



*Pattern  
Alteration*

# Increasing Bodice Front Fullness

AgriLIFE EXTENSION

Texas A&M System

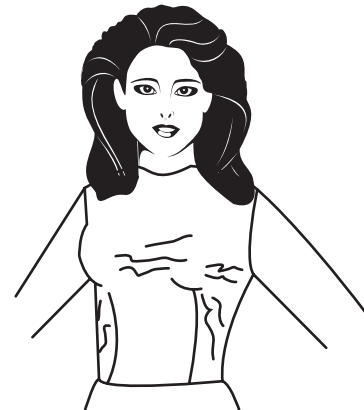
Extension Family Development  
and Resource Management Specialists

**B**efore attempting this alteration, review Extension publications E-372, *Principles of Pattern Alteration*, and E-373, *Personal Measurement Chart*, for basic instructions.

Although darts or bust fullness can be positioned correctly on a pattern, you might need to alter the pattern to fit your figure. A bodice that is too small in the bust might cause wrinkles and pull lines between the breasts. Diagonal wrinkles might form from the side seam near the waist to the bust point and from the bust point to the armhole. A tight garment flattens the bust line (Fig. 1). If a pattern is smaller than your measurement plus ease on your *Personal Measurement Chart* (line 1), you need to increase the bodice front.

After altering for bust fullness, check the length and placement of the fitting darts. Bust darts should end  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches (1.5 to 5 cm) from the tip of the bust. You might need to lengthen or shorten the darts for proper fit.

Depending on the style of your shirt or dress, you should follow practical steps in altering the bodice.



**Figure 1.** Bodice too small for bust size.

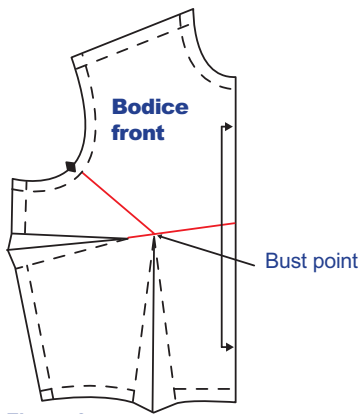


Figure 2.

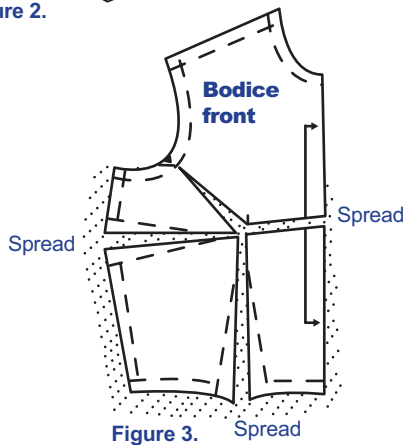


Figure 3.

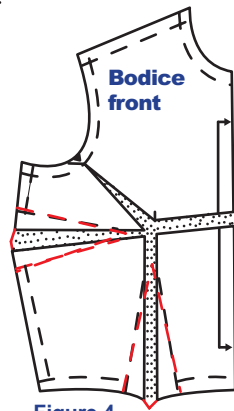


Figure 4.

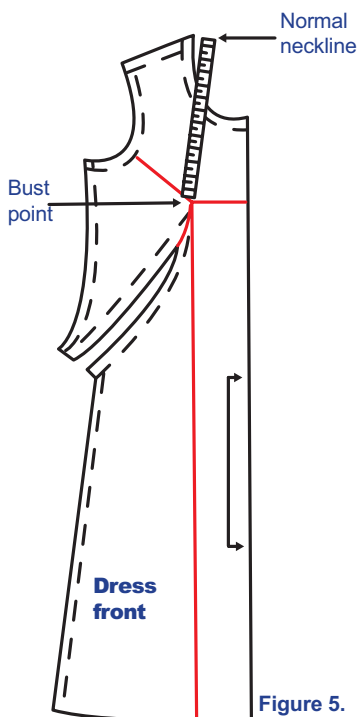


Figure 5.

