

A stack of four folded pieces of fabric with different floral patterns in shades of pink, blue, and green. A yellow measuring tape is coiled around the fabric. A pair of silver scissors lies on the wooden surface in the foreground.

The *First* Garment

A 6-Step Masterclass in Constructing
the Classic Girls' Sundress.

The Three Mandatory Pattern Checks

- Seam Allowances Stated
(Look for '5/8 inch' or '3/8 inch').
- Grainlines Marked
(Every piece needs an arrow, including straps).
- Construction Diagram Included.

Patterns failing any check require extra skill to use. Set them aside.

FIRST-MAKE RULE

Choose a pattern with no zipper, no lining, and no set-in sleeve. Those three features can each become a become a project-stopping problem on a first make. Add them on the second make of the same pattern.

[Child's Body Dimensions]

Measure: Full Chest +
Natural Waist + Height.

Cut for the measurement
compared to the "Finished
Garment Measurements"
table, never the age label.

+

[Expected Wear Coefficient]

Add 1 inch of length
per 6 months of
expected wear at the
pattern's "lengthen
here" line.

=

[True Cutting Size]

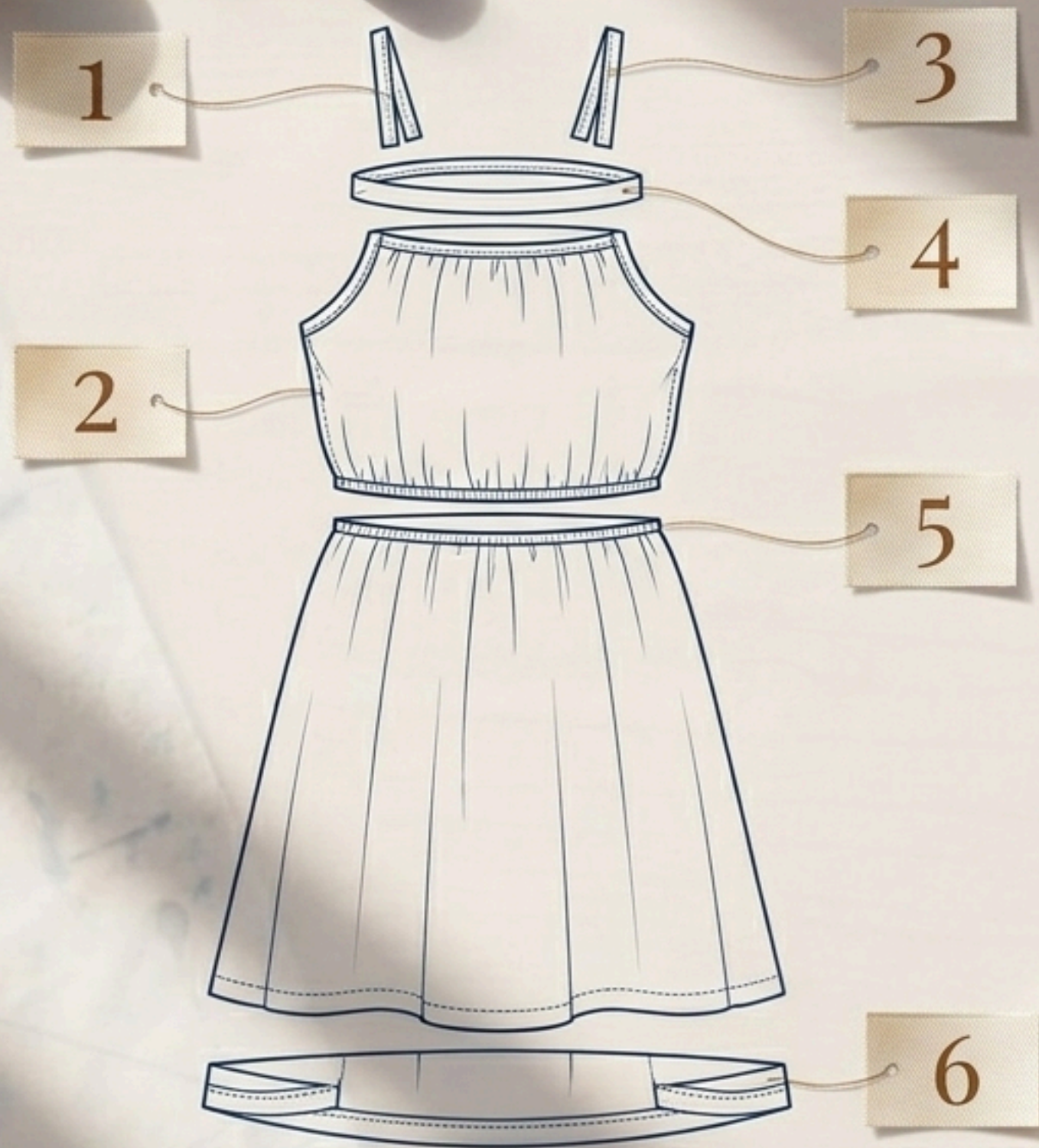
If between sizes, cut
the larger size at the
chest and taper in at
the waist.

