

FITTING GARMENTS

Circular 416

1930's

Old Sewer



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Fitting Garments

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Fitting is one of the most important steps in the making of a garment, because upon it depend good appearance, comfort, and long wear. No garment should need constant pulling and tugging by the wearer if it is properly fitted.

In clothing made at home and those made to order, the proper place to begin with fitting is with the pattern. Take accurate measurements of the individual for whom the garment is to be made, and purchase a pattern having these measurements as nearly as possible. Check the fit of the pattern by pinning the pieces together and trying on. If it does not fit, alter the pattern and try again until a proper fit is obtained. For steps in altering patterns, see Pattern Alteration, Oklahoma Extension Circular No. 327.

For garments purchased ready-made the altering, if needed, must be done on the garment. Always try on ready-made clothing before buying in order to see how well it fits. If the alterations necessary would be too difficult, it would be wise not to buy. Since the majority of women and girls do not have perfect figures, there is usually some altering to be done.

Or, perhaps the pattern used was not correctly altered and the garment made by it was ill fitting. Again alterations on the garment would be needed for a good fit.

It is for such fitting difficulties as these that the suggestions and remedies are given on the following pages.

FIRST STEPS TOWARD GOOD FITTING

KNOW OURSELVES

Each person should analyze herself carefully as to her figure characteristics before purchasing patterns or fitting garments.

Determine whether she is square, round, or sloping shouldered, has one shoulder higher than the other, prominent bust or hips, or various other figure differences that require the fitting of dresses.

Do not have a size complex—and know your size. Larger people can be as attractively fitted as smaller ones—if the rules are followed.

WATCH THE GRAIN OF THE MATERIAL

GRAIN—Fitting becomes a much easier task if the straight of the goods or grain is true, which means the crosswise threads of the material in the garment are kept parallel to the floor and the up and down ones are perpendicular to it. (Only in bias-cut garments does this not hold true).

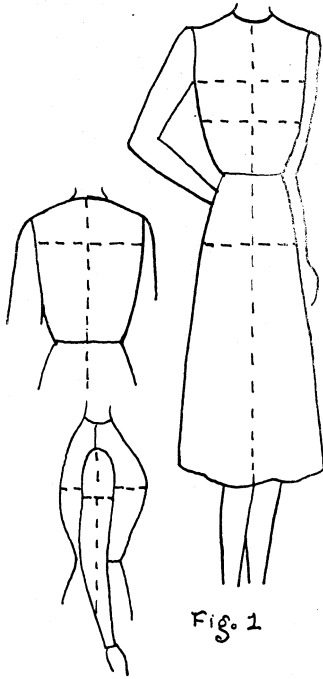


Fig. 1

Position of Grain on Garment.

Crosswise threads that drop down in any place cause diagonal wrinkles to appear and these wrinkles have no place in a correctly fitted garment. Try working with the garment until the grain is true and see the wrinkles disappear.

There will naturally be folds appear as the wearer moves, but these are folds caused by the necessary ease allowed, or by motion.

CHECK GRAIN—When making a garment, lay the pattern so that the grain is absolutely true. Check by measuring from selvage to the straight of material markings on the pattern. The distance should be the same at each end of marking.

MARK GRAIN LINES—To make fitting simpler, mark the up and down grain at the center front and center back of the blouse and skirt, the crosswise grain of the blouse at the bust line,

and of the sleeve at the point of the largest part of the arm just below the armhole. If both hips are not the same, mark the crosswise grain of the skirt at the hipline.

These lines are best marked by long basting stitches of contrasting color thread.

FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS

Older women need softness. Therefore garments should not be too tightly fitted, but should never hang baggily.

Large figures require some ease in garments—they should fit smoothly, but not so tight as to appear drawn.

Thin women need softness, ease, and fullness. Clothes should never suggest a pinched appearance.

Figures with good posture show clothes to best advantage. Develop the best posture possible. Hide what can't be changed by clever fitting and selection.

Garments that are too tight slip up when sitting and must be pulled into place upon arising.

Fitted outer garments require perfectly fitted undergarments.

A garment properly fitted insures comfort.

HOW TO GET A GOOD FIT

FITTING AIDS

When making a new garment such as a coat or suit of costly goods, it is wisest to first make one of muslin or inexpensive print to be sure the pattern will fit. Make whatever changes are necessary in the muslin, and cut the garment from the altered pattern.

Mark all necessary darts and notches to insure a perfect fit. Basted markings will stay in longer. Important markings are center front, center back, darts, armhole and sleeve notches, and marks for location of all trimmings. Also mark notches indicating the joining of unusual pieces.

Baste with small stitches when careful fitting is required.

If the pattern has not been used, allow on seams for letting out, in case the extra allowance may be needed. Mark and baste on original seam lines.

Fit garments right side out as many figures are not the same size on both sides.

DECEIVERS

If the front of the skirt is larger than the back, with the side seam slightly to the back, it tends to make the size of the back appear smaller.

Round-shouldered and sway-backed people need fullness in the back of the waist.

If there is not too great a difference in the height of the shoulders, they should be fitted alike, but if quite noticeable, fit the shoulders separately or the cross grain line of the blouse will sag. A thicker shoulder pad on the low one can often be used to make the shoulders appear the same.

CONSTRUCTION POINTERS

Keep the seam lines straight by careful cutting and straight stitching.

In altering seam lines, lap the front of side seams over the back and pin the back of the shoulder seam over the front and the sleeve seam over the armhole seam. Pin at right angles

and remove the garment after fitting. Baste by slip stitching the top seam to the bottom on the right side, thus avoiding taking out the pins and breaking the newly fitted seam line.

Hang garments with bias seams two or three days to allow them to stretch before putting in the hem. This helps to prevent the sag which so often occurs in bias cut garments.

DARTS ARE USEFUL

Darts are excellent aids in fitting. They take up fullness as well as directing it to the place needed. Never take too large a dart—several smaller ones are softer and more attractive. Tucks and gathers can often be used instead of darts. Slant the dart toward the part of the body where the fullness is needed.

Front shoulder, front neck, underarm, and front waist darts are used to throw fullness over the bust. Note whether high or low busted.

