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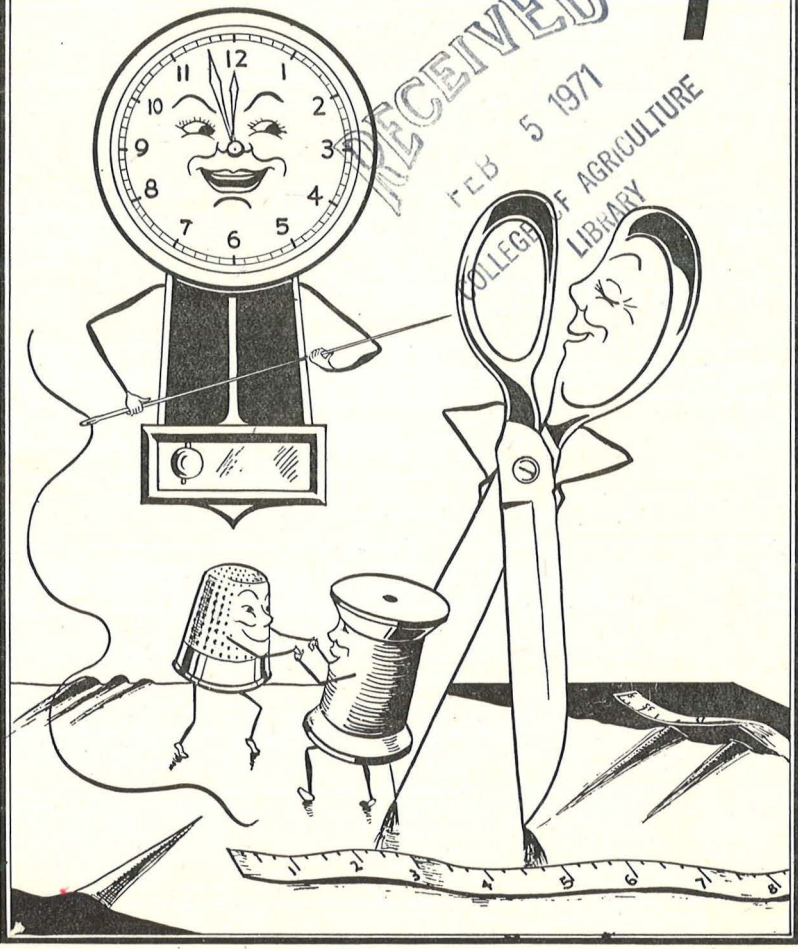
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Department of Entomology
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebr.

TIME SAVERS In Sewing



EXTENSION SERVICE, AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, LINCOLN
EXTENSION CIRCULAR 471

TIMESAVERS IN SEWING

HELEN ROCKE

A collar with lumpy corners is not easy to stitch and requires more time to iron; it presents as well a less attractive appearance. A sleeve that binds makes the job you are doing seem more difficult and keeps you at it longer. It takes time and effort to get into a dress with complicated or hard-to-reach fastenings.

Women and girls on the alert for time and energy savers may find helpful suggestions for sewing and clothing timesavers in the following paragraphs and illustrations.

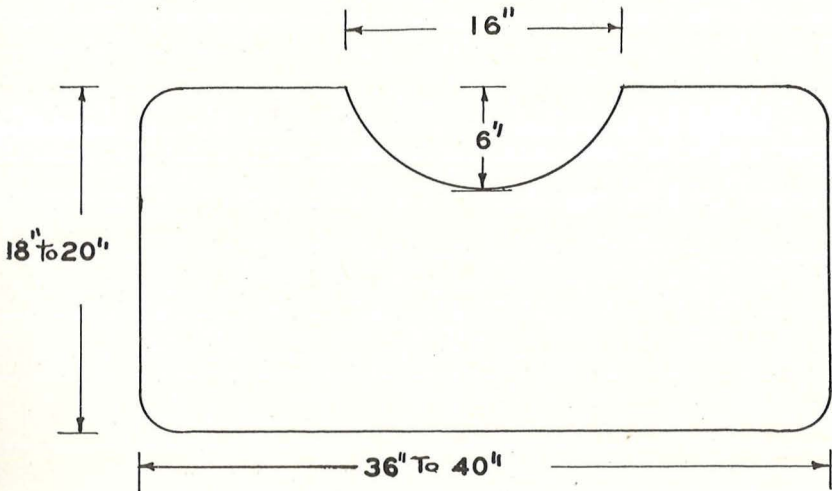
GETTING READY

When and Where to Sew

When there is much sewing to be done, one can accomplish more if time is planned so that work is not interrupted for several hours.

