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The commercial pattern is an essential tool of the woman who sews for herself or her family. Poorly fitting garments are a waste of time and materials. They are unattractive; uncomfortable, and do not withstand hard wear. The first step toward making a well fitting dress is a pattern that fits properly.

*The three forms shown in figure 1, for instance, take the same size pattern; yet for each, entirely different alterations must be made to take care of individual problems. The tall figure needs extra length in the waist, skirt, and sleeves. The length is right for the middle figure but the skirt will have to be enlarged through the hips. For the third figure, the pattern will have to be shortened and the hips widened.

The best way to make changes is to alter the pattern, since it is impossible to make some alterations as well once the dress is cut and basted together. This bulletin deals with the problems of altering a pattern—how to measure the figure and take corresponding pattern measurement, and how to alter the pattern pieces to correspond to your measurements.

Selecting a Commercial Pattern

Every figure and personality suggests a definite style. Unless a woman recognizes her figure proportions and the lines most becoming to her, it is impossible for her to select becoming patterns. In choosing a pattern try to imagine the lines of the pattern transposed to a figure of your proportions. Then pause to remember, "Simplicity is the keynote of good design."

The homemaker who does not have much time relies almost entirely upon a commercial pattern for her sewing. To her mind a design created by an artist-designer is the most satisfactory design. However, all patterns do not pass through the hands of a good designer. In fact, a good design is expensive. The original de-
signs are not always of lasting style. Some expensive patterns are styled exclusively for those who want "high" fashion.

Fashion Detail—If a woman wishes to use a pattern more than once, or wear the dress for several seasons, she should watch carefully certain fashion elements. She can acquaint herself with new lines by a study of fashion magazines, commercial pattern books, window displays, and advertisements. Before buying she should ask herself: (1) What is the current silhouette? (2) Does it look like me? (3) Are the shoulder, neck, and sleeve lines becoming to my figure? (4) Is the decorative detail and its arrangement becoming? (5) How long has the detail or line been in style?

Construction Detail—The fabric and the pattern should be harmonious in line and texture. For example, a skirt with plaits requires fabric that is firm and crisp for plaiting. A bulky, loosely woven fabric would never be used for a skirt with a number of gores simply because it will not hold its shape.

Guide Sheet—The instruction or guide sheet is essential to every user of patterns. Even if a person has done very little sewing she can learn good dressmaking methods with some guide sheets. They vary as much in quality as do the patterns. A clearly presented guide sheet is an important point to look for in choosing a pattern.

The yardage needed to make the garment is important from the economical viewpoint. Shape and number of parts in a pattern can make the cutting problem difficult or easy, and also can add to or decrease the time involved. If alterations are necessary, ask yourself the question, "Can the pattern be altered satisfactorily?"

Size to Buy—Always buy a pattern according to the bust measurement. The fact that you wear a size 20 dress does not mean you need a size 20 pattern. To date, there is no definite relationship between the sizes of patterns and the sizes of ready-to-wear garments. You may be accustomed to buying a pattern according to hip measurement, but skirts are more easily altered than waists.

Measurements Needed to Check the Pattern

The woman to be measured should stand in front of a mirror so she can watch the procedure. To secure accurate measurements, the dress should be removed and guide lines marked over a smooth fitting slip.

Narrow cotton tape or a piece of selvage can be used to establish the waist line and hip line. Pin the tape in several places to hold it in the correct position. A soft-lead pencil or skin pencil
sharpened to a fine point can be used for establishing points on the body. These points are neck at shoulder, armseye at shoulder, center front neck, and center back neck.

After these lines and points are established, the body measurements can be taken. The person doing the measuring should use a firm tape measure and be as accurate as possible with the measurements. She should also record the measurements on a chart. The person who is being measured should give careful attention to her standing position. Accuracy of measurements is one assurance of successfully checking a pattern.
Fig. 2 shows the location of the measurements you will need.

1. Bust—Measure fullest part of bust, keeping the tape parallel to the floor.

2. Chest Width—At a point 6 inches down from the shoulder seam at the neck line, measure from armhole seam to armhole seam.

3. Width across shoulder blades—At a point 7 inches down from the shoulder seam at the neckline, measure from armhole seam to armhole seam.

4. Shoulder length—Measure from the neck, shoulder point to top and outermost point of armscye line.

5. Blouse length, center back—Measure from the collarbone at back of neck to waist line.

6. Blouse length, over shoulder blades—Measure from the neck shoulder seam, over shoulder blades, to the waist line. Keep tape parallel to center back.

7. Blouse length, over bust—Measure from the neck shoulder seam, over the bust, straight down to the waist line. Keep the tape parallel to center front.

