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EC71-483 Sewing with Stripes

Jane Speece

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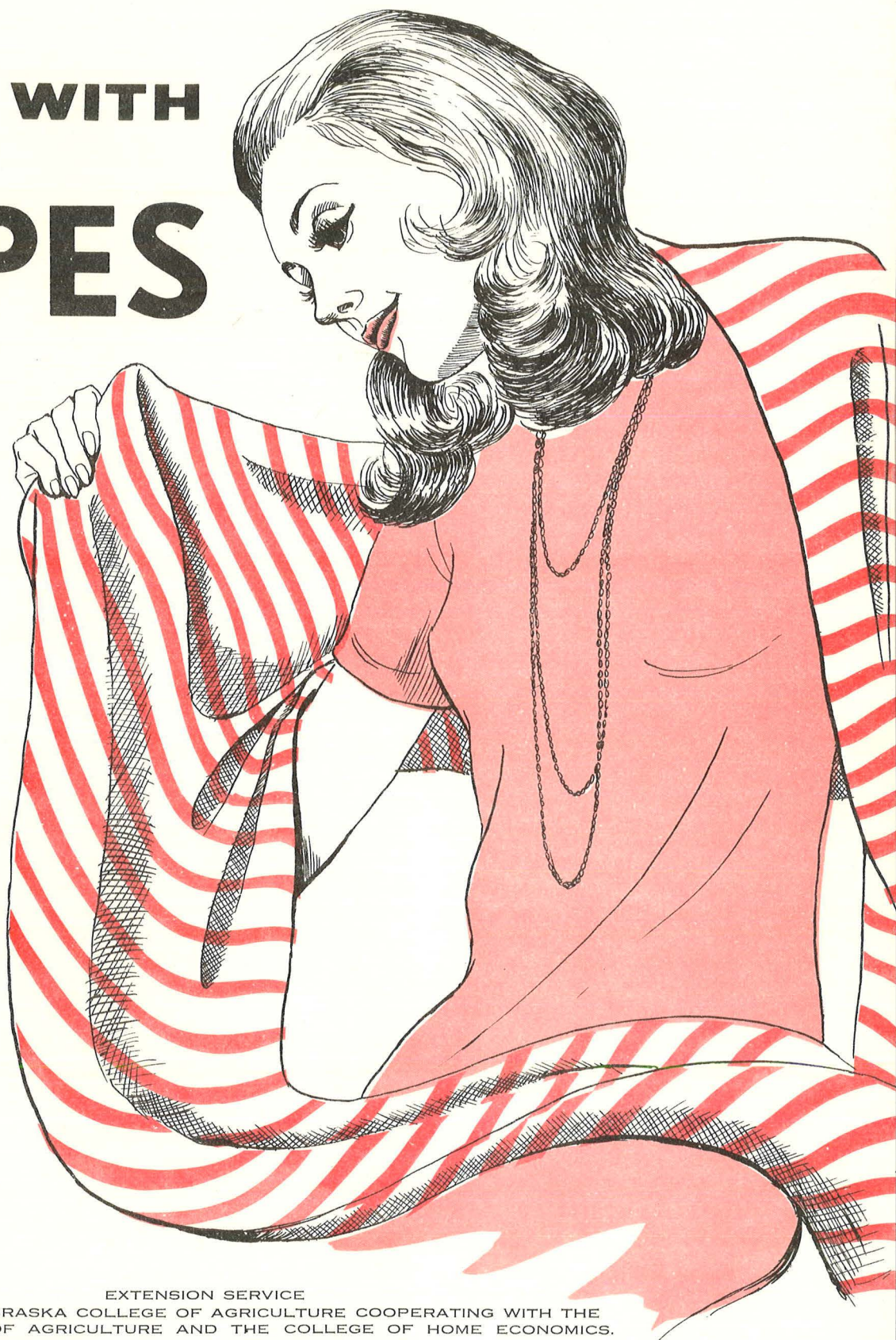
EC 71-483

SEWING WITH STRIPES

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EC 71-483

SEWING WITH STRIPES

Jane Speece
Extension Specialist (Clothing)

A stripe can lift the simplest of styles from an ordinary "so-so" garment to an inspired "custom-made" design. Striped fabrics have earned a welcome place in our year-round wardrobes. We should never take stripes for granted just because we are accustomed to them.

