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Sewing Ups and Downs: Placement of Fabric and/or Garment Pieces for Machine Sewing

This NebGuide describes how to position fabric and garment pieces during construction to facilitate sewing and achieve a more professional look.

Anna Marie White -- Extension Clothing Specialist and Home Economics Program Coordinator

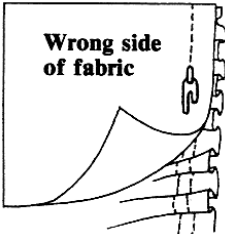
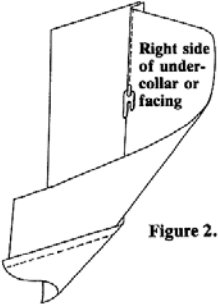
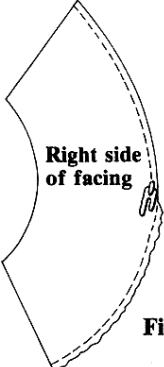
Sewing, like much of life, has its *ups* and *downs*. Sewing *ups* and *downs* might be thought of as successes or frustrations, but the *ups* and *downs* referred to here are intended to prevent frustration at the sewing machine during garment construction.

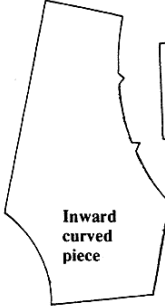
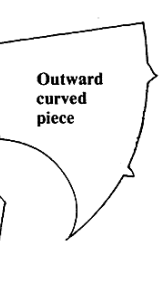
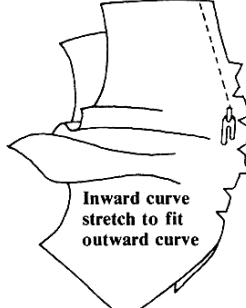
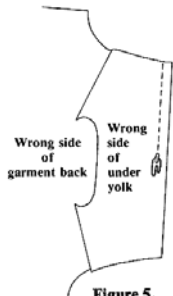
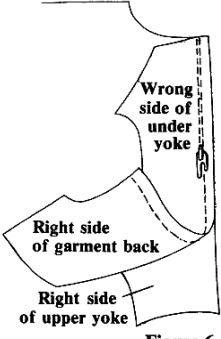
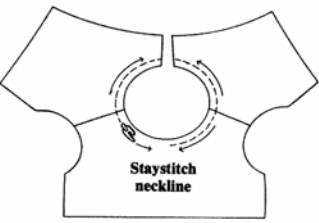
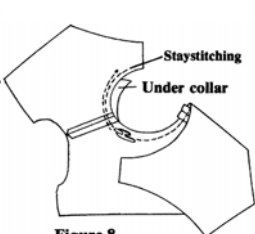
How fabrics or sections of the garment are placed when being machine stitched often affects the outcome of the stitching. It often makes a difference which layer of fabric is placed *up* and which one is *down* on the bed of the machine when stitching is done.

The action of the machine's parts causes the difference. The presser foot pushes the upper layer of fabric forward while the machine feed dog grabs at the lower layer of fabric, pulling it in the opposite direction. The normal actions of these machine parts can be a help to the seamstress, but only if the sewing *ups* and *downs* are understood and used.

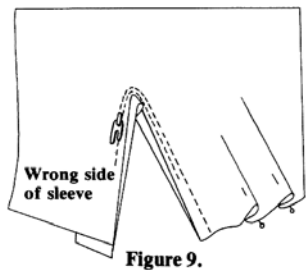
You still need to follow the general pattern instructions, but following sewing *ups* and *downs* will help you get accustomed to analyzing the seam to be stitched before positioning the layers of fabric in preparation for stitching. Remember to let the sewing machine work *with* you, not *against* you.

Type of Fabric and/or Garment Pieces	Placement of Fabric and/or Garment Pieces	
	UP	DOWN
Stitching non-fusible interfacing to fashion fabric.	Interfacing	Fashion fabric
Stitching woven fabric to knit or stretchy fabric.	Woven fabric	Knit or stretchy fabric
Stitching un-napped fabric to napped fabric. Stitch in same direction as nap (with the nap).	Un-napped fabric	Napped fabric
Stitching an ungathered edge to a gathered edge. <i>Example:</i> A ruffle stitched to the lower edge of a skirt. Two rows of gathering stitches are better than one. Place one row 1/2" from fabric edge, the second row 3/4" from fabric edge. The 5/8" stitching line will fall between the two gathering lines (<i>Figure 1</i>). Hold ungathered edge taut as you stitch.	Ungathered edge	Gathered edge

<p>Figure 1.</p> 		
<p>Understitching (sharpstitching)-- Position seam allowances against the facing. Stitch very close to, but not on, the seam line (<i>Figure 2</i>).</p>  <p>Figure 2.</p>	<p>Right side of garment facing</p>	<p>Seam allowances</p>
<p>Easing one layer of fabric to another. <i>Example:</i> Back shoulder seam eased to front shoulder seam.</p>	<p>Un-eased edge</p>	<p>Edge to be eased</p>
<p>Clean finish on facing edges -- Place one row of stitching 1/4" from raw edge of facing. Turn raw edge to wrong side of facing, making the fold on the stitch line. Stitch again 1/8" from folded edge (<i>Figure 3</i>).</p>  <p>Figure 3.</p>	<p>Right side of facing</p>	<p>1/4" turned edge</p>
<p>Princess seams where the outward (convex) curved edge is eased to the inward (concave) curved edge. Match notches. Stretch inward curve as you stitch. The seam allowance of this edge may need to be clipped to allow it to fit the outward curved edge (<i>Figure 4a and 4b</i>).</p>	<p>Inward curved edge</p>	<p>Outward curved edge</p>

