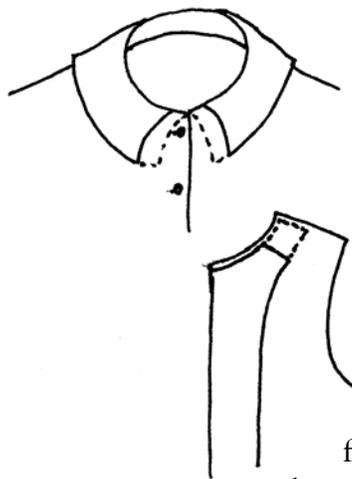


Correcting Patterns

Occasionally you get part way through constructing a garment and there is that sudden realization - this is not going to work! Your first thought is, "What did I do wrong?" You put the paper pattern pieces together and your suspicions are confirmed; the pattern is at fault, not you. Let's look into a few likely trouble spots and try to correct these faults before they happen.

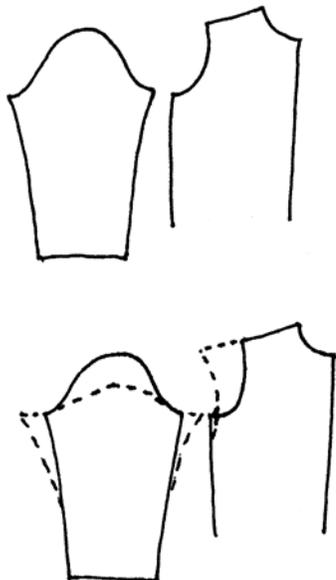
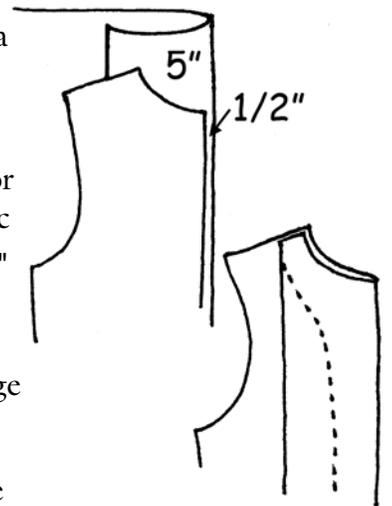
I once made a dress whose pattern envelope showed an attractive dress gathered unto a yoke. The reality of that was the dress and yoke measured exactly the same. To gather, the dress would have to have been several inches bigger than the yoke to which it is stitched. The artist had simply sketched what he thought was more attractive - the non-existent gathers.

My fabric was already cut so this time it would have to be straight and flat. If this is desirable another time, immediately pin a reminder on the pattern so you will not forget how it will be done - according to the pattern layout and instructions. To make it look like the picture, simply add more fabric at the center front fold next time by moving the pattern a few inches over.



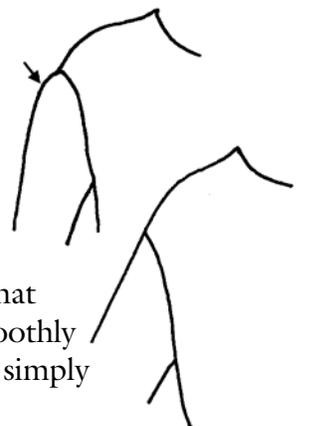
A collar on a standard shirt or blouse should come exactly to the center front point. When it falls $\frac{1}{2}$ " short of it, for next time tape that extra in place on the collar end. Its facing should be long enough to extend to the shoulder seam. It now has this extra added.

If using a basic fabric, the way to insure this does not happen again is to fold back a piece of paper or directly on the fabric about 5" or 6". Lay the basic pattern on so the center front is moved over $\frac{1}{2}$ " from this fold. This is the extension for buttons and buttonholes. Cut out the basic with this fold and the fit will be perfect every time. Shape down the facing edge somewhat when the pattern is removed.



Blouses sometimes have problems where the bodice and sleeve join if the sleeve cap is too shapely. Here is how that happens. This is how a standard sleeve cap and armhole look.

If there will be a dropped-sleeve seam, the bodice shoulder is extended so that it drops down into the upper arm area. Sometimes that extension is 3" or 4". Whatever length is added to the bodice must be removed from the sleeve cap as dotted lines indicate. Frequently there is too much length on the sleeve so that when finished, there is an unsightly bulge instead of smoothly flowing one into the other. This is easy to correct by simply deepening the seam slightly at the cap until it is flat.



