

1970

EC70-463 Preparing Fabrics for Use

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PREPARING FABRICS for use

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PREPARING FABRIC FOR USE

By Jane Speece
Extension Specialist (Clothing)

Smart styling and a professional look in clothing construction require correct use of the grain of the fabric. No formula or method can conceal a poorly cut garment.

Garment pieces cut or pulled off grain will not fit correctly and will hang poorly when worn. Whether simple or elaborate in design, the fabric shows whether or not it has been cut on the exact grain (Figure 1).

Identify the Grainline

"Grain" is the direction of threads of a fabric. The lengthwise grain refers to threads running the length of the fabric piece. These fibers are parallel to the selvage (or finished) edges of the fabric. The crosswise grain refers to threads running across the width of the fabric piece from selvage to selvage (Figure 2).

A third important direction is that of the "bias." The bias is the perfect diagonal across the fabric. This direction provides the greatest stretch and elasticity. To find the true bias, fold the lengthwise grain of the goods (selvage) so that it lies at right angles to the crosswise grain (Figure 3). This fold gives the direction of the true bias. Other diagonal folds or cuts at any other angle may be called bias, but they are actually off-grain lines and provide little of the stretch called for in the true bias.

Grainline and the Body

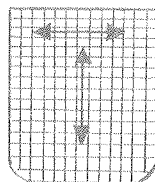
Fabric used to clothe the body is flat, but the human figure comes in many rounded forms and shapes. Both the body and the fabric, however, have a perpendicular or vertical line as their base.

Vertical lines are used as the basis of designing and cutting a garment to fit the body. All darts, gathers or cuts are made with these two points in mind: the lengthwise grain runs vertically, and the crosswise grain runs horizontally. Generally, the lengthwise grain runs from the base of the neck to the hem and on the sleeves from the shoulder to the cuff. The center front and back also run vertically along the lengthwise grain (Figure 4).

Preparing the Fabric for Perfection of Grain

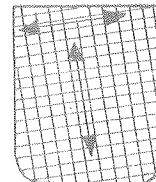
A piece of fabric cut or torn from a bolt of cloth has two finished edges and two raw edges. A torn end is always on the grain, but a cut edge may not be. The grain may have been pulled out of shape by the finishing process or imperfectly rolled on the bolt. Each piece must be checked for perfection of grain before the pattern is laid on it.

Horizontal Arrow Indicates
Crosswise Thread



Pocket "on grain"

Vertical
Arrow
Indicates
Lengthwise
Thread



Pocket "off grain"

FIGURE 1

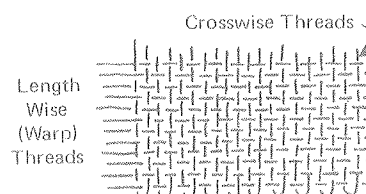


FIGURE 2

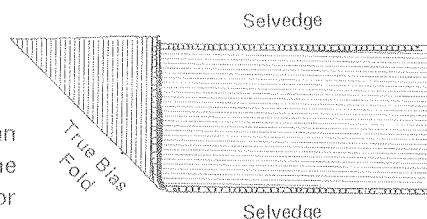


FIGURE 3

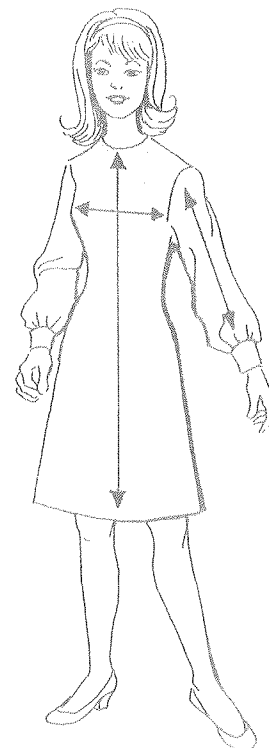


FIGURE 4

To check the perfect grain clip into the selvage near the edge and pull a crosswise thread over the entire width of the fabric. Cut along the drawn thread. Fold the fabric lengthwise, matching the selvages, and smooth out on a flat surface. If the straightened raw edges match, the fabric is on the grain and ready to use (Figure 5).

