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# Making Clothes Fit

Anita Andrews

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# CLOTHING to HEALTH

Extension Circular 303

November, 1930

## *Making Clothes Fit*

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE  
EXTENSION SERVICE  
A. E. Anderson, Director  
Brookings, S. D.



# *Making Clothes Fit*

Anita Andrews

## **Extension Specialist in Clothing**

Well-fitted clothes have a distinctive look which can not be achieved by clothes that do not fit. Even the simplest garment, well fitted, is more attractive than a better one which does not fit.

Fitting must be an individual problem, and in most cases, a garment which is made to fit one individual will not fit another as well as the one for which it was intended. This is one difficulty with ready-made garments. However, many people who approach the average are able to find clothes which require little or no altering. It is not these women who need to watch the fit of their clothes; it is the women who have difficulty who must be especially careful, for an irregularity in figure will only be more pronounced with ill-fitting clothes. These women will probably find it more satisfactory to make or to have their clothes made, for many times alterations on a ready made garment are not satisfactory. Fitting principles, however, are the same for altering a ready-made garment or fitting a garment cut at home.

Probably the most important point in making a good looking well-fitted dress is alteration of the pattern and care in cutting. A dress for which the pattern was altered correctly and which was cut so that the grain of the material falls right should give little or no trouble with fitting. However, some places which can not be checked on the pattern require fitting. Fitting means adjusting the garment until it sets well on the figure.

### **Points of a Well-fitting Garment**

1. Size appears correct, no drawing or wrinkles:
2. Shoulder and underarm seams correctly placed.
3. Sleeves hanging without wrinkles or gathers at cap.
4. Skirt length correct for figure and fashion.

### **Basting in Fitting**

Contrary to the opinion of many, fitting should be done from the right side. A garment which is fitted on the wrong side has the left side fitted to the right of the body. It is, however, necessary to do a little different type of basting when the fitting is done on the right side. One basting stitch to use is known as top basting. Top basting is used especially on shoulder seams and armseyes in fitting. The seam on the back shoulder line is folded under to make a correct line and laid on the front and the basting stitches taken about  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch from the edge. Top basting holds the seams of a garment straight and in well defined lines which insures greater accuracy in fitting.

When a garment is removed, slip basting is used on the seam so that it may be turned to the wrong side and stitched. Slip basting is a slip stitch done along the seam line.

### **Fitting A Garment After the First Basting**

A well-fitted garment allows freedom of movement without being too large and is free from unnecessary wrinkles and folds. Large figures ap-

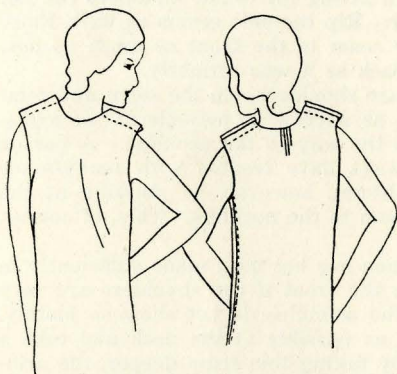


Fig. 1—Wrinkles in the back caused by round shoulders may be taken out by proper fitting.

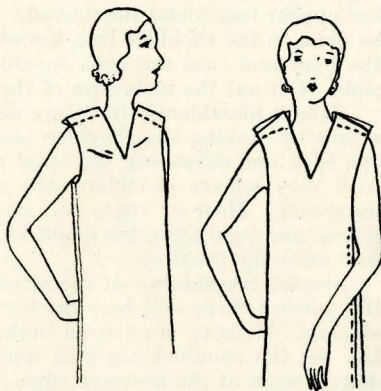


Fig. 2—Square shoulders require deeper seams taken at neckline edge than is allowed on pattern to do away with wrinkles across the front.

pear larger if garments are tight.. It is better to make any garment too loose rather than too snug.

