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EC65-442 Pile Fabrics

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PILE FABRICS

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Pile fabrics are made by using a basic weave with an extra set of yarns to make soft loops or pile. The loops may be uncut as in terry cloth or cut as in velvet. Velveteen, corduroy and imitation furs are other examples of cut pile fabrics.

These fabrics require special handling because of their napped or pile surface. Here are two suggestions:

1. Buy the amount of yardage suggested for napped fabrics on the pattern envelope or add $1/2$ to $3/4$ yard to regular yardage required for 39-inch fabric.
2. Follow pattern layout for napped fabrics or lay all pieces so the tops point in the same direction. This is important since light reflects differently when fabrics have an up or down pile.

VELVET

Velvet was originally made of silk but is now made of a number of fibers. Velvet is a luxury fabric and should be handled gently. Choose a style with few pattern pieces, one that has silhouette interest rather than construction detail.

Laying & Cutting the Pattern

1. Lay all pattern pieces in one direction.
 - a. A rich deep color results when the nap runs upward toward the face (usually loveliest).
 - b. A lighter and shinier appearance results when the nap runs downward. (It may wear longer.)

2. Fold fabric with naps together on lengthwise grain (folding on crosswise will reverse the nap on one piece).
3. Pin pattern pieces with needles to prevent marking the fabric.
4. Transfer pattern markings by using tailor's tacks and silk thread.

Construction Techniques

1. Baste with silk thread to prevent marking the fabric. Use short stitches to prevent slippage.
2. Make a test seam using a longer than average machine stitch (10 to 12 stitches per inch) and a lighter pressure. Use a fine, sharp machine needle and stitch in the direction of the nap.
3. Check darts and seam placement carefully before stitching permanently. Ripping and restitching may show on the fabric.
4. Avoid outside or top stitching.
5. Slash darts to $1/2$ " of point. Press open and overcast the cut edge.
6. Face or line with matching lightweight fabric (such as China silk or tafetta) to avoid the bulkiness of two layers of pile.
7. Avoid buttonholes. Instead use loops, snaps, or zipper closings. Zippers put in by hand will look nicer. (If buttonholes are used a lightweight interfacing is needed.)

8. Seams may be finished by an overcast stitch, zigzagged or bound with chiffon, net, or silk tape depending on the amount of raveling.

9. Hem edge may be finished by:

- a. Pinking and machine stitching,
- b. Zig Zag stitching, or by stitching seam binding to the edge. Loosely hand stitch the hem to the garment as in a tailor's hem.

Pressing Velvet

1. There are three ways in which velvet may be pressed:

- a. By using a needle board. This is a length of canvas covered with upright pieces of wire called needles. The velvet is placed with the face (pile) side down on the needle board. Steam press from the wrong side. This keeps the pile uncrushed.
 - b. By either standing an iron on end or by turning the iron upside down and sliding the handle over the arm of a sleeve board so the plate is facing upward. Place a damp cloth over the plate of the iron. Now draw the wrong side of the velvet against the steaming iron.
 - c. By laying fabric, pile side down, over several thicknesses of turkish toweling. Then steam press from wrong side. A piece of left-over velvet might also be used. The nap of the two pieces of velvet will interlock while steaming.
2. Be careful not to fingermark the velvet while fabric is warm and damp.
3. To crease a hem hold the steam iron over the inside of the hem without letting the iron plate touch the fabric. While velvet is damp pat it briskly with the bristle side of a stiff brush.
4. Short seams might also be pressed over a stiff brush placed with the bristles up.

5. Wrinkles may be steamed out by holding a steam iron close to the pile without touching. Wrinkles from wear may be steamed out by hanging the garment on a shower rod in the bathroom.

VELVETEEN

Velveteen is handled in a manner similar to velvet but it is not as delicate a fabric. Mercerized cotton thread may be used. Cotton or blends may be used for facings or linings. It is important to make sure the alterations and lines of stitching are correct before making the final stitching. Any ripping of stitching will leave marks.

CORDUROY

The technique for handling corduroy is similar to that used for velvet. It is not as delicate a fabric and is often machine laundered. This should be considered when choosing facings and linings.

Wide wale corduroys should be matched and treated like a stripe. Seams may be zigzag stitched or bound depending on amount of raveling. A pinwale corduroy seam may need only pinking and a line of machine stitching 1/4" from edge to make it durable. Bias tape might be used on the hem.

IMITATION FUR

Many of the techniques used for velvet are also used for imitation furs. Additional suggestions:

1. Pattern is usually placed so hairs or pile run downward.
2. It may be more satisfactory to cut with a razor blade than with a shears. (This is the way real fur is cut.)
3. Make a test seam using 8 - 10 stitches per inch, a size 14 needle and light pressure. Push pile hairs back from the seam.
4. After stitching use a pin on the right side to pick up hairs that have been caught in the seam.
5. Darts are slashed and pressed open. The edges are catch stitched to the back of the fabric.