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**Texas
Agricultural
Extension
Service**

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Director
College Station

**ABILITY
NOT
DISABILITY**

Clothing



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ABILITY—NOT DISABILITY: CLOTHING

An attractive personal appearance contributes to self-confidence. Many easy adaptations make fashionable clothing available to the handicapped.

General Principles

General principles for clothing apply to all designs.

- Skirts should be wide enough to be comfortable, but not so wide that they get caught in crutches or wheelchair wheels.
- A long front opening on a dress, about three-quarters of the way down the front, is best.
- Elastic waistbands make dressing easier.
- Set-in sleeves are better for persons with crutches because they do not bunch under the top of the crutch. Reinforcement can be added with a patch of similar material in the underarm seam.
- Tapered sleeves will not get caught in wheelchair equipment. Short sleeves are often preferred, but a long sleeve provides warmth.
- V-necks allow the person to see the top button. A low, rolling collar will not ride up on the back of the neck when wheeling a chair or using crutches.
- Two-piece dresses hide many figure problems.

Zippers

A piece of ribbon or a medallion makes the zipper tab longer and easier to grasp.

The original work of Harriet E. Meldahl, Area Extension Agent, Rehabilitation and Joyce Wascoe, Rehabilitation Assistant in Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service is acknowledged and appreciated.

Pockets

Pockets are a convenient way to carry items such as glasses, handkerchiefs and medicines. Pockets should be large and open at the top so possessions will not fall out.

Pants

Pants are fashionable, provide warmth and cover leg deformities or braces. Knit slacks are easier to put on and are more comfortable for someone in a wheelchair. An elastic waistband or zippers on each side at the waist make dressing easier.

Zippers can be put all the way down the side seam of the leg, opening from the top or bottom. At the top of the zipper, place a hook large enough to be handled easily.

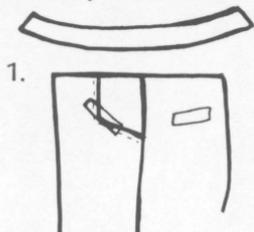
A knee pleat takes pressure off inflamed or sore knees. Cut a bias strip of the same color fabric as wide as the total width of the entire seam allowance and as long as necessary to accommodate the knee bend area. Baste seam in the knee bend area. Press open. Topstitch on each side of the seam line. Stitch a bias piece to outer edges of seam allowance. Reinforce ends. Remove bastings.

A patch of nylon lining under the fabric at the knee allows a brace to slip easily and prevents wear on the material.



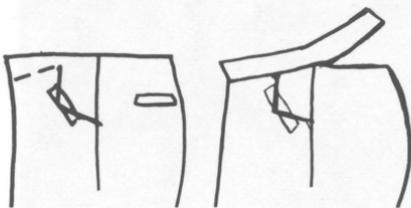
For persons in a wheelchair, add extra length to pants back for comfort and cut the front length down to avoid "lap puff."

To adapt waistband:

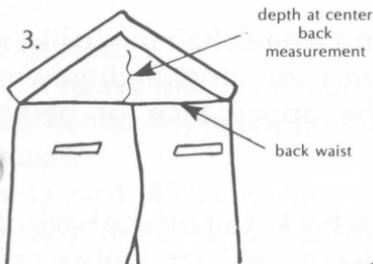


1.

2.



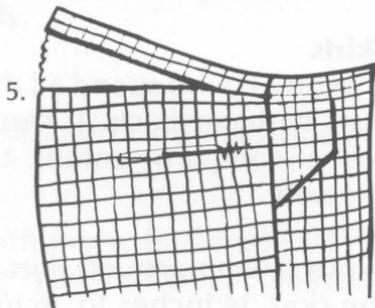
1. Detach the waistband from a regular pair of slacks, preferably knit. Note how the waistband is attached at the center front.
2. Measure the distance from the crotch seam to the waistline in both front and back of a seated person; add 1 inch (2.5 cm) to that measurement. Reapply the front waistband, lowering it the distance measured above. Stitch carefully over the zipper.



