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in
Dressmaking

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Practical Helps in Dressmaking

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The success of a wardrobe depends not on the amount of money it costs, but on the thought and care put into it. Careful planning, wise buying and a knowledge of sewing will help us to dress economically. In order to look our best, we must study our figure and complexion and select styles which suit our type, and colors which bring out our coloring. It has been said, “To be well dressed one must have the sense to look, the courage to see, and the wisdom to know just what to do about it.”

An attractive garment must have good lines, be well fitted, have properly finished seams, and good finishing touches. Some suggestions are given in this circular that will help to do away with the “home-made look” and make our sewing easier.

Equipment

Good sewing equipment is necessary if we are to be successful with our home dressmaking. We need sharp shears with true cutting edges, a generous supply of pins with good points, thimble, accurate tape measure and yard stick, and various kinds of needles. The needle and thread will depend upon the materials, and the manner in which they are used. Milliner’s needles are good for basting. For this purpose, use basting thread as it is made with a glazed finish which allows it to be easily removed without harming the material. Use embroidery needles.
with long points for sewing with yarn or floss. For fine sewing, use short, fine needles. For general sewing, use number six or seven needles and 40 to 80 thread; sheer material requires number eight to twelve needles, cotton thread 70 to 150 and silk A, B, 0, 00, 000. Tailor's chalk is necessary for marking. Use white on dark materials and colored on lighter materials. Do not overlook the importance of an iron and proper pressing pads. Use a well-padded pressing surface. A curved seam requires a curved pressing surface. A pad of this kind can be made by stitching together two pieces of muslin the size and shape of a ham and stuffing hard with soft cloth. A good sewing machine is another essential. Keep the sewing machine oiled and cleaned so that it will run easily. Much time will be saved if sewing machine attachments are used, and the results will be much more satisfactory.

Selection of Patterns

The commercial pattern is the accepted foundation for home sewing. Each commercial pattern company uses its own set of measurements. Each person can find a make of pattern which will require practically no alterations while other makes will require an alteration in nearly every structural line. Every person should find the make of pattern best suited to the individual figure and use it exclusively. Before buying a pattern, a person should study the fashion magazines, keeping in mind their own figure and the lines suited to it.

Selection of Materials

Before buying, determine the right color, the right fabric and the smartest and most becoming trimming. Do not use expensive trimmings on inexpensive materials or the reverse.

In choosing materials, we must consider if it has an up-and-down. If so, it must be cut in the same direction. If figured materials are used, select a design that will cut into few pieces. If striped materials are used, be sure you are using the stripes becomingly for your figure. If material is very narrow, select a style that will hide the seams. Any decorative material should be simply made.

Cutting of Materials

In order to have good lines we must cut carefully; this means that we must have a flat surface for cutting. There should be no wrinkles in pattern or material. Place the pattern pieces straight with the weave of the goods (the fold through the middle is not always straight.)

Straighten the material by drawing a thread and cutting or
by tearing. If it is not even, pull and stretch the material into shape. Perforations show the up-and-down in commercial patterns. Observe pattern notches. Lay the pattern on the wrong side of the goods so perforations will show when basting. Examine the material for right and wrong, up and down, and in plaids, left and right. On the right side of twilled materials, the twill always runs down from left to right.

Lay the entire pattern on before cutting any part. Place the wide end of the pattern to the cut end of the material unless there is an up-and-down in the material. In using a pattern for the first time, make any necessary changes in the armseye before cutting the sleeve, otherwise the shoulder seam may be shortened and the top of the sleeve will be short.

Make all necessary allowances. Cut all materials where nap was pressed down in the finishing of the material, with the nap running down; otherwise, with the nap running up.

In the case of printed materials, it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice cutting on the thread of the materials for the sake of matching the figure.

Read carefully the instructions for laying on the pattern. Pin carefully so that you are sure of cutting both sides exactly the same. Use weights to prevent the material from slipping.

![Fig. 4.—Fitting the waist and side seam of a skirt.](image)

Mark the center front and center back with a long uneven basting thread before removing pattern. This is to insure accuracy in fitting, and in placing pockets, belts or yokes.
Fitting The Garment

To fit properly, try the basted garment on and observe carefully where alterations are necessary. In figure IV, A shows how square shoulders may be adjusted to fit drooping shoulders. After the seam on the shoulder is changed, the dress will be too high under the arm and will need to be cut lower as shown by the dotted line on B. If the side seam sags as a result of skirt and not the waist fitting, open the underarm dart and raise the skirt section until the filling of the material runs parallel. Corrections are shown in B, Figure IV.

If the dress wrinkles as shown in C owing to a full bust and narrow back, open the underarm seam and lower the front at the armseye on the back until the wrinkles disappear as in D. This gives more fullness across the bust. If more wrinkles appear under the arm, they can be removed by lifting the front and laying a few small darts in it on the underarm seam, just below the armseye. Smooth out the wrinkles and mark a new armseye.

