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# Put It All Together

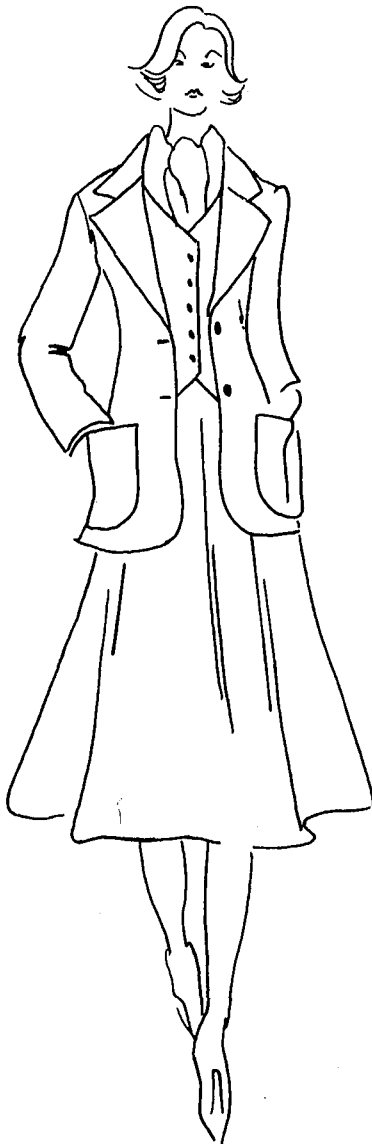
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# Put It All Together

LOIS GOERING, Extension Clothing Specialist



## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

How will it look? Will this fabric look right with this pattern? Will the combination look nice on me? How often have you asked these questions as you were shopping for a pattern and fabric? And then, as you began to sew, you may still have wondered until you were able to try it on.

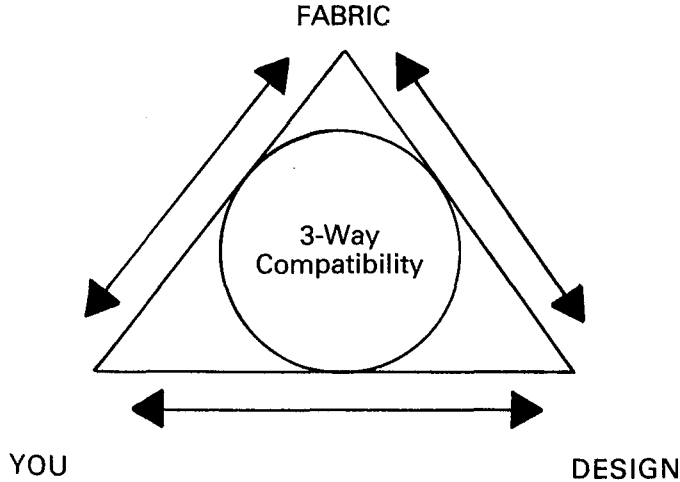
## PRACTICE MAKES IT EASIER

Practice developing your "eye" for what's right by doing some of the following activities:

1. Try on ready-to-wear to see which pattern designs and types of fabric look best on you.
2. Study the pattern catalog and fashion magazines to see what fabrics the designers have selected to use with a variety of garment designs.
3. Browsing in a fabric store, try to visualize the fabrics you like made in a variety of styles.
4. Look through the pattern catalog; imagine the crispness, weight, and surface design of fabric that would be most suitable for the patterns you like.
5. Look carefully at what fabrics are suggested on the pattern envelope. If you do not want to use any of the specific fabrics suggested, think of the characteristics of those fabrics. What weight are the suggested fabrics? Are the suggested fabrics soft, crisp, or in between? Have they recommended that any fabrics not be used (such as diagonal patterns, plaids, stripes, etc.)?
6. As you study your pattern, try holding the fabric in the general shape of the design. For example, if the pattern is cut on the bias, try holding the fabric by one corner to see how that fabric hangs on the bias. Does the fabric hang in folds similar to those illustrated in the pattern illustration?

### THREE-WAY COMPATIBILITY

The way a garment will look on you depends on three factors: you, the pattern you select, and the fabric you select. All three are important. Your figure and personality affect what garment designs and fabrics will look and feel right on you. The pattern you select will limit the choices of fabric you can use for this outfit. If you have already decided on the fabric, it will limit your choice of patterns. You have important decisions to make when you sew. Your decisions will either create the overall effect you want in that particular garment, or create a costly mistake. A mistake in selection of either the pattern or fabric will result in a garment you don't enjoy wearing (and may never finish making.) None of us want to spend time and money making clothes that just hang in the closet.



