

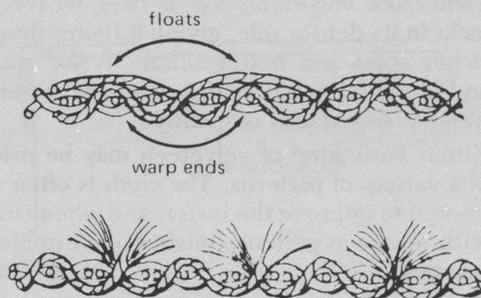
Velvet and Velveteen All Sewn Up

Beverly Rhoades*

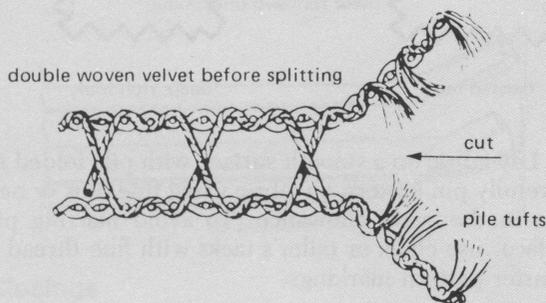
For a plush, fashionable look any time of the year, choose velvet or velveteen, the most luxurious of the pile fabrics. For centuries, these fabrics have added elegance, femininity and versatility to wardrobes as beautiful dresses, gowns or separates.

While these fabrics are similar in appearance, the process used to construct each fabric is quite different. Velvet, the oldest of the pile fabrics (since 2000 B.C.), may be woven or knitted. In woven velvet the pile is formed by the lengthwise warp yarns; in velveteen the crosswise filling yarns form the pile. In woven velvet, two layers of fabric are woven simultaneously forming a sandwich with the vertical warp yarns as the filling. Layers are then separated with a knife to form the pile. Velveteen, a simulation of true velvet used since the late 1700's, is woven in a single layer with a floating yarn which is cut to form the pile.

Velveteen construction



Velvet construction



Types of Velvet

Velvet was originally made from silk, but today's velvet is usually all or part synthetic (particularly rayon and acetate), or may be cotton or a cotton blend. With vast improvements in weaving, knitting and finishing techniques, today's velvet is easier to work with and care for. It has become a fabric for all seasons in weights for every type of garment.

Lightweight velvets are suitable for dresses, separates or evening wear, especially in warmer seasons. Types of sheer velvet include *Bagheera*, a fine, uncut pile with crush resistant, rough surface, and *Transparent velvet*, a soft, draping, cut pile fabric of fine silk or rayon yarns. *Chiffon velvet* has similar characteristics but is more closely woven.

Lyons velvet is a heavier fabric with stiff, thick pile of silk yarn and rayon or cotton back. Velvet made from 100 percent synthetic yarns is called *Lyons-type velvet*. This velvet is suitable for coats, separates, dresses or gowns, especially in cooler seasons.

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Other types of velvet include *Cisele* and *Faconne* with a patterned or sculptured surface, and *Nacre* with pile yarns and backing of different colors. *Panne*, which may be knitted or woven, has a flattened pile for a satiny finish. Crushed effects may also be achieved by flocking. Velvet made with delustered yarns has a matte finish, while velvet made with interwoven metallic yarns has an elegant, shiny appearance.

Special finishes can make velvets crushless, water repellent and spot resistant. Many velvets may also be trimmed with embroidery.

Types of Velveteen

Referred to as "cotton velvet," velveteen was originally made of 100 percent cotton. But today it may also be acetate, rayon or a cotton and polyester blend. Although available in numerous variations, there are two basic types of velveteen.

- Straight-back velveteen with a plain weave construction on the back is often not a durable fabric, and usually is not used for apparel unless treated with a chemical backing to lock the pile.
- Twill-back velveteen has a twill weave that locks in its denser pile, giving it better drape, a richer color and better suitability for apparel and home furnishings. It is available in various weights and grades of quality.

Either basic kind of velveteen may be printed in a variety of patterns. The cloth is often wax-treated to improve the luster, and when treated with water repellent finishes is suitable for rainwear.

