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## EC454 Keeping Clothes Wearable

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Extension Circular 454

August, 1932

## Keeping Clothes Wearable

This circular has been prepared for use of women's project clubs in the "Live at Home" project sponsored by county farm bureaus and the agricultural college extension service.

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# Keeping Clothes Wearable

By HELEN ROCKE

It is a good practice in every household to check over the clothing each season. It is the easiest way to determine just what clothing is on hand and what will be needed to comfortably clothe the family for the season.

Among the garments on hand, in addition to those in wearable condition, are usually some which need repairing, remodeling, or which may be made over entirely for other members of the family. After all garments have been checked over, it is a matter of determining which may be made to give further service by being freshened up by cleaning and a few slight changes, and which may be remodeled or made over.

## Cleaning and Pressing

A thoro brushing and airing is the first step in cleaning any garment that is not washable. Sometimes sponging will help freshen material. This is done by sponging the material all over with a cloth wrung out of clean water, then pressing on the wrong side. Often this will give the cloth a new appearance.

Spots are less obstinate if removed soon after coming in contact with the garment. Such substances as chalk, fuller's earth, or corn meal are known as absorbents and may be used for absorbing a light or freshly made stain. They can not be relied upon when the stain is set or very extensive. They are harmless to all fibers.

To use the absorbent powder, lay the stained fabric upon a flat surface and spread a layer of the absorbent over the stain. Work it around gently so as not to pull the fibers. As soon as it becomes gummy, shake or brush it off, and repeat the process until the bulk of the stain is removed. Then apply another layer of the absorbent and allow it to remain overnight or longer if necessary. If it is not convenient to let the stain stand overnight, place a layer of cloth or brown paper over the absorbent and apply a **warm** iron for several minutes. In the case of stains made by solid fats, which must be melted before they can be absorbed, the use of the warm iron is necessary.

Water and such liquids as ether, alcohol, acetone, gasoline, chloroform, and carbon tetrachloride are common stain solvents. A substance which dissolves a stain is called a solvent. A large number of stains can be removed by water without harm to the fabric. Unless the stain is known to be insoluble in water and the fabric water spots or the colors run, it is best to try water first. Test by placing a little water on an inconspicuous part of the garment if there seems to be danger of injuring it. The other solvents mentioned are particularly good for removing stains of a fatty or greasy nature.

In removing spots it is well to work from the wrong side of the material so that the foreign substances can be washed from the fibers without having to pass thru the material. A folded bath towel or pad of other soft material, or blotting paper placed under the spotted garment will absorb the soil and surplus liquid. Working from the outer edge of the spot toward the center will avoid spreading the stain. Professional spotters use a soft bristle brush or a pad of folded chamois skin to apply the solvent to the stain, tapping the material gently and working in toward the center of the spot. The spot is never rubbed with the chamois. If a brush is used there is never enough pressure applied to bend the bristles. Either of these motions might tend to rough up the material.

Unless a garment is perfectly clean aside from a spot or two, it is better to dry clean the whole garment because the area where the spot has been removed will be lighter and there will be a mark showing just how far the cleaning process has taken place.

All dry cleaning should be done **out of doors, away from buildings and away from fire.** A dry, warm, clear day is safer and better for dry cleaning than a cold damp day. The heavier air on a damp day does not allow the gas formed by the evaporation of the cleaning fluid to rise as quickly as when the air is less filled with moisture, making the danger of fire and explosion greater.



There are various solvents which may be used for dry cleaning. Carbon tetrachloride is probably the safest because it is non-inflammable and non-explosive. It is too expensive for general dry cleaning but is used for emergency cleaning and spot removal. It may be purchased at drug stores. Gasoline and naphtha are extremely inflammable and need to be handled with great precaution. A satisfactory cleaning solvent may be purchased from most oil companies. It is inexpensive and not as dangerous to use as naphtha or gasoline.

