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# MAKING A DRESS AT HOME

by

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A needed dress . . . pride in achievement . . . something learned—these are the rewards of making a first dress. The job will not be hard if you take it step by step with care and attention to detail. Then when you have learned the principles of putting together and finishing a simple dress, you can apply them in the making of any garment.

## To Make a Dress, Here's What You Need

### Pattern

If you've never made a dress before, choose a **style** that's easy to make. A good choice for the first dress is one with collarless neck or plain collar, smooth or darted sleeves, gored skirt, and few buttonholes. Don't try set-in pockets, fancy shirrings, or drapery until you have more sewing experience.

To decide the **size** of pattern you need, compare your measurements—hip, bust, and waist—with those of the pattern given on the envelope or in the large pattern books that you find at pattern counters. Select the size that has measurements most nearly like yours. For example, if yours correspond with those of size 34 except for the hips, choose a 34 and alter the skirt to fit. Don't get the same size in a pattern as you do in ready-to-wear clothes. The measurements may not be the same.

Get a pattern with a good **sewing chart**—one with clear-cut illustrations and easy-to-follow directions. Some patterns give little help to the beginner. Best way to find out about the chart is to ask the clerk to let you see it before you buy the pattern.

### Material

When deciding on the **kind of material**, look for one that will wear well, is easy to handle, and doesn't require much seam finishing. A good choice is a closely woven cotton—percale, chambray, seersucker. Sheer fabrics and materials that fray easily like most rayons are harder to work with and need more careful finishing.

Look for a fabric that is colorfast to sun and washing and is finished so it will not shrink more than 1 percent. Usually you can find information of this kind on the end of the bolt of goods.

Be sure to buy the right **amount of material**. Look on the back of the pattern envelope to see how much you need for the style and size of your dress and the width of your material.

Most saving of cloth is a plain fabric—same on both sides—because you can lay pattern pieces on either side of the goods and use small strips which might otherwise be wasted. Next thriftiest is the small allover print.

But if you are choosing a large print with a definite “up-and-down” or goods with a nap or a pile, like corduroy or velveteen, you’ll need more material because all the pattern pieces have to be laid on the cloth in the same direction. You’ll find the amount of goods you need of this kind on the pattern envelope under “fabrics with nap.”

Materials with wide stripes take more goods, as do plaids that have to be matched crosswise and lengthwise. For a small plaid, you’ll need about a fourth of a yard extra; for a large plaid you may need as much as a yard more.

You may need to buy more goods if you’re tall. Most patterns give the finished length of the dress, measured from the neck at center back to the hem. The sales clerk can likely help you decide how much more material you need after you’ve compared the length of your own dress with the pattern length.

### **Threads and Findings**

Use mercerized cotton thread on wash fabrics and on all dull-surfaced materials. Buy thread that is a shade darker in color than your material because colored thread usually works in lighter when it’s stitched. You’ll need about two 100-yard spools for a dress.

You may need twilled tape, ribbon seam binding, or selvage cut from firm but thin cotton cloth to reinforce curved or bias seams that are likely to stretch, such as those at the neck and armholes. Be sure tape is preshrunk or it will pucker the seams when the dress is washed. You may also use seam binding for finishing sleeve and skirt hems on heavy cottons or nonwashable materials and for binding seams likely to fray.

The best time to buy buttons is when you’re getting pattern and goods. Choose buttons that will stand washing or dry cleaning. Otherwise you will have to take the buttons off and put them back on each time the dress is cleaned. In any case, have the buttons on hand before you make the buttonholes. And this might be a good time to consider the kind of belt you want so you’ll be sure it suits the buttons and the fabric.

## Equipment

To make a simple dress you need shears with blades at least 4 inches long so you can cut with long sharp strokes. Old shears of good-quality steel can be cleaned, sharpened, and tightened and may serve very well.

Needles should suit the weight of material you are using. Size 10 is best for most dress materials and for hand sewing that calls for small stitches. Sizes 7 and 8 are better for heavy fabrics and basting.

Best pins to use are size 5 with sharp points. Keep them in a clean box with a lid.

Be sure your sewing machine is clean, well oiled, and in good running order. Test the tensions and the length of stitch on a small piece of goods. Fifteen stitches to an inch gives a good length of stitch for most materials. Stitches should be strong, even, and smooth and look the same on both sides. If the cloth puckers, the stitches loop, or the thread breaks, you may need to adjust the tensions. Follow directions in the instruction book that came with your machine or in some other reliable bulletin on adjusting sewing machines.<sup>1</sup>

Most sewing machines have attachments, and one of the most useful is the seam guide which is used for stitching a straight seam.

Wear a thimble when you do hand sewing for easier, quicker sewing and to save your fingers. Be sure the thimble has no rough edges or holes punched in the end. Sharp places on a thimble may snag thread or material or break needles.

In addition, you will need an accurate ruler and tape measure and either tailor's chalk or colored pencil. Don't use wax pencils because wax will melt into the cloth and stain it when pressed with a hot iron.

For pressing, have a good, clean iron; a well-padded ironing board with a clean cover; a sleeveboard if possible.

## Good Dressmaking Calls for Fitting . . . Pressing

### When You Fit Your Dress

Keep in mind these important points:

Baste seams, darts, tucks, and pleats accurately before fitting.

Wear the same kind of undergarments and the same height heels you will wear with the dress.

<sup>1</sup> HOLBROOK, HELEN S., and KREWATCH, ALBERT V. SEWING MACHINES; CLEANING AND ADJUSTING. U. S. Dept. Agr. Farmers' Bull. No. 1944, 24 pp., illus. 1943.

If the pattern calls for shoulder pads, make them before you fit the dress, and pin them in place before each fitting.

Since most figures aren't the same on both sides—one shoulder or hip may be higher than the other—fit the dress right side out.

Rip the section that needs altering; then pin-fit. First step is to turn under the necessary amount of seam allowance on one dress piece. Lap that piece over the other section enough to fit the garment correctly and keep the seam line straight. The fold of the turned-under piece will rest on the new seam line. Pin along the crease, and with chalk or pencil, mark the new seam line on the under side of the dress, following the pin lines. To keep a seam line straight when you're fitting, you may need to take in or let out more material on one side of the seam line than you do on the other.

Fit your dress so that the crosswise yarns are parallel with the floor at bust and hip level; all lengthwise seams and stitching lines—unless the dress is of unusual design—hang straight down; side seams of skirt are in line with side seams of waist; and sleeves hang smoothly, without a wrinkle.

### **Press As You Sew**

Before you begin any of the machine stitching on your dress, set up your ironing equipment. To avoid a home-made look to your finished dress, it's important that you press as you sew.

Press each seam or stitching line before you cross it with another line of stitching. For example, press shoulder darts before you baste the shoulder seams together . . . finish and press underarm and shoulder seams before you put in the sleeves. To save frequent heating of the iron, plan your stitching so as to press several parts at one time.

