CHAPTER 1

PREPARING THE MATERIAL AND CUTTING

To Shrink Woolens or Cottons in Woolen Finish. — Spread out the material on a smooth surface and cover it with a wet cloth. Un-bleached muslin or an old sheet doubled makes an excellent shrink cloth.

Dip the shrink cloth in clean cold water. Do not wring it dry. Squeeze out only part of the water and place the cloth on the material dripping wet. After the wrinkles have been smoothed out of both the fabric and the shrink cloth, roll the fabric and its wet covering over a flat thin board. The wet cloth should be long enough to wrap several times around the outside of the fabric. Slow drying shrinks the material. After twelve hours unwrap the material and press while damp. To
avoid shining the surface, press on the wrong side or cover the material with a cloth.

Goods with selvedge should have the selvedge cut off before shrinking. The weave of the selvedge being different from the fabric may cause the selvedge to shrink more or less than the goods, making puckers along the edge.

Woolens or cottons in woolen finish which are not shrunk before they are made will water spot and shrink unevenly when exposed to moisture. It is impossible to press properly unshrunk fabrics of this description. When the material is dampened and a hot iron applied, the steam will shrink it in spots and may spoil the fit of the garment.

**To Shrink Wash Fabrics.** — Soak the material in clean cold water and hang it in a shady place to dry or roll in a Turkish towel. It is slow drying that shrinks the goods. Press the material before it is entirely dry. It is important to shrink wash fabrics before making up. All cottons, linens and raw silks shrink when tubbed.
If the fabric is colored, put the proper ingredient in the water to set the shade.

To Set Blue, Brown or Brownish Red Shades.—Soak the material for two hours in sugar of lead water. Use one ounce of sugar of lead to every gallon of water. Allow the sugar of lead to dissolve thoroughly before placing the material in the water. This process will set the above mentioned colors permanently.

To Set Green, Mauve, Purple or Purplish Red Shades.—Soak the material in alum water for ten minutes. The proper solution is one ounce of alum to one gallon of water.

Proper Tools.—An electric motor attached to an ordinary sewing machine will double its capacity.

Heavy shears cut a clean edge which is easy to follow in sewing. Cut with the points of the shears resting on the table.

An accurate tape measure is essential. A misfit is often due to the wrong size of pattern ordered according to an incorrect tape measure. To test the tape, stretch it along a
wooden ruler and determine if it is correctly marked.

A tracing wheel makes a distinct mark easily followed in stitching if the material is of firm texture. It is an excellent means of indicating the position of pleats, tucks, hems, etc.

Steel pins do not mar the fabric like lead ones. If the pins have black heads they are easy to see and to pick up.

Laying the Pattern on the Goods. — If all the pattern pieces are laid on the goods before any one piece is cut, they can be shifted around and placed to the best advantage. It saves material to plan the arrangement of the pieces instead of cutting haphazard one piece at a time. There are two ways of placing the pattern pieces on the goods or making a layout. One method is to spread the material in a single thickness and lay on each piece of the pattern twice, once for the right and once for the left side of the garment, and another way is to double the goods and lay on each pattern piece only once.

*If the material is spread in a single thickness*
place it face down on a smooth surface and arrange the pattern pieces on the wrong side of the goods, fitting them in to the best advantage. Place the large pieces on first and fill in with the small pieces.

Lay each pattern piece on twice, marking it in first for one side, then reversing it by turning it over for the other side. To avoid cutting two pieces for one side mark an X on the side of each pattern piece which corresponds to the left side of the finished garment, considering that the piece will be placed on the wrong side of the goods. Lay the pattern on the goods with the X marks showing and mark around each piece. This provides for the left side of the garment. Turn the pieces over and mark around them for the right side, in which case none of the X marks will show. Where both right and left sides of the garment are cut in one piece, as in the case of a one-piece back, lay the center-back edge of the pattern straight of the goods. Mark around all edges of the pattern except the center-back. Turn the pattern over, keeping the
center-back on the same thread of the material, and mark around all edges again except center-back.

The closest possible layout can be made when the material is spread in a single thickness. The pieces can be interlocked and large and small pieces worked in alongside of each other. For instance, the material may not be wide enough to cut two waist fronts, while a sleeve and front will just take the width.

