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MODERN HOME SEWING
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Never before in the history of fabrics has there been such an array of exciting materials to tempt the home sewer to try her skill in clothing construction. Old friends in the textile field are taking on new finishes and new fibers have entered into the fabric picture—all calling for new knowledge in their handling during construction.

In addition to this abundance of textile material from which to choose, there is the splendid selection of good patterns, notions, and sewing equipment which is available today.

A new style consciousness has swept the country and the modern home sewer is no longer satisfied just to make clothes, but the clothes which she makes must come up to the fashion standards of the best ready-to-wear which she sees in magazines, movies, television, and in store windows.

Since she sews to produce a garment which is stylish and smart, the time spent in sewing at home, in spite of the lovely fabric and good pattern, is lost if the goal is not attained. The ultimate in joy of achievement is reached when the question “Where in the world did you find such a smart outfit?” takes the place of “I see you made it yourself!” (It surely looks like it!)

This circular will attempt to set forth some of the ways in which this goal may be reached.

**Pattern Chosen Should Fit the Fabric**

Probably one of the first things for the home sewer, who seeks the professional look, to consider is the fabric and its relation to the pattern. Fabrics should not be asked to do the impossible. To ask a stiff fabric to fall in soft folds is as ridiculous as to ask a soft flowing fabric to produce a crisp “stand-out” look. So, to become conscious of fabric in its relation to style and details of construction in the pattern is the first step toward a professional looking garment.

Some fabrics ravel readily, pucker easily, or tear easily and are characterized by thread slippage tendencies. For these fabrics, the wise home sewer will choose a pattern which has the majority of the long seams cut on the partial bias. Some examples of this kind of fabric are: voiles treated for crease resistance, and some sheer, crisp fabrics made from nylon, Orlon, and Dacron.

Some fabrics do not lend themselves to certain details of construction such as pointed collars, underarm gussets, and other such details where successful construction calls for closely clipped corners. Sheer, loosely woven, crisp fabrics such as cotton voile, Orlon, nylon, or Dacron sheers are examples of these fabrics. In contrast to these materials, crisp, closely woven fabrics which ravel very little can be clipped close to the stitching at collar points with no danger of raveling.

These are only two examples of where the choice of the pattern influences the success the home sewer will have in interpreting the pattern to produce a professional looking garment. The alert sewer should always think about fabric in relation to pattern as she shops.
Fundamentals of Clothing Construction

Before considering the special problems in home construction which are presented by the new fabrics, a modern home sewer may want to review the fundamental principles which apply regardless of the fabric chosen.

Prepare the Fabric for Cutting

Many problems which arise during the sewing of a garment are caused by poor preparation of the fabric before cutting. Cloth is woven with warp and filling threads at right angles to each other. Patterns are marked with arrows or perforations which indicate the position of the pattern in relation to the crosswise or lengthwise thread of the fabric. It is easy to see then, that the cloth must be straight before the pattern can be placed accurately.

Cut along a pulled thread to straighten materials which cannot be torn.

To check the fabric for straightness of thread (grain), do the following: (1.) See if the ends are straight with the thread. They may be torn in some fabrics or in some, which do not tear easily, a crosswise thread may be pulled for a guide for cutting. (Illustration) (2.) Fold the two selvages together and, if the cloth is straight, the torn ends should fall together evenly and the selvage and ends should form a perfect right angle. (Illustration)

The fabric is straightened across the ends, basted and rolled in a towel after soaking in water. When removed from the towel it can be straightened because original pressing in gone.

Often the fabric comes from the bolt off grain because it has been pressed crooked in finishing. In this case, it is the home sewer's responsibility to correct this situation before the pattern is placed for cutting. This may be done in a number of ways depending upon the fabric.

For washable fabrics the easiest and most satisfactory method is to place the piece of material (which has been cut or torn with the thread) into some warm water. Leave it in the water long enough for it to be thoroughly soaked. Remove it from the water and roll it in a large towel or old sheet. (Illustration) Do not put the fabric through a wringer as this will cause wrinkles which will have to be pressed out. When the material is still damp, remove it from the towel and lay flat on a table, folded with the right sides in and with ends pinned or basted together. Selvages and ends should make a perfect right angle with each other. Ironing with the thread to keep the fabric straight or smoothing with the hands while drying will put the fabric in a good condition for cutting.
This is a method of straightening wool fabric before cutting

Wool fabrics and other fabrics which are not washable may be straightened as follows:

1. Straighten the cut ends by tearing or pulling a thread for a guide in cutting.
2. Fold the fabric lengthwise and baste stitch the straightened ends together. This may be done with a long machine stitch.
3. Wet a sheet thoroughly, then run it through a loose wringer to remove excess water.
4. Place a wet sheet on the fabric about eight inches from the end. (See Illustration)
5. Fold the fabric over the end of the sheet and fold or roll sheet and fabric together to the end. (See Illustration)
6. Cover with wrapping paper or a Turkish towel and let stand until the moisture from the sheet has penetrated into the fabric. The wool will feel cool, but not wet.
7. Check the grain lines and smooth out on a flat surface. Pat the fabric with the hands until it is grain perfect. Pressing with an iron will not be necessary.