## Bodice front with darts

1. To locate the bust point on a basic pattern, extend the center lines of the darts until they cross. Extend the line through the side dart to the center front and draw a line from the bust point to the armhole seam line at the notch (Fig. 2).
2. Slash the line from the waist to the bust point and to, but not through, the armhole seam line. Clip the armhole seam allowance at that point and slash the line from the side seam allowance through the center front.
3. Place tissue paper under the pattern. Beginning at the bust point, enlarge the lower section of the pattern by spreading it evenly and align the dart markings horizontally. The spread should equal one-half the amount you need for the alteration. On the center front section, spread the pattern width evenly along the horizontal slash and check your *Personal Measurement Chart* (line 7) for length. Straighten the center front line and align the lower edge. Then pivot the underarm section of the bodice to align the underarm dart markings vertically. After tapering the diagonal spread to the armhole, lap the clipped seam allowance (Fig. 3) and tape the pattern in place.
4. Relocate the tip of each dart in the center of the slash. You draw new dart stitching lines by connecting the new dart tip to the original dart markings at the seam lines (Fig. 4).
5. Fold in the underarm dart as if it were sewn. Redraw the side seam line and cutting line as straight lines from the underarm to below the dart. Fold in the waistline dart and redraw the waist cutting line (Fig. 4).

## Bodice or dress with French darts

1. Locate the bust point by extending the center line of the dart about 1½ inches (5 cm). Measure the pattern from the normal neckline and compare that length with your *Personal Measurement Chart* (line 6). You can also lay the pattern over another pattern that has two fitting darts. Mark the bust point on the pattern you're altering. Draw two lines: one from the bust point to the armhole seam line at the notch and one parallel to the center front that goes from the bust point to the lower edge of the pattern. Draw another line from the bust point to the center front at a right angle to the center front (Fig. 5).

- Slash the line from the center front to the bust point. Then slash the vertical line *to, but not through*, the lower edge of the pattern and slash the line from the bust point *to, but not through*, the armhole seam line. Clip the armhole seam allowance at that point and slash the line from the side seam through the dart *to, but not through*, the bust point.
- Place tissue paper under the pattern, which stays flat when you spread the vertical slash one-half the amount you need at the bust point. Align the upper section of the bodice front to maintain a straight line at the center front so that the pattern spreads evenly along the horizontal slash. The French dart will spread, the diagonal spread will taper and the clipped seam allowance will lap (Fig. 6). Tape the pattern in place.
- Relocate the tip of the dart in the center of the slash. Draw new dart stitching lines by connecting the new dart tip to the original dart markings at the seam line. Fold in the dart as if it were sewn. Cut off the base of the dart so it matches the side cutting line or trim the center of the dart, leaving only seam allowances (Fig. 7).

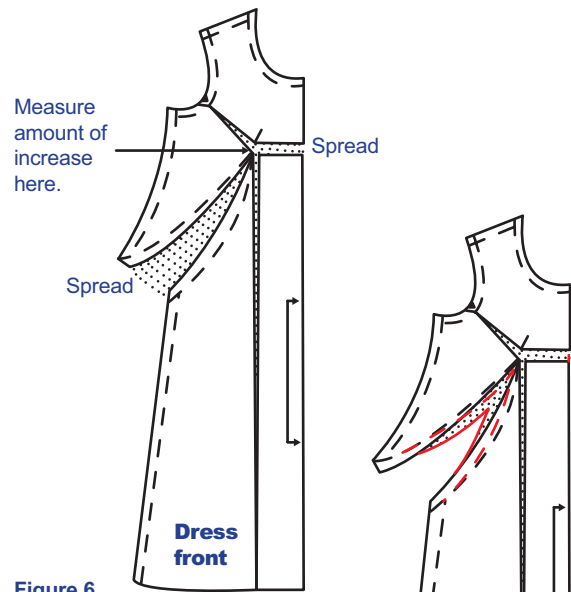


Figure 6.

