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CLOTHING & HEALTH

Extension Circular 302

November, 1930

Patterns and Necklines

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE
EXTENSION SERVICE
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Patterns and Necklines

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Design is probably the first factor to consider in choosing a pattern for a dress. However, there are a few other factors which will govern the choice. Price of some patterns is a prohibiting feature. One make of pattern may seem to fit better than another although this is probably not so true now as a year ago. However, if such has been found to be the case, it is well to continue using that make of pattern, as it will eliminate some unnecessary altering.

Realizing the need for some standardization in measurements used in patterns, representatives from the U. S. Bureau of Standards, manufacturers, educators, consumers, and others interested in the problem, met and agreed upon certain measurements which would be used. Nearly all leading pattern concerns are now using these measurements as their basis for cutting patterns.

Standard measurements for women, approved by the pattern industry and used by the majority of the companies. (All measurements in inches.)

Waist	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44
Bust	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50
Hip*	37	39	41	43	45	47½	50	53	56

*Hip measurement taken 7 inches below natural waist line.

We have been led to believe for a long time that the measurements previously used by these companies were ones obtained by research embodying a large number of people. This was found to be a mistaken idea, and just where the original measurements came from has not been found. Companies have given various ways that these measurements were originally secured and checked, but the ways seem vague, hazy, and not very sound.

This paragraph by one who attended the conference probably sums up what really has happened. "Apparently the manufacturers, hard put to it, have had to call in small groups of people who looked average, and measure them. Their sets of proportions were then labelled perfect 36's and 38's and so on and a few inches added here or subtracted there to get proportions for thin people or fat ones. In other words, many of the measurements have been made with a lead pencil and nothing else. The same seems to have happened in the case of children's clothing. We have started to keep account of all the mothers who tell us their children are so well developed that they wear garments made for children two, three or four years older. We have about decided that all ready-to-wear clothing for children is at least two sizes too small. But as one merchant said, 'Well it makes the parents happy to think their children are large for their age.' We have also been forced to the conclusion that many of the measurements now used have been inherited from a dim and distant past. No one knows just where they came from. But the fact that they are old makes them greatly respected."

The need felt at this conference for some accurate body measurements resulted in a motion recommending that some accurate measurements, based on an average of large numbers of people, be made. It was suggested that the Bureau of Home Economics carry on such a study. This would eliminate, in part perhaps, the wide difference in sizes not only in patterns, but also in ready-made dresses. All this increasing standardization will be of direct help to the individual consumer, for it is with him in mind that these standard studies are made.

Even though measurements used by all companies are the same, shapes used by each company vary. Some seem to fit the more square shoulders, others the sloping shoulder. These fitting points should always be noted when a new type of pattern is used, for it is really very foolish to continue buying a certain make of pattern, if it does not fit, when there are many others to be had.

Determination of the size of dress pattern needed should be based on bust measurements. There are, however, a few exceptions. The woman with a very large bust and small shoulders will find it better to buy a pattern to fit the shoulders and alter for the bust.

Testing the Pattern

There are two ways a pattern may be checked or tested for size. The simpler method is to pin the pattern together and slip it on. This may be done without tearing the pattern, if care is used. The sleeve is pinned up, but only held in place.

The other method is to check each piece of the pattern with body measurements. These measurements must be taken accurately and then allowances made for the fullness desired in the garment.

