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Fit for Fashion Refitting and Altering
Michigan State University Extension Service
Bernetta Kahabka, Extension Clothing
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FIT for FASHION

REFITTING AND ALTERING

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INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS in posture and body build may require some refitting or altering of clothes even though you have obtained the best fit possible from available ready-to-wear size-type and size range. The extent of refitting and altering can be lessened by selecting the best fitting size and suitable garment design.

Refitting and altering may add considerably to the cost of a garment. Even if you prefer to do altering for yourself or others in your family, your time and effort is a form of investment which has value. Consider this point before you buy.

Information on refitting and altering will be helpful in improving clothes on hand. Refitting which is merely adjusting the design to the figure requires little effort. Alteration, however, may be more difficult because it involves changing the relationship of the various parts of a garment.

WHAT TO DO

Perhaps the first thing to consider is what possibilities or limitations are involved in getting a better fit. Alterations involving length and width changes are considered fairly easy to do providing there is fabric available to do so. Some extensive alterations are just not worth the time, money, and effort. Neckline, shoulder, and armseye changes are often difficult and time-consuming. They may not be worth the effort. Decide on whether or not the garment is worth altering. Decisions on whether or not to alter may not be easy but perhaps the following questions will help.

ALTERATION QUIZ

Does the style of the garment make alteration possible?

Extreme, complicated styles usually limit alteration possibilities.

Is the garment cut on the straight GRAIN of the fabric?

If not, the strain or pull it causes can rarely be corrected in refitting or altering. Styling involving fabric on the bias direction is an exception to the straight grain test.

Is there enough seam allowance or ease to make adjustments for enlarging the garment?

Seams, though released, should be left wide enough to give the garment stability and enough strength to withstand care and wear.

Is the fabric suitable for altering?

It should be firm enough to withstand ripping and re-stitching; original stitch lines should not show when the stitches have been removed.

Is the hem wide enough to let down, re-mark and even up if necessary?

The highest point of the hemline plus the hem allowance is what you'll have to work with.

GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL REFITTING AND ALTERING

- Original design lines and proportions in a garment will be better retained if small changes are made in several areas rather than making a large adjustment in one place.
- Sometimes a slight refitting in SEAM PLACEMENT, DART DIRECTION, or EASE will remove wrinkles, straighten GRAIN lines and balance the garment on the figure.
- Considerable refitting can be done by changing DART DIRECTION and position.
- Sometimes it's easier to make adjustments within the body of the garment (center front or center back seams, side front or side back seams, darts, tucks, pleats) rather than the side seams.
- Fit the garment right side out on the figure, the way it is worn.
- Consider the total refitting and alteration picture in a garment before beginning to work on it. Often one alteration may lead to another or cause another.
- Use the neatest, simplest method to alter clothes.

SOME COMMON PROBLEMS

• WHAT'S WRONG?	ALL	GRAIN EASE DART DIRECTION SEAM PLACEMENT
• WHAT'S THE CAUSE?	relate	
• WHAT TO DO?	to	

Shoulder seams too long

Take up extra length with front and back shoulder darts.

Stitch in a back shoulder dart and take up extra fabric in front shoulder with gathers.

Fold in excess length of shoulderline in a pleat along the armseye. Stitch the pleat in place for about 3 inches down the front and back shoulder. 1¼ inches of excess length is needed to do this.

The sleeve may be removed and some excess shoulder length trimmed off of the armseye. This takes considerable skill to know how much can be trimmed and how the sleeves can be reset.

Shoulder seam too short

Let out upper armseye seam as much as possible.

A wide collar may permit setting in a narrow wedge of fabric in the back and front shoulder seams near the neckline.

Waistline area too tight or too loose

Release or deepen any blouse and skirt darts, tucks, or pleats and, if necessary, seams.

Blouse too short

Remove blouse from skirt and sew seam tape to very bottom edge of blouse. Then reattach skirt stitching seam as close to seam tape as possible.

Wrinkles from strain around armseye area

Caused by high shoulders or very straight shoulders. Rip upper part of sleeve from armseye and if possible release shoulder seam at armseye end. Refit sleeve into armseye.

Garment too tight or too loose

Let out or take in one or more of the structural seams such as side seams, center front and center back seams, side front or side back seams.





Wrinkles across lower blouse back

If caused by too little EASE release side seams and darts for more fullness. Sometimes back blouse darts are completely released and replaced by gathers or tucks.

If caused by a too long back waist length trim off excess length at bottom edge of blouse and re-attach to skirt.

Wrinkles across upper blouse back at neck

If too much ease causes wrinkles, remove collar and facing and stitch in small neckline darts at the back of the neck. Re-attach collar and facing.

If extra back waist length has to be taken out, remove collar, facing, and sleeves, open the shoulder seams and recut the neckline and shoulder area. This is an extensive alteration with slim chances of a good fit unless in the hands of a skilled fitter.



Wrinkles in bustline area

Check DART direction and if necessary release under-arm seams of blouse for added ease.

Diagonal wrinkles in sleeve cap

Remove sleeve and re-position in armhole so GRAIN lines are straight, usually moving the sleeve forward so there are no wrinkles.

Back waistline dips causing skirt to cup in back

Lift skirt at center back and re-attach at waistline. Skirt dart lengths may have to be changed.



Skirt wrinkles just below front waistline

If caused by too little EASE in hips making the skirt ride up, let out lengthwise seams.

If caused by too little EASE just below the waistline, release stitched darts into tucks.

If caused by excess length at center front lift skirt at center front and re-attach to waistline.

REMEMBER

Too many or too extreme alterations in one garment may affect the design lines of the garment, even distorting the proportions.

Becomingness and comfort are rarely achieved by altering to make a garment into another size. It is possible to completely rip a garment and recut it into a smaller size.

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