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HEG77-76 Pressing Methods (Revised April 1981)

Thelma Thompson

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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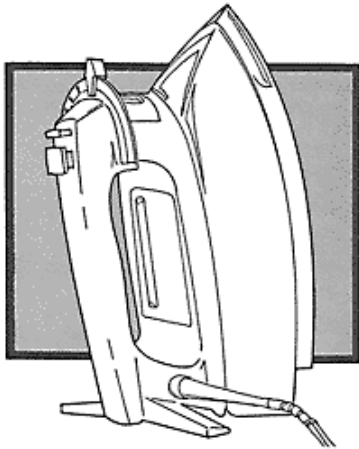


Pressing Methods

This NebGuide discusses pressing methods that will not mar or distort the fabric.

Thelma Thompson, Extension Specialist -- Clothing

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A skillful job of pressing requires time, practice and the use of methods that will not mar the fabric. Pressing should not make the fabric shine, flatten the pile or nap, or distort the texture or weave.

Pressing is not ironing. In ironing, the iron is pushed from one spot to another in an unbroken motion to remove wrinkles. In pressing, the iron is lifted up and set down in a particular spot to flatten or shape small areas. To prevent the fabric from stretching, do not use a sliding motion when pressing.

Fabrics react differently to heat, moisture and pressure. The fiber content of the fabric governs the temperature to be used for pressing. The texture of the fabric dictates factors such as moisture and pressure.

Moisture is needed to press most fabrics, but it should be used with care since it can give a shiny, overpressed look. A steam iron may be enough for some fabrics; in others, a press cloth with a damp cloth placed on top is necessary. A dry iron is usually used with the latter technique. Use a press cloth with either kind of iron when doing final or finish pressing on the right side of a garment.

Test a scrap of your fabric before beginning to press parts of the garment. Make a test seam or dart to check for imprints on the right side. Set the heat control of the iron for the fiber from which the fabric is made. Place the fabric carefully on the pressing surface to avoid stretching or pulling it out of shape.

Press on the wrong side of the fabric whenever possible. Keep the grain of the fabric straight and press with the grain. Use light pressure at first. Some fabrics require little pressure to flatten them without marring the texture or the weave. Let the garment dry from the steam before it is handled or it will stretch. If the fabric will show press marks on the outside, place brown paper strips under the seams or use a seam roll.

Pressure, Moisture, Heat Factors

1. **Pressure.** Keep the weight of the iron in the hand. Use light pressure on the fabric rather than the full weight

of the iron. Careful lifting and lowering of the iron controls the amount of pressure. Add pressure only for crease-resistant and firmly woven fabrics.

2. **Moisture.** Excessive moisture often spots fabrics, makes them look overpressed, gives shine and ruins texture. For fabrics that cannot take direct moisture, place a damp cheese cloth over a dry press cloth, or dampen the press cloth with a sponge.
3. **Heat.** Cotton and linen fabrics generally require a higher temperature and man-made fibers a lower one. Some synthetics should not be pressed with an iron at all as heat will flatten a pile or deteriorate the fiber. When a fabric is made of two or more fibers, use the temperature setting for the one requiring the lowest heat.

Pressing Special Fabrics and Finishes

The pressing technique for wool can be used to advantage with many other fibers and fabrics that are made into coats, suits and other tailored outfits. Because it is an important technique, it is listed first.

Wool. It is essential to use moist heat when pressing wool to preserve its original texture and resiliency. Use a wool pressing cloth to press wool fabrics. A piece of wool may be placed on the ironing board with the right side of the garment resting on it. When pressing on the right side, the wool press cloth is placed next to the garment, then a dry cotton press cloth, and a damp cheese or cotton cloth on top. Raise and lower the iron over the area to be pressed. Lift the press cloth frequently to pull steam from the surface of the fabric and help raise the nap.

Wool should not be pressed until entirely dry. A clapper may be used to further flatten edges while steam is still rising from the fabric. Steam from the steam iron or a wet pressing cloth held over a dry iron may be used to shrink out ease along seam lines of shaped sections. Wool is the fiber most easily shaped or molded in pressing. More pressure is used on areas to be shaped or creased, such as bust darts and pleats. Fabrics finished to look like wool should be pressed with steam the same way you press wool.

Beads, Sequins. Use a low heat setting. Run the tip of the iron along the seam. Use a dry iron as steam may erase the shine or finish.

Brocades, Embroideries, Laces. Use a turkish towel on the ironing board to prevent the raised pattern from flattening out. Press only on the wrong side. Steam should be used with care; a dry iron may be preferable in some cases.

