

July, 1923

Bulletin 205-A

Colorado Agricultural College  
EXTENSION SERVICE

Fort Collins, Colorado

DRESSES  
METHODS OF MAKING

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CO-OPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME  
ECONOMICS, COLORADO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AND U. S.  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CO-OPERATING

Distributed in Furtherance of Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914

This bulletin is intended for the present season, to cover the work on the making of dresses usually done in the third year of the Girls' Clothing Clubs. A larger bulletin on the subject including also the making of blouses and skirts will be published later.

# DRESSES

## METHODS OF MAKING

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The word "dress" as understood in club work is generally taken to mean the one-piece dress and this is the type considered here.

**Selection of Pattern.**—(Refer also to section on patterns in Sewing Handbook.) In most cases the pattern is selected before the material is purchased, as it is then possible to know exactly the amount of material which will be required.

In selecting the pattern the following points should be borne in mind:

1. The type of dress required:—House dress, school dress, street or business dress, afternoon or "dress-up" dress.
2. Material which it is planned to use.
3. The general effect:—Is it a style which will be becoming? Will it remain in style for more than one season? Is it too conspicuous?

NOTE: For the Girls' Clothing Clubs a type of dress simple in effect is advised and will be given preference in the judging.

4. Construction:—Is it fairly easy to make, or is the pattern composed of so many sections that the amount of time consumed in making is out of proportion to the worth of the dress?

Having decided on a pattern suitable for the type of dress required and in which the general effect of becomingness and style meets all requirements, a pattern which will, moreover, be reasonably simple to make, the material must be considered next.

**Materials.**—The material for a one-piece dress may be of any weave in cotton, wool, linen, or silk, and plain in design, or with a figure, stripe or plaid.

The *cost*, or the amount to be spent on the dress, is one of the first things to consider. If the sum is quite limited, it is better to choose a good quality of cotton instead of purchasing a cheaper grade of wool or silk. Often too the choice is limited by the stock of the local store, where it is always best to purchase material if possible.

The *color* is a very important point: First it should be becoming, and secondly it should be a color of which one will not tire readily and in which one will not feel conspicuous.

The *design* of the material has much to do with the satisfaction one feels in wearing the garment. If the design is too large or conspicuous, the coloring of the figure, stripe, or plaid, too vivid, or if the fabric is too distinctly a "fad" or "freak" material, one will soon tire of it, and everyone in the neighborhood will be able to "date the gar-

ment," that is, tell exactly when it was made or purchased because of the vogue of that material during a certain year.

The weave of the material must be carefully examined in order not to select one which is loose and stretchy and which will cause the garment to pull out of shape.

**Making.**—Follow the directions given on the pattern envelope or enclosed leaflet for placing the pattern sections on the material. Refer also to the section on the Use of Patterns in the Sewing Handbook.

Baste with an even basting stitch for the first fitting. Plan the making with as few fittings as possible, thinking ahead so that each fitting will accomplish several things, as for instance, in the first fitting the basted seams should be noted, and any alterations made, also the fit around the armseye and neck.

If the dress is all in one piece, the waist line and the amount of blousing, if any, should be indicated with pins. See section on Fitting of Waists in the Sewing Handbook. The basted sleeve should be tried on at this time, also, and the proper length of the sleeve marked. If the waist and skirt sections are separate, the waist line with the proper amount of blousing, if any, should be indicated by pins on the waist.

If the skirt is straight and full it will not be necessary to try it on at this time, but the seams can be stitched and finished, and the top gathered ready for the second fitting.

**Seams.**—After fitting, the seams should be stitched and finished in the way best suited to the material. Full information on the finishing of seams is given in the Sewing Handbook.

If the dress is of thin material in cotton or silk, and the seams are fairly straight, there is no objection to using a French seam. If, however, the material is very closely woven, if it has considerable dressing, or if it is at all thick and clumsy, a French seam would not be at all advisable. From the illustrations and directions in the Sewing Handbook it will be possible to decide on the best method to be used for the particular material.

**Pressing of Seams.**—Before proceeding any farther press the seams of both dress and sleeve.

**Putting in the Sleeves.**—It is often advisable to pin in the sleeve carefully before basting, matching the notches. In case alterations are necessary remember that at the present time most patterns require the highest part of the curve at the top of the sleeve to be placed at the shoulder seam, which is now directly on top of the shoulder.

Hold the sleeve toward you in pinning and basting it in, and if there seems to be too much fullness to fit into the armseye, try to "ease" it in by pushing it along with the thumb of left hand during the basting. If, perchance, the shoulder and underarm seams have been taken up so that the fullness in the sleeve cannot be "eased" in, it may be necessary to slip it up into the armseye a little more. If this is done be sure that the sleeve is slipped up all around, else it will pull and wrinkle around the outside of the arm just below the shoulder.

The top of the sleeve should be a little larger than the armseye to allow for the fullness and movement of the upper part of the arm.

**The Waist Line.**—This should be adjusted before the second fitting. The straight, one-piece dresses in which the fronts and backs are cut in one piece and which do not blouse, do not require any gathering or band at the waist line.