Fabric is now straight and ready for cutting.

Place Pattern Accurately

The next step toward the creation of a professional looking garment is to place the pattern on the fabric with accuracy. Margins on printed patterns should be trimmed off. Use a ruler or a tape measure and see that each hole or each part of the line which indicates the straight of the material is the same distance from the selvage. (See Illustration) As each piece is placed, it should be pinned first on this line, then smoothed out and pinned at the corners and at close enough intervals around the pattern to hold the pattern firmly on the fabric. (Illustration) Pins placed at right angles to the cutting edge will hold the pattern more securely and

Measure from the selvage to straight of the material line on pattern before pinning the pattern in place.

Notice that the pins are placed at right angles to the seam line with heads toward the inside.
prevent tearing of the pattern. Some materials which have a tendency to creep will require more pins than firmer materials.

**Cut With Care**

Patterns are made accurately to size and generally with a stated seam allowance of ⅛ to ⅜ inch. The pattern envelope will tell what this seam allowance is and each piece of pattern is marked with the seam allowance. Cut with care using sharp shears. If the left hand is placed on the fabric when cutting, it is easier for you to cut close to the material. Cut with long even strokes without lifting except where the shears are cutting. (See Illustration) Never use pinking shears for cutting out because they do not make for accuracy in cutting.

Notches cut out, instead of in, do not weaken seamlines. A hand placed firmly on the fabric makes cutting easier and more accurate.

It is easier to cut a smooth straight line, if the cutting is done from the wide to the narrow end of the pattern, i.e., from hem to the waistline; from neckline to armhole, etc.

Notches which indicate the position of pieces of the pattern in relation to each other need to be marked as the pieces are cut. If the pattern pieces are far enough apart to permit it, these notches should be cut out from the edge. (See Illustration) If space does not permit this method, each notch should be marked with thread, chalk, or carbon. Never cut notches into the seam line to weaken it.

Mark all perforations which indicate the position of darts, tucks, pleats, buttonholes, etc. as needed. This marking may be done with chalk, white manicure pencil, thread, or dressmaker’s tracing paper. Dressmaker’s carbon is an especially prepared carbon which may be found on most notion counters. It is useful when marking smooth washable fabrics. If the material is folded with the wrong side out for cutting, one piece of carbon may be placed under the pattern carbon-side down and the other under the material carbon-side up. A tracing wheel or pencil and ruler may be used. (See Illustration)
Sew With Skill

A great deal has been said about the importance of careful cutting with the grain line of the fabric in mind at all times. If the pieces of the garment are not handled properly as they are put together, the time spent in cutting accurately will be lost if the pieces are allowed to stretch and spread. The more loosely woven fabrics will have a greater tendency to stretch in handling. Notice how much larger the cut fabric piece is than the paper pattern as the piece of pattern is taken off. A row of machine stitching through the single thickness of fabric about \(\frac{3}{8}\) inch from the off grain cut edges will put the cut pieces back to the size of the pattern and will hold the crosswise and lengthwise threads in the right position.

Find the direction for this line of stitching (stay-stitching) by running the finger along the cut edge and observe if the edge is stretched or held in place. (See Illustration) The illustrations show the direction for stay-stitching the edges in blouse and skirt pieces. Notice that the skirt need only be stay-stitched from the hipline to the waistline and at the waistline.

Pieces of the garment may be held together either with pins or thread for stitching. The method which is used will depend upon the fabric and the place on the garment. Some details can be basted with thread more successfully than with pins. With the flexible presser foot found on most machines, it is possible to sew over pins.
Arrows in the illustration show directions for stitching seams to keep the grain of the material in perfect condition.

placed at right angles to the seam line. The notches should be matched and pinned first, then the two ends. If the garment has been cut out accurately, any excess material is ease. For example: This will show up when pinning shoulder seams. Ordinarily the back seam is longer than the front seam so should be eased to the front. This gives an easy fit to the shoulder line. Follow the instruction sheet in the pattern envelope for the order of sewing the parts of the garment.

Sew with the grain of the material in mind and follow the "wide to narrow" rule, i.e., from the hemline to the waistline, from the neckline to the armhole, from the underarm to the waistline. Use the cloth guide on the machine for accuracy and ease in stitching. (See Illustration)

If the pieces of the garment are handled as little as possible during the construction, the finished garment will be crisp and fresh looking when it is finished.

Sewing New Fabrics and Finishes

After this brief review of the fundamentals of good clothing construction, regardless of the fabric used, let us consider the special problems created by less familiar fabrics and finishes.

1. Cutting Problems.
   Fabrics woven of man-made fibers call for sharper shears for cutting. Weights should be used instead of pins or needles in placing the pattern when laying out plastic film and artificial leather materials used for jackets and raincoats.
   In sheerest man-made fabrics less puckering of seams will result if the pattern chosen is one which can be placed on
Use tailors tacks on fabrics not suitable for tracing paper, such as rough textured or sheer materials

the fabric where most of the seams are on the partial bias of the fabric.

