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EC63-433 Skirt and Dress Hems

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Skirt and Dress

HEMS

Extension Service

University of Nebraska College of Agriculture and Home Economics
and U. S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

E. F. Frolik, Dean

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Dress and Skirt Hems

By Anna Marie Kreifels

Introduction

Fashion predicts dress and skirt lengths--the American female carries out the prediction. Each woman must learn to modify fashion standards to suit her figure so her appearance is a pleasant one.

A question frequently asked is, "How long or how short should a skirt be?" There is no specific answer to this question.

Length of skirt should be determined according to the total figure height, length and shape of the legs, age and personal comfort of the wearer. Let fashion indicate, but not dictate, the trend.

The hem of a garment should have certain quality features. Among these are:

- ... A lower edge that hangs an even distance from the floor.
- ... An inconspicuous appearance from the right side of the garment.
- ... A smooth, flat, well-pressed appearance.
- ... An even width of fabric turned up to form the hem.
- ... A neat, durable stitch holding the hem in place.

Width of Hems

The width of a hem varies according to the fabric and pattern style. Consider the proportion of the hem width to the total skirt length. The width of hem should give the right apparent weight to the skirt. Garments moderately flared look well with hems two to three inches deep. Hems wider than two to three inches look clumsy on skirts of wool or heavy cotton. On full skirts of lightweight or sheer fabrics hems as wide as ten inches are sometimes used for design effects. Flared and circular skirts require narrower hems -- sometimes as narrow as one inch or less.

Pressing

Proper pressing helps prevent the hem from showing on the right side of a garment. Whenever possible, press the hem before the hand stitching is done. Place a piece of brown paper between the hem and the skirt so the top edge of the hem will not form an imprint on the outside of the garment. Use a "lift and lower" -- not a sliding motion with the iron.

Pressing over basting done with silk thread will not leave stitch imprints on the fabric. Therefore, when hemming a garment made of wool, wool blends or soft fabrics, use silk thread for basting. Always avoid pressing over pins.

Seam Tapes

Although not necessary on all hems, tape is often used on heavy or bulky fabrics. Straight cut or woven edge tapes are commonly used, but bias cut tapes are particularly suitable for gores or circular skirt hems. The tape should match the fabric in color and have wear and care qualities similar to those of the garment fabric. Try to avoid stretching the tape as it is stitched to the edge of the hem. Stretching the tape will cause the finished hem to pucker.

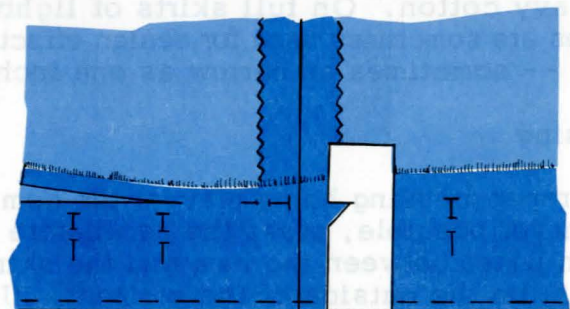
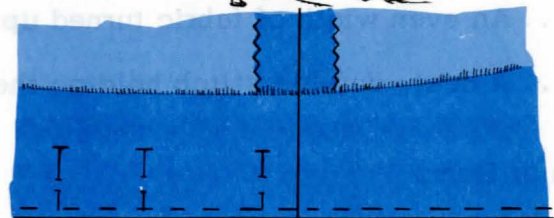
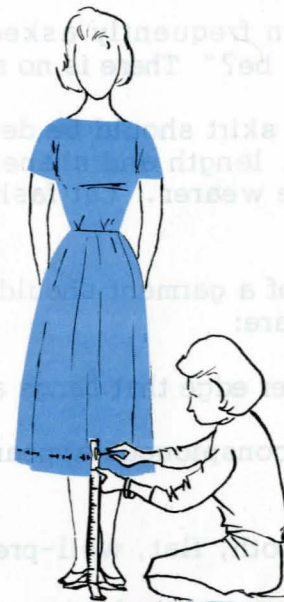
Basic Steps for Hemming Skirts