Assemble the sewing equipment, patterns, and materials in a convenient place where there is good light. A firm flat surface at the proper height to prevent stooping is important. A piece of oilcloth rough side up or a thin cotton blanket will protect the dining room table if it is used for cutting, and it also helps to keep the cloth from slipping out of place.

It is important to be able to sit and work at a table while sewing. Cloth is more easily handled if resting on a flat surface and more satisfactory work is done. Curved and bias edges are likely to stretch and lose shape if the pieces are held on the lap.



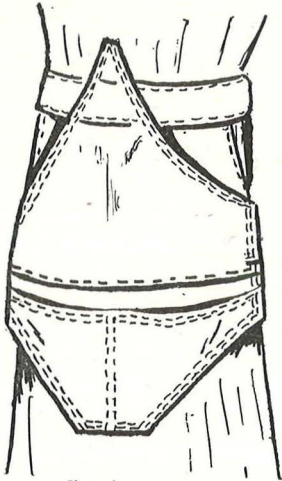
Suggested dimensions for making a lapboard

A card table or lap-board is convenient for some types of sewing. A turkish towel on the small table helps to keep slippery material in place. If pinned around the leaf of the machine it will help to keep such material in place as it is being stitched.

Small Equipment

Essential small equipment includes sharp scissors, pins, needles of various sizes, tapeline, thread, a long and short ruler, tailor's chalk, a pencil, hem gauge, and a thimble. A thimble protects the fingers and makes it possible to sew quickly and easily. Use one that fits snugly and has deep indentations so that the head of the needle will not slip.

You will like a small apron with deep pockets across the lower edge, or one like the illustration, to keep equipment handy as you work.



Sewing apron

Wrist Pincushions.—A small pincushion worn on the wrist is a time and motion saver during many sewing processes, and especially when cutting and fitting. A convenient size is made from a four-inch square of firmly woven wool or velvet material. Fold the square diagonally with the wrong side out, and stitch, leaving a one-inch opening. Turn and stuff with wool or hair and sew up the opening. Sew narrow elastic to the corners of the diagonal side. Five or six inches of elastic is the average length used.

You may also like a small pincushion or several thicknesses of soft cloth fastened to the sewing machine head. It provides a handy place to put pins which are taken out of the material as you are stitching.

The Sewing Machine

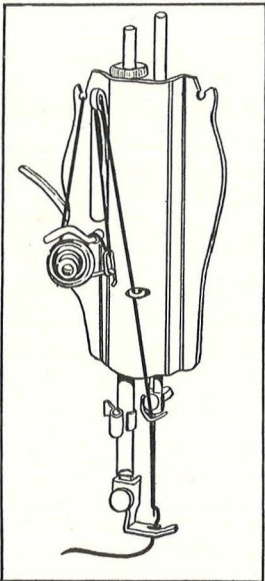
Be sure your sewing machine is clean, well oiled, and in good running order. Learn how to test the tensions and to change the length of stitch for different materials. Fifteen stitches to an inch gives a good length of stitch for most materials. Test the tension and length of stitch on a sample of the material which is cut on the same grain of material as the piece you are going to stitch.

Before you begin stitching pull the under thread up from the bobbin and draw both threads back under the presser foot. Hold them loosely until you start to stitch. This prevents bunching of thread during the first few stitches, and results in neater work and saving of time in finishing.

Train yourself to finish stitching with the needle bar up and the take-up lever at its highest point. Leave at least two inches of thread

coming from the needle. Otherwise the needle will come unthreaded and time is wasted in rethreading.