Fitting principles are very dependent on grain. A front or sleeve that has been cut off grain is hard to remedy. In some cases, if it is badly off grain, it cannot successfully be used. In general, the crosswise thread should run straight around the figure at the bust and hips. In a sleeve, the crosswise grain should run straight around the arm at the fullest part. A straight skirt that is joined to a waist should be hemmed on a thread. If, however, the skirt has any gore to it, the lower edge will not be on a thread.

In making the first basting, match notches marked on pattern, unless an alteration has changed these, so they will not fit. It is wise in this basting to baste on the seam allowance. Baste the garment together, but do not set in sleeves until after first fitting. In the fitting, check placement of shoulder line, side seam, armseye line and width.

### Shoulder Line

Placement of the shoulder seam is very important. It should be a straight line from the highest part at the neck to one-half an inch back of the highest point on the tip of the shoulder. The seam in this position is not visible from either the front or the back when the garment is worn. The armseye seam should come just at the highest point on the shoulder. If the shoulder is too long, it makes the figure appear wide and makes the garment look too large. A ready-made garment with wide shoulders may be altered by ripping the seam and taking up extra fullness in front by small tucks on the shoulder seam. Tucks may also be taken in center back and the neck reshaped. Much more serious is the problem when the shoulders are too narrow. There is very little that can be done after a garment has been cut. The alteration should have been made in the pattern.

**Round Shoulders.**—The woman with rounded shoulders should place the shoulder line a little back of the normal position. This tends to make



her appear less round shouldered. All fitting for round shoulders can not be done on the shoulder line, however. Rip the side seams as well. Raise the back and ease the back shoulder seam to the front as much as possible. Cut out the underarm of the back as it was formerly.

**Square Shoulders.**—In fitting square shoulders, rip the seam and commence by making the shoulder seam as narrow as possible at the arms-eye edge and deepening the seam all the way to the neckline. A person with very square shoulders will always have trouble with ready-made garments. Most of them can be altered, however, by starting at the sleeve, and increasing the depth of seam to the neckline. This, of course, will raise the neckline.

**Sloping Shoulders.**—If the alteration has not been made sufficiently in the pattern there will be wrinkles in the front if the shoulders are very sloping. If there is an open neck, the wrinkles do not show so plainly. Let out the shoulder seam as much as possible at the neck and take a deeper seam at the armseye edge. By taking this seam deeper, the armhole will be made smaller. It should be snipped at right angles to the edge at underarm until former size is obtained. This problem is more difficult to remedy in ready-made garments. It necessitates removing the sleeve and taking a deeper seam on the shoulder line at the armseye edge and letting the seam out as much as possible at the neckline edge. The armseye will then have to be enlarged.

### The Underarm Seam

The position of the underarm seam is important to the fit as well as the appearance of the dress. The seam should fall straight to the floor from the under arm.

In fitting on the underarm seam sometimes it is necessary to take a deeper seam on either the front or back in order to make a straight line. The figure with a protruding abdomen will find that the side seams are often swung to the front and the skirt hangs shorter in front. This may be remedied by a dart taken below the waist line on the seam line and extending both to the front and back. It should be taken up until the skirt hangs straight.

### Fitting The Bust

Fitting the figure with a large bust when sufficient alteration was not made in the pattern requires some darts and possibly a little recutting. There will be wrinkles below the bust which must be removed. If the pattern has allowed for a shoulder dart, but no underarm dart, rip the underarm and shoulder seam and baste in a dart at the bust

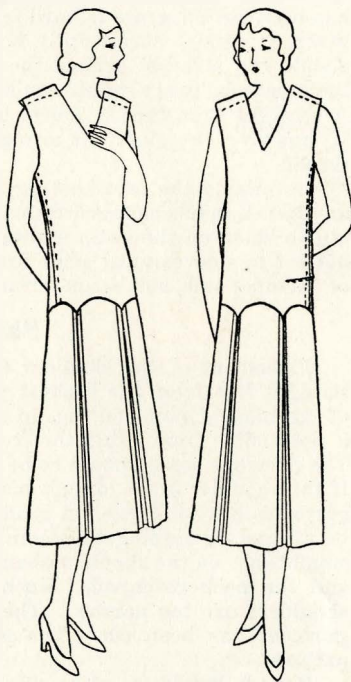


Fig. 3—Alteration for protruding abdomen.