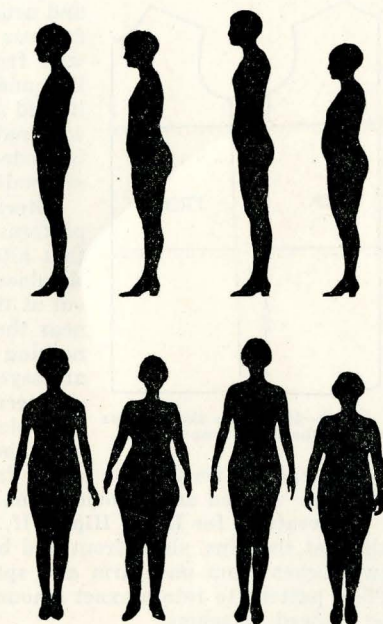


Fig. 1—Four figures with 38-inch bust measure. The differences in height, neck measure, slant and width of shoulders, waist and hip measure, position of waist-line, and other proportions would necessitate alterations on almost any size 38 pattern or ready-made garment for these figures.—U. S. Bureau of Home Economics.

Alteration of Commercial Pattern

Alterations should practically always be made from the inside of the pattern so that the outer edges remain unchanged. Occasionally, slight amounts, seam allowances, etc., may be added on outside without danger to the shape.

Alteration to Shorten.—To shorten a dress pattern pin plaits across it. The alteration should not all be made in one place however. The normal waist line is marked on the pattern. Subtract length from both the waist and skirt, above and below this line if necessary.

Alteration to Add Length.—To lengthen a pattern, cut the pattern across, in both the waist and skirt, and spread to add the length desired.

Alteration for Rounded Shoulders.—Round-

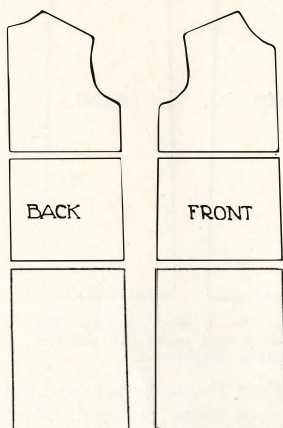


Fig. 2—For the taller figure

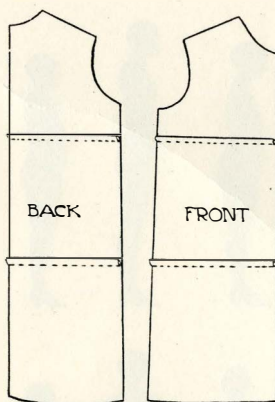


Fig. 3—If you are short, plait remove the extra length.

ed shoulders require extra fullness in back and usually slightly less in front. To add this fullness in back, slash pattern at back crosswise from center back towards the shoulder line and spread the slash. Pin paper under it, and straighten the center back edge. This will make the neckline larger. This fullness is needed and may be taken care of by a series of small tucks.

Alterations for Square Shoulders.—Some patterns have very sloping shoulder lines, so that alteration is quite necessary. If the shoulder seams, when pinned together stand out at the neck, make darts in front and back near the neck across the shoulder, ending in nothing at the corner of the shoulder and armseye.

Alteration for Sloping Shoulders.—For the very sloping shoulders, the average shoulder seam is too straight. Begin by making a slash near the neckline on center front line and continue it to the armseye line. Spread until shoulder line lies flat.

Alterations for Large Hips.—If, on testing a pattern, it is found to be tight at the hips, slash front and back from lower edge to armseye and two inches from underarm and spread apart necessary amount at hip. Piece pattern to retain exact amount allowed. A slight amount may also be allowed on seams.

Alteration for Large Bust.—To add width for a large bust the pattern should be slashed from the corner of the shoulder and armseye on a slanted line to hem, then on bust line cut across from center front to meet

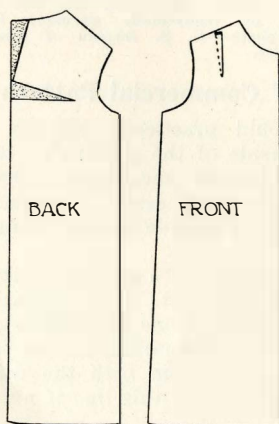


Fig. 4—Rounded shoulders require extra fullness in back.

