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Pressing Fabrics

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FS 597

Pressing Fabrics

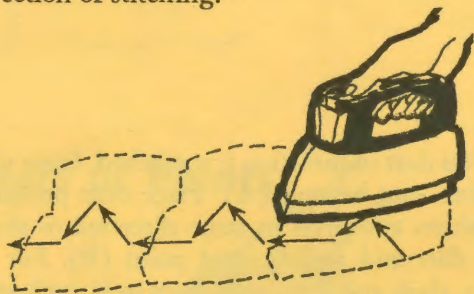


Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Pressing Fabrics

By Elizabeth K. Easton, Extension clothing specialist

To press means to smooth or flatten fabric, usually with steam. Pressing is not ironing. Pressing is lifting and lowering the iron, not pushing from one spot to another. Be sure to follow the grain of fabric and direction of stitching.



There are two kinds of pressing: Pressing as you sew, and pressing garments in your wardrobe.

Pressing as You Sew

Good pressing methods are just as important as good cutting, stitching and fitting. Underpressing is pressing as you construct a garment. Top pressing smooths the finished garment.

To Underpress

- Press each construction detail.
- Press seam before crossing with another seam.
- Shape curved areas to fit rounded parts of the body.
- Sharpen and flatten crease lines and edges.

To Top Press

- Make it the last step in finishing a garment.
- Press on right side only—use press cloth for most fabrics.

Pressing Garments in Your Wardrobe

This kind of pressing is similar to top pressing. Be sure the garment is free from spots and stains and, if wool, is brushed thoroughly.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Whether you are pressing as you sew or pressing a finished garment, consider:

1. Heat Sensitivity

Always press according to the fiber or fibers in fabric. Fibers may be natural, manmade, or a blend. The amount of heat and moisture needed varies with each fiber. If in doubt, test a seam edge or other hidden area.

All manmade fibers are heat sensitive, so use medium to low heat. When two or more fibers are present, set the iron according to the most sensitive fiber. Many fibers require press cloths for top pressing.

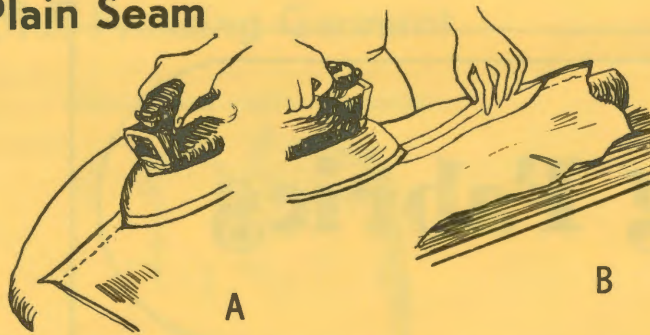
2. Pressure Needed

Always keep weight of the iron in your hand and apply only the needed amount of pressure. Press mainly with tip of iron. The amount of heat and moisture and need for a press cloth also depend on the fabric.

3. Use of a Press Cloth

Your choice and use of a press cloth also depend on the fabric and how the garment is made. Some fabrics need to be pressed until they are dry. **Never press wool completely dry.**

Plain Seam



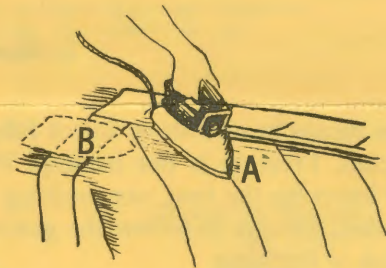
Once you master pressing straight plain seams, other pressing is easier. Before opening a seam, press its two edges together as stitched (A). This helps flatten seam and works stitching thread into fabric.

Press seam open over seam roll (B). With curved seams, such as hipline, use rounded end of board to open. Press over pressing cushion or ham to mold curved area. Beater may be used gently to help flatten seams in some fabrics (see under "Edges and Creases").

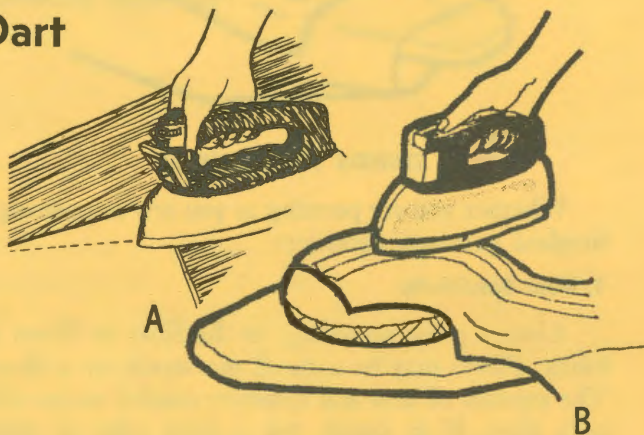
Fabric Grain

Press with grain of fabric (A). Pressing on cross-wise grain or bias may lead to problems in garment fit and appearance.

Press hem as illustrated (B).



