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Simplified Sewing Sleeves  
Michigan State University Extension Service  
Margaret Reed, Clothing  
Issued September 1964  
4 pages

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# SLEEVES

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST LANSING

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MANY OF TODAY'S FABRICS have advantages in appearance, wear and care. However their special characteristics may require different techniques in sewing. The home sewer may discover it is difficult or impossible to shrink out fullness when sewing on these fabrics. Often a sleeve can not be eased into the armseye (the seam around arm) without noticeable puckers or gathers remaining on the seam line. Fabrics of synthetic fibers such as nylon or a polyester do not

have the pliability needed to work out small amounts of ease. Similarly, fabrics with a special finish like polished cotton are not easily fitted into an armseye. On the other hand, fullness in fabrics such as wool can be shrunk by steam pressing.

When sewing on fabrics with little pliability, it may be desirable to decrease the amount of sleeve ease. Changes in sleeve ease are made in the pattern before the garment pieces are cut from the fabric.

## HOW TO ADJUST EASE

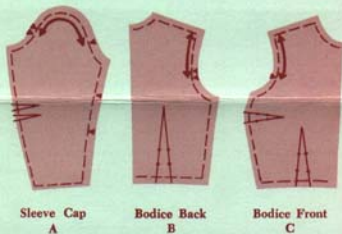
### 1. First estimate the amount of ease which the pattern provides:

A. With a tape measure or flexible plastic ruler measure the seam line (not the cutting line) around the *sleeve cap* of the sleeve pattern from notch to notch marks. Record this amount of the sleeve pattern .....

INCHES

B. Measure the seam line from notch marks to shoulder seam (not including C. width of shoulder seams) on both *bodice front* and *bodice back*. The total of these two measurements is the armseye measurement from notch mark to notch mark. Record this amount .....

The difference between these two measurements indicates **SLEEVE EASE** .....



### 2. If necessary, decrease the amount of sleeve ease:

In a fabric which has little pliability, approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches of sleeve ease can successfully be fitted in an armseye. Compare this allowance with the amount

of estimated sleeve ease. If there is a difference, reduce the amount of sleeve ease in the pattern to approximately 1½ inches. It is *never* desirable to eliminate all sleeve ease as some ease is needed over the shoulder curve for comfort and freedom in movement. (For a person with a very slender upper arm and shoulder, this amount of ease may be further reduced to 1 inch).

Remove the desired amount of excess ease from the sleeve cap by pinning or taping small darts along the seam line from notch to notches. This amount of ease should be equally removed from both the front and back sections of the sleeve cap. (See Figure 2) Darts should be tapered out completely. A paper



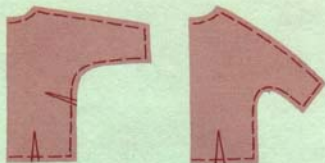
Figure 2

pattern must be free from wrinkles and as flat as possible before pattern pieces are cut.

#### INSERTING A TWO-PIECE GUSSET

Many of today's styles feature a kimono sleeve blouse or one which has sleeves cut-in-one with the bodice. Some kimono sleeves provide enough ease for lifting and reaching. Other kimono sleeves may not have this amount of ease and often as a result are strained at the underarm seam. A gusset found in ready-mades as well as in some patterns for the home sewer can provide that extra amount of needed ease. A gusset is a one-piece or two-piece diamond shaped inset of matching fabric inserted into the underarm of a kimono type bodice front and back. This piece makes the underarm seam longer, giving more ease when the arm is raised. A gusset follows the lower half of the armhole position and is inconspicuous when the arm is at a normal position.

If the sleeve joins the bodice at approximately right angles to the bodice, there is generally enough ease for normal activity. If a sleeve is sloped downward and close to the side seam, extra ease from a gusset may be necessary. (See Figure 3) When a kimono sleeve type pattern does not include a gusset, the following method can be used for inserting a two-piece



sleeve cut at right angle provides ease for movement

sleeve sloping downward has little ease

Figure 3

gusset. The method can be adapted for inserting a gusset in a ready-made garment or one previously constructed.

#### MARK THE GUSSET SLASH LINES

On the bodice front pattern locate the highest point on the underarm seam line where the sleeve and bodice meet. Locate a point on the shoulder seam line about 2 inches from neck edge. Fold and crease pattern on this line. Open the pattern and beginning at the underarm seam draw a line 4 inches on this creased line. Transfer the same marking to the bodice back pattern indicating termination point. These lines mark the slash lines for the gusset. (See Figure 4) Transfer to fabric pieces.

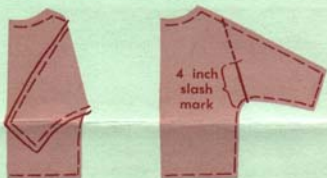


Figure 4

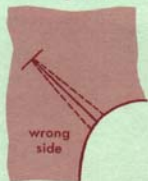


Figure 5

On fabric, mark stitching lines along the slash lines beginning 5/8 inch from slash line at underarm edge and tapering to the termination point. (See Figure 5)

### REINFORCE SLASH LINES

Since the seam allowance at the point of each slash tapers to nothing, some reinforcement at the point is desirable. Reinforce the point of each slash line before cutting slash lines. Place a two inch square piece of firmly woven fabric over point of each slash line matching the right sides of fabric and direction of grainlines. Stay stitch garment on the marked stitching line, stitching in the reinforcement piece. With needle in fabric, turn fabric, take one stitch across point and sew second side of gusset.

Cut on the slash line. Turn and press the reinforcement piece to the wrong side so that it forms a seam allowance. (See Figure 6)



Figure 6

### CUT THE GUSSET PIECES

Draw a right angle 6 inches long on each side along the straight grain of the fabric. The diagonal line joining these two ends will be about 8½ inches long. The diagonal line must be on true bias.

Cut two of these pieces for each gusset. The seam allowance on each edge of these pieces will be 5/8 inch. (See Figure 7)

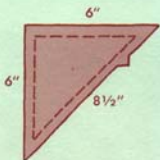


Figure 7

### INSERT GUSSET

This two-piece gusset is inserted before the front and back bodice pieces are joined.

With right sides together, pin the right angle part of the gusset into the point of the slash line. Keep the gusset seam allowance 5/8 inch while tapering the garment seam allowance from 5/8 inch at underarm to a scant 1/8 inch at point.

Machine stitch with the garment side along the row of stay stitching from underarm edge to the point. At the point, pivot needle and smooth out fabric in front of needle before stitching along the second side of the gusset. Insert the other half of the gusset in the other piece. Press seams toward the bodice. Topstitching may be done on garment side for additional reinforcement. (See Figure 8)

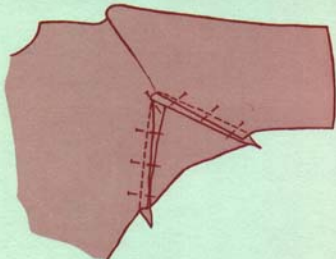


Figure 8

### COMPLETE UNDERARM SEAM

Pin bodice front and back together. Match gusset seam lines. Stitch the underarm seam stretching slightly the bias edges of the gusset as they are sewed. This will furnish a certain amount of "give" when the arm is raised.

Press the underarm seam open. Trim excess bulkiness from the seam allowances where the gusset meets the underarm seam. (See Figure 9)

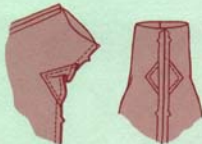


Figure 9

*Cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Michigan State University and the U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. N.F. Ralston, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, East Lansing. Printed and distributed under Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914.*

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