The stripe should be the focal point in a garment. Patterns used with stripes should have simple lines with few pieces and seams. Too many seams will make the stripe seem busy or cluttered, and the stripe becomes difficult to match. Stripes should run in the same direction in all the large structural areas of the garment.

Straight skirts and set-in sleeves usually work to the best advantage for an inexperienced seamstress. As skill in matching and knowledge of design increase, however, styles used may include kimono sleeves, pleats or gathers.

The dominant stripe of the fabric is used as the guideline in deciding the pattern layout. This stripe is the one that seems to stand out as you squint your eyes to look at the fabric from a distance. Often a secondary color can be used effectively. Experimenting with trims and accessories to match dominant or secondary colors will help you to decide which one would be most attractive for your garment. If a secondary color does not stand out above the original dominant color, use the original dominant stripe for greatest satisfaction in the finished product.

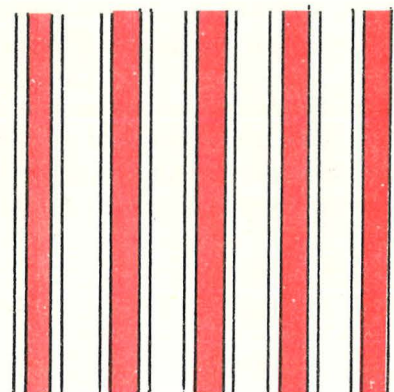
When purchasing fabric, view the stripe by placing the bolt at a distance. Squint your eyes to get the effect of the colors and widths of the stripes. Consider the proportions of the colors and widths of the stripes in relation to each other. Examine the material to see whether the design is yarn dyed or printed on the finished fabric. If the design is printed, check to be sure the print is on the grain.

Then ask yourself a few questions. Are the color combinations pleasing to the eye? Do they harmonize with each other? Are the stripes too wide or too bold for me? Will the stripe be flattering to my figure shape? Is the width of the stripe appropriate for the style of dress? Will I get tired of the colors? Can I do interesting design features with the stripe?

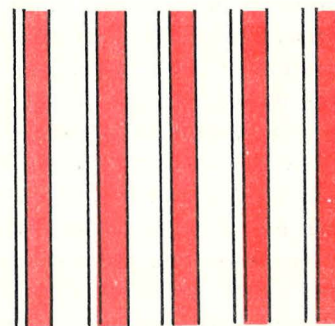
Balanced and Unbalanced Stripes

The two general classifications of stripes are the balanced stripe and the unbalanced stripe (Fig. 1). The tiny stripe formed by texture, color or weave, giving a monotone effect, does not require matching.

The balanced or even stripe repeats the same pattern on both the right and left of the dominant stripe. The balanced stripe is fairly easy to match. Precautions should be taken, however, to lay corresponding notches or seam lines on the



Balanced (Even)



Unbalanced (Uneven)

Figure 1.

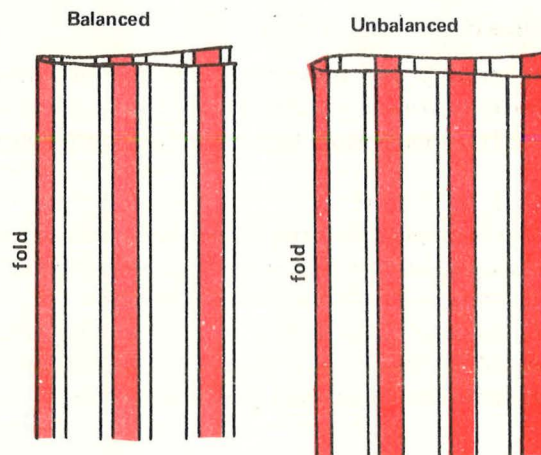


Figure 2.

same stripe as the layout is completed. Though extra fabric is often needed to allow for matching, the even stripe usually needs less than 1/4 yard of extra fabric.