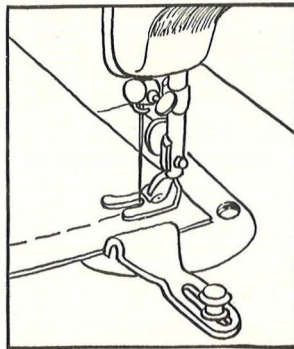
Make a practice of using the seam guide on your machine to keep seams even in width and to make other rows of straight stitching. The illustration shows a seam guide in place ready for the stitching of a seam.



Finish stitching with take-up lever at highest point

Arrange to do a lot of stitching at one time. Try to stitch without breaking the thread between pieces of the garment. This saves time and thread.

Knowing how to begin and carry through a problem or construction process in sewing is a timesaver. A few basic suggestions are given here.



Seam guide

CHOOSING PATTERNS AND MATERIAL

Check your measurements—hip, bust, and waist, and compare with those given on the pattern envelope. Select the size that has measurements most nearly like yours in bust and waist and alter the skirt to fit. Don't necessarily get the same size in a pattern as you buy in ready-to-wear clothes. The measurements may not be the same.

Choose patterns with simple lines and few pieces. If you have never made a dress before, choose a style that is easy to make and easy to iron. A good choice for the first dress is one with collarless neck or plain collar, smooth sleeves, gored skirt, and few buttonholes. If making house dresses and aprons, look for the special patterns that have been designed for comfort, free action and convenience.

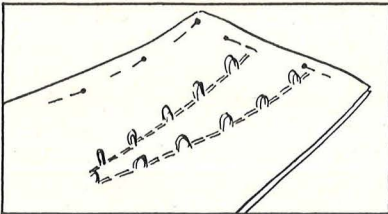
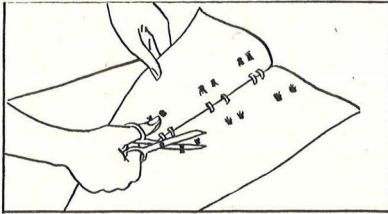
Choose material that will wear well, is easy to handle, and does not require too much seam finishing. Don't forget to consider laundering or cleaning qualities, and whether it will be easy to press or iron. Buy the thread and other findings as buttons, tape, fastenings, and trimming at the same time you buy the material.

Using the Pattern and Cutting

Study the guide with your pattern, read directions carefully and learn what each marking means. You may want to make a cardboard gauge with the same seam and hem measurements as the pattern. Make necessary alterations in the pattern before cutting the garment.

Place the pattern carefully watching the guides for placing with the straight of the material. Use pins or weights to hold the pattern in place. Cut with long full strokes of the shears to give an even edge. Cut close to the pattern unless you're adding more seam allowance. In that case, be sure you cut so the extra amount is the same on all seams. It is better not to cut out the notches. Instead mark the notches with tailor's chalk or cut small projections beyond the edge of the pattern.

Mark center front, center back of a garment and the lengthwise grain of the sleeves with a different color of thread than that to be used for basting.



Tailor's tacks

Mark all perforations needed on the wrong side of the goods. Mark the perforations for the seam lines, particularly if you have added extra seam allowance. On dark fabrics put a pin through at each perforation; then mark where the pin shows through with tailor's chalk. On light material use pencil, or make tailor's tacks with a double thread of colored darning or embroidery cotton.

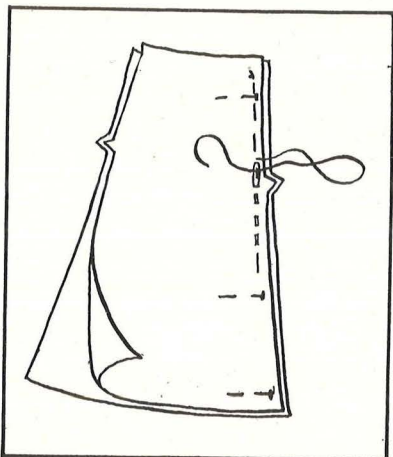
Tailor's tacks are made by taking a small back stitch in each perforation. The stitch is made through both thicknesses of cloth if it has been cut double. Leave long loops of thread between stitches. Clip the threads at the top of each loop to remove the paper pattern. If the fabric is double, pull the two pieces apart gently, taking care not to pull out the tacks. Clip the threads between the two pieces.