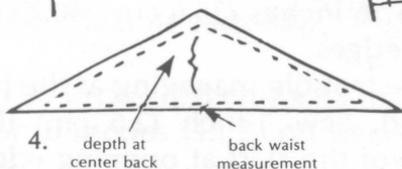
3.

depth at center back measurement

back waist



5.

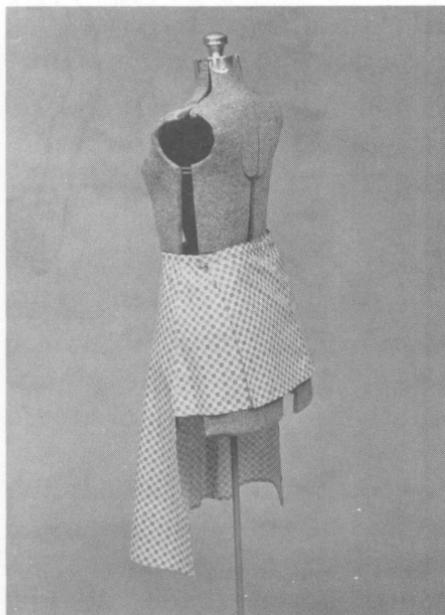


4.

depth at center back

back waist measurement

3. Extend the back waistband pieces at an angle as needed to equal the above measurement, with the ends meeting in a vertical seam. Measure the back waist width from side seam to side seam and the depth of the angle at center back.
4. Using these two measurements, cut a triangular insert piece from a stretchy knit fabric, allowing for seam allowances. Sew insert piece into pants.
5. Shape the finished slacks to fit the seated figure.



Skirts

Women who spend all their time in a wheelchair might like a skirt with no back. It can be put on over short nightgowns when company comes to give the appearance of being dressed.

Directions:

Buy a wrap-around skirt that laps in back. Cut off the back of the skirt 14 inches to 16 inches (35.6 cm - 40.7 cm) below the waistband. Hem cut edges.

For those who have trouble managing at the toilet, a wrap-around skirt is good. Sew 1-inch (2.5 cm) flexible fabric fasteners to the hem of the skirt at opening edges.

Aprons

Handicapped homemakers may drop things more easily or need special protection at meal times because of unsteady hands. A low-bib apron gives good coverage. For more protection, use a boned high-bib apron. Neither type is put on over the head, and there are no straps to bind shoulders or to slip off. Each apron is secured around the waist with an apron



clip, which can be purchased at notions departments. Patterns for making special aprons are available commercially, or can be designed to meet specific needs.

Lap Apron

A heavy plastic lap apron keeps water off clothing while the homemaker peels vegetables.

Supplies:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ yard (45.8 cm) heavy plastic with fabric backing.
- 52 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (1.3 m) cotton cording $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.5 cm) in diameter
- 2 inches (5 cm) flexible fastener

Dimensions:

- Lap section 15 inches (38 cm) x 15 inches (38 cm)
- Yoke section 6 inches (15.3 cm) deep x 15 (38 cm) inches wide
- Cording strip 2 inches (5 cm) x 52 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (1.3 m)
- Waistband 2 inches (5 cm) wide x waist measurement plus 3 inches (7.7 cm) for overlap.

Directions:

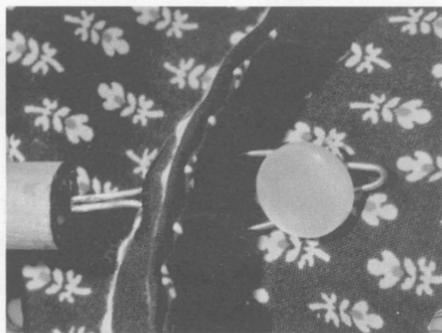
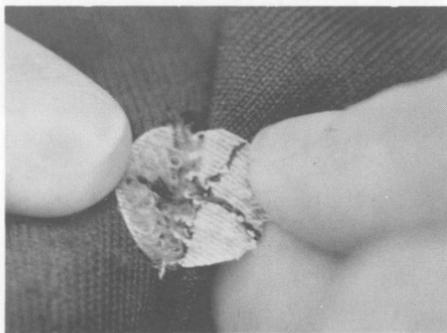
Sew yoke section to lap with $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch (1.6 cm) seam allowance. Make cording strip by folding fabric around cotton cord and machine basting as close to cord as possible using zipper foot. Pin cording strip to apron, matching raw edge.