The unbalanced or uneven stripe may vary in the color, size and spacing of the stripes. The stripes on the right of the predominant stripe may be quite different from the stripes on the left. Unbalanced stripes sometimes require up to 1/2 yard of extra fabric to allow for matching. The pattern needs to be laid out as if the fabric had a nap. Extra care is required for matching but the results achieved can be striking.

Occasionally an unbalanced stripe may look balanced when it is not. To check the balance, fold the fabric along the center of the predominant stripe. The stripe colors and pattern will be exactly the same on each half if the stripe is balanced (Fig. 2).

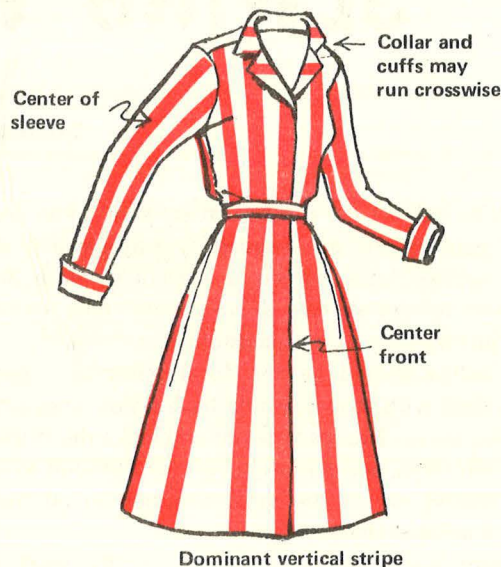


Figure 3.

Using Stripes Vertically (Fig. 3)

Choose the position of the dominant stripe. Hold the fabric up to your figure to decide upon placement. The usual position for vertical stripes is to place the dominant stripe down the center front and back. Other garment pieces can then be matched in relation to this stripe. You may prefer to have the dominant stripes lie on each side of the center front or back. In this case one of the secondary stripes may become the guideline. When working with repeated clusters of narrow stripes, which give the idea of repeated wide stripes, choose the color within the cluster you wish to be outstanding and make it the dominant stripe.

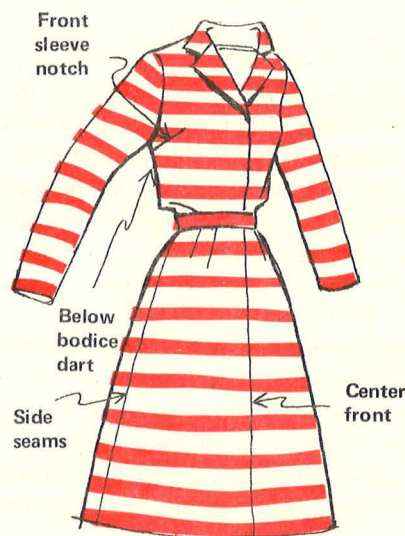


Figure 4.

Using Stripes Horizontally (Fig. 4)

If the stripe is used horizontally, the dominant stripe usually begins below the shoulder and runs across the upper chest area. The hemline looks best if it ends in the dominant stripe.

Hold the fabric up to your figure. Position the stripe at the bustline and hipline to flatter your figure. You may wish to avoid placing the dominant stripe in those areas. Adjust your plan before laying out the pattern in this case.

If the dominant stripe falls at the bottom of a curved hem, and will not seem to be of equal width throughout the hem, a less dominant stripe could be used in this area.



Figure 5.

Matching Stripes (Figure 3, 4, and 5)

Stripes should match at seam lines rather than at the cutting lines of the pattern. Remember to check this point as the pattern is laid out. Buttonholes usually run the same direction as the stripe. The top of a two-piece garment should be matched to the skirt. If possible, move darts so they will blend into the striped effect.