Enough cleaning fluid for washing and rinsing the garments should be purchased before beginning the cleaning process. The solvent should be placed in a vessel large enough to hold the garment without packing and there should be enough fluid to cover the garment well. Sometimes the solvent is heated by placing the vessel containing it in a large vessel or tub of boiling water. **Never put any cleaning solvent on the stove or try to heat it in the house.** The cleaning qualities of the solvent are increased by heating. A dry cleaning soap may be used if the garment is badly soiled.

The article to be cleaned is placed in the liquid and may be left to soak a few minutes, then rinsed back and forth a number of times in the bath before removing. (Rubbing may cause sparks. For the same reason earthen ware containers are considered safer than those of metal.) The surplus solvent is squeezed from the garment and it is then rinsed in clean solvent and hung in the air until free from odor. It usually requires a day or two to deodorize garments cleaned in solvents other than cleaner's naphtha or carbon tetrachloride. The fluid used for rinsing may be allowed to settle, then poured off in a tight container and stored out of doors for first cleaning of other garments.

Garments are usually pressed on the right side, with a heavy pressing cloth for wool and silk. If the material requires dampening, it is more satisfactory to sponge over the pressing cloth rather than the garment. In some cases paper makes a good substitute for a pressing cloth. A well padded ironing board makes the work easier and more

satisfactory. Wool materials are not pressed entirely dry to avoid shine and seam marks. In pressing, the iron is lifted and set down each time rather than being constantly rubbed over the material as is done in ironing.

### Bringing Garments Up To Date

Often a last year's garment may be made to appear new and up to date by a few slight changes. A new collar and cuff set, a new belt with buttons to match are some of the devices used. Again slight alterations in the fitting of the garment or in the length of the skirt will improve it in comfort and appearance for the wearer.

A common difficulty is having an otherwise perfectly good garment pull out at the armseye, wear or become discolored under the arms or break out at the elbow. The present fashions offer various solutions to these problems.

The sleeve that has pulled out at the armseye may be taken out and the top recut. Extra length may be added by using an inner cuff of contrasting material if the sleeve has enough width. Otherwise godet shaped insets or wide applied cuffs of contrasting material may be used. When a contrasting material is used in this way, a better effect is produced if the material is repeated in another place on the garment as in a collar, tie, vest, or some bit of trimming on the waist. Horizontal bands of a contrasting material combined with material of the garment may be used to give width and length to the lower portion of a tight, sleeve.

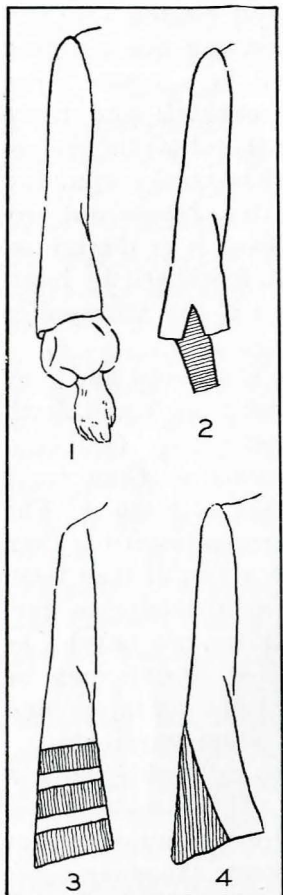


Fig. 1.—Suggestions for replacing worn part of sleeves.