Sew close to cording using zipper foot. Fold waistband in half. Pin to yoke of apron with center of waistband at center front. Stitch along apron and to ends of waistband. Sew flexible fabric fastener to ends of waistband so that one side laps over the other to fasten apron.

Buttons

A person with hand problems can manipulate more easily buttons at least $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (1.6 cm) in diameter. To avoid buttons, flexible fabric fasteners* can be used to adapt closings and hold the garment together.

Sew fastener tape underneath the button on each edge so it does not show. Then sew a button on top of the buttonhole to give a buttoned appearance.



Sew buttons at sleeve openings with elastic thread so the hand can slip through without unbuttoning.

Buttons are preferable to gripper snaps because snaps are difficult to pull apart and squeeze shut.

A buttonhook—a piece of wire attached to a dowel—can be used to slip through the buttonhole, catch the button and draw it through. You can make a buttonhook by making a small hole in the end of a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1.3 cm) dowel. Glue wire shaped to accommodate button size into the hole.

Nylon Stockings

Many stocking devices are on the market for persons who have trouble bending and reaching or who have hand problems. Most are easy to use.

*Velcro™, Flexloc™, Scotchmate Flexible Fabric Fastener™



Undergarments

Brassieres are difficult to put on for those with arm restrictions. A front-opening brassiere can be handled by a one-armed person. If the brassiere opens in the back, sew it together and slit open the front. Sew a drapery ring on one side of opening. Sew a strip of fabric on the other side. Add flexible fabric fasteners as shown. Slip the material through the drapery ring, pull it to the desired tightness and press fabric fastener layers together to secure. Sew a large hook and eye at the top of the slit and hook after securing lower band.

Slit slips down the front and set in a zipper for easier dressing.

To adapt a slip:

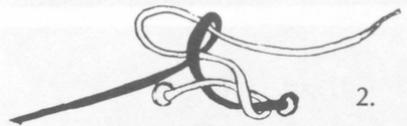
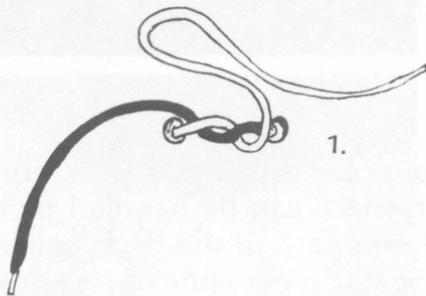
1. At center front, staystitch a rectangle the length of a 14-inch (35.6 cm) zipper by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (.5 cm). Change to zipper foot.
2. Place zipper on right side of garment so the zipper stop is just below the bottom of the stitching. Stitch across the zipper, just below the zipper stop, the width of the zipper teeth. Stitch back and forth several times, using small stitches.
3. Slit slip through middle of rectangle and to corners at the bottom.

4. From the garment side, pin zipper in place, lining up top of zipper with the bodice edges and zipper edges parallel with the cut edges. Stitch from bottom of zipper to the top, keeping the garment on top so you can use staystitching as a guide. Turn down excess zipper tape at neck edge and finish by hand.

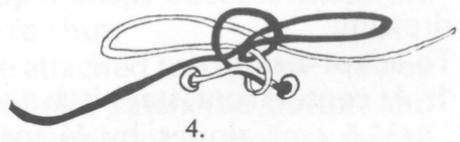
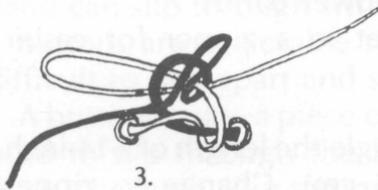
Tying Shoes

One-armed persons can tie a shoelace by following these steps.