(Adapted from: *Three-Way Compatibility of Fabric, Design, and Anatomical Structure*; Jean Goodrick, Purdue University.)



### YOU AND THE PATTERN DESIGN

The pattern design you select can help you look your best and it can eliminate or cause fitting problems. The pattern should also be right for your personality and activities. Until you develop the skill to automatically select those "right for you" patterns, you should study yourself carefully.

**Personal Analysis** —What are you like? How do you look? Do you have a perfect figure or do you wish you were taller or shorter, heavier or thinner? Do you wish your proportions were different?

Take a good look at yourself in the mirror wearing only your undergarments. Stand facing the mirror.

Don't look at all the details. Squint at yourself and look at your general body shape. The average figure has shoulders and hips about the same width. Do you? Which are wider?

What is your general hip shape? Is your hip silhouette shape average, with your fullest measurement 7 inches to 9 inches below your waist with a gradual rounding from your waist to your hips like a dress form? Or is your fullest hip measurement just 3 inches to 5 inches below the waist in high, rounded heart-shaped hips? Maybe you have diamond-shaped hips with the fullest part about 12 inches below your waist and the fullness at the side of the upper thighs.

Now stand with your side to the mirror. Is the placement of your bustline high, medium, or low? Do you have a flat, rounded, or protruding tummy? How does your body line up from the side? Can you draw a straight line from your ear through your shoulder, hips, and ankles? Or is your posture such that your hips tilt backward, making your seat protrude? Or your hips might tilt forward, causing a very flat, tucked under seat.

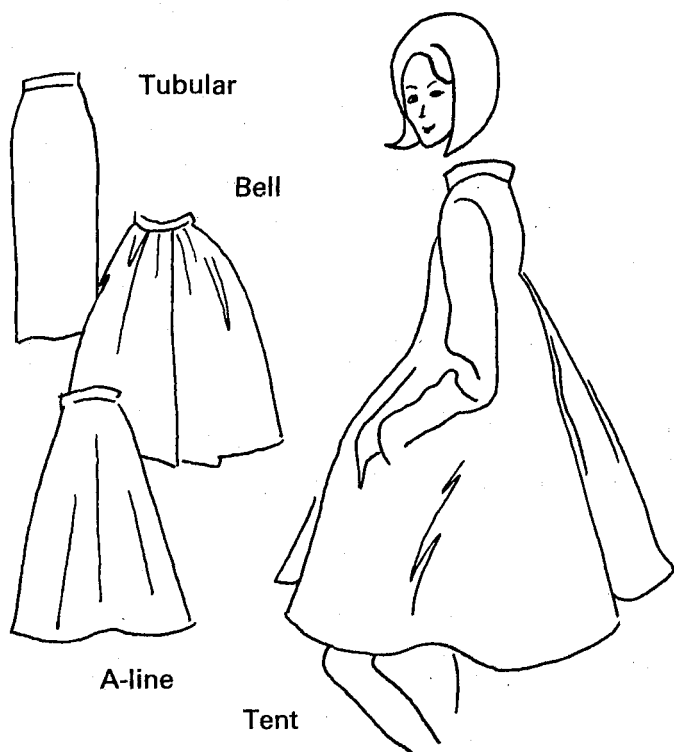
If you are having problems analyzing your figure, think about how ready-to-wear garments or your home-sewn garments fit. Do you usually have trouble finding clothes that fit? If a garment is a fairly basic straight design, do you know that a part of it is apt to be tight or too big? If it is usually too snug right below the waist, you probably have the heart-shaped hips or a protruding tummy. If you know that pants usually are too tight just at crotch level, you may have the diamond-shaped side hips. If you often have a wrinkle just below the waist in back, you may have the hips that tilt backward. Or, if pants usually droop just below your

seat, you probably have hips that tilt forward (creating a very flat seat).

**Design Analysis** —The first thing you notice about an outfit someone is wearing is its general shape. Is it tubular, A-line, bell-shaped, or tent-shaped? The general silhouette of a garment will affect how it looks on you. Usually, you will appear to be the heaviest where the silhouette is widest. You will find that some silhouettes are better for you. Try a variety of clothes on in a store to observe the effect of different silhouettes on your appearance.