Keep ironing board cover clean. Goods pressed damp will often pick up scorch stains from a scorched cover. When the iron doesn't slide easily or has starch on it, clean by heating the iron, rubbing it over beeswax or waxed paper, and then wiping it—sides as well as base—on wrapping paper or a paper bag.

Different materials call for different ways of pressing. As a rule you can brush cottons lightly with a damp sponge or cloth and press. With other materials such as rayon, wool, or mixtures of rayon and wool or rayon and cotton, you will need to experiment by trying different pressing methods on a sample of the goods. Press on the wrong side first. Keep in mind that you want to retain the original appearance of the cloth.

To press rayons, you may get best results by using a piece of firm tissue paper laid over the goods. Dampen lightly with a sponge and press until dry. Tissue paper holds less moisture than a press cloth

and so for some materials is more satisfactory. Other rayon materials may be pressed without dampening the paper.

To press materials that get shiny or scorch easily—like white rayon—try using a piece of firm cheesecloth—washed until all the sizing is out of it. Dampen slightly, place it over the material, and press.

For woolens, you may want to use either a treated press cloth or two cloths—one of linen or heavy cotton with all sizing washed out, and the other of wool such as flannel. Place the woolen press cloth next to the fabric and the linen one on top. Dampen the linen and press until dry. Using this method, you can press most woolens flat without giving them a hard, shiny look. For crepe wools that tend to pucker when pressed, a treated press cloth or dampened cheesecloth is better.

## Before You Cut

### Know Your Pattern

Look over the pattern and construction chart carefully. You'll find it helpful to keep the chart at hand, for on it you'll usually find the meaning of perforations; a diagram showing the pattern pieces; cutting layouts for each pattern size and material width; and a general plan for making the dress. Draw a circle around the cutting layout that is right for the width of your material and the size of your pattern. Use it as a guide when you're cutting out the dress.

Now look over the pattern pieces. On some patterns, the name of the pieces and directions such as "place on fold of goods" are printed on each one. On others the names are perforated in the paper pattern, as for example, blouse front . . . blouse facing . . . sleeve. Still others have letters or numbers. If your pattern is marked with letters or numbers—from your instruction chart find out the name of each piece and write it on the pattern.

Since most pattern designs have more than one style, you may not need some of the pattern pieces. Sort out those you won't use and put them back in the envelope.

Then, unless you have a printed pattern, you'll find each pattern piece has many perforations. Read the chart and look at the diagram to see what each is for. Notice which perforations form darts, which are for the straight of the goods, which for seam allowances. Then write next to the perforations "seam allowance," "dart," "straight of the goods," or whatever the perforation indicates. Be especially sure to mark all straight edges that are to be placed on a fold of the material—center back is usually one—so that you won't forget and cut along that edge. Mistakes of this kind are hard to correct. On each pattern piece draw a line between perforations that indicate the straight of the goods.

Notice the notches along the edges of the pattern pieces. These are guides for putting the dress together. Single notch matches single, double notch matches double, and so on.

Patterns differ so much in their proportions that it's safest to compare your own measurements with those of the pattern before cutting. Take your bust, waist, and hip measurements level with the floor. Add about 4 inches to the bust measurement and at least an inch to the hip measurement for ease. The waist measurement is taken snugly. Take lengthwise measurements, both front and back, straight down from the neck to the waist—allowing for blousing in the waist if necessary—and from the waist to the bottom of the skirt (fig. 1).

If you need to lengthen a pattern piece, draw a straight line crosswise on the pattern, at right angles to the line marking the straight of the goods. Cut on the crosswise line, and on a piece of paper spread the pattern apart evenly, enough to give you the desired length. Pin the pattern pieces to the paper to hold the pattern together. Connect outside edges of the pattern with a straight line and trim off the strip of paper in line with the pattern.

To shorten a pattern piece, draw two crosswise lines at right angles to line marking the straight of the goods. Draw the lines as far apart as the amount you need to shorten the pattern. Cut on one line and bring cut edge to second line. Pin. Trim off edges of pattern in a straight line if necessary.

Alter the waist between armhole and waist seam. Be sure to change all waist pattern pieces alike, including front facings. Alter skirt 2 to 3 inches below the hip, and change all skirt pieces the same amount.

When you have looked over your pattern carefully and made any necessary alterations, press all pattern pieces flat with a warm but not hot iron. Be careful not to wrinkle or tear the pattern.

And now that you know your pattern pieces, it's a good idea to read through the sewing steps on your chart. You'll find it easier to make a dress if, before you start, you understand how it will go together.

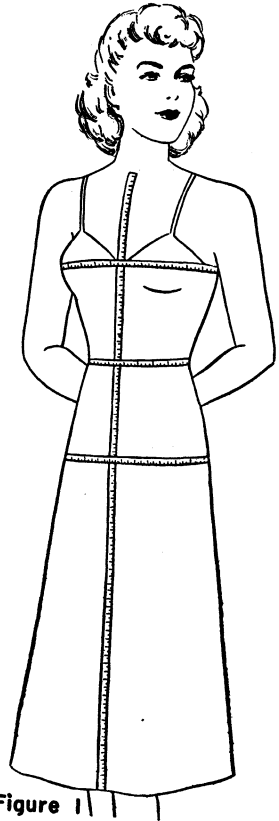


Figure 1



## Get Material Ready

Straighten both ends of your goods by pulling a yarn all across the material and cutting on the line left by the pulled yarn. Or if the material will tear, straighten the ends by tearing off a small piece straight across the width of the goods. Sometimes material is twisted when it's finished at the mill and will look crooked even when ends have been straightened. To straighten it, pull the goods diagonally and then crosswise.

If the goods are washable and have not been preshrunk, shrink in warm water and, when dry enough to iron, press straight and even.

If the goods are preshrunk, press out the center fold and any other creases.

## Lay Out Pattern

To lay out the pattern you need a large smooth surface. A big table is ideal, but you can use a clean floor or, if you have it, lay a long strip of wrapping paper on the floor.

Spread the material out flat, with ends and sides straight.

Following your pattern layout, put the big pattern pieces on first, but don't pin them until you are sure you can get all pieces on. See that the line which shows the straight of the goods is placed exactly on a lengthwise yarn of the cloth. Measure from the selvage to the line, making certain that the distance is equal at all points.

Next, lay out the small pattern pieces. Your pattern chart will show you whether they are to be laid on a lengthwise or crosswise yarn of the goods.

Sometimes pattern edges that should be straight are crooked—frequently on skirt pieces below the 7-inch hip line. In such a case, draw a new straight line lightly with pencil on wash cottons, with chalk on other goods, and cut a straight edge regardless of the pattern.