Areas to check for matching as you cut and sew:

1. Center front and center back openings or seams.
2. Side seams of the skirt.
3. Below the underarm dart in the bodice.
4. Collar center backs should match center back.
5. Set-in sleeves: Match the front sleeve notch to the front bodice notch at the seam line.
6. Kimono sleeves: Match front and back notches at the shoulder seam line. If the slope of the outer seam on the front and back are the same, the sleeve can be matched all the way down.
7. Raglan sleeves: Match the notches at the seam line on the armhole.
8. If yokes, pockets or tabs are to run the same direction as the main garment areas, they should match that area on which they lie.
9. Center front and back of shorts and slacks should match. Other areas may be too bias to match.
10. Chevron effects produced by bias seams should be matched as carefully as the other striped effects. A stripe printed on the bias cannot be cut to give a chevron effect. A reversible bias stripe can be.

Sample Layouts

The illustrated layouts are included to give an idea of the position of pattern pieces. *They are not intended to be pattern layouts.*

Balanced Stripes With a Vertical Pattern (Fig. 6)

Lay the pattern straight-of-grain line parallel to the stripes. If there is no seam line at the center front of the pattern, fold the fabric at the center of the dominant stripe and lay the center front of the pattern along this fold.

If there is a seam line in the center front of the pattern, pin two dominant stripes together, then place the pattern so the seam line falls in the center of the dominant stripe.

Place other pattern pieces in relation to the first piece. Check to be sure the dominant stripe runs continuously throughout a two-piece garment.

