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## HEG88-237 Sewing With Stripes

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## Sewing With Stripes

**Sewing with stripes is easier when you know what pitfalls to avoid. This Guide covers pattern selection, yardage requirements, stripe strategies and more.**

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*Rose Marie Tondl -- Extension Clothing Specialist*

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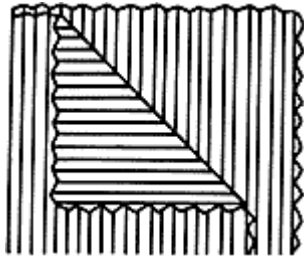
Any way you line them up, stripes make a striking fashion statement. You can be as bold or as subtle as you like with stripes. Nothing gives a garment less appeal than stripes that do not meet and match at seams.

Simply defined, a stripe is a band or line which may be wide, narrow or in-between. Stripes can be horizontal vertical or diagonal, even or uneven, and one color, two color or multicolor. Stripes can be printed onto or woven into fabric. They can be knitted into fabric, too.

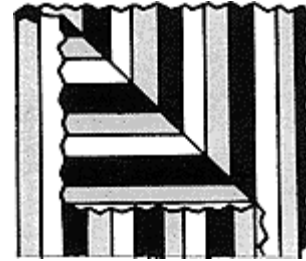
Fabrics with printed stripes should be examined carefully to be sure they are printed on grain. Avoid those that are printed off-grain.

On-grain fabric contains a perfect right angle of lengthwise and crosswise yarns of woven fabric, or wales and courses of knit fabric. In off-grain fabric the threads do not form a perfect right angle.

An even or balanced stripe repeats the same pattern on both the right and left of the dominant stripe. To determine if the strip is even, fold the fabric in half, lining up the dominant stripe. Turn back the top corner of fabric at a right angle. If lines at the diagonal fold match in both width and color, the stripe is even, or balanced. If the lines don't match, the design is uneven or unbalanced.



**Even stripe**



**Uneven stripe**

An uneven or unbalanced stripe has a different arrangement or color of stripes to the right and the left of the dominant stripe.

### **Pattern Selection**

Patterns with few seams are the best choice for stripes because the pattern lines and the fabric design won't compete with each other. Princess seams, eased seams, bias seams and long darts will detract from the visual appeal and distort the design.

Check the back of the pattern envelope to see if the yardage section recommends the use of a stripe. Do not use a stripe if the pattern envelope is marked "not suitable for stripes."

### **Yardage Requirements**

If a pattern is shown in stripes, yardage will be given on the envelope for that type of stripe. If a pattern is suitable for stripes, but extra yardage is not given, allow extra fabric for matching.

Here is a simple way to figure the extra amount needed for horizontal stripes or unbalanced vertical stripes:

1. count the major pattern pieces;
2. measure the width of the stripe repeat;
3. multiply the number of major pattern pieces by the width of the repeat.

For example, if your pattern has four major pieces and the width repeat is three inches, you need 12 extra inches of striped fabric.

### **Stripe Strategy**

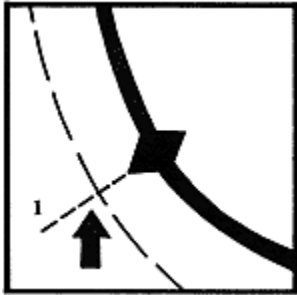
Make all pattern adjustments before you begin to lay out the pattern. Seams may not match if changes are made after cutting.

Think how the pattern pieces will fit together. Do you want the stripes to run up and down, across or diagonally?

Even or balanced stripes are easiest to match. You can use a "without nap" pattern layout. If the stripe is uneven or unbalanced, use a "with nap" layout.

"Without nap" refers to the even stripe that has no one-way design. The "with nap" layout refers to the uneven stripe with a one-way design.

When pinning a pattern to striped fabric, match stripes at seam lines, not cutting lines. Draw a line through each notch and across the seam line. Where the two lines meet is the match point. Use the dots on the seam line of patterns as match points, too.



When you cut a double layer of fabric, pin the layers together along the stripe lines so that the stripes in both layers match exactly. Pins prevent the fabric from shifting while you are cutting.

### **The Match Game with Crosswise Stripes**

The key to striping is in the matching. The point to remember is that the smaller the stripes, the easier they are to match.

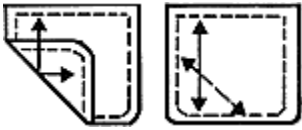
- Match the stripes at center front and back, at side seams and front armhole seams of set-in sleeves. Stripes may not match at shoulder seams, darts and back armhole seams.
- Match front and back notches of kimono sleeves at the shoulder seam line. If the outer seam on the front and back are the same, the sleeve can be matched all the way from neckline to sleeve hem.
- On raglan sleeves, match stripes at the front and back seam lines starting at the shoulder and moving to underarm.
- Place the dominant stripe at the hem and sleeve edges unless the dominant stripe falls at the bustline and hipline. Adjust so the dominant stripe is not at the bust or hip, for a more flattering look.
- For curved hems, place a less noticeable stripe at the bottom, instead of the dominant stripe.



#### **Crosswise stripe**

- If you prefer not to match pockets, flaps, facings, etc., plan design details on the bias or the

opposite direction of the stripe. Draw a new bias grain line by folding pattern pieces so the grain line arrow is at a right angle to itself. Unfold the pattern piece and draw the new bias grain line on the crease.



Crosswise stripes, whether even or uneven, should appear as one continuous line around the body. Plan a two-piece outfit so the repeat of the stripes will not be broken where the garments meet.

To create chevrons with crosswise stripes, the pattern must be placed on the true bias. Some patterns are designed to be cut on the bias while others need to be changed.