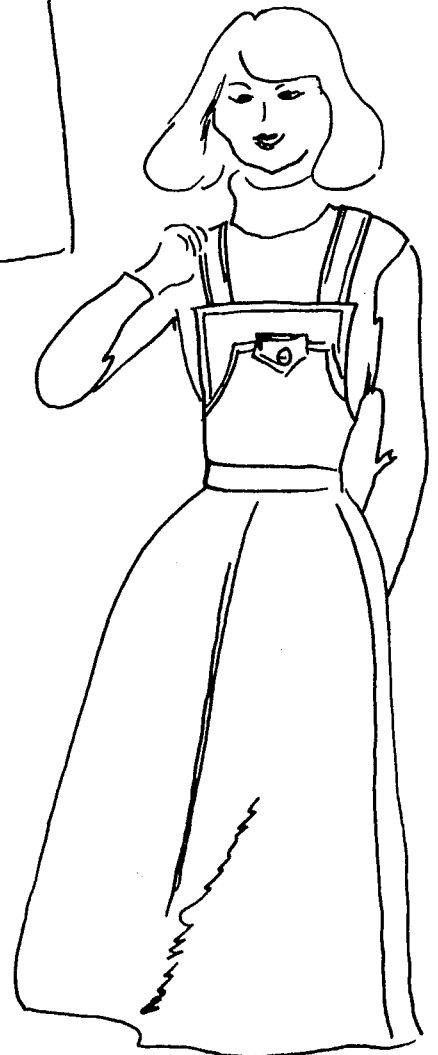
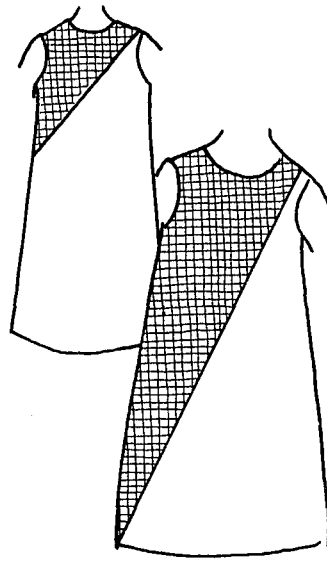
Where and how fullness is added to the garment design will affect the size you appear to be. Gathers at the waistline will make that area appear larger. Full gathered sleeves will add width at the shoulder or hip line, depending on the location of the gathers. A bodice gathered onto a yoke may make your bustline appear fuller.

Seams and design details in garments affect your appearance. In general, vertical lines in garments will give the illusion of height and make you appear narrower. Horizontal lines will give the illusion of width and make you appear shorter.





Horizontal lines create the illusion of width. They generally shorten the appearance of your figure and add width where the line goes across the body. Horizontal design lines can be created by the use of pocket flaps, patch pockets, hems, yokes, waistline seams, belts, etc. They can be used to balance body proportions. For example, if you are narrow through the shoulders and wider in the hipline, use a yoke in the shoulder area and a plain skirt to widen the shoulders and balance your figure. Diagonal lines can be very flattering to the figure that is not well proportioned. They can be used to camouflage. The degree of slant determines whether the diagonal lines act more like a vertical or horizontal line.



Vertical lines are created by any seams that go up and down in the garment design. You will notice seam lines, vertical slash pockets, tabs and plackets, buttons and trims, single knife pleats, and other vertical lines in today's patterns. The more contrast or attention that is drawn to a vertical line, the more it affects your appearance.

Two or more vertical lines can sometimes add apparent width to the body. When vertical lines are closely spaced, they act like a single vertical line and give the illusion of length. If the lines are far apart, as they are in some dresses with a front panel, your eye travels back and forth and you get the impression of width. The same widening effect may occur if there are many parallel lines, as in a skirt with narrow knife pleats all around. The eye gets caught in the rhythm of the parallel lines and moves from side to side. If two or more vertical lines are not parallel, they will add width to the figure where they are farthest apart.



**How Will It Look?** Carefully study the pattern you are considering. What is the general silhouette? What design lines are used? Where are the horizontal lines that will add width to your figure? Are they located at the wide or narrow part of your figure? Will the lines in the pattern design tend to balance your figure proportions or will they tend to emphasize parts of your shape you would rather not notice?