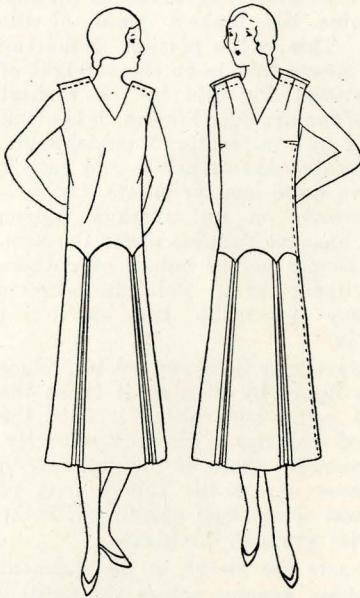


Fig. 4—A garment for the figure with a full bust requires darts to make it lie smoothly.

line. Taper this out to nothing. The back will then be too long and will require recutting. Lower pattern on back the same distance as the width of the dart and recut.

If the garment had allowed for dart at bust line, another dart may be taken, or the former one made deeper until the garment hangs free from wrinkles.

There will also be wrinkles in a garment that is cut for an average bust if the figure is flatter than the average. The dress appears to hug in below the bust. If there is a dart at bust line, let it out, entirely if necessary and cut off extra length on lower edge. If there is one on the shoulder seam, let it out until the garment hangs smoothly. Keep the original dart line, letting the surplus material extend towards the armseye edge. The armseye will then need recutting to restore original shape.

### The Armseye

The armseye is the next important point to check in fitting a garment. The armseye line for a fitted sleeve should drop practically straight from the shoulder seam or when viewed from the front, the two lines should be parallel. The armseye lines in back should also be parallel.

An armseye should never bind. Different types of sleeves require different shaped and sized armseyes. The shoulder for a shirt sleeve may be wider, extending slightly beyond the tip of the shoulder. The sleeve is wider and does not fit like a fitted sleeve. To make an armseye larger, snip the under arm edge at right angles, taking care not to cut too deep. Sometimes the shoulder or underarm seam may be let out to give sufficient room.

If the armseye is too large this can usually be remedied by taking deeper seams on both the shoulder and underarm seams. If the armseye has been cut in the back so that the line is curved instead of straight, there is no remedy unless the length of the garment will permit it to be raised and recut.

### Setting In A Sleeve

No sleeve should be put in unless the armseye has been checked to see that the seam will drop almost straight in front and back from the shoulder line. Matching the notches of a commercial pattern in setting in sleeves is not always successful. If any alteration in garment or sleeve has been made, marks cannot be followed. A few principles hold for placing any sleeve.

Most sleeves of dresses now will fall so that the seam in the sleeve meets



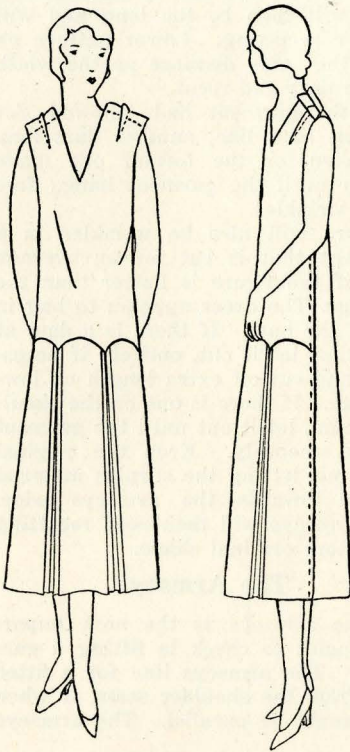


Fig. 5—Alteration for the flat bust may require slight recutting but the figure appears more normal.

the underarm seam. The back of the sleeve will be the longest side of the cap. Determine the highest point of the sleeve. This is the portion of the cap of the sleeve that is on the straight of the material. Pin this to the highest point of the armseye line which is about one-half inch in front of shoulder seam. Then locate quarter points and ease it in above these quarter points. A well-fitted sleeve on an average person should have no fullness under the arm. There should not be bulges or gathers in the upper arm. This fullness is necessary to make the sleeve fit smoothly.