Pattern and Fabric Selection

For either fabric, choose simple styles with as few seams as possible. The beautiful draping qualities of velvet make it particularly suitable for soft, flowing styles. Velveteen has more natural body and is suitable for many styles ranging from casual sportswear to evening wear. To give velvet the body needed to support design lines for a more structured or tailored look, use medium weight underlining.

Selecting the correct pattern size is particularly important to avoid fitting problems during the construction process, because stitching lines will usually show when removed. Also, be sure that needed pattern alterations are made to assure proper fit before cutting the pattern out.

Yardage Requirement

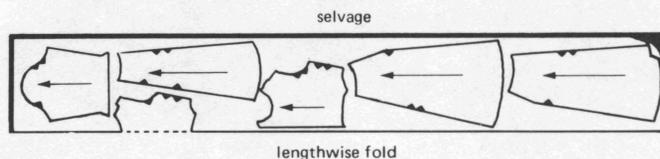
Look for yardage requirements for pile fabrics under "with nap" on the pattern envelope. If not listed, add $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ yard to yardage given.

Inner Fabrics

Choose inner fabrics that complement the velvet or velveteen and do not change its natural appearance. Light to medium weight interfacings will give body to stress areas, yet allow the fabric to remain soft. Underlinings will give body and stability if needed. Lining fabrics compatible with the weight of the fashion fabric may serve as facings to eliminate bulk. Light to medium weight lining fabric may be added for a neater inside appearance, and to allow garments such as jackets to slide on and off easily.

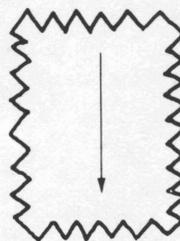
Fabric Preparation & Cutting

Preshrink all washable fabrics and notions before placing pattern on fabric. Follow the "with nap" layout diagram on the pattern guide instructions. If not given, be sure to use *only a lengthwise fold* (or single layer if appropriate) and cut all pattern pieces in the same direction.

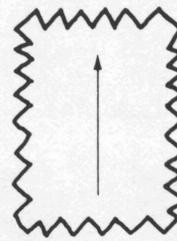


To determine the nap or pile direction, brush hand lightly over the pile. The surface feels smooth in the direction of the pile. For a rich, deep color, cut velvet with nap going up the body. For a frosted effect, nice for pastels, cut nap going down.

Direction of pile



frosted look



deep, rich look

Lay fabric on a smooth surface with pile folded in. Carefully pin pattern on fabric using fine pins or needles in the seam allowance. To avoid marring pile surface, use chalk or tailor's tacks with fine thread to transfer pattern markings.

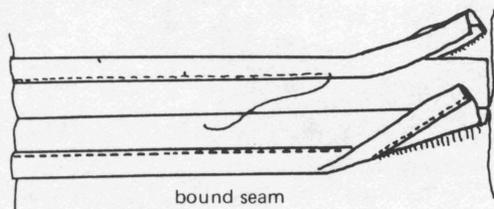
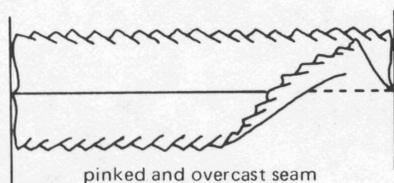
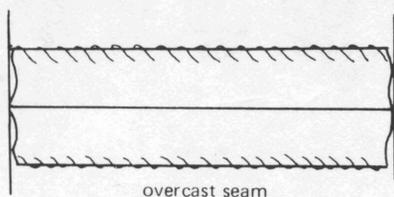
Construction Techniques

For a perfect stitch, make test seams with two layers of fabric, pile to pile, to adjust tension and

pressure as needed. Basting seams first often helps prevent fabric slipping while stitching. When pinning, place fine dressmaker pins close together at right angles to the stitching line in the seam allowance only. Use a size 11 or 14 needle and set stitch length at 10 to 12 stitches per inch. The heavier the fabric the longer the stitch needed. For velvet, use a fine thread such as silk (size A), polyester or cotton covered polyester designed for lightweight fabrics.