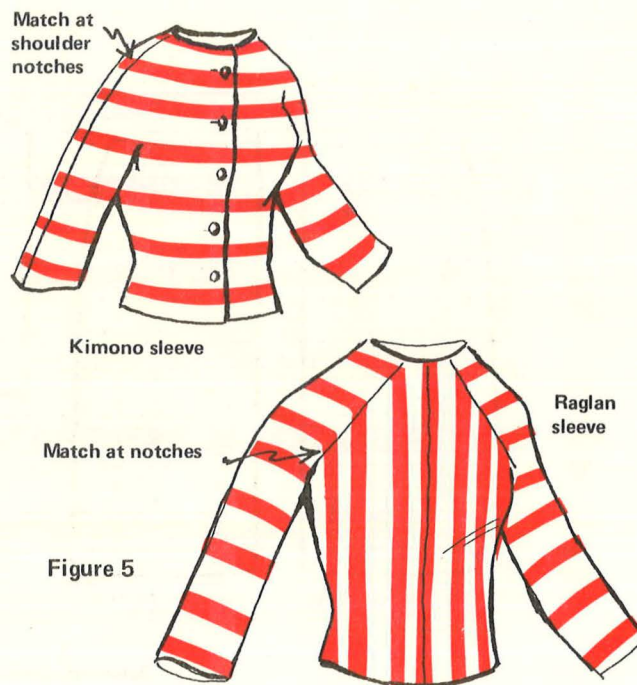


Figure 5

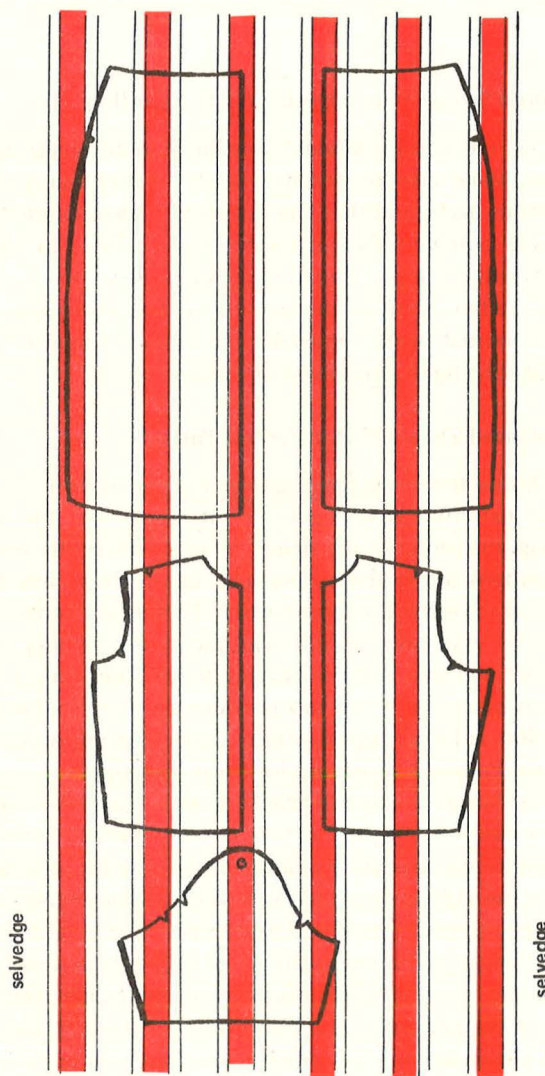
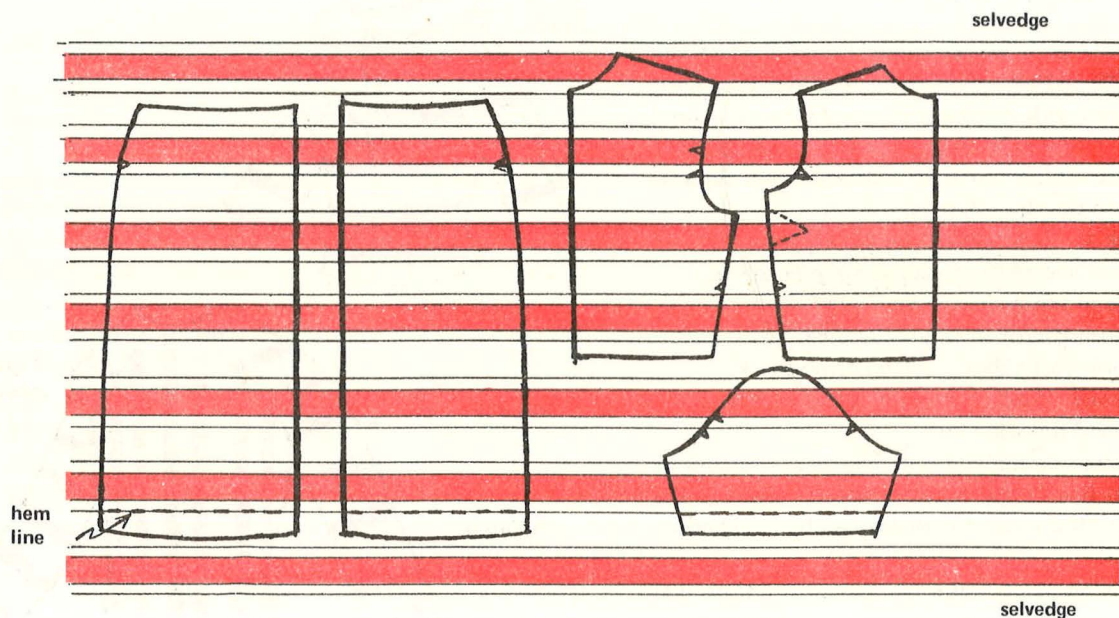


Figure 6. Balanced stripe: vertical layout



Balanced stripe: horizontal layout

Figure 7

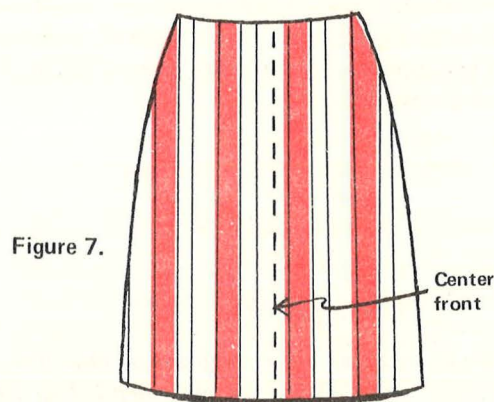
Balanced Stripes With a Horizontal Pattern (Fig. 7)

