



News You Can Use

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General Pattern Preparation

by Kaaren Hoback



Many people wonder what pattern preparation is and why they should bother. Pattern preparation is taking the pattern you have printed from your computer and preparing it for your fabric. There are little things you can do, that are quick and simple, to both make the construction process easier and assure that your garment will fit properly.

Once you have proven your measurement chart, the program will add ease, fit and flare for the design or silhouette you have chosen. This is your last chance to change your mind about the decisions you have made as to neck depth, length, flare and ease before spending your fabric.

The very powerful tools you have at your disposal within the program allow you to try things you have never seen in commercial patterns. You have many more options with any Dress Shop design than you ever could have with a commercial pattern. Some of the brightest ideas simply won't work well for you. They are fine in concept but fail the reality test.

Plan, plan, plan! Check and double check! You are designing, and you are the one making the decisions. Plan your decisions and keep track of them by using the [pattern summary](#) option found under file. Write text notes in the free form text field.

Print all patterns with the reference line and amounts on, as this gives you landmarks to map your journey.

Tools and notions required:

Paper scissors

Colored pencils (You may find that all new cut lines can be done in red, and all measurement lines in green pencil, so that you have consistency with all your patterns.)

A French curve

A seam gauge marked in 1/8-inch increments, with a slider

An 18" clear ruler (I use one with very large numbers for ease in "seeing".)

Binder clips (also known as bull dog clips)

Additional copy paper, pattern paper, or cheap interfacing to trace off pattern bits

Regular tape

Single hole punch, available from discount and office supply stores.

Another handy tool is blue low-stick painter's tape. I often use it to attach pattern pieces to each other to build a pattern in the round that I can try on.



Take great care in taping your patterns together. My personal favorite method is to tape on a large grid mat and use an 18-inch ruler. You may choose your own method. Just make sure all pages are square, and that the A column pages from A-1 to A-last are set so that all the registration marks on the right hand side of the page are spaced exactly 3 inches apart at center. Also verify that all B, C and maybe D columns' left-hand pages accurately overlap the corresponding right hand page of the previous column.

Once all the pages are taped, you need to finish your preparation before cutting away excess paper. I complete the following steps for every pattern.

First, true all seam allowances. The stitch lines on the pattern are correct. The cut lines are generally correct on straight areas, but sometimes vary at armholes and necklines.



Take your seam gauge and set the slider to your seam allowance width. (The program uses 5/8th or 0.625 inches as default.) Run the slider along the stitch line and make dashed marks with your colored pencil for the adjusted cut line.

Now adjust the darts. If the dart starts on a side seam at a raw edge (such as at the waist or shoulder), fold the dart as it will be sewn and pressed.



Use a bulldog or binder clip to hold the dart closed so that you have both hands free to cut at the corrected cut line.

For side seams, the side/elegant and French darts are all pressed so that the fold of fabric on the wrong side is down. Cut away excess paper, starting at the underarm and going toward the hem. Stop several inches above the hem.

For pant waist darts, many books say to fold the dart(s) toward the center. Frankly, I do mine toward the out seam, as I find it gives better shaping for my body shape. If you plan to press the dart toward the center, start cutting at the out seam, towards the center to form the proper dart cap. If you are pressing toward the out seam, start at the center and cut toward the out seam.

Only folding it out will accurately true a dart! One method of folding to true a dart is to make sure that the dart legs overlap each other perfectly, even if that means that the dart center or a dart leg needs to be trued! Alternatively, you can use the midline of the dart as your presumptive start point and adjust the dart legs.

Next, work with the hems (including sleeve hems). Turn the hem under at the stitch line, toward the wrong side. Cut the excess paper up from the bottom fold line. This will create little triangular pokeys that may go in or out, depending on the stitch line above it.

Using these triangular pieces will mean that you no longer need to either ease in excess fabric when hemming, or try and stretch the hem to fit.

True the shoulders and necklines. Start by placing the back piece so that the neck faces you and the hem is pointing up. Overlap the front piece shoulder stitch line so that the piece faces hem down. Fold under the seam allowances of the shoulder seams and butt the pieces together. Smooth the back neck curve using a pencil by “eye” or using a French curve as shown. (This combo curve and square is my favorite, but you can also get a set of French curves from an art supply shop, if this type is difficult to find.)



