels), the hem edge should lie perpendicular to the lengthwise grain.

## Step 2: Draw the pattern pieces

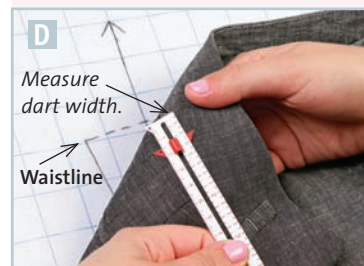
The order in which you trace your seamlines is important. Use dashes to represent seamlines so you won't confuse them with cutting lines.

### START WITH THE PANT BACK

**1 Trace the waistline.** With the grainline still pinned to the Tru-Grid, rearrange the pants to trace off the waistline seam just below the waistband. Make sure that the grainline is aligned at all times. Fold the pants back, and mark the top of the center back seam. Then mark the waistline to the first dart.



**2 Copy each dart.** Fold back the pants, and draw the dart stitchline from waist to tip. Measure the dart width with your seam gauge. Double that amount, and use that measurement to draw the other stitchline. Pinch the dart closed on the Tru-Grid, and pin. Smooth the pants back over the pinned dart, trace the waistline to the second dart (if there is one), and repeat. Then trace the rest of the waistline seam.



**3 Trace other details.** Working along the waistline, add notches for pockets or other details. Without shifting the pants, remove the grainline pins. Place your hand inside the pants and repin the bottom layer only along the grainline.



**4 Reproduce the crotch curve.** To trace the center back seam and crotch curve, rearrange the pants to expose that seam. (And always keep the grainline aligned.) Pin the crotch seam to the Tru-Grid: put the first pin 3 or 4 inches down from the waistline, and then trace it. Remove the pin, and



then repin the next couple inches of the curve. Trace, and repeat this process to the inseam. You can also tuck the unpinned leg inside the leg with the pinned grainline to access the crotch curve.

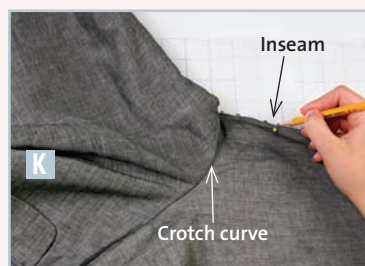
**TIP:** Draw an "X" where seams intersect. This provides a reference point to go back to if the garment accidentally shifts.

www.threadsmagazine.com

**5 Render the side seams.** Unpin the crotch from the Tru-Grid. As with the other steps, make sure that the pinned grainline hasn't shifted. Then roll the leg over to the side seam. Flatten it with your fingertips, pin it down, and trace the seamline.



**6 Copy the inseam.** Unpin the side seam from the Tru-Grid. Roll the leg over to the inseam. Pin it down, and trace. Unpin it, and draw in the pants hemline.



**TIP:** To "cheat," unstitch the inseam. To make copying the crotch curve and inseam easier, rip out the stitches at the inseam, and open up the pant; the pant will lie flatter on the Tru-Grid. After you've traced the areas, simply restitch the inseam on your sewing machine.

### THEN REPEAT FOR THE FRONT

To copy the front of the pants, unpin the pants, flip the leg over, and repeat the above steps. For side front pockets, mark where each end intersects the waistline and side seam. The pocket pieces will be drafted in Step 2 on p. 44.

## FIT MATTERS

The fit of pants matters most from waist to mid-thigh. The original silver pants offer great fit from waist to thigh, and its minimal details make it a perfect candidate to copy!

Original



Knock-off



## Step 3: Copy key details

Smaller pieces can either be traced as on p. 43 and p. 44, or measured separately and drawn freehand on Tru-Grid.

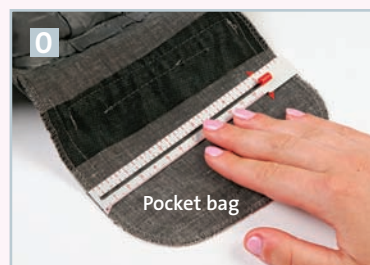
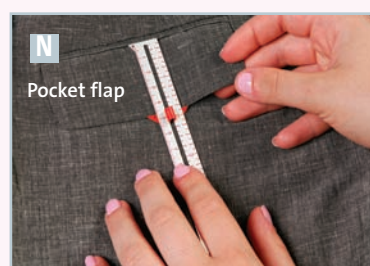
**1 Draft the waistband.** Place the center front of a curved waistband on the lengthwise grain. Pin it down, and draw the outer curve of the band, as shown. Unpin it, and remove the pants. To draw the other long end, measure the band on the pants with a seam gauge; then measure, and draw it on the pattern. Repeat for the back waistband, aligning the center back on the grainline. (Note: The right and left side of the front band will have the same curve but may be different lengths to accommodate the closure.)



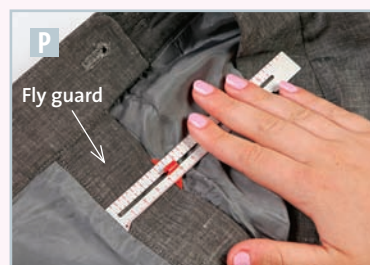
**TIP:** If the waistband is straight, there is no need to trace. Just measure its width and length, and then draft it with a ruler.

