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CHILD'S SHAWL DRESS & LEGGINGS

This child's dress is patterned after the early evolution of a one piece women's cloth dress. Today's shawl dancers have moved to fancier patterns but this one still works well for children.

The material used can be a plain cotton or cotton-polyester blend material, or patterned fancier finished, but be sure it will machine wash easily. The amount needed will depend on the dress size, but 45 inch wide bolt material will usually work as shown in this pattern design. Plan the length needed as twice the length from the child's shoulder to the ground.

Fold the fabric at the shoulder as shown, but do not cut the fold. Place the child on the cloth with shoulders even with the shoulder fold. (As an alternative to a wiggly child, you can use newspaper to make a pattern first and transfer that to the cloth.)

Cut the cloth in the pattern shown leaving room for "give" and side seams along with a 2-3 inch hem. The hem can be let out as the child grows. Fold the cut out dress inside out and sew up the side seams, extending out on the underarm about half way. Hem the rest of the edges of the arm pattern. Cut out the neck large enough for the child's head to slip through. Hem the neck opening with a piece of decorative satin ribbon.

The finished dress should reach below the knees. Place the dress over the child and pin up the bottom hem. Sew that in place so you can change the hem later when she grows. Finish adding satin ribbon trim to the dress. The yoke decoration and skirt ribbon shown in our drawing are two of the trim options. Colors are determined by the colors in the fabric and your choice to balance with other accessories planned. The shawl is then color coordinated with the dress choices.

Leggings are made from a piece of the same fabric as used in the dress. We show using an 18 inch piece for grade schoolers, but adjust for your child by measuring from below the knee to the foot instep, allowing for hems. Fold in half lengthwise with fabric inside out. Sew along the open edge, leaving a 4-5 inch opening at the bottom edge. Fold over the top edge and sew a channel to hold elastic. The leggings fit just under the knees to just over the moccasins, but not dragging on the ground. Ribbon can be added to the bottom hem and up the opening to match the dress.

Our dancer sketch shows her wearing a slim hairpipe and bead breastplate as was done here in the Great Lakes area during the 1970's but that accessory is rarely used today by shawl dancers. A Lakota elder in Minnesota has advised my daughter that it is not appropriate for shawl dancers to use that there. Be sure to know the teachings in your area for these things.