Match the seam lines so they are perfect. Remember that if you are using a shoulder dart, the dart should be clipped as it will be stitched and pressed (toward the shoulder). Leaving the shoulder seam allowance folded under, you can now take the front and back separately and cut away excess paper from the cut line. This will again give you a perfect match when stitched, avoiding excess fabric triangles at the ends of your seams.

Now match your side seam lines. Remember that any fitted garment, or one that is derived from a fitted garment, such as Casual and Comfort fit levels, will have some shaping at the waist. With any side darts folded out, start at the underarm and overlay side seam stitch lines together. Make sure you have a perfect match up, especially when you have used the shaper tool for asymmetric hems. The princess and panel items should also have the side to center panels matched up and smoothed as necessary.

Now prepare the sleeves. Walk the sleeve stitch line (pattern print side down to the bodice print side up).



Start at the underarm and walk toward the shoulder point and cap apex. When you get to the armhole markings on the pattern, hole punch through both bodice and sleeve so that you have exactly identical marking points. Continue on up to the shoulder point. You should run out of armhole before you run out of sleeve. Make a pencil mark at that point on the sleeve. Repeat for the back.

You now have a sleeve with the exact amount of cap ease easy to see! The numbers on sleeve data, which show both armhole length and sleeve length front and back, detail the cap ease, but this way is visual!

Next prepare the facings. This may be an issue, especially if you have adjusted the neckline or used the shaper or closure tools. Lay the facing on the piece it is to face. Clone the neckline (and armhole, if you are using) of the fashion fabric to the facing. You can adjust facing widths, by using the options tool.

To make an interfacing for the facing, you can reprint it using a different seam allowance or none. Enter 0 to eliminate seam allowances. Make sure to clearly mark the piece as interfacing. You may also draw your interfacing lines on the base fashion fabric pattern and then trace it off onto pattern paper, inexpensive sew-in interfacing, or something from carriff.com they call sewing fabric. Clone the interfacing to the facing.

When you are doing a lining back piece for a jacket, there is a default “action pleat” set for three inches, which you can adjust. Make sure to fold this out, as it will be stitched before doing any back neck facing piece. True the lining to the facing, which you may wish to gentle the curve on.

Remember that any changes you make are at the stitch line. After you make any such changes, true the cut line for the seam allowance. You have now completed the pattern preparation for any blouse, dress, pants, or skirt.

If you find a serious mismatch on your pattern pieces during the preparation process:

- Double check that your pages are taped correctly at precisely 3 “apart on the registration circles.
- Verify that your pages are aligned square at top and sides.

- Double check that your seam allowances on curves have all been tried to your desired seam allowance width.
- Check you haven't forgotten to fold out a dart, such as the shoulder dart.
- Verify that your changes to neck depth or width are accurately reflected in the facings.
- Check that the collar extension to the back neck edge of a shawl or wing collar is 1/8-inch longer for turn of cloth ease. Adjust as necessary for your fabric weight.

If you prepare the pattern and take some key measurements against your known chart, you will be able to accurately establish the exact total garment ease, including collateral ease as well as design and wear ease at all points on the pattern.

You will also have a fully prepared pattern that you can work from if you do use hand drafting techniques to convert the straight of grain pattern to a bias pattern or to adjust the shaping of a piece beyond what shapes are currently available.

Using the reference lines at key landmarks on your pattern, you can easily map button placement, embroidery and other wearable art locations and sizes.

When you have completed your garment, you can staple the pattern summary, a scrap of the fabric and any notes you have created on your design sheet, for an archival history of the garment to either repeat or modify for future use.

Coming in Late March!



The next Dress Shop update is scheduled for late March and will include fixes and enhancements based on user requests and reports of the past few months. And, this update will also include the "Spring 2006 Collection", a collection of the most popular topical patterns of the season. The Spring 2006 Collection will include:

- ◆ 10 gore, 12 gore, and 14 gore skirts
- ◆ Trumpet skirts
- ◆ Empire waist blouses
- ◆ Hot new neck styles



25 patterns included for \$49. Coming late March. No advance orders, please.

