

Dressmaking for Beginners

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A young artist starting out to paint from nature generally tries to take in the whole landscape instead of studying a bit at a time, and the result is usually disappointment.

Dressmaking is an art, and if we try to grasp the whole subject at once, the result will be disappointment, too.

To sit down and attempt to make a whole dress without some previous knowledge of sewing is too difficult a task for the average mortal, but since it is innate in every woman to desire to look well, the average woman can, if she so desires, learn to make her own dresses and dress successfully, provided she starts out along the right road. If she does, the first point she will come to along this road will be absolute cleanliness. There is no excuse for passing this by, for it is within the reach of every one. The woman whose garments are spotless feels so, and this gives confidence and dignity to her manner.

The next point we come to is correct carriage. We all admire the woman who carries herself well; this adds much to the appearance of her dress. Walking is splendid physical exercise, but it should be correct walking, and correct walking is graceful walking. The gymnasium is doing much to help in this direction.

The next point we come to is good taste, and here we might rest awhile and study the women who always choose good styles both in material and in design, and leave the conspicuous and the vulgar alone. Good taste will cover a multitude of deficiencies and is the friend of all, especially of the woman who must count her pennies. With this as an asset, she can make a little go a long way, for it is not so much the cost of material as the way it is made and worn that makes it attractive.

Another important point along this road is habit. Why is it that some women are always spotless, while others in just the same circumstances and doing the very same work are always spotty? The former have formed the habit of cleanliness, the latter have not.

It is the things we seldom do that we find hard to do. Habit makes things easy, so if we would always appear well-dressed, we will form the habit of cleanliness, the habit of walking correctly, and try to cultivate good taste by using our eyes, our brains, the shop windows (when we can), also the magazine articles, and the ability to dress well will come to us.

The Correct Thing

Whether it is because of the high cost of living or the inability to secure competent help, or both, it is now the correct thing for a girl to know how to make her own dresses. The girl who boasts today that she does not know anything about sewing is a back number. The city girl is having an opportunity to learn how to make her own dresses in school, but to the girl who has not this opportunity, I should like to give a few simple directions as to how she might make a beginning. Presuming you have had some experience in making simple undergarments, which is essential for the sake of becoming familiar with patterns and the handling of materials before attempting the making of a dress, which will never look well or give pleasure to the wearer if the work is belabored—we will begin with the use of the commercial pattern in dressmaking.

This question is often asked: Which of the commercial patterns do you consider best? The answer I usually give is this: They are all good, provided you have taken correct measurements and follow implicitly the directions that are given with the pattern. One cannot always get the style one wants from one firm, and so must obtain it from different firms at different times. The beginner is so eager to see what the pattern looks like that she is apt to take it out of the envelope before reading the directions, and straightway becomes bewildered because of the number and strangeness of the pieces. If, then, before removing the pattern from the envelope, one would read carefully the directions, observing the chart that usually accompanies the pattern, until familiar with the shape of

the pieces and understanding what every notch and perforation stand for, the problem of using a pattern would be simplified.

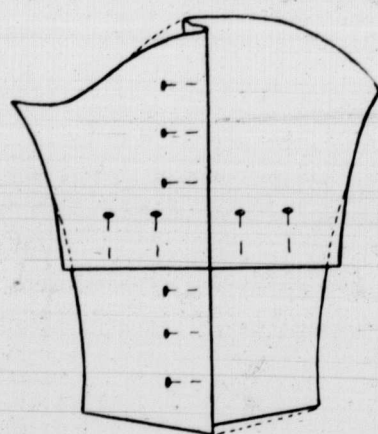
Adapting the Pattern

Patterns are made to fit the normal figure and are sold according to bust, waist and hip measures, but not to

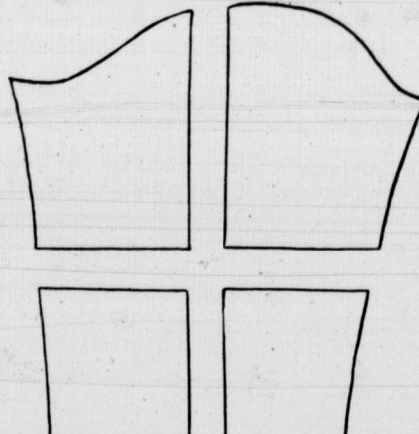
If the skirt pattern is too long, make a pleat in the pattern twelve inches below the waist line in each gore large enough to make it the correct length. The alterations are made here so as not to alter the outlines of the pattern.

Shrinkage

If much alteration has been made, it



TO MAKE THE SLEEVE SHORTER AND NARROWER



TO MAKE THE SLEEVE LONGER AND WIDER

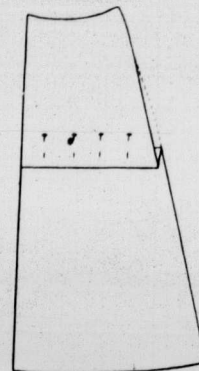
length measures. Now one may have a waist measuring twenty-four inches and a skirt thirty-six inches, while another may have a waist measuring twenty-four inches and a skirt forty or forty-two inches. You can readily see how cloth would be wasted if the skirt patterns which are usually forty-two inches were not changed before the skirt was cut for one

whose skirt length is thirty-six inches. This also applies to length of waist and sleeve. To test the pattern, which, by the way, we will suppose is for a shirt waist and a two-piece skirt, which is the simplest kind of a dress for a beginner to make, take the measurements of the person to be fitted, and compare these with the length measurements of the pattern. The proportions of waist, sleeve and skirt may be easily changed to suit the figure. To change the front or back portions of a shirt waist, tie a tape around the neck and one around the waist line. Measure from the bottom of the tape at the neck to the bottom of the tape at the waist, and under the arms to the tape at waist line. If the pattern meas-

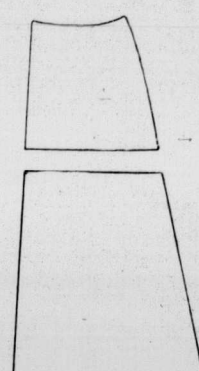
would be well for a beginner to cut the dress from some cheap cotton material and try it on before cutting the material from which the dress is to be made. The latter should be tested for shrinkage before it is cut.

