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The Young Homemaker Learns

EASY SEWING SKILLS



Agricultural Extension Service,
University of Arizona, Tucson

Circular 236

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COVER PICTURE is of Mrs Jack Flesher who is a member of a young homemakers club in Pima County. The daughters are Vicki (left) and Toni (right).

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Agricultural Extension Service
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The Young Homemaker Learns

EASY SEWING SKILLS

By Helen L. Church
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As a young homemaker, have you found yourself confronted with having to learn to sew for two young daughters like Vickie and Tom? (See the cover picture) Purchasing children's clothing ready-made seems to put a strain on the family clothing budget. In an attempt to help the situation, possibly you have invested money in

one of these new "wonder" sewing machines. Now you are determined to get your money's worth out of it. You found that the wonder machine wouldn't do the job alone.

With this in mind, this circular has been written for you. It will give you some basic sewing techniques to be learned through the construction of a blouse and skirt.

Make Good Use of Your Sewing Machine

There are many things that your machine can do for you to make sewing easy. Use your machine as much as possible.

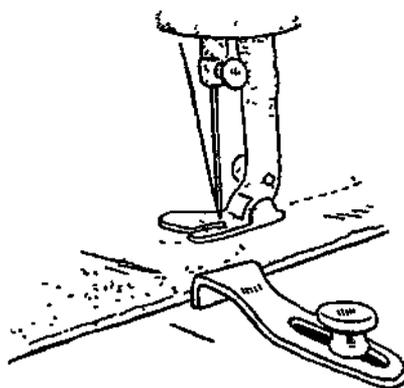
Baste by machine It is more accurate. Lengthen the stitch to 6 or 7 stitches per inch. Pull the bobbin thread to pull out the basting

Tie threads by machine Retracing is satisfactory on under seams but it takes more time. Try using the following method. As you finish stitching, lift the presser foot just enough to keep the feed dog from pulling the material back. Let the needle go up and down in the

same hole several times. This will tie a knot as you sew. Clip the threads closely.

Use the seam guide or place a piece of adhesive tape parallel with the foot of the machine. Since most seam allowances are $\frac{5}{8}$ inch, the tape should be placed in a straight line $\frac{5}{8}$ inch from the needle. This will help you to make uniform seam widths (Illustration 1).

Illustration 1 →



Select Your Pattern Size Correctly

When looking for your pattern, turn to the back of the book and check where the measurements are taken for the particular make of pattern

The pattern for the blouse will be purchased according to the bust measurement. Most patterns ask for measurement above the fullest part of the bust. Waist and hip measurements are necessary for the skirt size.

Now take your pattern and a garment that fits you correctly. Take the measurements of the garment and compare them with the pattern size

	Gar- ment	Pattern	Alter- ation
Waist Length			
Front	_____	_____	_____
Back	_____	_____	_____

Now measure from center front to side seam, coming two inches below the armpit. Measure across the back in the same way

	Gar- ment	Pattern	Alter- ation
Back	_____	_____	_____
Front	_____	_____	_____

Now measure sleeve width, measuring across the sleeve at the top of the underarm seam

	Gar- ment	Pattern	Alter- ation
Sleeve Width	_____	_____	_____

The skirt needs to be measured at the waistline, and 7 inches below the waistline for hip measurement, back and front separately. Pin to-

gether pieces making the skirt front and back, lapping seam allowances.

	Gar- ment	Pattern	Alter- ation
Waist Front	—	—	—
Waist Back	—	—	—
Hip Front	—	—	—
Hip Back	—	—	—

The pattern tells you how to alter the length measurements. Here are some suggestions for altering the width:

To alter bust measurements. Alter small amounts on the dart line center of shoulder down to bust. Cut and lap the amount needed to be taken out. If the blouse is too small, spread the pattern parts until you have the desired width. Remember, you are working with only one half of the pattern. (Illustration 2).

