

Stripes

Depending on the scale and direction, stripes can create illusions. A look in the mirror can help one decide what looks best on the body and what creates the desired illusion. If artfully used, stripes add dimension and flair. Stripes can be worn by everyone, but everyone cannot wear all types of stripes.

Stripes are the least complicated and probably the oldest type of geometric fabric design. Because they have lines in only one direction, they are easier to sew and wear than plaids.

Stripes can add spice and dimension to the wardrobe. They come in narrow, wide, bright, soft, and muted forms. Despite type, stripes should be in harmony with the wearer to be truly pleasing. Therefore, select them to complement the body. Remember that stripes are made of lines or bars of color. Lines may divide space, bind forms, set up movement, and subdivide areas.

Narrow, evenly spaced stripes tend to create the impression of a solid color. Stripes that are uneven in color and space look best when cut in only a few pattern pieces. Diagonal stripes take on several different characteristics, depending on their angle and placement.

Use striped fabric to create interest by chevroning skirt seams that have the same angle. Consider cutting a collar, cuffs, pockets, or yoke on the crosswise grain or cutting a front band or pocket on the bias. Chevroning a collar or yoke with a front or center back seam will add flair and variety to the garment. However, because stripes create rhythm and movement, be careful not to change directions in too many places.

Types of Stripes

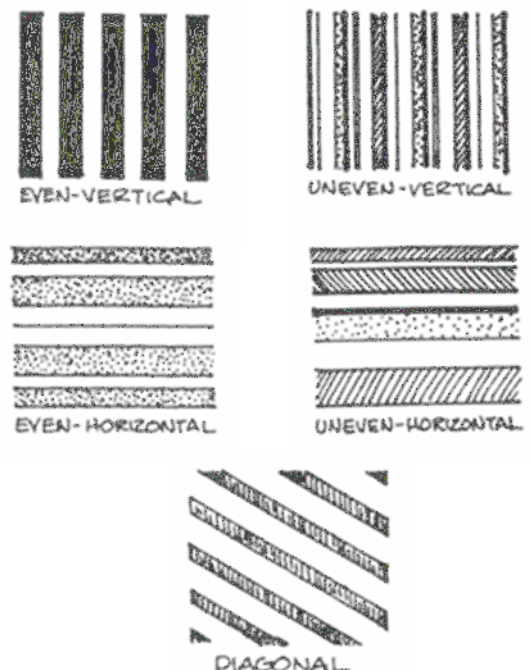
There are two types of stripes (1) C balanced or even, and (2) unbalanced or uneven. A balanced stripe repeats the pattern as the most dominant stripe from left to right and above and below a center bar. An unbalanced stripe varies in spacing or color from left to right and/or above and below a center bar. Stripes may be vertical or horizontal. A few may be printed diagonally.

Stripes are classified by their direction. Horizontal stripes go around the body. Vertical stripes go up and down the body. Diagonal stripes are at an angle. All stripes are either balanced or unbalanced.

Balanced- a regular repeat of color bars, and spaces.

Unbalanced- an irregular repeat of color bars, and spaces.

Unbalanced stripes require greater care in matching. To decide if the stripe is a balanced stripe, fold the fabric piece in half lengthwise along the center of a dominant (brightest, boldest, or largest) stripe. If the stripes match, the fabric is a balanced stripe.



Fabric Selection

Considering how the stripe will look on the body is important. Do the stripes give the illusion or appearance of making the body look slender or broader? It depends on the stripe.

Usually horizontal stripes tend to shorten, whereas vertical ones add height. However, some stripes have a definite feeling of width, even when used vertically. Look carefully at the width of the stripe, the width of the spacing, and the colors used.

Evenly repeated horizontal stripes tend to lead the eye vertically because of their repetition. Tall, thin individuals should avoid using this stripe in long areas. Unevenly repeated stripes tend to confuse the eye and create both vertical and horizontal movement. Because of this, the short, stocky figure may find that this type of stripe, whether used vertically or horizontally will emphasize their shortness and heaviness. Whereas the tall figure, may look even taller in this type of vertical stripe.



Unevenly repeated stripes tend to confuse the eye and create both vertical and horizontal movement. Because of this, the short, stocky figure may find that this type of stripe, whether used vertically or horizontally will emphasize their shortness and heaviness. Whereas the tall figure, may look even taller in this type of vertical stripe.

Evenly repeated wide vertical stripes (especially in sharply contrasting colors) tend to lead the eye across the figure. Therefore, the person will tend to appear shorter and heavier.

Balanced stripes are easier to work with, since the stripes are evenly spaced. Determine if the stripe is woven, knitted, or printed.

If the fabric has a printed stripe, be sure the stripe is printed on-grain. If the fabric has a woven or knitted stripe, check to see that the fabric piece is a piece perfect, @ or crosswise and lengthwise yarns are at right angles to each other.

Occasionally fabrics made of manufactured fibers are heat set in the finishing process. If yarns are not at right angles when heat set, the right-angle (on-grain) structure cannot be restored. Likewise, it will not stretch off grain.

Extra yardage is often needed for matching stripes. A general rule is to allow 1 yard for narrow stripes, 3 yard for medium stripes, and 2 to 3 yard for matching large stripes.

