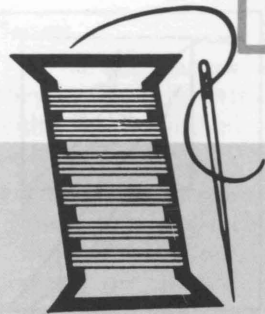


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# FACT SHEET

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## SHEERS LOOK ALL SEWN UP

Becky Culp\*

Sheers are year-round fabrics! From crisp airiness to soft drapable textures, sheers help satisfy needs for fabrics as varied as today's many moods and activities. Important in all apparel, the sheer is a classic fabric in today's wardrobe.

Sheers are thin, transparent or translucent fabrics. Included are voile, organdy, organza, georgette, batiste, lawn, dotted swiss, chiffon, lace with open backgrounds, tulle, marquisette and sheer tricot. They may be plain, printed, embroidered, flocked, crisp or soft. Whether knitted or woven, sheers can be natural fibers (cotton, wool or silk), synthetics, or more commonly, a blend of two or more fibers such as cotton and polyester.

### Recommended Care

When buying sheers, note specific care instructions. Advanced processing and finishing by the manufacturer frequently make it difficult to determine proper care requirements without this information. Law requires that care labels, which can be sewn inside finished garments, be available when fabric is purchased.

When in doubt about caring for an article, it is best to dry clean or hand launder. When laundering by hand, avoid harsh treatments with chlorine bleach or wringing and twisting the garment. Delicate fabrics require careful handling. Launder fabrics before constructing washable garments. Pre-shrinking helps insure that the finished garment will remain the same size. Test iron temperature, pressure and steam on a fabric scrap or seam allowance before using.

### Selecting Sheers for Fashion Fabrics

In sewing sheers, consider what you will wear under the sheer or if it should be underlined, lined or both. Underlinings usually conceal seams and dart edges which would normally show through. Inner fabrics should be compatible with outer fabrics, so choose washable inner fabrics for washable sheers.

A wide variety of designs is possible with combinations of inner fabrics. For example, you may

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underline a bodice, leave sleeves sheer and line the skirt with a separately seamed and hemmed underskirt. With a patterned lace, embroidery or print, face or line areas requiring double thicknesses with a solid, compatible fabric.

Consider using several layers of sheers in a garment. Four or more layers of one color create a "watered" look while different colors create a moire or rippled effect.

Sheers lend themselves to designs with fullness, and even tailored styles take on softer looks in sheers. Check the suggested fabrics on backs of pattern envelopes.

If you prefer a crisp sheer for a certain design or fashion look, conduct an over-the-counter test in the store by rubbing two small sections of the fabric together. Flaking of white particles or powder indicates the fabric's crispness is temporary and will be lost in the first laundering. Many finishes for crispness are permanent, while some are merely starches and sizings.

Sheers require special handling during construction. Raveling, slippage and see-through characteristics of sheers present additional challenges for the home seamstress. Be aware of construction techniques that contribute to an attractive garment. No one construction method is acceptable in every case. When a sheer fabric becomes opaque because of underlining or lining, it ceases to be a sheer and is constructed like any other fabric.

### Machine Adjustment and Supplies

Sheers require special sewing machine adjustments and supplies. Various machines perform differently on sheer fabrics, so refer to the machine manual for specific recommendations.

- Loosen machine tension to avoid puckering.
- Lighten machine pressure for all sheers to insure top and bottom fabrics feeding through the machine evenly. Soft sheers require an even lighter pressure setting than crisp sheers. If the fabric is marred or caught on the feed dog when even the lightest pressure is used, you may place strips of tissue paper under seams. After stitching, tear

away the tissue paper. Machine pressure requirements may vary with added layers of fabric. For example, when stitching a collar, bodice and facing in one seam, heavier pressure may be required than when sewing only one or two thicknesses of the same fabric.

- Select a size 9 or 11 ball-point machine needle for sheer knits, and size 9 or 11 sharp needles on wovens. Ball-point needles and pins separate yarns, avoiding cut yarns and a frayed appearance. Discard needles and pins frequently as points may become dulled and burred, snagging and pulling yarns during construction.
- Coordinate thread and fabric types—cotton on cotton, synthetic on synthetic. Use a fine thread when available. For example, select a size 60 mercerized cotton for a 100 percent cotton voile.
- Use 12 to 15 stitches per inch for lightweight sheers, and 15 to 20 stitches per inch for delicate sheers.
- To prevent fabric from being drawn into the bobbin area when straight stitching with a zig-zag machine, use the small hole throat plate or place the needle in the far left or right hand position. Before stitching, lower the needle into the fabric and hold the top and bottom threads.
- Extra sharp or specially designed scissors will prevent “chewing” or catching of the fabric in the blades.

