



**realize your fashion ideas
without losing your
money, time or mind**

Garment Development & Production 101

Introduction

Clueless about how to realize your fashion ideas?



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I tried my best to make this guide as accurate as possible, but it serves only as a general guide. My intention is only to educate you. I'm not responsible or liable for any loss or damage by the use of the information in this guide. Neither am I responsible for the content of linked sources.

Garment Development & Production 101 is an ongoing project. If you have any feedback, don't hesitate to share it with me. It's very much appreciated. You can reach me at: info@daniellesteman.nl



This guide is part of the Sjoon Pekske concept. You can find more info about this concept [here](#).

Then read on

Getting your garments made can be overwhelming, especially if it is your first time. It takes way more than just handing over a sketch to the manufacturer.

And many before you have stumbled over this and given up. And that's a shame. And not necessary.

Although there are manufacturers who will take care of the complete process from sketch to production, you still need to think about several aspects to make the process go smoothly.

To get you started, I have written several guides on various aspects of garment development and production.

These guides are written for small independent designers and labels who are determined to make a success of their own designs but lack the technical knowledge to make this happen.

I hope you enjoy reading them, but more importantly, I hope it guides you through the sometimes complicated process of bringing your designs to life.

Danielle

Read these guides if you:



- have no clue where to start to produce your own designs
- have been disappointed by your samples before
- feel overwhelmed by the idea of contacting a manufacturer
- want to understand the manufacturing process

These guides will help you gather all the information you need to manufacture your designs.

If you have this information clear, you can:



- communicate your ideas clearly
- get what you want without surprises
- negotiate like a pro
- manage the production process with confidence

This guide will show you what is involved in making your fashion ideas a reality. I will explain my process, what information is needed and where to find help.

Although this guide is tailored to my way of working, the info in this guide is generally applicable.

Ready to start?
Let's dive in!

From idea to production



As mentioned in the introduction, getting your garments made is not so simple and straight forward as you might think.

It takes way more than just handing over a sketch to the manufacturer. Although there are manufacturers who will take care of the complete process, you still need to think about several aspects, like fabrics and specifications, to make the process go smoothly.

You can follow the traditional manufacturing process of having a pattern and a tech pack made, having a sample made, review it, having another sample made and, if you are lucky and your second

sample is okay, finally start production after six months.

Or you can take the digital highway and go for digital samples and have the complete package ready in just a couple of weeks. And know for sure that what you see is what you get.

Take the digital highway

My way of working is not easily captured in a step-by-step plan. Many steps overlap and intertwine. Foremost, I start with the last step, making a (digital) sample.

I'll show you how it works on the next pages.

The garment development process

Of course, it all starts with your design idea. After you've done your market research and fine-tuned your sketches it is time to take the development a step further.

That's where I come in! Or any other one-stop manufacturer, technical fashion designer or pattern maker for that matter. The process they follow might be different, but they should lead you to the same end result.

First I'll explain my process in general, in the next chapter I'll zoom in on the different steps.



