

## SHEER FABRICS

A sheer fabric is one that is transparent. Some examples are voile, organdy, chiffon, batiste, georgette, dotted Swiss, and gauze. They are pretty, feminine fabrics that are also fragile and delicate. Sheers are available in many types of fibers and fiber blends.

Soft sheers such as chiffon are silky and very drape able. Crisp sheers, such as organdy, have more body and are easier to handle. Both types have gentle, light, airy, see-through characteristics. (Figure 1) They inspire the *finest* workmanship.

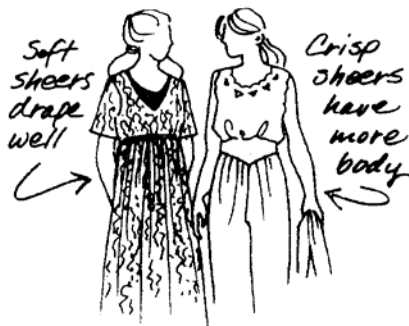


Figure 1

All sheer fabrics require special handling. Some are more difficult to work with than others because of the fiber content and/or hand of the fabric. Fabrics made of manufactured fibers are usually more slippery than those made of natural fibers. Sometimes sheers are underlined with an opaque fabric or with another layer of the sheer fabric.

### SELECTING THE PATTERN

Sheers are most frequently used in designs that are loose and flowing or that have an oversized silhouette.

Simple designs are best as they show off the beauty of the fabric. Because of the sheerness of the fabric, the inside construction techniques are visible on the outside.

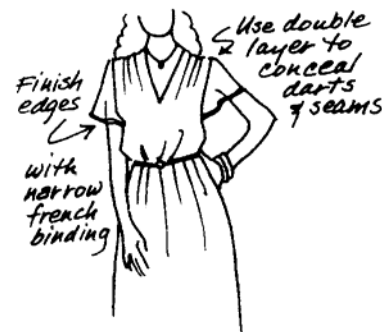


Figure 2

Soft sheers need designs that have fullness and softness in order to make the most of the fabric. Soft fabrics drape beautifully. It's very common to see a sheer garment that has a double layer in the bodice; but only one layer for the sleeves. (Figure 2) Facings are frequently eliminated, and a narrow French binding or self-fabric binding is used to finish the edge. French seams or self-bound seams are almost always recommended.

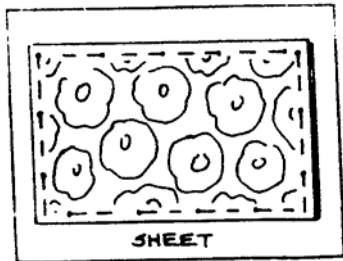
### INTERFACING

Organdy, organza, voile, or tulle may be used for interfacing. Sheer commercial interfacings are also available. Always test to be sure that the hand of the fabric is maintained.

## LAYOUT AND CUTTING

If a washable fabric has been chosen, be sure to pre-wash before using. Straighten fabric ends and check to see that the fabric is on-grain before moving to the layout stage. When working with one of the slippery sheers, cover the cutting area with a sheet that has been secured to the cutting table surface. (Figure 3)

Pin the fabric to the sheet, being sure not to pull the fabric off-grain. Another possibility is to tape tissue paper the length and width of the fabric and pin the sheer to the paper. Some sheers may have selvages that are woven very tight. They must be clipped and the fabric smoothed before laying out the pattern.



Pin Fabric to Sheet  
Figure 3

If cutting more than one layer, as for a double bodice or skirt, diagonally baste the fabric layers together before cutting. More pins may be required than usual. Before cutting, check carefully that shears and/or rotary cutter is smooth with no rough edges. Hold the fabric securely with your free hand while cutting with sharp shears or rotary cutter. (Figure 4) Be very careful not to stretch the fabric. Wipe lint off frequently.

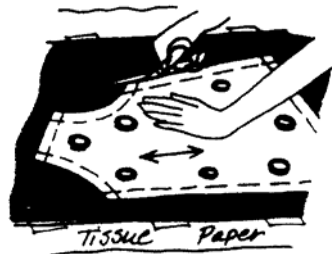


Figure 4

## MARKING

Select the method of marking carefully. Always test technique on scrap fabric before using. Generally tailor's tacks are the recommended technique. (Figure 5) Make sure to use a fine needle. On crisp sheers, soap slivers, marking pen/pencil, or chalk is suggested.

