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HEG83-173 Follow That Grainline

Linda K. Biles

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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Follow That Grainline

This publication covers the importance of following fabric grainline in pattern layout and cutting, staystitching, sewing seams, pressing, topstitching and fitting for a professional-looking garment.

Linda K. Biles, Extension Clothing Specialist

- [Select and Prepare the Fabric](#)
- [Pattern Layout and Cutting](#)
- [Staystitching](#)
- [Directional Stitching for Seams](#)
- [Pressing](#)
- [Topstitching](#)
- [Fitting](#)

Strict attention to the grainline is one of the most critical factors in cutting and sewing professional-looking garments. Following the grainline is important when pinning the pattern to the fabric, cutting the fabric, and sewing the garment.

Select and Prepare the Fabric

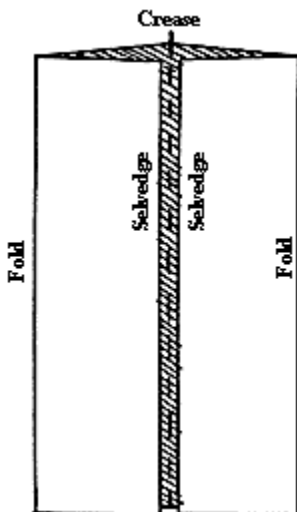


Figure 1.

The first step in making a quality garment is selecting fabric that is "on-grain" (see *G91-1028, Preparing Fabric for Use*). If the fabric is not on-grain, see if it can be straightened by using methods described in the above publication. If the fabric is off-grain and cannot be straightened, you cannot create a high quality garment.

Pattern Layout and Cutting

Pin the pattern and cut the garment sections so the grainline is placed as intended by the pattern designer. The lengthwise fabric grain is usually placed vertically on the figure; the crosswise grain goes around the body. The lengthwise threads are stronger and will provide greater garment durability when placed this way.

Lay the pattern on woven fabric so the lengthwise grainline is parallel to the selvage. Fold the fabric for layout so that the selvages are parallel (*Figure 1*). Fabric folded incorrectly will result in a garment that is "off-grain" because the threads are not parallel and perpendicular to the floor. Measure from each end of the pattern's lengthwise grainline to either the fabric's fold or selvage. Adjust the pattern so each measurement is the same (*Figure 2*).

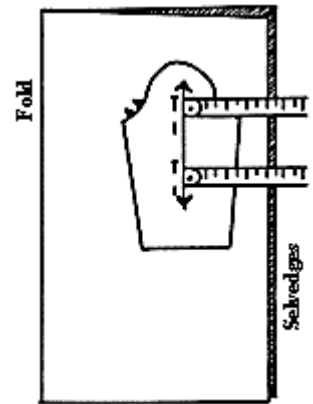
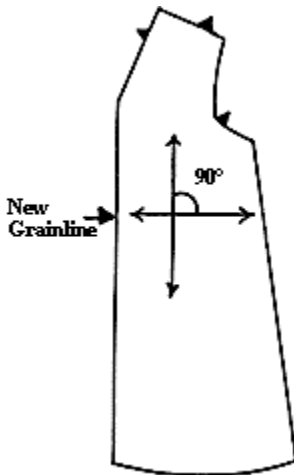


Figure 2.



The pattern's lengthwise grainline may need to be placed on the crosswise grainline of the fabric when cutting out a border print. To prevent confusion and assure accuracy, draw a new lengthwise grainline on the pattern perpendicular to the original one (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3.

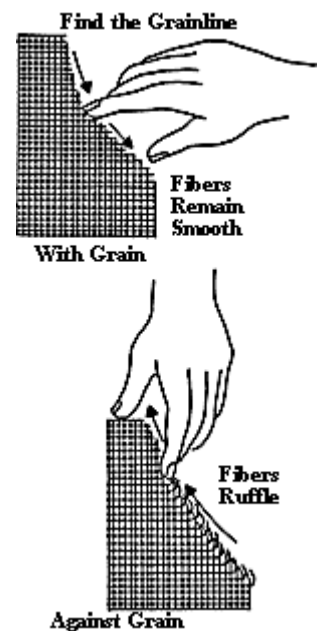
Grainline is often more difficult to determine on knits than on wovens. To find the grainline of knits, locate a lengthwise row of knitting in the center of the fabric. Fold the fabric lengthwise along this row. Measure from this folded fabric edge rather than from the cut edge when placing pattern pieces.

Staystitching

After cutting out the garment pieces, the lengthwise and crosswise threads of the fabric need to be held in place along the curved areas, which may stretch as they are handled. A stitching line, called staystitching, is needed to keep these areas in place.

Staystitching should follow the grain. Run your finger along the slanted or curved edges to determine the correct direction. If the threads ruffle up, you are moving against the grain; if they stay in place, you are moving with the grain. This is the direction the staystitching should follow (*Figure 4*).

Staystitch the garment pieces as soon as the paper pattern is removed. Areas to be staystitched and general stitching directions are shown in *Figure 5*. The arrows on the pattern seamlines are the preferred direction to stitch.



Where to Stitch

Use the same length of stitch for staystitching that is to be used for stitching the garment unless the pattern indicates otherwise. Staystitching remains in the garment, so use a matching color of thread. Do not turn or pivot at corners; stitch to the edge, remove the garment from the machine, and clip the threads close to the edge before beginning a new line of stitching.

Unless the pattern calls for stitching on the exact seamline, staystitch about 1/8 inch inside the seamline in the seam allowance. Long bias seams, such as in a circular skirt or raglan sleeve, are stitched only along the placket or shoulder area. These long seams need to stretch as the fabric stretches.