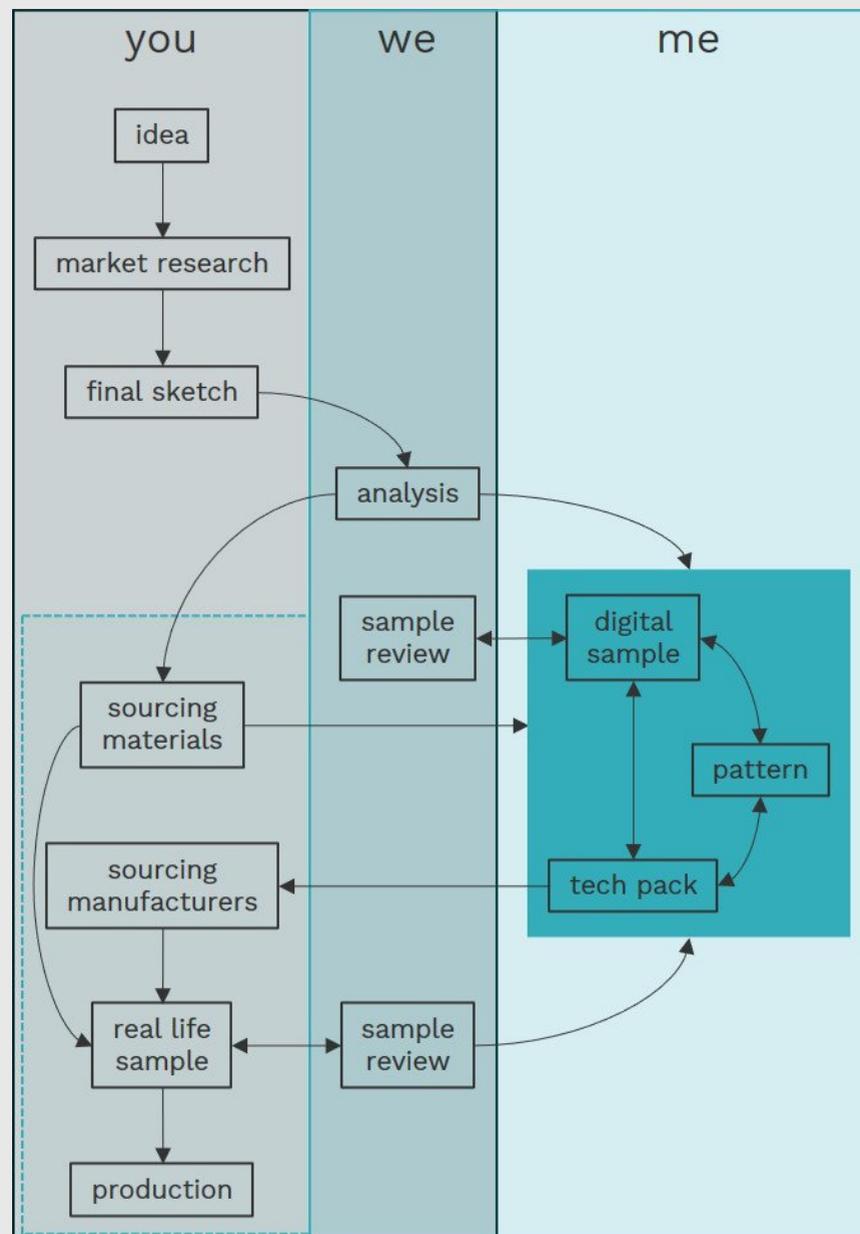
My way of working

To collect all the needed information, we will take an in-depth look at your design. This is the first step when you work with me: the analysis of your design.

After the analysis you can start sourcing the materials if you haven't done so already. And I start working on the technical stuff.

As said, this is not a step-by-step process. I start with a digital prototype: a simplified 3d setup of your design. In most cases, I can show you a (simplified) 3d image the same day once I start working on your design.

This is to give you an idea of what your design will look like in real life. This way you know for sure that we're on the same level early in the process.



While I'm waiting for your feedback, I start working on the pattern and the tech pack. I start as soon as possible with the tech pack because you need it when looking for a manufacturer.

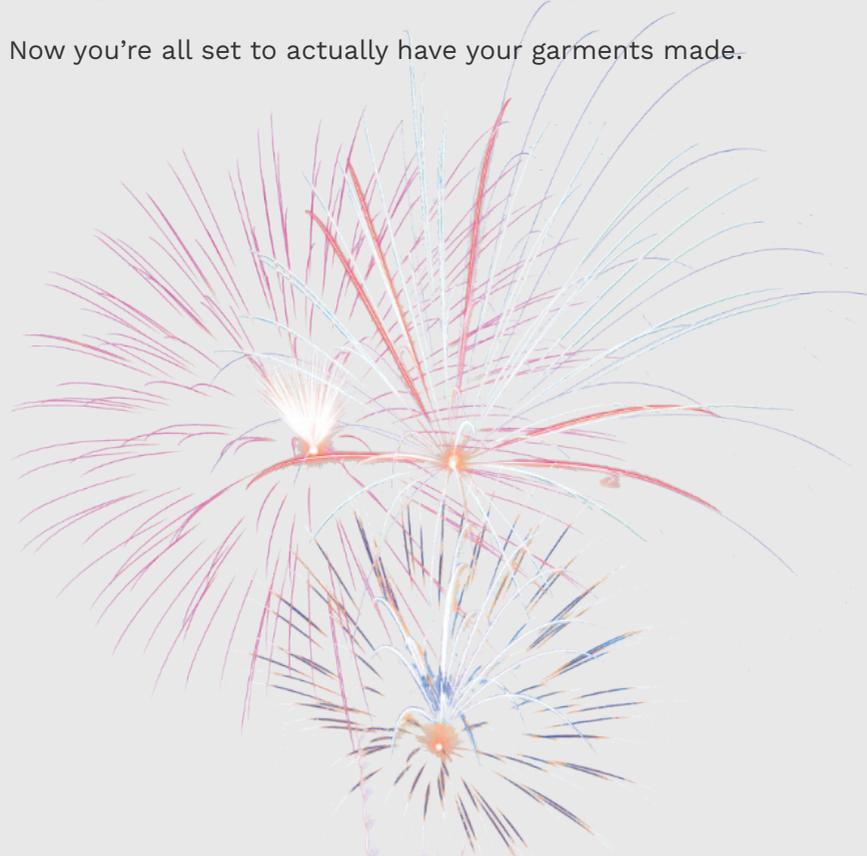
When I have all the final information on the materials, sizes, construction, etc. I can finalize the digital sample, the pattern and the tech pack.