### Plan Before Cutting

Certain design elements of a garment are more suitable for sheer fabrics than others. For example, sew an interfaced, top stitched band or a fly front which conceals buttonholes on a garment with front buttonholes. Avoid facings which show through by cutting a garment section double or binding the neck and sleeve edges.

Use the “with nap” layout for sheers with a nap, sheen or for a knit. Net and lace do not have grainlines and may be cut in any direction. Turn laces to position motifs as needed.

### Marking

Tailor tacks are ideal for marking, as pins may slip easily. Using a double thread, take a small stitch through the pattern and two thicknesses of fabric at the center of the marking. Leave a 1-inch end thread. Repeat in the same place forming a loop of at least 1 inch. Cut thread, leaving ends of 1 inch. Do not cut the loop. Remove the pattern by slipping one hand under it and holding the thread. You may tie these ends in a loose knot to prevent slipping. After sewing, you can remove the tailor tacks easily. See illustrations 1 and 2.

Another accurate method for marking is thread-tracing the pattern markings onto the fabric. Use a single, unknotted thread and an uneven basting

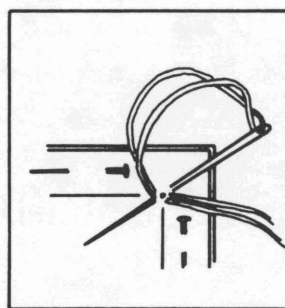


Illustration 1

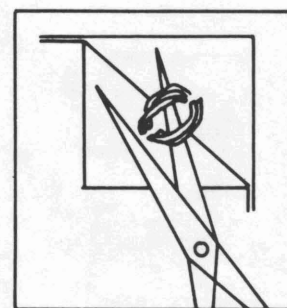


Illustration 2

stitch, thread-tracing through one thickness at a time. Remove the pattern tissue when completed. This type of marking makes it easier to locate fold or grain lines.

### Darts

In very sheer fabrics, bobbin stitching will avoid knots and loose threads at the point of the dart which shows through to the right side.

- For self-winding bobbins, wind an empty bobbin with enough thread to make one dart (approximately 20 inches). Do not cut this continuous thread after winding. Starting at the point, stitch dart toward the seam allowance or the widest part of the dart. The continuous thread will lock automatically in the first stitch. Back-stitching and thread-tying are not necessary to maintain a permanently stitched dart point. Rewind the bobbin for each dart.
- For regular-winding bobbins, thread top and bottom threads as usual, but do not thread the needle. Draw enough thread off the bobbin to stitch the dart (approximately 20 inches). Turn hand wheel, moving needle and take-up lever to highest position. Thread bobbin thread through needle opposite the normal direction of the top thread. Knot bobbin and top threads together. Wind the top thread spool, drawing the bobbin thread onto the spool and forming a continuous thread. Stitch dart from the dart point toward the seam allowance. Repeat the procedure for each dart stitched. See illustrations 3 and 4.

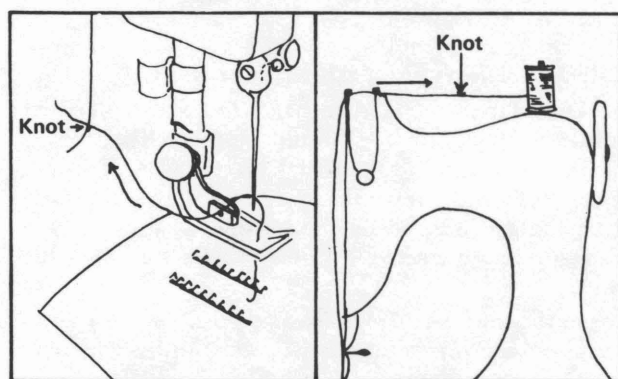


Illustration 3

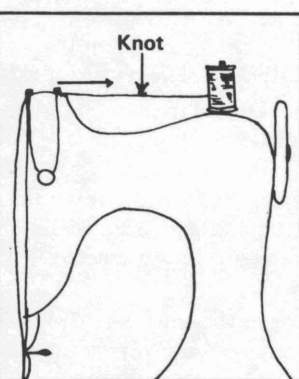


Illustration 4

## Seams

Neat and narrow seams are ideal for sheers, as they are the most attractive on the right side. Ideal width for a finished seam on a sheer is  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.