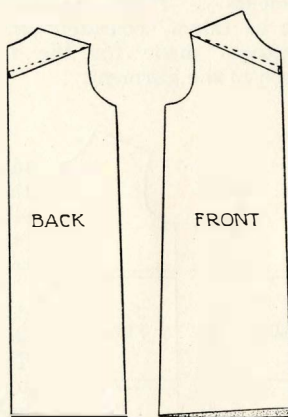


Fig. 5—A dart across the shoulders will make the pattern fit square shoulders.

slash. Spread to fit comfortably and pin on other tissue paper to hold shape. The back of the pattern will probably need to be reduced. Start folding at corner of shoulder and take out any extra fullness.

Alteration for Sleeves.—A well fitting sleeve is probably the most important feature of a well fitting dress. Sleeves that have been cut wrong are hard to make right, but if the pattern is altered first, success should be assured. Each type of sleeve presents a different problem, but principles can be applied to all alterations. The sleeve that is too long may be shortened with plaits in the pattern, or lengthened by slashing the pattern across and adding length. For the arm exceptionally large above the elbow, width may be added by slashing the pattern through the center, and folding plaits from this center line about five inches down from the cap, and ending at nothing at the outer edge. The cap will then be too short and length must be added to restore original shape. The armseye of the dress will then need to be increased. Trim away at underarm. Care should be taken to see that the fullness for the elbow which is found in so many sleeve patterns will come at the right place.

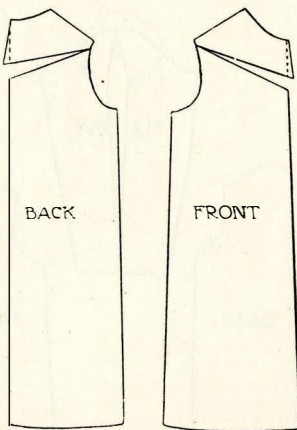


Fig. 6—Sloping shoulders require additional length at neckline.

Alteration for Circular Skirt.—To shorten a circular skirt, cut off unnecessary length. Then to retain original width at the lower edge, pin this portion on pattern and slash skirt and spread to meet this piece.

Cutting the Dress

After a pattern has been altered so that it appears correct there is one thing more to do before cutting. There is usually a slight hollow in the

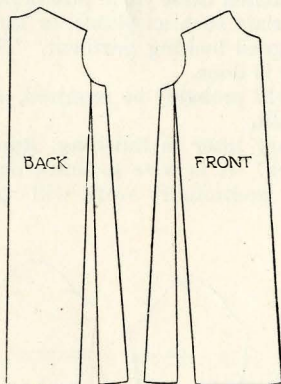


Fig. 7—Alterations for large hips.

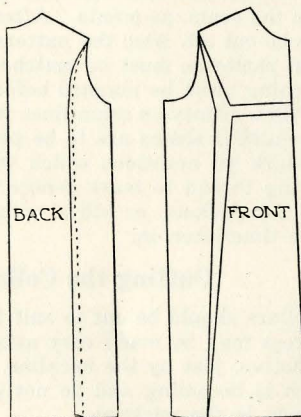


Fig. 8—This alteration takes care of the large bust.

back of the neck and most well fitting dresses have a series of small tucks here. These tucks really serve two purposes. They fill in this hollow place and give added fullness across the shoulders where it always is needed.

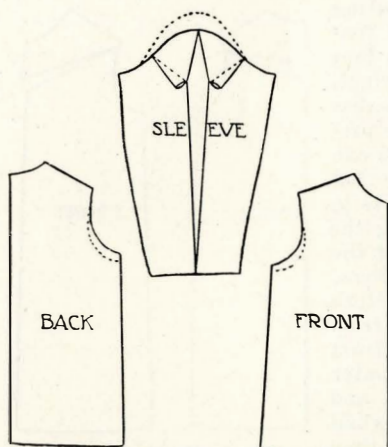


Fig. 9—Sleeve and dress alteration for large upper arm.