After we reviewed the final digital sample, there will be one round of small adjustments if necessary.

In the mean time you have been looking for a manufacturer and you can have a real life sample made.

We will review this real life sample together and if necessary, there will be another round of small changes. But chances are pretty good that this sample is first time right.

Now you're all set to actually have your garments made.



Timing

Depending on the complexity of your design, the process from analysis to tech pack takes about 3 to 4 weeks.

That said, the speed also depends on you. The quicker you deliver all the needed input, the faster I can work.

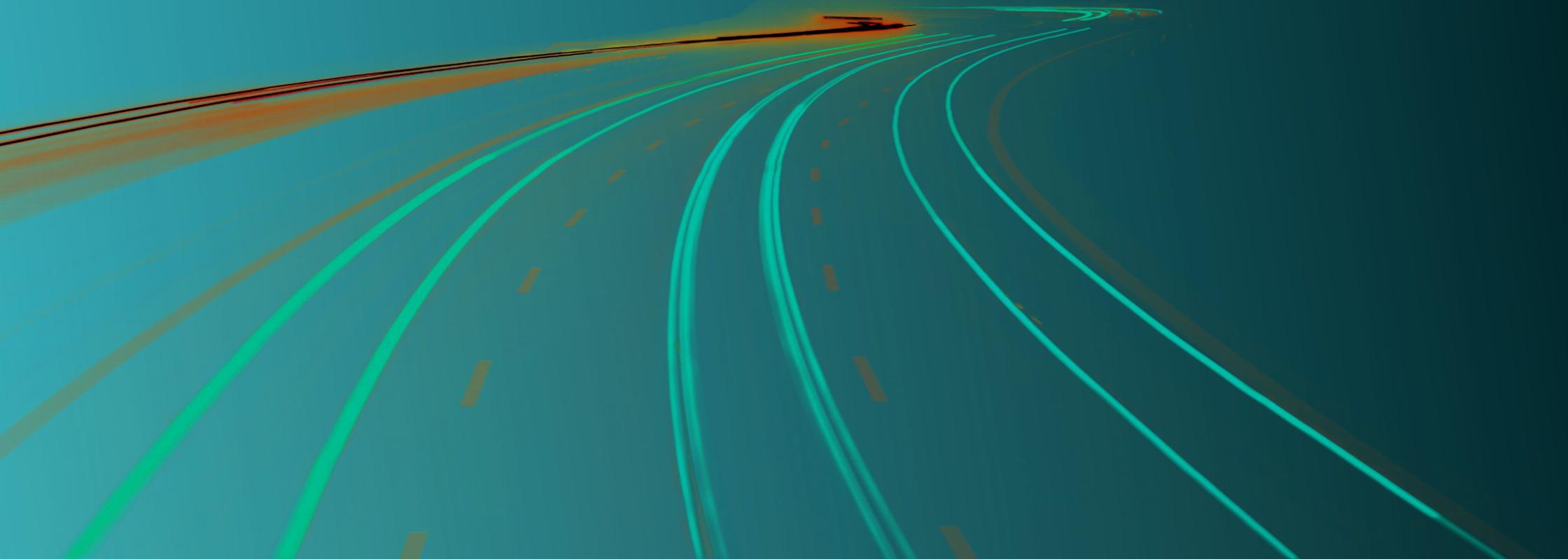
The real sample and actual production are out of my circle of influence. But with proper documentation you minimize delays.