Remember that your interpretation of the pattern as you construct your garment will influence how dominant the design lines are. Design lines are most noticeable if there is a change of color or pattern at the seam or if the seam is topstitched in a contrasting color. You can play down the effect of the design line by keeping the fabric the same in both parts of the garment, using a small print, and using a plain seam (no topstitching).

**How Will It Fit?** For good fit, you must purchase the pattern size and type best for you. Use your measurements and the pattern measurement chart to make this decision. You will find that some patterns require many alterations and others only a few to achieve good fit. Look for patterns that will allow for your figure irregularities. If you are full through the hipline, look for patterns that allow extra design ease in the hip area. If your waistline is larger than the pattern measurement chart indicates for your size, select garments that are loosely fitted in the waistline. Make sewing easy. Consider ways to achieve good fit without making a large number of pattern alterations.

Patterns are usually easier to alter if they have side seams (instead of darts in the location of a seam.) Waist, bust, and hips are easier to alter if there is a waistline seam. Alterations in the shoulder area are easier if there is a shoulder seam instead of a yoke. Think of alterations you often need to make and select

patterns that will be easy to alter to fit you.

**Does the Pattern Look Like You?** Some patterns just seem to look like they were designed for you. You never seem to consider those patterns with the low-cut necklines, or those for very tailored dresses, or the soft feminine dresses. Is it because "It just doesn't look like me?"

We express our personalities through the clothes we wear. That low-cut neckline may make you feel sexy, the tailored dress may make you feel inhibited, or the soft dress may make you feel too young to be the mother of three teenagers. Oh, but you do have just one dress with a low-cut neckline for the times when you want to feel romantic? We all have different types of garments for different activities and for different moods. To make wise clothing decisions, we must consider personality and life style.

What kind of a person are you? Do you enjoy wearing the very latest fashions? Do you like being the first to wear a new style? Or do you prefer comfortable clothes that do not call attention to you? Do you like to have clothes of high quality fabrics in classic garment designs? Would you classify yourself as dramatic, classic, romantic, or casual as you think of your personality and activities?

The type of person you are affects the general feeling you will want to express in most of your clothing. For example, if you are a very active, casual person, most of the time you will probably be comfortable and feel best in clothes that allow for activity and that look casual. But you may want to have one or two dramatic or classic outfits for the times when you want to dress up and feel special. Most of us have clothing that reflects more than one type of feeling. The following chart shows fashion details that reflect different types of personalities in garments.

## Clothing Design Personality

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### DRAMATIC

Newest fashions and design details. Severe lines such as high, tight collars, deep v-necklines. Large plain areas with little design detailing. Long tunics, dolman sleeves, clinging silhouettes. Informal balance.

### CLASSIC

Simple tailored lines in garments. Conservative fashions. Bows and ties at the neckline.

### ROMANTIC

Soft-looking fashions which show off the figure. Fitted bodices with full skirts. Soft, draped collars; low, rounded necklines.

### CASUAL

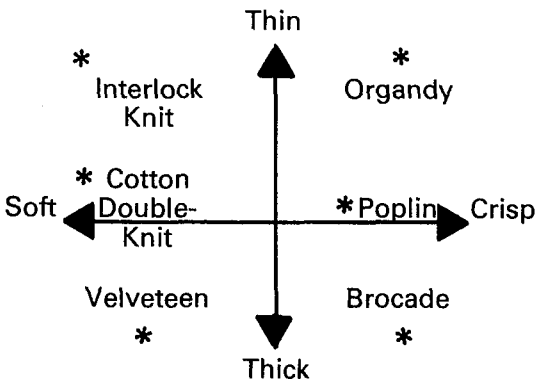
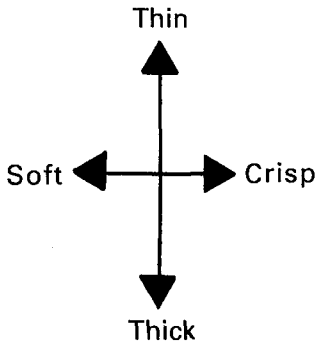
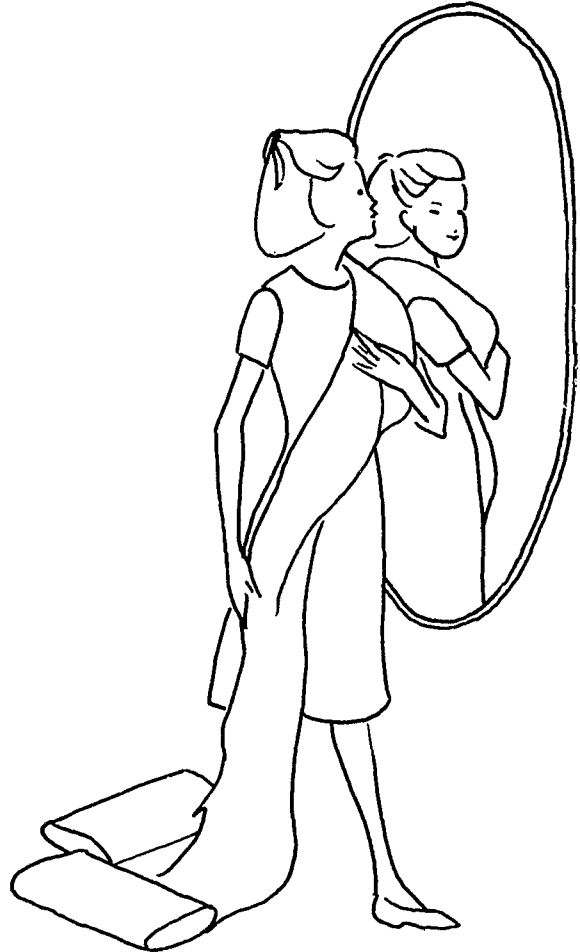
Neat and comfortable clothes. Clothes with no unusual features. Pants worn frequently. Tailored blouses with shirt-type collars. Wrap skirts.