The effect of the blouse type of dress may be obtained by a waist lining of the shirt waist type finished with a belt at the desired waist line, if the dress opens in the front, blousing the outside and fastening to the belt.

If the dress is a slip-over type, the blouse effect is made possible by an elastic run through a casing, or by a band fitting the portion of the figure where the waist line comes. An elastic is not always satisfactory, as if made at all tight it is apt to crawl up. On the other hand it is sometimes difficult to slip the dress over the shoulders if the band about the hips is too small.

Where a sash is to be used it is possible to have the band fairly loose, then if the sash is tied snug and trim, the waist will still blouse.

In adjusting the band, which may be of belting or a straight strip of the material, finish the band to the required size and place on the figure; then put on the dress and pin to the band at the waist line. If it seems necessary the dress may be gathered at the waist line before pinning to the belt. When the waist and skirt are cut separately the band is put on first, then the waist which has been gathered at the line of pins. The waist is then pinned to band, and the gathered skirt pinned over it at the line of gathering on the waist. The top of the skirt should be turned over three-eighths of an inch before gathering.

**NOTE:** If the skirt is perfectly straight the lower edge should be finished or have the hem basted before the top is gathered. When this is done we say we "hang the skirt from the top." The waist is then basted to the band before pinning the skirt to the band.

Any extra material below the row of gathering on the waist should be cut away so that from the wrong side of the dress the raw edges are covered by the band or inside belt.

Two rows of gathering threads in both waist and skirt will be found a great help.

When an elastic is to be used the waist and skirt may be joined together in something the same manner on a loose belt, slightly wider than the elastic. The gathering of the waist should be placed at the top of the band and the upper edge of the skirt left raw instead of being turned in. The gathering line of the skirt should be placed at the bottom of the band. The casing, a straight strip of the material with the edges turned in, is then stitched flat over the raw edges, and the elastic run in.

**Neck.**—The neck of the dress may be finished flat, or with a collar. If finished flat, it is sometimes slashed at the center front or back, fastened on the shoulder seams, or cut out sufficiently either boat-shaped or rounded down in front, so that it can be put over the head easily.

A neck without a collar is generally finished with a binding or a facing. The latter may be applied on the right or wrong side according to the effect desired. A cording also makes an attractive finish. The sleeves are finished to correspond with the neck finish. Directions for applying bindings, facings and cordings will be found in the Sewing Handbook.

Collars are often made double and the neck of the dress set in between the two thicknesses of the material. In such cases the collar really serves as a binding for the neck of the dress. This method is satisfactory if the two thicknesses of the collar are held together by stitching or embroidery, otherwise it is apt to look puffy, and not fit well.

Another method of applying a collar is by a narrow bias facing cut from the material, or by using bias tape stitched flat. The bias material should be basted and stitched on with the collar and then hemmed down by hand. If done in this way the collar will lie much flatter, as machine stitching around the curve of the neck is apt to draw. Cuffs are put on in the same way as collars.

**Hanging the Skirt.**—If the work is well planned, the “hanging of the skirt” or “turning up the skirt” at the lower edge can be done at the second fitting. This should not be done until after the waist line has been adjusted in dresses which blouse at the waist, or in a straight dress, until a belt has been tied around the waist or hips to hold the skirt close to the figure. Directions will be found on page five in the Sewing Handbook for hanging a skirt by means of a yard stick without the help of a second person.

Mention has already been made of basting the hem on a straight full skirt before it is hung.

All hems on dresses should be hemmed by hand and not by machine.

**Other Problems in the Making of Dresses.**—Many dresses have the skirts trimmed with wide ruffles or flounces. These are finished on the lower edge with bindings, hems, or flat trimmings.

Knife pleating (a pleating in which the pleats are narrow and close together) is also used in various widths as a trimming on waists or skirts. This pleating is done on machines for the purpose. It is applied to the dress in somewhat the same manner as a ruffle. The pleating may be basted on flat and then stitched on, or the material may be held out smooth and gathered close to the edge and then applied.

A sort of overskirt or tunic is seen considerably on this year's dresses. This is attached at the waist line.

Double skirts, or three-tiered skirts, if made of material that is at all expensive, are generally mounted on a foundation skirt. This foundation skirt is made of material much less expensive than the dress material.

In applying these skirt sections the upper edge is turned in and stitched to the foundation, or the raw edge may be concealed with a narrow strip of the material either straight or bias, stitched flat.

When panniers or loose panels are used, they are finished with a hem or facing. This may be held down by machine stitching, machine hem-stitching or by some decorative stitch.

Many dresses have skirts slightly draped. These are not suitable for wash dresses, and are not advised for Club girls. Some dresses of this type are known as the "wrap-around" because the fronts of the skirt overlap from six to ten inches, but are seldom fastened together below the waist line.

If there is a decided right and wrong side to the material, or rather a wrong side which does not look well, the draped section should be faced back as far as necessary with a shaped facing. The edge of this should be held in position by invisible sewing, as catch stitching or blind stitching.

Further information will be furnished by the Clothing Specialist as to methods, if the Club Leader wishes to write in regarding any special problem.