To make the waistline smaller, take a dart at the dart line folding out the required amount; or straighten the side seam line. (Illustration 2a). If the skirt is too small at the waistline only, you can alter the same way as you did the

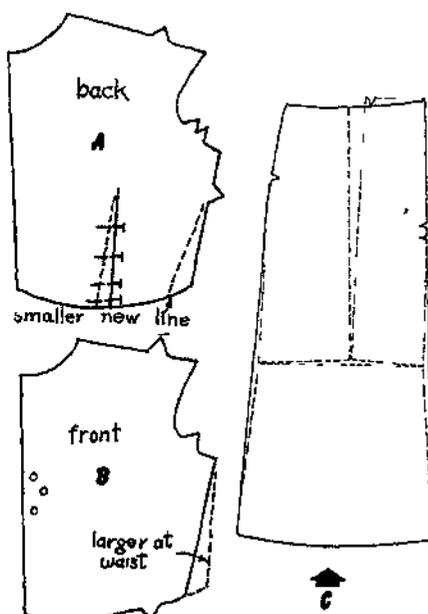


Illustration 2

blouse by making less slant at the side seam (Illustration 2b).

If the skirt is gored with panel front, alter the side panels by cutting on the grainline in the center of the panel. (Illustration 2c). Take up or spread the desired amount. Remember, altering may need to be done only in front or back to keep the side seams at their correct position.

Preparation of Fabric

It is wasteful to buy any material that is not pre-shrunk or sanforized. If your material does not carry a label, wash it in soap and water, dry, and press before cutting out the garment.

Often material does not appear

straight across the torn end. It needs to be straightened. To do this:

1. Bring the selvages together and turn edges together. Now check to see if the corners are square by placing a newspaper or magazine on the folded corner of the cloth

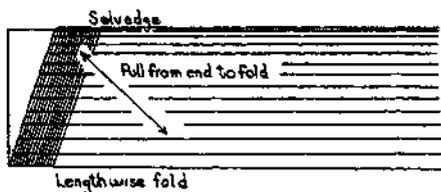


Illustration 3

(Illustration 3). These sides of the cloth should lie in straight lines with the magazine. If they don't,

the grain line of the fabric is not straight.

2. To straighten, pull opposite ends of the short side diagonally, attempting to straighten yarns. If this does not work, wet the fabric and when partially dry, press it, keeping the selvages and torn ends together.

Pinning the Pattern on the Fabric

1. Press the pattern. Get out the guide and read it carefully. Mark the cut out chart on the guide that corresponds to your width of fabric.

2. Lay all the pattern pieces on the material before you cut.

3. Fold the pattern from top to bottom on the grain line. This helps you to lay the pattern straight.

4. Use only enough pins to keep the fabric from slipping. Place pins perpendicular to edges.

5. Cut with shears (**not pink-ing shears**) close to the pattern edges. Cut notches away from edge instead of making a nick in the material.

Marking: Put in all markings, darts, buttonholes, pleats, collar placing, etc. Do this with a tracing

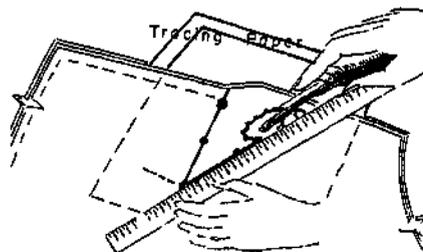


Illustration 4

wheel and carbon paper, tailor chalk, or tailor tacks.

Leave the pattern on the material until you are ready to put the pieces together. The quick method of marking is to use the tracing wheel and dressmaker carbon. Test carbon paper and use lightest color possible. Make all markings on the wrong side of material. (Illustration 4).

Putting the Garment Together

Do your sewing by units. Fold pattern pieces in 4 or 5 stacks, each stack containing parts that go together.

BLOUSE

Front:

1. Stay stitch neck, shoulders and any bias areas. (See Circular 180, "Stay Stitching Makes Sewing

Easier," University of Arizona, Agricultural Extension Service).