If your pattern has a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch seam allowance, you'll want to add another eighth of an inch all around each pattern piece to allow for a good seam finish. Remember that you must allow for that extra eighth of an inch when you're placing the pattern. But be sure when you mark your pattern pieces, to mark the perforations for the stitching line; otherwise your dress may be too large all over.

To lay a pattern piece on the fold, measure at the widest part of the pattern and fold the material over that amount. Make sure it is folded over the same distance for the full length of the pattern piece.

When you have placed a pattern piece exactly right on the goods, weight it down so it cannot shift and pin it securely without a ripple. Put the pins in at right angles to the edge of the pattern so the goods won't hump. Pin at corners, curves, and along seams. If you haven't enough pins, use glass furniture coasters, paperweights, or other small, heavy objects to hold the pattern down.

You will find that you have one sleeve pattern from which to cut both sleeves. Usually you can fold the goods and cut both sleeves out at the same time. But you may have to cut the sleeves separately in order to get them out of the goods you have. If so, cut one sleeve and then be sure to turn the pattern over for the second so that you won't cut both sleeves for the same arm.

To be doubly sure, lay the pattern for the first sleeve and before you cut it out, put a pencil check mark on the surface of the paper pattern. Then when you lay the pattern for the second sleeve, place it with the check-marked side against the cloth. Do the same with any other pattern piece from which you have to cut two dress pieces, one at a time. Broken lines on the pattern layout show which pieces you may need to cut separately.

If a pattern piece such as a skirt is wider than the goods, you may have to do some piecing. First turn under a seam's width on the edge to be pieced. Then lap this folded edge over the piecing—be sure to match piecing to dress so that the lengthwise yarns of the piecing and dress run in the same direction.

If the fabric is a print, match the design. Pin piecing in place and finish pinning the pattern. Then when you've cut out the pattern and are ready to sew, baste piecing to dress with  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slip stitches on the right side to keep piecing exactly in place. Keep stitches even and right at the folded edge. Turn dress to wrong side and machine-stitch on the basting line.

## Ready to Cut

Cut with long full strokes of the shears to give an even edge.

Cut close to the pattern edge unless you're adding more seam allowance. In that case, be sure you cut so the extra amount is the same on all seams.

Don't use pinking shears for cutting out your dress. Accurate cutting is too difficult with them, and the jagged edge made by the shears won't slide next to a seam guide.

Don't cut out the notches, especially if your goods fray. You may spoil the seam finish if you do. Instead mark notches with tailor's chalk or cut small humps beyond the edge of the pattern wherever you find a notch in the paper pattern.

## Mark the Dress Pieces

Before you remove the paper pattern from the dress pieces, mark all perforations on the wrong side of the goods. On dark fabrics, put a pin through at each perforation, then mark where the pin shows through with tailor's chalk or colored pencil—not wax pencil. On light material use pencil, or make tailor's tacks with a double thread of colored darning or embroidery cotton (figs. 2 and 3).

Be sure to mark the perforations for the seam lines, particularly if you have added extra seam allowance.

Then when you have removed the paper pattern, draw the lines on which you are to stitch—darts, tucks, pleats, and the like—by connecting perforations with pencil or chalk lines (fig. 4).

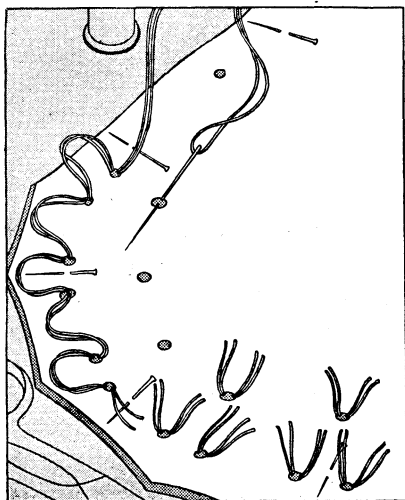


Figure 2

### To Make Tailor's Tacks

Figure 2.—At each perforation, take a small stitch—through both thicknesses of goods if cloth has been cut double. Leave long loops of thread between stitches. Clip threads at top of each loop and remove paper pattern.

Figure 3.—If goods are double, pull two pieces gently apart, taking care not to pull out tacks. Clip threads between the two pieces.

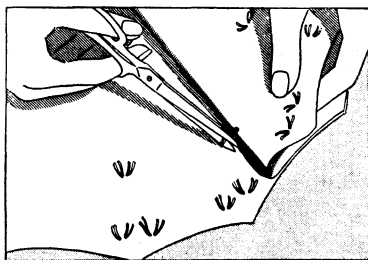


Figure 3

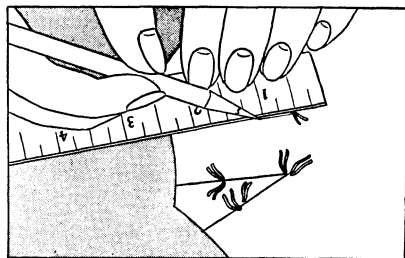


Figure 4

### To Mark Darts

Figure 4.—To mark stitching line for darts, draw a line through center of perforations from point to wide part of dart.

## When You Put Your Dress Together

Follow this order of sewing for best results :

Pin and baste all darts, tucks, seams in the waist and sleeves.

Try on the waist, fit, and mark any needed changes. You may have to try on the waist a number of times, depending on the changes necessary to make it fit correctly.

Stitch, finish, and press—first, the darts, tucks, shoulder, and yoke seams ; then the waist and sleeve seams.

Finish the neck with facing or collar.

Baste skirt seams, and pin the skirt to the waist. Try on the dress and fit the skirt. Stitch, finish, and press skirt seams.

Pin, baste, and stitch the waist to the skirt.

Pin and baste the sleeves to the armholes. Try on the dress and fit the sleeves. Stitch the sleeves ; finish seams. Press.

Make placket.

Measure the hem in the skirt ; pin a hem in the sleeves. Finish hems and press.

### Pin and Baste

Pin before you baste. Lay the pieces you are working with on a table or flat surface. Match the notches, single to single, double to double, triple to triple. Be careful not to stretch cut edges.

Sometimes one dress piece has to be eased onto the other, for example, the back shoulder to the front shoulder. To prevent stretching the shorter piece, machine-stitch along the seam allowance a little less than the seam's width from the cut edge. Then pin the longer piece to the shorter one, arranging fullness so it's evenly spaced.

Baste before you stitch—take one long stitch and two or three short stitches. These hold better than even stitches and are more satisfactory for fitting. Baste accurately. When basting seams together, measure the seam allowance from the outside edge to the basting line as you sew. Take out pins as you baste.

Or you may wish to machine-baste long seams on the sewing machine. Use long machine stitches that can be ripped out easily.