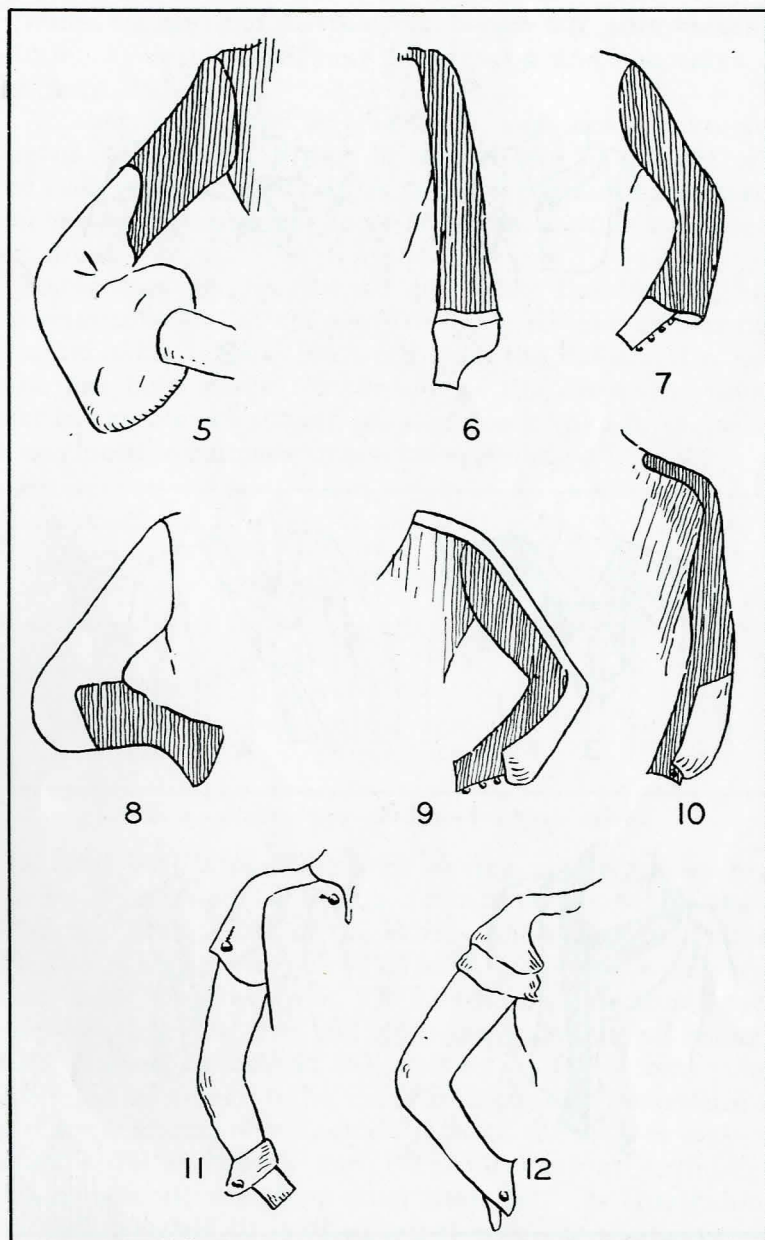


Fig. 2.—Suggestions for remaking sleeves and adding width to tight sleeves.