2. Mark center front with machine basting for 2 inches.

3. Make darts.

4. Finish facing edge.

5. Make pockets. Stitch interfacing to front on edge.

6. Press.

Back:

1. Stay stitch as you did the front.
2. Stitch in darts.
3. Press.

Collar:

1. Mark center of collar.
2. Stitch together undercollar and interfacing. Put top collar and undercollar together.
3. Press seam open.
4. Stitch the under edge of the seam down. This keeps the edge from rolling.
5. Trim the edges to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Clip curve.
6. Press collar. Then stay stitch the inside neckline, stitching top and undercollar together if collar is round.

Sleeve

Be sure that you have cut the sleeve grainline-true and that you have marked the high point and notches. The trick to setting in a sleeve is in the handling of the fabric.

1. Make a machine basting from notch to notch on the exact seam allowance. A second row can be made $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from this line. (Illustration 5).

2. The machine basting stitch should not be too large, about 5 stitches to the inch. If you wish,

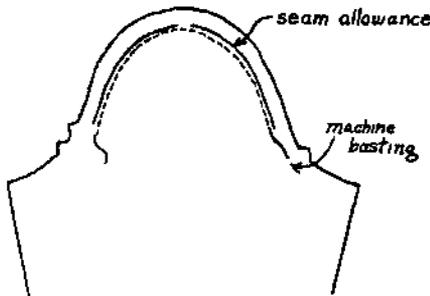


Illustration 5

use your bobbin filled with nylon thread. Then make the seam in the sleeve. Press.

3. Turn garment wrong side out, but do not turn the sleeve. Drop sleeve into the armhole, bringing together the right sides of both.

4. First, pin the notches matching exactly. Place all pins perpendicular to the edges.

5. Then pin the high point of the sleeve to the shoulder seam.

6. Pin seams together at underarm.

7. Pull up stay stitching and ease to armhole, keeping most of the ease quite high.

8. Pin securely. Turn the sleeve back over your hand; ease the fullness down on the armhole. Baste so that there are no visible gathers. (Illustration 6).

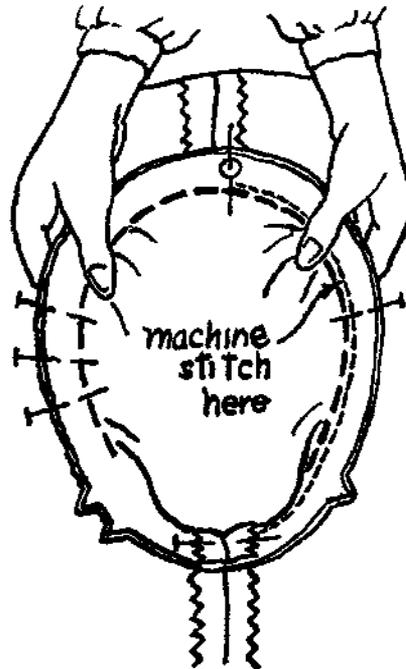


Illustration 6

9. Stitch by machine from sleeve side.

10. Run a second row of stitching $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the first row. Be sure to trim the seam down to the second line of stitching. This leaves the seam $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in width when finished. (Illustration 7).

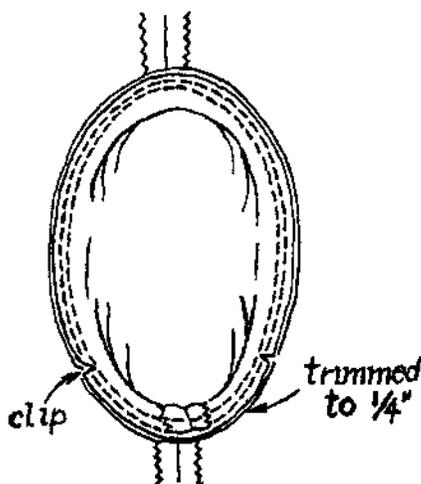


Illustration 7

11. Clip at the point where the curve begins to straighten out. Press area that goes over top of arm out into sleeve.

Now attach the shoulder pads. Bring the pad out so that the wide area is even with the end of the seam allowance. Tack to the seam.