### Darts

To make darts : First match the lines you have drawn from the point of the dart to the edge, folding dart at center. Pin and then baste dart just inside the chalk line so that when you machine-stitch, the stitching won't get caught in the bastings. If tailor's tacks were used, take them out. Press.

Stitch dart on the chalk line, beginning at the wide part of the dart with the fold toward the center of the machine. The dart is more likely to press smooth and flat without any pouching if you start the stitching at the wide part of the dart instead of the point. Taper stitching to nothing at dart point so that the last two or three stitches are right on the edge of the fold.

Cut off the threads, leaving ends about 2 inches long. Tie threads and either clip to one-half inch or thread a needle with them and sew back into the stitching. Pull out bastings.

Press shoulder, neck, or waist darts toward the center of the dress. Press sleeve darts toward the top of the sleeve to give body to the sleeve cap. Press underarm darts toward the armhole.

If you have wide front darts on a heavy material, you may want to cut or trim them off to get rid of some of the bulk. If your material is heavy and firmly woven so it's not likely to fray, cut the dart down the center fold to about one-eighth inch from the point. Press seam open and overcast each edge so it can't pull out.

If your goods are heavy but fray easily, cut off the dart so there's about 1/2-inch seam allowance left. Stitch and overcast the cut edges together and press the dart to one side.

But if you have ordinary-weight cotton or material that stretches easily or frays badly, such as voile, don't cut your darts.

## Seams

Before you stitch the seams, decide how you will finish them (figs. 6-10). In general, you want seams strong so they won't pull out and seam allowances finished flat so they won't show on the outside.

When you stitch the seams you will find the stitching is likely to be more even if you use a seam guide. Screw the guide in place so that the width from inside edge of guide to needle point is the width of the seam allowance. Guide the goods so that the cut edge will slide along next to the seam guide as you sew (fig. 5).

Finish seams according to the seam finish you have chosen. Pull out bastings. Press seam flat.

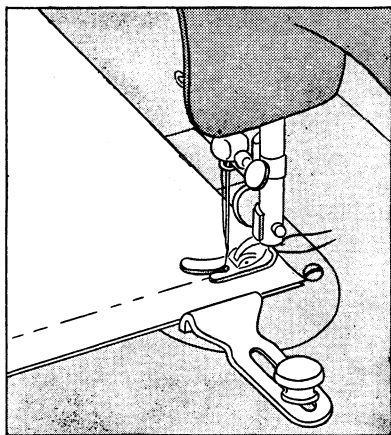


Figure 5

## Best Seam Finishes Are:

Figure 6.—For firm wash cottons: Stitch seams together a second time about one-fourth inch from the first seam line. Pink the edges if you have pinking shears. Press to one side.

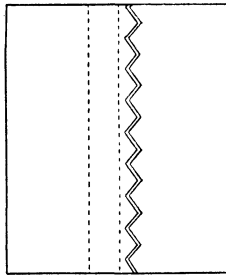


Figure 6

Figure 7.—For firm fabrics such as wool flannel or silks: Pink the edges if you have pinking shears, or machine-stitch about one-eighth inch from the outside edge of each side of the seam. Press the seam open.

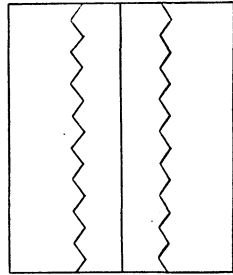
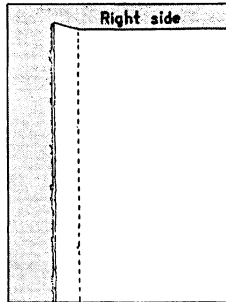


Figure 7

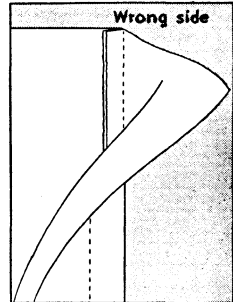
Figure 8.—For thin materials that fray, such as voile or sheer rayons: Use a French seam—except for yoke and armhole seams and the seam joining waist to skirt.

First make a small seam on the right side of dress, machine-stitching three-eighths inch from the regular seam line. Trim seam to one-fourth inch. Turn to wrong side.

Press seam flat. Then fold back goods on the line just stitched and press. Make a second seam with the first seam well inside it, machine-stitching on the regular seam line.



Right side



Wrong side

Figure 8

Figure 9.—For mediumweight materials that fray, such as some spun rayons, silk crepes, or light wools: Stitch seams together a second time about one-fourth inch from the first seam line. Overcast the edges together first in one direction, then in the other. Press seam to one side.

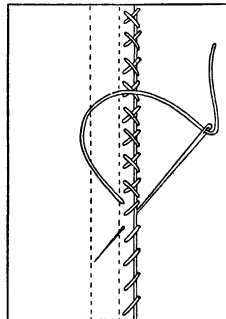


Figure 9

Figure 10.—Another finish for mediumweight goods: Press open stitched seam. Turn under each seam edge about one-fourth inch and stitch along the turned edge.

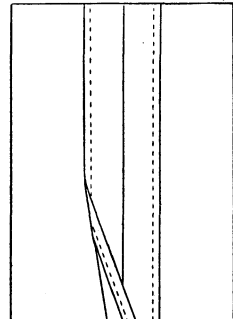


Figure 10

## Gathers

When one edge of a seam must be gathered, the gathers will be more even and accurate if put in by machine rather than by hand. Use a large stitch—about seven or eight to the inch. Make two rows of stitching.

Stitch the first row along the seam line, using a seam guide. Or measure the width of the seam allowance from time to time as you sew.

Stitch a second row in the seam allowance one-eighth of an inch away from the first row.

Tie the threads at one end or wind them around a pin to keep them from slipping.

Pin the gathered section to the piece to which it is to be joined, matching notches and seam edges. Pull up the two underneath gathering threads on the wrong side of the cloth until the gathered piece fits the other. Distribute gathers evenly so they're not bunchy and stroke them with a blunt needle until they hang down even and straight. Tie gathering threads.

Baste the gathered section to the joining piece with  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch stitches . . . small stitches keep gathers in place.

## Shoulder Yoke

Join a shoulder yoke to the dress with a lapped seam before you stitch the underarm seams. To make a lapped seam, first mark the seam line at the bottom edge of the yoke with chalk or machine stitching. Turn the seam allowance of the yoke to the wrong side and baste (fig. 11). Press to make the fold flat for machine stitching. Pin the yoke to the right side of the blouse, matching notches and seam edges, then baste (fig. 12).

When you machine-stitch the yoke, keep the needle on the folded edge so the stitching will be straight. For a tailored finish, make a second row of stitching on the yoke, keeping the narrow edge of the presser foot next to the first row (fig. 13). Do all outside stitching slowly and carefully to keep it straight.

