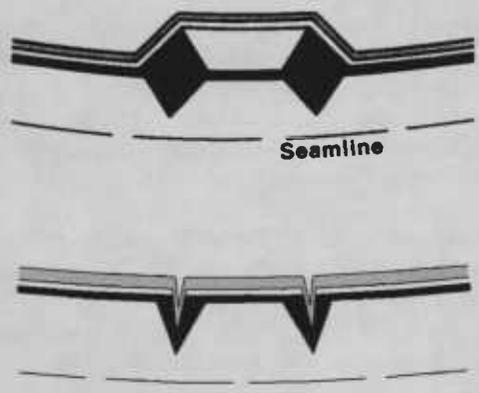


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Cutting Skills for Garment Construction

Cutting skills for garment construction demand accuracy and care. If cutting is not done carefully, the size and fit of a garment can change, seams won't match, facings and edges will be bulky, or shaped areas won't lie flat. Whatever kind of cutting you are doing, do it carefully with the correct equipment. Be sure that scissors or shears are sharp so they will cut without applying extra pressure.

CUTTING OUT THE PATTERN AND FABRIC

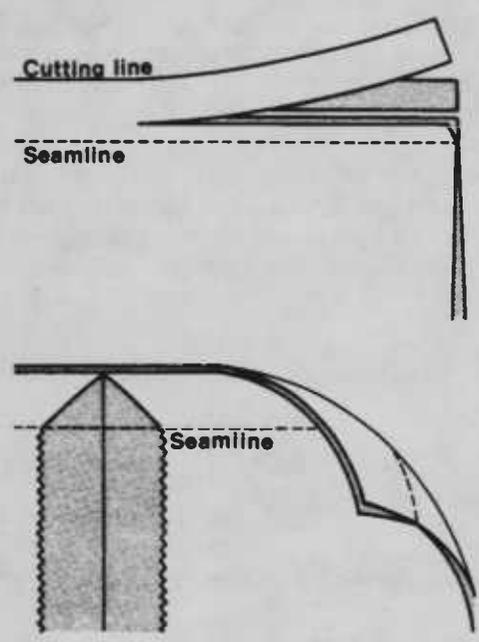


Use bent-handled dressmaker shears for cutting out the pattern and fabric. The bent-handled shears help you keep the fabric flat as you cut. Cut exactly in the center of the cutting line. So that you can see exactly where the blades are cutting, cut with the pattern to your left. On a loosely woven or stretchy fabric, cut in the direction of the lengthwise yarn to keep raveling or stretching to a minimum. Never use pinking or scalloping shears to cut out a pattern and fabric because they will not be accurate. Slide the shears along the cutting surface to move forward for the next stroke. Use long, firm, smooth strokes that cut with all but the tips of the blades. Hold the shears upright, without letting them tilt to one side, especially if you are cutting two layers of fabric so that both layers will be the same size.

Cut all notches outward so that the seam won't be weakened and the notches will be quickly visible for matching. Cut double and triple notches with a continuous outer edge.

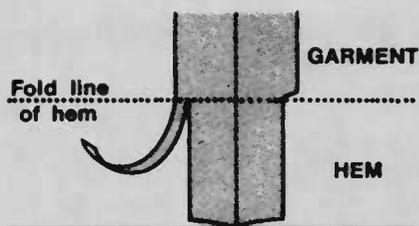
If you are experienced in sewing and want to save time, cut the pattern out without cutting around the notches. Before removing the pattern, mark the notches by making tiny 1/8 inch (3 mm) clips into the seam allowance at the location of each notch.

