Chapter Ten

READY-MADE FRAMES

Covering a frame is an easy and inexpensive way to make a hat. If you live in a city and can make purchases at a millinery supply house, you will be able to find hundreds of different styles and shapes. They are made out of buckram and elastic net; and even the amateur, if she sews neatly, can do a good job on them. The lines of the hat are already established — all you need do is cover.

After you have covered a few simple frames, you can attempt the more elaborate ones. In selecting your frame, choose a stiff, well-made one — the soft or carelessly made frames get out of shape very quickly.

You can use almost any kind of material to cover, but do try to suit the frame to your material. For instance, if you have heavy suiting or coating, choose a simple, brimless frame. On the other hand, if you are using a stretchy dull black crepe, you can cover a brimmed frame very beautifully — the result will look almost like black felt.

Covering a ready-made frame takes less time, naturally, than making a frame and then covering the hat. If ready-made frames are available, do try them out.

Don’t overlook the possibilities of combining parts of ready-made frames with sections of frames that you are able to make yourself. For instance, you may like a certain crown and be able to make it. But if you wish to add a brim that you cannot make — a rolled brim, such as a Breton or Fedora, etc. (these are blocked on a special brim block) — make your crown and buy your brim. Or you might like to make your own flat brim and combine it with a fancy blocked ready-made crown.
COVERING READY MADE FRAMES.

Ready made Sailor frame.

After you have material cut for brim, sew slashed section around crown. Whip edge of material to edge of brim, cutting off excess material.

Ready made Breton frame.

Proceed same way with Breton brim except that material should be glued on upper side of brim before outer edge is sewed.

UNDER SIDE OF HAT SHOWING HOW BINDING TURNS OVER WIRE.

USING A READY-MADE FRAME

Every frame presents a different problem, and different milliners have different ways of working out the same problem! A few general instructions, plus some specific examples, however, may help you work your own solution.

If your frame has its brim sewed to the crown, you might do well to take the sections apart. Rip out the machine stitching at the juncture of crown and brim (making a note of center front on both pieces), and then proceed to cover each section in the same way that you would cover one of your own frames. (You will need to make a muslin pattern from the frame and then cut your material, using the pattern.)

After brim and crown are covered separately, you can combine them again.

Many frames, however, have brims and crown blocked or molded together; and you must cover these as if crown and brim were a single unit. The ready-made sailor and Breton described here are examples of this type of frame.

Under side of hat showing how binding turns over wire.

Turn your hat upside down and hold your material over the brim. You will want a bias, running from back to front—so you will use a corner of your material in the center back. Let the point hang over the brim and pin the center back and center front.

Smooth the material over the brim sides. Pin it all around the edge of the brim. This will seem awkward to you at first, working with your material over your frame; you can’t really see what you are doing! Learn to have “eyes in your fingers.”

Cut the material all around your brim. Give yourself leeway by cutting 1/2 inch beyond the pins.
Here again you are working in the dark; — but either feel with your fingers, or hold the frame up to the light.

Slash the 3/4-inch leeway all around. The slash should be just deep enough to almost meet the juncture of crown and brim.

Take your material off the frame and cut a second layer exactly like the first, keeping a bias running back to front. If your material has a wrong and right side, lay your “pattern” (first section) right side up on the wrong side of the lower layer. One of these layers you now slip over your crown. Notice that the slashed section hugs the side of the crown. Smooth it down and sew it at the juncture of crown and brim. Use a large basting stitch and go around twice.

If there is any glue to be applied, it should be done now. A Breton or any brim that curves up will need to be glued on the top side. A mushroom or “down” brim needs to be glued on the underside. (See Millinery Glue — Chapter II.)

Sew the material to the edge of the brim. If you have used glue, wait until it is dry. The material will hang over the edge of the brim; but do not turn under. Prepare to sew the edge with an overcast stitch and trim away excess material as you sew. Cut away a few inches, then sew; cut away a few inches, and then sew, etc. Cutting away the material as you sew means that the material will always be just right — never short and never over. Keep smoothing your material as you overcast the raw edge to the wired edge of the buckram.

Follow the same procedure for the under brim. The slashes should fit up inside the crown. Sew at the juncture of crown and brim. The material along the brim edge should now be cut away and the edge overcast to the edge of the brim.
Bind the edge of the brim with material binding. Cut a bias strip a little longer than the circumference of the outside edge of the brim. It should be about 2¼ inches wide. Fold the bias and press it in the center, lengthwise. Pin the raw edges of the bias binding to the edge of the brim. The binding on a Breton should eventually fold in toward the crown; sailor binding should fold down and under the brim.