Yardage Reference (44" wide fabric)

Toddler (2T-4T)	1.0 - 1.5 yards
Child (4-8)	1.5 - 2.5 yards
Child (8-14)	2.0 - 3.0 yards

PRE-WASH RULE

Wash all fabric before cutting. Budget quilting cotton can shrink 5 to 8 percent in a hot wash. A sundress that fits before washing may not fit after.



The Construction Blueprint:

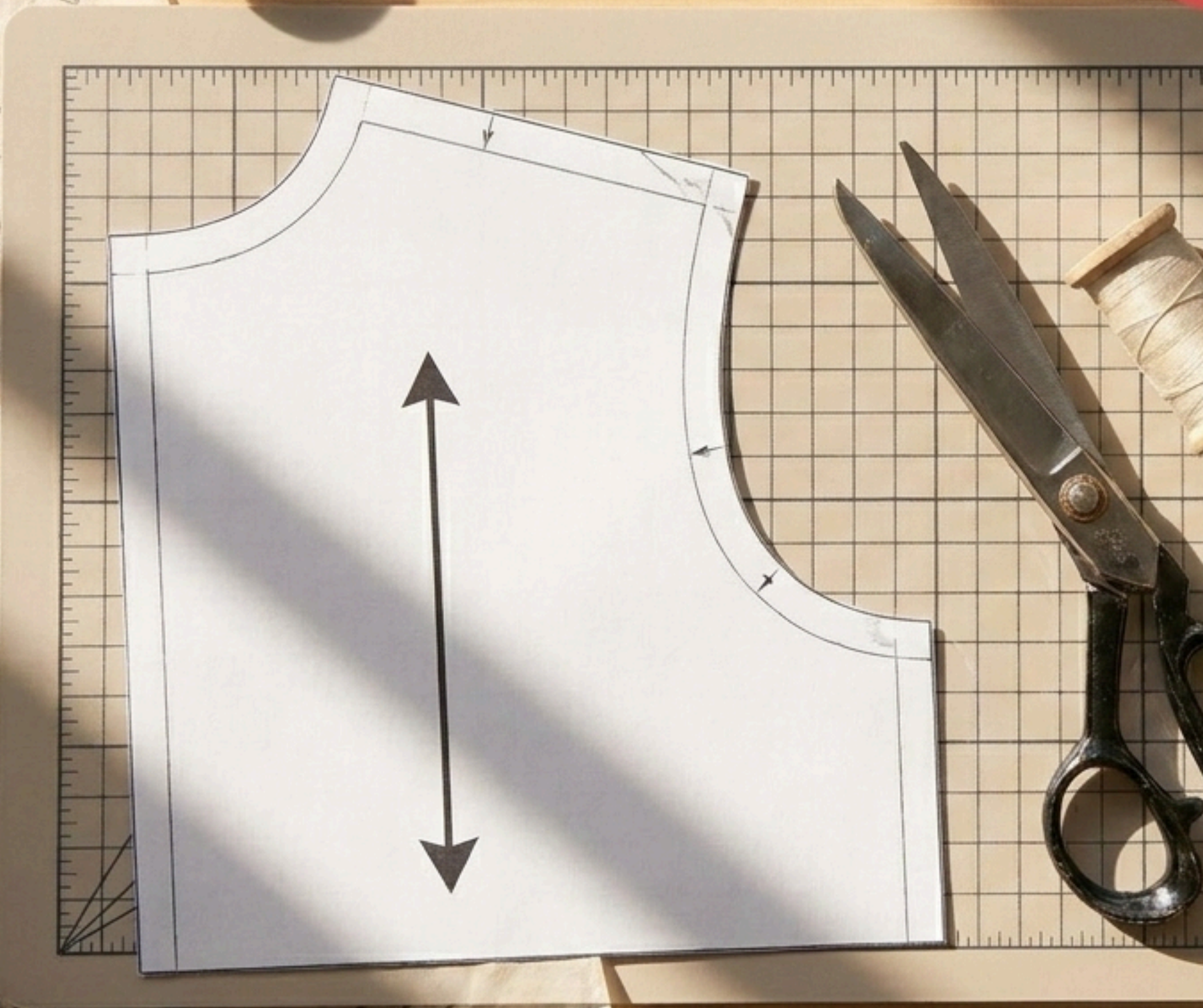
1. Cut and Mark
(Flat fabric)
2. Sew Side Seams
(Bodice sides)
3. Construct Straps
(Shoulders)
4. Construct the Casing
(Neckline/Chest)
5. Attach Skirt to Bodice
(Waistline)
6. The Hem
(Bottom edge)