8. Sleeve length—Measure from shoulder at armscye down over the elbow with arm bent, to the wristbone. Also measure distance from elbow to wristbone.

9. Upper arm (at base of sleeve cap)—Measure around the fullest part of upper arm.

10. Waist line—Measure snugly at the smallest part.

11. Hips—Measure at widest part of hips, keeping tape parallel to the floor. Look at your figure from both front and sides to see whether your hips are larger at the hip or the thigh level. If in doubt, take both measurements. Record distance of this measurement from the waist line. Usually it is between 6 and 10 inches below the waist.

12. Skirt length—Measure from the waist line to the floor—at center front.

13. —At right side.

14. —At center back.

15. —At left side.

16. Subtract the distance of desired skirt length from the floor: Add 3" for hem.
# Measurement Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Personal Measurement</th>
<th>Ease to be Allowed</th>
<th>Pattern Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Chest width (6&quot; down from neck)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Back width (7&quot; down from neck)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Shoulder length</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Blouse length:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Center back</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Neck at shoulder over shoulder blade to waist line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Neck at shoulder over breast to waist line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sleeve length:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Shoulder at armsecy over elbow to wrist</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) To elbow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c) To wrist</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Arm at base of sleeve</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Waist line</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Hip line:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) From waist to hip line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Complete measurement</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Skirt length:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Center front from waist to floor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Right side from waist to floor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Center back from waist to floor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Left side from waist to floor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Skirt from floor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hem allowance</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Allowance for ease—The amount of fullness needed for ease depends on the kind of material and style of the dress—thin, sheer fabrics need more fullness than heavy tailored ones; soft, dressy styles more than straight slim types. Patterns allow a certain amount for ease in some of the measurements, but it may not be as much as you need for comfort.

FIG. 3
Most patterns allow the following amounts for ease:

- 4 inches through the bust—2 inches or more across the front and about 2 inches in back.
- About ½ inch in the chest width.
- From ½ to 1 inch in back width across the shoulder blades.
- At least ½ inch in all blouse length measurements.
- About 2 inches at hips for a plain skirt—1 inch in front, 1 inch in back. Some fullness can be fitted out later if this is too much.
- Base of the sleeve cap—3 inches.

**Measure the Pattern Pieces**

The guide sheet of the pattern helps to identify pieces and locate markings. Read this sheet over carefully before checking or using the pattern. Label each piece if it is not marked. Locate darts, seams, gathers and ease lines. Lay pieces flat on a table in this order for checking measurements.

Mark in a colored pencil these additional lines for checking measurements: bust, chest, width of back, hip and base of sleeve cap. See Fig. 3.

Pin corresponding parts of pattern together—such as yoke on blouse. Lap seam line on seam line and pin.

Measure with a true and firm tape measure from seam to seam. When measuring across a dart or for an around measurement, pick up the tape measure at dart line and carry across the dart to continue the measurement.

Check all measurements on one section of the pattern such as blouse front and back and record changes on the colored line. For example, when extra is needed, record “+” amount in inches, or if the pattern is too large, record “—” amount in inches and if correct mark “O.K.” See Figure 4.

Continue in like manner for the skirt and sleeve. This gives one a complete picture of all alterations to be made. Study the pattern parts carefully before deciding which alteration will give you the best results.
Rules for Pattern Alteration

Pattern alteration can be a very simple procedure. There are a few basic rules to follow. Accuracy in checking the measurements is essential to insure a successful pattern.

Rule 1—All ease is allowed within the pattern area, occasionally at basic seam lines.

Rule 2—Slashing always starts at a seam line and goes to an opposite or parallel seam line. This allows the pattern tissue to lay flat.

Rule 3—Spread the tissue for the amount needed at the point needed. Paste or tape tissue to this area.

Rule 4—The amount of increase at seam line should come at a seam line which provides for darts, gathers or tucks; as, waist line.

Rule 5—Decreases may be made by slashing the pattern and lapping or by folding in a blade tuck. Keep parallel (|) and horizontal (—) lines true.

Rule 6—to correct basic lines as a result of slashing use a ruler and draw in new line or true curves with pencil. Example, Fig. 5. Connect neck line shoulder point with armscye shoulder point.

Steps In Alteration

Fig. 4 illustrates that the front blouse has been checked against the personal measurements. All points measured have been marked “+”, “—”, or “O.K.”. The alterations decided upon were as follows:

A Lap pattern ¼”
B Lap pattern ½”
C Spread pattern 1”
D Extra at waist fitted into darts or gathers.

