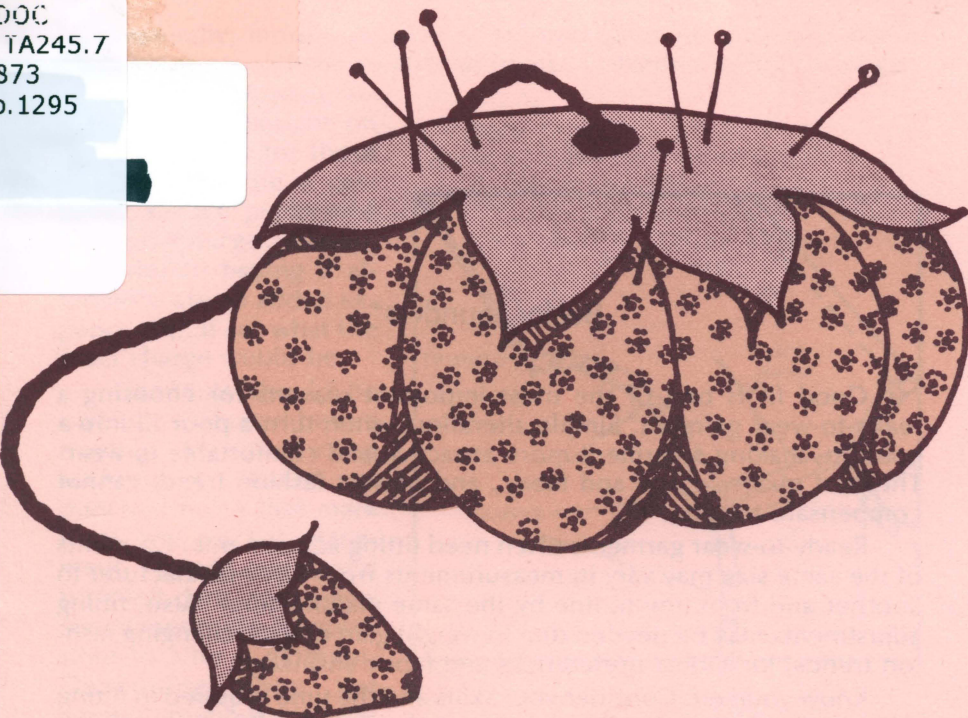


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Fitting and Altering Ready-to-Wear

Basic Principles

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Good fit is one of the most important reasons for choosing a ready-to-wear garment. Simple alterations often turn a poor fit into a good fit, making a garment more attractive and comfortable to wear. The best quality, color and fabric, and newest fashion trend, cannot compensate for poor fit.

Ready-to-wear garments often need fitting adjustments. Garments of the same size may vary in measurements from one manufacturer to another and from line to line by the same manufacturer. Also, fitting adjustments may be needed due to weight gain or loss, changing fashion trends, individual preferences and fabric shrinkage.

Know yourself. Consider your skills and the time required in fitting and altering before buying a garment that needs alterations. If you dislike ripping, probably you will also find altering unpleasant. However, if you are uncomfortable in a less than perfectly fitting garment, successful altering will save you money, expand your wardrobe and contribute to a good feeling about your appearance.

Since fitting and altering ready-to-wear is done mainly through existing seams, darts and other design details, recommended techniques often differ from those used in making a garment or in altering a pattern. Basic sewing skills are helpful in thinking through and then completing the alterations needed. This publication emphasizes techniques for fitting and altering and does not include information on basic sewing.

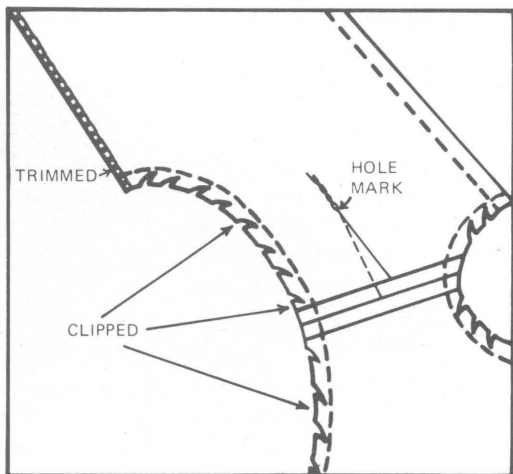
Know Alteration Limits

It is not always possible to alter a garment. Garments that are more than one size too small or too large usually cannot be successfully altered through existing seams, particularly in areas such as the neckline, shoulders and across the back or upper chest. Garments more than one size too large are most successfully adjusted by recutting, using a pattern that fits. Adjustments in the width of the bust, waist and hips, and in hem lengths usually are successful since they have little effect on the design lines.