It is a good plan to leave the pattern pieces on the cut sections of cloth until the garment is to be assembled. As the pattern is removed, draw the lines on which you are to stitch . . . darts, tucks, pleats, and the like . . . by connecting the perforation markings with pencil or chalk lines as indicated in the illustration.

Pinning and Basting

When putting dresses or similar garments together try to plan your work so there will be as few trips as possible to the sewing machine, to the iron, and for fitting. Do as much of a certain special process at one time as you can, as cutting, stitching, pressing, fitting. For example, plan to do all lengthwise stitching after the first fitting during one sitting at the sewing machine. Belts, bound buttonholes, and pockets may be stitched at this time. If two different colors of thread are used plan to do all the stitching with one color at the same time. Then you will be ready to do much of the pressing, pinking, or overcasting at one time.

Pin and baste all darts, tucks, seams in the waist and sleeves. Baste the lengthwise seams, as shoulder, underarm and sleeve, and pin the crosswise seams as in collar, cuff, armseye, waistline, and hem for the first fitting. Do not do any machine stitching until after the garment has been fitted.



Pins placed at right angles to edge of material—notches cut outward

Learn to put pins into material carefully and accurately. Take up as little of the cloth as necessary to hold the pieces together. This helps to keep pins from falling out. Pins placed at right angles to the edge are easy to pull out when basting or stitching. Pins put in this way hold the goods smooth when the pattern is pinned to it.

After one has become experienced, some straight seams may be pinned instead of basted before stitching if the cloth is firmly woven and not slippery. Baste carefully all bias and curved edges and slippery or creepy cloth.

For hand basting, take one long stitch and two or three short stitches. These hold better than even stitches and are more satisfactory for fitting.

Pin before you baste. Lay the pieces you are working with on a table or flat surface. Match notches and the beginnings and endings. Pin at each of these places; then the basting or additional pinning can be done quickly and accurately.

Bastings should be just off the stitching line because they are difficult to remove when covered with machine stitching. In basting a seam with one edge longer or fuller than the other, keep the full side uppermost.

Clip any bastings and remove as soon as they are no longer needed so that the work will be finished as it progresses. A seam should have

the basting thread removed, should be trimmed, finished, and pressed before crossing it with another seam.

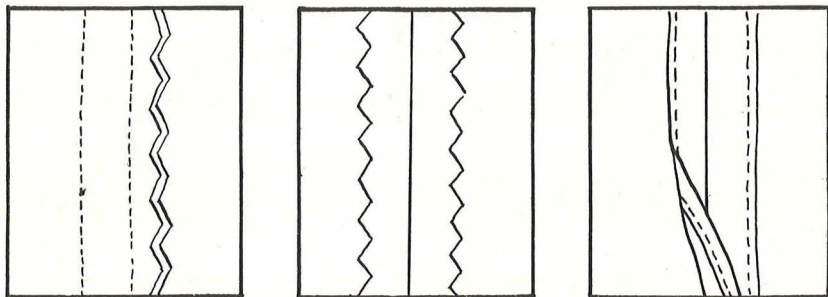
Seams

A good seam finish requires a seam allowance of $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch. If your pattern has a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch allowance, add another $\frac{1}{8}$ inch all around each pattern piece. Be sure to mark the perforations for the stitching line. It may be a good plan to leave a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch allowance on the lower edge of the waist section and on the side seams of waist and skirt.

Some good seam finishes are shown in the illustrations. In general, seams should be strong so they won't pull out and seam allowances finished flat so they won't show on the outside. A good seam for firm wash cottons and other material of the same weight and texture, is the plain seam stitched together a second time about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the first seam line. The edges may be pinked. This same seam may be used on materials that fray such as spun rayon and light wool, if the edges are overcast.

The plain seam pressed open with edges pinked or overcast is best for wool and other firm fabrics. The outside edges of these seams may also be machine stitched about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from the outside edge of each side of the seam.

Another seam finish for light to medium weight goods is the plain seam pressed open. Then turn under each seam edge about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and stitch along the trimmed edges.