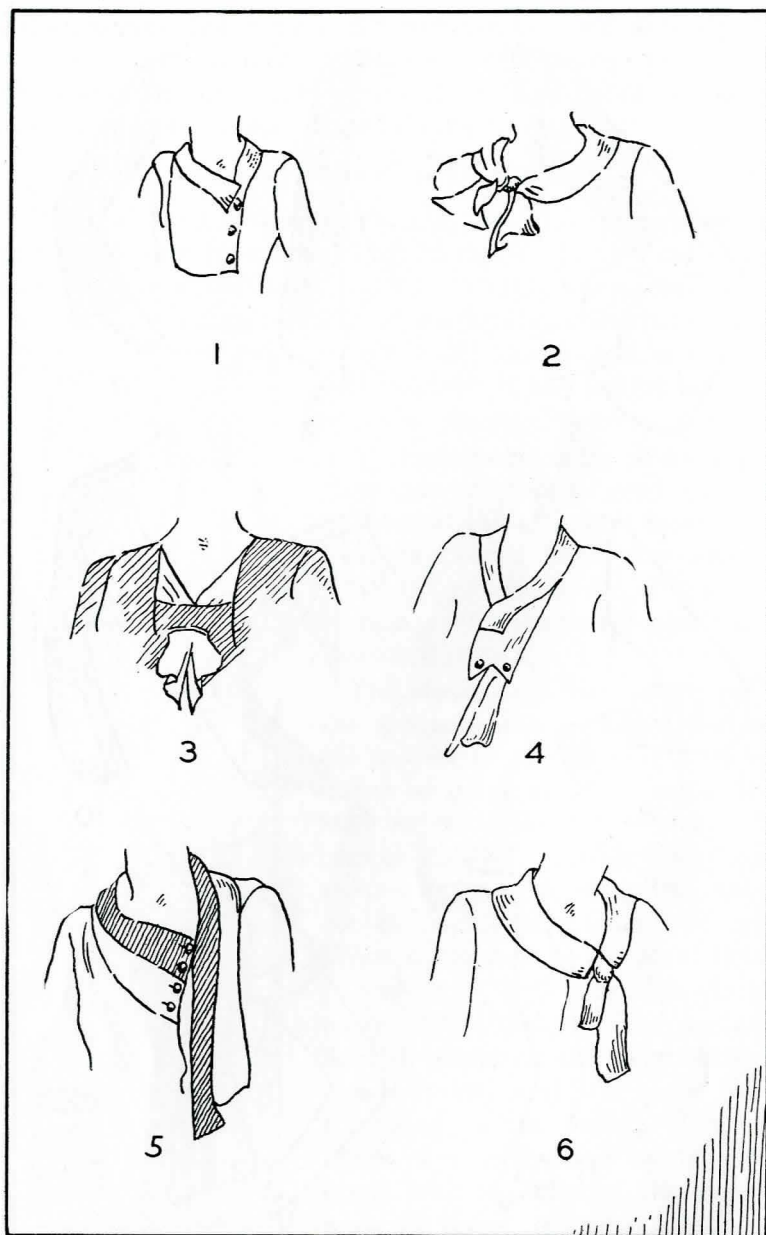


Fig. 3.—Possibilities for changing and building up necklines.



Wide collars and berthas, if becoming, offer another solution. Worn places may be mended and concealed in this way.

Another possibility is making a new deep yoke and sleeves. Many of the new dresses shown have light tops and sleeves, making it possible to use a contrasting material and to add life and color to an otherwise dull or uninteresting dress.

Skirts may be lengthened by using the belt of self material to set in at the waistline. A leather belt or one of other material may be worn with the dress. If a new yoke has been made for the top of the dress, the upper part of the old waist may be used for a yoke in the skirt. It may need to be made in several sections.

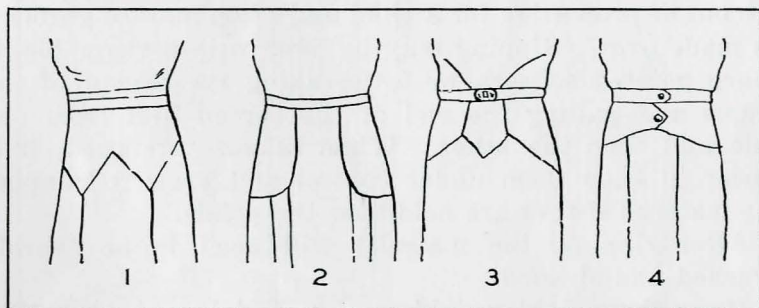


Fig. 4.—Yokes may be used to lengthen skirts.

A skirt with a straight back having a fairly deep hem can be lengthened by letting down the hem and using a yoke only in the front of the skirt. Another style of dress had a skirt which was quite full in the back and was longer in the back than the front. It may be possible to rip such a skirt at the waist line and side seams and cut off enough of the flare or fullness at the sides to use for a front yoke. This yoke may need to be made in sections. Sometimes if no other material is available for yoke the sleeves may be cut off and that material used. The sleeves may be finished with a decorative cuff of other material. In lengthening children's dresses, it is often possible to use applied hems of a contrasting color or material.

