

# Teach Yourself to Sew

Start with the basics, and you'll be sewing clothes in no time

How many times have you looked at a fabulous outfit and thought, "I want that!" Then reality sets in—designer prices, sizing issues, the wrong color or fabric—and the fantasy ends. Why not make it yourself? It's not that difficult—really. By learning just a few simple sewing skills, you'll soon be whipping up skirts, dresses, pants, or even your own Chanel look-alike jacket. You can choose the color, fabric, style, and embellishments. Plus, you can get a perfect fit.

This foldout includes absolutely essential sewing information—the basic stuff you must know to sew. When you see the lightbulb, you'll find even more from our sister publication at [ThreadsMagazine.com/Sewing](http://ThreadsMagazine.com/Sewing), including an online trip to a fabric store. Come along for an incredible journey, and let's start sewing.



## Assemble your tools

If you don't have a machine, ask a friend or relative to lend you one or rent one from a dealer. Borrow other tools for a weekend to get started or purchase them at a fabric store.

### Essential equipment (clockwise from top):

- \* Pins
- \* Hand and sewing-machine needles
- \* Chalk or disappearing marking pens
- \* Seam ripper
- \* Measuring tape
- \* Scissors
- \* Bobbins
- \* Thread
- Not shown:
- \* Fabric
- \* Pattern
- \* Iron/ironing board
- \* Sewing machine



# PATTERNS



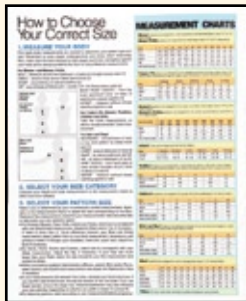
## Use a catalog to pick your pattern

You can find catalogs at your local fabric store or online.

### SIZE YOURSELF UP

You will not wear the same-size pattern as you do in ready-to-wear. With a tape measure, measure your bust, waist, and hip circumferences following the illustrations and directions in the catalog. This information is also online. Your measurements determine what size pattern you need.

It's unlikely that all of your measurements will match one size on the chart. Match your bust circumference to determine your size for tops and your hip circumference to determine your correct size for skirts or pants. Some catalogs indicate the body types most suited for a particular style.



Pattern catalogs provide direction.

### CHOOSE AN EASY PATTERN

Most pattern companies have styles marked as "easy" or "very easy" to sew. This designation usually means there are fewer pattern pieces and uncomplicated shapes to sew.

One pitfall for a beginner is choosing a first project that's too difficult. Try your wings on any garment that excites you—skirt, top, pajamas—but choose a loose-fitting garment that doesn't require a custom fit. You'll experience success—the first time. All patterns have instruction sheets to guide you through the cutting and sewing process.

You'll find an abundant selection of patterns for beginners.



### Want a certain look? 💡

Major commercial pattern companies include Burda, Butterick, McCall's, Simplicity, and Vogue. Plus, independent pattern companies produce small lines of uniquely styled patterns.

## Use the pattern envelope as your shopping list 💡

Pattern envelopes usually contain multiple sizes.

On the envelope back, find a list of notions and suggested fabrics.

This chart shows how many yards to buy for your view and size, based on the fabric's width.

Various garments are labeled as a "view" or garment type.

SIZES/TAILLES	(8)	10	12	(14)
Bust	31½	32½	34	36
Waist	24	25	25½	28
Hip	33½	34½	36	38
Poitrine	80	83	87	92
Taille	61	64	67	71
Hanches	85	88	92	97

**VOGUE PATTERNS**

**V7883**

MISSES/MISSES' PETITE TOP, SHORTS AND PANTS:  
 Loop-fitting pullover top has sleeves and shaped hem. A: short sleeves. B: long sleeves. Shorts or straight legged pants has elastic waist, side pockets and stitched hem.

NOTIONS: Shorts C, Pants D: 1½ yds. of ¼" Elastic  
 FABRICS: Lightweight Broadcloth, Lightweight Linen, Lightweight Challis and Lightweight Gauze. Unsuitable for obvious diagonals, plaids or stripes. Use nap yardages/layouts for pile, shaded or one-way design fabrics. \*with nap. \*\*without nap.

SIZES	(8)	10	12	(14)	16	18	(20)	22	24	
TOP A	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	2½	2½	2½	
45***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
60***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
TOP B	1½	1½	1½	1½	2½	2½	2½	2½	2½	
45***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
60***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
FUSIBLE INTERFACING A, B	20"	24"	36"	36"	36"	36"	36"	36"	36"	
SHORTS C	45***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
60***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
PANTS D	45***	2½	2½	2½	2½	2½	2½	2½	2½	
60***	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	
WIDTHS - Lower edge	Top A, B	41	42	43	45	47	49	51	53	55
Shorts C	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
Pants D	21	22	22	23	23	24	24	25	25	
LENGTHS - Finished back from base of your neck	Top A, B	22½	22½	22½	23	23½	23½	24	24½	
LENGTHS - Side length from waist	Shorts C	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	
Pants D	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	

FRONT DEVANT A      FRONT DEVANT B

# FABRICS & CUTTING

## Put your pattern and fabric together

The real fun begins when your pattern meets the fabric.