If your material is firm, trim the seam allowance on the wrong side to three-eighths of an inch. Otherwise, leave the full seam allowance and overcast the edges.

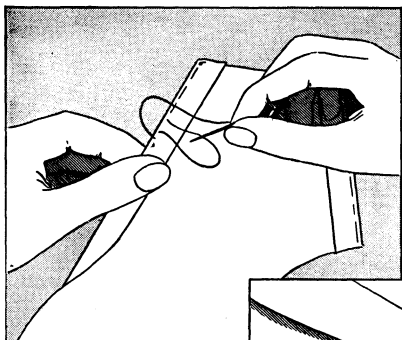


Figure 11

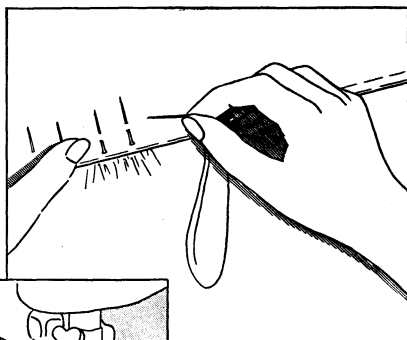


Figure 12

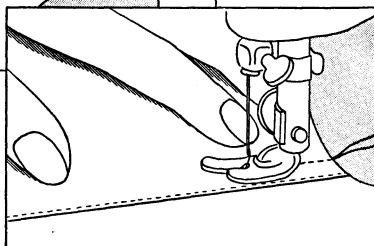


Figure 13

## Neck and Front Finishes

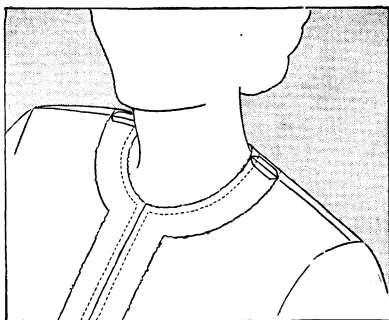


Figure 14

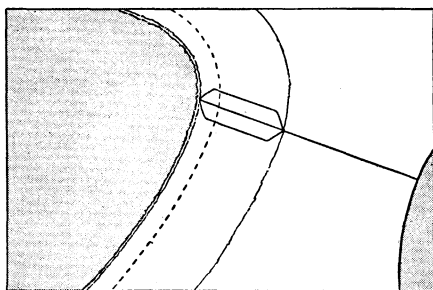


Figure 15

**If the neck of your dress is plain and finished with a shaped piece (fig. 14):** Seam together the back and front parts of the neck facing. Press seams. Pin facing flat to the neck of the dress with the right side of the facing against the right side of the dress. Baste along the seam line or you can measure a seam's width with a ruler or pasteboard guide as you sew. Take small stitches—no more than one-fourth inch long—to keep a good curve (fig. 15).

Stitch facing close to the basting and follow with a second stitching right on top of the first to make a strong edge. Trim seams to one-fourth inch. Clip into the stitching, where the seam is rounded, so the facing will lie flat when it is turned to the inside of the dress. When you turn the facing to the wrong side be sure the seam line is exactly at the folded edge. Baste around the edge and press.

**If your dress has a collar,** follow the instructions on the pattern chart for putting collar together and joining it to the neck.

Here are some points to remember:

Be careful to stitch the collar evenly.

Trim seams to one-fourth inch and clip off the corners to avoid thick, ugly lumps when collar is turned (fig. 16). Take care not to cut the stitching. When you turn the collar right side out, push out the corners carefully so they're smooth and even. You may have to pick them out with a pin.

Before you press, baste around the edge of the collar with the seam line exactly at the folded edge (fig. 17).

After you stitch the collar to the neck, trim neck seams to one-fourth inch and clip just to the stitching. Press the seam open between the shoulder seam and the front edge of the collar. Across the back of the neck, press the seam up so it will be inside the collar (figs. 18 and 19).



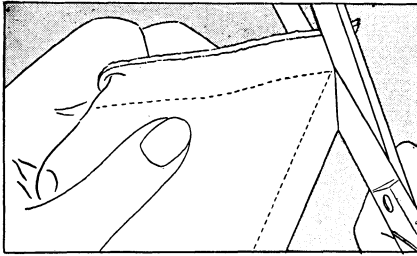


Figure 16

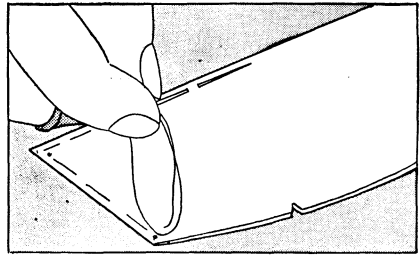


Figure 17

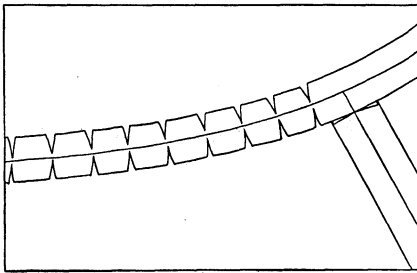


Figure 18

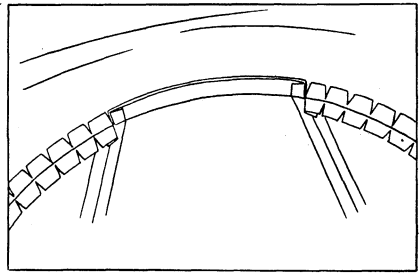


Figure 19

**Ways of finishing facings** differ with the kind of material you have. If your goods are cotton or some other lightweight fabric, turn under the edge of the seam allowance on the facing about one-sixteenth inch; then stitch. If your goods are thick or nonwashable, finish facing by trimming off the seam allowance and stitching ribbon seam binding flat along the edge. Or machine-stitch along the edge and overcast.

Fasten facings to the shoulder seams with small catch or slip stitches. Then baste facings flat to the waist. You don't need to fasten the facing from the shoulder seams to the waist, especially if you have buttons and buttonholes down the front. But if you want to sew the facings down—or if you have a shaped facing on a plain neck—use long, loose stitches, catching only a yarn of the dress in each stitch so that facings won't be held too tightly to the dress and stitches won't show on the right side.

## Buttonholes

Good buttonholes are important to the appearance of your dress, so you'll want to make them with care.

Pattern markings for the buttonholes may not be right for you so try on the waist, pin center fronts together, and mark with a pin the place where you want the top button. Take off the dress, lay the buttons on the right front with the top button on the pin to work out an attractive spacing for the buttons. Make sure that they are an equal distance apart and an equal distance from the front edge of the dress. Mark the place for each on the center front.

Next, decide on the length of buttonholes. Measure the button and add about one-eighth inch for thickness of button. Never make the buttonholes before you buy your buttons. Usually it's a good idea to make trial slashes in scraps of goods and slip the button through to be sure the size of the buttonhole is right.