Decrease pressure on the presser foot to prevent shifting of fabric layers and to avoid crushing pile. Or try an even feed pressure foot to help prevent fabric shifting. Tissue paper placed under sheer velvets or bias seams will stabilize the fabric while sewing, assist with even feed and help prevent puckers. Stitch with the direction of the pile. Looser thread tension may help to produce a balanced stitch. Use a small, round hole throat plate, if available, to prevent an imbedded stitchline. Hold fabric taut while stitching.

To check fit, baste seams with fine thread and make needed alterations before machine stitching. Machine stitch over basting rather than pins. Seams may be finished by overcasting, zig zagging or binding with sheer strips. (Seams in washable and knitted panne velvet should be bound.) To reduce bulk, grade or layer inside seams, slash darts and press open. Pockets, bands, trims and collars in velvet may look best when applied by hand. Top stitching is usually not effective on these pile fabrics, except on some panne or flocked velvet.



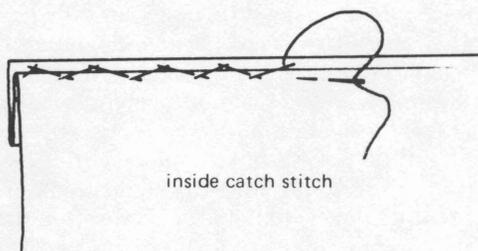
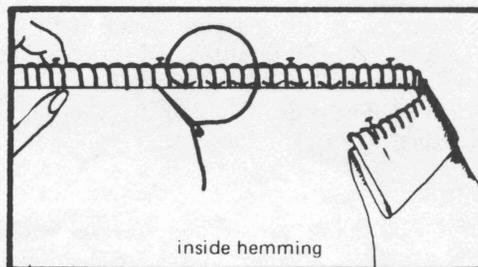
Closings

Bound buttonholes (with bias strips), loops or frogs make attractive closures. Machine buttonholes are appropriate for velveteen. Buttons may be covered or purchased for a special decorative accent. Invisible or conventional zippers may be used. Choose

flexible, lightweight zippers for sheer velvets. For best results in velvet, apply conventional zippers by hand in the final step.

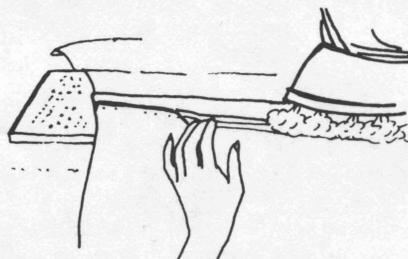
Finishes

Raw edges of facings and hems may be finished with seam binding, bound with sheer strips or bias lightweight fabric (Hong Kong finish), overcast or zig zagged. Hems should be done by hand using fine thread. Use an inside hemming stitch or a catch stitch. Do not pull the thread tight. Fusibles are not appropriate for most velvets, but may be used successfully on some velveteens if applied carefully.



Pressing

Most velvet and velveteens require special pressing techniques. To avoid crushing the pile, press on a velvet board (a piece of canvas through which blunt needles project upright), on a thick turkish towel or on another piece of the fabric. Place fabric *pile side down* and hold iron over the surface (not touching fabric) while steam penetrates the fabric. Or, cover the iron with a damp cloth and run the fabric gently across the covered iron. Never place velvet directly on an ironing board. For blends, the fiber requiring the lowest temperature determines the iron setting. A dry iron with a damp press cloth can be used on velveteen but *not* on velvet.





Run fabric across covered iron

To press an entire garment, hang it in a steam filled bathroom for 30 minutes and then shake to remove wrinkles. Pile may be carefully brushed up with soft brush while damp. Allow to dry thoroughly before wearing.

Care

For dry cleanable velvets and velveteens choose a reputable, quality cleaner. Between cleanings, dust and lint may be removed with a soft brush. For washable fabrics, follow label directions carefully for washing and drying. Use *correct water temperature* and wash separately by hand in a mild detergent or use the delicate cycle on washing machine. To prevent the pile from collecting lint, turn the garment wrong side out and do not wash with other fabrics that may lint. In most cases, machine drying is recommended (at low temperatures) to help fluff and soften the pile. Padded hangers help preserve the shape of garments.



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