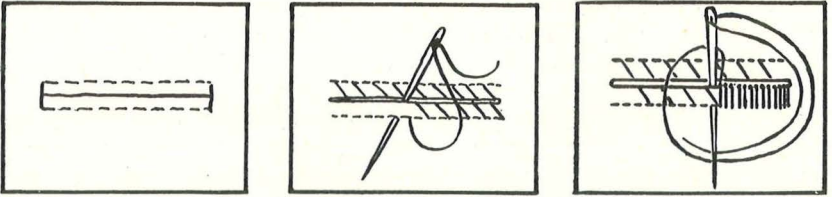
Seam Finishes

Buttonholes

To determine the length for a buttonhole, measure the button to be used and add about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch for the thickness of the button. 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 the buttonholes with chalk, pencil, or basting. Be sure to keep the line straight with the thread of the material. When buttons are to be placed exactly at the center front, start the line for the buttonhole $\frac{1}{16}$ 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 the center front.

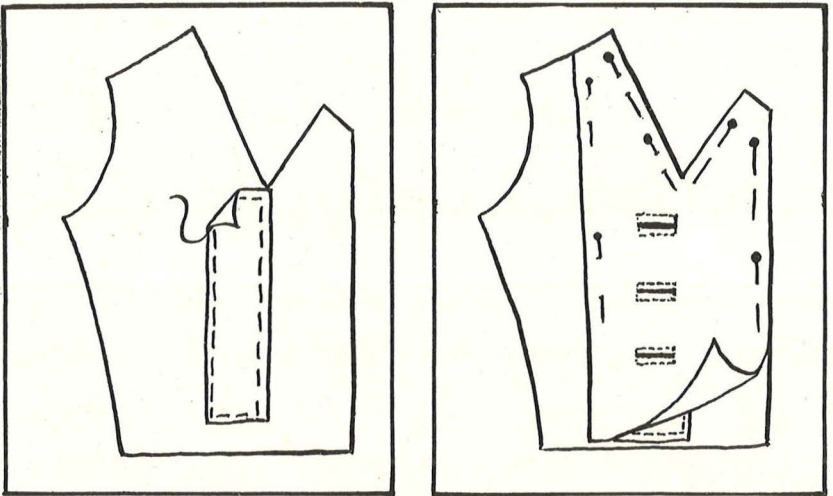
Worked buttonholes are easy to make and are suitable and popular for wash dresses. To keep the material firm and to form a guide for working the buttonhole, machine-stitch about $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch from each side of the chalk or basting line marking the length of the button-



Worked buttonholes

hole. Cut along the marked line and overcast the cut edges. Work the buttonhole with ordinary mercerized thread using the buttonhole stitch. Make the stitches long enough to just cover the machine stitching. Strengthen the ends of the buttonhole with several small stitches.

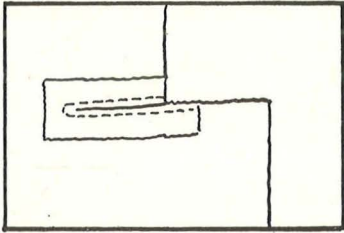
A **timesaver for making bound buttonholes** is to cut a piece of material long enough to cover all the buttonholes to be made and one inch wider than the buttonhole. Baste this on the dress where the buttonholes are to be placed, with the right side to the right side of the dress.



Timesavers for making bound buttonholes

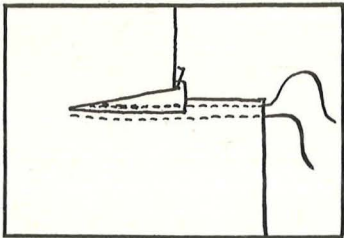
Make a tracing on tissue paper of the pattern piece with the markings for the buttonholes. Pin the tracing to the front of the dress over the strip of material and stitch around each marking. Keep the corners square by leaving the needle in the material when lifting the presser

foot to stitch across the ends. Count the stitches on the narrow end to keep the width of the buttonholes uniform. When all the buttonholes are stitched tear the tissue paper away, cut the strip of material between the buttonholes and finish the buttonholes in the usual way.

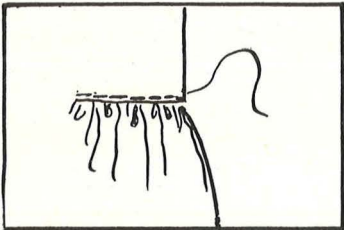


Gathers

Gathers of most any kind are more even and more easily adjusted if put in by machine stitching. Lengthen the stitch so there are about 7 or 8 to the inch and make two rows of stitchings. 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.