Even if everything in the pattern fits together perfectly, some fine-tuning may be necessary in order for it to be perfect for your body. Perhaps a dart needs to be shortened or lengthened so it coincides with your body's curves.

A very common fine-tuning solution is getting a skirt to hang just right. Correct this at the waistline, not the hem. Almost always, if you compare the center back and center front waistlines, they will be on the very same level. If your waistline is not parallel with the floor, this just does not work. Anyone with a little roundness in the tummy needs to add some height here at the center front. If you are a little swaybacked, the center back height probably needs to be lowered. An amazing improvement results from these small adjustments.

Sometimes that problem amounts to just the reverse. If you have a little excess weight above your waist, the skirt front can dip down somewhat, so corresponding front height should be removed. A high prominent bottom will need to be cut higher up at the center back.

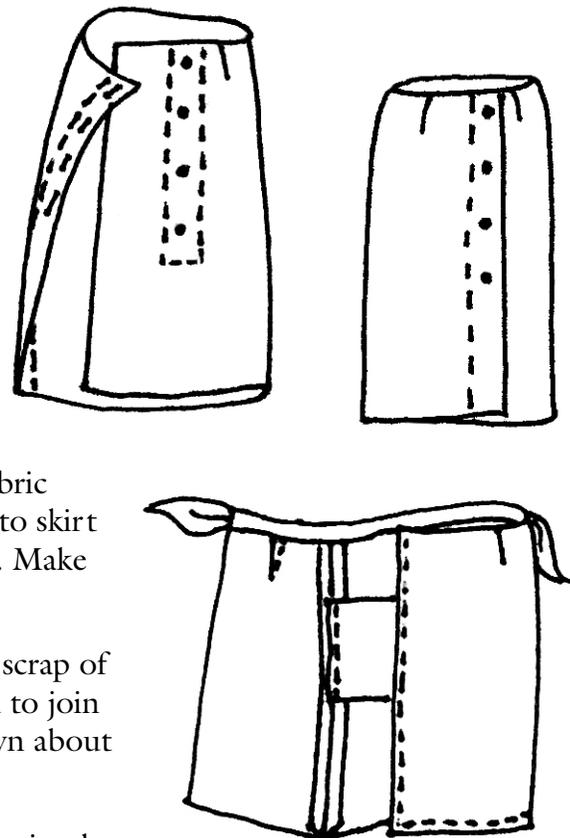
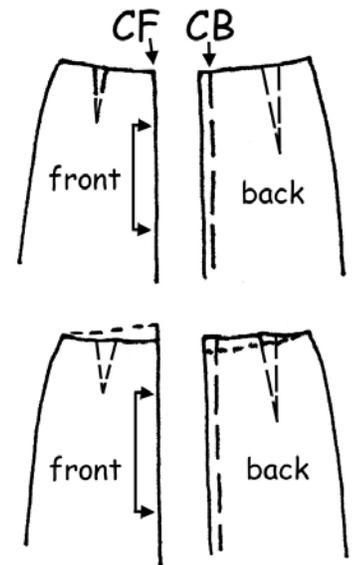
If the body is not balanced, which is very common, allowance for this must be made. If one shoulder or hip is higher or larger than the other side, adjust the pattern for that larger or higher side. The small or low side can then be cut down to be right a skirt or pants. The low shoulder improves with a little larger shoulder pad to equalize them. Develop a critical eye to spot your problems.