### **Remodeling or Making Over**

Almost every clothing inventory will bring to light some garments of good material which can not be made wearable by slight alterations or changes. Such garments may be ripped up, cleaned, and made over entirely. Before undertaking the complete remodeling of a garment, it is well to determine if there is a sufficient amount of material of good quality and, if new material is required to combine with it, that the cost will not be out of proportion to the worth of the garment.

Preparation of the material is an important step in remodeling any garment. It is usually better to completely rip the garment, especially if it is being made over for a child. Yokes, panels, and pockets of grown-ups' garments are out of proportion for a child and often mark a garment as made over. Ripping may be done with a razor blade, sharp pointed scissors, or by breaking the thread of the seams and pulling the end of the thread first from one side and then the other. When scissors are used, it is easier to keep them under control and prevent snipping the material if they are held near the points.

After ripping, the material will need to be thoroly brushed and cleaned.

Many times light weight wool materials and some silks may be successfully washed with soap and water. Lukewarm water, mild soap to make a good suds, and thoroly rinsing in tepid water are the secrets of success. After rinsing, squeeze out and roll the material in soft towels. Leave for several hours then press carefully.

If the material is to be dyed, this may be done after washing. The dark plain colors fashionable now will make it possible to redeem good materials discarded because they are faded or of unbecoming color.

In remodeling or making over, it is sometimes possible to combine the material of two garments. When materials are combined and can not be exactly matched there should be a decided contrast in color, pattern, and texture. A plain material may be used with a patterned one. Two