After the simple knot is formed and tightened:



1. Pinch shoe lace together forming half of a bow, which lays on the side of your shoe.
2. Take the other lace and wrap it around the half bow.

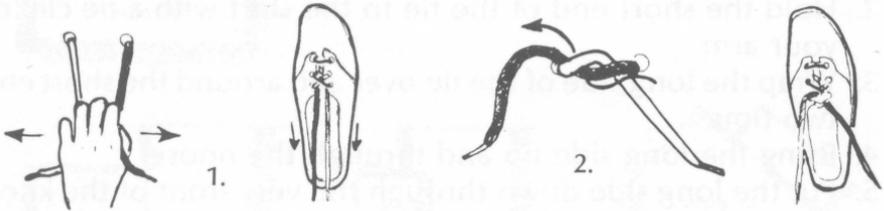


3. Pinch the same lace together (forming another half bow), and push through the loop formed when you wrap the lace around the first half bow.
4. Tighten.

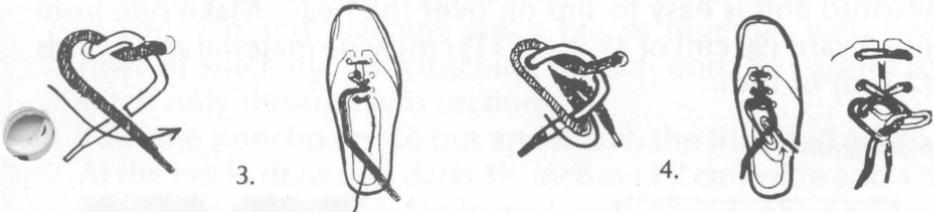
Another way is to thread the laces back through the top two eyelets, pull the laces tight and tuck them down into the side of the shoe.

Another method:

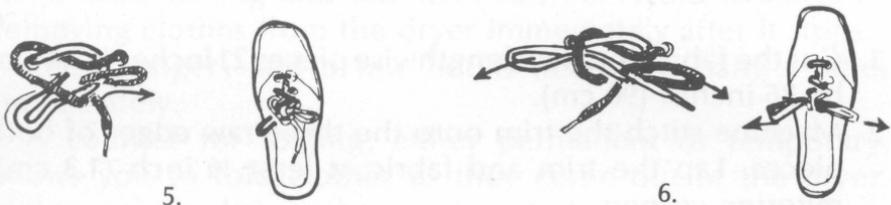
1. Take hold of both shoe laces and pull back-and-forth with your hand.
2. To form the simple knot, cross the light lace over the dark lace, forming an X. Put the light lace under the dark lace and pull the light lace through. To tighten a simple knot, take the dark lace with the first finger and the thumb, then pull laces away from each other.



3. Cross light lace over dark lace, making an X.
4. Fold light lace together; push light lace under dark lace and through loop that has been formed. Hold light loop, which is half of your bow, and pull on dark lace to tighten.



5. Take dark lace and bring the end of the lace under light lace.
6. Tighten the bow by putting your fingers in the loops and pulling them apart. Be careful not to let the ends of the laces come out. If they do pull out, push end of lace back into middle of the bow to again form second loop of bow.



Neckties

Clip-on ties with pre-tied knots can be handled with one hand and are available in all department stores. Another idea is to leave the knot in the tie once it has been tied and slip the tie over your head to avoid re-tying.

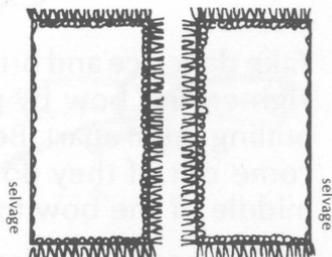
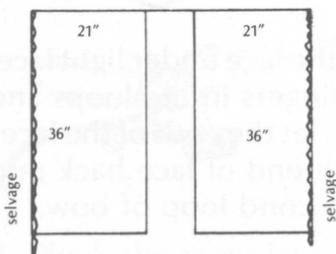
To tie your own, follow these steps in front of a mirror.

