

Common Sewing and Pattern Making Terms Defined

Description



New to sewing or pattern making and feeling a bit overwhelmed by all the terminology? From draping to selvedges, this mini glossary has got you covered!

Armscye: The armhole opening in a garment where the sleeve is attached.

Basting (or tacking): Temporary stitching, either done by hand or machine, that is used to hold pieces of fabric in place.

Blending (or truing): The process of adjusting and refining pattern lines to create seamless transitions between pieces while ensuring perfect alignment.

Block: A foundational pattern piece that represents the basic shape and fit of a garment (e.g. bodice, dress, and pant block). It serves as a starting point for developing different styles.

Bust point: The most prominent and protruding part of the bust.

Centre front and centre back: The position on the pattern that indicates the centre of the front or back of the body. These markings become particularly important if the garment extends beyond the centre, for example for a double breasted garment, or a button placket.

Commercial patterns: These patterns are designed by large pattern companies (e.g. Vogue, Burda, Butterick, McCallâ??s), and are intended for a wide audience.

Cutting line: The line along which the fabric is to be cut, marking the exact edge of the pattern pieces.

Dart: A triangular section of fabric that is folded and stitched to remove excess fabric. Darts are usually positioned in areas where shaping and fitting is required, such as the bust, shoulders, and waist.

Dart apex: The point where a dart tapers and ends.

Dart legs: The two long sides of a dart, which are stitched together.

Draglines: Lines or wrinkles in a garment caused by fabric being pulled or stretched in certain directions. They can be the result of poor fit, construction issues, or an unsuitable fabric choice.

Drape: The way the fabric hangs or falls. Fabrics vary in drape, from stiff and structured to soft and flowing. Drape can be assessed by observing how the fabric flows or conforms to shapes, or by draping it over an object like a closed fist.

Draping (or form pattern making): The manipulation of fabric directly on a dressmakers mannequin or model to create a garment. This technique involves pinning, folding, and shaping the fabric to achieve the desired silhouette and fit. These fabric pieces are then used as a guide to create a final pattern.

Ease: The additional fabric that is included in a pattern allowing for movement and overall comfort. It is essentially the difference between the body and garment measurements. It is typically added to areas such as the bust, hips, or sleeves.

Facing: A piece of fabric used to finish and reinforce the raw edges of open areas on a garment, such as necklines, armholes, or waistlines. Facing provides a clean, professional finish while helping maintain shape and structure. They are typically attached to the inside of the garment and can be made from self fabric or lining, and may be interfaced for added stability.

Flat pattern making: This technique involves using body measurements to create a pattern on a flat piece of paper or cardboard, or digitally. Patterns are adjusted and manipulated using methods like slash and spread to modify the fit, shape, or style.

Fold line: Indicates the edge of the pattern piece that should be positioned on the fold of the fabric during the layout process. It is used to create symmetrical pattern pieces.

Gathering: Creates fullness by taking a longer piece of fabric and making it shorter (think curtains pulled open on a curtain rod).

Grading: The process of adjusting a pattern to create a range of sizes. This involves scaling the pattern up or down while maintaining the correct proportions and fit across different sizes.

Grain: Refers to the direction of the threads in fabric. There are three types of grain:

- *Lengthwise or straight:* The warp yarns that run parallel to the selvedge, providing strength and stability.
- *Crosswise:* The weft yarns that run perpendicular to the selvedge, offering flexibility and stretch.
- *Bias:* Running at a 45-degree angle across the fabric, providing the most stretch and drape, being ideal for creating garments with fluid and natural movement.

Grams per square metre (GSM): The weight (or density) of fabric that is typically measured in grams per square metre (GSM). A higher GSM indicates a heavier and denser fabric, while a lower GSM indicates a lighter and less dense fabric.

Gusset: A piece of fabric added to a garment to improve fit, add shape, or increase comfort in areas where the fabric needs more room.

Hem: The bottom edge of a garment, which can be finished in various ways, such as a single or double fold hem, blind hem, or rolled hem. Hemming prevents the fabric from fraying and provides a clean, finished look.

Independent (or â??indieâ??) patterns: These patterns are designed and created by individuals, or small teams, offering unique and creative designs that reflect the designerâ??s personal style. They often include comprehensive instructions, high-quality illustrations or photos, and detailed information on sizing and construction techniques, providing a more personalised and supportive sewing experience.

Interfacing (or interlining): A specialised fabric that is applied to the reverse of fabric. Itâ??s purpose is to provide stability, structure and strength to a garment by reinforcing weak spots and areas prone to stretching, such as collars, plackets, necklines, and waistbands,.

Knit (or stretch) fabric: Made from continuous interlocking loops of yarn. This creates a flexible and stretchy fabric (think t-shirts and activewear).

Lengthen or shorten (adjustment) lines: These are single or double lines on a pattern that indicate where to cut and add (move apart) or remove (overlap) length from a garment to ensure the best fit.

Nap: The texture or direction of the fibres that create a different appearance when manipulated in a certain direction. It can be directional, where the fibres lie in a specific direction, causing changes in appearance when viewed or touched from different angles (e.g., velvet). Alternatively, it can be non-directional, with the fibres spreading evenly in all directions without significantly altering the fabricâ??s appearance (e.g., corduroy).

Notches (or balance points): They are positioned around the edges of the pattern piece and help ensure correct positioning and alignment (eg. the head of a sleeve with the shoulder point). These vary from pattern to pattern, but are most commonly either triangular in shape or simple lines.

Placket: An opening in a garment created by folding back a section of fabric. Plackets can vary in design and are used to accommodate buttons, snaps, or zippers.

Pleats (or tucks): A fold in the fabric that is either pressed or stitched down to create fullness or shape.

Seam allowance: The area between the edge of the fabric and the stitching line. This allowance can vary, but typically ranges between 0.7cm and 1.5cm for seams, to several centimetres for hems.

Seam finish: A technique used to prevent raw fabric edges from fraying. Common seam finishes include zigzag stitching, serging, and binding.

Seam (or stitching) line: The path along which the fabric is sewn.

Selvedge: The tightly woven edge of the fabric that runs parallel to the lengthwise grain. This is a key reference point for aligning pattern pieces.

Stay-stitching: A row of stitching just inside the seam allowance that prevents areas from stretching out of shape during construction.

Toile (or muslin): A test garment used to check sizing, fit, and proportion. There are typically two types of toiles:

- *True:* A preliminary test garment made when less confident with the pattern or working with new techniques. It helps evaluate fit and proportion without needing to be â??prettyâ?• or even finished.
- *Wearable:* A finished garment intended to be worn. They are created when confident in the pattern and expecting only minor adjustments.

Top-stitching: Stitching that is usually done in a longer stitch length or with a heavier thread, with the intention of being visible.

Understitching: Involves sewing the seam allowances to a lining or facing just below the seam line. It is used to prevent a facing or lining from rolling to the outside of a garment.

Warp threads: The lengthwise yarns that run parallel to the selvedge. They provide a strong and stable foundation on the loom during weaving.

Weft Yarns: The crosswise yarns that are interlaced over and under the warp yarns. They run perpendicular to the selvedge and offer more flexibility in shaping the fabricâ??s design than the warp threads.

Woven fabric: Made by interlacing warp and weft yarns at right angles. This weaving process produces a stable, structured fabric with minimal stretch and

greater durability.

Yoke: A seperate piece of fabric that is sewn into a garment (similar to a facing) and is used to provide structure and shaping. They are commonly found at the shoulders, waist, or hips.

CATEGORY

1. SEWING ESSENTIALS

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