Make a second row of stitching in the seam allowance $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from the first row. Tie the threads at one end or wind them around a pin to keep them from slipping. Pull the bobbin thread to gather the material the desired amount.



How to reinforce gathers along a slash.—Cut a facing the shape of the section to be gathered. This should be large enough to extend an inch beyond the sides and end of the slash. Place over the marking for the slash with right sides of material together. Stitch around the slash marking. Then cut both the slash and the facing at the same time. The under facing attached to the lower piece that is to be gathered, should be pressed so that it extends up. The facing on the upper edge should be pressed back to form a facing.

Reinforce gathers along a slash

Make two rows of gathering stitches on the under edge and draw up the gathering stitches so the two edges will be even. Lay the upper faced edge over the gathered edge and top stitch.

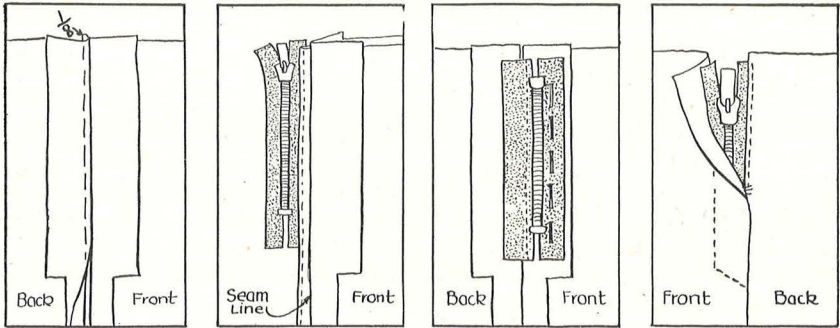
Jiffy Zipper

There are a number of ways to put a zipper in a skirt or side dress opening. This is a quick and easy way and one which prevents stretching of bias seams.

Sew up the placket opening on the fitted line using a basting or long machine stitch; then press the seam open.

Fold the back edge of the seam forward to make a $\frac{1}{8}$ inch turn. Baste and stitch to the zipper beginning at the lower end.

Next turn the dress to the right side and stitch across the top of the zipper and down the length of it, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in from the seam, and across the lower edge to the side seam. Rip the seam basting along the placket opening and the zipper is complete.



Jiffy zipper

This method requires at least a half-inch seam allowance. If there is not enough width on the front seam, seam binding may be stitched to it before putting the zipper in place.

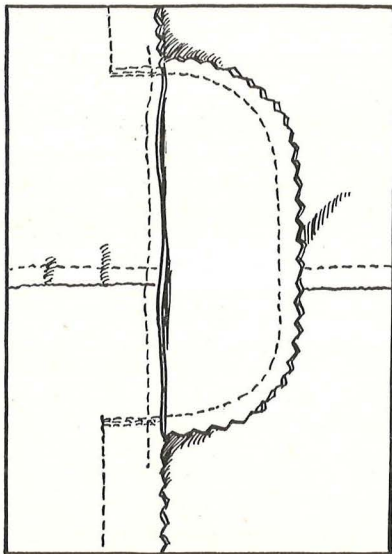
Plackets

Slot plackets are satisfactory side closings for house dresses and are simple closings to make.

Cut two pieces of cloth like the dress material two inches wide and 7 inches long for each placket to be made. Fold crosswise and round the corners. Pin to the dress with the crosswise creases at the waist where the skirt joins the facing and the dress together.

Stitch placket facings to the side seams of the dress using a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam.

Fold the dress so that the side seams are straight and the placket facings are together. Then beginning at the waist side seam sew around the placket facing to the skirt side seam retracing the stitching at each end.

