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# service in ACTION

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## Clothes for independent living-- T-shirt tricks

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### Quick Facts

T-shirts may be adapted with neckline closings and front zippers to provide more convenient access for persons with physical disabilities. Open shoulder seams make it easier to slip T-shirts over the head. Use a separating zipper to completely open up a slipover T-shirt.

T-shirts may be adapted to provide more convenient closures for people with physical limitations. All-cotton or cotton blend T-shirts are more absorbent and comfortable to wear.

When altering T-shirts, launder all materials (braids, tapes, zippers) that will be used on the shirts before applying these trims. This prevents differences in shrinking when the T-shirt is washed regularly.

### Open Shoulder Seams

Open shoulder seams make it easier to slip T-shirts over the head. Polo shirts with raglan sleeves can be altered in the same way. (See Figure 1.)



Figure 1.

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1. Reviewed by Kathy Williams, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension apparel and textiles specialist, design merchandising and consumer science. Information from Michigan State University Bulletin E-1205, *Undercover Convenience*. Reprinted with permission. 9/92. ©Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. For more information, contact your county Cooperative Extension office.

1. Open up shoulder seams. Be careful not to stretch the edges of open seams. (Stitch along each side of the seam before opening to prevent stretching.)
2. Bind the seam edges with twill tape (1-inch) so that the edges overlap.
3. Cut narrow strips of hook-and-loop pressure tape and sew it onto the bound edges.

### **Separating Zippers**

Use a separating zipper to completely open a slipover T-shirt. Use an open-end zipper about 22 inches long, depending on the size of the T-shirt. The zipper should end at the waistline so the remaining shirt can be tucked into pants.

1. Cut the T-shirt open, begin at the neckline rib seam and continue at a slight slant, down through the bottom of the shirt.
2. Stitch the zipper into the opening, place the top of the zipper at the neckline. (See Figure 2.)
3. Turn under the remaining edges and edge stitch.
4. Sew a strip of wide twill tape underneath the zipper to protect the skin from the zipper teeth.



**Figure 2.**