
TERMINOLOGY OF PATTERN MAKING

ALTER

To change or revise a pattern or garment to suit individual sizing or desires. This could be making an item larger or smaller, adding darts, lengthening a bodice, etc.

APEX

The highest point of a curve such as one on the figure which occurs at a dart point.

ARMSCYE

Section of a pattern into which the sleeve is fitted.

BACKING

Fabric used as the back layer of another fabric.

BACKSTITCH

Used at the beginning and end of a machine sewn seam to anchor the seam in place; it involves a couple of extra stitches back and forth.

BIAS

A diagonal line across the grain of fabric. When used to substitute crosswise or lengthwise grain in pattern placement, a bias cut will cling to the figure following body curves closely.

BLEND

Blending is as it sounds making two separate lines appear as one in the final design. The blend will be part of the pattern that you will be working from.

BLOCKS

Patternmaking blocks refer to the individual pieces that together create a full **sloper**. For example, a bodice sloper consists of bodice front, bodice back and sleeve blocks. Patternmaking blocks do not include facings, hems, linings or other finishing details.

BULGE

A convex curve on a figure created from either bone or flesh and requiring at least one dart or dart equivalent to provide shaping of fabric in order to fit the figure.

BODICE

The part of a pattern or garment that runs from shoulder to waist.

CAD

Computer-Aided Drafting program enabling the user to use an enormous number of tools to draw very precise working copies of things sometimes too small to see or too large to fit the drawing surface. It enables the user to work in a scale that is comfortable while using realworld measurements.

CUTTING LINE

On a pattern, the outermost dark line is the line upon which you cut. Traditions vary; some people cut through the center of this line, others cut just to the outside of this line.

CROQUIS

A flat, 2-D sketch of a fashion model or models used to illustrate a garment or a collection of garments.

DART

Darts are the distinctively triangular elements of a pattern that once sewn, enable a flat piece of fabric to take the shape of a curved figure. A V shaped, tapered adjustment to a pattern to allow for more fullness in the bust area or less fullness in other areas (waist, back). Darts can be creatively placed for fit or design elements.

DART INTAKE

The intake is the extra space, or quantity of fabric, that ensures that when a dart is sewn, the end result isn't too tight.

DART POINT

This is pretty much as it sounds; the tip and pointed end of a dart.

DRAPING

Draping is a method of patternmaking that is related to the drape of fabric rather than the shape of a pattern. Draped fashions are usually intended for a specific individual but can be disassembled to get a styled pattern. As with window draping, successful pattern draping requires strict attention to and effective balance of grain lines.

DRAFTING

A system of pattern making that depends on measurements taken from a form or model to create basic, foundation, or design patterns.

EASE

A patternmaking factor used to allow extra fabric so that a garment will not be skin-tight.

EDGE ALLOTMENT

Specific amount of ease added at a particular location on the pattern. Usually A stitch done a scant 1/8" from the folded or seamed edge.

FACING

Fabric sewn on the raw edge of a garment piece that is turned under and serves as a finish for the edge as well. This is an extra pattern piece that is shaped and cut to stabilize an outer curved edge. Sometimes the fabric can be folded instead of cut to create a facing, such as for some button and buttonhole closures.

FINISH (AN EDGE)

Turn under 1/4" and stitch, serge the edge, or other method of finishing the edge so it doesn't ravel or cause a bulky problem.

FOLD LINE

Many pattern pieces are placed on the fold of a piece of fabric. This is the actual fold of the fabric off the bolt or a fold of your own creation; the goal is to have a pattern piece that is cut out without a center seam.

GATHER

Gathering allows for making a long piece of fabric to fit with a shorter piece of fabric and also is a method of easing a seam to allow insertion of sleeves and other rounded pattern pieces.

GRADING (SEAMS)

Trimming raw edges in graduate widths to reduce bulk. The narrowest seam edge should be closest to the body, as a general rule. Grading rules determine how patterns increase or decrease to create different sizes. Fabric type also influences the pattern grading standards.

GRAIN

Direction of the fabric that runs parallel to the selvage (a stretchier grain is found running perpendicular to the selvage).

HEM

Fabric that is turned up on the lower edge of a garment or sleeve to provide a finished edge. Often extra fabric is left in the hem with children's clothing to allow for growth (especially skirts and slacks).

INSEAM

Seam inside the leg of pants that runs from the crotch to the hem.

MARKER

A marker is a diagram of a precise arrangement of pattern pieces for sizes of a specific style that are to be cut from in one spread.

NOTCH

Notches are marks used to identify corresponding points along pattern cutting lines to identify where pattern pieces are to be joined together. This is particularly useful when joining convex and concave curves such as sleeves and armholes or a straight piece and a curved piece, such as a waistband and a skirt.

Notches may also occur at other definable points such as centre front and placement of gathers that are distributed unevenly.

Usually single notches identify front, double notches identify back and triple notches, when they occur are other definable locations for positioning pieces.

PATTERN

A pattern is the paper or cardboard template from which the parts of a garment are traced onto fabric before cutting out and assembling (sometimes called paper patterns).

PLEAT

A fold in fabric that is either inverted or folded outward, is not sewn except on the top edge (as in a skirt or slacks waistband), and provides decorative or functional fullness.

SEAM

The result when two pieces of fabric are sewn together along a line.

SEAM ALLOWANCE

The fabric between the edge of the fabric and the line of stitching.

SELVEDGE

Often marked with information from the manufacturer (color code, identifying data, etc.), this is the edge of the fabric which generally does not fray due to manufacturer's finish. In most cases, this edge should not be included when you cut your fabric, as it may cause puckering of your seam later on.

SLIT

An open part of a seam, the bottom usually, often found in skirt side or back seams.

TACK

A temporary stitch to hold pieces together, usually removed after final stitching. Tacking is also known as a term for starting off a seam with a few stitches back and forth for stabilizing.

TOILE

This is a garment made from cheap fabric, used to 'prove' a pattern: you make this version up to ensure that the pattern fits: any alterations can be transferred to the pattern before cutting out the real version. It is usually only done with expensive garments and fabrics that would mark, like silk wedding dresses. The American term is 'muslin'.

TRIM

Trim is any decorative item, ribbon, lace that is put on a garment or craft item that is being sewn. Trim is also used to define the act of trimming excess seam allowances or fabric with scissors.

TUCK

See pin tuck. A method of sewing fabric together resulting in a raised seam, often seen in heirloom sewing, the bodice of a woman's blouse or a man's formal shirt.