My Pattern Designer

The future of pattern drafting software has arrived: **My Pattern Designer**.

Upgrade your software now so that you get more of what you want in the best fit possible. Discounts to customers that already own one of Livingsoft's Dress Shop Family programs are available AND through March 15th you get additional FREE patterns of your choice! See:

<http://www.mypatterndesigner.com/MPD/MPDPrices.htm>

Hurry, special pricing ends soon

You can also view the new My Pattern Designer newsletter at

<http://www.MyPatternDesigner.com/newsletter/vol1/newsletter.htm>. Check it out!

Q & A



Q. Where can I get directions or advice about sewing a neckline or closure type that I am unfamiliar with?

A. While Dress Shop does not include directions for every option in the product (you would need a substantial book for that and there are many such available), those most often requested have had articles written and added to the program. To see what is there, run Dress Shop and select Help - Help Index. You'll see a number of drop list boxes. You should visit them all, but the one labeled "How To Assemble Garments" has the most articles. You need to first select a category, then choose the article you are interested in.

Take a look at all of the categories and what articles are included. There are many, all with photos and step by step directions. Check it out.

Q: I'm never sure, when I run into a problem, if I should use the problem report function of ds/mpd, or if I should just post the question on the discussion board. Anyway, is there a rule of thumb or a preference?

A. Yes, there is a rule of thumb. Here's a list of problem types and how you can best get help for each:

1. You need to adjust the fit. For example, you have a wrinkle, or your garment does not hang right. You need to talk to somebody who sews. Sending in a problem report will not help, although the programmer can forward such reports to Kaaren. In this case it is best to post your concerns to the discussion board.
2. You are consistently getting a sloper that does not fit right. The pattern drafts properly. Others are using it without problem. But, yours does not fit. You need measuring advice. The discussion board could be useful, but a problem report would send in your measurements and anything that is obviously wrong can be spotted that way. Your best first step, however, would be to print out a full chart using a standard that is close to your size and see if any key measurement differs a lot while most differ a little. The differ-a-lot one should be looked at more. The most common issues are inseam and armhole depth (people tend to use garment measures, not body measures), side length (just hard to get right) and shoulder slopes (same).
3. My custom pattern drafts badly, but drafting the same pattern with standard measurements looks good. Now, here we have the perfect candidate for a problem report. The problem only happens with your measurements and does not happen with others. The problem report will send in your measurements, so we might be able to find it using those. This does not automatically mean that your measurements are wrong. That is frequently the case, but there are other times that a design just does not work with some body shape and the program could be changed to make it work properly with that shape. That change would not be

possible without measurements that show the problem. When you send in a problem report, the following are attached to it automatically:

A. The measurement set you were using when you submitted the report. Be sure to send it while the problem is visible on screen so we get the right data.

B. The pattern you have selected, including all options you have chosen on Mia. This is critical information. The problem may only occur, for example, with the gathered halter neckline and raglan sleeves, so we need to know you made those choices.

C. Every adjustment you have made with any tool. This is also critical to know.

D. Which version of the program you are using. If you are not using the latest revision, then updating is always going to be the first suggestion. We attempt to correct any problems reported in the next update. Sometimes we cannot, but usually we can. If you are not using the latest, then you are using a version with known problems that have been corrected.

E. System information and settings, such as printer margins and which version of Windows, which might help us reproduce what you are seeing.

F. The activation codes you have entered. Again, this will help us configure Dress Shop to what you are using. Some problems (user interface issues mostly) have come up that only happen with some particular mix of products.

Finally, please keep in mind that if you send in emails, describing something that others are not seeing, or even post pictures that others cannot duplicate, then you may be spending the time of hundreds of other sewers with every email you send. One problem report can often provide an answer within minutes that others may struggle for hours to track down. The forums are the ideal place for other sharing. Fit and measuring adjustments, fashion advice, information links and fabric sources are all ideally suited for discussion in the forums. Reports of your successes and difficulties overcome absolutely belong on the forums, as do procedural questions (e.g., how do you adjust something or other).

LivingSoft Northwest Links

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