Sourcing & production

You are responsible for the sourcing and production part of the process yourself. All other steps are included in the Sjoon Pekske Plan.

Of course, I won't leave you dangling and will help you where I can. But I cannot make final fabric choices for you or negotiate with manufacturers.



From analysis to real life sample

analysis

digital sample

pattern

tech pack

real life sample

In this chapter I'll zoom in on the different (technical) steps.

In the next chapter I'll come back to the market research. Although this is not my field of expertise, it is too important to ignore it.



Analysis

There are three main inputs needed to get your garments made:

- materials
- patterns
- instructions

These three inputs intertwine and you cannot leave one out.

To make the patterns information about the fabric and sizes among others is needed. And for the instructions the patterns and information about the construction for instance is needed.

To collect this information, we will take an in-depth look at your design. We'll analyze 4 aspects of your design:

Appearance: What does your design look like?

Construction: How is your design constructed and finished?

Sizes: In what sizes do you want your design made?

Materials: From what materials is your design made?

As you can see, there is quite a lot to think about. But don't panic, advice is included in the Sjoon Pekske Plan, I will walk with you along the way.

On the next pages are some examples of the things we discuss during the analysis.



Obviously, you need materials. What are you going to make without them? The emperor's new clothes? Or digital clothing maybe, to stay in this century?



What would you do without a pattern? That might work if you are just making a piece of cloth with a hole in it. Or if you are a Savile Row tailor. But for a fashion manufacturer it is pretty hard to make anything acceptable without a pattern.



No instructions is a no go, I cannot emphasize this enough. You don't want your manufacturer to guess what you want. If you don't give them clear instructions they will do whatever is most beneficial for them and that might be different from your objectives.

Appearance - What does your design look like?

We look at things like the fit, colorways, closures & openings and other design details. Here are some of the questions I ask:

What fit do you want? Should it be slim fit, loose fit or over-sized for instance? And with fitted designs, how is the fit shaped?

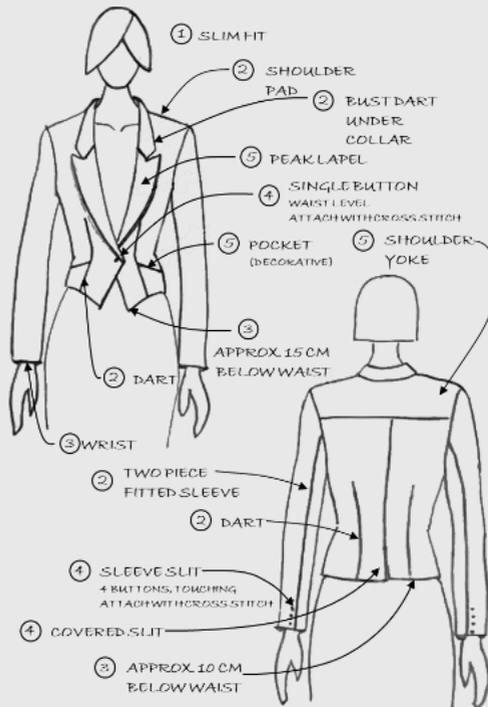
In case of skirts and pants, at what level sits the waistband? What is the shape at the hem? For instance, a tapered skirt or flared pants.

What is the length of the model? What length are the sleeves?

How do you get into your model? Does it have buttons in the front and if so, how many? Or is there maybe a hidden zipper in the back?

And how do you move around in your model? Does it have a walking slit?

What design details, like pockets, pleats, logo's, etc. are there? Not only "constructional" details, but also things like embroidery, decorative stitches, bows, you name it.



The advantage of digital

It is not necessary to already know exactly all the dimensions and details during the analysis. The digital sample is a great help to refine your design.

With a digital sample, you can immediately see if your design looks like what you have in mind.

During the review we can make immediate adjustments and we will tweak the model until it is exactly to your liking.

Construction - How is your design constructed and finished?

Let's take a look at the inside of your design.

