

## MAKING OR BUYING A VEIL

Veils are a wonderful addition to the belly-dancer's wardrobe. They are beautiful to dance with, make a great cover-up for your costume, and can be used to add colourful layers and accents over your skirt. And when they're not in use you can throw them over the bed-head or curtain rod to turn your bedroom into an exotic boudoir!

I have made several veils, and have discovered a few things about what material does and doesn't work, what length of material you need, etc. Here are some pointers to keep in mind when making or buying a veil.

### Choosing fabric

- Choose light-weight fabric. Throw it into the air and see if it floats down. The lighter the material, the longer it will take to drop down. Some suitable fabrics are chiffon, polyester mixes, silk and organza.
- Ideally, the material should be fairly see-through. This is not an absolute must, but will make things easier if you will be draping the veil over your face, dancing with it held up in front of you, or spinning with your arms up. If you can't see you risk a collision!
- Silk is absolutely beautiful, but is not ideal for a beginner. It drops fairly quickly and tends to wrap onto the body. As you gain experience, you will find silk easier to work with, but beginners may find it difficult to keep a silk veil afloat. Also, it's very expensive and can get easily stained.
- Organza veils look gorgeous and catch the air beautifully. They often have several colours in the fabric that shimmer under stage lights. However, organza can be quite stiff. If you like to wrap and drape the veil, organza may not look as nice as chiffon. There are newer organza fabrics now on the market that are softer and will drape better.
- Lame also looks amazing under lights, but like organza, is not good for draping. It can also be difficult to edge without an overlocker. Use lame for entrances and spinning movements.
- Choose colours that will match your costume and look great under lights (if that's how you perform). Bright, bold colours are a good choice. Pastels look beautiful in the day-time, but may look pale or discoloured under stage lighting. Materials with metallic thread or a second colour shimmering through the fabric can look stunning.

### Getting the right length and width

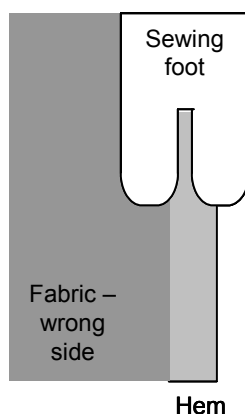
- I will refer to the long side of the fabric as the 'length', and the short side as the 'width'.
- Most beginners tend to obtain veils that are too short in length. This will restrict what you can do with the veil, and you may find your hands slipping off the ends when doing larger arm movements.

- As a general rule, you want to be able to hold the veil at maximum arm length with some drape between the arms, plus a good 30cm or so additional length beyond each hand. Most people will need a veil at least 2.5m long.
- To find the right length for you, drape the material over your back and shoulders and let it hang down towards your feet on both sides. Reach your hands right down with STRAIGHT ARMS and clasp the veil where your fingers reach. Add around 30cm beyond each hand. This is the length for you!
- In regards to width, a veil that is too wide will create more problems than one that is narrow. If the veil is too wide, you may step on it when doing moves with your arms down low, or when wrapping it around your waist. A width that is just shorter than the distance between your hip and ankle is about right. The standard fabric width of 112cm is usually good for most people. I'm tall, so use some wider veils, but I have to practice to ensure I don't trip over them!

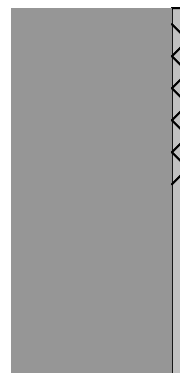
## Hemming

- You can hem the fabric in several ways:
  - Overlock with attractive coloured or metallic thread;
  - Create a 'roll-hem' using the roll-hem foot on your sewing machine;
  - Sear the fabric closed by running it quickly next to a candle flame. Test a small piece of material first. Don't pass the material right through the flame or it will leave a shadow.
  - Turn over and zig-zag the raw edge. I do this in such a way as to catch the hem edge in the machine, so the zig-zag catches right around the folded edge, like so:

**Position of fabric when sewing:**



**Resulting Hem:**



## **Decorating**

- Decorations such as beads can weigh the veil down by much more than you might think! I once spent hours sewing beautiful drop-beads at intervals along the ends of my veil, only to find that they caused the veil to collapse down on me after every throw, and hit me in the face. You can still use a beaded veil as a costume cover and a 'frame' to hold up behind you when entering, but forget lots of spins and throws.
- An overlapped edge is the safest and lightest form of decoration – metallic thread edging looks lovely. Another option is to sew sequins at intervals along the end and bottom edges. It's best not to secure them with beads, as these will add too much weight. You can also try edging with small, strung sequins, but again, the veil won't float as much.
- Sequins sewn at intervals across the fabric will also look nice. Start by sewing them wide apart, test the weight and then fill in the gaps. Keep testing to ensure the veil doesn't get too heavy.

## **And most importantly...**

- Practice with the veil you plan to use when performing! Each veil will move differently, so decide which veil you want to use in advance, and get familiar with it.

Happy veil dancing!