Back neck, back shoulder, and back waist darts are used to throw fullness to shoulders and give ease across the back.

Skirt darts give ease or fullness over the hips and elbow darts give the necessary fullness for ease in bending the elbow.

PRESS!

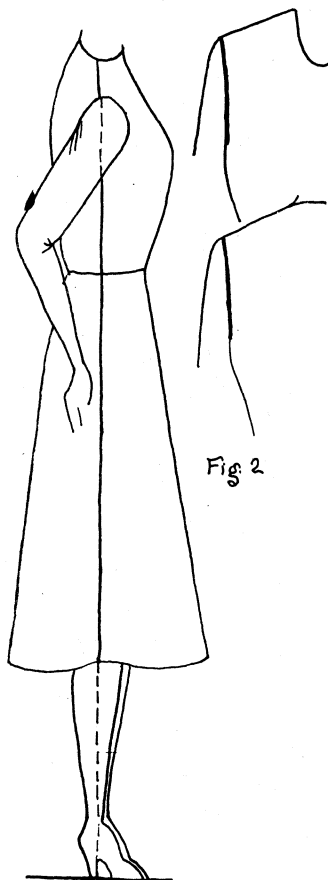
Pressing of each seam or dart as it is sewed makes them lie flatter and a smoother fit will result.

DIRECTION OF SEAM LINES

The skirt length should be that best for the individual, keeping within the range of fashion.

The side seam should fall in straight line down the side of the body with an imaginary straight line on through the foot.

The top of the armhole seam should fall directly over the



Direction of Seams.

shoulder bone and the front and back of the armhole seam should have the appearance of a straight line.

A great number of sleeves now are cut to hang straight with no fullness and the armhole seam is directly over the shoulder tip with the sleeve hanging straight down.

The shoulder seam is placed evenly between front and back unless figure differences cause other placements.

EASE IS NEEDED FOR GOOD FIT

A certain amount of ease across the shoulders, the bust, the hip line, and through the sleeves makes a much more attractive and comfortable garment. This ease will vary with types of individuals or the style of the garment but is necessary for proper fit.

Generally speaking, the following amounts will apply to the majority of figures:

The back shoulder seam has from $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch ease to front shoulder seam (don't gather).

Chest should be $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wider than body—for ease.

Back chest should be $\frac{1}{2}$ - to 1-inch wider for ease.

Extra width through the bust should be from 2 to 6 inches according to the individual and the style of the dress.

There should be 1 to 2 inches extra width through the hips. This is for a skirt fitted about the hips.

Extra amount needed around largest part of upper arm— $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches.

Amount through elbow—1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches—depending on size of arm and type of sleeve.

Amount through largest part of lower arm— $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch.

Dress with fitted waist should fit snugly.

The style as decreed by fashion will have a great influence on the amount of ease or fullness to allow.

ORDER OF CONSTRUCTION AND FITTING

In making a garment, if a pattern is being used that does not have a guide sheet, proceed in the following manner in constructing and fitting it:

Mark and baste in all darts in blouse, or tucks if used. Stitch after fitting.

Baste or stitch around armhole and neck to prevent stretching. Check both. Make shoulder pads before fitting shoulder line.

Baste shoulder and underarm seams—allowing for placket. Stitch after fitting and press.

If piped buttonholes are used, mark place and make. Or make whatever neck placket is used. Press after each part is completed.

Finish collar and attach.

Make pockets if used.

Mark and baste all darts in skirt.

Baste, fit, and stitch all lengthwise seams in skirt. Press all seams after stitching.

Attach skirt to blouse. Fit and stitch.

Mark side placket. Insert slide if used. Finish whatever type placket is used.

Baste sleeve seams and put in darts or gathers. Fit and stitch.

Finish lower edge of short sleeve.

Baste sleeve in armhole. Fit and stitch. (Never be satisfied with an ill-fitting sleeve). Have shoulder pad in place for fitting.

Finish lower edge of long sleeve. (For long sleeve put in placket in line with little finger and for taking final length it is best to wait until basted in armhole.)

Take hem length (with commercial hem marker or by placing pins at regular intervals and equal distance from the floor all around the skirt, using measuring stick). Then baste with long bastings on this hem line. Turn up hem, baste, and finish.

Attach buttons, thread belt loops, and complete finishes.

Make final check-up.

Press well.

OVERCOMING COMMON FITTING PROBLEMS

No garment should remain ill fitting if there is any possible method by which it could be remedied and there are few fitting ills that do not have a cure. The time spent in altering is amply repaid in the satisfaction of wearing an attractive garment—and *no garment is attractive on the wearer unless it fits*. The following suggestions will not apply in every case. Whatever the fitting difficulty, get the grain lines straight and the problem will be more easily solved.

Misfits in Blouses

1. Problem—wrinkles all over—shoulder line drops. Fig. 3a. Cause—garment too large. Remedy—rip apart entirely. Fit by taking length-wise tucks both front and back from center shoulder to waist. Fig. 3b. Deepen shoulder seam. Alter pattern or make a new pattern by the fitted blouse and recut blouse by altered pattern.

2. Problem—shoulder seam too long—sleeve draws when arm is raised.

Cause—narrow shoulders.

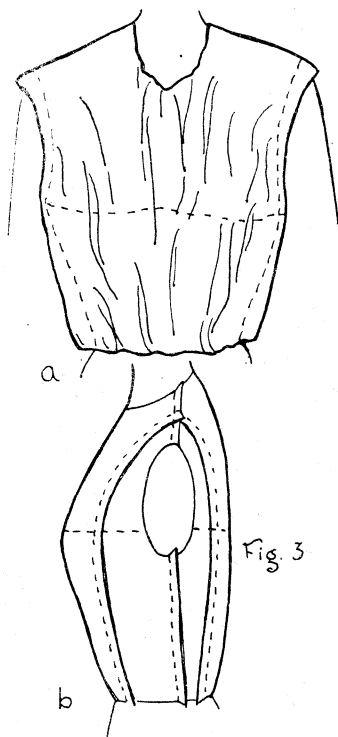
Remedy—a. Establish a new armhole seam by pinning around the corrected line. Fig. 4a. Mark with chalk or basting. Cut out a seam's width from this line.

b. If not great, cut off amount that extends too far over shoulder.

c. Take darts or tucks both front and back down from shoulder seam or increase size of front dart already there

and make extra ones in the back. Figs. 4b, c.

d. The under arm part of the sleeve may have to be cut out correspondingly to increase cap to equal amount taken off shoulder line. Fig. 4d.