Lay the pattern straight-of-grain at right angles to the stripes. Make sure the notches match on skirt seams, below underarm darts, and that the sleeve dart corresponds to the armhole notch of the pattern front. Take care to be sure stripes will correspond as they continue down the garment. If the pattern is cut on the crosswise grain to take advantage of an unusual stripe, remember the usual lengthwise "give" will be running in a crosswise direction.

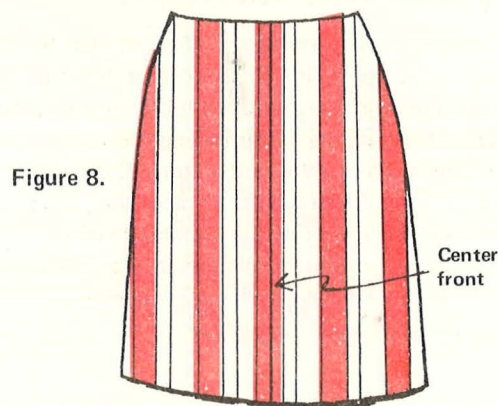
Unbalanced Stripes With a Vertical Pattern

Choose the stripe intended for the center front (Fig. 8). If the pattern has no center front seam, fold the fabric through the center of the stripe and place the center front of the pattern along the stripe. The fabric may have to be refolded to repeat the same pattern. If there is a center front seam, or you wish to add one, pin two matching stripes together and add seam allowance to the fold line. Lay all pattern pieces with the top portions pointing in the same direction as for a napped surface. General layout procedures used for balanced stripes are followed (Fig. 6).

The fabric is often a reversible stripe with no right or wrong side (Fig. 9). In this case the fabric is not folded and pattern pieces are cut separately. Cut out the first piece, match the right side of the first piece to the wrong side of the second. After the second piece is reversed for stitching, a mirror image is formed so the stripe becomes balanced from the center. A seam line is necessary in the center front and back of the pattern to use the reversible fabric in this way. Seam allowance may be added to a center front or back fold to take advantage of the reversible stripe.



Unbalanced stripe: no center front seam



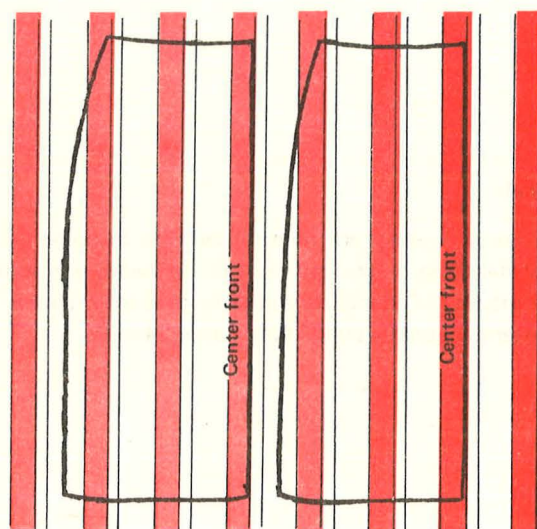
Unbalanced stripe: seam in center front

Unbalanced Stripes Used Horizontally (Fig. 7)

Follow the same rules as the even stripe used in a horizontal manner except the pattern layout must be for a napped surface.

Chevrons (Fig. 4)

Chevrons at seam lines will be formed on the bias areas. Gored and A-line skirts will form natural chevrons. These chevrons should be matched as carefully as straight-line seams. Many patterns are designed to enable the seamstress to take advantage of this attractive effect. Many others will not cut to advantage. Check the advice on the back of the pattern envelope before planning. An unbalanced stripe must be reversible to make matching chevrons.