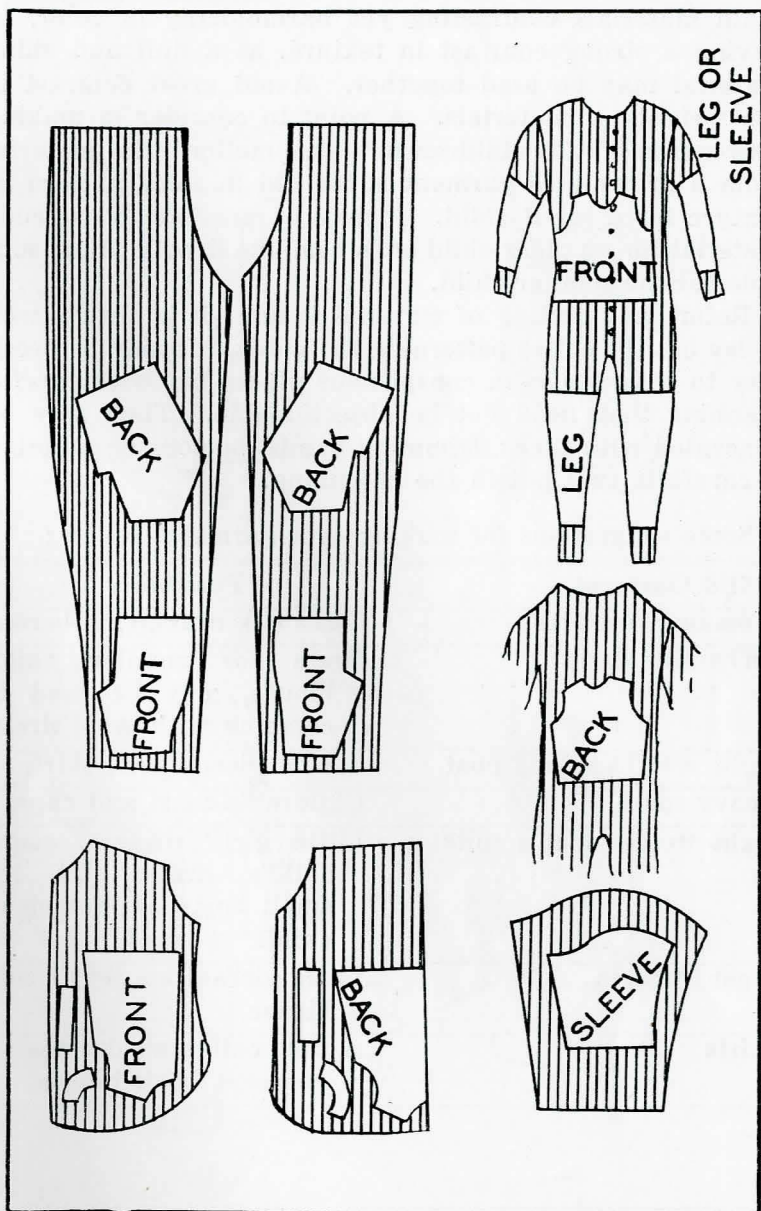


Fig. 5.—Suggestions for placing patterns to cut child's garment from man's trousers, shirt, or union suit.



plain materials contrasting yet harmonizing in color, or having a strong contrast in texture, as a dull and shiny material may be used together. Avoid great contrast in the weights of materials. A point to consider in making over garments for children is that sometimes the material from a grown-up's garment is too old in color pattern or texture for a small child. It may be possible to use such material for an older child or to combine it with colors suitable for the smaller child.

Before any cutting of material is done it is always well to lay out the entire pattern on the goods. It may be necessary to have seams in conspicuous places but with careful planning they need not be objectionable. They may be concealed with tucks, trimming bands, buttons or fagoting if carefully thought out in the beginning.

Some suggestions for making over garments follow:

Old Garment	Possibility
Womans' silk dress	Girl's silk dress, slip, berets.
Girl's silk dress	Dress for smaller child, blouse, may be used to combine with wool dress.
Light weight spring coat	One piece dress, skirt,
Heavy coats	Children's coats and caps.
Light weight men's suits	Little girls' dresses, coats, child's dress, suit for small boy, coat for small child.
Wash dresses	Little girl's dress, boy's suit, blouse.
Shirts	Apron, children's dresses, rompers, boy's blouse.





Fig. 6.—Suggestions for children's garments which may be made from adult's garments.