Problem 1—blouse too large

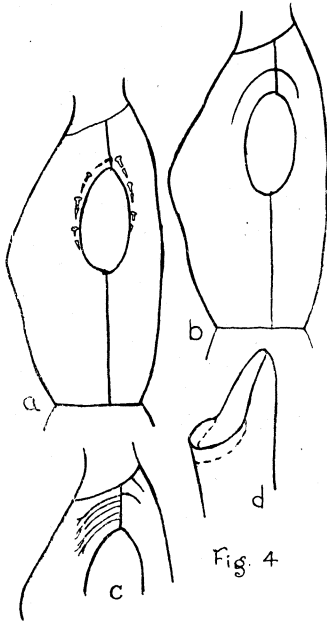


Fig. 4

Problem 2—shoulder line too long

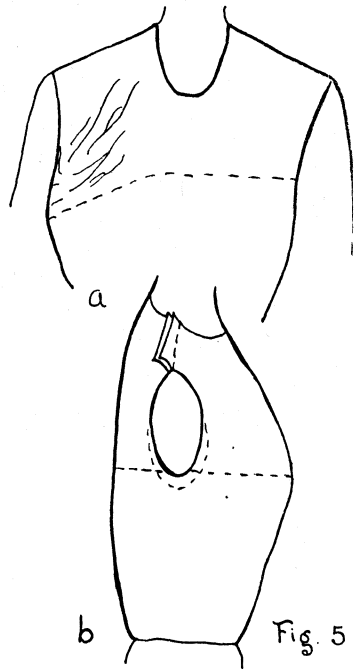


Fig. 5

Problem 3—one shoulder lower than other

3. Problem—grain line drops to armhole and forms diagonal wrinkles on low side from neck down to armhole. Fig. 5a.

Cause—One shoulder lower than the other.

Remedy—a. Raise the shoulder seam on the low side until the grain line is straight or put extra padding on low shoulder. Fig. 5b.

4. Problem—blouse pokes out in back at lower edge and at neckline. Diagonal wrinkles form from shoulder blades downward under armhole. Fig. 6a.

Cause—Round shoulders, protruding shoulder blades or roll of fat just below neck.

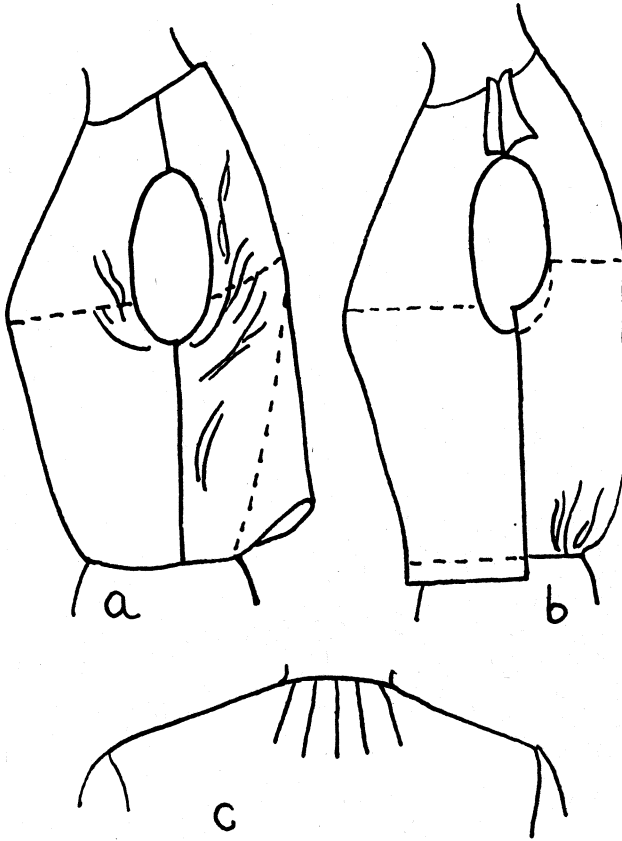


Fig. 6

Problem 4—fitting round shoulders

Remedy—a. If slightly rounded, darts at the neckline may take care of it. Fig. 6c.

b. If very rounded, raise shoulder seams at armhole above front, recutting back to correspond to front. Fig. 6b. Darts may also be used and fullness is needed at the waistline.

c. Use of shoulder pads helps.

5. Problem—neckline loose.

Cause—Flat chest.

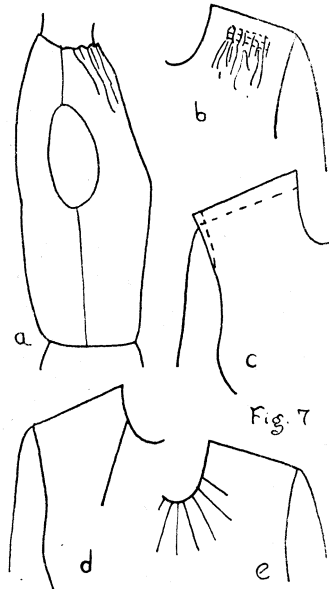
Remedy—a. Raise the shoulder seam, taking out extra fullness, recut armhole and neckline if necessary. Fig. 7c.

b. If caused by stretching, draw up with small gathering threads and shrink out if woolen. Ease into collar line and press out all fullness possible.

c. If style permits, use small tucks, gathers or darts radiating from neckline. Figs. 7, b, e.

d. Take out fullness in neckline dart. Fig. 7d.