In Figure V, E, the dress is drawn forward and upward over the bust. It will be necessary to raise the woof or filling thread under the arm so that it is parallel. The fullness around the neck, in back and across the top of the shoulders, can be corrected by opening the shoulders and underarm seams; smoothing out the fullness at the back in the neck and raising the front at the armseye end of the shoulder seam. If the woof thread is not raised enough, a few small darts may be taken on the front at the underarm seam near the armseye. This will necessitate marking a new neck and armseye line and a new hem line across the back. This is shown in F.

The waist may fit perfectly but owing to fullness through the hips or abdomen, the skirt may hang like the picture in G. This can be corrected by opening the waist line dart and raising the back or front until the woof of the material is once more running in a parallel direction as shown in H.

If one's shoulders are unusually square, the wrinkles come crosswise below the neck. Take up the shoulder seam with wide alteration near the neck and taper towards the shoulders. If the shoulders are very sloping, the waist is apt to wrinkle from the neck to the underarm seam. Take up the shoulder seam deepest at the armhole and taper towards the neck.

A shoulder alteration is apt to change the neck and armseye. Try the waist on and slash it in the neck and armseye until it is comfortable. Be careful not to cut out too much. (Shown in H).

In Figure V, I, a sleeve properly fitted is shown. If the sleeve is short at the top, there will be wrinkles from the top of the shoulders to the underarm. If the sleeve has been cut first, the only way to remedy the defect is to cut the sleeve out deeper on the underarm seam. This may make the sleeve short and necessitate a cuff.

If the sleeve draws up in wrinkles running around the arm just below the shoulders, it is too tight across the top. The sleeves must fit the armhole of the dress. Remember the lengthwise grain of the material should run directly in line with the tip of the shoulder and the crosswise grain parallel with the bust line.
The garment must be stitched straight. A variation in the width of seams spoils the finished garment. Press every seam before it joins another seam.

Seams should be flat and tailored. Baste slightly inside the line for the finished seam. One reason for this is that the basting does not hold as firmly as the stitching; another is that the basting will not be sewed in with the machine stitching. Seams in heavy material may be held together and clipped, then pressed open. Seams in material that ravels should be overcast or bound. It is advisable to overcast each edge separately although in some cases, the edges may be loosely whipped together providing the seam has been previously pressed open. Bias tape makes a splendid finish for seams. For a tailored seam, make an ordinary seam, press, turn both raw edges of the seam the same way and stitch on the right side close to the original seam. If selvage is left on, it should be clipped every four or six inches so the seam will not pull. A tailored seam is used in tailored blouses, and in sport and tailored dresses where the seam is used as part of the decoration.

**Finishing Touches**

**Facing.**—Figure VI, A, is a facing with no stitching showing on the right side. The facing is placed directly over the center-front on the right side of the garment and two rows of stitching made. Next cut between the rows of stitching, turn the facing to the wrong side and tack to hold in position. The collar is then put on and this holds the facing in place at the upper edge.

**Bound Buttonholes.**—Bound buttonholes are much used for belts, dresses and as a foundation for set-in pockets as shown in B and C, Figure 6. Lay the right side of the binding material to the right side of the garment. Stitch a rectangle the size of the button opening. Cut
through the center and diagonally to the corners. Pull the binding material through the hole and pull back the short ends. Bring the cut edges to the middle and stitch just outside of the center edge of the binding.

For the set-in pocket in light weight material, cut the binding large enough to form the pocket. In heavy materials, it should be only large enough to form the flap and that part directly under it.

**Arrow-head.**—The arrow-head is used at the top or bottom of pleats and laps and at the end of seams and pocket openings. To make, draw a triangle and number the points 1, 2 and 3 as A in Figure VII. Start with long running stitches to point 1. Place the needle in the material at point 2 and come through at point 3. Take a stitch across the back of the point at 1 (B). Repeat the stitch from 2 to 3, placing the needle
inside the stitch already made (C). Repeat the stitch at point 1 (D). Slip the needle under the thread between 3 and 1 before taking the stitch between 3 and 2. Continue until the triangle is filled (E). Draw the thread through to the under side and fasten.

Shirrings.—Shirring may be made with a machine attachment. If you wish to make shirring without an attachment, lengthen the stitch. Make the rows of stitching the desired distance apart. Draw up the bobbin thread and slip the material along until the fullness is evenly distributed.

Flares and Godets.—A flare may be joined to the skirt by using a plain seam as shown in F, Figure VII. Press the seam open and overcast the edges to make the seam joining as inconspicuous as possible. The lower edge may be finished with bias binding.

Flares may be put on top of a dress with the stitching showing, as in G, providing stitching shows elsewhere on the dress. To apply this flare, first run a basting thread at the point of joining. Next turn the top of the flare under a seam’s width. Press the turn and pin the flare in position. It is best to have the garment on a flat surface when pinning the flare in position so that the edges of the flare will not be drawn out of shape. The bottom edge of the flares should be finished before the flare is applied to the garment.

A suitable way to finish and apply silk is shown in H. Pointed flares or godets may be applied as in I, J and K.

References

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