The same marking and measuring procedure will be followed for all pattern parts. When the pattern seems to be only ¼ inch to ⅛ inch too long or too wide, it is usually best to leave the excess and fit it out in the garment.
Problems of Alteration

Pattern Too Short
Or Too Long

On each pattern piece to be lengthened or shortened, draw a line at right angles to the straight of fabric line. This line should be below the bust dart and above waist darts on the front blouse; on the sleeve above and below the elbow.

Cut along these lines. If the pattern is too short, spread to the correct measurement. Increase the same for the back of the blouse.

If the pattern is too long, lap the edges to the correct measurement. A tuck may also be folded in the tissue. Correct all pieces affected by these changes such as facings.

Shoulders Too Narrow
Or Too Wide

Slash from the shoulder to waist line as in Fig. 7A. Spread the amount needed at the shoulder. Lay tissue under pattern and paste or tape. Do the same for the back of the blouse. This increases some at the chest but it is usually needed.

To shorten shoulder line, fold in a blade dart as in Fig. 7B.
To Increase Width at the Bust Line

To increase width through the bust when the pattern is too narrow at chest, bust, and waist, use alteration illustrated in Fig. 8. Slash from the waist to shoulder line and spread for the amount needed at the bust line.

Correct shoulder line as illustrated.

To increase only at the bust line use alteration in Fig. 9. This alteration can provide extra length on the front of the blouse if needed. Slash from the waist to bust line, then to armsgye. Spread for the amount needed at bust. Extra fullness at the waist line may be fitted out with darts or gathers.
To Determine the Size of the Underarm Dart

Some patterns do not provide adequate darts to fit the fabric over the bust. This can be determined with the following measurements: (Fig. 10). (1) Mark with pins line AB. (2) Establish point C which is directly above the point of the breast. (3) Measure lines CD and DE. (4) The difference in the length of the two lines equals the size of the dart.

Slash the pattern as in Fig 10 and mark the dart. The dressmaker dart should be about 3/4" wide and 4" long. If the amount needed is more, make two darts.

Round Shoulders or Prominent Shoulder Blades

Either A or B, Fig. 11, may be used for this alteration. In illustration A, the extra is at the back neck and can be used in darts. Slash the pattern from center back to armseyc line, spread for the amount needed at center back. It is usually best to add some to the neckline when making this alteration as in A. For B, the extra fullness comes at the waist line and can be used as gathers or darts.
To Increase the Width of Sleeve At Base of Cap

For an increase up to 1¼ inches use Fig. 12. Slash equidistant from the center lengthwise line. Spread for one-half the needed increase on each side of center at base line. Correct the cap line as indicated.

To increase from 1½ inches and up, slash as in Fig. 13. Allow approximately 2/3 of an increase through the cap area and 1/3 at underarm. For example, to increase 2 inches, spread the pattern ¾ inch at right and left of center and ¼ inch at right and left underarm.

In some instances the cap may be too wide. Fit this out at front and back in the garment.

Correct the cap line as indicated by the dotted line.
To Increase Width
At Hip Line

All skirts having one or more gores probably need to be increased at the side gore. The front gore or gores usually are the correct proportion for most figures.

Slash the pattern from hem line to waist on grain line as indicated in Fig. 14. Spread for the amount of increase at hip line. Correct the grain line as indicated by white line. The extra fullness is usually needed at the bottom of the skirt.

Increase $\frac{1}{4}$ of the amount needed on each of the front and back side gores.

To Increase at Waist
And at Hip Line

Slash the pattern from hem line through hip and waist line as indicated in Fig. 15. Spread for the amount of increase at waist and at hip line.

Draw in grain line at center of increase. This keeps a balance in extra added at front and side seam lines.
To Increase At Waist Line

This is usually needed only at the side seam lines.

Add the amount needed at waist on side seams as indicated in Fig. 16. For one inch of increase add \(\frac{1}{4}\)" to the front and back side seam. This increase may be graduated to nothing for approximately four inches.
To Increase Length on One Side of Skirt

The alteration in Fig. 17A is used for those with one hip slightly higher.

If one hip is much fuller than the other and also higher use alteration as in Fig. 17B.

Slash from side seam to front seam as indicated in Figure 17. Spread for the amount of increase in length at side seam. Correct side seam and center front or side gore lines.

These alterations will make it possible to turn the hem line on a balanced line.

To Increase Length at Center Front of Skirt

![Diagram of skirt alteration](image)

Extend the amount of increase needed at center front, above waistline, graduating to nothing at side seam, Fig 18. This alteration is essential for a prominent abdomen. In some instances the center front line may be longer than the side seam.