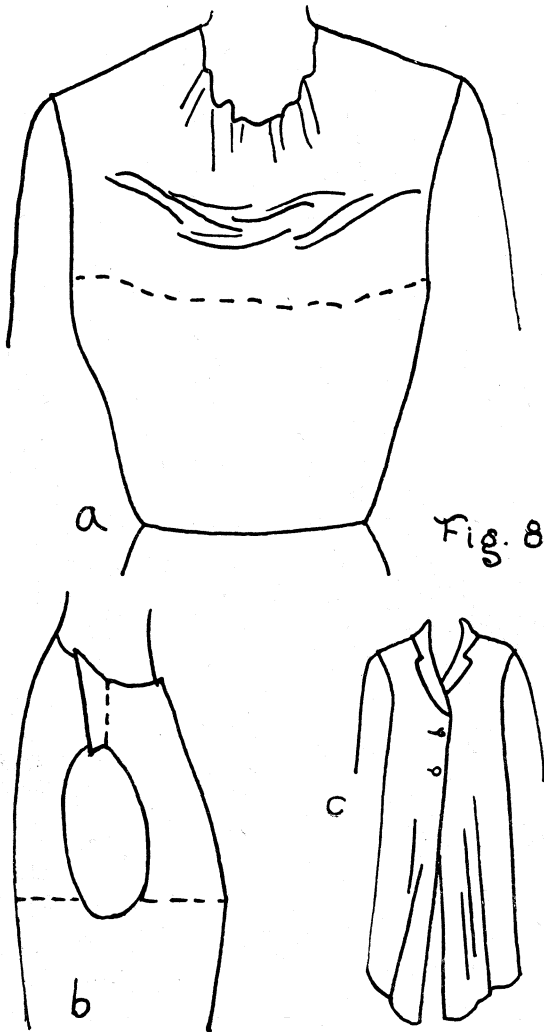
6. Problem—Neck bulges and wrinkles across chest. Coats and suits sag at the bottom. Figs. 8a., c.



Problem 5—fitting remedies for flat chested individuals

Cause—very flat chest with garment too long between shoulder and bust.

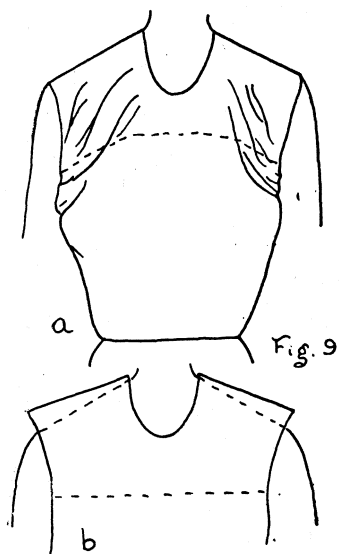
Remedy—Raise at neckline and take deeper shoulder seams at neckline, pushing extra amount to armhole seam to cut off as in Fig. 8b. Reshape front and front neckline.



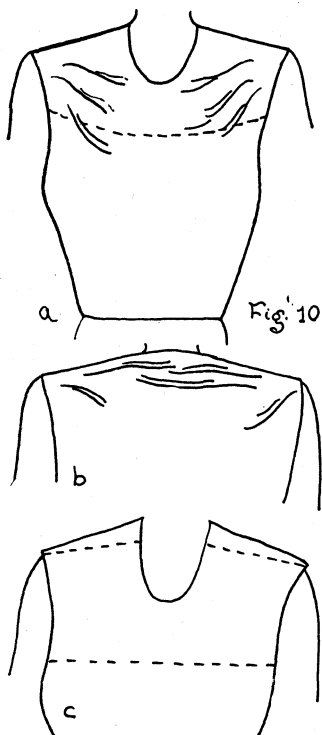
Problem 6—for a very flat chest

7. Problem—Diagonal wrinkles from neck to lower armhole both back and front—seam fits closely at neck. Fig 9a.

Cause—Sloping shoulders.



Problem 7—fitting sloping shoulders



Problem 8—fitting square shoulders

Remedy—Take deeper seam at armhole in front only if no wrinkles in back, but for back too if back wrinkles. Fig. 9b. Armhole will need to be hollowed out to original pattern.

3. Problem—Crosswise wrinkles in back above shoulders and diagonal wrinkles toward center in front. Fig. 10a and b. Loose at neck.

Cause—Square shoulders or prominent shoulder bones, or too much padding.

Remedy—Raise shoulder seam at the neckline slanting to regular armhole seam. Fig. 10c. If neckline is raised too high, recut to normal neckline. If collar is attached, rip collar loose and recut neckline.

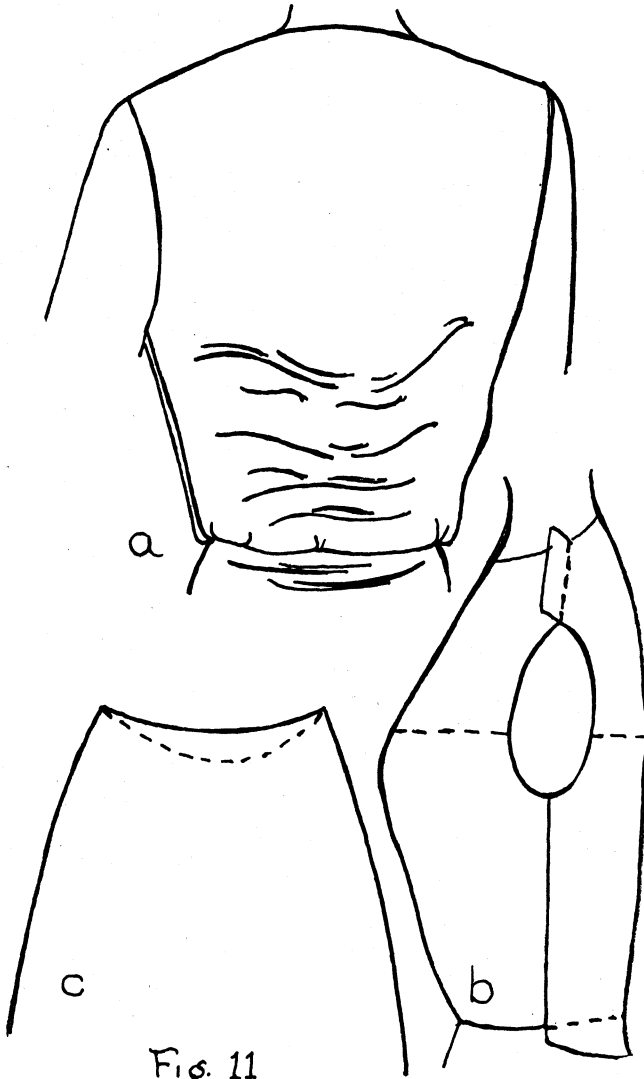


Fig. 11

Problem 9—fitting a sway back

9. Problem—Blouse too long at waistline in back. Skirt wrinkles crosswise just below waistline. Fig. 11a.

Cause—Sway back.

