

It's hot stuff

PRESS AS YOU SEW

Have you ever made a garment that turned out just so-so? Chances are you didn't press as you sewed.

Pressing is an important part of sewing a garment from beginning to end. Pressing is lifting and lowering the iron to smooth the fabric or mold the garment shape. Heat, moisture, and pressure are used. Don't iron, which is pushing the iron over the fabric.

Three areas of pressing are discussed in this folder:

- pressing equipment
- construction pressing
- pressing temperatures

PRESSING EQUIPMENT

You'll need an iron and an **ironing board** or other flat, padded surface. The iron can be either steam or regular. With a regular iron you will need to dampen a cloth to get moisture.

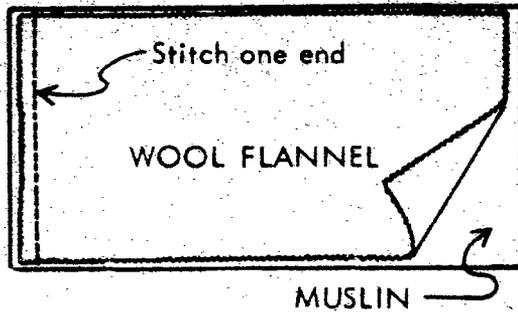
The ironing board must be sturdy, level, and well padded (about 1/2 inch thick). The cover should be lint free and washed often.

You can make some pressing equipment yourself, such as a **press cloth**. It is used to prevent scorch and shine when pressing on the right side, and to provide moisture. For pressing wool, a wool press cloth is needed to preserve the nappy fabric texture. To make a double press cloth, use one thickness of thoroughly

THE CLOTHES YOU MAKE

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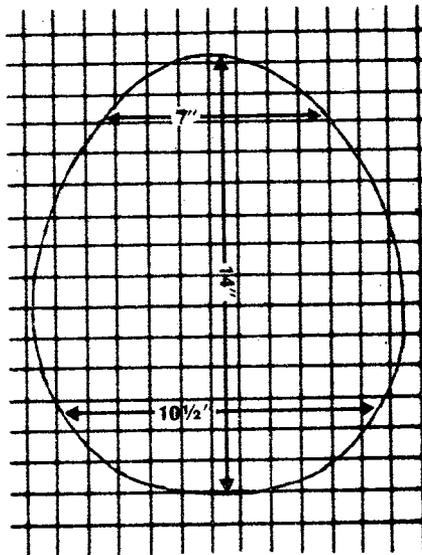
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washed muslin and one thickness of a nappy wool fabric. Cut the wool 1 inch smaller than the muslin in each direction. Machine baste the two together at one end only. Then, when you need additional moisture, you can dampen the muslin.

A good size for general use is 18 x 24 inches. Or, you can make a large -- 15 x 36 inches, and a smaller one -- 12 x 18 inches.

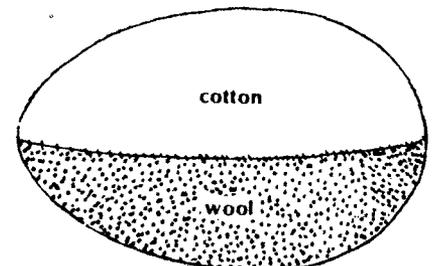
A **pressing cushion** can also be made quite easily. It is needed to press curved seams and darts at the waist, bust, and hip areas; and the shoulder, neck, and armhole areas of bodices and jackets.

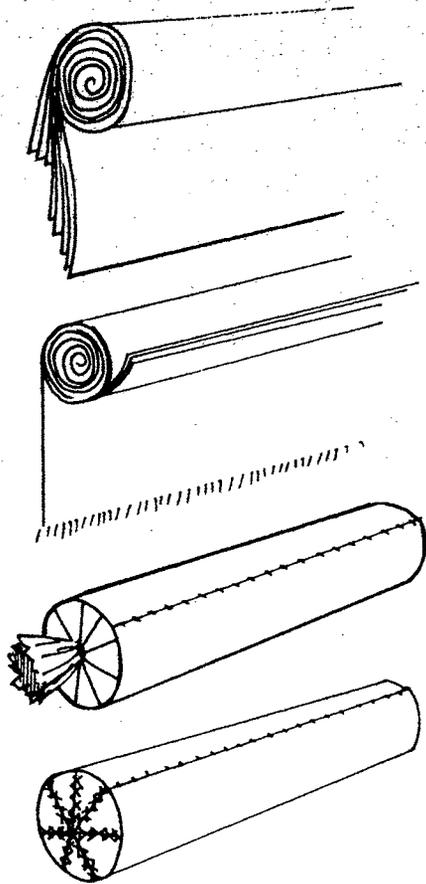


To make your own cushion, see the accompanying diagram. Make your pattern by drawing this kind of line on 1 inch squared paper. Cut one piece from thoroughly washed muslin and one piece from a nappy wool fabric. These can be the same as you used in making a press cloth. This cushion will be about 13 inches long when finished and should be large enough for most areas you'll be pressing.

