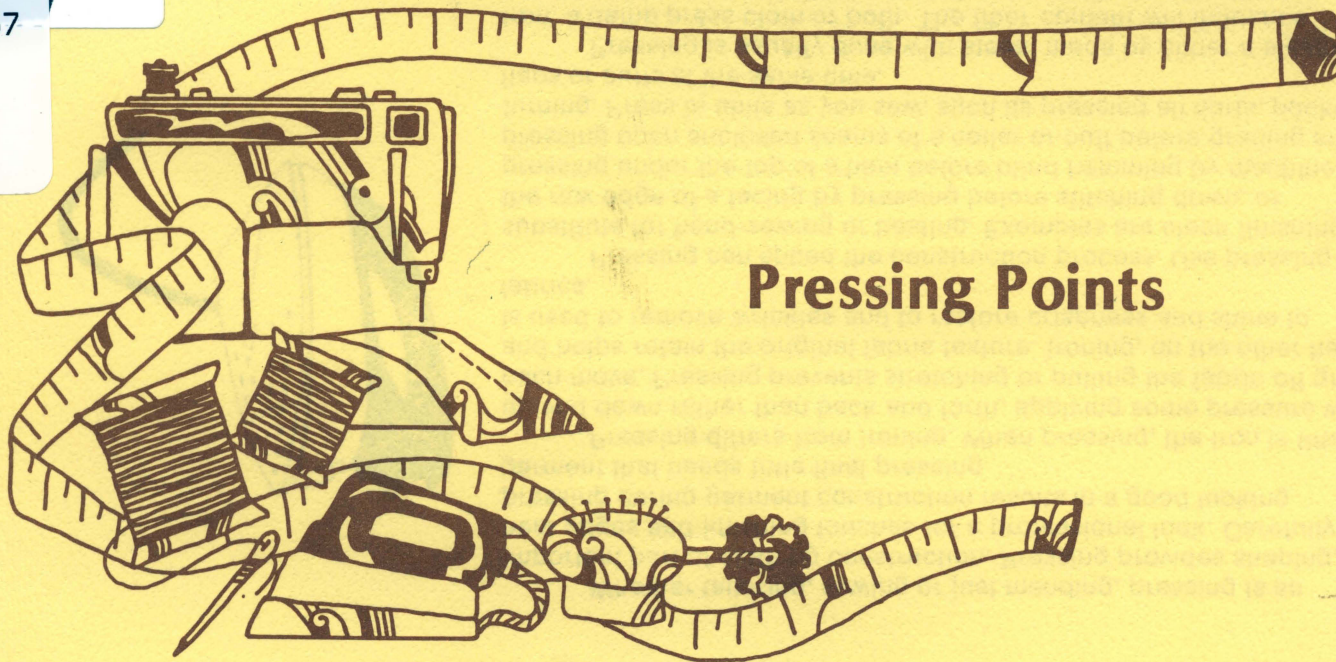


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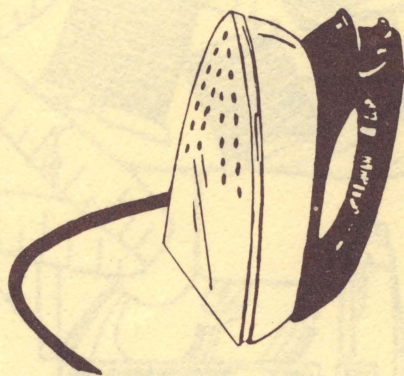
Measure Your Sew-How



Pressing Points

PRESSING POINTS

*Marlene Odle-Kemp**



Whether tailoring, sewing or just mending, pressing is an important part of clothing construction. Pressing provides shaping, neat edges and finishing touches for a professional look. Carefully pressing during garment construction results in a good looking garment that needs little final pressing.

Pressing differs from ironing. When pressing, the iron is lifted up and down rather than back and forth, applying some pressure with each move. Pressing prevents stretching or pulling the fabric off grain and helps retain the original fabric texture. Ironing, on the other hand, is used to remove wrinkles and to restore crispness and shine to fabrics.

Pressing can speed the construction process. Use pressing as a substitute for hand-sewing or basting. Examples are clean finishing the raw edge of a facing by pressing before stitching down, or pressing under the top of a hem before blind hemming by machine, or pressing open enclosed seams of a collar or cuff before grading and turning. Press in units as you sew, such as pressing all darts, pocket flaps or cuffs at the same time.

Pressing is usually done with steam made by either a steam iron, a damp press cloth or both. The fiber content will influence whether steam is used. Some sheer fabrics such as nylon, acetate, rayon or polyester may water spot with steam.