### PREPARE FABRIC

Prewash your fabric for a washable garment. Then follow the pattern instruction sheet, which shows exactly how to lay the pattern pieces on your fabric. Most patterns are cut on a double layer of fabric. The fabric is usually folded with the right side inside to simplify marking (along the straight grain—see below—unless specified otherwise in the pattern).

### FIND A CUTTING SURFACE

Work on any table, kitchen counter, or floor space that accommodates your folded fabric. Pin your pattern pieces through both layers of fabric, and cut along the cutting line. You can

use either scissors or a rotary cutter and mat.

On multisize patterns, highlight the line you want to cut along and cut the pattern to your size before you lay it on your fabric.

### MAKE REFERENCE POINTS

The little points along the cutting line, called notches, help you align the seams of two fabric pieces properly. When you see a notch, cut a ¼-inch snip perpendicular to the seam edge to mark its location.

After you've cut your fabric but before you pick up your pattern pieces, follow the directions for marking darts (see "Stitching" section).

For your first project, use a woven fabric like shirting or flannel.

Read the entire pattern instruction sheet.



### Avoid extremes

Don't choose fabrics that are too heavy, too lightweight, too fuzzy, too slippery, or too anything.

### Need-to-know fabric terms

**Selvage:** The factory-finished edges of the fabric—typically the longest edges.

**Straight grainline:** Any line parallel to the selvage. Fabric has little stretch in this direction. This is indicated on pattern pieces as an arrow.

**Bias:** A line or a cut made on a 45-degree angle to the selvage. Fabric stretches considerably in this direction.

**Crossgrain:** A line that is 90 degrees to the selvage. Fabric has a slight stretch in this direction.



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# STITCHING

## Darts, seams, and edges are all that you

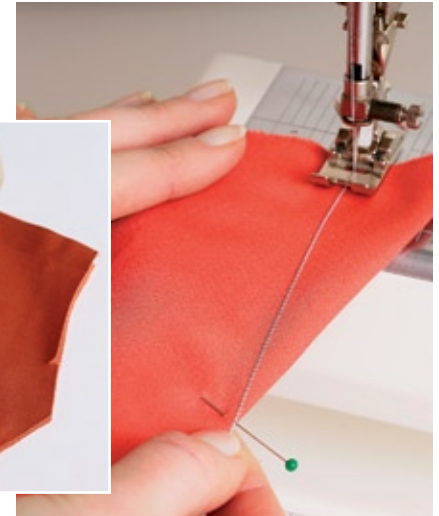
### First, make your darts

Darts add shaping to a garment and are the first things to sew—even before the seams. Here are two alternative ways to mark and stitch a dart.

**1 Clip the seam edge at the dart legs.** Mark the point with a pin and a disappearing marker. To position your fabric when you sew the dart, bring the two clips together with right sides meeting. Allow the fold to form from the clips to the point.

**Pin the fold at the point and seam ends.** Position the seam end of your dart under the needle, draw out enough thread to reach to the point, lower the presser foot and stitch along the line that the thread forms when you hold it to the point.

*Clip and mark point.*



*Follow thread to sew.*



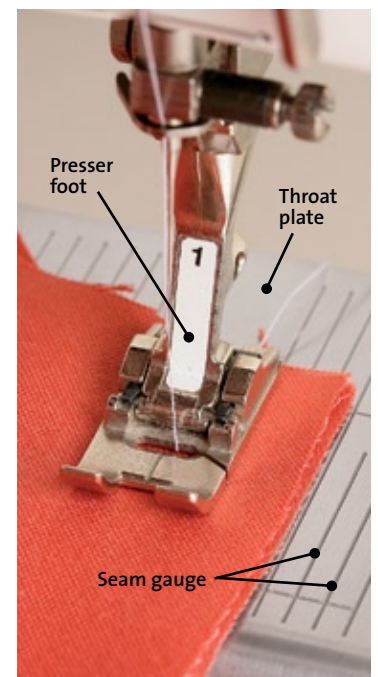
### Next, sew your seams

Seams hold the fabric pieces together to form a garment.

The pattern dictates the amount of seam allowance—the distance from the cut edge to the sewn line—to sew. Seams are usually sewn with the right sides of the fabric together.

To start, align the raw edges of corresponding seams, match notches, use straight pins to hold the layers together, position your fabric edge under the needle, lower the presser foot, and gently press the foot control. The machine pulls the fabric under the presser foot as you control the speed with the foot control.

Your hands drive the fabric, aligning the cut edge with the seam gauge on the throat plate for straight and curved seams. If a seam has a corner in it, sew up to the point without crossing it. Position the needle down into the fabric. You can hand-crank the flywheel until the needle is down but only for a few stitches and in the direction the machine sews. When the needle is in the down position, lift the presser foot, and pivot your fabric until the next side is parallel with the seam gauge. Lower the presser foot and continue sewing.