*If the material is doubled* crease it through the center bringing the face sides of the goods together and lay it on a smooth surface. Lay all the pattern pieces on, placing the large pieces on first. In this case, each pattern piece is laid on only once. As the material is double, two pieces are cut at the same time. Where the right and the left sides are to be cut in one piece, as a one-piece back, lay the center-back edge of the pattern on the fold of the material.

*If the material has an up and down*, as some figured goods and fabric with nap, lay all the pattern pieces one way. Place the pattern
so the top of each piece heads in the same direction.

To Match Plaids.—Mark off the seam allowance on the pattern pieces. This gives the exact sewing line. After the pieces are laid on the goods, mark where the lines of the plaid will come on the sewing line. Shift the pieces until the lines of the plaid come at exactly the same place on the sewing line in pieces which join together. It is impossible to match plaids with the seams on the pattern. The lines of the plaid may match at the outer edges and not come anywhere near meeting at the sewing line.

Marking Around the Pattern and Indicating the Perforations.—After determining the proper position of the pieces weight them down, using ordinary paper weights or books. A pattern cannot be pinned to the material without dragging the material out of shape. Mark around the outside edges of the pattern with wax or chalk.

If the material has sufficient body so the marks will not show through on to the right
side, wax or chalk mark the perforations for hems, pleats, etc. Lay the pieces for the two sides of the garment together. Place the pattern in position and mark perforations with the wax or chalk. Remove the pattern. Pass a pin through the two thicknesses of the material at each perforation. Turn the pieces over and wax or chalk mark the under piece at each pin.

Awl marking is one means of indicating perforations in materials having firm texture. Before removing the pattern from the goods place the point of the awl center way of the perforation and, with the awl in a perpendicular position, bear sufficient weight on it to make a hole in the goods.

Thread marking is used in delicate fabrics or materials of loose texture which will not hold the awl mark. Use thread which contrasts in color to the material. Lay corresponding pieces together, that is, the right and the left fronts together, etc. Where the right and the left sides are cut in one, as in the case of a one-piece back, fold the piece through
the center. Place the pattern in position and pass the needle perpendicularly through the perforation in the pattern and the two thicknesses of the goods, bring it up through the perforation and repeat two or three times, keeping the stitches loose. Remove the pattern and pass the scissors between the two thicknesses of the goods clipping the threads. If the stitches have been taken sufficiently loose, the thread will be long enough to hold in the goods.

Cutting. — *Use heavy shears*, keep the points on the table and always cut away from you. It is impossible to follow a line accurately when the wrist is bent.

Cut just inside the lines which outlined the pattern. Since the pattern itself was inside these lines they should be cut off. Cut accurately. An eighth of an inch added in one place and a quarter of an inch in another may come at the same place in joining and spoil the fit.

*Mark notches* by slashing the goods for a depth of a quarter of an inch at each notch.
This is better than cutting a notch as the slash is not so apt to fray.

To cut a true bias fold the material diagonally, bringing a crosswise thread to a lengthwise thread. Cut along the diagonal line. See Fig. 1.

Pressing. — Woolens and cottons in woolen or cotton finish should be covered with a damp cloth when pressed. Heavy muslin is the best fabric for a press cloth. Keep a basin of water handy and dip the press cloth in this, wringing it only partly dry.

Under pressing simplifies sewing. Press each piece after it is cut and each seam after it is stitched. Hems, tucks, etc., are more easily and neatly stitched if they are pressed into position first. Press collars, cuffs and other trimming before attaching them to the garment.

To steam out slight ease or fulness in woolen
materials, cover with a wet cloth and press with a hot iron. Run a gather thread in the material and draw it up the desired amount, cover the material with a wet cloth and press with a hot iron. Bring the iron down squarely on the goods, rest it a second, then remove it, permitting the material to steam. Repeat the process.

*To remove shine* on the surface of woolens caused by a too hot iron or wearing, steam the goods. Cover the goods with a wet cloth and press with a hot iron. Rest the iron and raise it alternately to steam the goods. While the goods is steaming brush it with a stiff whisk brush.