

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Historical Materials from University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Extension

---

1972

## EC72-485 Dress Pattern Alterations

Gerda Petersen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>

---

Petersen, Gerda, "EC72-485 Dress Pattern Alterations" (1972). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 4159.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/4159>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# DRESS PATTERN Alterations



Figure 1

Try-on  
Pattern Fitting

by Gerda Petersen  
Extension Clothing Specialist

Making attractive, well-fitted clothing is the goal of every woman who sews.

The first step toward this goal is selecting a becoming style that will minimize or adapt to figure problems and will emphasize good features.

Secondly, select a fabric that is suitable to the style. Then choose a pattern in which the body measurements and figure type most nearly correspond to your own body measurements. If you do not know how to determine your size and figure type, the circular "A Pattern For You" EC 72-435 will help. You can get a copy from your local county Extension agent.

Many people will still need to make some alteration in the paper pattern. Minor alterations can also be made in the cloth for a better fitting dress.

## Determine the alterations needed

1. Fit the paper pattern on yourself (try-on method) to get a general idea of how it will fit. You can check the placement of darts, tucks, pockets and curved seams in relation to your figure.

2. Take certain body measurements and add the suggested amount of ease. Compare this sum with the measurements of the pattern. Or, compare the pattern measurements with those in a dress that you already have that fits well.

A combination of the measurement and try-on methods usually produces the most satisfactory results.

## Try-on fitting

1. Wear the shoes and undergarments that you plan to wear with the dress.

2. Press paper pattern pieces with a warm iron if needed.

3. Lengthen grain-line markings to the edges of the pattern pieces so grain can be clearly seen throughout the alteration procedure and later in cutting the fabric.

4. Trim off extra margins next to cutting line on shoulders, neckline, centers front and back. Leave margin on side to allow for adding extra width on the sides.

5. Fold out darts and tucks and pin in place.

6. Lap seams at the side, shoulder, and waistline. Pin on stitching line.

7. Have someone hold the pinned pattern at your center back as you stand in front of the mirror.

8. Check the following: (Fig. 1)

— Is the pattern large enough or too large at neck, shoulder, bust, waist, hips?

— Are darts, tucks, pockets and other fashion design lines placed correctly in relation to the figure?

— Are there problem areas indicated by wrinkles, folds, looseness, or tightness? If so, mark area on your paper pattern where altering

Extension Service

University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture Cooperating with the  
U. S. Department of Agriculture and the College of Home Economics  
E. F. Frolik, Dean J. L. Adams, Director



is needed. For example, if the pattern is too small in the bust area but fits in the chest and shoulders, take care to enlarge only the bust area. Try not to alter shape of armholes, neckline or shoulders any more than necessary.

### Check measurements

Use your list of measurements plus ease to check the corresponding pattern measurements to figure how much you need to add or subtract. Remember that on most pattern pieces you are measuring just half of the finished garment. For example, you measure half of the blouse front and half of the blouse back, so twice these measurements should correspond to your whole bust measure plus allowance for ease (Fig. 2). If your bust measures 32" your pattern should measure about 35" for the 2" to 4" generally allowed for ease.

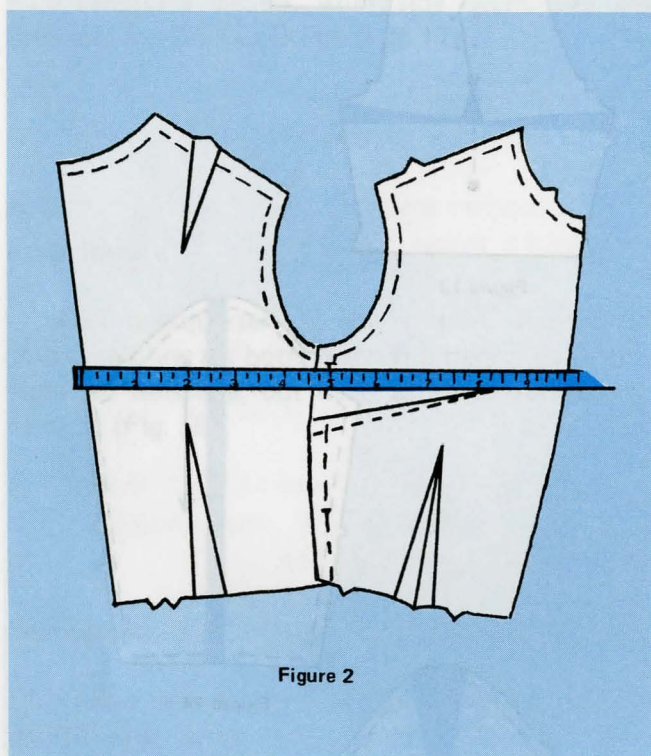


Figure 2

Measuring Pattern Bust Line A to B. Lap side seams so stitching lines C-D meet.

