

# FABRICS AND INTERFACINGS



Plan to buy both fabric and pattern on the same shopping trip. The choice of fabric will depend upon what looks nicest on you considering the style of the garment and the texture, color, and cost of the fabric. Keep in mind the places where you will wear the garment, the occasions when you will wear it, the other clothes in your wardrobe, and your sewing skill.

## FABRICS

### DESIGN

Plain-colored fabric or fabric with a small design that requires no matching is a good choice for the beginner.

Checks, stripes, and plaids need to be matched. This takes careful workmanship and also requires more fabric. The larger the design, the more extra fabric needed.

Other designs may need to be matched, too. For instance, flowers printed in a line or square.

You will also need more fabric if the design has an up and down or if the fabric has a pile or nap. Napped fabrics, such as corduroy and velvet, and fabrics with one-way designs need to be cut with all the pattern pieces running in the same direction.

### CONSTRUCTION

If you are a beginner, you may want to choose a medium-weight fabric. Very thin or thick fabrics are usually more difficult to handle.

The fabric should have a firm, balanced weave with about the same number of lengthwise and crosswise yarns. The yarns should be similar in diameter and twist.

Wiry, tight weaves are hard to pin and stitch and they make it difficult to ease in fullness. Loose

weaves may stretch and pull out of shape and the edges may ravel.

Whether or not a fabric will ravel also depends upon the smoothness of the yarns. Fabrics with smooth yarns usually ravel more than those with rough yarns.

### GRAINLINE

For a garment to hang well and hold its shape, the lengthwise yarns must be at right angles to the crosswise yarns. Before you buy yardage, check the end of the bolt to see if the grainline is straight.

When the fabric at the end of the bolt is torn or cut along a crosswise thread, the two folded ends should lie straight together and at right angles to the selvage.

Avoid fabrics which have been pulled lopsided in the finishing process at the factory and have been printed or pressed off grain. Be sure the fabric is "on the straight" and that a print design follows the straightened edge (Fig. 1).

Although some fabrics can be straightened at home, others cannot. If the fabric has a polished



FIG. 1—Avoid fabrics printed off grain. When end of fabric is torn or cut along crosswise thread, design should follow straightened edge.

### CREASE-RESISTANT FABRICS

Some man-made fibers—such as acrylic, polyester, and nylon—are naturally resistant to wrinkles and creases. Cotton, linen, and rayon can be finished with resins to make them more crease resistant, too.

All of these crease-resistant fabrics have several qualities in common. They resist wrinkling, but are easily heat damaged. And the fabric yarns are so stable they are difficult to ease.

You may have difficulty shrinking out the ease of set-in sleeves, especially with the man-mades, so choose another sleeve style. Be sure seams are right before pressing. Needle holes or creases may not press out.

surface or a durable press finish, it cannot be pulled back into shape. The threads are permanently set in position.

No amount of straightening can fix a design that has been printed off grain. It cannot be matched if you want to keep the grainline straight. Even though you like the color and design of the fabric, leave it in the store because your dress will not look right.

### DYES

Check the label for information about the color. A statement that the dyes are fast to washing, cleaning, and to light adds to your confidence that the colors will last and will not run.

Vat dyes are the fastest dyes available for the fabrics to which they are applied. On man-made fibers, look for the term solution-dyed. A solution-dyed fiber cannot change color; the dye is placed in the solution before the fiber is made.

## INTERFACINGS

Almost any garment—no matter how light weight the fabric—will be more professional looking with the right interfacing to give it body and shape. Interfacing is used inside facings, collars, and cuffs to support the fabric. It is also used under buttons and buttonholes to add strength and firmness.

The effectiveness of using interfacing depends largely upon choosing an interfacing that's right for your fabric and the effect you want in the garment. Don't just ask for interfacing at the store—choose the right one:

- *Weight*—Interfacing should be lighter than the outer fabric. It should add body, but not bulk.
- *Amount of crispness*—A tailored garment needs a firmer, crisper interfacing than a softly styled garment.
- *Color*—If the outer fabric is sheer, the interfacing needs to be the same color.
- *Amount of give*—A non-woven interfacing that doesn't give is suitable for areas where little or no roll is needed, but not for collars and other areas where flexibility is desired.
- *Care requirements*—If the outer fabric is washable, the interfacing should be, too. Use wash-and-wear interfacings for wash-and-wear garments.

## PREPARATION

Take time to straighten and shrink both the fabric and the interfacing before you cut out the garment.

### STRAIGHTENING FABRIC ENDS

Make sure the raw ends of the fabric follow a crosswise thread. If the fabric has been torn from the bolt, the ends will automatically be on a straight, crosswise grainline.

If the fabric has been cut, you will need to straighten the raw ends. To do this, snip through the selvage, pick up a crosswise thread, and pull it gently. Then cut along the line made by the pulled thread (Fig. 2).

### STRAIGHTENING FABRIC GRAIN

To see if the grainline needs straightening, follow these steps:

1. Straighten raw ends of fabric.
2. Fold the fabric lengthwise with selvages together.
3. Pin edges together at one end.
4. Pin fabric together along selvages.

If the pinned fabric lies flat and smooth, it is on grain. If not, it needs to be straightened.



FIG. 2—To straighten ends of fabric, clip through selvage, pull crosswise thread, and cut along line made by thread.

The fabric may be straightened during preshrinking. Or, if it is badly off grain, hold the short corner in one hand and pull the opposite selvage in a diagonal direction (Fig. 3). Move both hands further down the selvages and pull again. Continue until the fabric is straight.

#### SHRINKING WASHABLE FABRICS

Preshrinking should duplicate the conditions the garment will receive in use and care. Hand washable fabrics should be preshrunk by hand washing in lukewarm water and air drying on a flat surface. To preshrink machine washable fabrics, machine wash and dry by the customary methods.

To preshrink, follow the washing recommendations on the label that accompanies the fabric.

Some fabrics need no ironing, but others need to be pressed when dry. Keep the grainline straight

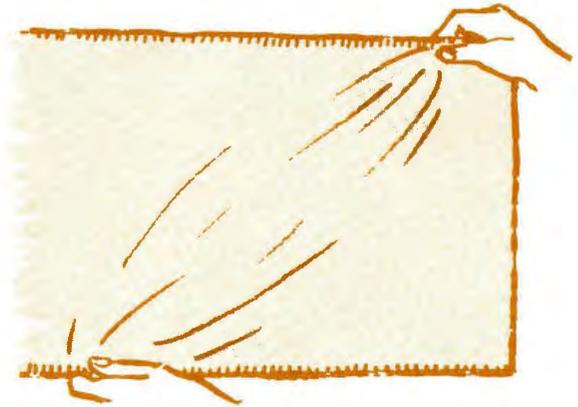


FIG. 3—To straighten grain, hold short corner and opposite selvage and pull diagonally. Move hands along selvage, pull again. Repeat until straight.

as you press. Be careful not to iron a sharp center crease in the fabric.

#### SHRINKING WOOLENS

In most cases you should preshrink woolens unless you know the manufacturer has already done this. It's particularly wise to preshrink inexpensive or "special purchase" woolens. Some may shrink as much as several inches.

However, there are woolens that should not be shrunk. These are the lacy, open, fashion woolens.

If you decide not to preshrink, then always have the finished garment cleaned and pressed by a quality dry cleaning shop that can block the garment to its original size.

The easiest way to take care of preshrinking woolens is to have them steamed commercially. Choose a reliable dry cleaner or tailor who can assure the return of a grain-perfect fabric.

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