Remedy—a. Dress with seam at waistline—take off at lower line, also deepening shoulder seams to take up part. Fig. 11a.

- b. One-piece dress is not good for people with sway back. If worn, take deeper shoulder seams and perhaps cross-wise dart at waistline (conceal under belt).
- c. The skirt often needs to be hollowed out until it is smooth. Fig. 11c.

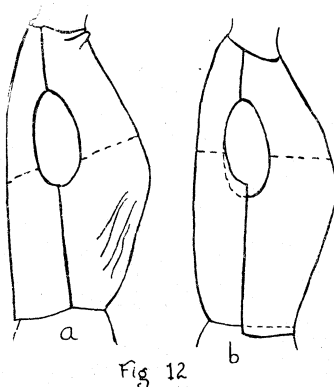


Fig 12

Problem 10—Neck and shoulder seam slide back

10. Problem—Neck and shoulder seam slide back. Fig. 12a.

Cause—Back armhole is short in proportion to the front, or the back is too narrow.

Remedy—Open underarm seam. Raise back, recutting back armhole. Fig. 12b. Make larger through the back by letting out the seams if possible or putting in a back panel.

11. Problem—Too tight across bust, draws with downward wrinkles. Extra fullness gathers at lower point of armhole. Fig. 13a.

Cause—Large bust.

Remedy—a. Let out underarm seam, if possible.

- b. Make another dart—two or more if necessary. Fig. 13b. This may make the blouse too short in front—set in a piece and cover with belt. Cut off lower edge of back to correspond if new front is long enough. Point darts up for high bust and down for low bust. Figs. 13b., c.
- c. If the shoulder seam is long, make a shoulder dart (or tucks) which throws fullness over bust.

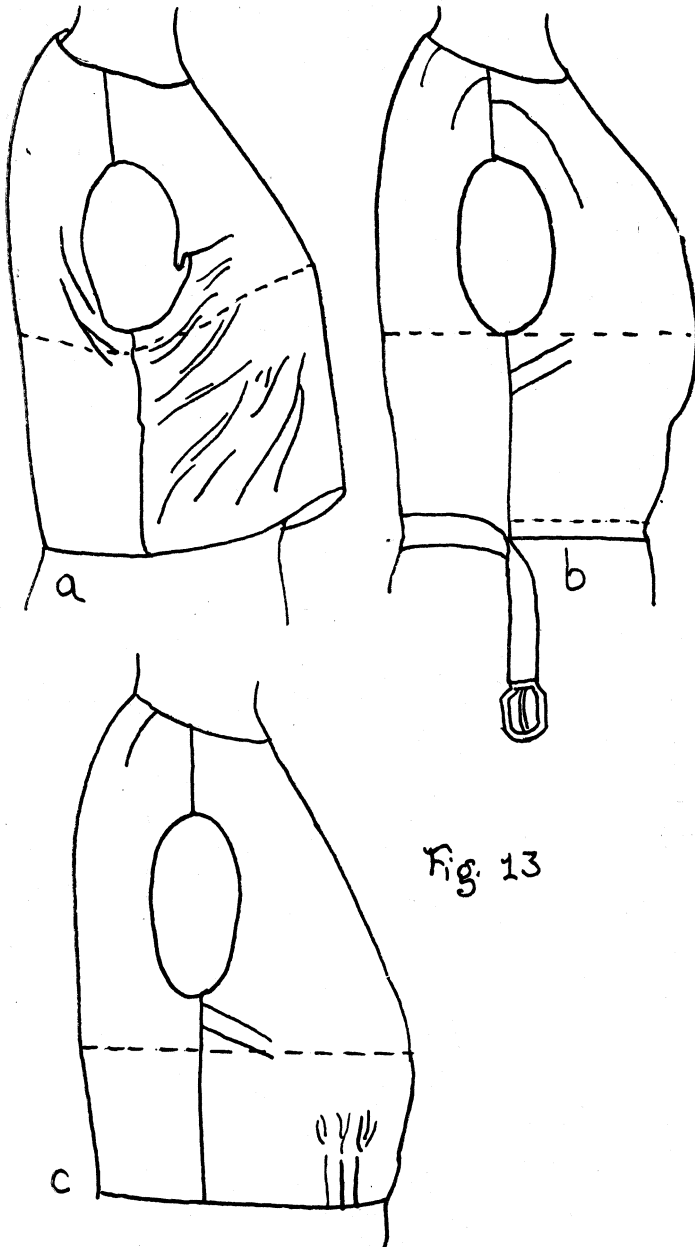


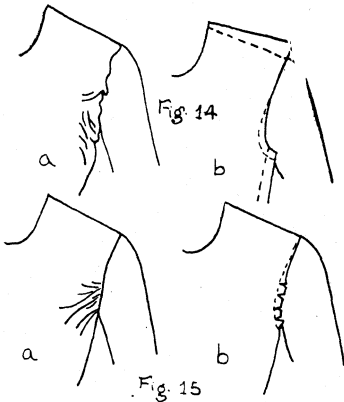
Fig. 13

Problem 11—fitting a large bust

12. Problem—Draws very badly and wrinkles at sides of bust.
Cause—very prominent bust.
Remedy—Best to alter pattern and recut, piecing or remodeling if necessary.

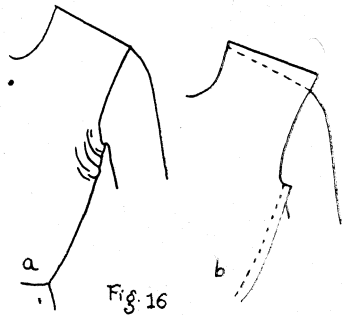
III-Fitting Armholes

1. Problem—Puckers and sags at underarm seam. Fig. 14a.
Cause—Armhole stretched.



Problem 1—armhole stretched,
Fig. 14

Problem 2—armhole too tight,
Fig. 15



Problem 3—armhole too large

Remedy—In woolen, it may be shunk back into place easily if stretched. Cottons and linens and some rayons respond slightly to shrinkage. Otherwise raise shoulder seam and cut lower edge of armhole. Fig. 14b.