Plastic and leather-like materials should be marked with pencil. Never use tailor’s tacks or tracing wheel on plastics. Tailor’s tacks with fine thread are most satisfactory for fabrics which cannot be marked with carbon. (See Illustration)

Use fine, sharp pins or needles to avoid fiber breakage and puckering. Use paper clips to hold sections of plastic or leather-like materials together.

4. Stitching Problems.
It is in the stitching of many of the new materials that the average home sewer experiences trouble. Because the different fibers vary in weight, thickness, and elasticity, it is important to know your fabric. Ask the sales person and read the label or description in the catalogue. Experiment on a sample to find the best stitch length, tension, needle size, and kind of thread. The following stitching guides may prove helpful:

**Needle Sizes.** Most of the fabrics woven from man-made fibers call for smaller needle sizes. Use 9 or 11 needles. Size 9 is better for sheer, closely woven fabrics. Size 11 for heavier, bulkier fabrics. Be sure that the machine needle is smooth and sharp—a rough needle will pull threads.

**Thread.** Size “A” nylon thread, Dacron thread, or Size “A” silk thread. Nylon or Dacron thread will dry at the same speed as the man-made fabric in the garment. On seams where there is very little strain, cotton thread size 100 gives good results on very sheer fabrics.

**Stitch Length.** For most of the woven fabrics made from the man-made fibers, shorter stitches will make better looking, stronger seams. Eighteen to twenty stitches to the inch seem to give the best results for the sheer, closely woven fabrics. Fourteen to sixteen stitches to the inch may be used for the less sheer fabrics.


**Tensions.** The above illustration shows the location of the adjusting screws for the lower tension on four types of bobbins. When nylon thread is used, the tensions, both top and bottom, should be as loose as they can be and still produce a good looking line of stitching. Do not be afraid to adjust this lower tension! Silk thread requires a little tighter tension than nylon. Dacron thread may be used with about the same tension as for mercerized cotton thread.

Taffetized or everglaze and embossed cottons call for a loose tension so that
the tight stitching line will not cut the crisp paper-like finish. Rayon and acetates may be stitched with a regular tension. Most Acrilans, Orlons, Dacrons, nypons, plastics, and knit fabrics call for loose tensions, both top and bottom. Be sure that the drag on both top and bottom thread is the same so that the line of stitching will be balanced.

Winding Bobbins. Since there must be no tension on the nylon thread when it is wound on the bobbin, the thread may just rest on the top of the tension discs rather than into the hooks used regularly when winding the bobbin or it may also be wound by hand. Dacron, silk, and mercerized thread may be wound on the bobbin in the usual way.

If the fabric is stretched slightly with one hand behind the presser foot and the other hand in front of the foot as the material feeds under the foot, the seam in many of the man-made fabrics is less apt to pucker. The slightly stretched fabric springs back into place when the seam is pressed. (See Illustration.)

Machine Speed. When using nylon, Dacron or silk thread, the machine should be run at a moderate rate of speed. It will be hard to keep the machine threaded and the spool will spin when using these threads, if the machine is run too fast.

A pad of felt placed under the spool will be helpful in preventing the spool from spinning. These pads may be purchased at stores where sewing machines are sold.

Fastening Threads. All seams should be back tacked or overstitched when sewing with nylon, silk, and Dacron thread. These threads have a greater tendency to rip out at the ends and often knots do not stay tied.

If darts are stitched from the small end with a continuous thread, there will be no knot to tie. Pull the bobbin thread out and thread it through the needle from the wrong side. Knot this thread to the top thread and wind it on the spool. Enough thread to stitch the dart should come from the bobbin. (See Illustration) When this method is used, be sure that the dart is well basted and pressed before stitching as this is actu-
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ally the wrong direction for stitching—wide to narrow is the rule. This method is justified in the case of a short dart in a sheer fabric where a knot would be too conspicuous or where it might come untied.

**Seam Finishes.** Seam finishes will vary with the fabric and the place on the garment. On many of the new fabrics, where there is a tendency toward raveling, wider seams are recommended. Edges finished by edge-stitching, zigzag stitching, or edges turned under and stitched are some methods used.

Some fabrics may be fused with a flame to prevent raveling. This is a hazardous method and great care must be used to prevent burning the garment.

**Hints for Sewing New Fabrics**

*Work buttonholes in sheer fabrics by machine.

*Use the lighter weight zippers in sheer fabrics.

*Press during construction with a damp press cloth and iron set for nylon or rayon.

*A steam iron may be used—a thin press cloth over the seams to be pressed is advised.

*If ripping is necessary, cut thread at close intervals. Do not pull and snap the thread as in many cases this will pucker and spread the threads in the fabric.

*It is best not to have to change a seam line after it has been pressed. Sharp creases are often hard to press out.

*Knit fabrics such as tricot and jersey use about fourteen stitches per inch and a looser tension both top and bottom so that the stitching line has the same elasticity as the fabric.

*Many of the new fabrics have a tendency to slide off the table of the machine. A piece of Turkish toweling (terry cloth) made into a case and slipped over the leaf will give a rough surface which will keep the fabric from slipping.