# YOU AND THE FABRIC

The fabric you select should be suitable for your figure and personality. The weight and crispness of a fabric influences how it will look on your figure. The surface design and crispness of the fabric will affect how well it reflects your personality.

**Fabric Weight and Crispness**—Fabric weight varies from thin lightweight fabrics to thick or bulky heavy-weight fabrics. Those same fabrics vary from very soft to very crisp. The way these two characteristics of fabric are combined affect how much thickness or weight they add to the body in garments you wear.

As you analyze a fabric to determine the effect on how heavy you look, decide where you would put it on the chart. Would it be a thin, crisp fabric such as organ-dy, or a thin, soft fabric such as the very lightweight interlock knits? Is the heavy fabric you are considering for a garment a thick, soft fabric such as velveteen or corduroy, or is it a thick, crisp fabric such as a brocade? Or are you considering a mediumweight, crisp fabric, such as poplin, or a mediumweight, soft fabric such as a cotton double knit? When you have analyzed a fabric for thickness and crispness, you can begin to predict how it will look on your figure.



**Fabric and Your Figure**—A soft and drapeable fabric will tend to follow your body curves and will reveal any figure irregularities. If you want to disguise figure irregularities, you may find that you prefer to use very soft fabrics in blouses or tops that will be worn with jackets rather than as entire dresses. If you find a soft fabric that you want to use in a dress, but it is too clingy, you may want to underline the dress in a crisper fabric to make it stand away from your body slightly.

Fabric with more crispness will hold its own shape and stand away from the body, hiding figure irregularities. With the fabric slightly away from your body, no one knows for sure that you have a little roll just above the waistline or a tummy that protrudes slightly.

Very crisp, thick fabrics add bulk and weight to the figure. Quilted fabrics with several bulky layers also are thick and add weight to your appearance. Since they do add weight to the figure, crisp and thick fabrics look the best on average to tall slender people.

Fabrics of moderate thickness and crispness are good choices for people who are heavy. They do not cling and do not reveal exact body contours.

People who do not want to call attention to body irregularities are safest selecting fabrics that do not have extremely noticeable texture. Fabrics that are very thick or thin, soft or stiff, or shiny tend to call attention to the figure. Relatively dull, smooth fabrics of medium weight are easiest to use successfully.

**Fabric and Your Personality**—The fabrics you wear tell people something about you—that you are dramatic, classic, romantic, or casual. You will feel more comfortable wearing fabric that gives others an accurate picture of you.



## Fabric Personality

### DRAMATIC

Bold prints with space between parts of the design. Vibrant colors. Extremes in fabric texture—very smooth and shiny, very bulky and rough. Unusual fabrics.

### CLASSIC

Plain colored fabrics or closely spaced, stylized designs. Relatively flat surface texture. Distinctive, unusual fabrics.

### ROMANTIC

Soft fabrics. Dainty prints in soft colors. Sheer fabrics and those that drape well.

