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Fit for Fashion The “A-B-C’s”
Michigan State University Extension Service
Bernetta Kahabka, Extension Clothing
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FIT for FASHION

THE "A-B-C's"

Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University

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FIT IS ONE of the *factors of appearance* in clothes which may be important to you. — It works together with style, color, and fabric to give a garment its "acid test" — its appearance when you wear it.

Fit establishes the degree of harmony between your figure and fabric. It actually makes a flat surface (*the fabric*) conform to a three dimensional object with curves and planes (*the figure*). Beautiful as a garment might be, it should fit as well as possible to do the most for both the wearer and the garment design.

You will look your best, feel comfortable and at ease in well-fitted apparel which stays in position on the figure and allows you to move freely.

A WELL FITTED GARMENT FOR YOU

- BECOMES YOU
- SETS IN BALANCE ON YOUR FIGURE
- ADJUSTS TO BODY MOVEMENT
- DE-EMPHASIZES LESS DESIRABLE FEATURES

AND IS RELATED TO:

- YOUR FIGURE VARIATIONS
- YOUR FIGURE TYPE
- FASHION TRENDS
- HOW YOU LIKE CLOTHES TO FIT
- USE OF THE GARMENT
- FABRIC OF THE GARMENT

Harmony between figure and fabric is achieved by using the components of fit to relate the two.

COMPONENTS OF FIT

| | | | |
|--------|----------------|---|-----------|
| FABRIC | GRAIN | Are used to relate to figure contours such as | SHOULDERS |
| | EASE | | BUST |
| | DART | | ARMS |
| | DART DIRECTION | | WAISTLINE |
| | SEAM PLACEMENT | | ABDOMEN |
| | | | HIPS |
| | | | THIGHS |

GRAIN

A garment looks off balance if the grain (lengthwise or crosswise yarn direction of the fabric) does not run "true" — that is:

lengthwise grain perpendicular to the floor
crosswise grain parallel to the floor.

Each garment is designed so that certain areas will be on grain.

If a garment is balanced, (1) it sets on the figure without sagging or drawing to one side or to the front or back; and (2) the seam lines and design lines will look straight, not distorted or out of shape. See the drawing on page 2.

EASE

Ease is that *extra amount of fabric* within a given size, that is built into a garment. It is in addition to what is needed for actual body measurements to allow for movement and comfort. Garment design may also provide ease by features such as gathers, tucks, pleats, darts, and flare.

The amounts of ease allowed in any given garment will depend on the personal preference of the wearer, current fashion trends, the particular garment style, the fabric, the intended use of the garment, and the wearer's figure, build or type.

A given amount of ease in a garment may look bulky in a crisp, heavy fabric and look skimpy in a soft, light-weight fabric. A large-boned body build may require more ease in a garment than a smaller boned figure even though height and weight may be similar. It depends on bone structure and distribution of flesh.

The proper amount of ease in a garment neither *overfits*, emphasizing less desirable figure variations and causing garments to ride up or bind, nor does it *underfit*, causing a too loose, wrinkled or bulky appearance.

Even though a snug contour fit may be desired, enough ease should be allowed so that the body does not change or strain garment lines.

DARTS

Darts give *ease* and mold the fabric to the figure contours. A dart, unless purely decorative, should point toward the fullest part of the curve it is intended to fit. For example: An underarm dart should point toward the fullest part of the bust. Elbow darts should be directed toward the bend of the elbow.

Length of darts as well as direction is an important fitting factor. Darts usually should end before they reach the fullest part (crown) of the curve. Seasonal styling and fashion trends may dictate differently.

SEAM PLACEMENT

Basic seam lines generally follow the silhouette lines of the body and should appear perpendicular or parallel to the floor. Some seams can be used to mold and give dimension, such as the seams in a princess line design.

Seam placement can create an effect which tends to de-emphasize less desirable features of the figure. For example, the slant of the shoulder seam on a garment can make a round shouldered person look more erect by slightly slanting the shoulder seam to the back.

Analyze the fit of all clothing — for yourself or for any family member. Analyze the components as they relate to the individual figure. The same principles apply to men's and women's, boys' and girls' clothing.

These basic ideas on *fitting* apply to buying, altering, and sewing clothes. Careful attention to *fit* can enable you to select clothes which are becoming and perhaps even eliminate or at least lessen the extent of costly and difficult alterations. You can perhaps refit some of the clothes you already have.

Those of you who sew will find that altering patterns in relation to the components of *fit* will help you to produce more becoming and comfortable clothes.

FIT FOR FASHION and FUNCTION!



BALANCED
GRAINLINE UNBALANCED
GRAINLINE



LACK OF EASE
STRAINS GARMENT

TO PROVIDE EASE,
DARTS MUST POINT TO THE
FULLEST PART OF A CURVE



BASIC SEAM LINES
FOLLOW BODY LINES