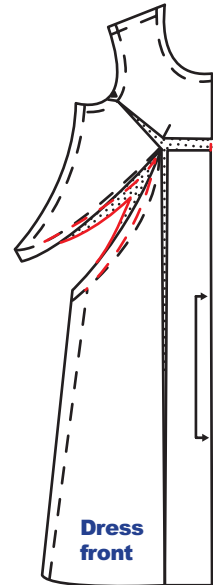


Figure 7.

## Bodice or dress with princess lines or modified princess lines

- Locate the bust point on the princess seam lines of both pattern pieces halfway between the notches. Draw horizontal lines at right angles to the lengthwise grain line or the center front through the bust point on each section. On the center front piece, draw a line parallel to the center front from the shoulder to the lower edge or waist seam line at the princess seam line. On the side front section, draw a line parallel to the lengthwise grain line from the intersection of the princess seam line at the shoulder or armhole to the lower edge or waist seam line (Fig. 8).
- Slash the horizontal line on the side front piece from the princess seam to the vertical line. Next slash the vertical line *to, but not through*, the shoulder or armhole seam line and *to, but not through*, the lower edge or waist seam line. Clip the shoulder and waist seam allowances at the slashes.
- Place tissue paper under the side front section. Spread the pattern evenly with the bust point along the vertical slash one-fourth of the width you need. Keep the pattern flat by tapering the spread to the seam lines.

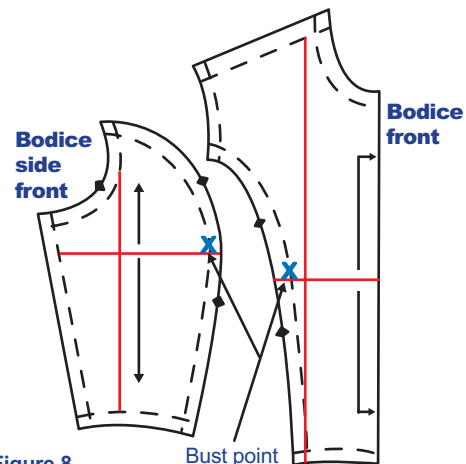
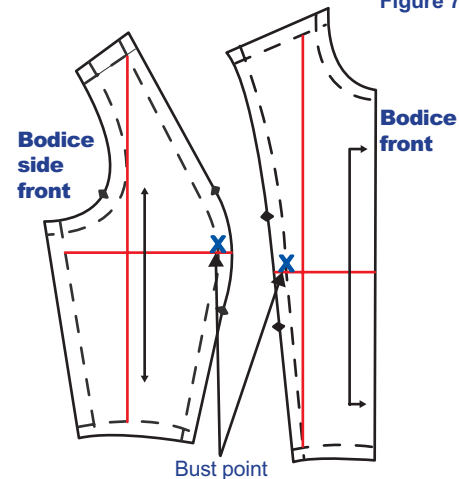
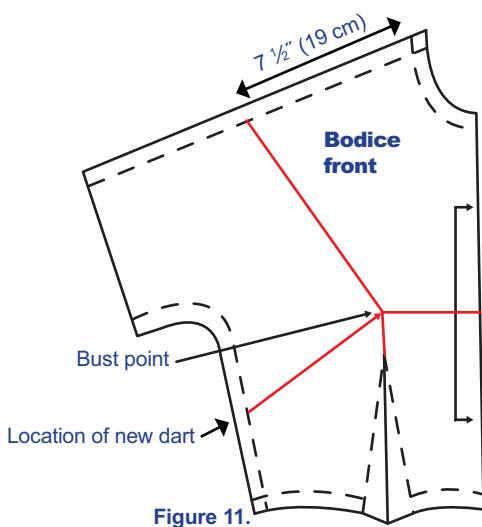
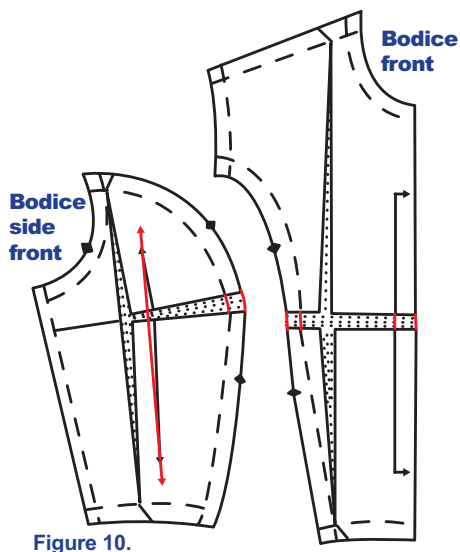
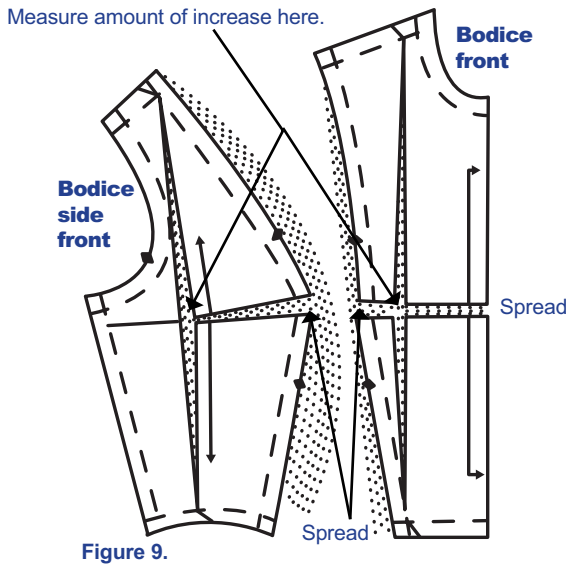