Slip Basting (Fig. 10)

Slip basting is done from the right side of the fabric when matching seams. With the pieces right side up, turn under the seam allowance of one piece and lap it over the adjoining seam allowance of the other piece. Place pins at right angles to the seam. Using a regular basting thread with a knot at the end, bring the needle through to the right side at the edge of the fold. Then insert the needle into the fold directly above this point. Bring the needle out of the fold about 3/8 to 5/8 in. to the left. Insert the needle directly below this point in the lower layer of fabric and take another basting stitch about the same length. Continue this procedure until the seam is basted. A straight line will show on the wrong side. Then stitch the seam, taking special care to stitch directly on the basting line.

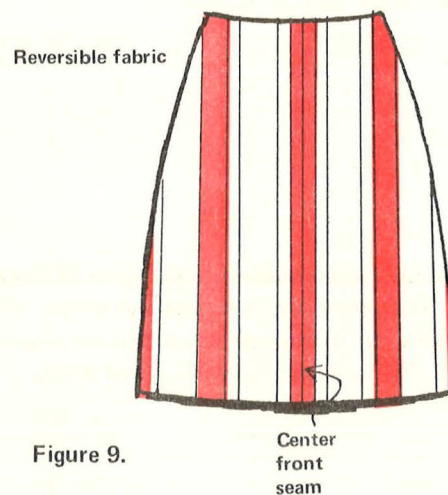


Figure 9.

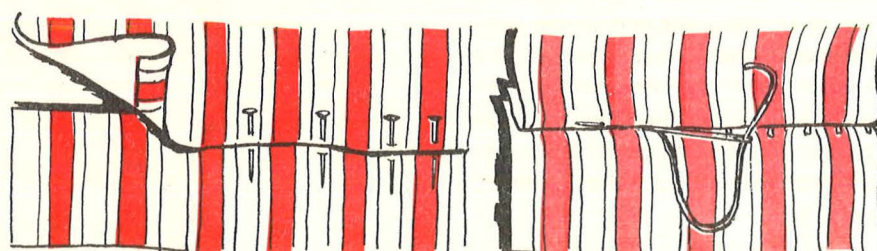


Figure 10.

Diagonals

Diagonal weaves are almost invisible in some fabrics. Special handling is required only if the weave is prominent or the shading of the fabric will cause problems. In this case, the pattern should be cut as for a napped fabric.

The diagonal usually begins at the upper left side and runs toward the lower right side of the garment front. In the garment back, the diagonal begins at the upper right side and runs to lower left. Thus the angle of the diagonal runs in the same direction around the body (Fig. 11a).



a) Non-reversible



b) Reversible diagonal

Figure 11.

Diagonals look best when made into garments of simple lines and straight silhouettes. Set-in sleeves and collars with no seams in the back cut to the best advantage for pleasing appearance. Avoid bias cut seams, gored or flared skirts.

Chevrons in diagonals can be formed if the fabric is reversible or identical on both the right and wrong sides (Fig. 11b). In this case the fabric length is cut in half and the right side of one piece matched to the wrong side of the other piece. The diagonals should run the same direction (Fig. 12). The pattern pieces are then laid on the fabric and corresponding pieces are matched as for other patterns. Extra yardage is usually required.

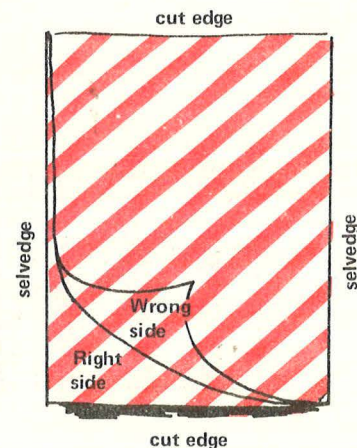


Figure 12.