Glossy Finish, Glazed Finish, Satins, Crepes. Use little or no moisture. Press only on the wrong side with a light touch.

Dull Finishes, Dark Colors. Press on the wrong side whenever possible to prevent shine. Use a press cloth when pressing on the right side.

Sheers. Use a low temperature and a dry iron. Steam or too much heat may pucker the fabric. Use the tip of the iron just along seams.

Blends. Select the pressing temperature for the more delicate fiber. Test for water spotting in an inconspicuous area before using steam.

Pile Fabrics, Napped Fabrics. Use a needle board, heavy turkish towel or self-fabric on the ironing board. Place the right side of the garment on top of this. Press the garment on the wrong side, using a light touch so that the pile will not be flattened. For delicate velvets, prop the iron up and draw the wrong side of the fabric over it. Steam, rather than pressing, is the important factor. Do not touch the iron to the right side. Shower steaming will also remove wrinkles.

Fake Furs. These may melt easily and the pile may matt. Usually finger pressing is sufficient. If you think pressing is necessary, use a dry iron rather than steam. Always press on the wrong side, never on the right.

Durable Press, Permanent Press. Use low to moderate temperatures. Check the fiber content. Creases once pressed may stay, so be sure of seam lines before pressing. Use the tip of the iron along seam lines, more pressure

will be needed here. The final press may be done with a higher temperature and a press cloth to give sharper creases.

Stretch Fabrics, Knits. Press lightly to prevent stretching. Steam may be used with care. Press on the wrong side in the direction of the lengthwise ribs.

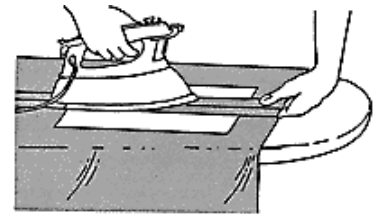
Bonded, Laminated. Select the temperature for the outer fabric. Do not let the iron touch the foam or other laminate. If needed, use a press cloth to prevent this.

Leathers. Pressing these materials is usually inadvisable. If it is necessary, use a low temperature and brown paper for protection. Use a dry iron only.

Vinyls. Do not press.

Pressing Construction Details

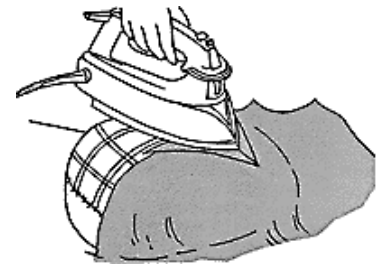
Seams. Press along the stitching line in the same direction in which the seams were stitched before opening the seam or pressing it to one side. This smooths the stitching and works it into the cloth.



If the seam is to be pressed open, press with the tip of the iron on the stitching line first. Then apply moisture if needed and press it open. Use a seam roll or slip strips of heavy wrapping paper under the seam edge so the imprint does not show on the right side. The kind of fabric will determine whether or not a press cloth is needed to protect the fabric or to improve the press.

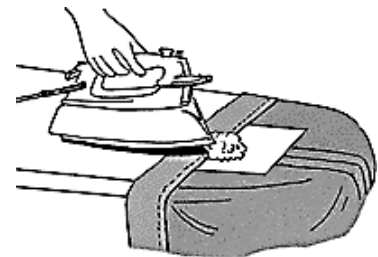
Waistline seams are usually turned up into the bodice. Curved seams should be pressed over a curved area such as a pressing ham.

Darts. Press these over a curved surface such as a pressing ham toward the tip. Do not let the iron go beyond the stitching line. Avoid imprints on the right side by using the same technique used for seams.



Unless the design indicates otherwise, vertical darts are pressed toward the center and horizontal darts are pressed downward. Slash wide or bulky darts and press them open.

Hems. Press hems up from the lower edge. Press the fold of the hem after it has been marked, basted, trimmed, and eased at the top. Shrink fullness of a hem before finishing the edge, using a strip of heavy paper between the hem and garment. Steam press lightly, keeping the weight of the iron in the hand. Slip the iron into the fullness at right angles.



Never press around a skirt hem as it tends to stretch and ripple the fabric. For a rolled effect on the hem edge, hold the iron a few inches above the hem. Let the steam penetrate. Pat with a block or ruler to mold hem.

Plackets. Press plackets on the wrong side on a textured surface such as terry cloth. Use a press cloth and limited moisture. Avoid zipper teeth. Place paper strips between the laps to prevent imprints on the right side. Then press on the right side over a rounded surface such as a press mitt, pressing ham or rounded turkish towel. Fabric that shows imprints easily should be protected by slipping paper between the zipper teeth and the outside fabric.