CUTTING TO REMOVE FABRIC BULK

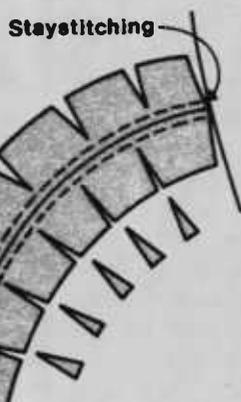
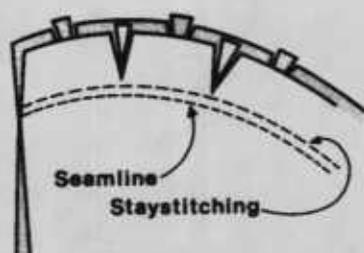
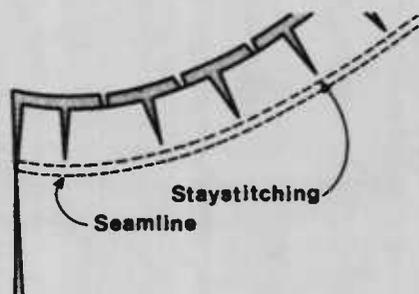


Save fabric scraps left after cutting. Scraps are useful for testing the machine tension, stitch length, and pressing techniques. Some commercial pattern companies do not include patterns for bound buttonholes, belt carriers, sleeve plackets, and other small pieces that need to be cut from scraps.

Grading or layering removes fabric bulk and prevents a seam allowance from forming a ridge that shows on the outside of a garment. It is used where two or more seam allowances lie together in an enclosed seam such as a facing, pocket, or cuff. To grade; cut the layers of an enclosed seam to progressively narrower widths: the widest seam width should lie toward the outer surface of the garment and the narrowest seam width closest to the body. The final width of each layer will be determined by the weight, the raveliness of the fabric, and the number of layers. Very bulky fabrics can be graded by trimming the several layers at once, providing your scissors are very sharp. Hold the scissors at a flat angle against the shortest edge. Grading should be done *before* notching or clipping seam allowances.



CUTTING SHAPED SEAMS



Grading seam intersections where two seams meet, may be required with mediumweight and heavyweight fabrics to reduce bulk. Seam intersections that may need grading include a dress waistline seam before applying a zipper and a shoulder or side seam before applying a neckline or an armhole facing. If the fabric requires a seam finish, do the finish on the first two seams before joining them with the third. Trim away the seam allowance of the first two seams where they will be joined by the third seam to reduce bulk.

Grading vertical seam allowances within the hem is done to prevent bulk and ridges. Trim the seam allowance below the fold of the hem narrower than the vertical seam allowance above the hem fold. Begin the trimming about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (1.5 mm) above the fold line of the hem to prevent bulk at the fold. Be careful not to trim away so much that the hem cannot be lengthened.

Clip inward curved seams to relieve strain on fabric edges and prevent the seam allowance from folding back within an enclosed seam. Facings for necklines and armholes are examples of inward curved seams. When there are two or more layers of fabric, clip each layer separately and alternate the clips so they are not matched which leaves a sharp double edge. Clip only where needed to relieve strain or pull. On gentle curves, few clips will be needed but on sharp curves more frequent clips are necessary. Clip to within $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (1.5 mm) of the staystitching. Do not cut through the staystitching.

When seaming together an inward curve and an outward curve, as in a princess seam, a little clipping may need to be done before stitching the seam in order to fit the two curves together. Additional clipping is done after the seam is sewn.

Notch an outward curved seam by cutting out a small, triangular wedge of fabric from an outward curved seam allowance to reduce bulk. Rounded collars and round-cornered patch pockets are examples of outward curves. When there are two or more layers of fabric, alternate the notches on each layer so they do not leave a sharp double edge. Notch only as needed to reduce bulk. On gentle curves few notches will be needed, but on sharp curves more frequent notches are needed. Notch to within $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (1.5 mm) of the staystitching. Do not cut through the staystitching.

If an inward curve requiring clipping and an outward curve requiring notching are combined into a seam such as a princess seam, check that clips and notches alternate across from one another at the seam line. If a clip and a notch line up, the seam may not form a smooth curve.

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