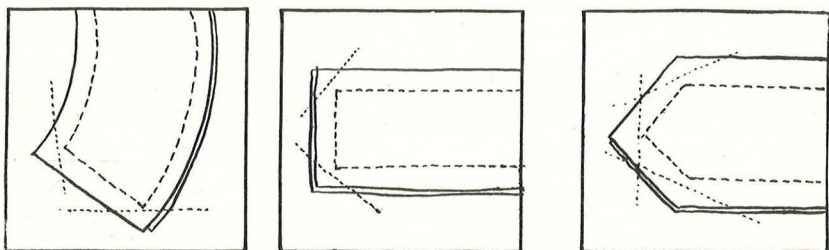


Slot placket

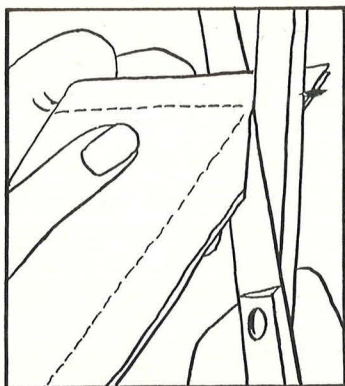
Sew a hook and eye at the waistline. No snaps are needed on the placket.

True Corners and Smooth Finishes

Smooth, clear cut corners on a pointed collar, cuffs, or belt ends add a professional appearance to a blouse or dress. First make a true turn or corner when stitching the collar or belt. Then trim off the extra



Clip corners like these diagonally before turning material



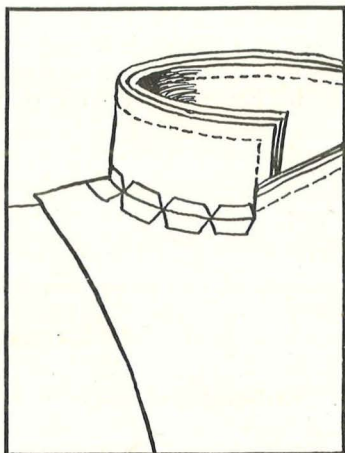
seam allowance at the point or corner to make it less bulky. Turn the corner right side out. Do not use the point of the scissors because they may pierce the cloth and leave a ragged edge. Use a threaded needle to take a stitch deep into the seam at the corner. Then holding both ends of the thread, pull it gently to bring out the seam and corner. Repeat the process if necessary and the corner will be eased out gradually and smoothly.

Before turning an inward curved edge, trim the seam and clip into the seam allowance with sharp scissors to get a flat, smooth finish. On out-

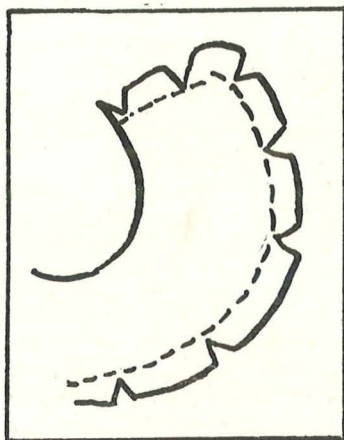
ward curves, snip small notches in the material to remove extra bulk. When seams are covered by binding or facing, trim them for a smoother finish. In heavy material, one edge of the seam may be cut shorter than the other.

Belts

The use of an inexpensive quality of grosgrain ribbon saves time in making fabric belts. It gives firmness to the belt which adds neatness and style to the dress. Use a piece of the ribbon the width of the belt to be made. Cut a lengthwise piece of cloth three times the width of the ribbon. Lay the ribbon on the cloth slightly to one side of the center. Fold the shorter width of cloth over the ribbon. Then fold the wider edge over turning under the extra material to meet the edge of the belt. Baste and stitch both edges of the belt or if desired make several rows of stitching down the center to give added firmness.



Snip inward curved edges



Notch outward curved edges

Hems

A quick way to finish the hem of a wash dress is to even off the turned up part of the hem to the desired width. Two inches is the standard width hem for women's dresses. Then turn under the cut edge $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and press. Machine stitch close to the turned under edge. Next pin and baste the hem to the skirt matching the seams. Press hem in an up and down direction, then sew to skirt with a hemming stitch.

Press as You Sew

Careful pressing, and pressing as you work is a real time saver when sewing. Sections of a garment are easy to handle for pressing. Seams and other edges cannot be joined smoothly until they have been pressed. Remember the old rule is—never join one seam with another until both have been pressed. Pressing as you work shortens the time for the final pressing of the garment. If a dress has been made in this way, the final pressing should mean only special pressing of the hem, and probably only a slight touching up otherwise.

Press the hems of dresses and other wide hems up and down rather than across or around to keep them from rippling.