There is nothing less attractive and more uncomfortable than a garment that is too tight. Letting out the seam allowances is often not enough. Instead of committing the outfit to the back of your closet, try reviving it by using one of the following solutions.

**Solution**

**Gussets**

Gussets are simply rectangular, triangular, diamond-shaped, or football-shaped pieces of fabric that are inserted into a seam to produce more width. The location on a garment where you need extra width dictates the shape of the gusset. For example, to enlarge a wedding gown bodice, you might use the following shapes of gussets at the side seams with these corresponding results:

- A football-shaped gusset to enlarge mostly at the bust.
- A rectangular gusset to enlarge evenly the width along the side seams and the front and back armscye.
- A rectangular gusset that tapers to a point at the top of the side seam to enlarge the width at the side seams without enlarging the front and back armscye.
A rectangular gusset topped with a cut-on triangle to enlarge the width at the side seams and at the front and back armscye.

A diamond-shaped gusset at the upper sleeve and side seam to enlarge the armscye circumference.

Here’s the basic method for applying a gusset.

1. Start by carefully ripping out the seams that are too tight.

2. Try the garment on, and measure the widest gap in the seams. Note the location and shape of that gap, and match it to the shape of your gusset.

3. Next, cut out the gusset, adding a generous seam allowance all around.

4. Sew the gusset to the garment seams, right sides together, breaking the thread at any points.

5. Trim, finish, and press the seam toward the garment.

Variations

Gussets are typically made from matching fabric, but you could also use contrasting fabric and use the colors of that contrast elsewhere on the garment to add to the design. For example, if you have made solid-colored pants to go with a printed top that came out too tight, you could use the solid color for gussets and pick up that color in buttons or other trim.

For active sportswear, use stretch fabrics for gussets. Remember to preshrink gusset fabrics and match care requirements to your garment.
Solution

**Insert trim**

The width of the trim that you choose will determine the width that you can add to the garment. Think of black wool crepe pants let out with wide black satin ribbon for a tuxedo effect. Try lace insertion to let out the princess seams on a cream silk blouse for a sexy but Victorian look. Simply rip out the too-tight seam, lap the trim just over the finished seam allowances, and topstitch in place.

Solution

**Add slits or vents**

Adding slits or vents at lower side seams, princess seams, and center-back seams allows for extra width at the hips. For a slit, rip out the stitches from the lower edge of the garment to just below the waist, turn the seam allowances to the inside of the garment, and press. Topstitch or hemstitch in place.

For a vent, cut two rectangular extensions the length of the opening and about 3 in. wide.

1. Sew each extension to the length of each edge of the opened seam, grade the seams, and press both of the extensions along the seamlines toward the left side of the garment.
2. Finish the raw long edges that remain.
3. Topstitch through all layers at the top of the vent to secure, or on finer garments, catchstitch invisibly to the garment at the top of the vent.
Solution

Make a strapped seam

For a strapped seam, use strips cut on the lengthwise grain of self-fabric, contrast, or wide trim as an underlay.

1. Press under ¼ in. along the length of each finished seam allowance that you want to let out.

2. Slip the fabric strip (with raw edges finished) or trim underneath the seam allowances, and spread the seam the amount of the increase that you require. Take care to keep the two foldlines parallel.

3. Topstitch close to the folded edges.

Solution

Add a vertical contrast band to a center-front or center-back closure

When all you need to sneak in is a few extra inches in circumference, follow the instructions on pp. 76-78 for a horizontal contrast band, but cut the band on the lengthwise grain, interface it, and apply it to a center-front or center-back closure. Note that for a vertical band, you will need to sew up the ends of the band as you would for a waistband. Also, note that a vertical band will increase width at the neckline, so decide whether or not you’ll like the extra width. On jewel necklines, for example, bodices that need extra width through the torso typically need extra width in the neck, too. On the other hand, wide, scooped necklines may become too wide if spread.