Gathers and Shirring. Press these from the wrong side whenever possible. Hold the gathering or shirring along the stitching line. Press toward the gathers, sliding the point of the iron into the gathers. Slide the iron with the grainline; do not move it from side to side.



Pleats. Press pleats from the hem to the waistline. Use brown paper strips under the folds. Unpressed pleats may be pinned to the ironing board and a steam iron held a few inches above the pleats. Let the pleats dry before removing the pins. If necessary, support pleats with a chair or table as you press.

Tucks. Whenever possible, press tucks from the underneath side. Press the fold toward the center, stopping at the stitching line. Tucks made on the right side are pressed from the stitching line toward the fold. Place brown paper strips under the folds, and use a press cloth when pressing on the right side.

Buttonholes. Press buttonholes over a sleeveboard on the wrong side of the fabric. Then turn and press on the right side, using a press cloth.

Pockets. Press from the right side using brown paper strips to cushion the pocket edges and a press cloth to protect the fabric.

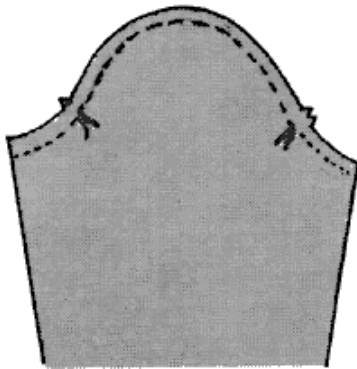
Facings. First press seams without direction, then with the tip of the steam iron, open the seam lightly. Grade seams so that the widest edge will be uppermost from the right side of the garment. Finally, press seams toward the facing.

Turn the facing right side out and press so that the seam rolls to the underside. In some cases you may wish to understitch to keep the facing in position.

Collars, Lapels. Press along the stitching line, then lightly press seams open. Seams should be graded or trimmed after light pressing. Use a point presser to achieve sharp corners. Press the seams toward the undercollar or underlapel. Turn. Press collar or lapel on the right side, making sure that the seam rolls to the underside.

Preparing and Setting in the Sleeve

In order to control the excess fullness to be shrunk from the sleeve cap, machine baste on the seam line between notches. Stay-stitch the remaining portions of the seam line.



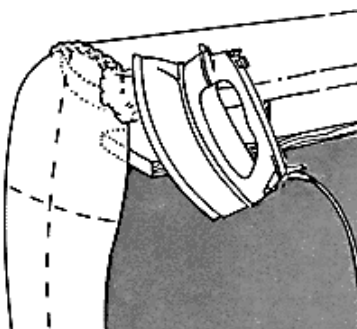
Machine basting and stay-stitching on seam line of sleeve cap.

Before stitching the lengthwise seams in long sleeves, shape the elbow area over a curved pad -- at the location of ease or darts. Machine stitch and press open the underarm sleeve seam.

To determine the amount of fullness to shrink from the sleeve cap, pin the sleeve in place at seam lines and notches. Pull the basting thread over the cap of the sleeve to adjust fullness. Arrange most fullness where the sleeve is bias. There should be practically no ease at the very top of the sleeve where the grain is straight. Remove the sleeve from the garment and place the sleeve cap over end of a sleeve board, being careful to make no more than 3/4 inch extend over the

board. You may prefer to use a pressing mitt for this purpose.

Shrink the sleeve cap by playing steam over this section. Mold it with the palm of your hand. Work with the point of the iron to eliminate the gathers from either side of the seam line.



Shrinking fullness from sleeve cap.

Do not place the iron directly on wool fabrics. After shrinking and shaping the sleeve cap, press with a wool-protected press cloth. *Allow the fabric to air-dry thoroughly* and then pin the sleeve into the armhole, matching underarm and shoulder seams and notches.

Baste the sleeve into the armhole on the seam line, keeping the sleeve side uppermost. Try on to check the fit and shaping. The sleeve should be free of

diagonal wrinkles and, in the case of a long sleeve, the crosswise grain should slant slightly downward in back.

Stitch the sleeve in place, keeping the garment uppermost to get a smooth line. Over the large end of a sleeve board, lightly steam press the seam, unopened, along the stitching line only on the inside of the sleeve. To retain the rounded cap of the sleeve, *do not press from the right side*.

File HEG76 under TEXTILES, CLOTHING AND DESIGN

C-11, Construction

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