Figure 8.



The horizontal slash will spread, and the clipped seam allowances will lap (Fig. 9). Tape the pattern in place.

4. Slash the center front piece apart along the horizontal line. On each section, slash the vertical line *to, but not through*, the shoulder seam and *to, but not through*, the lower edge or waist seam line. Clip the seam allowances at the slashes.
5. Place tissue paper under the center front section. Spread the pattern evenly with the bust point along the vertical slash one-fourth of the width you need. Keep the pattern flat by tapering the spread to the seam lines. At the same time, spread the pattern at the princess seam line along the horizontal slash by using the same amount as the spread at the princess seam line on the side front. Make sure the center front line is straight and keep the width of the horizontal spread even between the center front and the vertical spread. Lap the clipped seam allowances (Fig. 9) and tape the pattern in place.
6. Redraw the curve of the princess seam and cutting lines on the side front section. Draw the smooth stitching and cutting lines on the center front section, and redraw the lengthwise grain line on the side front section (Fig. 10).

## Bodice with kimono or dolman sleeves

Kimono and dolman sleeve styles often have styling and wearing ease. Even though the finished garment might be large enough to wear, the design will not look right if the pattern is altered incorrectly. Your *Personal Measurement Chart* (line 2, column 3) shows how much to alter, and you don't need to measure the pattern piece before beginning the alteration. Increasing the bust allowance in kimono or dolman sleeve style garments might require adding a new dart in the side seam. Follow these steps:

1. Locate the bust point like you do for a bodice with French darts (Fig. 5). Draw a line from the bust point to the waistline through the dart. Draw a second line from the bust point to a point on the shoulder seam line about 7 ½ inches (19 cm) from the neck seam line (Fig. 11).
2. Mark the side seam line below the curve of the sleeve for the new dart. A pattern that fits well can help you determine where to put the dart. Draw a line from the bust point to the center front at a right angle to the center front (Fig. 11).
3. Slash the line from the waist to the bust point *and to, but not through*, the shoulder seam line. Clip the shoulder seam allowance at that point and slash the pattern along the new dart line from the side seam *to, but not through*, the bust point. Then slash from the center front through the bust point.