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Generally, more expensive or tailored garments such as suits or coats are more difficult to alter at home. Consider having these garments professionally altered. Unless bought on sale, alterations for these garments may be a customer service performed without charge. Always ask prior to buying if alterations are an added expense and, if so, what the exact charge would be.

Garments should be carefully evaluated before buying. Manufacturing techniques such as punched holes that mark darts and pocket placement, clipped seams and trimmed darts and seams sometimes make it impossible to alter a garment. Depending upon the amount, number and type of alterations needed and the garment involved, results are usually more satisfactory when making a garment smaller than when making it larger. Also, garments made in some fabrics are difficult or impossible to make larger. Releasing seams or folds in fabrics such as velvet, corduroy, suede, satin, leather, vinyl, sequined and permanent press fabrics usually causes the original stitching lines to show. When in doubt, release a small area and look for any needle marks. Pressing, brushing, laundering or drycleaning may help remove original crease or seam lines in some fabrics.



Fitting Steps

- Fit the garment on the body since left and right sides of the body may differ. Wear undergarments and shoes similar to those that will be worn with the garment so curves and hem lengths will remain consistent. If possible, completely close all zippers, buttons, hooks and eyes, snaps or belts, and secure ties, sashes or other details as intended to be worn.
- First, check the overall fit using the "Checkpoints for Good Fit," Make sure the garment is on the body correctly, not pulled too far forward or backward.
- Analyze each garment area, beginning at the top of the garment and moving down to the hem. Sleeves and hems always should be last.

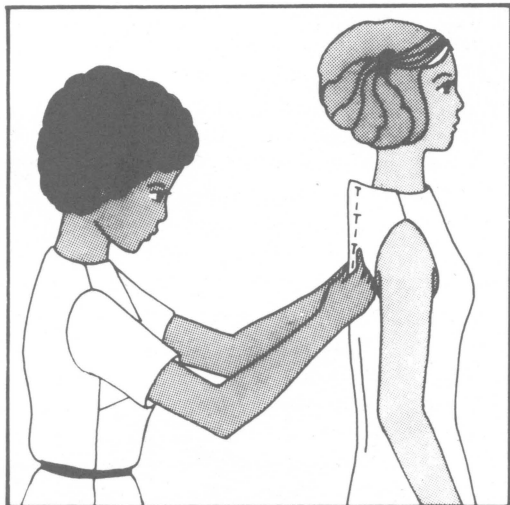
- Make one alteration at a time, since one adjustment often affects and may even help to correct another problem. For example, by shortening the length of the waistline bust darts, a garment may be altered enough to fit a person with a lower and slightly fuller bust measurement.

- When fitting, point pins on vertical seams and hems downward. On shoulder seams, pins should point away from the neck. This will allow the pins to stay in position and let the garment hang naturally.

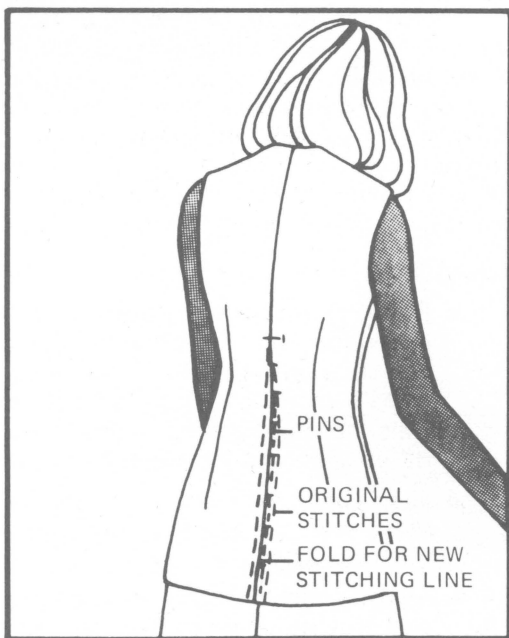
- To remove excess fullness, fold the garment along existing seamlines and pin out amounts needed, using the position of the pins on the outside as a guide for marking on the inside.

To add extra fullness, place pins perpendicular to seamlines at each end of the area to be released. Remove garment and release original stitching lines between these points. Put on the garment and pin a new seamline.

- After fitting with pins from the right side, remove the garment and turn it wrong side out.



TAKE IN



LET OUT

- While the outside pins are still in place, mark on the wrong side with basting, tailor's chalk, clip marks and/or pins. Basting is the most time consuming, but recommended for delicate fabrics such as lace and sheers. Clipping $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) into seam allowances is fast and accurate. It is ideal for exact matching or for marking center front and center back locations, but may weaken seams that are to be let out. Pinning is fast and useful when the alteration is to be completed immediately; otherwise pins may fall out.
- Remove the fitting pins.
- Pin garment with right sides together placing pins perpendicular to the new stitching lines marked. Consider fuse basting or double stick tape to hold an area in place to check evenness, to try it on or until it can be stitched. Never press over pins as permanent marks are often left.
- Before stitching the new seamline permanently, double check each area fitted for adequate ease of movement, comfort and appearance.