Interfacing Collars And Garment Fronts

If your fabric is soft and has very little body, you will need to use interfacing to keep the collar, cuffs, and fronts from becoming droopy. The weight and the drapability of the fabric determine the kind of interfacing that you will need. Sanforized nurses cloth, permanent finished organdy, and regular interfacing materials made for

dress weight fabrics are satisfactory.

Be sure that the interfacing will shrink the same amount as the garment that you are putting it on. It is wise to pre-shrink all interfacing before using it.

Getting the Collar Ready to Attach

1. Before you put the two collar pieces together, sew the interfacing to the bottom collar. Stitch inside the seam allowance. Trim inside stitching line. (Illustration 8).

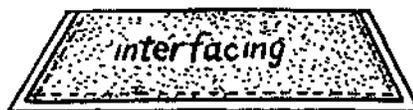


Illustration 8

2. Place collars together with right sides facing each other. The top collar should be slightly eased to the undercollar. You can do this by bringing in the edges slightly.

3. Press seams open. (This is important).

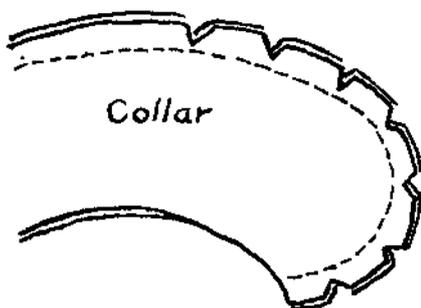
4. Stitch from right side on the undercollar next to the seam, catching the interfacing too. (Illustration 9). Note that you finish the ends after the interfacing is stitched in convertible collar.



Illustration 9

5. Now trim the undercollar seam to $\frac{1}{16}$ inch and then, the top collar to about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Trim evenly.

6. Clip out v-notches on outside curve of collar. (Illustration 10).



A
Illustration 10

7. Turn and press again. (This also is important; be sure that the stitched edge is under the collar).

8. Now stitch the neck edge at seam allowance. You will note that the edges do not come together. The undercollar could be about 1/16 inch longer. **Do not pull** the top collar to meet this edge. (Illustration 11).

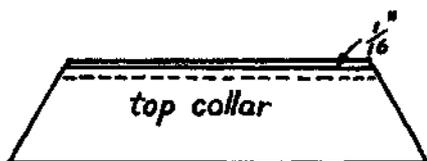


Illustration 11

ATTACHING COLLARS

The Peter Pan Collar

Flat collars, such as the Peter Pan collar, are joined to the neck with a bias facing. Clip the collar to the stitching line so that it will lie in a straight line (Illustration 12).

1. Pin the collar to the neckline along the two stay stitching lines.

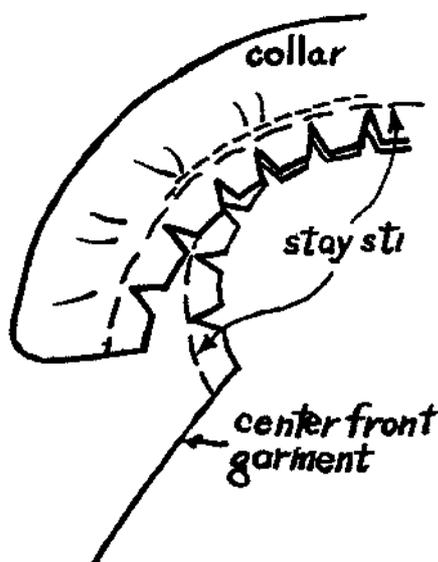


Illustration 12

2. Match center fronts, center backs and notches. Machine baste $\frac{1}{8}$ inch inside the seam line (Illustration 13).

