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Simple Equipment for Pressing

Circular 216



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Simple Equipment for Pressing

By Helen Church
Extension Specialist in Clothing

Pressing plays an important part in clothing construction and, of course, is most essential to good grooming. Many a home-tailored garment has that home-made look merely because the garment was not skillfully pressed as it was constructed.

With a few simple devices, pressing can be most satisfactorily done at home. Even the knife-pleated skirt can be pleated without overpressing. Those gabardine trousers can be pressed without producing a "shiny" effect, and still have that desired sharp crease.

Pressing presents many problems and is an entirely different process than ironing. Too often the same process is used without regard to the effect. When you press you use steam, and you do not press dry. Too much pressing is as bad as too

little. In fact, overpressing is worse as it may permanently damage the fibers.

Overpressing is caused by two factors: (1) excess heat which may melt the fiber or scorch it, (2) pressure exerted by the iron that may press until it is too dry. You may avoid both by making use of the right press cloth. The amount of heat, moisture and pressure required is dependent upon the kind of fabric being pressed. Wool and most synthetics are not pressed dry as are rayon and cotton and silk.

The equipment needed is (1) Well padded ironing board and sleeve board, (2) Iron, (3) Press cloths, (4) Clapper or beater, (5) Sponge and water, (6) Press cushions, and (7) Press roll or seam board.

Irons

A steam iron is not a "must" for doing a good job of pressing. It is convenient, but you have to be cautious in its use. Your ordinary iron and press cloth can do just as good a job as the steam iron.

When buying a steam iron take a good look at the area of the plate that gives off steam. Some emit very little steam. The better iron will have half of the iron a steam area.

The steam iron should always be used on the wrong side of most fabrics. Only half and sometimes less of the area of the iron emits steam. The remaining area of the iron is likely to overpress. When using the steam iron on wool or synthetics, be cautious, glide it along, lightly steaming the garment on the wrong side. Be sure not to press it dry.

The new fibers and blends require some pressing to make them look their best. In the process of constructing a garment of synthetics, pressing is most important. The iron should be set probably as low as possible. Press from the wrong side.

To remove stubborn wrinkles and to press open seams, steam with your wool press cloth and use the clapper. It is not necessary to press these new fibers dry. Steam out the seams or wrinkles, then hang and let dry.

There is one exception, *never* use steam iron or steam on dynel. Use a dry press cloth. Set for the lowest heat possible.

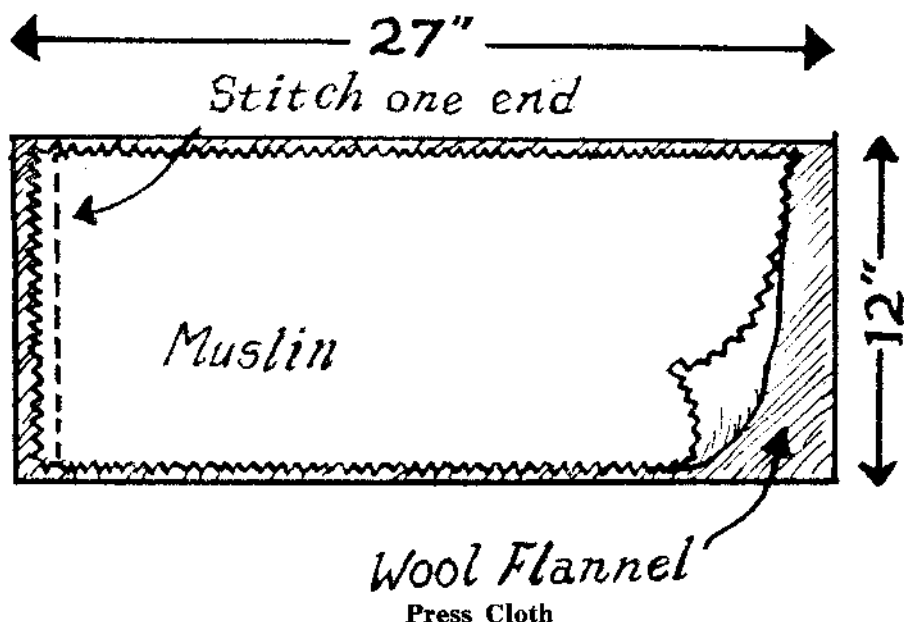
Press Cloths

A press cloth is used to protect fabric from heat and to supply moisture so that the iron may produce steam. When pressing lightweight fabrics — such as rayons, acetates, and many of the synthetics—a lightweight piece of muslin, tissue paper, or one of these non-woven press cloths does a good job. Dampen these with a sponge or spray to produce steam and press from the wrong side.