*The seam gauge has 1/8-inch increments.*

### THREE WAYS TO KNOT YOUR WORK

**Unsecured seams can separate, so secure them at the beginning and at the end.**

※ **The most conventional way to knot your thread is to hand-tie the two thread tails in a square knot close to the edge of the fabric.**

※ **Take a few stitches in reverse when you start and end your seam to back-tack your stitches.**

※ **Decrease to a short stitch length for about 1/8 inch as you start and end each seam.**

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# need to sew

## STITCHING

**2** Cut through one dart leg on your pattern. Fold it over to meet the other dart leg as shown. Then mark the shape of the void. Fold the fabric along the foldline, and sew on the dart-leg line.

Start sewing darts as you would any seam, but taper the stitching line toward the fold and stop when you hit the point. Don't back-tack at the end of a dart point—it will pucker. Tie a knot instead.



*Cut, fold, and mark.*



*Taper stitching to the point.*

Choose the right interfacing for your fabric. 💡



## INTERFACING ADDS SUPPORT

Most facings require interfacing to help hold their shape. Interfacing is a fabriclike product, which is available in several weights for all kinds of fabrics. You can find it in white and occasionally in other colors. Ask the fabric-store sales associate to help you select the proper interfacing for your type of fabric.

Some interfacings are fusible and include complete directions on how to fuse to your fabric.

Many fusible interfacings shrink. Preshrink it in a sink full of warm water until the water cools. Blot and dry flat.

Proper fusing requires heat and moisture. If you're fusing small pieces, bond a section of interfacing to your fabric before cutting out your pattern.

When you fuse, use a press cloth between the steam iron and fabric. Lift and reposition your iron instead of sliding it. Allow the piece to cool before moving it. Repeat the fusing process on the reverse side.

## Finally, finish your edges

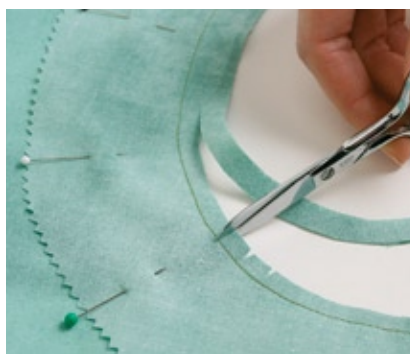
Garments have all kinds of edges, but sewing them is usually just another version of stitching a seam.

Double-fold edges work for most hems and all casings. Fold once and press, fold again and press, then edgestitch along the first fold. This edge is used for machine- or hand-sewn hems of any width—from a 10-inch hem allowance to a ¼-inch shirttail hem. When this same edge is sewn the width of an elastic, it can be used as the casing for an elastic waistband or cuff.



*This is a double-fold hem.*

Facings finish a shaped edge such as a neckline, lapel, cuff, or scalloped hem. They are an extra pattern piece that mirrors the shape of the edge. Align the matching edges with right sides of your fabric together, and sew a seam following the edge. Trim the seam allowances, make little clips perpendicular to the seam on curved edges, press the seam allowances, and turn the garment to the right side.



*Tiny clips make smooth curves.*

# FINISHING TOUCHES



## Press as you go

When you're sewing, spend more time at your ironing board than at your sewing machine. If you don't press as you sew, the appearance of your garment will suffer. Here are some tips.

- 1 **Press the seam as it was sewn to set the stitches.** Compare curved edges to the original tissue pattern to make sure they haven't stretched during sewing. Block in the original shape if needed.
- 2 **Press the seam open,** to the side, or as directed by the pattern.
- 3 **If the seam follows an edge,** as a facing seam does, follow step one, press the seam open, then fold and press along the edge. There are special pressing tools for curved edges.



Give edges extra pressing attention.



## Explore closures

### QUICK ZIPPER TIPS

All zipper packages and pattern instruction sheets contain directions for how to sew in a zipper. It's simple when you change from a regular foot to a zipper presser foot. (See *Threads* online for information on selecting and sewing zippers.) Steam-a-seam, a double-sided fusible tape, holds a zipper in place while you sew it in.

Regular foot

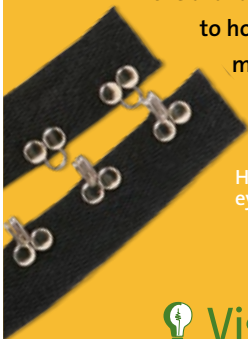
Zipper foot



### SNAPS, ETC.

Spend time in the notions section of the fabric store. Snaps, laces, hooks and eyes, and magnets are some of the available options to hold your garments together.

Hook and eye tape



### BUTTONING UP BUTTONS

Many of today's machines have one-step buttonholes. The sewing machine manual explains how to sew a buttonhole on your machine. If you are using a vintage model without a manual, you may be able to find a booklet online or ask for directions at our Gathering bulletin board.

*The options for closures are unlimited.*

