

Haute Couture Techniques  
On-Site Course  
Beginner Level

# Dressmaking

02—04.10.2026



CRISTÓBAL BALENCIAGA MUSEOA

## Introduction

This course is a practical introduction to the garment-making techniques used at the dressmaking ateliers at Maison Balenciaga; where day, cocktail, party and bridal designs, noted for the sophistication of their silhouettes and precise tailoring, were produced.

Participants will study and reproduce the sewing, assembly and ironing procedures; they will thus discover a way of working based on technical mastery, the interior structure of the garment and the specific behaviour of the dressmaking fabrics. Sessions will combine live technical demonstrations and practical exercises, in order to progressively acquire manual skills and the criteria needed to produce haute couture.

The main exercise of the course will be to make a bodice using original toile from 1961. The piece has a slightly fitted front and a generous back that recalls the sack line designed by Cristóbal Balenciaga in 1957. The design includes a front V-neckline and an oval neckline at the back with a ruffle held in place using an inner band. The garment also includes an inner waistband attached to the lining; that allows the front to be fitted while the back displays its characteristic volume.

The course thus provides a material and technical approach to some of the most typical couture resources of Balenciaga's legacy, with a special emphasis on the relationship between pattern, fabric and volume.

Dressmaking	Duration	Format
Level 1. Beginner	20 hours	On-Site
Level 2. Intermediate	30 hours	Online
Level 3. Advanced	35 hours	On-Site

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Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>— Identify the characteristics and behaviour of different dressmaking fabrics used in haute couture.</li><li>— Understand the basic construction and volume principles that are characteristic of Maison Balenciaga.</li><li>— Apply the specific sewing and ironing techniques that were traditionally used in the dressmaking ateliers.</li><li>— Use the typical preparation, reinforcing and assembly processes for haute couture garments.</li><li>— Apply the typical inner finishing and fastening systems that are typical of this type of garment making.</li><li>— Develop technical criteria to handle structure and delicate fabrics.</li><li>— Produce a bodice with a sack back, by applying the procedures studied during the course.</li><li>— Include technical resources that can be transferred to future design, pattern and garment-making projects.</li></ul>
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Methodology	<p>The course methodology is based on progressive and practical learning, by combining technical demonstrations by the instructor with individual exercises to apply the skills.</p> <p>Each block will include explanations about the processes and materials, supported by live sewing, assembly and ironing demonstrations and sampling. Participants will then carry out the set exercises, using the demonstrated techniques and applying them to the pieces envisaged for the course.</p> <p>The methodology prioritises direct experimenting and developing manual skills; the aim is for the participants to end the course with practical understanding of the demonstrated techniques and with resources that they can use for future design, pattern and garment making projects.</p>
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- I. Presentation of the Course and of the Programme
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- II. Introduction to Haute Couture Tailoring Techniques
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- III. Dressmaking Fabrics and Their Characteristics
- Satin
  - Taffeta
  - Organza
  - Silk gazar
  - Faille
  - Shantung
  - Zibeline
  - Lace
  - Cloqué
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- IV. Practical Exercise: Making a Bodice with Sack Back
- Preparing and cutting the fabric
  - Cutting the lining
  - Basting
  - Applying organza interfacing
  - Sewing main seams and darts
  - Making an open central seam
  - Assembling and sewing the lining
  - Preparing and fitting the ruffle on the neckline.
  - Attaching the lining using an awl to the inside of the garment
  - Preparing the neckline facings
  - Using organza bias binding to finish the facings
  - Sewing the inner tape of the neckline
  - Gathering and attaching the sack neckline
  - Using organza to finish the hem
  - Making and fitting the inner waistband
  - Using a hook and eye to place the waistband
  - Crafting a decorative hollow bow for the front

## Javier Martín

Javier Martín, originally from Ávila but now residing in Madrid, graduated as a Senior Fashion Designer from the Polytechnic University of Madrid in 1991. Early on, he met Carmen and Emilia Carriches, seamstresses at the EISA atelier in the capital and who were first assistants to the head couturier, Felisa Irigoyen. They taught Javier the specific dressmaking techniques of the couturier from Getaria and he learned how to create fullness which would shape his designs.

Javier was part of the team at Sybilla for ten years, until 2005, when he decided to create his own haute-couture brand, Nihil Obstat. He has combined his work as a designer with collaborations with other creative artists of the ilk of Carmen March, Jesús del Pozo and Joaquín Trías – the latter is the grandson of a Balenciaga model and to whom he provides technical advice. He worked for the Spanish company DELPOZO from 2012 to 2019, where his remit was to model and develop volumes of part of the collection and to develop luxury *prêt-à-porter* garments with an international outreach.

Javier is also a lecturer and has been involved in educational projects of the Spanish Government's Ministry of Education; he has lectured on design and modelling at the Higher Fashion Design Centre at the Polytechnique University of, the European Design Institute of Madrid, and at the Estación Diseño School in Granada, to name a few. Since 2015, he has been collaborating with the Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa education programme; that has involved compiling and passing on the sewing techniques used at the Balenciaga ateliers.



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Dates	October 02-04, 2026 Total dedication of 20 hours
Timetable	Friday, October 02, 14:30–18:30 Saturday and Sunday, 03 and 04, 09:30–13:30 / 14:30–18:30
Language	Although the course will be primarily in Spanish, English-speaking participants are also very welcome, as explanations can additionally be provided in English whenever needed. Furthermore, as this is a hands-on methodology, the language of sewing itself helps make the content accessible and easy to follow in a universal way.
Participants	Students or people holding qualifications in Fashion Design, Pattern Design and Dressmaking, fashion professionals and anybody interested in learning or improving their knowledge with Haute Couture techniques.  The maximum number of participants will be 20. The participants will be selected based on the requested documentation and the allocation of places will be confirmed from 15 July.
Requirements	Those interested in participating must be able to prove that they have prior knowledge of haute couture techniques and that they are capable of cutting, basting and sewing a garment.
Registration	Registration will be open from the day this course is announced until 30 June (both inclusive; deadline, 2.00 p.m. Spanish time). Those wishing to participate must complete the online registration form. Candidates are required to submit a curriculum vitae specifying their training and experience in the world of fashion, and a cover letter stating why they want to participate in the activity and their connection to its content.

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Price	<p>290€. The price includes the materials for the development of the exercises for a value of 35€. The Museum will supply each participant with the necessary kit, consisting of taffeta and cotton fabric. Participants must, in turn, come equipped with basic sewing tools (scissors, pins &amp; needles, thread, measuring tape, tailors chalk, etc.).</p> <p>The net registration fee to be received by the Cristóbal Balenciaga Foundation is the above-mentioned. All bank charges are to be paid by the participant.</p> <p>The discount that may correspond to "Friends of the Museum" is restricted to those friends with a demonstrable seniority of at least two years at the time of registration.</p>
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Places limited/Registration is required

In the event of failing to meet the minimum number of participants, all interested parties will be informed of the activity cancellation and any registration fees paid will be refunded

A certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the activity.

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Contact	<p>T +34 943 004 777 info@fbalenciaga.com</p>
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Partnership

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