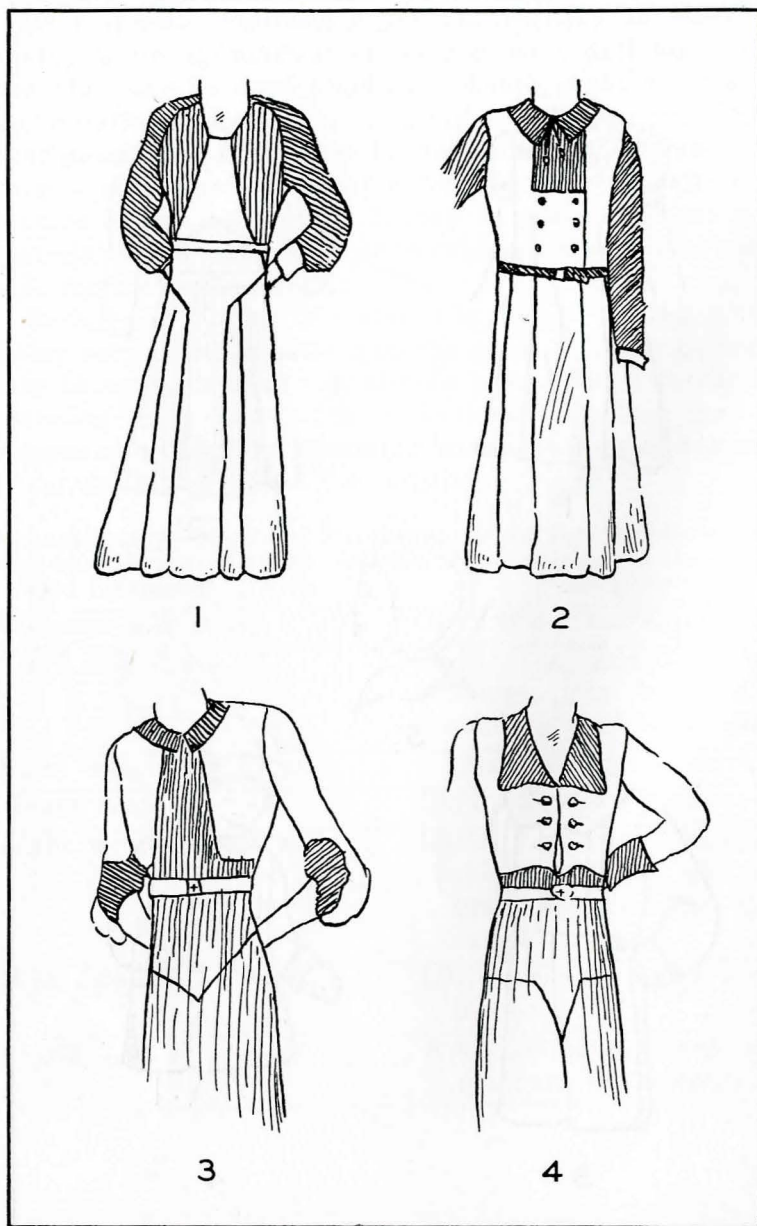


Fig. 7.—Suggestions for making over dresses for girls and women.

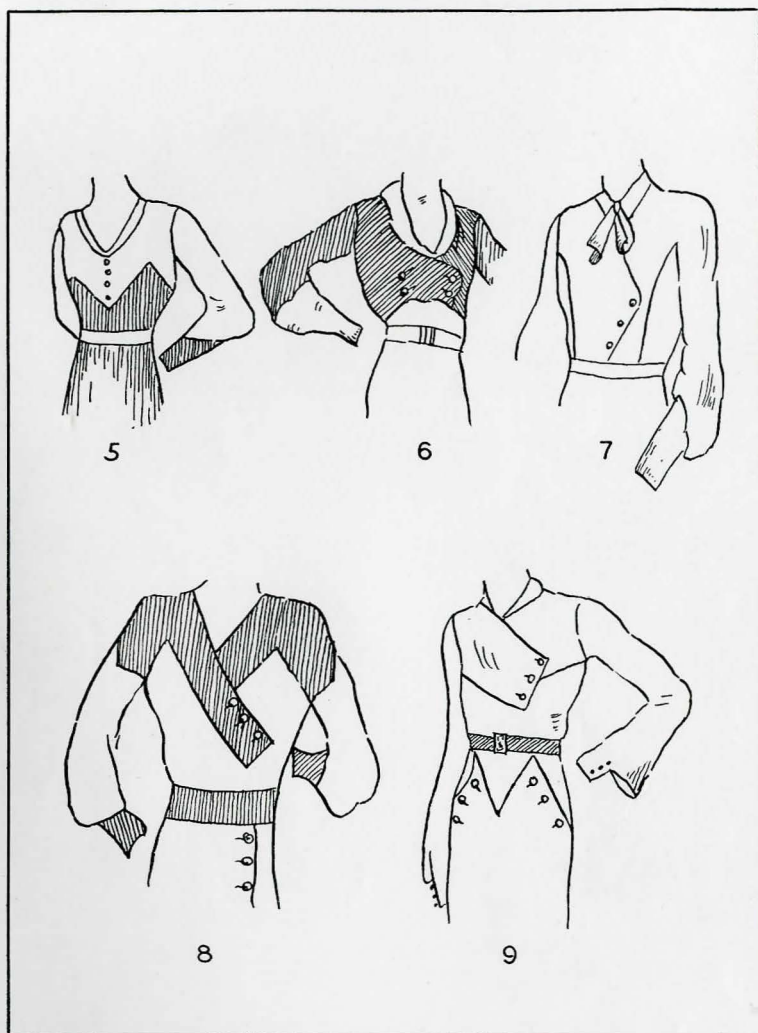


Fig. 8.—Suggestions for making over dresses for women. Materials of two worn dresses may be combined or a small amount of new material may be purchased for the yoke and sleeves.

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