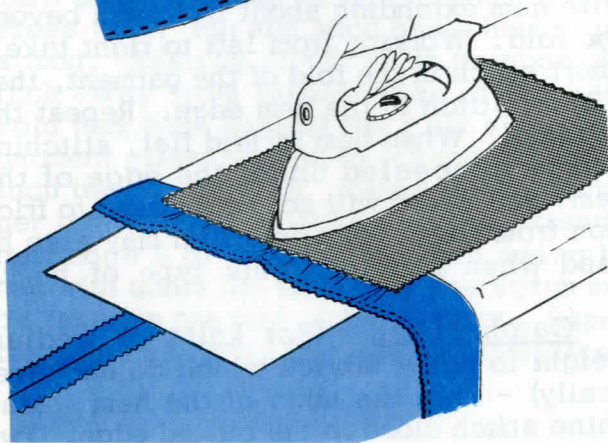
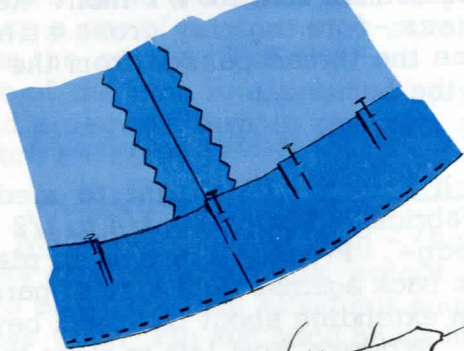
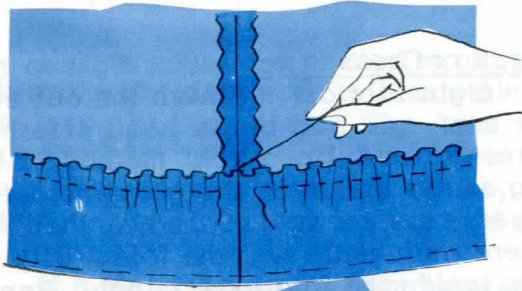
Allow the garment to hang for a day or two before hemming. This is especially important for bias or circular cut skirts.

1. As you try the garment have someone measure the correct length and mark the hemline with pins or chalk. Wear the foundation garments and shoes that you will wear with the finished dress or skirt. A variation in tightness or a difference in heel height will change the skirt length. Stand in a natural position with arms down and feet close together. Remain in the same position until the hem is pinned. Do not turn -- your helper should move around the hemline as she marks it.

2. Turn the garment wrong side out and place it on a flat surface. Turn the hem up on the marked line. Pin, then hand baste near the folded edge of the hem.

3. Decide how wide the hem is to be. With a gauge, measure and mark the hem width. Trim off extra material so the hem width is uniform around the skirt.





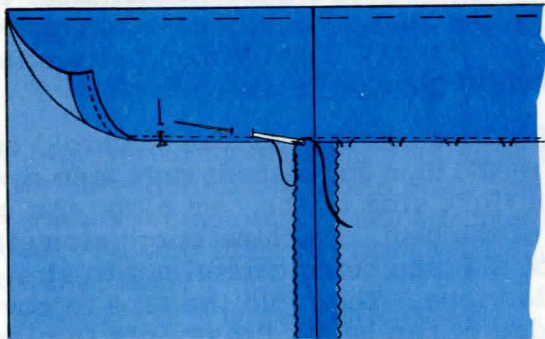
4. Adjust the fullness at the cut edge of gored or circular skirts so the hem will lie smoothly against the garment. Use one of these methods:

Easing - Place a hand or machine easing stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the cut edge. Draw the thread to ease in extra fullness so the hem lies flat and smooth when seams in the hem and skirt are matched.

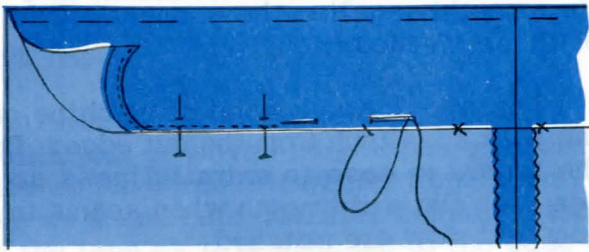
Darting - Form tiny darts where fullness occurs and taper them to nothing at the folded edge of the hem. Crease, but do not stitch the darts. Many tiny darts give better results than a few large ones. Match seams in the hem and skirt.