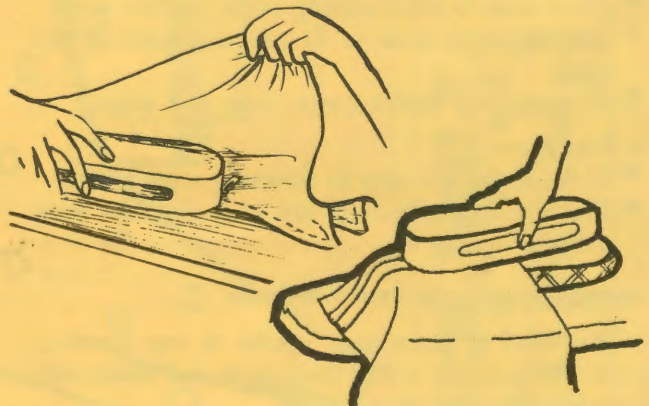
Dart



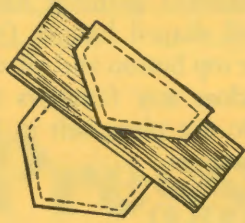
Press dart in direction it is stitched, from wide end to point—not beyond (A). Place over pressing ham or cushion and press in same direction to shape and mold dart and area beyond point (B). For bulkier fabrics, slash and trim wide darts to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and press flat to the point as in a plain seam.

Edges and Creases

Use a beater to sharpen edges and creases on lapels, pleats, etc. with wool and other difficult-to-crease fabrics. Working on a small area at a time, steam press, remove press cloth, and immediately slap the fabric with beater. This forces steam through fabric, leaving flat thin edges and creases.



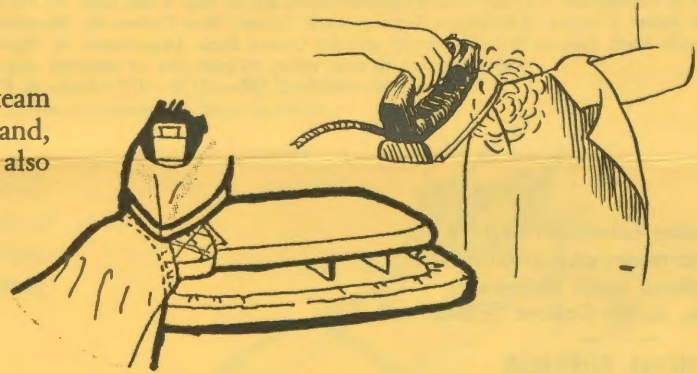
Pocket Flap



Wrapping paper, paper toweling or lightweight cardboard will avoid marking pocket flaps, facings, seams, darts, etc. in pressing right side of garment. Tissue paper is best for lightweight fabrics.

Molding Sleeve Cap Area

Place sleeve cap area over pressing mitt and steam without touching iron to fabric. Using palm of hand, mold. A damp press cloth held around dry iron also produces steam.



Corners or Points

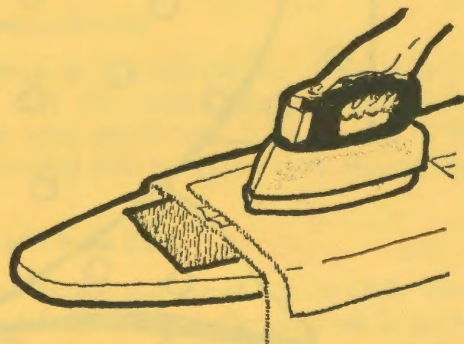


Corners or points can be pressed in many ways. If the corner is at a finished edge, lay the wrong side over a point presser or seam roll. Always open the seam with the tip of the iron.

Textured Fabrics

Textured fabrics require special treatment to protect their surface effects. Press face down into a towel or piece of self fabric for best results.

Pile fabrics such as velvet require a very light touch! A needle board or several thicknesses of toweling should be used. Place the pile side down, cover with a press cloth, and allow steam to penetrate the fabric without applying more pressure.



After Pressing Garment



After finished garment has been pressed, place it on a well shaped hanger (wooden or padded is best). Close top button and all zippers. Depending on garment, close any fasteners that will keep grain straight. Do not place belt in loops, but hang from buckle on hanger.

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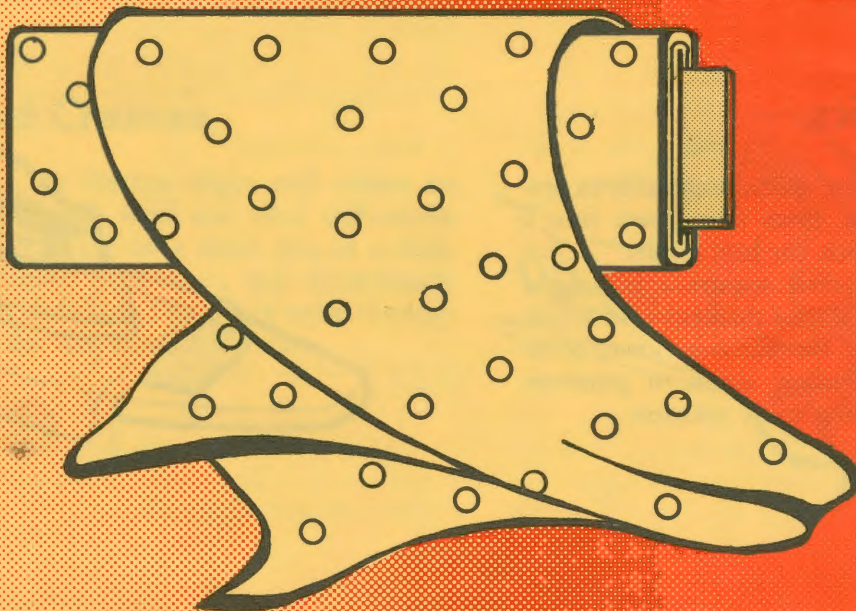
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