Guidelines for Easy Alterations

Study the construction techniques used by the manufacturer before ripping or removing stitches. When restitching the same area, try to use the same or a similar technique. Depending upon the alteration, it may be helpful to alter one side at a time so that the other side can be used as a guide in completing the alteration.

When possible, stitch new seams before ripping out the original stitching, especially if the new and old stitching lines are close together. The original stitches will hold the garment pieces in place, making the new seam easier to sew. Original seam allowances that were pressed open should be pressed closed to make the stitching easier and more accurate.

All seam allowances should be stitched so that they are at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.6 cm) wide to prevent pulling out. Seam tape can be stitched in the seam to give strength, and/or raw seam allowances can be enclosed or overcast to prevent raveling.

When making a garment smaller, leave the wide seam allowances where possible. Extra fabric or ease may be needed later.

When changing part of a seam or dart, taper the new stitching line smoothly into the original line. The greater the alteration, the longer and more tapered the new stitching line should be to smoothly line up with the original stitching line. Both ends of the new and original stitching lines should be secured, especially when the original one is a chain stitch.

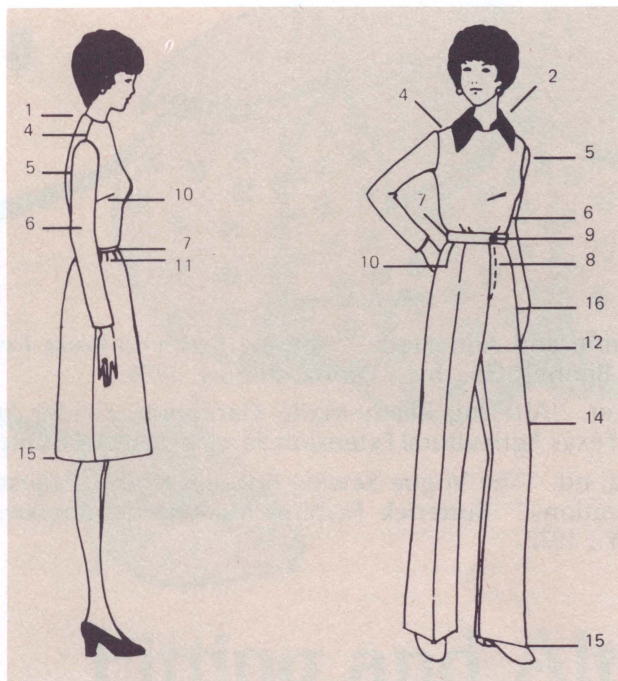


Recognizing when and where alterations are needed is fundamental to a good fit. Use the following general fitting points to check each garment in a mirror from the front, back and side:

- Adequate ease is allowed for comfortable movement when sitting, walking or bending. The garment does not bind or restrict. Strained, pulling or popped seams and wrinkles mean the garment is too tight.
- The garment fits in line with current fashion trends, and according to fabric, garment and figure type. Baggiess, extra fabric folds and uneven lengths mean the garment is too large.
- Crosswise grainlines, horizontal seams and hems are parallel to the floor unless specifically designed to be at another angle. Uneven dipping, rising or sloping means fitting problems.
- Lengthwise grainlines and vertical seams are at right angles to the floor unless they are specifically designed to be at a different angle. Sloping or twisting means a poor fit.

Use the following specific garment areas to pinpoint any problems. Each point is described for common design details.

1. The neckline lies flat against the body.
2. A high collar lies smoothly against the neck; a scoop neck collar lies against the body at the seamline.
3. Lapels roll against the garment without gapping or turning up.
4. Natural shoulder seams lie directly over the top of the shoulder or approximately one inch (2.5 cm) behind the ear lobe. They are not usually noticeable from the front or back when viewed at eye level unless dropped or otherwise modified by garment styling.
5. Natural armhole seams lie closely and evenly around the armhole. The underarm seam is usually about one inch (2.5 cm) below the armpit.
6. Sleeves hang straight from the shoulder.
7. The waistline lies along the natural waistline, or raised or lowered, along the midriff or hips.



8. The zipper lies flat.
9. Buttonhole closings are smooth when the garment is buttoned.
10. Darts point toward the curves of the body and end before reaching the fullest part of the body. One dart should point directly at the fullest part of the curve while several darts should be balanced around the curve.
11. Gathers, pleats, vents and tucks hang evenly.
12. The pant crotch follows the body curve evenly in both front and back.
13. The pant seat fits without bagging or pulling.
14. Pant legs fall straight to the floor with creases following the lengthwise grainline in the center of each leg.
15. Hems hang straight.
16. Long sleeves end at the wrist bone.

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