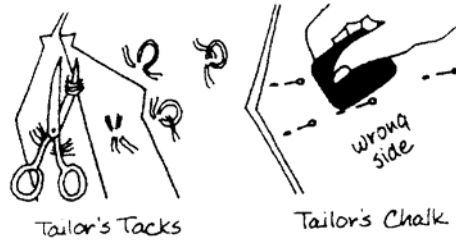


Figure 5

## SEWING

Carefully staystitch all curved areas of the garment to prevent stretching. Loosen the machine tension slightly. Use a size 8 to 11 (60 to 75) universal needle, a straight stitch throat plate, and 12 to 15 stitches per inch. If there are problems with skipped stitches, place a piece of masking tape over the throat plate hole, to make a very small hole. (Figure 6)

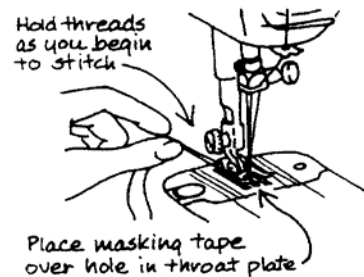
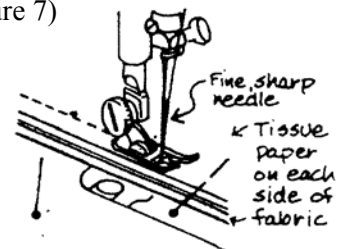


Figure 6

When filling the bobbin, wind slowly to prevent the thread from stretching. Stretched thread can cause puckered seams. Position the threads to the back of the sewing machine and hold for the first inch of stitching. (Figure 6). If the machine feed dog is marring the fabric, stitch over tissue paper. Place tissue paper next to the feed dog, or use a stabilizer. (Figure 7)

Figure 7



Using an even feed foot will also help prevent puckering.

To prevent jamming of thread, do not backstitch on sheers. Machine stitch carefully and accurately, since it is difficult to remove stitching without damaging the delicate fabric.

Use an extra-fine all-purpose thread (lingerie, machine embroidery), if possible.

### Darts

Darts may be finished in one of the following ways:

- Fold dart and stitch, then stitch again  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the first stitching. (Figure 8) Trim close to stitching. Finish raw edge by binding or overcasting.



Figure 8

- Fold dart and stitch. Cut on fold. To finish raw edges, carefully turn dart edges in. Stitch along edge. (Figure 9) This creates a false French seam appearance.



Figure 9

### Seams

- For straight seams, use a French seam. (Figure 10) To construct:

- Pin wrong sides of fabric together and stitch  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch from raw edge.
- Trim close to the stitching. Press.
- Turn so the right sides are together and press along the seam. Stitch  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch seam.

- For curved seams use a false French seam. (Figure 10) To construct:
  - Pin right sides together and stitch a  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam.
  - Press, and then fold raw edge in  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch on each side.
  - Hand slipstitch or machine stitch at the edge. Press.

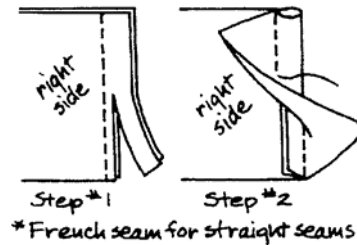


Figure 10

- A double-stitched seam may be used on semi-sheer fabrics. Stitch seam on the stitching line. Stitch again  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the first stitching. Trim close to the stitching. (Figure 11)

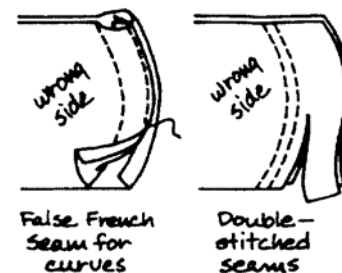


Figure 11

### Pressing

It is always a good idea to check pressing techniques on a scrap of fabric. The amount of heat and moisture that can be used is determined by the fiber content of the fabric. Always press a

sheer with a light touch. A press cloth will prevent shine and water spots.

### Collars

If a straight collar cut is part of the design, place the straight outer edge on the fold in order to eliminate the seam. To stitch the outer edge of the curved collar, use a hairline seam or set machine for a narrow zigzag stitch, and trim seam allowance close to the stitching.