If the raw edges do not match, the fabric must be straightened. Several procedures may be used to return the fabric to true grain.

1. *Pulling on the Bias.* Keep the fabric on the true bias. Start at the longer corners and stretch the fabric gently but firmly at intervals until the other end is reached. Check again for perfection in grain. If the fabric still does not meet, repeat the procedure (Figure 6).

2. *Dampening the Fabric* (wool, wool blends, washable fabrics). This process may also be used for pre-shrinking fabrics.

Fold the fabric lengthwise, with the right sides together, match the selvages and baste them together. Match the straightened raw edges and baste those together. The fabric may be crooked or be wrinkled in the center portion (Figure 7).

Dampen a sheet as if just taken from the washer and fold it lengthwise. Place the dampened sheet on a flat surface and place the fabric upon the sheet, fold the sheet and fabric together with folds about 12" deep until all the fabric is folded in. Keep the folds as wrinkle free as possible (Figure 8).

Wrap fabric in a towel to keep from drying out and leave for at least 6 hours. Unroll the folds before the fabric is completely dry and smooth the piece upon a flat surface. Use the hands to pat the piece into grain perfection. Leave until thoroughly dry and remove bastings. Washable fabrics may be pressed on the wrong side following the lengthwise grain. Woolens or wool blends may be gently steam pressed if necessary to remove wrinkles.

Washable fabrics may be returned to perfect grain by simply washing the piece of fabric and pulling it into grain perfection while still damp. Lay the fabric on a flat surface to dry. Steam press in the lengthwise direction.

Some fabrics cannot be returned to grain perfection. The consumer can determine if a fabric is on the grain by unrolling a yard or so from the bolt while still in the store. Fold the fabric back, matching the selvages. Check to see if the crosswise grains run at right angles to the lengthwise grains. Check on both sides of the fold of a bonded or printed fabric to be sure that both halves are on the grain. If they are not, no amount of correction at home will perfect the grain. Carefully examining the fabric before purchasing it will enable you to avoid off-grain cuts (Figure 9).

3. *Fabrics Not Woven on the Grainline Are Difficult to Determine.* Occasionally a crosswise thread cannot be pulled in a closely woven fabric, a diagonal weave or a knit to find the perfect crosswise grain. In this case the fabric is opened up and laid so that one of the selvages follows the straight edge of a table. The true crosswise grain can be established by a T-square or yardstick laid at right angles to the table

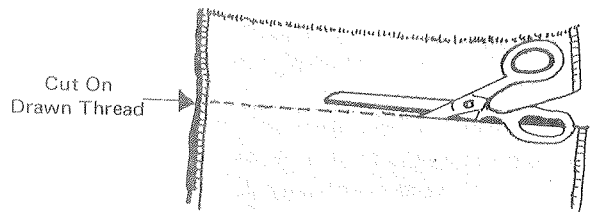
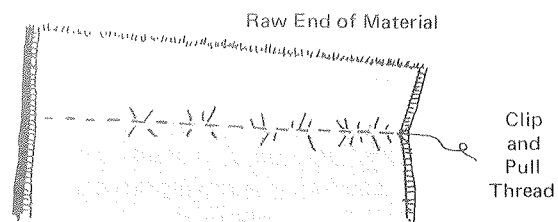