Set-In Sleeves

The set-in sleeve is cut larger than the armhole and needs to be eased in. The staystitching follows the 5/8-inch seamline so that it can be used as the ease stitch. Use a longer stitch and leave one-inch thread tails to allow the fabric to ease readily. Staystitch on the right side of the sleeve so the bobbin thread can be pulled for easing (*Figure 6*). When setting in the sleeve, there will be no ease 1/2 inch on either side of the top of the sleeve to attain a smooth, rounded cap.

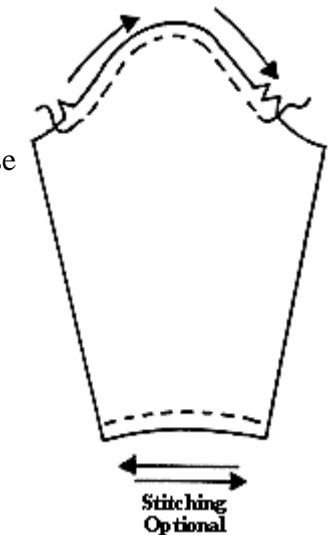


Figure 6.

Collars

Staystitching along the 5/8-inch seamline (rather than 1/8 inch from the seamline) of a circular collar and neckline will often give a better fit. Notching both the collar and the neckline will give a straight line instead of a curved line to follow for the final stitching (*Figure 7*).

Figure 7.

Figure 5.

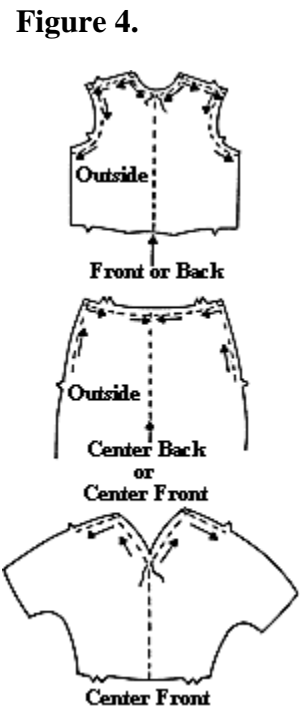
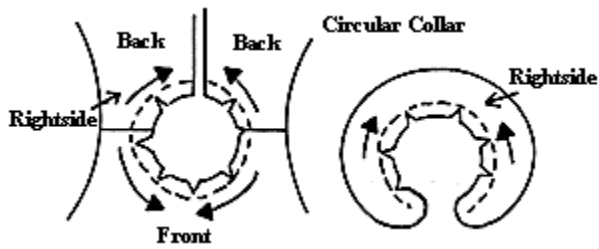


Figure 4.



Slashed or Clipped Areas

Pattern pieces often indicate "slash or clip to here" at certain construction points, such as gussets, sleeve laps, and corners joined to other garment pieces. Staystitching strengthens these areas and indicates the final stitching line for many seams (*Figure 8*). This staystitching can also serve as reinforcement stitching when the stitch length is shortened.

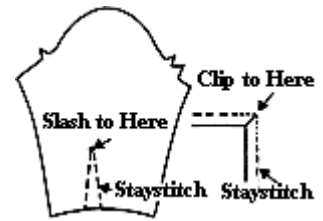
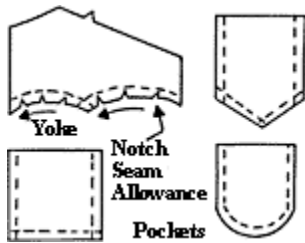


Figure 8.

Pockets, Flaps and Yokes



Staystitching on the 5/8-inch seamline allows the sharp turning of corners and prevents stretching of the bias areas (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9.

Directional Stitching for Seams

The stitching direction for the final seams is important. The same general rules apply to stitching the final seams as they do to staystitching the garment pieces (*Figure 10*). Stitch in the direction of the arrows that are printed on the pattern.

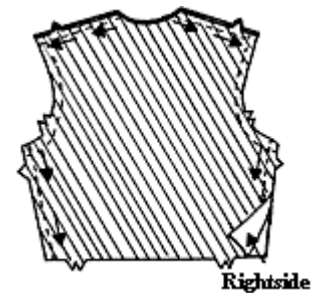


Figure 10.

Directional stitching is not needed for:

- Joining the bodice and skirt together.
- Joining the sleeve to the garment.
- Seams that are parallel to the grainline.
- Stitching true bias edges or seams.
- Joining the collar to the garment.
- Areas that have already been staystitched.

Pressing

Press seams with the grain and in the same direction they were staystitched. If a large section of fabric needs to be pressed, press it with the grain.

Topstitching

The key to successful topstitching is to topstitch all sections in the same direction. If you topstitch down one side of the front, topstitch down the other side also. When two or more rows of topstitching are used, all rows must be stitched in the same direction to prevent puckers and pulled fabric. Topstitching with the grain may cause puckers. Stitch in the same direction that creates fewest puckers.

Fitting

Check the finished garment for fit in relation to placement of grainlines. The lengthwise grain at center front and center back should be perpendicular to the floor. The crosswise grain at chest or bust and at the hips should be parallel to the floor. The lengthwise grain of the sleeve should be perpendicular to the floor from shoulder to elbow; the crosswise grain at the bicep should be parallel to the floor.

Following the grainline through all construction processes will help you achieve that perfect product.

File HEG173 under: TEXTILES, CLOTHING AND DESIGN

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