If you are pressing wool, dacron, orlon and wool mixtures, you will find the wool press cloth described below to be most efficient. The wool distributes the steam and moisture without making wet spots on the garment.

To make the press cloth, secure a piece of wool, preferably of light color that will not fade. The wool should also have a good nap. A flannel is excellent. Then secure another piece of cloth the same size of medium weight muslin. (See the drawing at right above.)

Sew these two pieces together along one end. As you use the cloth, dampen the cotton by submerging and wringing out the water. Place it over the wool press cloth, and steam press from the cotton side. To do this, lift the iron instead of sliding it. Steam should be distributed through the wool evenly. When you lift the cloth, steam should arise from the garment that you are pressing. If there is no steam, you are overpressing, and wool may become "shiny." Possibly the top press cloth is not wet enough to produce steam.



Clapper

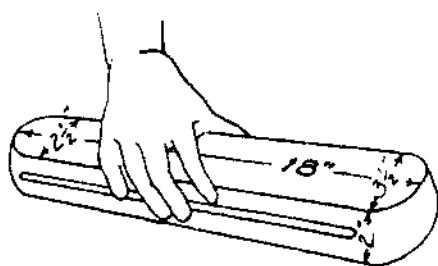
When you are pressing in pleats or creases, you may have the habit of allowing the iron to stand in one place adding your weight to it to add pressure. The iron is hot, the pressure plus the heat dries the wool to the stage that it is overpressed. Many times this permanently damages the wool.

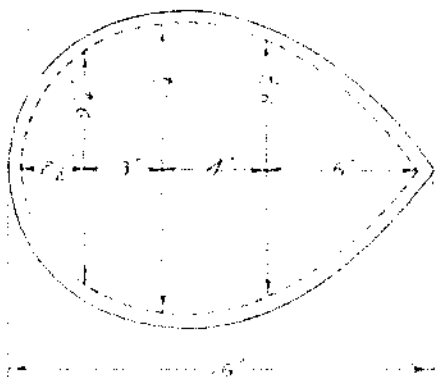
Why not use the clapper or beater instead? Use the iron only to put in the steam, raise the press cloth immediately, and put the clapper down on the garment being pressed. This keeps the steam in and causes the crease to form without damage to the fabric.

To make a clapper, use a piece of hardwood, 15 to 18 inches long, 3½ inches wide, and about 2 inches

thick. Shape this piece of wood into an oval-shaped block if possible. The dimensions could be 3½ inches at one end and 2½ at the other. A shallow groove worked into both sides will give a place to rest your fingers as you use it. Some sandpaper will help to round and smooth off all edges. (See the drawing below.)

Clapper





Tailor's Ham

Pressing Cushions

The tailor's ham is a "must" if you want to make your tailoring easy. To make it, cut two pieces of firm muslin or ticking according to measurements in the drawing above. Stitch the pieces together with narrow seam, leaving about 4 inches as an opening at the top. Turn it inside out and stuff it firmly with sawdust or clean sand.

Another very handy cushion that you may wish to use is a round cushion. You will find it handy when you iron sleeves and necklines of your dresses and blouses. Its size allows you to slip it into place when tailoring pockets and pressing sleeve seams.

Cut two circles 6 inches in diameter from duck, muslin, or canvas.

Round Cushion



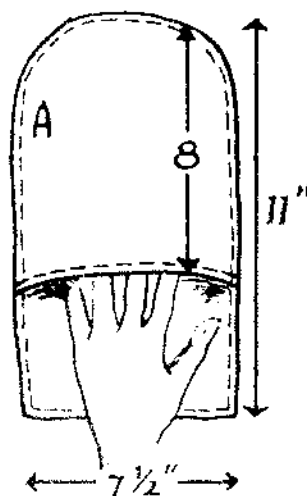
Cut a strip of the same muslin 3 inches wide and 20 inches long.

