



## **Clothing Construction: Tips & Techniques Class Instructions**

### ***Choosing a Pattern***

Before you buy a pattern, take all of your measurements and keep them with you while you shop. See the Tools section of SewingCity.com and follow the measurements table. Keep the measurements on file, and take additional measurements regularly in case your figure changes.

When shopping for patterns and fabrics, plan for at least two hours. This will include time to evaluate patterns, check fabric contents, ask questions, and wait in the cutting and register lines.

If possible, open the pattern at the store and examine its contents and instructions. Get a feel for the level of skill needed to complete the garment. Also, make sure it has lines that will conform to your body type.

If you find a pattern you like, hold it aside and look through several manufacturer catalogs. Often times there will be variations in patterns and you may find something that suits you even better than your first selection. Also, you can get ideas by combining patterns, and taking positive aspects and putting them together in one garment.

### ***Fabric Purchase***

When creating a garment from a commercial pattern, usually pattern companies have recommended fashion fabrics to use for their patterns. Typically, these companies have made test garments from each of the recommended fabrics, so they have a good idea of the drape and characteristics of the fabric, so it's usually safe to go with these recommendations.

As you search for fashion fabrics, pay special attention to the fiber content and care instructions that should be listed on the end of the bolts. If the content or care is not listed, try to find out as much as you can about the fabric, or select

another. Also, take note of the width of the fabric. Patterns usually outline yardages needed in different widths. You can also use SewingCity.com's Yardages Chart in the Tools section of this website. Remember to buy extra fabric if it has a directional pattern or nap to be matched.

While you are at the fabric store, select a cheaper fabric that has characteristics of your fashion fabric. You will use this fabric for your fitting or "muslin" and eventually, your pattern. If your garment will be made of cotton, then buy some muslin as it is also cotton. Check the \$1 bins, quilt scraps, and sale areas for the best deals on practice fabrics. If you find fabric that is in many pieces, go ahead and get it – it doesn't all have to match.

Pick up any notions or thread as directed on the pattern envelope. Also buy any additional embellishments such as trims, buttons, or anything you want to personalize this garment.

### ***Fabric Preparation***

When you get home with your fabric selections, prepare to pre-wash the fabrics. This is an important step. If the fabric you selected is dry-clean only, then skip this step as your finished garment will need to go to the cleaners rather than through your washing machine.

Taking note of the content at the fabric store will help you determine how much shrinkage there will be. 100% cotton can shrink in many washings, and can shrink upwards of 30%. Even a simple steam pressing can shrink your fabrics. If you have a fabric that has a high cotton content, wash it in very hot water and tumble dry on high heat. This will ensure maximum shrinkage. Tie the ends of your fabric together to prevent tangling. Do not use fabric softener for pre-washing fabrics. It can leave a film on fabrics that is not good to work with as it can interfere with fusible stabilizers and marking utensils.

After the fabric comes out of the laundry, iron it, making sure there are no creases or wrinkles. Cut off any frayed ends. Also, cut your pattern pieces (according to your size) from the pattern sheets and iron those flat as well.

### ***Making a Test Garment***

Make your test garment by cutting your pattern pieces out of your fitting fabric. Sew these together with long stitches, since you will be taking it apart and using it for your final pattern.

Try on the fitting, and have someone else (if possible) fit the garment to you. Take in or let out areas that don't fit well. Take a look at dart placement, and make sure there is enough ease throughout. This is why it is important to select

a fitting fabric similar to your fashion fabric – it will give you an idea of how your fashion fabric will drape and wear.

Once you have made adjustments to your fitting, take it apart, iron it, and re-examine and re-measure to confirm any changes. Make sure side seams are aligned and that the garment is “trued” or symmetrical on both sides. Now you’re ready to cut your fashion fabric.

### ***Cutting Fashion Fabric***

Pay special attention to the recommended layout of the pattern. If your fabric has a directional design or nap, then you will need to take extra time to accommodate these areas.

Pin our weight the newly made pattern down on the fashion fabric. Transfer any special markings using tailor’s chalk or any other preferred method of transfer. Cut notches outward in groups. These will line up in various areas. Also, cut any interfacing or interlining as necessary. These are used to add weight and to stabilize fabrics.

When cutting, make sure to use a pair of scissors that are sharp, and designated for cutting fabric. If you use an old pair that have cut other substances, the shears may be dull and won’t do the best job. Rotary cutters are the same.

### ***Sewing It All Together***

Pin your pieces together and sew. Use the same seam allowance you used for your fitting. Measure everything as you go, comparing to your body and to the fitting. Press all seams as you go. This is important for the look of the finished garment. Follow the instructions that come with the pattern, and make sure all notches and markings line up.

If your garment is lined, you will need to take the same care in fitting and preparation of the pattern and fabric. Some garments are interlined, which give the garment stability and makes the fabric look heavier.

Facings to garments add a nice finish to edges. Make sure to interface or stabilize the backs. A handy tip to keep facings in place is to sew them to the seam allowance.

Use seam binding to add stability to any seams that will come under pressure often. Lightweight fabrics such as satin will pull apart under stress.

Finish seams by hand, with your serger or a zigzag stitch, or use sharp pinking shears if the fabric does not unravel easily.

## ***Embellish***

Once your garment is put together, you're ready to embellish it. Take care in only putting on embellishments that will survive the laundry or dry cleaners. Make synthetic or plastic/nylon based embellishments do not survive the dry cleaners.

Punch out buttonholes with a chisel so keep them uniform. Finish buttonholes by hand or by machine, and always place some interfacing behind them for stability. As you decide on placement of buttons and buttonholes for shirts and coats, start by putting on the garment and marking the bust point. That is where the first button and hole will go. Measure out in even increments for the rest.

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We hope you are pleased with this instruction handout for this class. If you received materials with this instruction handout, please take a moment and let us know if they worked well for you. Feel free to ask any questions or get clarification on any technique by e-mailing us at [classes@sewingcity.com](mailto:classes@sewingcity.com) anytime. Your feedback helps us make these classes a more valuable learning experience for other members.

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