Sew the two pieces right sides together, with a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch seam using small machine stitches. Be sure to leave about 4 inches open across the top.

Staystitch these open edges the same width as the seam. Turn it right side out and fill with dry sawdust. Put in a little sawdust at a time and pack it with a wooden spoon. Sometimes pounding from the outside will help to pack it tighter. It has to be packed so tightly it will not dent when you press your finger against it. When filled, turn the opening seam allowances inside and close with small overhand stitches. Make them very close to each other so the sawdust won't leak.





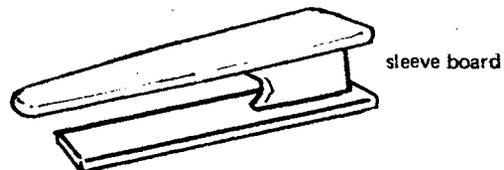
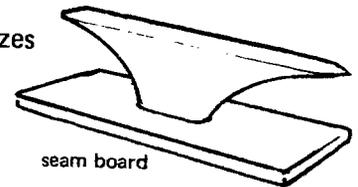
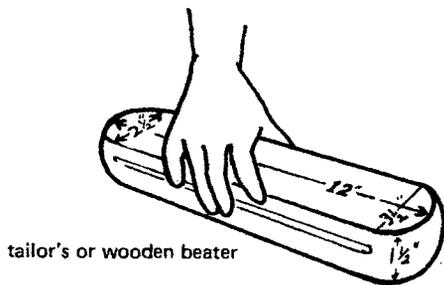
A **seam roll** will help you press open seams so the seam edge will not leave a mark on the fabric. It will also be handy to press sleeves.

Choose two long magazines that can be easily rolled. A piece of muslin or other firm, smooth cotton fabric will make a good cover. The piece of fabric must be wider than the length of the magazines and long enough to go around the roll several times. Roll the magazines and start the fabric into the roll before it is completely rolled. Continue rolling the fabric, getting it tight without any wrinkles. Fasten the ends with a rubber band wound very tightly, or tiny stitches over the folds at the end.

The round paper tube that some fabrics come on can also be used. Ask your fabric store or department store to save you one. Roll a magazine and stick it inside the tube so it won't buckle. Cover with muslin.

Other pressing equipment you may want to make or purchase are:

- sleeve board
- pressing mitts of various sizes
- seam board
- tailor's or wooden beater



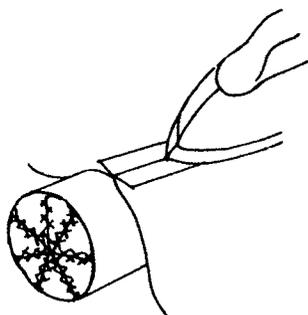
CONSTRUCTION PRESSING

General

1. Press with the grain in the direction of the lengthwise or crosswise yarns to prevent stretching.
2. Press from the wrong side first. If you press as you sew, the right side will need only finishing touches.
3. Press each machine stitching you make before crossing it with another stitching.
4. Press flat sections on a smooth, flat surface. Press shaped areas over a curved surface.
5. Never press over pins.

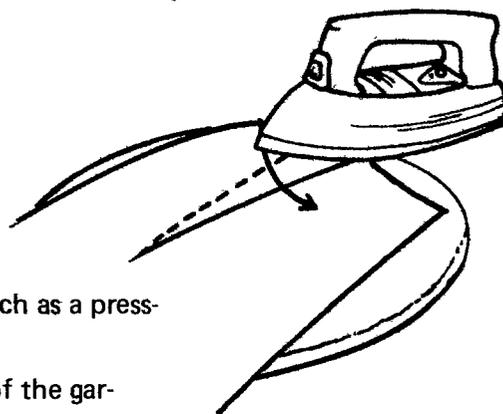
Seams

1. Seams are pressed open from the wide part of the garment piece to the narrow.
2. Prevent the seam edge from leaving a mark on the right side of the fabric by using:
 - a seam roll
 - heavy paper between seam allowance and garment such as brown paper or folded tissue paper
3. Clip curved seams before pressing.
4. A tailor's beater will help flatten seams in fabrics that are difficult to press flat.