The finishing has a large impact on the look and feel of your garment. Details like seams depend on the type of your garment, your target group, the price of your product, used fabric, etc. And it will influence the production costs. So it is therefore important to find a good balance.

This is probably the hardest part, there are a lot of details to think about, like lining, seams and stitches and reinforcements.

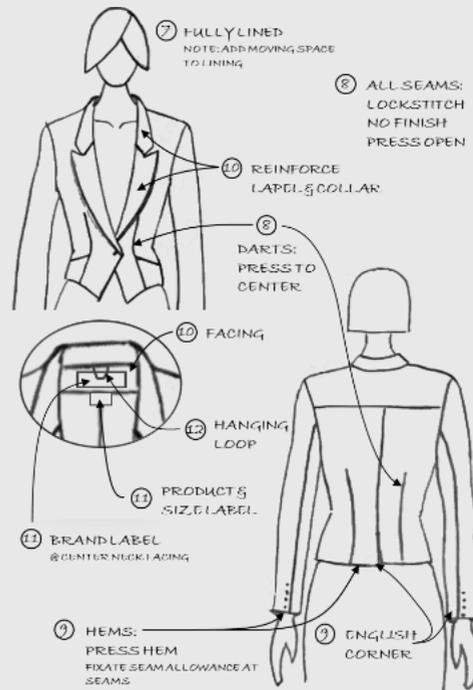
Here are some of the questions I can ask:

Will your garment be lined or not?

What kind of seams do you want? Do you want the seams to be finished with a posh French seam or is it good enough to finish them with an overlock stitch?

Are there parts that need to be reinforced, for instance a lapel? And if so, which grade?

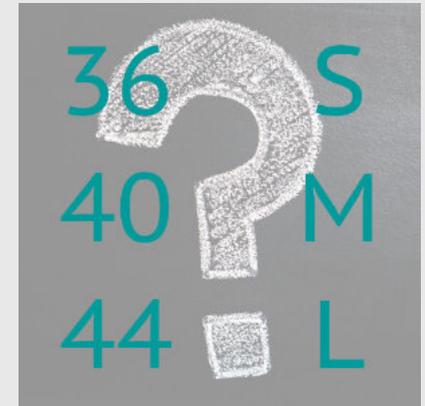
Where are the labels and loops?



Sizes - In what sizes do you want your design made?

We'll take a look at your target customer and find the right sizes matching your customers.

Choosing the size range is more complex than you might think. There are no set rules for sizing. With one brand you will fit into a size S and with another brand a size L will still be tight. And it is not only the sizes itself, but also the range and the labeling.



It is very hard to cater for everybody, especially for women. The variation in body shapes and sizes is so large that it is impossible to catch all those different bodies into a few size charts.

For clothing brands this means choosing between two evils. More sizes means higher costs which means less profit. Less sizes means poorer fit which can lead to fewer sales which also means less profit.

Plus sizes require extra attention. You cannot simply scale a size 36 to a size 48. Changes in body shape are more pronounced with plus sizes than with regular sizes. Patterns must be adjusted accordingly.

To create the best possible fit, I need to know a bit more about your customers. With the help of a questionnaire, I determine which size charts suit your clients best.

This is very specific knowledge and I can imagine you have no idea what I'm talking about. When I make a tech pack, I will take care of this kind of information, so no worries. Just indicate as much details as possible and I'll fill in the blanks.

Materials - From what materials is your design made?

We'll make a list of all the different fabrics and trims.

Fabrics

The choice of fabric has a huge impact. Not only on the looks of your garment, but also on the fit and construction. Aspects like ease and seam allowances are determined by the fabric. Here are some of the questions I ask:

What are the technical properties of the fabric? Especially when the drape of your garment is important, I need to know as much details as possible, like composition, weight, structure and type of weave.

Will your fabric shrink and if so, how much? If the fabric shrinks the first time it is washed, then I have to take this shrinkage into account in the pattern. I have to make the pattern a bit larger, so that the model will have the correct measurements after washing.

Does your fabric stretch? And if so, how much? The amount of ease doesn't only depends on the fit of the model, but it depends also on how much the fabric will stretch. The more stretch, the less ease is needed.

What is the usable width of the fabric? This is not absolutely necessary information, but without it I can't make a lay plan and determine how much fabric you need.