If you use ordinary muslin, use double thickness to prevent sawdust from staining the garment or leaking. Be sure that you have removed all sizing from the muslin before making the cushion. Pin one circle to the straight edge of the strip. Place pins at right angles to seam. Pin the other circle to the other straight edge and stitch by machine. Leave the ends of straight pieces open for stuffing. Stitch by machine, making $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch seams. Clip the seam every 2 inches around the circles. Turn it right side out and stuff it lightly with sawdust. The drawing at left below shows finished cushion with finished measurements.

Press Mitt

If sawdust isn't handy and you do have some cotton, possibly the pressing mitt will serve your purpose. It isn't as easily used as the

Press Mitt



little round cushion since you must use the iron and handle the fabric with one hand. It will help you to get into many places difficult to press.

To make the mitt, cut two pieces 11 inches x 7½ inches and one piece 7½ inches x 8 inches.

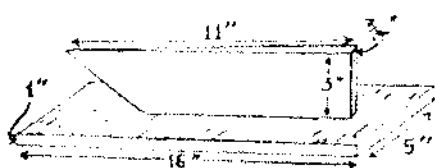
Hem the 8-inch piece, then stitch around all three pieces with "A" between the two larger pieces. (See drawing at left below.) Trim the seam, then turn and stuff with cotton. Close the end by turning in the edge and stitching by machine.

Seam Pressing Equipment

Seams need to be pressed open. They should be as inconspicuous as possible. Often in an effort to press them flat you may overpress the edges of the seam making an imprint on the right side. To avoid this, you can make or buy a seam board.

If you make it you will use a board 3 inches wide, ¾ inch thick and about 16 inches long. Bevel and make a point at one end. Sandpaper the edges and fasten to a base, 16 inches x 5 inches. Do not cover this, as you will press on the board. Select hardwood if possible as the steam will not cause it to splinter. (See the drawing below.)

Seam Board

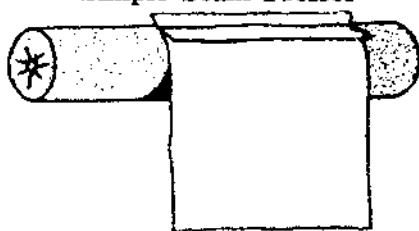


Easier still is to take a rolling pin, cut in two length-wise so that it will lay flat on your board. This may be covered or left without a cover.

Another easy solution to this problem is to roll a magazine tightly and tie it with sewing thread. Then wrap several thicknesses of muslin around it. Be sure that the magazine, when rolled, is only about 2 inches in diameter.

As you press down the center of the seam, the edges are not pressed flat. When pressing pleats, flaps, etc., place a piece of heavy paper under the pleat so that the pleat or flap edge will not leave an imprint. (See drawing below.)

Simple Seam Presser



Corduroy and velveteen are difficult to press. If you are sewing on these fabrics, and desire to press seams, try this. Lay the iron on its side, place a damp piece of muslin or press cloth on the wrong side of garment, then run the area over the edge of the iron.

Another method is to use your steam iron, place right side of corduroy next to folded turkish towel, then allow the iron to emit steam without putting the iron on the material. Then use your fingers to press down the seam.

If you do much pressing or make many garments of napped materials you can purchase a velvet board.

Using Pressing Equipment

When using the wool and muslin press cloth, the muslin should be wet. Put steam into garment by lifting and setting the iron down, or glide along lightly without pressure. Temperature of iron is not important.

To do the pressing, lift the cloth quickly, put down the clapper holding the steam with the weight of the clapper. Allow to remain a few minutes. The material will be slightly damp and does not need to be dry.

In using the sleeve board to press the sleeve, press from the right side safely because the press cloth is wool.

The tailor's ham is used to press through curved area of jacket. This avoids shrinking out of desired fullness.

The small cushion allows you to press curved areas and small areas without wrinkling the rest of the garment. Picture shows pressing around shoulder and neckline area.