Shrinking - (Used for wool and wool blend fabrics) - Place an easing stitch at the cut edge of the hem. Draw the thread to ease in fullness so the hem lies flat when seams in the skirt and hem are matched. Slip a piece of brown paper between the skirt and the hem. Place a damp press cloth over the hem. With a hot iron, steam out the excess fullness. Use a "lift and lower" motion with the iron and move gently and lightly at right angles to the hem edge. Do not press puckers or pleats in the hem.

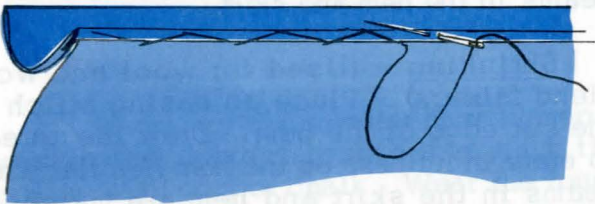
5. Finish the cut edge, pin and hand stitch the hem in place. Various methods for finishing the edge and stitching the hem are illustrated. Study these and then choose the method which will give the hem in your garment a durable finish and a look of quality.



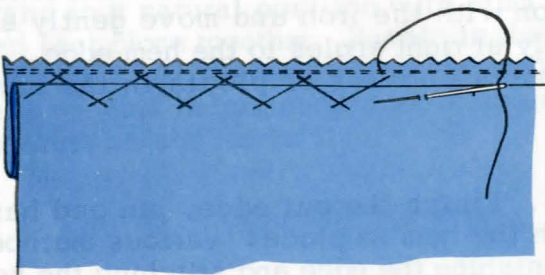
Slip-Stitch - (For light to medium weight fabrics) - Turn under $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the hem edge. Press. Machine stitch $\frac{1}{16}$ inch from the folded edge, but do not stitch hem to the garment. Machine stitching may be omitted if the fabric creases well and handles easily. Pin the hem in place. Begin hand stitches at side seam to hide the knot. Take a tiny stitch, picking up only one or two yarns in the garment at the edge of the hem. Then slip the needle inside the fold for about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Repeat stitches, being careful not to pull thread tight. Long stitches are hidden in the fold.



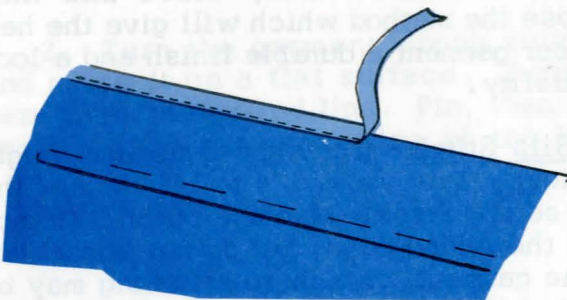
Lock or Cross Stitch - (For light to medium weight fabrics) - Finish the cut edge of the hem, pin and begin hand stitching as directed for "slip-stitch" method. After taking a tiny stitch in the garment, stick the needle into the fold of the hem just back of where the needle left the fold. Slip the needle inside the fold for 1/2 inch. Repeat the process, forming tiny cross stitches each time the thread passes from the garment to the hem.



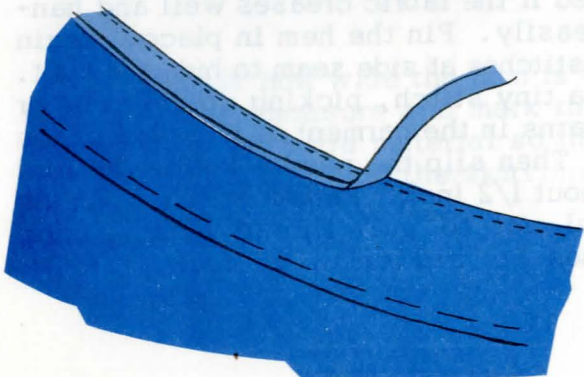
Catch Stitch - (For light to medium weight fabrics) - Turn under 1/4 to 1/2 inch at hem edge. Press. Pin hem in place. Fold hem back against right side of garment with hem extending about 1/16 inch beyond the fold. Working from left to right take a short stitch in the fold of the garment, then a short stitch in the hem edge. Repeat the stitches. When hem is laid flat, stitching will be concealed under the edge of the hem, and thread will not be exposed to friction from wear. (A slip stitch may also be used when stitching this type of hem.)