### Methods of altering

Determine where the problem area lies then choose the easiest of the following methods for altering:

1. Slash and spread on grain line, as far as possible, to add length, width and fullness.
2. Fold and lap to decrease size.
3. Relocate seams. If you must add or subtract more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ " on any seam consider the effect on the design lines.
4. Increase or decrease darts or tucks.

### General suggestions for altering

- Keep the style and design lines and proportions unchanged in outline or direction as far as possible.

- Keep grainline straight to preserve balance.

- Make changes between points where your body moves. Alterations in a long sleeve, for example, should be made between sleeve cap and elbow or between elbow and wrist rather than adding or subtracting all at the wrist line.

- If a considerable amount is to be added, proportions of the design are better preserved by making small changes in several places. Follow pattern instructions for shortening or lengthening.

- If an alteration lengthens or shortens an edge, alter the corresponding edge it joins so notches match.

- Draw transitional lines to correct lines broken in making tucks or slashes across slanting or curved lines.

- If you enlarge a curved area by slashing, lap it in another area to keep pattern pieces flat and retain true grain.

- Remember, if a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " tuck is folded to shorten a skirt or bodice, it shortens the pattern 1" because the tuck is double.

- If the alteration is a difficult one, try it out on a duplicate of the pattern made from tissue paper. Mark all construction lines and notches on the duplicate and make necessary corrections on it. It is a good idea to try out the altered pattern in muslin or an old sheet.

For women who usually need to make numerous changes in their patterns, a well-fitting basic pattern can be a helpful guide in altering. It saves time because fewer measurements have to be taken. If your figure changes, it may be necessary to refit the basic dress.

Standards of a good fit are outlined in EC 71-477 "The Fit of Your Garment."



# Pattern Alterations for Bodice

## Changing the bustline dart:

To raise bustline dart, fold at A-B. Slash and spread at C-D. To lower bustline dart, slash and spread at A-B; fold at C-D (Fig. 3).

## Square or sloping shoulders:

For square shoulders, add to the shoulder line on both front and back. Raise the armhole to keep the shape. For sloping shoulders, lower the shoulder line and lower the underarm (Fig. 4).

## Narrow shoulders:

Slash from A to B. Lap at A and taper to nothing at B. Straighten the shoulder line. Use the same alteration on back if needed. Otherwise, increase a back shoulder dart or ease the back shoulder to match the front (Fig. 5).

## Rounded shoulders:

Slash across the pattern where the shoulder curve is largest. Spread to allow extra room. Pin to paper. Straighten center back edge. Take small dart at neckline (Fig. 6).

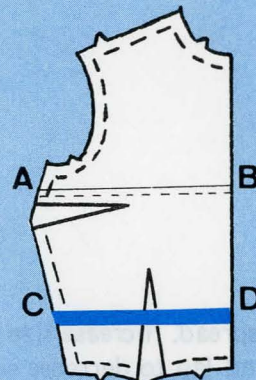


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

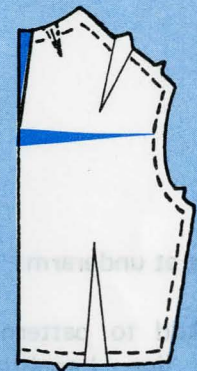


Figure 6



### Large Shoulder Blade:

Slash and spread where shoulder blade is most prominent. Draw armhole curve again then enlarge the dart (Fig. 7).

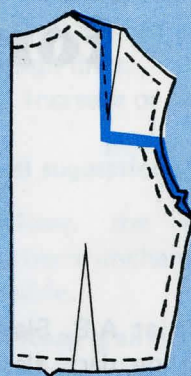


Figure 7

### Large or small bust:

For large bust, slash and spread. Increase size of darts. For small bust, slash and lap to decrease size of the bodice (Fig. 8).

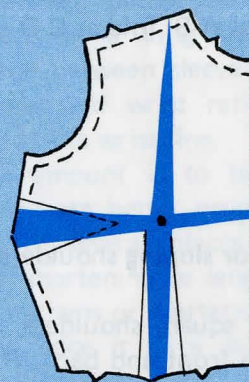


Figure 8

### Large bust with diagonal dart:

Slash and spread. Straighten center front line A-B (Fig. 9).

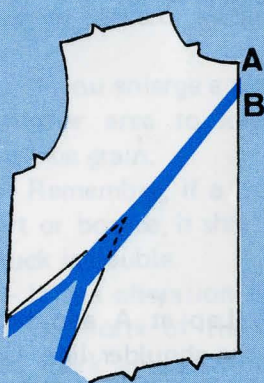


Figure 9

### Bulge at underarm:

Add to pattern at front and back underarm seam line. Lengthen at waistline. Make larger underarm dart. Add same amount to underarm of sleeve (Fig. 10).