- For a French seam, place wrong sides together and stitch a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch seam. Trim close to stitching and press open. With right sides together, crease on stitched line. Then stitch again  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the edge. The seam will resemble a neatly enclosed tuck on the wrong side and plain seam on the right side. Raw edges are enclosed, preventing raveling. Use the French seam for straight seams. See illustration 5.
- You can make a false French seam after completing a plain seam sewn with right sides together. Trim to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch. Turn one half the width of both seam allowances toward the inside and press. Edge stitch the folded edges together. This is similar to the French seam, but has an additional outside row of stitching. Use the false French seam for straight seams. See illustration 6.
- A double-stitched seam is ideal for curved seams and darts. Stitch a plain seam, then stitch again  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch toward the seam allowance. Trim to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch and overcast the raw edge with a fine zig zag. See illustration 7.
- A self-bound seam also produces a narrow, neat unraveling seam. Trim one side of a plain seam allowance to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch. Turn the edge of the other seam allowance over the trimmed edge. Slip stitch or machine stitch close to the seam stitching line. Use this finish for straight seams. See illustration 8.

## Closures

Buttons and button loops are ideal closures for sheer fabrics. Use either self-filled, corded or thread-loop closures. Avoid bound buttonholes because the inner construction would be visible on the right side. Machine-made buttonholes are best for more firmly constructed sheers and interfaced areas. Corded buttonholes add extra body, strength and stability. Small snaps or hooks and eyes also may be used.

Lightweight, conventional and invisible zippers are suitable. Synthetic coils are most compatible with lightweight sheers, and knitted zipper tapes are particularly flexible and compatible. Heavy zippers alter attractive garment lines and cause garments to hang improperly and bow out.

## Neckline and Armseye Finishes

A double-folded binding is an excellent neckline and armhole finish for sheers. Cut a strip six times the desired finished width and as long as

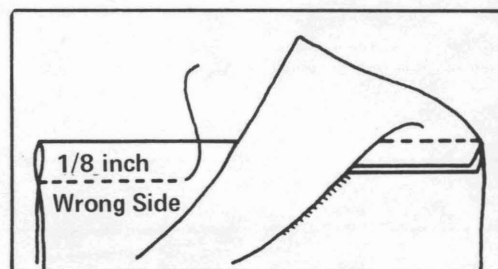


Illustration 5

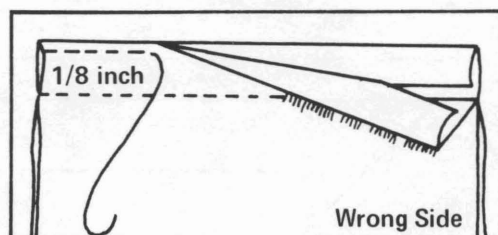


Illustration 6

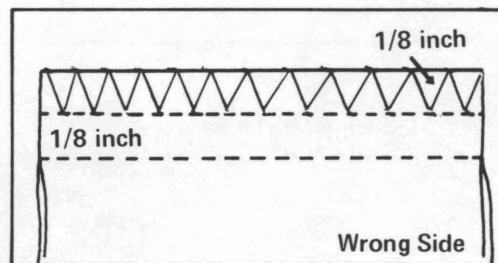


Illustration 7

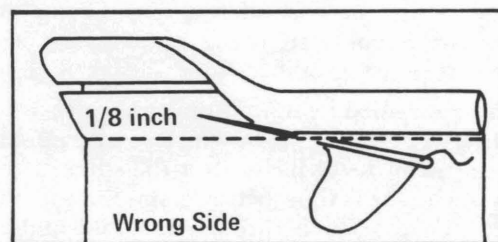


Illustration 8

necessary. For wovens, cut the strip on the bias. Fold the strip in half lengthwise with wrong sides together and press. Staystitch garment  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch deeper than seam allowance. For example, staystitch  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch from cut edge for a  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam allowance. Since the binding adds width, trim off the seam allowance. Baste or pin raw edges of the folded strip to the right side of the garment, keeping edges even. Stitch the desired width of the finished binding from the cut edges. Fold binding strip over raw edges to the wrong side. Slip stitch in place along stitching line or stitch by machine from the right side of the garment in the first seam. The machine stitches will disappear into the "well" or "ditch."

