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Pressing is Part of Dressmaking: Clothing Leaflet 3

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Pressing is Part of Dressmaking

An iron skillfully used, is as necessary to smart dressmaking as the sewing machine. The pressing surface must be absolutely smooth. Joinings, wrinkles or bumps in padding, covering, or in pressing cloth mark fabrics, often permanently.

Keep the fabric grain, seam lines and other parts straight or in their true position in the garment. When pressed crooked, grain and construction details tend to remain that way.

Most pressing is done with moist heat—steam from steam iron or damp pressing cloth and hot iron. Hold iron so it rests lightly on the damp cloth, not full weight on pressing cloth or garment. The amount of moisture needed varies with different fabrics; experiment first on a scrap. After steaming a small area, smooth it with the iron and a dry cloth.

Press each seam, dart and other part as it is sewed and before joining it to another part. Make a habit of pressing on the wrong side and use a pressing cloth on all fabrics except cottons. Always press all stitching flat to remove the slight pucker before pressing seams open or before turning.

To open plain seams in wools, dampen the center of the seam line with a small brush or the finger tip dipped in water. Press first with tip of iron on center line.

To press plain seams flat in rayon, silk, wool, use a strip of heavy wrapping paper under each edge of seam. This prevents the mark of the seam edges from showing on the right side.

Courtesy of What's New in Home Economics
Press the turned edge of shaped or bias lapped seams—first machine stitched close to the seam line—to save basting.

Shrink the sleeve cap over a pressing mit or other pad attached to wide end of sleeve board. Curve cap by drawing up one thread of long machine stitching and place over pad on sleeve board. With dampened pressing cloth and tip of iron, shrink out the fullness gradually, working from smooth part into gathers.

Shrink fullness of skirt hem before finishing edge. Space fullness with long machine stitching; place strip of heavy paper between hem and skirt and steam press; work into gathers at right angles.

Keep blouse, jacket, coat or dress on a hanger after shoulder or lengthwise seams have been stitched and pressed. This saves time, makes assembling the garment easier and adds to a professional look.

First press the stitching and the folded edge of darts and tucks flat, then press to one side over a strip of heavy paper.

Press curved darts, curved seams in a princess bodice or rounded shoulder-into-sleeve seam over a tailor's cushion. Press sleeve seams, shoulder seams and other detail on a sleeve board.

To avoid basting marks at edge of hem or facing, steam lightly, remove that part of basting and complete pressing.

Avoid "shining" the turned edge of shaped collars, lapels, pocket flaps, by placing a piece of heavy paper (cut to fit) just inside seam ridge before pressing to help to equalize the thickness.