1. Place tie around the neck inside of the collar so the short end is on the left.
2. Hold the short end of the tie to the shirt with a tie clip or your arm.
3. Wrap the long side of the tie over and around the short end two times.
4. Bring the long side up and through the noose.
5. Put the long side down through the very front of the knot.
6. Bring the knot up toward the neck, tightening, adjusting and straightening the tie.

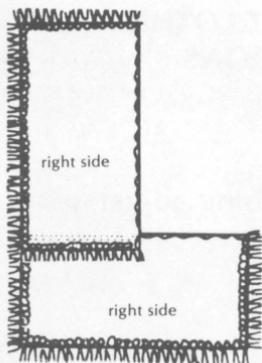
Poncho

People who are immobile are often cold. A poncho provides warmth and is easy to slip on over the head. Make one from just 1 yard (90 cm) of 45-inch (115 cm) wide material and 3 yards (2.7 m) of trim.

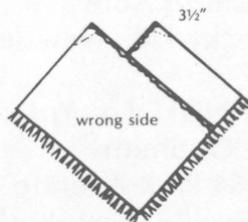
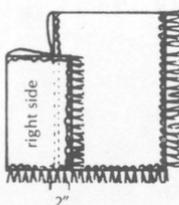
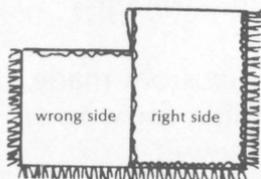
Instructions:



1. Cut the fabric into two lengthwise pieces 21 inches (53.4 cm) by 36 inches (90 cm).
2. Machine stitch the trim onto the three raw edges of both pieces. Lap the trim and fabric at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm), mitering corners.



3. With right sides up, lap the two pieces $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (1.6 cm). Pin and machine stitch pieces together with two rows of stitching, backstitching at each end.
4. Turn the pieces over so the wrong side is up.



5. Fold the long section so trimmed edges match.
6. Fold the short section over so it laps the other by two inches (5 cm). Pin and machine stitch pieces together with two rows of stitching, backstitching at each end. Be careful to stitch only through two sections.
7. Turn the poncho inside out and match the trimmed edges. At the neck, draw two darts $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.7 cm) wide and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches (11.5 cm) long. Pin in each dart, tapering to nothing at the end of the shoulder. Stitch the darts, starting at the wide end and backstitching. Tie the threads at dart tip.

Laundering

A few simple procedures can make your laundry room more efficient. Buy synthetics and permanent press clothes that need little ironing and stay wrinkle-free. Avoid wrinkles by removing clothes from the dryer immediately after it stops.

Keep hangers and a few hooks nearby to hang clothes immediately.

A counter for folding, either permanent or temporary, allows you to fold clothes as they come out of the dryer. Lightweight baskets make carrying clothes easier.

RESOURCES FOR EQUIPMENT, CLOTHES, PATTERNS AND PUBLICATIONS

- Do It Yourself Clothing
Adjustments
488 Madison Avenue
Calumet City, Illinois 60409
(clothing adjustment service)
- Fashion Able
Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553
(mail order clothing and undergarments)
- HANDEE For You
C. O. Smith
7664 Park Avenue
Lowville, New York 13367
(Semi-custom made clothing for women and sew-it-yourself kits)
- William F. Leinenweber
69 West Washington Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602
(mail order clothing for men in wheelchairs)
- Natural Creations
Kay Caddell
Textile Research Center
Texas Tech University
P.O. Box 4150
Lubbock, Texas 79409
(patterns for making clothing for handi-capped persons)
- PTL DESIGNS, INC.
P. O. Box 364
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074
(mail order clothing for elderly and handi-capped persons)
- Techni Flair
Box 266
Cotter, Arkansas 72626
(manufacturer of fashionable clothing for handicapped men and women—will accept mail orders)

Ventura Enterprises
35 Lawton at North Washington
Danville, Indiana 46122

(accessory items for
carrying supplies)

Vocational Guidance and
Rehabilitation Services
2239 East 55th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44103

(mail order functionally
designed clothing)

Wheelchair Fashions, Inc.
P. O. Box 99
South Windham, Maine 04082

(wheelchair fashions)

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