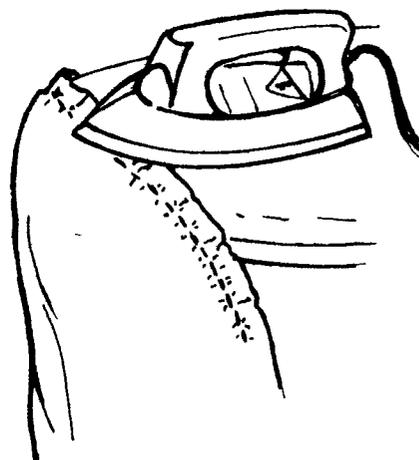
Darts

1. Darts must be pressed over a curved surface such as a pressing cushion to give shaping.
2. Waistline darts are pressed toward the center of the garment; underarm darts are pressed down.
3. Place heavy paper under the dart to prevent marking on the right side.
4. Darts in heavy fabrics may have to be slit to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the point and pressed open.



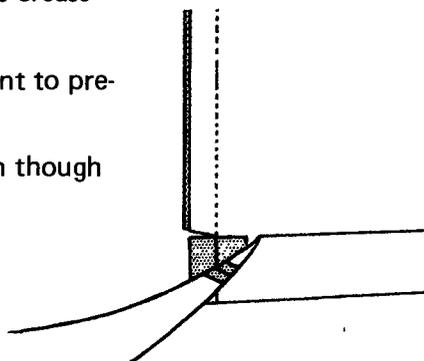
Sleeves

1. Fullness in the sleeve cap should be eased to fit the armhole before the sleeve is sewn into the garment. Place the cap over a pressing cushion or the end of your ironing board $\frac{3}{4}$ inch beyond the seam line. Use steam and press it into the desired shape.
2. The lower part of the sleeve-armhole seam is never pressed. Place upper armhole seam on end of ironing board. Press across seamline, using point of iron for a depth of not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.



Hems

1. The fold of a hem is lightly pressed up from the lower edge. This prevents stretching and makes easing the fullness possible. On fabrics such as wool, do not press a sharp crease in the hem. It should have a soft rolled edge.
2. Place heavy paper between the hem and the garment to prevent marking on the right side.
3. Seam allowances are pressed open in the hem, even though the seam may be pressed together, as in a pleat.





PRESSING TEMPERATURES

Pressing uses moisture, heat, and pressure in varying amounts. For each new fabric you sew, make a sample test. This is especially important today when we have so many new fabrics on the market. Your sample should be large enough to press half of it, then compare it with the unpressed half. Note any change in appearance of the fabric. This will help you decide upon iron temperature, the amount of moisture and pressure to use, and whether or not you need a press cloth.

Too much heat from the iron will cause your fabric to become stiff and shiny, and possibly scorched. Check your iron's temperature settings. It will probably have settings for synthetic, wool, cotton, and linen, ranging in order from low to high temperatures. It may also be divided between dry and steam heat.

Synthetic fabrics such as the acetates, acrylics, polyesters, nylons, olefins, and rayons need a low to moderately warm temperature setting. You must test a sample first for the exact temperature, and to find out whether moisture is needed and how much.

Wool fabric requires moist (steam) heat at a medium setting. It should not be pressed completely dry. To keep the nappy surface, be sure to use a wool press cloth on the right side.

Cotton fabrics generally need a medium-high heat setting, although light weight cotton fabrics need a lower setting. They should be pressed with moisture first and then pressed completely dry. Cotton blend fabric should be sample tested first.

Linen fabric requires a high heat setting and much moisture and pressure. **Silk** fabric requires a lower heat setting, moisture, and light pressure.

Additional information on pressing wool can be obtained from:

- The Wool Education Center,
- American Wool Council
- The Wool Bureau Inc.
- 200 Clayton Street
- Denver, Colorado 80206

CLEANING YOUR STEAM IRON

If your steam iron holes become plugged, or the iron "spits," it probably needs cleaning. Fill the iron with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup distilled water and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar. Let this stand overnight and then steam it out in the morning. Fill again with distilled water and steam it out. Wipe the bottom of the iron (sole plate) with rubbing alcohol.

Always use distilled water in your steam iron for the best performance.

Developed by Eileen G. Anderson, urban extension agent

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