   <p>Figure 4a. Figure 4b.</p>		
Stitching back yokes of shirts or blouses:		
<p>First stitching -- Place right side of under yoke to wrong side of garment back (<i>Figure 5</i>). Hold yoke taut as you stitch.</p>  <p>Figure 5.</p>	First stitching	
<p>Second stitching -- Place right side of upper yoke to right side of garment back. Stitch on the same line that holds under yoke to garment (<i>Figure 6</i>). Hold your work taut as you stitch.</p>  <p>Figure 6.</p>	Yoke	Garment back
<p>Attaching collar to garment -- Staystitch neckline of garment exactly on 5/8" seam line (<i>Figure 7</i>), then pin the collar in place. Stitch on the 5/8" staystitch line (<i>Figure 8</i>). Clip the garment seam allowance as needed to release it to fit the collar edge.</p>   <p>Figure 7. Figure 8.</p>	Second stitching	
<p>Attaching neckline facing after applying collar -- Pin facing in place. Stitch on the garment staystitch line, which is also the 5/8" seam line. Be precise.</p>	Under yoke	Upper yoke
<p>Continuous lap on sleeve placket -- Reinforce point of opening and slash as directed on</p>	Garment	Collar
<p>Attaching neckline facing after applying collar -- Pin facing in place. Stitch on the garment staystitch line, which is also the 5/8" seam line. Be precise.</p>	Garment	Facing
<p>Continuous lap on sleeve placket -- Reinforce point of opening and slash as directed on</p>	Slashed	Banding

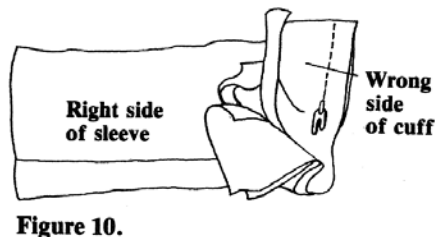
pattern guide. Pin banding strip or lap patch in place and stitch (*Figure 9*).



opening on garment

strip or lap patch

Attaching cuffs to sleeves -- Pin in place. Hold cuff taut as you stitch (*Figure 10*).

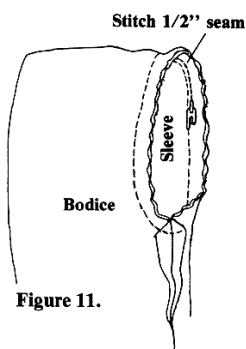


Cuff

Sleeve

Set-in sleeves -- Put one row of easing stitches on the 5/8" seam line of the sleeve cap between front and back notches. Draw up ease so sleeve fits the armhole. Pin sleeve in place and plan to stitch around the armhole twice.

First stitching -- Stitch around sleeve using a 1/2" (not 5/8") seam allowance (<*Figure 11*). Do not stitch over the ease stitching. Try for fit and check for puckers. Remove easing stitch.

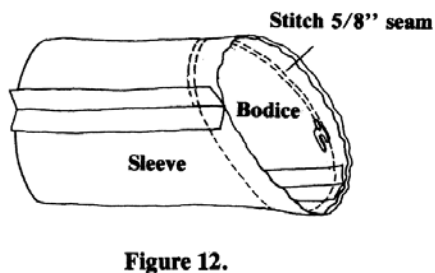


First stitching

Sleeve

Garment

Second stitching -- Reverse the position of your work, stitch around entire armhole on the 5/8" seam allowance (*Figure 12*). Hold the seam taut as you stitch.



Second stitching

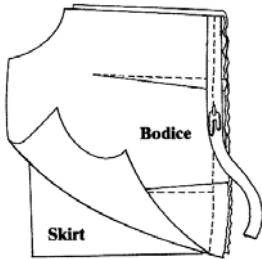
Garment

Sleeve

Taping waistline seams -- Hold tape taut as you stitch, but allow garment to move freely under the presser foot (*Figure 13*).

Tape

Garment

 <p>Figure 13.</p>		
Stitching waistband to skirt or slacks -- Hold waistband taut, but allow garment to move freely under the presser foot.	Waistband	Garment

As you continue your sewing activities, be alert to discovering other sewing *ups* and *downs*. Remember -- let your sewing machine work *with* you, not *against* you.

As you discover other *ups* and *downs*, note them in the spaces below. Knowing and following these guidelines will decrease your sewing time and increase your sewing enjoyment.

Type of Fabric and/or Garment Pieces	Placement of Fabric and/or Garment Pieces	
	UP	DOWN

File HEG205 under: TEXTILES, CLOTHING AND DESIGN

C-23, Construction

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