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Sewing with Silky Textured Fabrics

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What are silky textured fabrics? Silky textured fabrics have a smooth, lustrous surface often referred to as satin fabric. The term satin is the name of a weave. The sheen of the fabric comes from yarns that float over several yarns before interlacing with another yarn. These floating yarns reflect light and produce a shiny surface. Fibers used in a satin weave include rayon, polyester, acetate and silk. Some fabric names include crepe de chine, crepe-backed satin, sateen, shantung, antique satin and charmeuse.

Patterns

Because these fabrics are selected for their beauty and not durability, prom dresses, formals, wedding dresses, jackets and blouses are patterns most often used.

Preshrink

Check the end bolt of the fabric for care requirements. Some fabrics may be washable, while others may need to be dry cleaned.

Layout/Cutting

Use a "with nap" layout. Shiny fabrics shade differently if cut in different directions. Use silk pins or ballpoint pins. Pin within the seam allowance to avoid pin holes in the garment. Fabric weights are another option. Cut fabric with sharp shears to avoid snags.

Marking

Use thread or chalk or mark by snipping at the notches.

Interfacing

Use sew-in or fusible interfacings. Test the fusible interfacing to make sure the fashion fabric isn't too firm and the bonding agent doesn't "strike through" to the right side. Self fabric may be used in lightweight fabrics. Underlining the skirt with organza and attaching the hem to it makes an invisible hem. If using a lightweight fusible interfacing, fuse it to facings, undercollars and under cuffs.

Needles

Start with a new needle. Depending on the weight of the fabric, select size 60/8 to 80/12.

Sewing

Set the stitch length at 1.5 to 2 mm or 12 to 15 stitches per inch. Use extra-fine cotton thread, long staple polyester thread or machine embroidery thread. Do a seam test trying different needle and thread types on fabric scraps. To avoid puckering on lengthwise seams, hold the fabric taut when sewing. You may need to loosen the tension slightly and lighten the pressure. If using a wide spaced presser foot, move the needle to the far left position to reduce slipping. Or use a straight stitch presser foot and a single hole throat plate to hold the fabric firmly so it won't go into the needle hole or creep. A roller or walking foot may also help the fabric feed through the sewing machine.

Seam Finishes

Suitable seam finishes for plain seams are pinked and stitched, multi-stitch zigzag, zigzag or bias binding. If fabric is too lightweight, seam finish both edges together. Serge the edges if fabric tends to ravel. Check to make sure the thread isn't too heavy for the fabric, which would cause thread imprints. To prevent thread imprints, use woolly nylon in the serger loopers or on a sewing machine bobbin.

Pressing

Use a warm, dry iron and light pressing. If using a steam iron, heat the iron to the proper setting to avoid spitting and spewing. It is easy to damage the fabric with incorrect pressing. Press from the wrong side of the fabric. Use a press cloth when pressing on the right side. To avoid seam imprints and hem impressions use a seam roll or strips of brown paper.

Hemming

Select a hem appropriate to the garment design and quality. A top stitched hem may pucker. A variety of options include: pink and stitch the edge, then hem garment to stitched line of hem allowance; hand rolled hem; serge raw edges; serger rolled hem, enclose hem edge with sheer nylon bias tape and stitch; hairline hem and narrow topstitched hem.

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