3. Turn the facing back over the collar against the right side of the blouse.

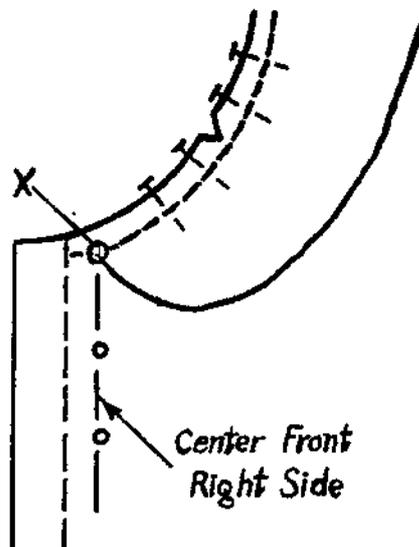


Illustration 13

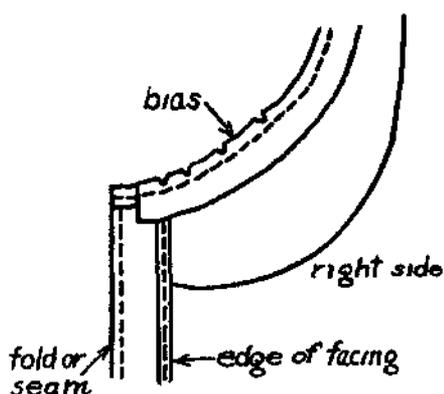


Illustration 14

4. Place a true bias over the top of the collar. Allow ends to extend $\frac{1}{2}$ inch over the facing. (Illustration 14).

5. Stitch on seam line, keeping bias on top.

6. Trim to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch the entire seam.

7. Turn over facing and bias, finish by hand or by machine.

The Convertible Collar

In this type of collar stay stitching is not necessary on collar.

1. Clip to the stay stitching line of the garment neckline.

2. Place the under collar to the right side of the blouse. Match center back and notches. Pin in place.

3. Stitch the undercollar only (single thickness) to the neckline from shoulder line to shoulder line. Continue stitching for 1 to 2 inches beyond the shoulder seam. (Illustration 15).

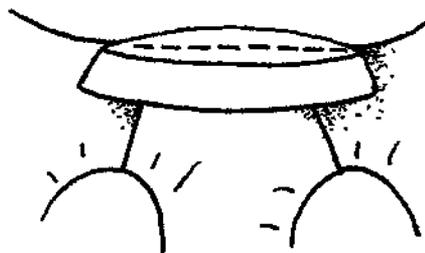


Illustration 15

4. Bring together the two edges of the collar from front to shoulder seam.

5. Pin entire collar in place. Be sure collar ends are at the same place on both fronts.

6. Fold the facing over the collar. Pin it in place.

7. Machine stitch from the front of the blouse to the shoulder seam on both sides. (Illustration 16).



Illustration 16

8. Trim the seam $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Clip if necessary.

9. At the shoulder, clip the seam allowance to the stitching line. Then turn the seam across the back up into the collar. The seam from the shoulder to the front will turn down into the facing. (Illustration 17).

10. Turn under the upper collar on the seam allowance across the back. Hem to the neck line.

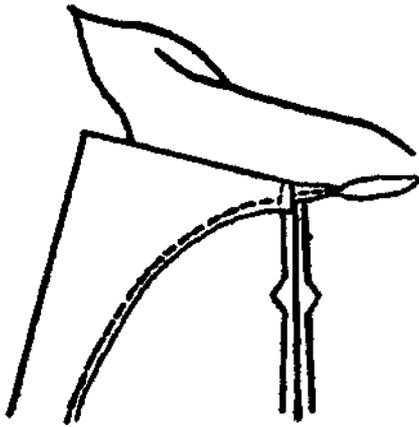


Illustration 17

11. Hem the front facing to the seam of the shoulder.

Shawl Collar

The shawl collar is cut with the front. The facing finishes the collar.

1. Mark the seam allowance at shoulder and neck. Also mark the clip line and the corner where the shoulder and collar extension meet. Do this on facing as well as on the garment. (Illustration 18).