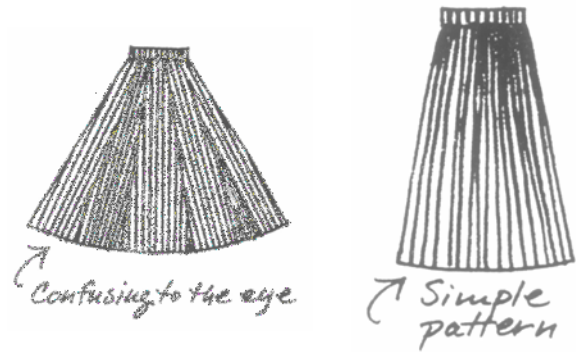
Be very careful not to purchase a striped fabric from a small fabric sample or swatch. The size, color, and repeat of the stripes can be very different when viewed in the larger piece.

It is always a good idea to examine how the stripe will look on the body at a distance. Stand in front of a full-length mirror and/or take a friend with you shopping who can give advice.

Pattern Selection

It is always a good idea to select the pattern design before the fabric is purchased. The best pattern designs for striped fabrics are simple ones with straight seams. Until you are experienced in sewing with stripes, select patterns with few pieces. If the pattern envelope shows the garment in a stripe, be assured a striped fabric is acceptable.

Also, check the fabric recommendations on the back of the envelope. Some designs caution against the use of stripes or plaids. Avoiding designs with curved lines is usually better. Remember that too much change in direction of the stripes will be confusing to the eye. Avoid raglan and kimono sleeve patterns when using an unbalanced stripe. Avoid a pattern design where matching the stripes will be impossible.



Layout

The dominant stripe plays a pivotal role in pattern layout. When working with vertical stripes, consider the dominant stripe in relation to the garment center front, center back, centers of the sleeves, and the center back/center front of the collar. The dominant stripe can be placed in the center, or evenly spaced from the center.



For horizontal stripes, consider where the dominant line should be placed on the body. If it falls at the bust line, it will draw attention to that area. The same is true for waistline, hipline, and hemline. Slight adjustments can be made so that the sleeve and other hemlines create the desired illusion.

When working with a vertical stripe, make every attempt to match the stripes at the shoulder seams. Horizontal stripes will be difficult or impossible to match above a horizontal bustline dart. However, horizontal stripes should be matched below the dart.

Also, consider the angle of the bust dart. Consider changing a slanted dart to a horizontal one to match the stripes in the dart area.

Always match horizontal stripes at the side seams, center seams and the front of the sleeve to bodice front. Sometimes matching stripes at the back armhole notches and the bodice back is difficult or impossible. Match side seams from bottom up (hem to the waist, bottom of the bodice top to the bust dart).



Matching should be done at the *stitching line*, NOT the cutting line. It may help to draw the stripe onto the pattern pieces. Another method is to use a single fabric layout view, cutting each pattern piece from single thickness. When using this technique, it is important that each pattern piece be turned over so there is a right and left garment piece.



To match at the centers when there is a seam; place the pattern so that the stitching line will be in the middle of the dominant stripe.

On an unbalanced stripe, if the fabric is reversible (woven stripes may be), stripes can be balanced from across the garment. The pattern must have a center

seam. Lay the pattern on single thickness of fabric; cut. Place the pattern piece on the fabric again with right sides together, matching stripes.

During the layout process and before cutting, determine the finished garment length. Consider the placement of a horizontal stripe at the hemline and plan accordingly. Placing the dominant line at the hemline will call attention to the hemline and leg area. Using a more neutral space is less likely to call attention to the area.

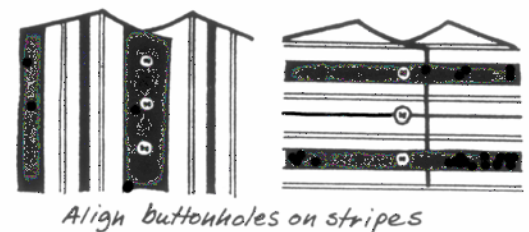
When making a two-piece garment, stripes should match where the two garments meet.

The layout for an unbalanced horizontal or vertical striped fabric must follow a *A with nap@* layout view, with the pattern pieces placed in the same direction.

Balanced striped fabrics can be folded lengthwise. The fold should be in the center of the dominant stripe, so the underneath layer is exactly like the top layer. Pin throughout the fabric to make sure the stripes match.

Construction Tips

- To help in matching, slip baste or pin baste at the seamline. Thread fuse is another good alternative C position, fuse, and then machine stitch.
- If possible, use an even feed presser foot (on a serger, use a differential feed).
- Buttonholes should run in the direction of the stripe. Buttonholes should fall on the same stripe when possible. Frequently, buttonhole placement will need to be repositioned



Summary

Stripes are always in fashion. Some seasons they are more visible than others. Keep these points in mind:

- Select a pattern with simple straight lines. Let your fabric be the center of interest.
- Extra fabric may be needed.
- Plan the center of interest using the dominant stripe.
- Match stripes at all centers, front of the sleeve to bodice, and every other place possible.
- Consider that buttonhole placement may need to be changed.

Prepared by Nadine Hackler, Associate Professor Extension Clothing Specialist. Permission to use granted by the Institute of Food & Agriculture Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

Adapted for use in Kentucky by Linda Heaton, Ph.D., Extension Specialist for Clothing & Textiles, April 2004.

Revised by Marjorie M. Baker, M.S., Extension Associate for Clothing & Textiles, September 2006.

Revised January 2018.

Copyright © 2018 for materials developed by University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension. This publication may be reproduced in portions or its entirety for educational or nonprofit purposes only. Permitted users shall give credit to the author(s) and include this copyright notice.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.