4. Place tissue paper under the pattern. Beginning at the bust point, evenly spread the lower section of the pattern to enlarge it and align the dart markings horizontally. The amount of spread should equal one-half the amount you need for the alteration. Taper the diagonal spread to the shoulder seam line and spread the new dart. Then use your *Personal Measurement Chart* (line 7) to determine length when you spread the pattern along the horizontal slash. Keep the center front straight and the width of the horizontal spread evenly. Lap the clipped shoulder seam and tape the pattern in place (Fig. 12).
5. Mark the bust point between the spread sections of the pattern. Next form the underarm dart by measuring  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch to 1 inch (2 to 2.5 cm) from the new bust point toward the side seam along the middle of the spread. Once you mark the dart tip at this point, draw dart stitching lines from the dart tip to the edges of the slash at the side seam line and fold in the dart as if it were sewn. Correct the side seam cutting line and the base of the dart by cutting a smooth line from the underarm curve to the waist line (Fig. 13).
6. Relocate the tip of the waistline dart in the center of the slash by drawing new dart stitching lines. Once you connect the new dart tip to the original dart markings at the seam line, fold in the dart as if it were sewn and redraw the waist seam and cutting lines. Trim the base of the dart to match the waist cutting line and see whether you need to redraw the shoulder seam and cutting lines (Fig. 13). If the width of the new underarm dart is 1 inch (2.5 cm) or less at the base, you can convert the ease to maintain the original design.

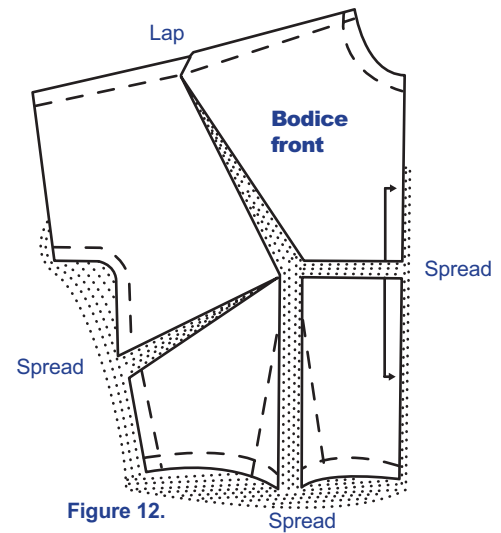


Figure 12.

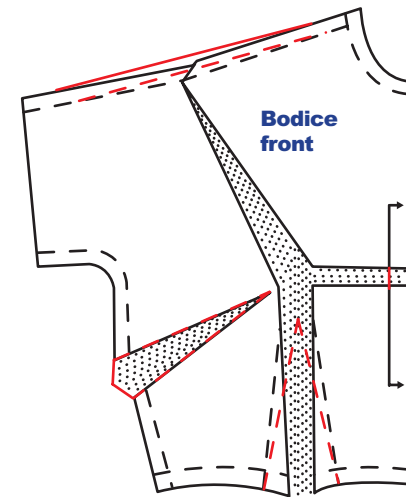


Figure 13.

## Bodice or shirt without bust darts or fitting seams

Styles without bust darts or fitting seams often need fullness to fit a large bust. You can increase the pattern easily without changing its design by adding an underarm dart.

While your *Personal Measurement Chart* (lines 2, 7) helps you determine how much to alter, *be sure to adjust for waist length before beginning this alteration.*

1. Locate the bust point by measuring the pattern from the base of the neck at the shoulder by the amount on your *Personal Measurement Chart*. Mark this point and then measure the distance between the tips of the breasts. Measure one-half the length from the center front on the pattern and put the bust point where the marks cross (Fig. 14).

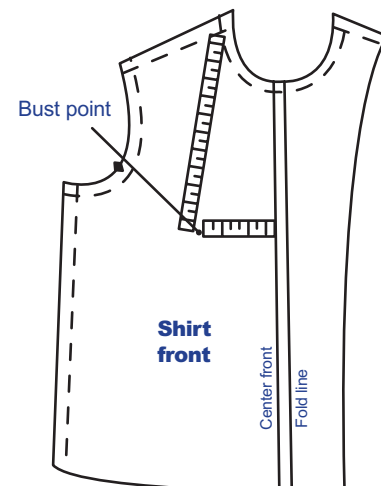


Figure 14.