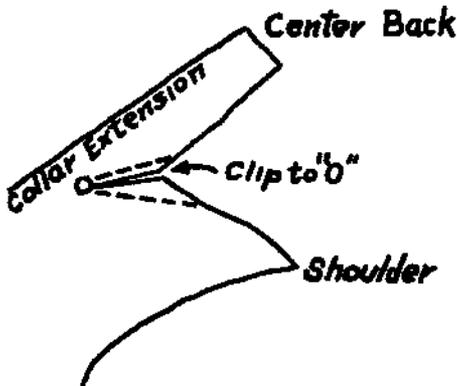


Illustration 18

2. Stay stitch a V to the clip mark.

3. Complete the facings by stitching together at center back. Press seam open and clip to end of V.

4. Now match notches in shoulder seam. Pin to point. Turn and baste on to neckline. You will note that there is no seam allowance across the shoulder line on the facing side. (Illustration 19).

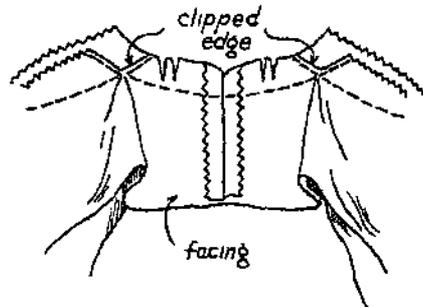


Illustration 19

5. This time you will press seam open and stitch one side of the seam to the garment side of the collar.

SKIRT

Stay stitch the waistline and zipper area only. The skirt seams should be stitched from the bottom to the top. Press seams. The waistband and zipper are your problems in making a well fitted skirt.

Putting the Waistband to Your Gored Skirt

Preparation of Waistband:

1. Your waistband should be your waist measurement plus two seam allowances and 2 inches for extension. Cut it 3 inches wide if you use selvedge, otherwise $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. This will make a one-inch finished band.

2. An interfacing in the waistband will keep it from wrinkling. You may use any type of interfacing. Nurses cotton, pella, or a fabric that will not shrink are suitable. Make it one half the width of your waistband plus $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Usually this is $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

3. Pin the interfacing to the wrong side of the band. Keep lower edges even. Stitch these pieces together $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the bottom. Trim the interfacing away close to

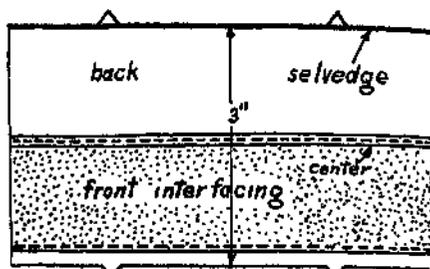


Illustration 20

line of stitching. (Illustration 20).

4. Now stitch the other edge of the interfacing to the band extending $\frac{1}{4}$ inch beyond the center. Note that this line of stitching will be on the under side of the waistband when it is finished. (Illustration 20).

Attaching the Band to the Skirt

1. Pin right side of band portion with interfacing attached to right side of the skirt at the front side of the placket. The band should extend the seam allowance and 2 inches at the other end.

2. Pin center front of band to center front of skirt; center back to center back. Pin at side seams.

3. Ease skirt to band. If you altered your skirt top, it should fit. If skirt is too large at top, you will need to take out the extra fullness in the seams.

4. Stitch the band to the skirt at seam line with band on top.

5. Fold the band double. Close end of band. At the front side of the band, stitch from the folded

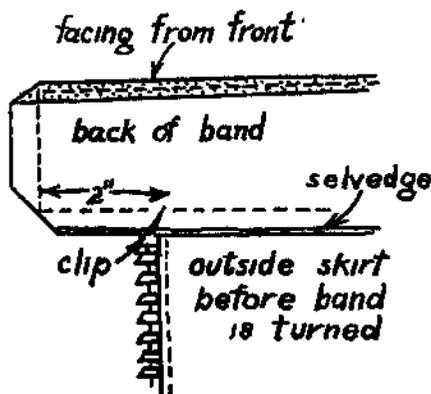


Illustration 21

edge to the waistline seam. (Illustration 21). Fasten thread securely.