### Facings

Neck and armhole facings may be eliminated by cutting a double bodice and using a narrow French binding as the edge finish. This technique is preferred in ready-to-wear and quality constructed garments. (Figure 12)

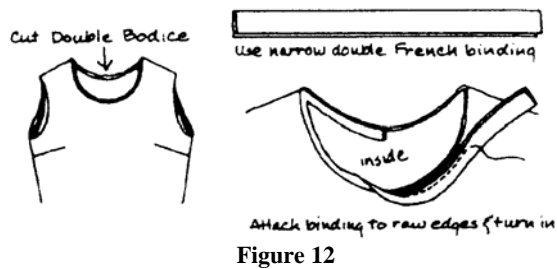


Figure 12

If the garment has a shirt-type bodice, cut the facing and bodice together, eliminating the seam. The width of the facing should be exactly the same on both sides of center front when finished. This will give a “band” effect. (Figure 13).

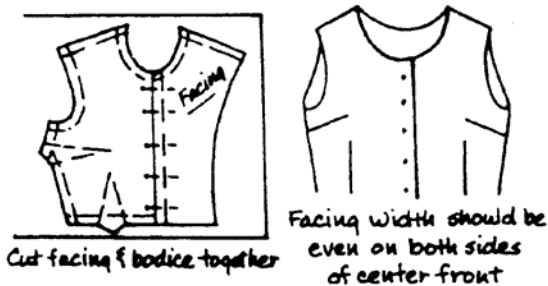


Figure 13

### Sleeves

Long sleeves are usually left “sheer” with no lining. Frequently, short sleeves are cut double with a fold on the straight lower edge. (Figure 14)

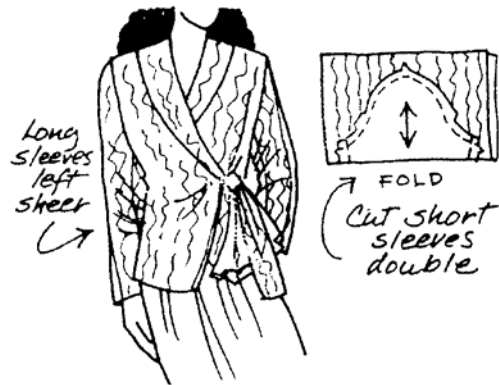


Figure 14

### Closures

Machine, hand-worked, or loop buttonholes may be used. An extra-small rectangle of interfacing may need to be used to keep horizontal buttonholes from sagging, or stretching. Delicate fabrics require dainty, delicate buttons. Use only lightweight zippers that are hand-picked with a single thread. (Figure 15)

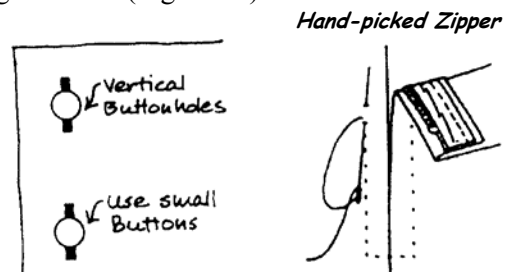


Figure 15

### Hems

Let the garment hang at least 24 hours before marking the hem. Use either a hand rolled hem or narrow machine-stitched hem on flared skirts. A double hem can be used on full straight skirts. For a party dress, a horsehair braid hem can be used for added flare at the hemline edge. On some sheers a serged hem or serged-rolled hem can be used.

**Hand Rolled Hem** – This is a beautiful and fluid hem.

- Stitch 1/8 inch below hemline to stabilize the edge.
- Trim hem allowance to within 1/8 inch of stitching line.
- Use a fine hand sewing needle and a single strand of light weight silk or cotton thread. With your fingers, fold the fabric along stitching line and secure thread in fold. Come out of the fold, go straight to just beyond the raw edge and pick up a single thread of the sheer fabric. Bring needle directly back to the fold and take a 1/4-inch stitch in fold. Again pick up a single thread just beyond the raw edge. Continue in this manner for about 2 inches. (Figure 16)

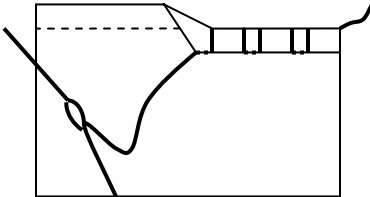


Figure 16

- Pull thread gently until fabric rolls and stitching disappears. (Figure 17)

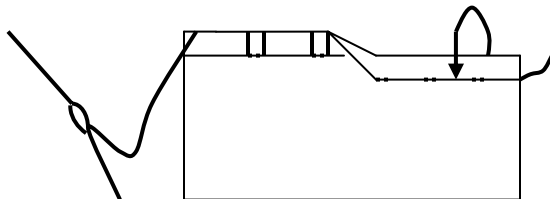


Figure 17

**Machine Rolled Hem** – This requires a special rolled hem presser foot. The coil shape on the presser foot turns the fabric under as the machine sews. Different widths are available for different weights of fabric.