2. Problem—Draws around arm. Fig. 15a.

Cause—Armhole too tight.

Remedy—Clip where tight until comfortable.

Mark a new armhole line and recut on line. Fig. 15b.

3. Problem—Sags under arm and wrinkles downward. Sleeve draws when arm is raised. Fig. 16a.

Cause—Armhole too large.

Remedy—Take deeper shoulder seam and underarm seam. Fig. 16b, recut under part of armhole to shape.

BADLY FITTED SLEEVES

1. Problem—Diagonal wrinkles in sleeve. Grain line drops to front or back. Fig. 17a and b.

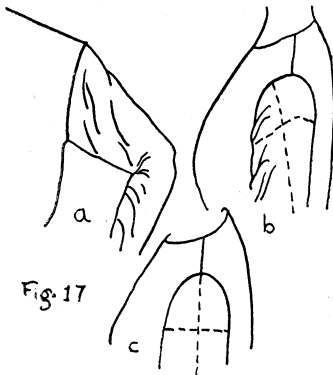


Fig. 17

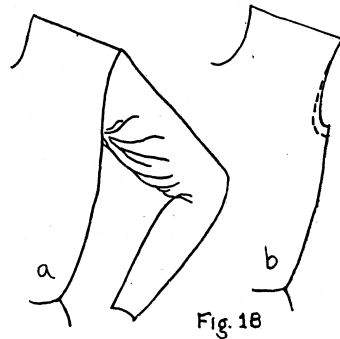


Fig. 18

Problem 1—sleeve put in armhole wrong

Problem 2—sleeve set too high in armhole

Cause—Sleeve improperly put in. Sleeve twists because not in armhole straight—not set in with crosswise and lengthwise grain running straight. Top of sleeve too far to front or too far to back. Sleeves may be cut off grain.

Remedy—Take sleeve out and reset. Fig. 17c.

2. Problem—Wrinkles from under armhole to elbow. Fig. 18a.

Cause—Sleeve set in too high armhole.

Remedy—Cut out armhole and reset sleeve. Fig. 18b.

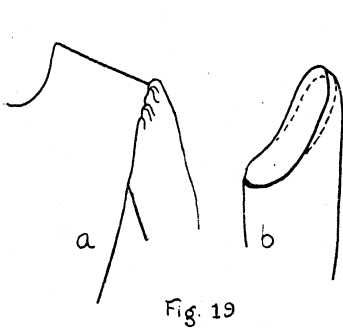


Fig. 19

Problem 3—sleeve cap too long

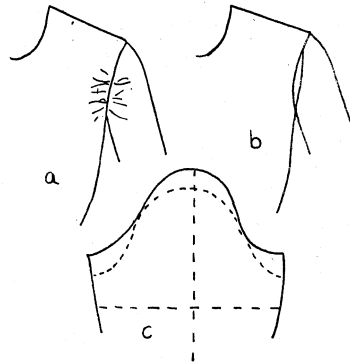


Fig. 20

Problem 4—armhole seams pull out

3. Problem—Sleeve cap puffs up. Fig. 19a.

Cause—Fullness may not be distributed evenly. Cap may be too long.

Remedy—Ease fullness more evenly. Take deeper seam across top. Fig. 19b.

4. Problem—Draws across the back and seams pull out. Fig. 20a. and b.

Cause—Back too narrow or cap of sleeve too narrow.

Remedy—Let out seams if large enough. If sleeve cap is too narrow and sleeve is long enough, raise sleeve and recut cap giving more width. Fig 20c. Bottom of sleeve may have mock cuff.

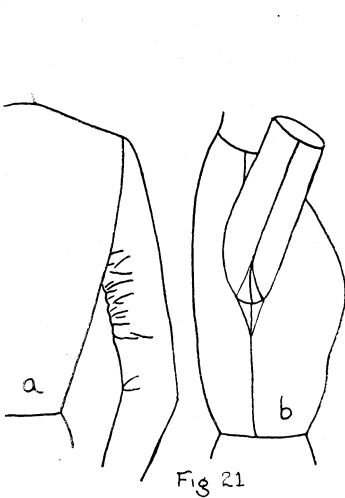


Fig. 21

Problem 5—sleeve too tight

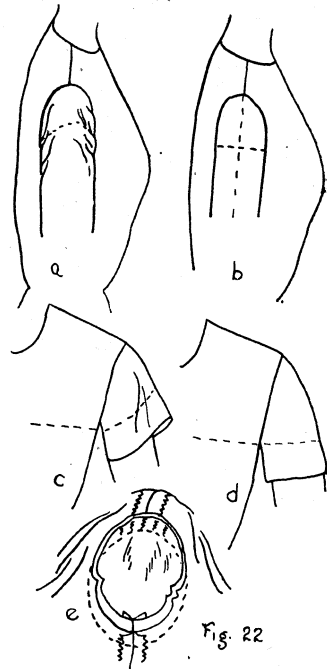


Fig. 22

Problem 6—sleeve cap too short

5. Problem—Sleeve binds and draws across arm. Fig. 21a.

Cause—Sleeve too small through upper arm.

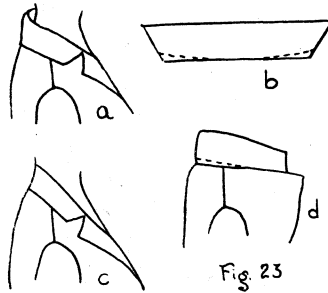
Remedy—Rip sleeve from armhole. Piece underneath and recut giving more width to cap. Fig. 21b. Let out seams if possible.

6. Problem—Sleeve wrinkles diagonally both front and back from shoulder to armhole. Fig. 22a. Crosswise grain drops both front and back. Short sleeve sticks out at lower edge. Fig. 22c.

Cause—Sleeve cap too short.