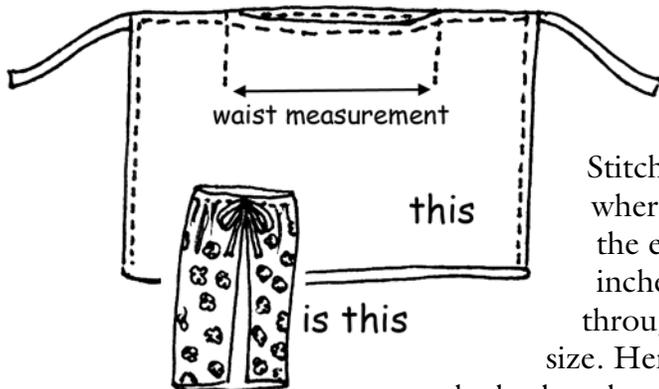
A wrap skirt has to have close to a double front in order to work properly. If it only wraps with a skimpy amount, it is not wearable as it will open to the waist when you sit. This I know as a definite fact and yet, when I started to cut out a longish skirt by a very big name designer, I stopped. The overlap was only 6", but he is world-renowned, he must know something I do not. I better cut as is and discover his secret. The man has no secret it turns out. Made in weighty washed rayon, it looked beautiful as I stood in front of the mirror. I sat down, and, as I suspected, it opened all the way to the waist! Famous name or not, the man did not have his model try it on for function.

There are two ways to cure such a skirt. One is to add buttons and buttonholes. If doing that, some reinforcement on the inside of the underlap will be needed to strengthen the fabric when buttons are added. Press under all edges of a fabric strip about 2" wide and as long as is needed. Topstitch in place to skirt inside at the location needed for the overlap edge to hang right. Make buttonholes in the overlap vertical hem.

The second way and the solution I used was to cut from a scrap of the same rayon, a piece about 10" long and as wide as is needed to join the edge of the underlap to the opposite side seam. Set this down about 7" from the waist so you have an opening to get the skirt on.

That little panel is just miraculous for how it holds the skirt in place. The next time this skirt is made, I will add those extra inches to the entire underlap to eliminate the problem. My little lesson learned from this is to trust my instincts. Sewing is mostly common sense.





A clever suggestion for a convertible wrap skirt came from the great lady in Pittsford, New York. From 45" prewashed fabric cut a skirt length of two different pieces - perhaps one solid and the other a coordinating print.

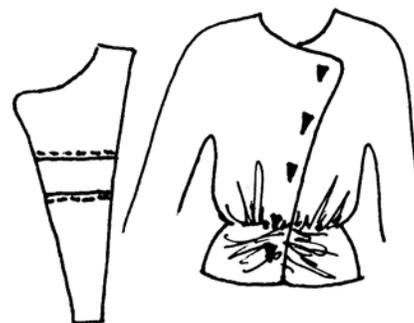
Stitch the two together at their ends and across the top stopping wherever middle part equals your hip measurement, inserting the ends at the top corners. At that point, stitch down a few inches. Sew a fabric casing to the waistline inside. Pull elastic through it and connect the ends in a ring, a comfortable waist size. Hem the two layers separately. This is a pull-on skirt. Tie it to the back and one side will show, tie in front and the other side shows.

Either way, the contrasting fabric will show at the opening. If 45" will not be sufficient, simply seam on extra fabric.

A new blouse pattern had really long sleeves - about 2" longer than usual. This was not discovered until the blouse was completely finished. Do you want to take off the cuffs, cut the sleeve shorter and re-attach the cuffs? Nor do I! For this time, the sleeves will blouse more than usual. Another quick fix is to stitch a few horizontal tucks to shorten. Before putting the pattern back in the envelope, trim off the excess length to correct it before you forge the pattern had a problem.

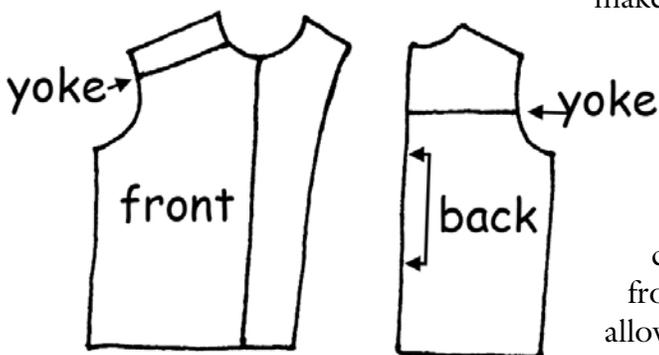


Another pattern recently made up seemed just fine until I applied the front facing. That facing was 1 1/2" too short and there were no large enough pieces of fabric left to cut another. I tried the paper pattern facing on the pattern front and sure enough, the manufacturer did make an error. To correct it, since the neckline will never be worn open, I merely added a fabric insert in the middle and a paper inset was taped to the pattern.