Does the fabric have a print? And if yes, is this a random print or a repeating print? This is important because I need to know if I have to align the different pattern pieces with regard to this print.

Trims

I also need information about all the other materials that are needed to create your garment. Not only things like buttons and zippers, but also the more "hidden" materials, like thread and fusing. Info like dimension(s), color, amounts, etc.



More help

As said before, a comprehensive analysis together is included in the Sjoon Pekske Plan. Together we'll go over all the mentioned aspects of your design.

Note that if you only choose pattern development, then I expect you to deliver all the information.

To help you gather the information on your own, you can attend the [Sjoon Pekske Workshop](#) or read the other guides in this series.

Workshop

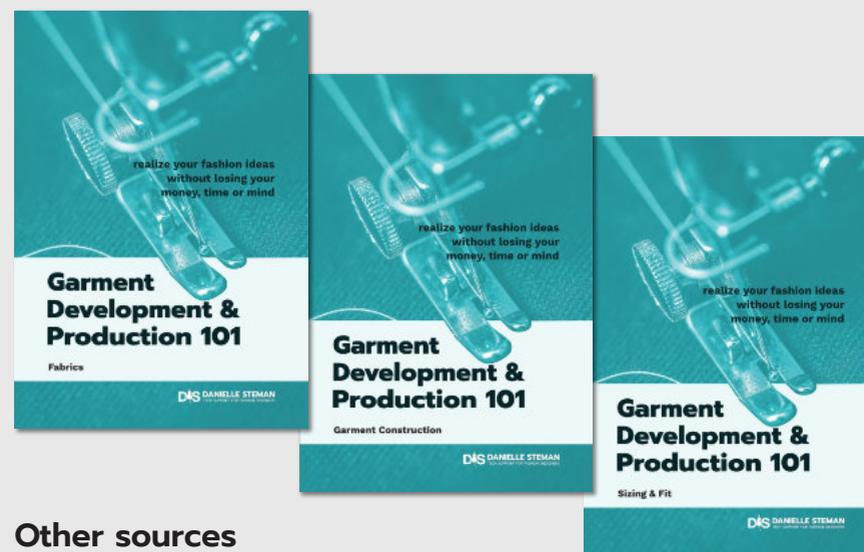
During this small-group workshop, we analyze the appearance, construction and materials of a design by each participant.

At the end of the workshop you will go home with an extensive workbook with the analysis of your design. Which can be a reference book for later designs.

Guides

To get you started, I am writing several guides on various aspects of garment development and production. Like selecting fabric for your designs, the construction and finishes of your garment and sizing and fit.

You can find the guides [here](#).



Other sources

You can find some useful info about stitches on the website of [ABC Seams](#).

On the website of [Vlieseline](#) you can find more info about interlinings and their applications.



Digital sample

As mentioned, working out the technical details is not a simple step-by-step process. The different steps depend on each other and intertwine.

After the analysis I start with a digital prototype: a simplified 3d setup of your design.

This is to give you an idea of what your design will look like in real life and is meant to check the overall design details. Like the length, the depth of the neckline or the size and position of the pockets.

When we discuss this prototype I can make changes on the fly.

During the development process this prototype is upgraded to a digital sample. To make this digital sample true to life, I digitize the actual fabrics you will use. Decorative stitching, buttons and zippers are applied and the avatar is dressed including accessories.

We will also discuss this digital sample and tweak it until it is exactly to your liking if necessary.



Digital samples are not only a sustainable alternative to real samples, digital sampling also makes the pattern development process faster and more reliable.

What you see is what you get



Pattern

To make the prototype, I have already made a draft of the pattern. Once the prototype is approved, I will continue to work out the details.

After the digital sample has been approved, the pattern pieces are finalized and graded in the desired size range.

The output can be either on paper or digital if you manufacturer has a cutting machine.





Tech pack

A tech pack (short for technical package) is an informative document that tells people what your garment looks like and how it should be made. It describes in detail what fabrics and trims to use, where to place pockets and buttons and what type of stitches to use and so on.

It is the single source of all relevant info

It is used to communicate with all the different parties during the design and manufacturing process to make sure that in the end you get exactly what you had in mind.