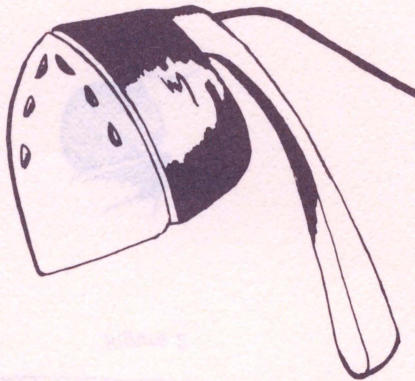
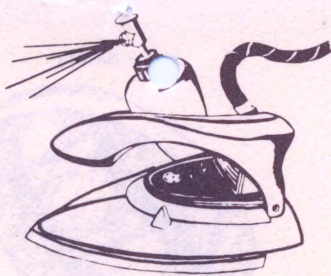


Figure 1

The procedure and equipment used in pressing are determined by the kind of fabric and the kind of garment. Most pressing aids, except most irons, are available from the notions counter at department stores or fabric stores.

Basic pressing equipment includes a steam and dry iron, an ironing board, a press cloth, a sleeve board and a tailor's ham.

Irons. A combination steam and dry iron with a full range of temperatures will ensure the best care of all fashion fabrics. A small iron is convenient for small, more difficult-to-reach areas such as sleeves, collar points, pockets and cuffs. The larger iron works best on large areas, general pressing and seams. Steamers designed for sewing purposes are available (see Figure 1).

Keep the iron clean at all times. If finishes or fusible materials are allowed to gum the sole plate, pressing is impossible. To remove excess buildup, clean the iron periodically. To clean, turn the iron to the highest temperature and rub the bottom of the iron over a paper towel until clean. If stubborn soil remains, use commercial iron cleaners. Clean the interior of the iron frequently to remove deposit and sediment. A diluted solution of vinegar and water will clean most interiors; however, follow the recommended instructions that come with the iron. Self-cleaning irons have a built-in mechanism for cleaning the interior, but are more expensive.

Ironing Board. Adjustable ironing boards provide comfort while working. Choose one that is rigid enough to withstand pressure while pressing. A substantial amount of padding cut to fit the area reduces shine and prevents damage to the fabric or iron when pressing over fasteners.

Cover type is a personal preference. Muslin is attractive and easy to put on; however, it scorches more easily than silicon-treated covers. On the other hand, silicon treated covers may cause fabrics to shine. Since a cover must be removed for laundering, secure it with tape, elastic, drawstrings or clamps for easy removal. Both padding and cover must be smooth to prevent wrinkles that may press through to the fabric.

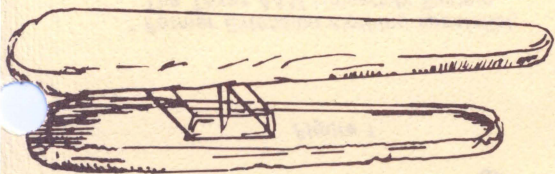


Figure 2



Figure 3

Sleeve Board. The sleeve board may be used for pressing seams and small sections of garments as well as sleeves. It is designed to allow the sleeve seam to be pressed without pressing in creases and to shrink out fullness in the top of the sleeve cap (see Figure 2).

Tailor's Ham. A tailor's ham is designed for pressing darts, curved seams, sleeve caps or any defined rounded area (see Figure 3). Hams are available in several sizes and are generally covered with cotton and wool (see Figure 4). As a ham substitute, use a small hard pillow or a tightly balled terry cloth towel pinned securely to hold its shape (see Figure 5).

Press Cloth. A press cloth prevents fabric shine or iron marks on the fabric. When dampened, it provides steam when tailoring or applying fusibles. Choose a weight compatible with the fabric. When pressing pile fabrics, use a scrap of self-fabric, placing nap to nap. A dampened terry washcloth makes a good press cloth for heavy fabrics. Commercial iron covers such as Iron Safe or Iron-all and muslin fabric covers eliminate the need for a press cloth (see Figure 5a).