Catch Stitch - (For knits or medium weight to bulky fabrics which do not ravel easily) - Pink the edge of the hem. Machine stitch close to the pinked edge. Two rows of machine stitching 1/16 inch apart may be preferred. Fold the hem back as shown and catch stitch hem in place. This stitch is suitable for knits since it allows considerable "give."



Taped Hem - (For medium to heavy weight fabrics) - Pin and stitch woven edge seam tape (shrink before using) to the right side of hem edge. Allow tape and hem edge to overlap about 1/4 inch. Stitch near the edge of the tape. Slightly ease the tape to the hem. Press. Then pin and slip stitch the hem in place.



If bias seam tape is used, unfold one edge of the tape and place it right side down on the right side of the hem along the cut edge of the hem. Machine stitch along the fold of the tape being careful not to stretch the bias tape. Then fold the tape to cover the edge of the hem. Press, pin in place and slip stitch.

Narrow Hems - (For bias or circular cut skirts) - The depth of the hem will usually be less than an inch. The hem may be turned under twice and machine stitched. Two or more rows of stitching may be desired to give the hem a detailed finish.

If a hand stitched hem is preferred, place a row of machine stay-stitch $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from the cut edge of the hem. The first turn of the hem is along the stay-stitch. Fold a second turn in the hem and slip-stitch as shown.

Machine Stitched Hem - (For straight hems on light to medium weight fabrics) - Turn under $\frac{1}{2}$ inch along cut edge of hem. Press well. Pin and hand baste hem in position. Basting stitch must be about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch away from turned edge of the hem. Fold hem back against the right side of the garment allowing hem to extend about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch beyond the fold. Using 10-12 stitches per inch, machine stitch on the extended hem edge 5 or 6 stitches, then swing the material under the needle so one stitch will be taken in the fold of the garment. Repeat the process until the hem is completed.

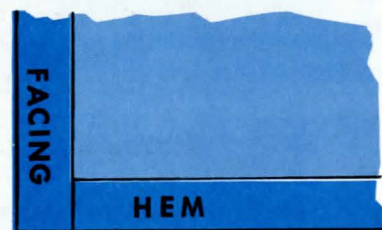
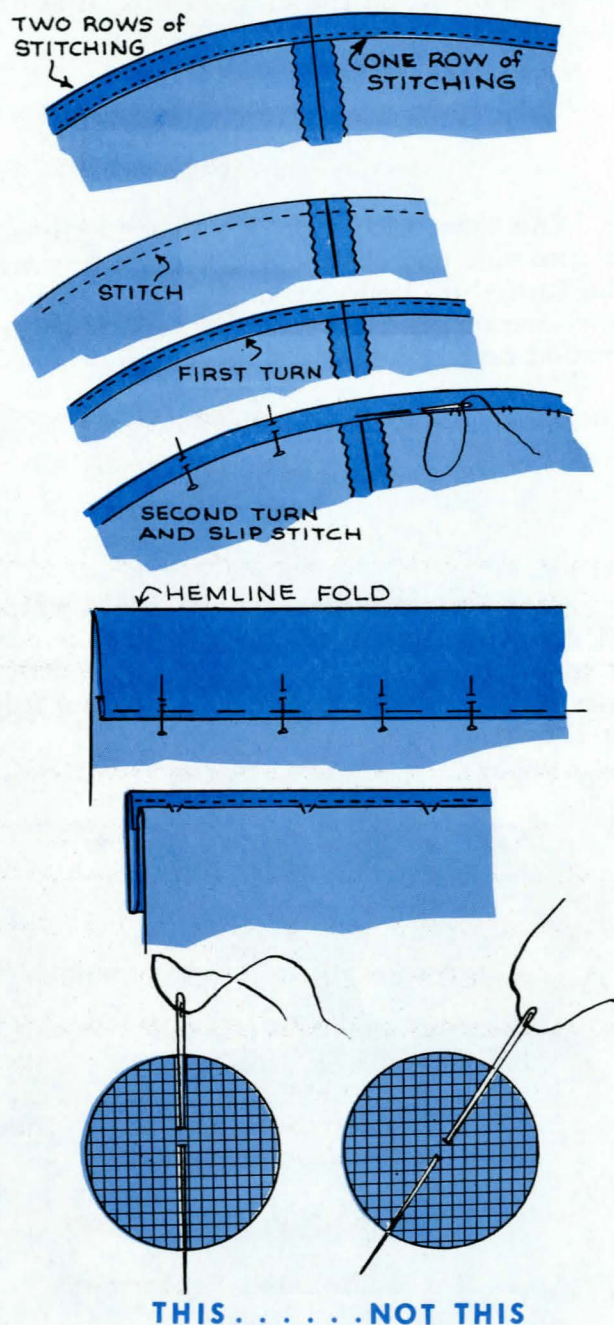
Final Pressing