Mark your buttonholes with chalk, pencil, or bastings. Start buttonholes one-sixteenth inch from the center front toward the front edge of the dress and measure back the length of the buttonhole. Then when your dress is fastened, your buttons will be exactly at center front. Be sure to mark the buttonhole line along the yarn of the material. This is the cutting line for the buttonhole.

**Worked buttonholes** are the easiest and most suitable for a wash dress. To keep the material firm and to form a guide for working the buttonhole, machine-stitch about one-sixteenth inch from each side of the chalk or basting line (fig. 20). Cut along the chalk or basting line the length of the buttonhole and overcast the cut edges (fig. 21). Work the buttonhole, using blanket or buttonhole stitch (fig. 22). Make stitches long enough just to cover machine stitching. Strengthen ends of buttonhole with several small stitches.

Try a few buttonholes on scraps of material first. Then make them on your dress after you finish the front edges and facings. For most fabrics use ordinary mercerized sewing thread. Buttonhole twist makes a heavy buttonhole and is suitable only for heavy woolsens.

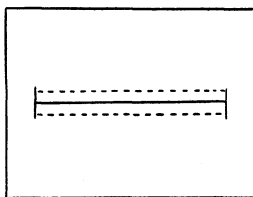


Figure 20

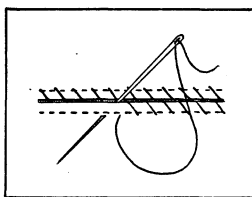


Figure 21

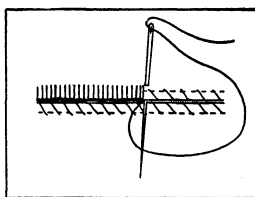


Figure 22

Then when you have more sewing experience you may wish to make **bound buttonholes**.

Make them before you turn back the front facings. Mark the cutting line for bound buttonholes on the wrong side of the dress, according to directions given above. Cut out patches of material to be used for binding, making them  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide and 1 inch longer than your buttonhole. Pull a yarn on each side of the patch to be sure it's even. Place the right side of the patch against the right side of the dress with the center of the patch right over the cutting line of the buttonhole. Pin the patch in place and baste it to the dress.

Stitch the buttonhole from the wrong side, no more than one-eighth inch from each side of the cutting line, and straight across each end. Count the stitches so that the lines above and below the

chalk line will have the same number of stitches and the lines across the ends will have a like number. Keep the needle in the goods when you come to the end of the buttonhole, raise the presser foot, and turn the goods to make a square corner.

Cut buttonhole on cutting line to within one-eighth inch of the ends. Clip diagonally to the corners. Be careful not to cut the stitching (fig. 23).

Take out the basting and pull the patch through the slash to the wrong side (fig. 24). With the point of the iron, press the seams toward the buttonhole opening. Fold back both sides of the binding, making the folds meet in the center of the buttonhole. Then from the right side work the binding so it is even on both sides of the slit. Baste across the ends and around the buttonhole seams. Baste folds together in the center of the buttonhole (fig. 25). Press.

On the wrong side, fold the dress away from the end of the buttonhole and stitch the pleated end of the binding right over the first machine stitching (fig. 26). Then on the right side, make small stitches by hand in the seam lines to hold the buttonhole binding in place. Trim off binding to one-fourth inch all around on the wrong side and press.

You may finish the buttonholes on the wrong side of the dress after everything else is done. Baste the facing smoothly around each buttonhole, 1 inch from the buttonhole opening. With two pins mark each end of the buttonhole through to the facing. Cut a slit in the facing between the two pins, following a yarn under the buttonhole opening. Turn under the cut edges as far as the stitching of the buttonhole, round at the corners; slip-stitch (fig. 27). Or, make the buttonhole the same on both sides by slashing the facing diagonally at the corners and by turning under the sides and ends to the stitching. Sew by hand.

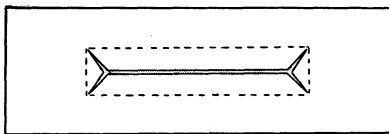


Figure 23

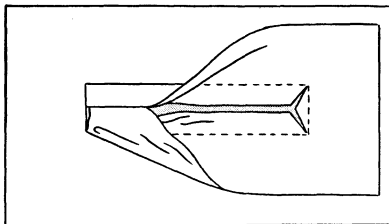


Figure 24

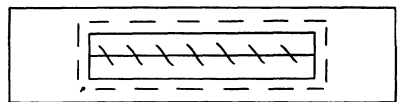


Figure 25

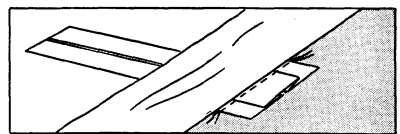


Figure 26



Figure 27

## Sewing on Buttons

Sew buttons to the left front on the center front line. If the button has no shank, make thread shanks by placing a pin across the top of the button and bringing the thread up through the holes and across the pin. When you have run several threads up through the holes and across the pin, pull out the pin, draw up the button so that the threads are taut, and wind thread around the taut threads to make a firm shank. Fasten with a few small stitches through the threads.

If the button has a shank, sew the button on so that the eyelets or holes are in the same direction as the buttonhole slit. This will keep the end of the buttonhole from spreading.

## Putting in Sleeves

Seam your sleeves at underarm.

If the sleeve tops have darts, baste and stitch the darts, tie the threads, and press.

If the sleeve tops are smooth, make two rows of machine gathering stitches one-eighth inch apart across the top of the sleeve between notches to ease in the fullness, stitching the first row on the seam line.

Turn sleeves right side out ready for pinning into the armhole.

To set the sleeve in the armhole work from the inside of the dress. Fit the sleeve into the armhole, as shown in figure 28 with the right side of the sleeve next to the right side of the waist. Pin from the sleeve side, matching underarm seams, notches, and top of sleeve to the shoulder seam. Fit sleeve smoothly to armhole around the underpart as far as the notches. If you have machine-stitched across the top of the sleeve, pull the underneath gathering threads until the sleeve fits the armhole. Ease in the fullness so there are no pleats or puckers, and pin. As the topmost part of the sleeve is cut with the grain of the goods, keep it flat for about 1 inch on each side of the shoulder seam and work in the fullness where the sleeve edge is more on the bias.

Baste from the sleeve side with  $\frac{1}{8}$ - to  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch stitches to hold fullness in place. Use a seam guide or ruler to get the seam allowance exact.

Turn sleeve right side out and check it from the waist side to see if the armhole seam is straight and even. If the seam looks crooked, pin a line where the seam should be and rebaste that part of the sleeve (fig. 29). If you're using shoulder pads, pin them in before fitting.