**Narrow Machine Stitched Hem** – This hem requires a 5/8-inch hem allowance. The resulting hem is somewhat stiffer than the hand rolled hem.

- Press under 1/2 inch and stitch close to folded edge.

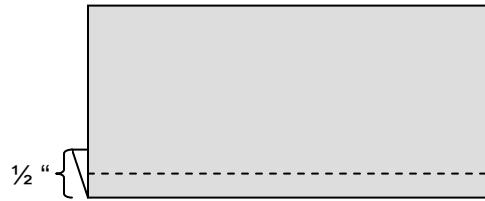


Figure 18

- Trim hem allowance close to stitching. (Figure 19)

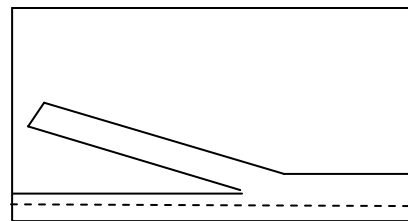


Figure 19

- Turn up 1/8 inch and edge stitch again.

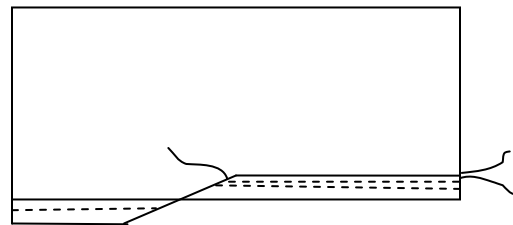


Figure 20

### Double Hem

Allow twice the depth of the hem allowance when cutting pattern out. Seam allowances should be graded before stitching hem.

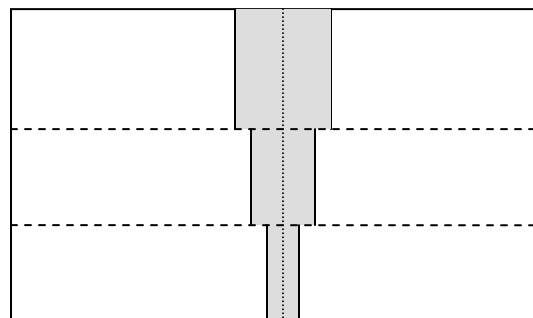


Figure 21

Turn up half the hem allowance, twice, enclosing the raw edge. Press. Stitch hem in place by top stitching, blind hemming, or slipstitching.

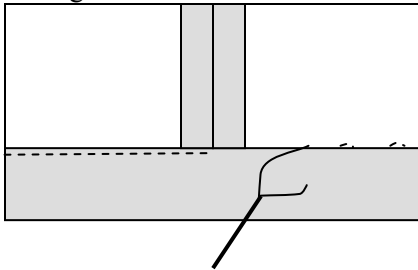
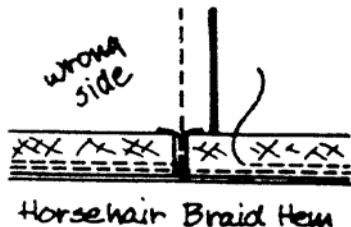
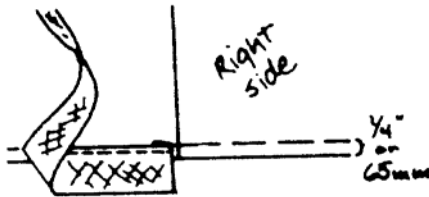


Figure 22

### Horsehair Braid Hem

Select a narrow horsehair braid for sheer fabrics. Lap braid  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch over right side of hem edge. Turn under to the wrong side. Stitch close to the edge of the braid. Turn to the inside. Machine stitch close to the folded edge. If needed, tack the horsehair braid at the seams. (Figure 23)



Horsehair Braid Hem

Figure 23

### Serged Hem

Serge the edge of the hem allowance. If possible, use a 2-thread stitch for less bulk. Turn up and press the lower edge along the serging; edge stitch.

### Serged Rolled Hem

Be sure to test first, some sheers are not strong enough to support this type of hem. Depending on your fabric, use regular, wooly nylon, or decorative thread in the loopers.

Follow your machine manual for rolled edge set up. The lower looper thread tension will need to be tightened to roll the stitched edge.

Experiment with stitch length until you get the look you want.

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