For the other side with the extension, stitch from the folded edge across the end to seamline. Then stitch to the waistline seam and angle back to outside edge.

6. Clip corners; turn seams so that they are staggered in width. Trim $\frac{1}{4}$ inch off the band and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of skirt seam allowance.

7. Turn the band right side out. Turn end seams into band and

press. Turn under on the line of stitching.

8. Match grain line at center front and center back and pin. Pin so that it covers the seam line.

9. Either finish by top stitching if you can stitch evenly and straight on lightweight fabric, or finish by hand on heavier fabrics. You may not wish to turn under heavy fabric. Try using selvedge, or stitch edge by machine and pink.

Putting in the Zipper

1. Baste the left opening seam together by machine. (Illustration 22).

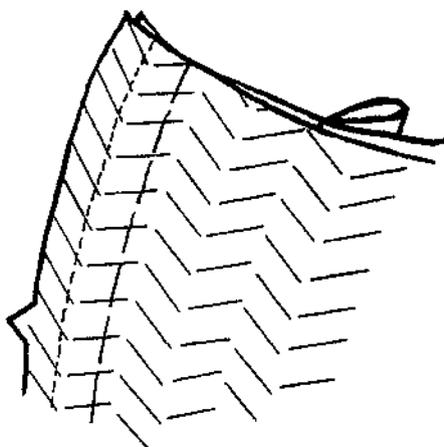


Illustration 22

2. Press seam open.

3. Place zipper over seam face side down, with the edge of chain along the seam line. (Illustration 23).

4. Stitch to seam with regular presser foot, the wide side against the zipper. Stitch from bottom to top. (Illustration 23).

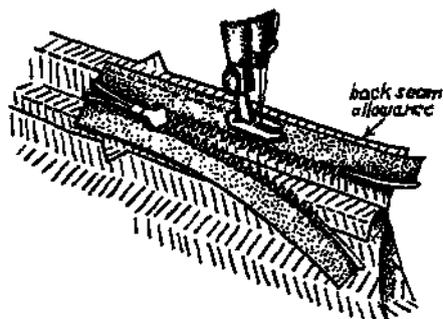


Illustration 23

5. Put on zipper foot and turn zipper right side up. Stitch close to edge of zipper. (Illustration 24).

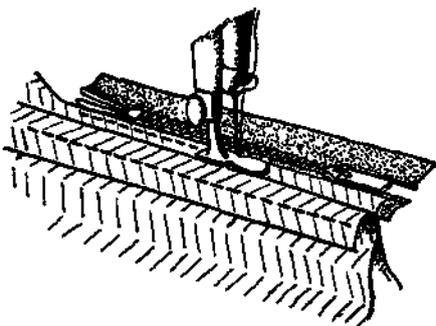


Illustration 24

6. Now allow zipper to turn over face down again over the front seam allowance. A small pleat will form at the bottom of the zipper. (Illustration 25).

7. Begin stitching at bottom at an angle. Or maybe you prefer just a straight line of stitching. Stitch close to the chain.

8. Remove basting from the back side of the skirt. Press on right side.

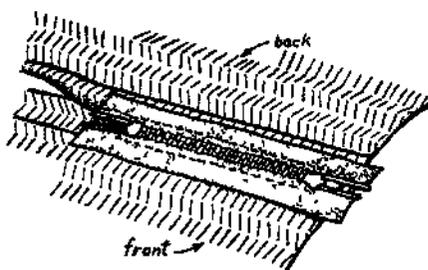


Illustration 25

Putting in the Hem

Many flared skirts are pretty but they are spoiled by an ugly hem. If the skirt is of heavy fabric, you can be assured that it will be difficult to handle and will stretch badly.

Cotton should be washed first to make it free from sizing. Allow the skirt to hang several days before you mark it with a row of pins an even distance from the floor.