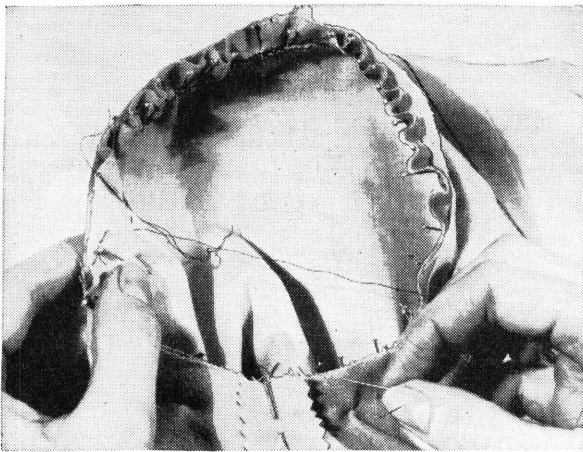
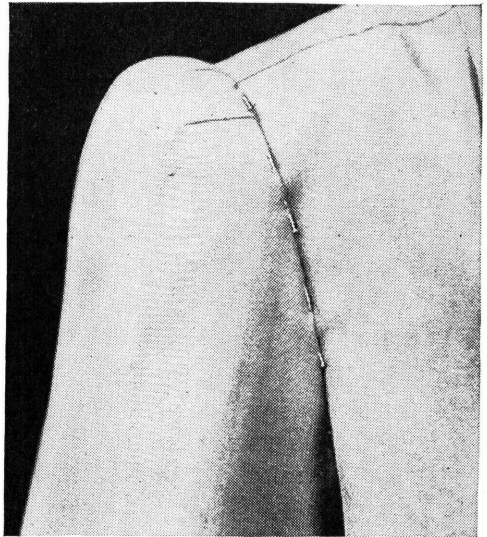


Figure 28.—To set sleeve in armhole, work from inside of dress. Pin from sleeve side, matching underarm seams, notches, and top of sleeve to shoulder seam.

Figure 29.—Turn sleeve right side out and check it from waist side to see if the armhole seam is straight and even. If the seam looks crooked, pin a line where the seam should be and rebaste that part of sleeve.

Be sure to fit sleeve so it hangs without folds or wrinkles.



After you have fitted the sleeve so it hangs without folds or wrinkles, machine-stitch from the sleeve side so that you can watch the fullness as you stitch, following the basting line carefully. In wash dresses, stitch a second row around the armhole about one-fourth inch from the first in the seam allowance.

Trim off the seam to about three-eighths inch and pink, overcast, or bind the edges. Press the top of the armhole seam toward the sleeve. Around the bottom of the armhole press the seam allowance up into the armhole.

If your material is heavy and nonwashable and you are using shoulder pads, finish the seam edges separately around the top of the sleeve. Press seam open at top to the middle of the armhole to make sleeve fit smoothly.

## Pleats

You'll find it easier to pin, baste, and press pleats before you baste the side seams of the skirt. After you have fitted the skirt, machine-stitch the pleats before you stitch the side seams.

**To make an inverted pleat:** Pin together the two skirt pieces that join to make the pleat. Baste along the seam line and the chalk line that marks the pleat fold (fig. 30). Machine-stitch the seam from top of skirt to the perforation that marks the top of the pleat. Cut and fasten the threads. Lengthen machine stitch and stitch to the bottom of the skirt next to the basted line. Pull out hand bastings.

Press seam and pleat open on the wrong side of the goods. Pin the pleat inset over the opened-out pleat, matching notches (fig. 31). Edges may not meet exactly, but the important thing is to have the inset lie flat. Baste the inset to the pleat along the seam lines. Trim off the seams so the seam allowance is even all the way around the inset. Stitch by machine and press. Take out the large machine stitches along the pleat folds.

One way to make pleats that will stay sharp and straight is to leave unstitched the lower 5 inches of seam on the pleat inset (fig. 32). Finish the last 5 inches of pleat after you have hemmed the dress and pleat inset.

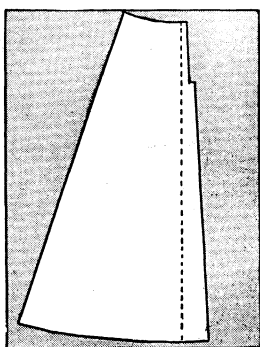


Figure 30

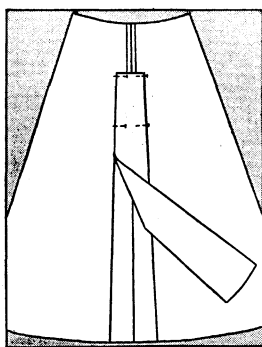


Figure 31

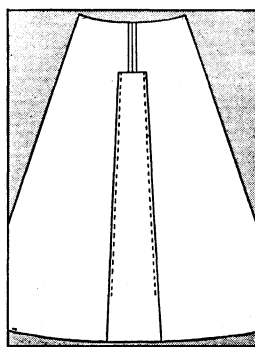


Figure 32

## Join Waist and Skirt

When you are ready to join waist and skirt:

Stitch around the top of the skirt with large machine stitches, a seam's width from the edge. Turn under on stitched line and baste, using  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch stitches to hold seam flat for pressing. Let it lie in the normal curve as you press. Do not clip this seam.

Pin skirt to right side of the blouse, matching seams, notches, center fronts, and center backs. Baste.

If the material stretches as some rayons and wool jerseys do, baste firm, preshrunk tape or selvage over the waist seam on the wrong side.

Stitch the skirt to the waist close to the fold.

Turn dress to the wrong side and stitch seam edges together about one-fourth inch from the first stitching.

Trim seams around waist to three-eighths inch if material is firm and finish in the same way you have finished the rest of the your seams. If the fabric frays badly, do not trim the seam.

## Side Placket

Make the placket long enough so the dress won't be strained when you put it on. A good length for most dress plackets is 10 inches.

If you are making a placket that fastens with buttons or snap fasteners, follow the directions on the pattern chart.

If you are using a slide fastener you may follow the directions that came with the fastener or use this method:

With long machine stitches sew the placket opening together just as you would a side seam. (These stitches will be ripped out later.) Press this seam open. On the wrong side, pin the right side of the slide fastener against the opened seam. Baste in place and stitch from right side. The easiest way is to use a cording foot instead of the regular presser foot. Or, in soft materials, sew by hand, using small stitches about one-eighth inch apart. Now take out the large machine stitches. Trim seam allowance on the wrong side so it is the same width as the fastener tape. Overcast edges together to prevent fraying and to give extra strength.

## Hems

Before you hem your dress, let it hang for a day or two to stretch the seams. Then they're not so likely to sag afterward.

Press entire dress carefully, making sure to press the seams flat.

When you are ready to put the dress on for marking the hem, be sure you have on the same kind of shoes and underclothes you will be wearing with the dress.