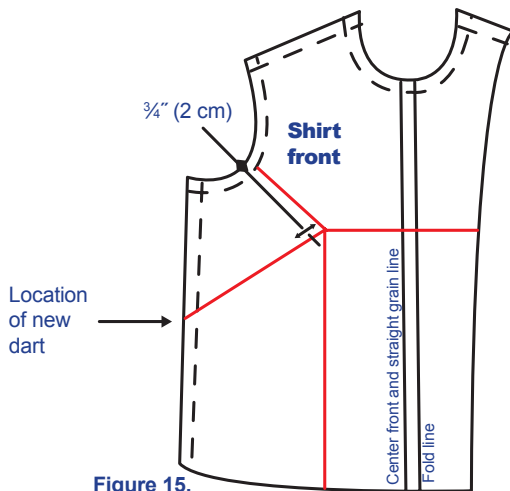


Figure 15.

Measure amount  
of width increase here

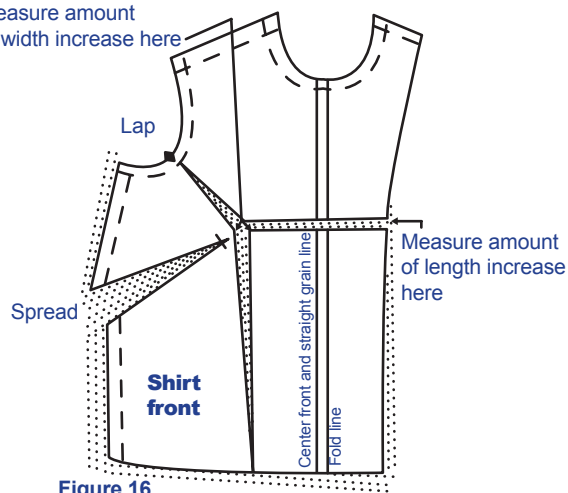


Figure 16.

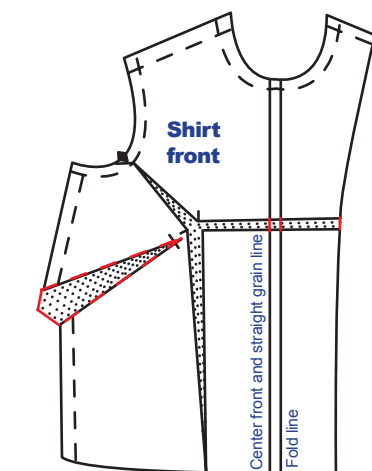


Figure 17.

2. Draw a line at a right angle to the center front across the pattern horizontally from the center front to the bust point. Draw a diagonal line from the bust point through the side seam line for the dart. From the bust point, measure toward the side seam  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (2 cm) along the dart line and mark this point for the tip of the dart. From the seam line at the armhole notch, draw a line through the bust point. Then draw a vertical line to the hem fold line or the seam line at the lower edge of the pattern (Fig. 15).
3. Slash the pattern along the horizontal line from the center front to the bust point and then through the side seam allowance on the dart location line. Slash the vertical lines from the bust point *to, but not through*, the armhole seam line and *to, but not through*, the lower seam line or hem fold line. Clip the armhole seam allowance and the lower edge seam or hem allowances.
4. Place tissue paper under the pattern. Spread the center section of the pattern along the horizontal slash to keep the center front straight. The space should equal the length your *Personal Measurement Chart* (line 7) shows. Spread the vertical slash at the bust point one-half the total amount you need, and the slashes to the side and underarm seams will spread. Keep the original bust points on these pattern sections as close together as possible (Point A). The side seam spread will become a dart, and the clipped seam or hem allowances will lap as needed. Tape the pattern in place (Fig. 16).
5. Draw in the dart with a straight edge after you locate the dart tip in the center of the horizontal slash that you made in Step 2. Fold it in there as if it has been sewn and redraw the side seam. Cut smooth lines from the underarm to just below the dart (Fig. 17).

*Ann Vanderpoorten wrote the original manuscript for this publication.*

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