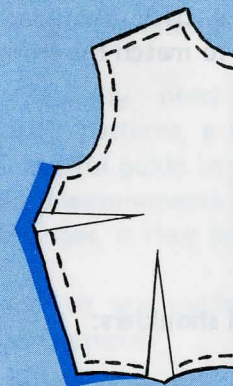


Figure 10



# for Sleeves

## Wide shoulder:

Slash from middle of shoulder on both front and back. Spread required amount. Redraw sleeve. For narrow shoulders slash and lap the pattern in same area (Fig. 11).

## Strain as shoulder:

Add at shoulder line. Adjust neckline facing to fit (Fig. 12).

## Raglan sleeve:

To add lift to a raglan sleeve draw line from corner to corner then up to dart point. Slash along lines. Spread top of sleeve  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch and lap dart edges. Pin over paper and fill in lines to point of armhole (Fig. 13).

## Large arm:

Slash and spread sleeve. For small arm, fold or tuck. Good for short sleeves. Lower armhole of bodice to fit (Fig. 14).

## Large upper arm:

Slash and spread. Enlarge armhole to fit sleeve or ease in fullness (Fig. 15).

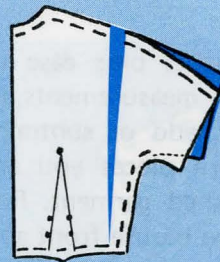


Figure 11

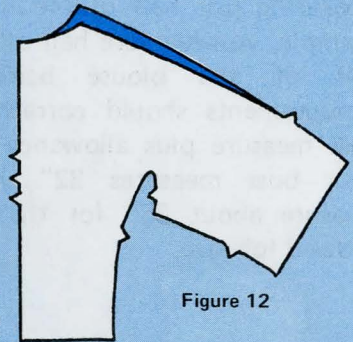


Figure 12

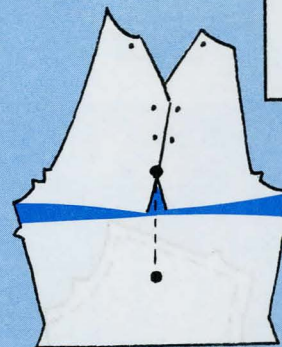


Figure 13

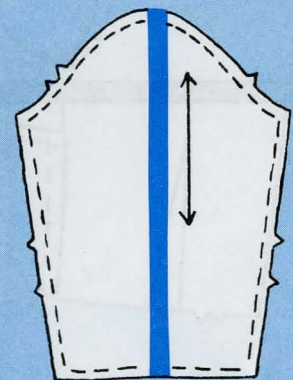


Figure 14

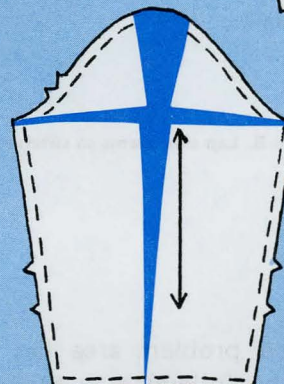


Figure 15



# for Dresses & Skirts

## Large abdomen:

Alter both skirt and bodice for a large abdomen. Slash and spread. Adjust waistline darts so skirt and bodice darts meet (Fig. 16).

## Small waistline:

Alter both skirt and blouse by enlarging darts and removing excess from side seam. Do the opposite for large waistline (Fig. 17).

## Large hips:

Add one-quarter of the amount needed to enlarge hipline on both front and back side seams. Taper to waistline, but keep width of addition to hemline (Fig. 18).

## Sway back:

Fold a tuck at center back and taper to nothing at the side seam. Clip at edge on side seam. Straighten center back (Fig. 19).

## Large derriere:

Slash and spread as shown. Increase size of darts to retain waistline (Fig. 20).

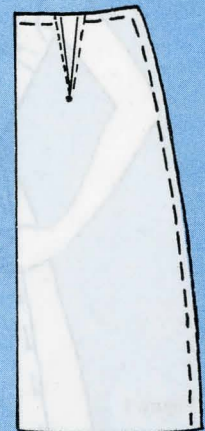


Figure 16

Figure 17

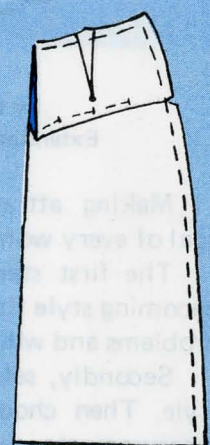
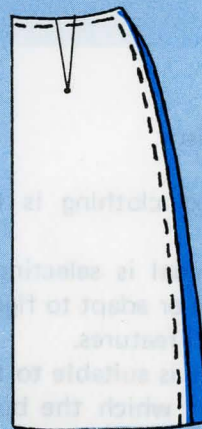


Figure 18

Figure 19

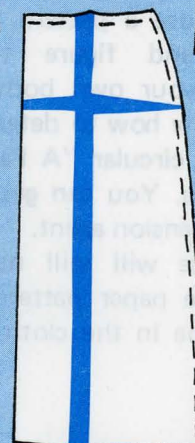


Figure 20