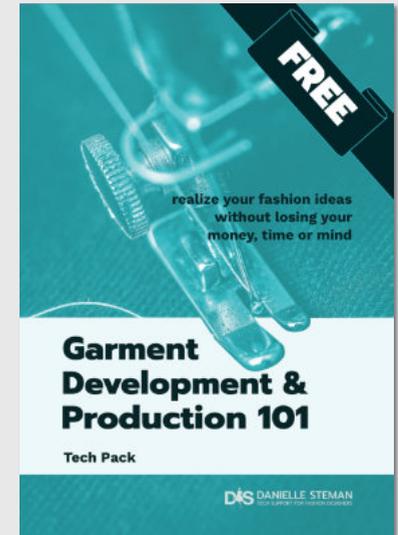
I start as soon as possible with the tech pack, so you can use it when you start looking for a manufacturer. At this point the tech pack won't be totally finished but it will contain the info a manufacturer needs to give you a quotation.

During the development process the tech pack will be updated regularly.



More help

The [free guide](#) about tech packs tells you in detail what a tech pack is and why you absolutely need one.



Or download an example tech pack [here](#).



Real life sample

Although a digital sample is already very realistic and accurate, it remains intangible. There is nothing better than seeing and feeling your design up close yourself.

That's not the only reason to make a real-life sample. A real-life sample is also made to perform a fit test and to check the workmanship of the manufacturer.

During the sample review session we take an in-depth look at the sample together and check it against the tech pack. We check the dimensions of the garment, the fit and the way it is made.

The digital model can already indicate whether a garment is too tight in certain areas or not. But a digital avatar cannot give you comments about the fit. That's why the garment is also fitted on a real model.

You can have a sample made by a third party, but I advice you to have the sample made by the manufacturer of your choice. This way the workmanship of the manufacturer can be checked. Like are the stitches correct, are the left and right side symmetrical, do the patterns match, etc.

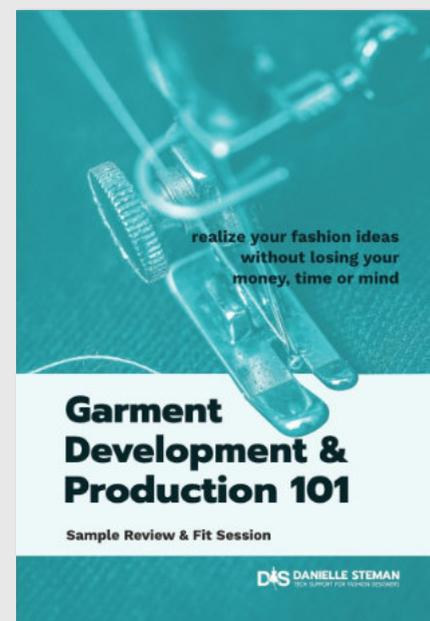
The results of this review are recorded in a report which is added to the tech pack. If necessary, the pattern and the tech pack are updated. In very rare cases a new sample is made, but until the moment of writing, that was never necessary.

More help

A guided sample review is included in the Sjoon Pekske Plan. Together we'll take an in-depth look at the sample and check it against the tech pack.

You can also book a [sample review and fit session](#) separately.

You can choose between a private session, or a session with fellow designers. You will not only share the costs of a fitting model, but you also have a chance to learn from each other.



And for the do-it-yourselfers, there is a separate [guide](#) about how to review a sample.

Why is market research so important?



Although I'm not a business coach or a marketing expert, I want to say something about market research.

Because you shouldn't underestimate the importance of your market research. You really need to know your target customer if you want to make your fashion ideas a success. They decide if they want to buy your products or not.

And this is not only based on the design. Also the price and the fit play an important role when it comes to choosing a certain garment. And other stuff like customer journey, but I'll leave that to other experts.

Price



Your selling price should be your starting point and not the end result of all costs. Instead of letting the costs drive your selling price, you should let your selling price determine your options.

The selling price should not only cover the production costs, but also the shipping costs, the marketing costs, return costs and your margin. And don't forget the VAT. Depending on where you live,

you are left with only 80 - 85% of the selling price.

You should ask yourself two things: "What are you customers willing to pay and what do they expect?" and work from there.

As said, I know very little about running a fashion brand in general, so I'll stick to my expertise, the technical stuff.

Production costs

The most important factors that make up the production costs are the numbers, the materials, the finishing and the complexity of the design.