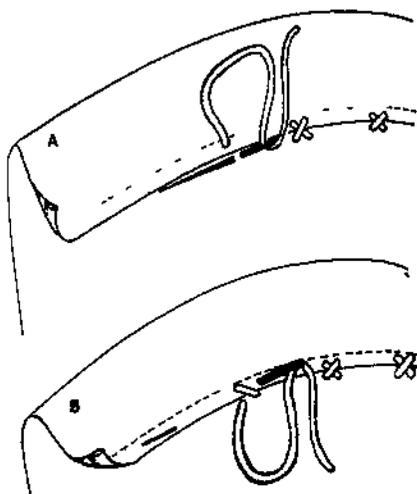
1. Baste and crease around the bottom from pin to pin.

2. Trim the hem to a uniform width.

3. The hem in circular skirt should never be more than 1½ inches wide, and, if the skirt is very circular, no more than one inch.

4. Now run a line of machine stitching close to the raw edge. Stitch with the grain at all times. If the skirt is quite bias, you will need to reverse your stitching several times.

5. As you stay stitch it, you can ease in the extra fullness by putting your finger just back of the presser foot. Press against the foot tightly so that the fabric will pile up in back of the foot. This eliminates fullness plaits, etc., in the hem.



(Note. These stitches are enlarged to show detail.)

Illustration 26

6 Press, shaping the hem to the garment. Turn down ¼ inch for finishing cotton hem. Remember, you press by lifting the iron from one position to another and not by pushing it along the bias, stretching the hem out of shape.

7. Put in the hem by hand, using slip stitch. (Illustration 26, A & B). Hold the hem toward you with the fold away from you.

a. Fasten your thread under the hem.

b. Slip the needle into the underside of the fold of the hem. Bring the needle out about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch forward.

c. Take up one or two threads below in the skirt. (See "A" in Illustration 26, page 14.)

d. Now put the needle into fold just back of where it was last put through. (See "B" in Illustration 26).

e. This forms a tiny figure 8 or cross that holds the hem securely.

It will not pull out if the thread breaks.

Invisible Machine Hem

1. Follow instructions 1 through 6 above.

2. Fold the hem back against the right side of the garment. Allow hem to extend $\frac{1}{6}$ inch beyond fold. You may wish to baste if it is a circular skirt. (Illustration 27).

3. Set machine at 10 to 12 stitches per inch.

4. Stitch on extended edge of hem for about 5 stitches. Then pull the garment side into line of needle, catching one stitch in fold. Continue; then press.

With practice you can make a most inconspicuous and very durable hem. If the pressure on the presser foot keeps you from pulling the material from side to side lighten the pressure on the pressure bar



Illustration 27

Finishing the Seams

The weave and finish of the fabric and the cut of the garment determine the finish to be used for the seams. The finish is to keep the fabric from fraying and to keep it inconspicuous from the right side.

Bias seams often need no finishing.

Pinking shears may finish seams on fine fabric with close weave.

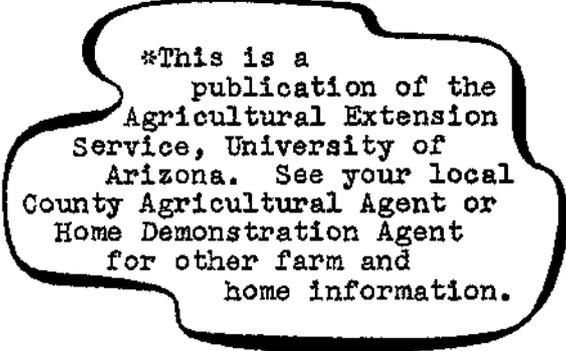
The new zigzagger finishes fabrics that ravel very easily. If you don't have a machine or an attachment that does this for you, one of the following finishes may be used:

1. Stitch single stitching close

to the edges and press seam open.

2. Turn under edges $\frac{1}{16}$ inch and stitch the edge. Do not use this finish if the material proves to be thick and heavy, as the edge will show on the right side when the garment is pressed.

3. Another finish on lightweight cotton is to stitch the two edges together and trim. The seam when trimmed is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in width. This is a good finish when you do not press seams open.



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