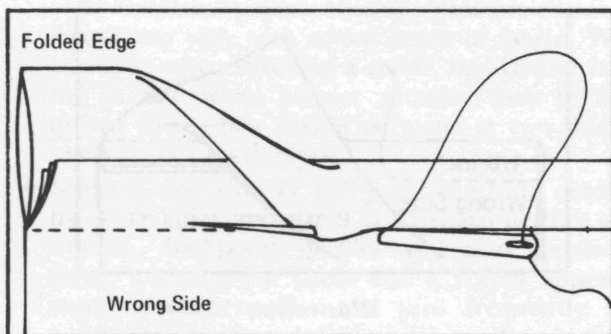


Illustration 9

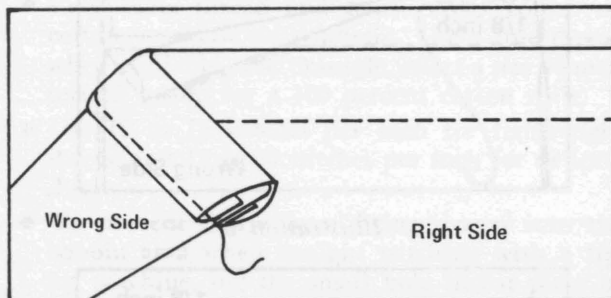


Illustration 10

Catch the folded edge on the wrong side by folding slightly past the stitched seam. See illustrations 9 and 10.

#### Hems

Let garment hang 24 hours before hemming. On a skirt with straight lines, such as a full, gathered skirt, a 3- to 8-inch hem is desirable.

On a circular or bias skirt, a very narrow hem is attractive. Avoid stretching the edges out of shape when pressing or handling the fabric.

- For a hand-rolled hem, fold under  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch below the desired hem length. Stitch close to the folded edge and trim to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch. Roll the stitched edge a few inches at a time between thumb and forefinger. Take a stitch through the fold and the garment  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the fold. Continue, placing stitches  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart. After approximately six stitches, pull the thread to form a rolled edge. See illustration 11.
- Use the machine's hemmer-foot attachment to achieve a machine-rolled hem with plain or decorative stitches. Follow instructions in the machine manual.
- A horsehair-braid finish is suitable for sheer organza, organdy marquisette, tulle and net. Horse-

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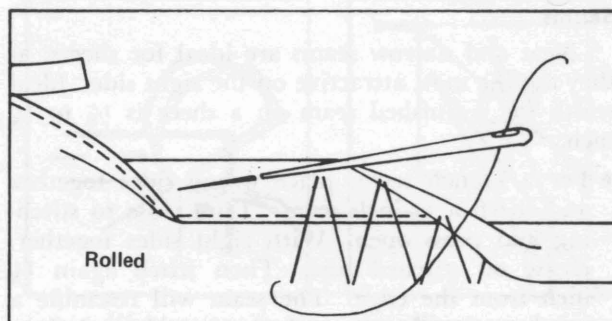


Illustration 11

hair refers to the stiff wiry characteristics of the braid and not to the fiber content, which is generally 100 percent nylon. Edge stitch  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide horsehair braid to the hemline. Turn up, press and tack every few inches as necessary to hold the weight of the braid. See illustration 12. A continuous hemming stitch is too noticeable and is not necessary to hold the hem.

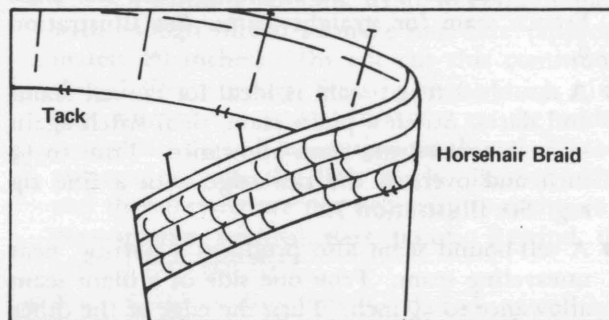


Illustration 12

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