There are several ways of shrinking cloth. Some cottons may be shrunk by simply soaking in warm water and hanging out to dry, while other cottons shrink more and must be thoroughly washed until all the dressing has been removed.

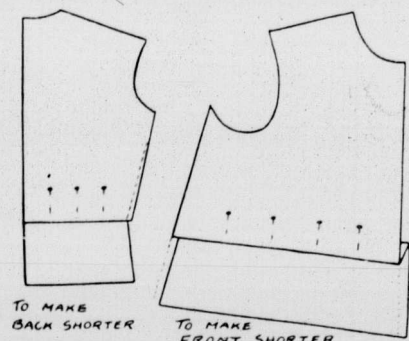
Woolen cloth may be tested for shrinkage and spotting by placing a wet cloth over a small portion of the material and pressing it lightly with a hot iron just enough to let the steam pass thru. If, when it is dry, a mark is left, the whole piece should be sponged. One method of shrinking or sponging woollens is to soak them in a pail of water and hang them out immediately on the line to dry without wringing. If plenty of clothes pins are used, little or no pressing will be required. If they are wrung out, creases are left that are very hard to remove in pressing and should be pressed before the cloth is quite dry.



TO MAKE THE SKIRT SHORTER

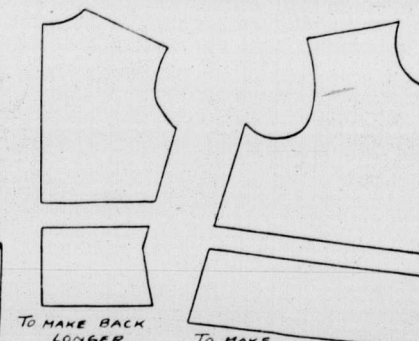


TO MAKE THE SKIRT LONGER



TO MAKE BACK SHORTER

TO MAKE FRONT SHORTER



TO MAKE BACK LONGER

TO MAKE FRONT LONGER

ures are longer than those of the person to be fitted, make a fold in the pattern two and a half inches above the waist line large enough to make the measurements equal, and make the fold straight with the waist line. If the pattern is too short, it may be lengthened by cutting it across two and a half inches above the waist line and separating it until it is the required length.

Another method is to spread the cloth out on the table, wring a piece of cotton, the size of the cloth, out of water, spread this over the cloth, have a board the width of the cloth, and roll the cloth around it firmly and smoothly, and place all away over night. The next morning the dampness will have penetrated the cloth, which should then be hung out on the line to dry. If the directions have

been carefully followed, it should not require much pressing. A third method, and one that is useful if one is in a hurry to use the cloth, but which requires much more hard work than the former method, is to spread the cloth on the table, right side up, place a wet cotton cloth on top of this and rub it over quickly and lightly with a hot iron. Remove the cotton and if there are no spots, turn the cloth over and iron on the wrong side until dry.

When cloth has been properly sponged there is no fear of shrinkage, and water may be used in pressing without any fear of spotting. Heavy cloth cannot be properly pressed without the use of water.

The Right Way

Now that the cloth and pattern are ready, place the cloth on the table, examine it carefully. If it has a nap or pile, the pattern should be so placed that the nap runs downward in each piece, except in velvet; in this, the pile should run upward. If the design is a flower, it should appear to grow upward. If a check, it must be so cut that it will match and form a straight line around the figure. If the design is a stripe, there should be one in the centre front and one in the centre back.

You may know the right from the wrong side of serge by the twill which, on the right side, always runs upwards towards the right hand when you hold the cloth straight in front of you. In plain cloths it is important that the threads should be perfectly even. In finishing cloth the threads are often twisted in the process of pressing. They should be pulled straight before the pattern is placed on. A garment will look almost as badly when the threads are not straight as it would if the pattern were not matched. It also affects the fit of the garment, sometimes causing it to go crooked when it has been worn awhile.

We now come to the placing of the patterns on the cloth. If the material is plain the cloth may be cut double, as this saves time, and if the two right sides are placed together, there will be no mistake made by having two pieces cut for one side, as sometimes happens when the cloth is cut singly. It is also wiser for a beginner to use plain material in making her first dress as there are so many other points to get hold of.

You are supposed to have read and now understand every part of the pattern and how it should be placed on the cloth. Be sure you remember to place those three perforations in the pattern intended to run parallel with the threads in the cloth exactly in that direction, and always begin by placing the wide end of the gore to the raw edge of the material. You will find the other pieces will fit in better and there will be less waste cloth. Always place the pattern so that the cloth that is left over will be as much as possible all in one piece and not cut up into little pieces that are no use for anything. It is well to have enough left over to be able to alter the sleeves of a dress, for the fashion of the sleeves will often change before the rest of the garment is conspicuously old-fashioned. Never cut out one part of the garment until the whole pattern has been placed on and you know there is enough material to finish the dress. Be careful to mark all notches and perforations before removing the pattern. As you remove the pattern, place all the pieces for the bodice together and fold them away until the skirt has been basted, then baste the waist and have all ready for fitting at one time.

HORRORS!

"I bought my Easter hat yesterday. It's a peach."

"But, my dear, why so soon? It'll be out of style by Easter Sunday!"

STILL MORE IMPORTANT

"My dressmaker gives me credit for good taste."

"Does she give you credit for anything else?"