Yet it holds the fullness in center back, so that the armseye line can still be in place. Some patterns have made allowance for these. It is however better to put them in before the dress is cut. Measure to find where the tucks should be and then cut after the tucks are in.

Another check to make, is to be certain that the back shoulder line from neck edge to armseye edge is longer than the corresponding edge on the front. The back should be slightly eased on the front in order to make a nice fitting shoulder. This is especially essential for anyone with slightly rounded shoulders.

Laying and pinning the pattern on the material is the next essential to the well fitting dress. Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of

grain in material. Grain refers to the lengthwise and crosswise of the material. There is a great temptation many times to throw a piece off grain ever so slightly in order to prevent piecing. Only trouble is in store when the fitting is done. A sleeve that is off grain never will hang nicely. Makers of commercial patterns fully realize the importance of getting the material correctly cut. Each company has its own system but each one uses some form of marking the straight of the material. Do not disregard it.

Another rule to follow is never cut notches into the material. Notches may be marked with chalk, or tailor's tacks, or the notches may be cut out from the seam, as points. After they are matched these little points may then be cut off. Also the pattern in the materials such as plaids, or large floral patterns, must be matched to make a good looking garment. This matching must be planned before the cutting is done.

Allow plenty on seam lines where fitting will probably be required, and especially if seams are to be pinked as a finish.

Mark all notations which will be necessary later in finishing. Run a basting thread to mark center front and back. It is wise to mark placings for pockets, or other trimmings. This preliminary work will save much time later on.

Cutting the Collar

Collars should be cut to suit the individual. A dress may be made very attractive, or unattractive, just by the neckline. Cut a collar which is becoming and do not depend on the pattern in the package.

Collars really group themselves into one of three types—roll, semi-roll, or flat. The straighter the collar piece the more the collar will roll. When cutting a collar the center back of a collar should either be on the

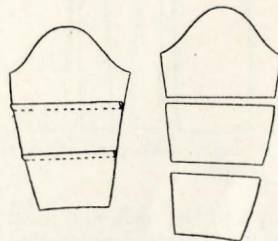


Fig. 10—Sleeves may be shortened or lengthened.

straight of the material or on the true bias. Be certain the shoulders fit perfectly, then shape the neckline of dress as desired. Fold dress on center back line and lay it on straight edge of paper for pattern. In order that the collar will fit more smoothly, the garment should extend about one-fourth inch beyond the edge of the paper. The collar is then slightly stretched as it is put on. Cut around neckline and shape outer edge as desired.

Collars that are made perfectly straight do not fit as well as one that has a slight roll. The collar cut on a true bias at center back also fits smoothly. If double bias collar is used, lower one should be seamed to prevent stretching.

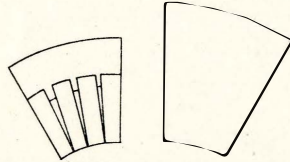


Fig. 11.—Altering a circular skirt in this manner retains all fullness at lower edge.

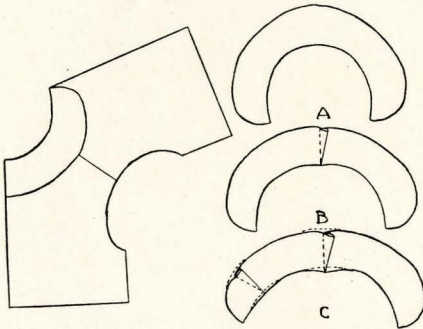


Fig. 12.—Cutting a collar to suit the purpose.
a. Flat collar.
b. Slightly rolled.
c. Rolled collar.

The amount of roll may be varied. When a collar is cut to fit the neckline of the dress it will lie flat. This collar pattern may then be cut apart at center back and lapped over at outer edge keeping the neckline edge the same length, but changing the shape of the collar. The more nearly this pattern approaches the straight line, the more it will roll. When a collar is cut this way the outer edge at the center back must be trued up in shape.

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