A sleeve may be easily set into place on the figure by pinning it in at the highest point, and raising it until the grain of material is running correctly. The crosswise grain of the material in the sleeve across the fullest part of upperarm should run parallel with the crosswise grain in the blouse.

To baste the sleeve in the garment after these quarter points are located, work on the wrong side of the garment. Pin in the sleeve putting in pins at right angles to the sleeve edge. The sleeve side of the seam should be held toward the worker as the sleeve is basted in. This will allow the worker to move the fullness into place with the thumb and finger of the left hand.

A well-fitted sleeve will allow freedom of movement so that it is possible to place either hand on the opposite shoulder without discomfort.

#### Some faults which may occur:

1. If the sleeve is too short in the cap, wrinkles will result. This may be remedied by recutting sleeve, making cap slightly longer providing the sleeve is still wide enough.
2. If the cap is too narrow, the sleeve will draw across the arm. The sleeve should be at least two inches wider than the arm to give comfort.
3. If the fullness for the elbow is not correctly placed, the sleeve will draw. Place fullness so that the elbow will fall into it.

#### Neckline and Collar

A collar cut by the pattern will not fit the neckline of a dress which has had any alteration on the shoulder line. If the back of the dress has been raised the neckline will no doubt be too high and will draw. The correct line should be determined and marked with a row of pins and

then the edges clipped down to this mark. If any great change was made, it is advisable to recut the neckline by the pattern.

It is usually best not to cut the collar until all alterations on the garment have been made. If the neckline was recut by the pattern, the original collar should fit. In case a collar of different style is desired and is to be cut for a dress that has been altered, use dress for neckline shape, instead of pattern in cutting inside line of collar. This will then take care of any alteration made. If the collar is plain, it may be possible to place it to the neck and cut off any extra length at the lower end.

### Hanging the Skirt

The skirt can not be hung until the dress is about complete. Sleeves should be in, and all seams well pressed. It is more difficult to hang a skirt by oneself, but it may be done quite successfully. There is a handy little device which marks a line on the dress for you, or a row of pins may be put in at the level of a table, and the length of the skirt measured from there. If the garment is cut to have the lower edge on the grain of the material, first decide upon the length desired, see that the edge is turned on a thread, and if the length is uneven, correct it by raising or lowering at the dart on the hip, under the arm, or at the shoulder. If the underarm seam is gored at all, the line of the hem would not be on a thread of the material; therefore it could be corrected at the lower edge.

For seam and hem finishes see South Dakota Circular No. 297, Successful Finishes.

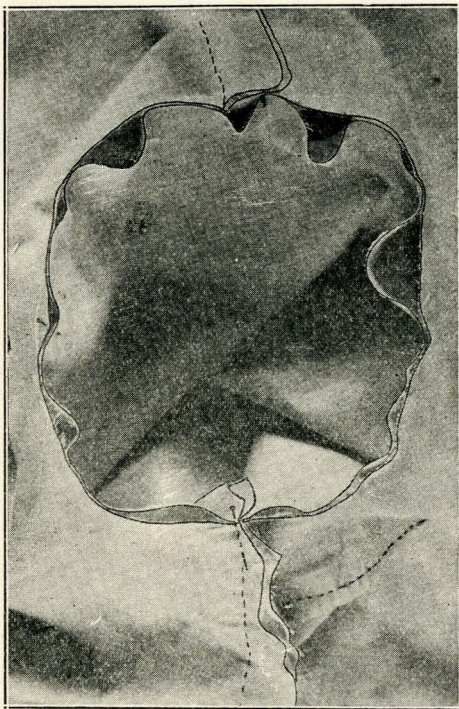


Fig. 6—Sleeve pinned into armhole at the quarter points showing the relative lengths of the two edges.—U. S. Bureau of Home Economics.



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