To change to the bias using a pattern with its original grain line, follow the directions as given when putting a pocket pattern on the bias. The new grain line arrow will be placed on the lengthwise grain of fabric. Do both front and back pattern pieces. Uneven crosswise stripes will chevron on shaped, curved or bias seams.



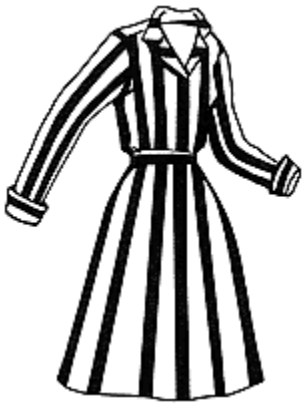
### **Reversible diagonal**

## **The Match Game with Lengthwise Stripes**

Fold the fabric down the middle of the dominant stripe and use it at the center on all major garment sections. These are the bodice, skirt and sleeve.

Collars, cuffs and yokes usually are cut on the cross grain of the fabric so the stripes run horizontally.

Align buttonholes with the direction of the stripes. If stripes are large, match the color of the button to the color of the stripe.



### **Dominant lengthwise stripe**

Match patch pockets, pocket flaps and cuffs; or, if you prefer, run the stripes in the opposite direction or cut them on the bias.

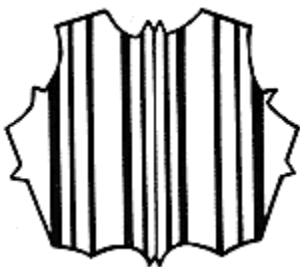
On two-piece garments, lengthwise stripes should match where top meets bottom at center front and center back.

If the pattern pieces have straight seam lines, the stripe will match evenly lengthwise. If the seam line is curved, the stripe will create a V-shape or chevron.

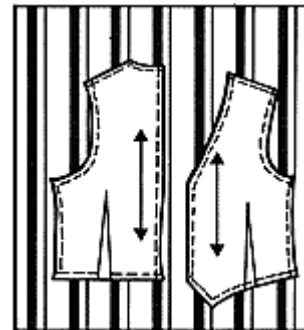
To see how your fabric will chevron, try this test. Fold fabric in half along the length of a dominant stripe. Turn back a corner of the fabric. If the stripes form chevrons, so will the lengthwise seams. Uneven lengthwise stripes can be made to chevron only if the fabric is reversible.

For uneven vertical stripes, decide if the stripes design will repeat itself around the garment in one direction or will repeat itself to the right and left of center front and center back.

A mirror image results when the stripe design to the right of center on one half of the garment forms the opposite sequence to the left of center. For a "mirror-image" look, the garment must have a center front and back seam and must be made from reversible fabric. In this stripe design the pattern sequence of stripes does not continue around the body but matches in reverse.



**Layout for unbalanced stripes  
Single layer fabric**



**Layout as shown two times, so you have  
pieces that are exactly the same.**

To create the mirror image look, lay the pattern piece on a single thickness of fabric so the center seam line is on a dominant stripe. Cut out. Without flipping the pattern, place the same pattern piece on a

second area of fabric and match exactly. Cut out. Reverse the second piece of fabric and you have two pieces ready for stitching. A mirror image is formed so the stripe becomes balanced from the right and left of center.



**Non-reversible**

### **Diagonally Striped Fabric**

The guidelines for diagonally striped fabric are different from those for lengthwise and crosswise stripes. Select a pattern with as few seams as possible. Styles with straight lines and set-in sleeves are best.

Avoid curved or shaped seams, bias darts, kimono sleeves and V-necklines since they will make matching impossible.

Extra yardage generally is given for patterns showing garments in diagonally striped fabric. If no yardage requirement is given, use a "with nap" yardage.

Diagonal stripes can be made to chevron by turning pattern pieces. Uneven diagonal stripes will chevron if the fabric is reversible.

An uneven diagonally striped fabric will match in fewer places than will other types of stripes. Match the most noticeable places such as the center front and center back seams, side seams, collars and pockets.

### **Pleating a Stripe**

A stunning effect can be created by pre-pleating a stripe so only one color shows on the outside of the garment. An even, two color stripe is easiest to pleat. Use the darker color stripe on the outside of the pleats, so it won't show through the lighter one. A multi-colored stripe will work, as long as one color is repeated regularly.

Pre-pleated fabric requires additional yardage. The wider the stripes and the bigger the pleats, the more fabric you will need.

Pre-pleat the fabric before cutting out the garment pieces. Allow one length of fabric for each main pattern piece. Fold the fabric along the edge of a stripe, then bring the fold to the edge of the next same-

color stripe. Baste the pleats in place and press. If your pattern has pleats, pleat the pattern before pinning it to the pre-pleated fabric.

## **Sewing Techniques**

An important step in stripe construction is to match the seams. This can be done by pressing under the seam allowance of one section to be matched and overlapping it onto the corresponding pieces, matching raw edges underneath. Slipstitch along the folded edge from the outside. On the inside fold back the pressed edge and machine stitch along the seam line.

Use double-faced basting tape. Place the tape along the folded edge of the seam allowance and match stripes. As you stitch be careful not to stitch through the tape.

Sergers feed the fabric evenly, matching stripes as the stitching is done. Just begin with stripes matched.

Some sewing machines have an attachment called an even-feed pressure foot. It moves the top fabric at the same speed as the underneath feed dog. If you start with the stripes matching, it will continue to stay matched for the length of the seam, with some pinning.

Stripes can add a new dimension to anyone's wardrobe. With careful planning and some special construction techniques, you can create exciting design possibilities.

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