Remedy—Let seam out if possible, or fit sleeve on person—raising sleeve in armhole at lower part until grain is straight (Figs. 22b and d) and ease in extra fullness toward the top of the sleeve. Work sleeve up in armhole. Trim off amount of sleeve raised above armhole. Fig. 22e.

Some Collar Remedies



If rolled or notch collar stands away from neck it is caused by the collar being set too far down on back of neck or collar being cut too straight. Fig. 23a.

Remedy—Raise on neck seam if possible and stretch collar at lower edge, taking off the extra at the ends. If collar permits, recut so there is more downward curve on back neck edge of collar. Fig. 23b. If rolled or notch collar rolls too high and too close to neck, hollow out the neck edge of collar slightly until collar fits properly. Figs. 23c and d. Attached collars rolling too high need more curve to neck edge.

Attached collars rippling at edge, or collar too flat need a straighter neck edge. Recut collar if possible.

Skirt Alterations

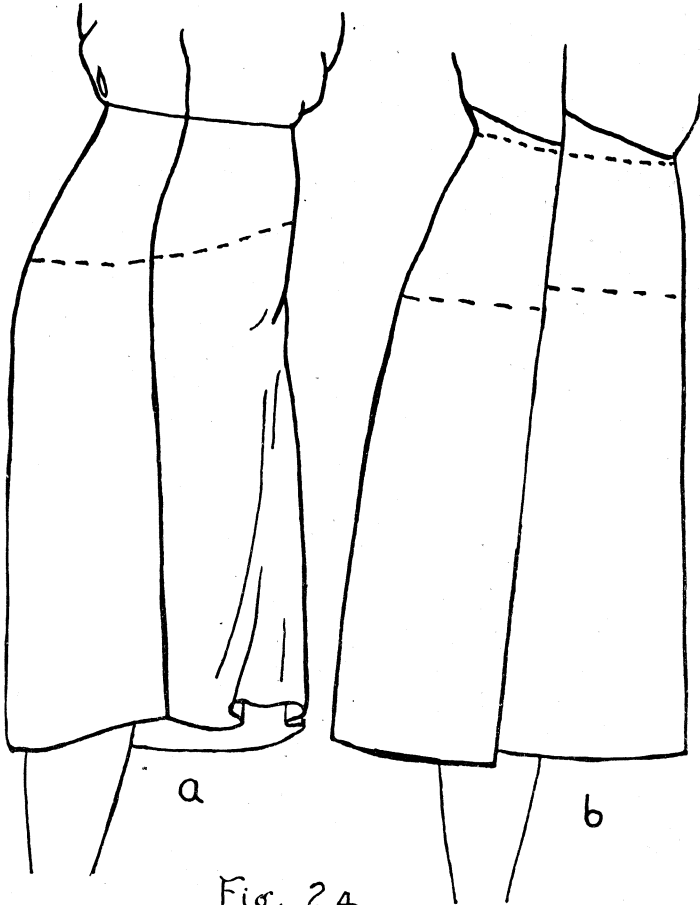


Fig. 24

1. Problem—The skirt pokes out in front and cups in at back. Fig. 24a.

Cause—Prominent abdomen.

Remedy—Open side seams and raise the side front seams at waist until the grain line is true. Fig. 24b. Cut off amount raised and let out hem if necessary. The back may need to be raised slightly at center back. A one-piece dress will require a deep bust dart and perhaps one at waistline in front.

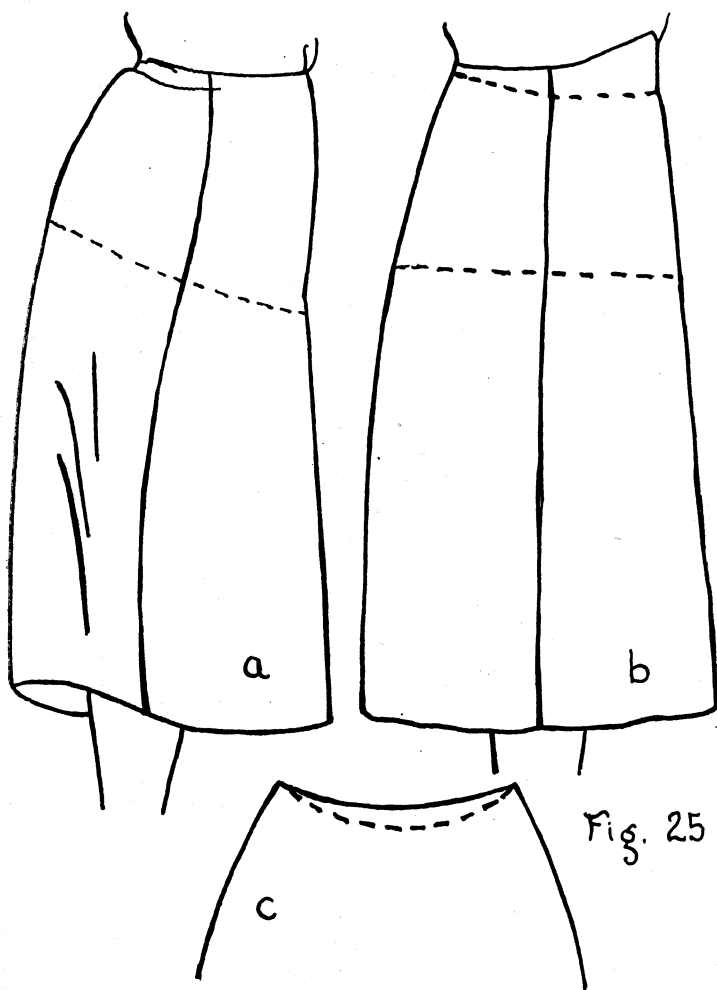


Fig. 25

2. Problem—The skirt swings out at lower back and draws in at the front; may wrinkle just below waistline.

Cause—Fig. 25a. Hips prominent in the back. May also be sway backed.

Remedy—Let out side seams if they are large enough, until grain is straight and the skirt hangs evenly. If the seams are too small, raise the skirt at the waistline from the back on around to front as illustrated. Fig. 25b. The skirt may need to be faced. Hollow out top of skirt if figure is sway backed. Fig. 25c.

