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Sewing with Voile

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What is voile? Voile is a sheer semi-crisp fabric made with highly twisted yarns with a plain weave in natural and synthetic fibers. Voile is a French word for veil and it is for this end use that this fabric was originally made. Other semi-crisp fabrics include lawn, dimity, batiste and gauze. Crisp transparent fabrics include organdy, organza, dotted Swiss and handkerchief linen.

Patterns

Consider patterns with few seams since construction details can be seen from the right side of the garment. Gathers and pleats are more attractive than darts. Look for patterns that fit loosely with flowing lines for dresses, blouses, shirts, vests, and pants. Think beyond patterns meant just for sheers. Mix sheers for a different yet intriguing effect. Consider using a sheer voile only in the sleeves or yoke area of a garment or for collars or cuffs. For something different, make underlined voile drawstring pants.

Preshrink

Check the care label at the end of the bolt. Edge stitch the cut edges to prevent further fraying in the washing process. Wash the fabric in the same manner as the finished garment. You can either hand or machine wash using a gentle cycle. Tumble dry at a low temperature or line dry. Check for any shrinkage.

Layout/Cutting

Before cutting, check the fit of the pattern. To keep fabric from slipping, baste the selvages together. Cover the cutting table with tissue paper, a sheet or flannel-backed tablecloth with the flannel side up. Secure the pattern with pins in the seam allowance or use pattern weights. Cut fabric with sharp shears or use a rotary cutter and mat. Mark the wrong side of the fabric with masking or hair tape to keep from being confused. If the fabric has a sheen, use a "with nap" layout.

Marking

Experiment with different types of marking techniques. Try tailor tacks, marking pens, or chalk. Avoid using tracing wheel and paper so as not to damage the fabric. Snipping into the fabric weakens the seam allowance and may be visible on the finished garment.

Interfacing

Eliminate interfacing wherever possible. You don't want to spoil the appearance of the garment with the interfacing showing. If interfacing is needed, use self-fabric, flesh-colored tulle, or organza. Cut a front facing twice as wide so when folded it can be the facing and interfacing.

Needles

Start with a new needle. It will help to prevent snagging and puckering of fabric. Select size 60/8 or 70/10. Test different needle sizes and types such as universal, sharp or a microtex (has a very thin shaft and a slim, sharp point) on seam samples.

Sewing

Set the stitch length from 1.25 to 2 mm or 12 to 15 stitches per inch. Select a fine embroidery cotton or a long-staple polyester thread. Removing sewn stitches from sheers may cause the fabric to tear. You may need to reduce the pressure on the pressure foot. Use a throat plate with a small hole to prevent the fabric from being drawn into a throat plate with a large hole for zig zagging. If your machine has an adjustable needle, move the needle to the right or left for sewing success. You may need to hand baste the seams together before sewing. Don't back stitch on sheers to avoid bulk. Instead start with a shortened stitch for three or four stitches, then adjust to appropriate stitch length. If fabric catches on the feed dog, stitch with tissue paper under the fabric, then tear it away after stitching.

Seam Finishes

Special seams are often used on sheer fabric to make the seams as invisible as possible. The best seams are narrow and neatly finished. There are various seam methods. The type you choose depends on the type of machine you have, the seam shape or location within the garment. The following seams enclose the seam allowance: French seam, mock French seam, flat-felled seam, self-bound seam and double stitched seam.

Pressing

Since voile can be made of a synthetic fiber, test the heat of the iron on scraps of fabric. Start with a low temperature and increase it until the appropriate temperature is reached for your fabric. Use a light touch with little or no steam. Protect the right side of the fabric by using a press cloth.

Hemming

Before hemming, allow the garment to hang for 24 hours. Sheer fabrics look best with a narrow hem or a very deep hem on straight edges. Narrow hems include a very narrow topstitched hem, horse hair braid hem, a rolled machine stitched hem using a hemmer foot, a hand-rolled hem and a rolled hem using the serger.

File NF431 under TEXTILES, CLOTHING & DESIGN

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