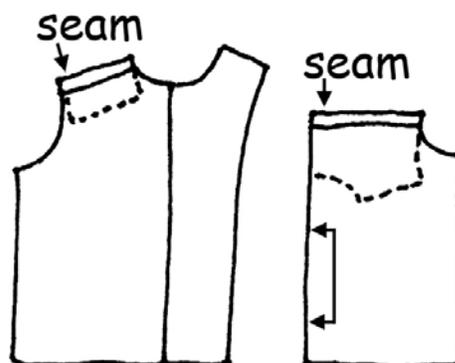


These mistakes do happen so do not be shocked if you encounter one. Rather, consider it an interesting challenge and devise a solution. The more you learn about how pattern work, the easier and more expert your sewing becomes.

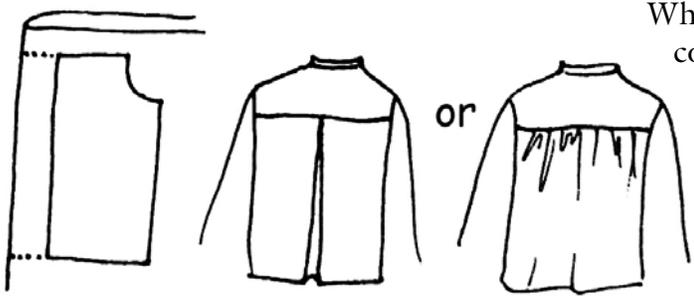
I use basic patterns so frequently because I know they fit and that they work every time. If I will be using them repeatedly, to preserve them I fuse on an inexpensive lightweight interfacing to the backside. Anything can then be designed from a few basics. Build some convertible features into these patterns to make them even more useful.



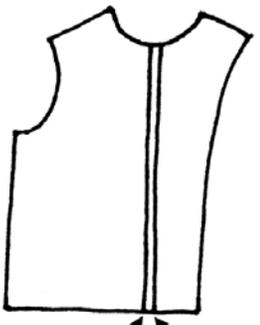
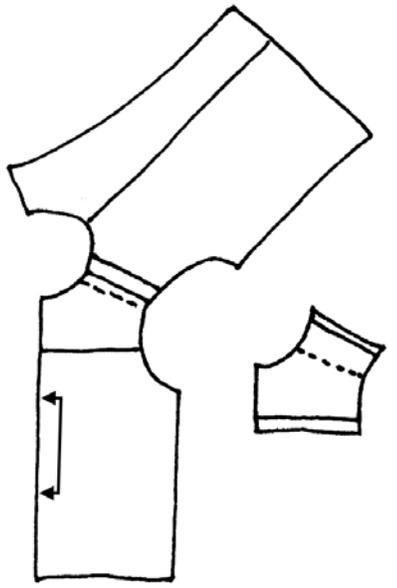
For example, a tailored shirt front and back could have a yoke line drawn. I can use this pattern as is with a shoulder seam or I can fold on the yoke lines and cut the back and front, adding a seam allowance to each.



Or I might even add a center back pleat or back gathers to the blouse by moving the pattern a few inches away from the fabric fold and added the excess fabric.

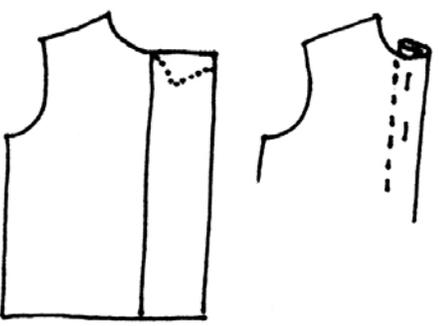


Where does the yoke piece come from? Overlap the front and back shoulder seams and trace the complete front-back yoke as one. Add seams.



The front facing is also convertible. As is, it is meant to be interfaced. If I want 3 layers of self-fabric to hold buttons and buttonholes, I just fold down and over the top part so what remains is a straight strip for the facing. That strip is then folded under twice for a narrow facing and interfacing all in one, then edge stitched and buttonholes added.

CF fold



That facing could also be folded under completely on the fold line so that only a front seams allowance remains beyond the center front line. Pipe the front and neck edges and add button loops and buttons. Cut a straight strip to fold in half, stitch to the left side for an underlap.

The possibilities are infinite. Be a little adventurous and discover you can do anything you want to do!



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