

FABRIC PREPARATION FOR SEWING

There is a series of steps that must be taken to prepare the fabric for layout and cutting before sewing can take place. It is important to follow the order given below.

Step 1: Making the fabric *thread perfect* in the crosswise direction (along the cut edge of the fabric).

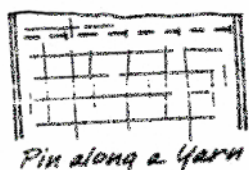
Understanding fabric grain is important in seeing why fabric should be *thread perfect*. Select one of the following methods:

- A. For woven fabric, pull a crosswise



yarn then cut along the pulled yarn.

- B. For knit fabric, baste along a crosswise course
- C. Pin along a crosswise yarn or course, removing the pins as you cut along line.



Both cut ends of the fabric should be made thread perfect. Fabrics with lengthwise selvage edges are thread perfect and do not require this process.

Step 2: Preshrinking and removing surplus surface finishes

Launder or dry clean your fabric according to the recommended care information. Some fabrics may shrink. However, it is better that they shrink now than after the garment or item has been fitted and constructed.

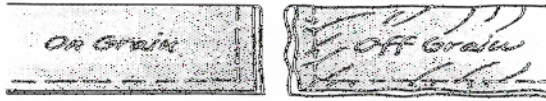


In addition, most fabrics have excess finish on the surface from the production process that should be removed. Failure to remove the finish can result in skipped stitches during the sewing process and possible accumulation in the sewing machine, causing sewing machine/serger malfunctions.

Step 3: Making the fabric piece perfect.

Fabric that has been pulled off grain during the final finishing or shipping process must be corrected, if possible. In some situations the fabric has been heat-set off grain, making it impossible to make the fabric piece perfect. However, it may be possible to adjust the fabric to make it useable.

Fold the lengthwise edges of woven fabrics matching the selvages and the crosswise ends of the fabrics. Fold knits on a lengthwise rib. Baste along the selvage and across both crosswise ends. If the selvage edges shrank during the preshrinking process, you may need to clip them every few inches so that the fabric will lay flat.



If the fabric is flat without wrinkles, and the crosswise and lengthwise edges are at right angles, you are ready to cut.

If there are wrinkles and/or folds, you must try to restore the right angle (on-grain) structure of the fabric. This is much easier to accomplish when the fabric is made of a natural fiber such as cotton, linen, wool, or silk.

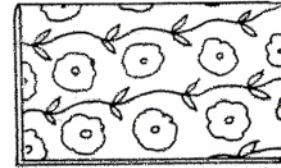
On a **woven fabric**, pull the short end of the fabric on the true bias when the fabric is slightly damp. Once it has been pulled back on grain, spread the fabric on a flat surface to dry, making sure it dries on-grain.

When working with a **knit fabric**, “block” the fabric on-grain while damp patting into position.

To make a **woolen fabric** grain perfect, lay the fabric on a wet sheet and fold it up. Let fabric sit 8 to 12 hours to allow the fabric to become damp. Unfold. Remove the fabric from the sheet. Lay it on a flat surface. Position the fabric gently by pulling and smoothing it on-grain. Let fabric dry, usually overnight.

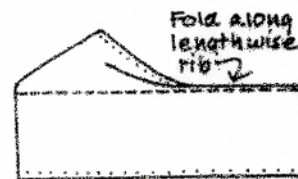
Many manufactured-fiber fabrics and those that have been heat-set off grain cannot be completely restored to their right angle/on-grain structure. However, one last technique may be tried.

If the fabric has been printed on-grain, cut along or with the print design to make the fabric *piece perfect with the print*.



Fabric Heat Set Off-grain

For knits, fold the fabric lengthwise matching the lengthwise edges following a rib.



Knit Fabric

SUMMARY

Learning to select quality fabric for your project will lead to a more successful end product. Remember to keep pattern design in mind when selecting fabric and prepare your fabric for cutting by:

- Preshrinking
- Making thread perfect
- Making it piece perfect

Resource: Nadine Hackler, Associate Professor Extension Clothing Specialist. Permission to use granted by Nadine Hackler, Emeritus Extension Professor Extension Clothing Specialist, Institute of Food & Agriculture Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Adapted for use in Kentucky by Linda M. Heaton, Ph.D., Extension Professor for Textiles & Clothing, July 2002

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