Figure 4

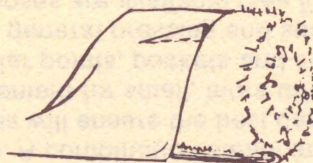


Figure 5

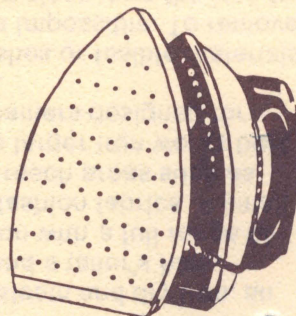


Figure 5a

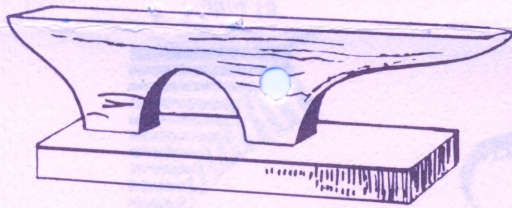


Figure 6



Figure 7

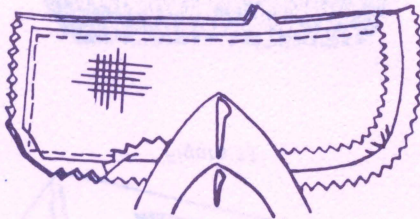


Figure 10

Point and Seam Presser. Some point and seam pressers provide many different shaped surfaces for pressing points, curved seams and straight edges. Others are designed to press points and straight seams only (see Figure 6). The thin flat edges provide a surface that allows the seams to be pressed open without a seam impression showing on the outside of the garment. The point presser allows the seam at the tip of the garment section to be pressed open (see Figure 7).

As a substitute for a point presser, use a pointed wooden dowel or several layers of cardboard the shape of the garment section (see Figures 8 and 9).

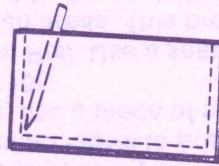


Figure 8

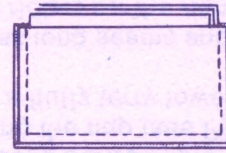


Figure 9

Another way to preset an edge is to press facing seam allowance toward facing before turning to right side (see Figure 10).

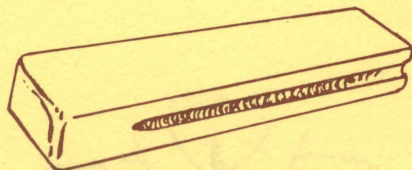


Figure 11



Figure 12

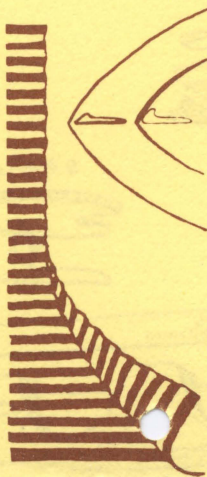


Figure 13

Clapper or Pounding Block. A clapper is a block of wood used with steam to flatten seam edges and is a must for tailoring where many layers of fabric are being pressed. Sometimes the bottom board of a point and seam presser serves as a clapper. Otherwise, the clapper is a board with rounded edges and grooves in the side for holding securely (see Figure 11).

To use the clapper on the fabric, steam as much as possible with a steam iron and press cloth. Remove iron and press cloth and pound firmly, regulating pressure and slapping movement according to the type of fabric being pressed. The garment should be placed on a sturdy surface such as a table before pounding.

Needleboard. The needleboard is a bed of steel wires mounted on a flat piece of heavy canvas that is placed between the ironing board and piled fabric to prevent flattening the nap (see Figure 12). As a substitute, use a piece of self-fabric or a fluffy terry towel (see Figure 13).

Seam Roll. Use a seam roll to press long seams and hard-to-reach areas. This prevents seam ridges on the right side (see Figure 14). As a substitute, place strips of paper under the seams before pressing or cover a tightly rolled magazine with scraps of wool or cotton fabric (see Figures 15 and 16).



Figure 14

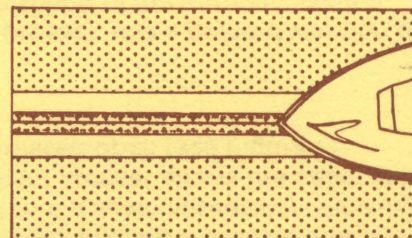


Figure 15



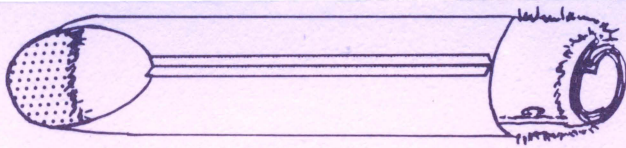


Figure 16

Other Helpful Aids. Use a bowl of water for dampening the press cloth without making a trip to the faucet or use a spray bottle filled with water. Use a clothes brush for removing lint and loose threads and straightening nap.

A 6-inch (15.24 centimeter) metal ruler with a slide marker to mark the measurements when turning up and pressing hems, facings, seams or clean finishing edges.

Pressing Tips

1. Press as you sew. Don't cross a seam with another seam before pressing it.
2. Overpressing causes a worn appearance. Underpressing causes an unattractive appearance.
3. Press in the direction of the grain; napped fabrics, with nap.
4. Use a scrap of fabric to check temperature, moisture and pressure to avoid damaging or spotting a garment made of synthetic fabrics.
5. Press on the wrong side when possible to prevent shine.

Pressing every step of the way and proper handling of the garment during sewing will cut final touch-up pressing to a minimum and produce a professional looking garment.

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