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How to Construct Darts

4-H Clothing, Skill Level 3

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Darts are stitched triangles that shape fabric to fit the body. On a pattern, a dart looks like a long, narrow triangle. Darts may be located at the back shoulders, below the waistline on pants and skirts, and above the waistline on dresses. Loosely fitting garments and garments designed for stretchy fabric may not have darts.

Well-made darts

The purpose of a dart is to make fabric that is flat fit to the body, which is made up of curves. To be certain that darts help the fabric fit the body, check the fit of the dart twice: the first time for major changes before cutting out the pattern and fabric; the second time for small adjustments before pressing.

When you are checking the fit, think about the location of the dart and its length and depth. Darts should point toward, but stop short of, the curve of the body they are intended to fit.

When the final dart is made, the point should look smooth like a well-pressed plain seam. There should not be a pucker or fold near the point. On the inside of the garment, the dart should be stitched so the point is tapered with the last several stitches exactly on the fold (Figure 1).

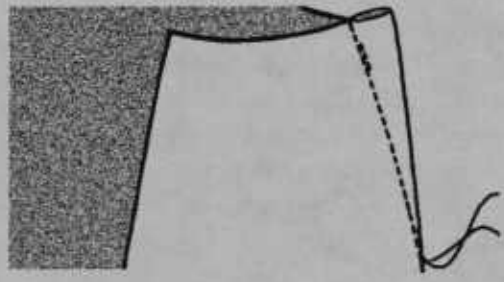


Figure 1

Up and down darts should be pressed toward the center front or the center back of the garment. Sideways darts should be pressed downward.

Markings

Choose a marking method appropriate for your fabric. For darts, mark the stitching line, the center fold line, and any matching dots or symbols from the pattern to the fabric.

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Sewing

Fold the dart on the center line to bring the marked stitching lines together. Pin at the point, at the wide end, and along the seam line. Add pins as needed along the stitching line. If you wish, hand baste along the stitching line. Start the machine stitching at the wide end of the dart and stitch toward the point gradually so the last two or three stitches are along the fold. This will result in a smooth, pucker-free point end.

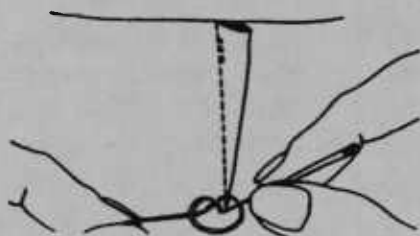


Figure 2

Finishing

Knot the threads at the point of the dart to keep the dart from coming unstitched. An overhand knot tied with both thread ends together is the most secure. Tighten the knot as close as possible to the point of the dart. Cut the thread, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch (2 to 3 cm) of thread (Figure 2).

Backstitching is too bulky at the point of a dart and should not be used there. Backstitching is satisfactory at the wide end of the dart where it will be crossed with a seam.

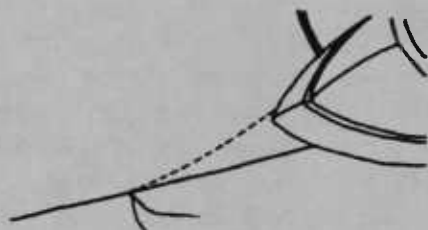


Figure 3

Pressing

Before pressing darts, be sure the fit is correct. Then, press the dart flat the way it was stitched, but be careful not to press beyond the point (Figure 3). Next, open out the garment, wrong side up, and shape the dart by finishing the pressing over a pressing ham or rounded surface (Figure 4).

Up and down darts are pressed toward the center front or center back of the garment. Sideways darts are pressed downward. If the fold of a dart tends to make a ridge on the front of the fabric, slip a piece of paper between the dart and the fabric before pressing firmly.

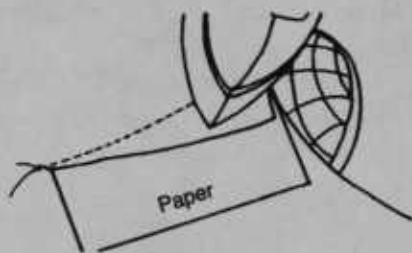


Figure 4



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