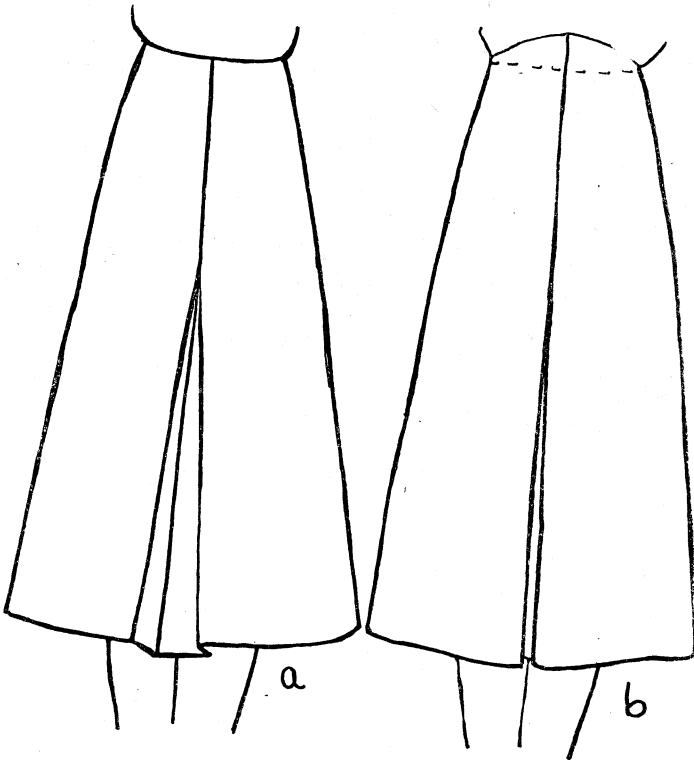


Fig. 26

3. Problem—Pleats in skirt spread and sag. Fig. 26a.

Cause—Top of pleat insets may not be caught sufficiently. Waistline may be too loose and allows skirt to sag in front. Skirt may be too tight.

Remedy—Tack pleat, or raise front waistline of skirt and refit. Fig. 26b.

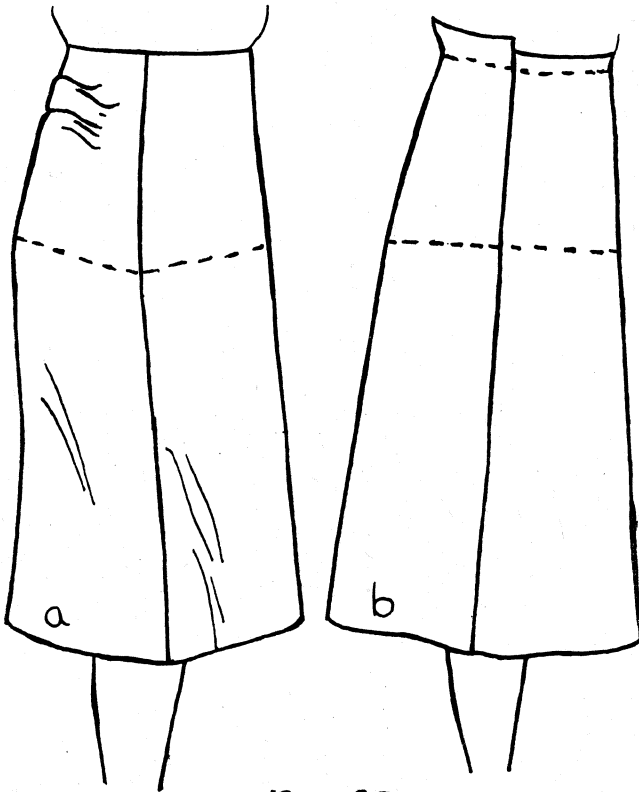


Fig. 27

4. Problem—The skirt cups in at back, or side seam swings to front. Fig. 27a.

Cause—Back of skirt may be too long between waist and hips and too tight across hips.

Remedy—Raise the skirt in the back until the hip grain is straight across the back and side seam hangs straight. Fig. 27b.

Other Alterations

5. Problem—Too loose all over.

Cause—Skirt too large.

Remedy—Take up seams to fit—side or hip seams preferably unless gores are thrown off space, then a proportionate amount off each gore.

6. Problem—Skirt draws and binds around hips.

Cause—Skirt too small.

Remedy—a. Let seams out if possible.

b. Raise at waistline and let out hem.

7. Problem—Seam lines are off plumb and skirt sags and wrinkles on one side. Hem line uneven.

Cause—One hip larger or higher than the other.

Remedy—Fit each side of skirt separately being sure grain lines run true.

8. Problem—Garment draws at seams. Tendency to slide up

Cause—Garment too tight.

Remedy—Let out seams. If this is not enough, it may need to be remodeled.

Darts or Fullness in the Wrong Place

Sometimes the blouse draws at the bustline because the waistline gathers are in the wrong place or the waistline underarm darts slant in the wrong direction.

Waistline of Skirt too Tight

Let out the skirt seams the amount needed, or make the darts smaller, or both. Slant them gradually to the hipline.

Waistline of Skirt too Large

Take up the extra amount in the seams. For a two or three-piece skirt, increase the size of the back dart also. In a six or more gored skirt, take a small amount off each seam. If the waistline is just slightly large, the amount may be eased in.

FITTING ACCORDING TO FASHION

Style trends determine the fit of the garment, and it is important to watch these trends to find out just how to do the fitting, in order to get the style intended. Whenever a new style appears, watch carefully for all changes. Read all articles pointing to these changes and how they are worked out. The pattern directions should be read and followed exactly.

The garments of today are padded quite heavily, with the armhole line falling directly over the outer edge where the arm joins the shoulder. The set-in sleeve hangs down in a straight line with no bulge at the sleeve cap. The shoulder pad is set in so that the outer edge just meets the seam or extends one-half to three-fourths inches into the sleeve. According to the current fashion these seams are pressed either into the sleeve or pressed open.

The new rounded shoulder line which includes the raglan, dolman and wing sleeves, as well as those cut all in one with the blouse, are also heavily padded but with a more rounded pad.

Watch the skirt trends as there is every promise of more fullness being introduced.