Stretch the binding as you pin it to the edge of the hat brim.

Use an overcast stitch (for the third time) sewing the bias strip to the brim edge. Make this stitching just a trifle deeper than the others.

Note: Do not use an overcast stitch that is too close together; make one stitch about every ¼ inch.

Bias binding may also be sewed on by machine. Sew very close to the wired edge. Lap the bias strip at the center back and turn the fold of material over the edge of brim. Slip-stitch the folded edge of the bias to the other side of the brim.

To finish, press the bias binding under a damp cloth with a warm iron. Do not get the rest of the brim damp, or it will buckle.

If your bias wrinkles at places, it is either because you did not have a true bias, or because you did not hold the raw edges evenly together as you stitched.

A neater back joining may be made by measuring your bias to your brim edge and then seaming the bias before you start to overcast the binding. On your second hat you will be able to do this because you now will have an idea of just how much you should stretch the bias binding.

This is the procedure to follow for brims of both hats. You will vary your technique on covering the crowns, because they are not alike — one is flat on top while the other is rounded.

_Sailor brim covered both sides with material._
(a) Flat crown is covered (b) binding is sewed on edge of brim.

_Completed sailor with draped cover band._

*Flat Crown:* Cover the flat crown with a piece of material which extends over the edge. It should be about ¾ inch larger all around than the crown. Sew it ¼ inch below the top edge. Stretch the material. After it is sewed to the crown, trim away excess material (below sewing line) evenly.

A plain or a draped cover band may be used to finish the hat. In either case, the cover band should be cut on the bias, and should fit the crown very snugly.

*Cover Band:* For a draped band, allow twice the height of the crown. For a straight band, allow 1½ inches for turn-under. The length of the drape depends upon the size of your crown. Measure it around tightly, stretching your material and allowing for a center back seam. (Pin it where your seam should be and then sew this line up on the machine.)

Stretch your seamed drape over your crown. Turn under the raw edge at the bottom, covering the slashed pieces of brim covering. Pin your drape at the junction of crown and brim so that it will be under control.
Turn raw edge under at the top of the drape, pushing the drape down over the crown. If it is tight enough, it will fall naturally into a drape, and with a little help may be pinned into even pleats. The top edge of the drape should just meet the top of the crown. Tack the drape top and bottom, being careful not to oversew. Don’t let the stitches show.

Round Crown: Covering a round crown with material involves the use of a hat block. Cut a piece of material the approximate size of your crown with about a 2-inch allowance; steam-press this material to the top of your block. Stretch and pin, until (under steam) the material is blocked. When dry, take it off the block and fit it to your crown. Pin and cut away excess material. Sew in place. Finish juncture of crown and brim with a circled ribbon or a piece of bias tubing. Both of these hats need to be lined and should have headsize ribbon sewed in.

**DO’S AND DON’TS**

**Do** read this book in its entirety before starting your hat making. There are specific instructions for individual hats, but general rules and information should also be applied.

**Do** cut your material on a bias!

**Do** stretch your material for a professional finish.

**Do** try to hide your stitches. Try different ways of sewing; maybe you can invent a new stitch.

**Do** try to improve your workmanship as you go along. Every hat you make will teach you something. Try to remember that lesson when you start to work on your next hat.

**Do** practice sewing on wire until you can do a quick, neat job.

**Do** make the easier hats first.

**Don’t** ever let a hot iron touch an unprotected felt.

**Do** watch the hats in shop windows, magazines, movies, and on the street. Making your own hats will make you hat-conscious, and you can pick up lots of ideas. If you try an idea and it doesn’t seem to work, rip it out and start over. If it is possible to do, you can do it — someone else did.

**Don’t** get discouraged with a failure and throw it away. Stick with it until you have made something out of it.

**Don’t** stray too far away from current trends when you are “designing your own.” Leave that to Dache, Victor or the John-Fredericks!

**Do** “baby” your hats. The nearer you get to finishing, the kinder you must be.

**Do** use the right supplies and the right equipment for your particular hat. It is better to make a simple hat and do it well than to attempt an elaborate one for the making of which you are not equipped.

**Do** remember that hats can be made out of anything if you use the right foundations.