FIGURE 5

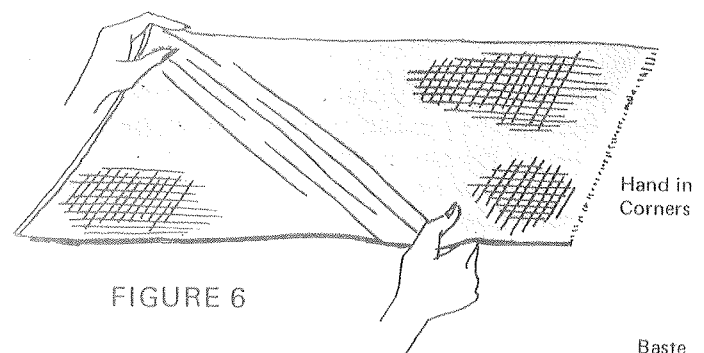


FIGURE 6

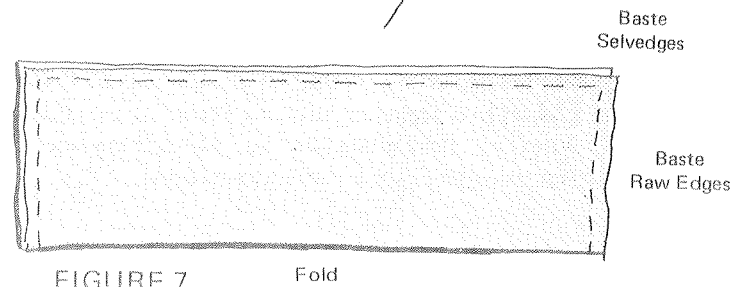


FIGURE 7

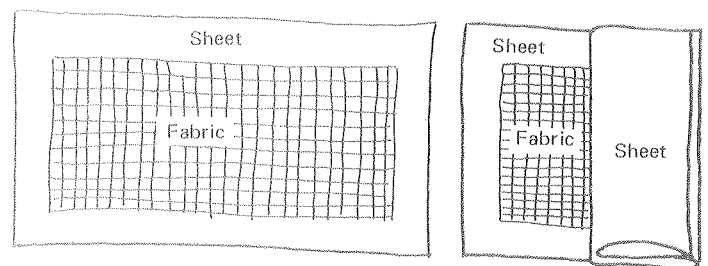


FIGURE 8

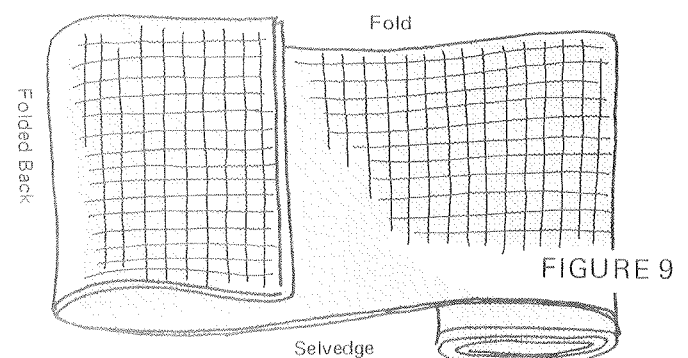


FIGURE 9

edge. A basting line following this measure will mark the crosswise line (Figure 10).

Pre-shrinking

Woolens, woolen blends. Method 2 of establishing the correct grainline may be used for pre-shrinking fabrics. More often the fabric is taken to a reliable dry cleaner for pre-shrinking. In this case the fabric is not basted at the edges. Caution the cleaner not to use too much steam on the fabric or to press a fold back into it. Sometimes wool fabrics which have been hand woven or have a novelty weave or a heavy nap do not pre-shrink successfully by the home dampening method. When in doubt of successful home care, take the fabric to a professional.

Cottons, linens, blends. Again Method 2 may be used or the fabric can be pre-shrunk by washing. If a fabric is to be washed and tumble dried, it should be treated in this manner for pre-shrinking. More shrinkage may occur in the dryer than in the washer.

Other fabrics. Fabrics such as fake furs, stretch fabrics, polyesters or vinyls should be treated in the pre-shrinking process as in the care procedure. Fabric that can be dry cleaned should be steamed at the dry cleaners. Washable fabric may be washed. Many fabrics come ready for the needle. Always check the label on the bolt of material for care directions and to see if the fabric is ready for use without preshrinking.

The professional, custom-made look of clothing depends upon proper care throughout garment construction. Many problems are caused by careless handling of fabric. The first step to success is beginning with the fabric on the grainline and following this procedure by maintaining accurate grainlines throughout the construction process.

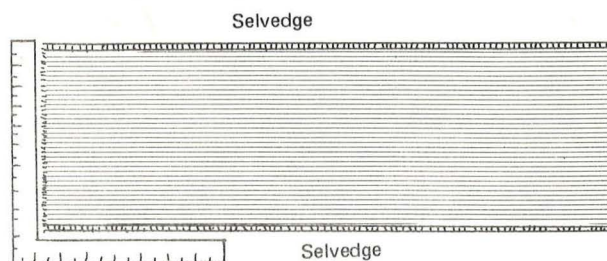


FIGURE 10