Have someone measure with a ruler, yardstick, or skirt marker the distance from the floor you want the skirt line to be (fig. 33). Have her mark the line with pins all around the skirt, about 3 inches apart. Or use one of the markers that you can work yourself.

Turn up hem on this pin line. Pin. Try on dress to be sure skirt hangs evenly and the length is right.

Baste hem at the bottom, take out the pins, and press the fold.

Even off turned up part of hem to about 1½ or 2 inches all around

(fig. 34). Turn cut edge under one-fourth inch. Press. Machine-stitch about one-sixteenth inch from turned-under edge.

Pin and baste the hem to the skirt, matching the seams. Baste in fullness where necessary with small pleats. Press hem in an up and down direction. Crosswise pressing may stretch the hem.

Use slip stitch (fig. 35) to sew hem to dress.

Other ways to finish the cut edge of the hem: For nonwashable dresses, finish hem with a seam binding. Baste lower edge of binding to the cut edge of hem, overlapping binding and hem about one-fourth inch. Machine-stitch. Then baste the upper edge of the binding to the skirt, and catch-stitch (fig. 36). Silk or rayon thread is best for these hems because it doesn't roughen or break.

Dresses that have tailored double stitching as a part of the dress design may also have double-stitched hems (fig. 37). Trim hem to one-half inch. Turn cut edge under one-fourth inch and crease with your thumbnail if material is firm. Baste hem to dress. Make first row of stitching around bottom of hem and second row an even distance from first row, wide enough to catch in top of hem. Stitch on the right side of the dress and use a seam guide or the presser foot as a guide.

Short sleeves may be hemmed the same as skirt hems. Make the hem about 1 inch wide when finished.

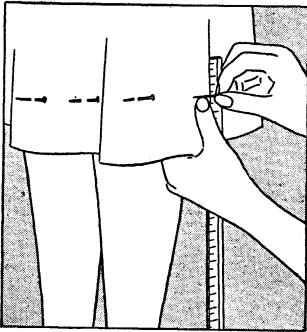


Figure 33

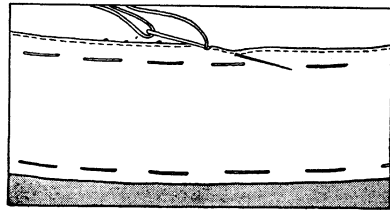


Figure 35

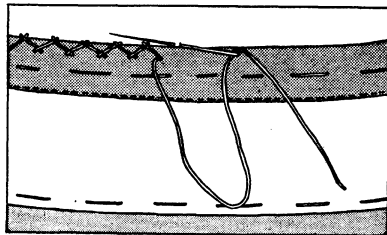


Figure 36

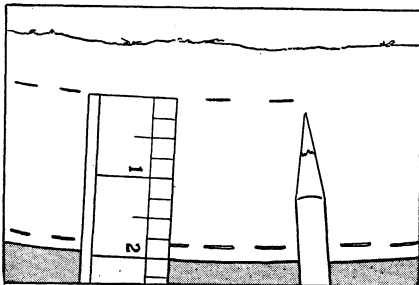


Figure 34

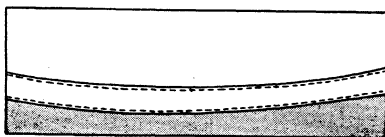


Figure 37



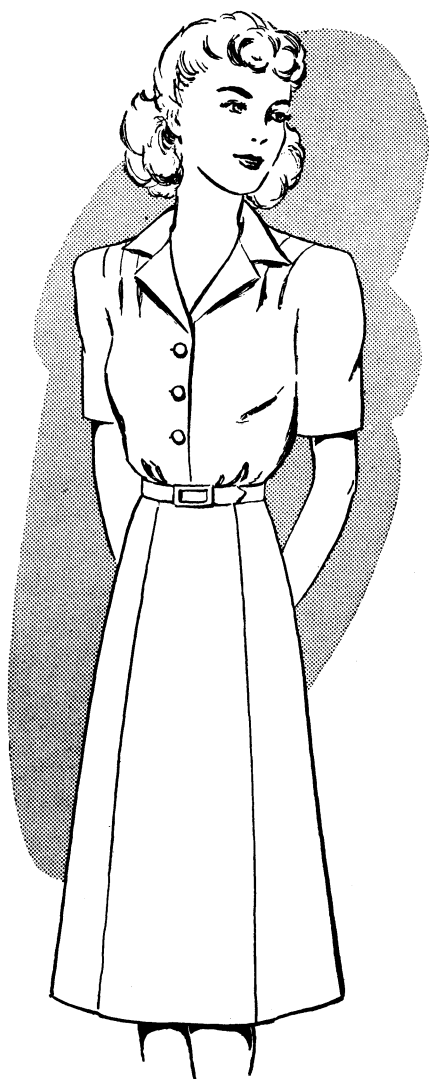
## Her First Dress Looks Professional

She cut it accurately with the grain of the goods.

She pressed darts and seams as she made them.

Collar corners are sharp and smooth because she cut back the seam allowance to the stitching.

Facings are turned back exactly on the seam line.

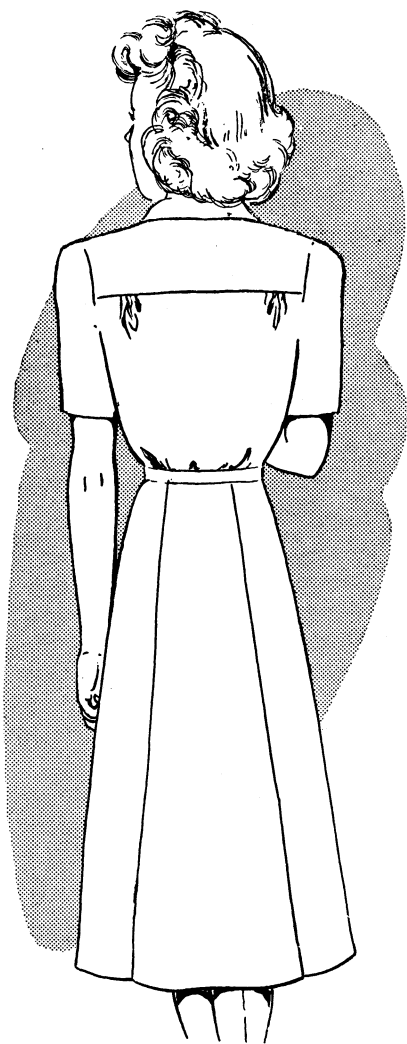


Neck fits smoothly because she trimmed off seam allowance and clipped it to the stitching.

Seams and hems don't show on the right side because she finished them flat.

Gathers are even and are distributed with no bunchiness.

Buttonholes are narrow, about one-sixteenth inch wide on each side, and firmly worked.



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