Low quantities mean high(er) prices. So forget Primark, H&M or Zara prices. If you are a small brand, you cannot compete with large fast fashion chains like that.

You should always deliver "value for money", no matter the selling price. Since you'll probably sell your garments on the high end of the price scale, this means higher quality fabrics and trims, more luxurious finishes and more sizing and color options for instance.

If your final costs are not in line with your selling price then you have to make other design and manufacturing choices. Like use cheaper fabrics, skip some design details or offer less color variations to name a few.

But be careful not to save too much that it affects the quality.

I admit, this is a difficult trade to master, but one you really want to learn. After all, you want to run a business and not a hobby, right?

Fit

It is very hard to cater for everybody, especially for women. The variation in body shapes and sizes is so large that it is impossible to catch all those different bodies into a few size charts.

For clothing brands this means choosing between two evils. More sizes means higher costs which means less profit. Less sizes means poorer fit which can lead to fewer sales which also means less profit.

Since fitting issues are the number one reason why clothing is returned, it is very important to offer the best fit possible.

To create the best possible fit, I need to know a bit more about your customers. With the help of a questionnaire, I determine which size charts suit your clients best.

Size inclusivity

Instead of keeping a large range of sizes in stock, you could also consider to offer your garments made to measure.

The process is completely remote and do it yourself. Your customer makes a scan and I do the magic. All you have to do is to make sure that the garment is made somehow.

This does not only guarantee a way better fit, it is also a very sustainable way of working. Since the garments are made to order, there is no stock you might not sell.

At the moment this process is available for small (<10/month) and large (>100/month) numbers. The process for medium numbers is under development.

Contact me if you want to know more. Or go to my website to read more about about [remote tailoring](#).



Know your customer

**Ready for the
next step?**

I hope this e-book made clear that getting your garments made is more than just handing over a sketch. I hope you now have a good idea about all that's involved in making your fashion ideas a reality.

Maybe it showed you that it is much more than you thought. And this might scare you off from continuing.

Please don't. I'm here to help. Don't be overwhelmed by all the information in this guide. With your determination and commitment and my help you are on your way to make your fashion label a success!

Work with me

My way of working is not easily captured in a step-by-step plan. Many steps overlap and intertwine. And most importantly, I start with the last step, making a sample.

You can follow the traditional manufacturing process of having a sample made, review it, having another sample made, have a size set made (if you are lucky and your second sample is okay) and finally start production after six months.

Or you can take the digital highway and go for digital samples and have the complete package ready in just a couple of weeks. And know for sure that what you see is what you get.

If you want to take the digital highway and speed up the process, then I'm your go to girl.

This is me

With my love for digital technologies and sustainability I seek innovative ways to re-shape the traditional fashion manufacturing model to a model that helps you save time, cut costs and increase your brand's sustainability.

I'm here for independent designers and labels who are determined to make a success of their designs but lack the technical knowledge to make this happen.

And for those who have the knowledge, but don't like doing all the technical work.

I take the time consuming technical matters like creating patterns, tech packs and samples from your hands so that you can spend time on your core business again.

I've been making clothes since I was a little girl, so by now I know what can and cannot be done. There is no single design that cannot be flattened in a 2D pattern for me. The more complex, the better.

I'm a sucker for color and high heels, but badly fitting & badly finished clothes really turn me off.

If you want to know more, contact me.

I'm happy to tell you more about how my digital services can make life easier for you.

Mail me at: info@daniellesteman.nl or call me at +316 55 88 03 85.

I would love to hear from you.



Sjoon Pekske

[Sjoon Pekske](#) is specially developed for small independent designers and labels who are determined to make a success of their own designs but lack the technical knowledge to make this happen.

Follow a workshop, get the e-books or go for the full-service plan and manage the production process with confidence.

Plan - the complete package to facilitate production

This plan guides you through the process from sketch to sample. It doesn't only take care of the technical stuff, but will also prepare you for the whole manufacturing process.

Workshop - the starting point to prepare for production

This workshop helps you to gather all the info needed to make the patterns and to prepare for production. At the end, you will be all set to have your designs manufactured.

E-books - the complete reference material on production

These e-books provide background information about all the technical aspects of manufacturing. No longer spend hours searching Google and YouTube for answers to your questions.



You're one step closer to realize your fashion ideas





Good luck