**2 Re-create the back pockets.** Pocket flaps can be measured and drawn as rectangles and then curved at the corners. For the pocket bags, turn the pants inside-out to access its correct size and shape.

**TIP:** Side pockets include a pocket facing, side inset, and a pocket bag (cut from lining fabric).



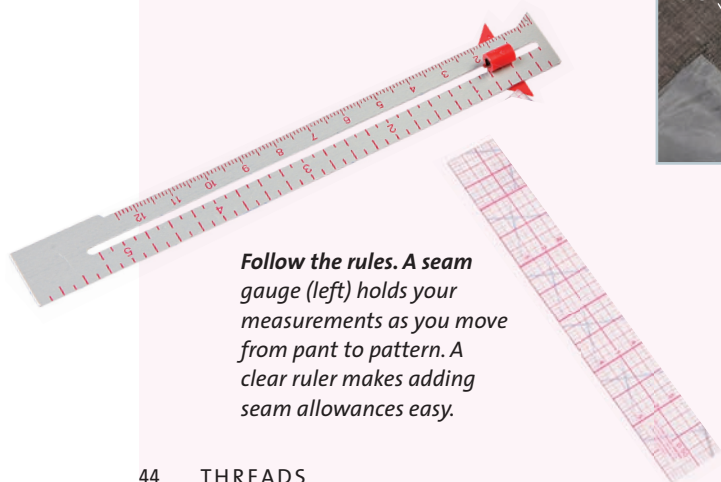
**3 Trace the fly front.** The fly front includes a facing on the fly side and a guard on the other side. The easiest way to draft these is to measure them and draw them freehand.



## Step 4: Verify the results

Next, check your work against the original pants.

**1 Mark and measure the pants in intervals.** Then compare the pants to your pattern draft. This is where Tru-Grid really comes in handy! If adjustments are needed, cross out the incorrect line, and redraw it using the 1-inch grid marks as your guide.



**Follow the rules.** A seam gauge (left) holds your measurements as you move from pant to pattern. A clear ruler makes adding seam allowances easy.

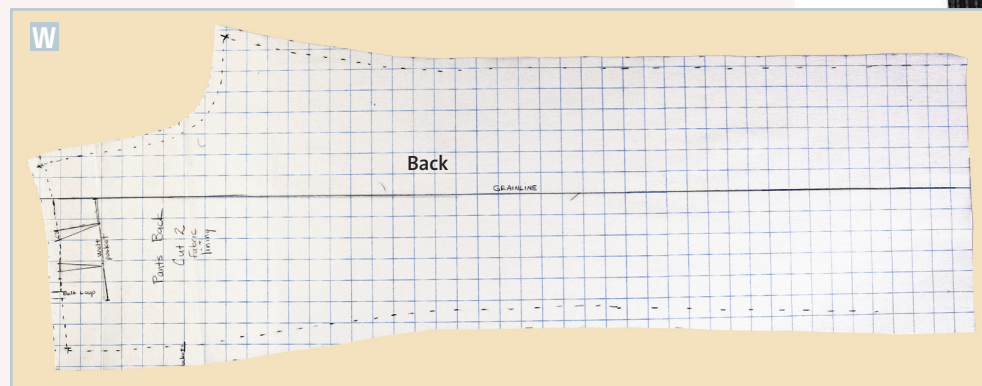
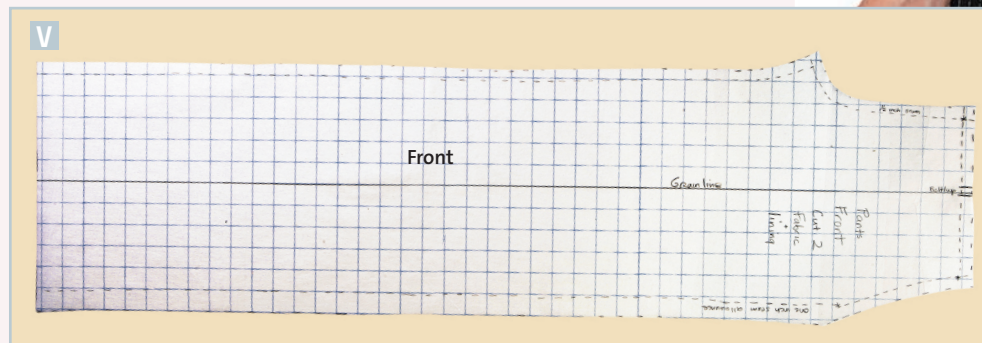
## Step 5: Finish up

Once you have verified all stitchlines, prep the pattern for production.

**1 Add seam allowances.** Using a clear plastic ruler, add seam allowances around all of the pieces. Make them  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{3}{8}$ , or 1 inch—your choice.



**2 Label the pattern pieces.** Write the name of each pattern piece in big, clear letters. Add notes, such as how many pieces to cut. If desired, also jot down the seam-allowance width as a reminder.



### Storage tip:

Store your new pattern in a manila envelope or folder with a note on the front that tells you which of your favorite pants you have copied.

**3 Check the fit.** To double-check the fit, cut the pattern out in an inexpensive muslin fabric, and baste the seams together. No need to sew all the details at this point unless you want to double-check their positions, too.