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Step 1: Align and Cut

- Cut all pieces in the same direction, strictly following the grainline arrow.
- Mark notches with small scissor snips into the seam allowance only.

Fix-It: Piece looks narrower after cutting? Bias-cut pieces distort under their own weight. Check grain alignment before re-cutting.



PRESSING IS CONSTRUCTION

A seam that is not pressed before the next seam is sewn will create bulk at every intersection. Press after every step, not just at the end. A tailor's ham is useful for curved seams; a clapper for crisp flat seams.

Pressing is not a finishing step; it is an active construction technique. Press after every single step.





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Step 2: Sew and Finish Side Seams

- Sew directionally from the hem up to the underarm.
- Press seams completely open.
- Finish raw seam allowances with a zigzag stitch or pinking shears.

Fix-It: Seam puckers? Shorten stitch length to 2.0 mm. If it still puckers, re-thread completely. Most stitch problems are threading errors.

Step 3: Construct the Straps

- Fold lengthwise, press, and open.
- Fold both raw edges to the center crease, press again.
- Topstitch both long edges to secure.

Fix-It: Strap twists during topstitching? The initial fold was not pressed firmly enough. Press again before the second pass.



Step 4: Construct the Casing

- Fold at the marked casing line and press before pinning.
- Stitch close to the lower fold, leaving a 2-inch gap.
- Thread elastic, overlap ends 1 inch, secure, and sew the gap closed.

Fix-It: Casing gathers unevenly? The elastic twisted inside. Remove one end of the stitching, pull flat, and re-sew.



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Instruction Panel

Step 5: Attach Skirt to Bodice

- Baste two parallel rows (3/8 inch and 5/8 inch from the top edge).
- Pull both bobbin threads to gather the fabric.
- Match side seams and center points first, then distribute gathers evenly.

Fix-It: Gathers bunching at seam joins? Anchor a pin exactly at each seam intersection first, then redistribute gathers outward.



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Step 6: The Hem

- Turn the raw edge 1/4 inch and press.
- Turn again 3/4 inch and press.
- Sew close to the inner fold to create a sturdy, wash-resistant double-fold hem.

Fix-It: Hem waves after sewing?
The fabric wasn't pre-washed.
Trim to an even depth,
re-press, and re-sew.



You finished the dress.

A completed imperfect dress
teaches more than an
abandoned perfect plan.

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Wear it well.