After the hem is stitched a final pressing is necessary. Use a well padded ironing board and press the hem on the wrong side. Again use the "lift and lower" motion, applying most pressure on the folded edge of the hem. Too much pressure on the stitched edge will cause an imprint on the outside of the garment. If touch-up pressing from the right side is necessary, use a press cloth to protect the fabric.

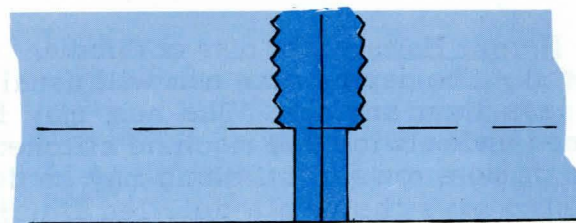
Hints for Better Looking Hems

Stitches in the garment should be taken in the direction of the fabric grainline - not diagonally on the bias. Keep stitches fairly loose. Pulling them too tight will cause a puckered hem.

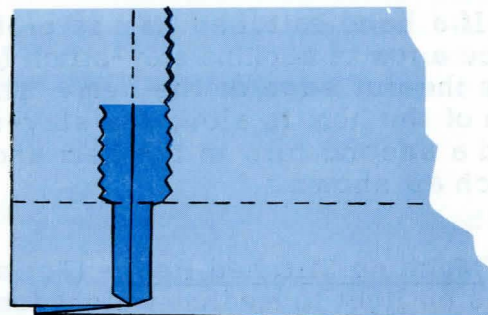
When a facing extends through a hem (button-down-the-front or wrap-around skirts), finish the hem first, then fold the facing back over the hem.



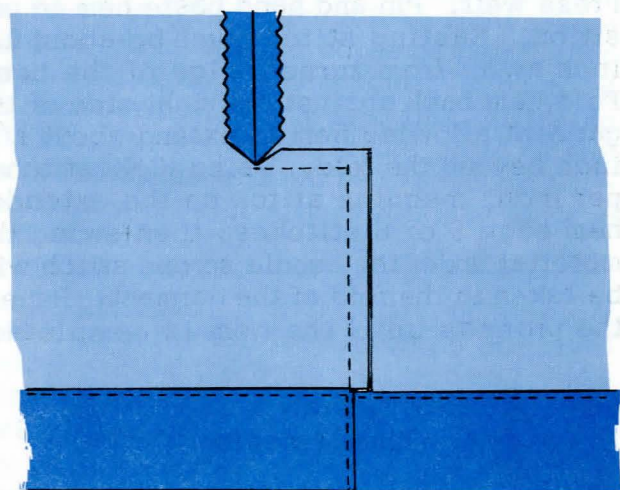
Seam allowances should be graded before the hem is turned up. One-eighth to 3/8 inch can be trimmed from the seam allowance between the marked fold line and the cut edge of the hem.



The seam allowance of a pleat is pressed to one side and clipped at the point to which the turned up hem extends. The seam allowance inside the hem is pressed open and graded before the hem is turned up.



After a pleat is hemmed, the fold which falls to the inside of the garment can be stitched to keep it creased. Machine stitch through the hem along the edge of the fold as shown.



The Nebraska Extension Service provides additional clothing construction circulars. These are available at your local county Extension office.

Belts & Belt Carriers	E.C. 56-412
Pressing Equipment	E.C. 60-423
Pressing Methods	E.C. 60-424
Easy Zipper Methods	E.C. 61-422
Making a Child's Coat	E.C. 61-426
Lining Skirts & Dresses	E.C. 61-428
Sleeve Gussets	E.C. 63-430
Making Bound Buttonholes	E.C. 63-429