### CASUAL

Rough to moderately smooth textures. Plain colored fabrics with surface texture such as corduroy, seersucker, suede. Plaids and stripes.

## THE PATTERN AND FABRIC

Some people seem to have a knack for selecting the right fabric for the pattern they are using—or for finding just the right pattern for the fabric they want to use. Most of us need practice to become skillful in coordinating patterns and fabrics. With practice, we can learn to recognize suitable fabrics for specific patterns and to combine fabrics successfully.

To select the appropriate fabric for a pattern, examine the pattern carefully. Look at the pattern silhouette, the number and placement of seams, the method and location of shaping in the pattern, and the use of fullness in all parts of the garment. You should also check to see if the pattern is made especially for knit fabrics. If it is, what amount of stretch is needed for comfortable, attractive fit?





**Silhouette** —The silhouette is the general shape of the garment. In looking at a pattern, analyze what the fabric must do to maintain the silhouette intended by the designer. If the garment is to fall close to the body, a soft, drapable fabric is needed. If it is to stand away in a structured shape (an A-line or bell skirt), the fabric should have some body and crispness.

**Shaping** —How is shape created in the garment—gathers, darts, seams, pleats, tucks? The type of shaping influences your choice of a soft or crisp, bulky or thin, firm or loose fabric. Most garments that are shaped with gathers look best in soft, light- to medium-weight fabrics. When the shape is created by either darts or seams, almost any fabric weight or crispness will look right. Closely fitted garments need a firm, medium- to heavyweight fabric. A soft, lightweight fabric may look skimpy in a close-fitted garment.

**Fullness** —It is often difficult to visualize the amount of width in a skirt or sleeves and how that width will look in a particular fabric. In general, the fuller the pattern is, the softer and lighter in weight the fabric should be. A heavy fabric tends to appear bulky in a full skirt, and a soft fabric seems skimpy in a straight or slightly flared garment.

The way the fullness is incorporated into the garment also makes a difference in what weight of fabric will look best in the pattern. A **STRAIGHT GATHERED** skirt looks best in fairly lightweight fabric. Gathers will give a puffy look to crisp or stiff fabrics. If the straight fullness is controlled by pleats or tucks, the fabric should be firm with some crispness, but not bulky or stiff. When fullness is created through **SHAPED GORES** with most of the fullness near the lower edge, the fabric needs a little more body and crispness. Fabrics of medium weight and crispness are most appropriate for gores. Softer and lighter weight fabrics can be used in patterns with **CIRCULAR FULLNESS**. These garments put a great deal of fullness near the bottom without bulk at the top of the garment. Fabrics such as broadcloth, gingham, chambray, and poplin are good in garments with circular fullness.

**Design Lines** —A very detailed pattern with seams is usually most attractive when used with a plain fabric. The design of the fabric and pattern both lose their effect when there is a lot of activity in both. So, for a busy pattern (one with many seams), use a plain fabric; for a simple pattern (few seams), select a fabric with a pattern. One or the other should be interesting. Also consider that design details such as welt seams or topstitched seams may not show in a print.

Study the types of lines in both the pattern and fabric. A garment looks more coordinated if straight lines in the design of the fabric (stripes and plaids especially) are used with straight lines in the design of the pattern (collar shape, yoke shapes, etc.). And if the fabric has a design with rounded lines, the same lines might be used in the pattern in details such as a scooped neckline, curved patch pockets, etc.

**For a quick reference, check the charts on the next two pages for suggested pattern and fabric coordination.**



**Pattern design****Appropriate fabrics**

<b>SILHOUETTE</b>	
Close to the body	Soft fabrics that drape and fall close to the body with enough firmness to maintain garment shape.
Tubular	Fabrics of medium crispness that will stand away from the body slightly and not reveal body irregularities.
Bell	Moderately crisp fabrics that will stand away from the body and maintain the shape of the garment.
Bouffant	Crisp fabrics that will puff when gathered.
Straight leg pants	Medium to crisp fabrics that will stand away from the body, but not appear baggy.
Wide leg pants	Soft fabrics for party-type wide leg pants. Crisp fabrics for daytime wear.
Blouson	Soft fabrics that will drape well and fall close to the body.
<b>SHAPING</b>	
Full gathers	Soft fabrics that will not puff when gathered. Fabric should hang in soft folds. Lightweight to sheer fabrics.
Medium gathers	Soft to medium crispness in fabrics.
Slight gathers	Fabrics of medium weight and crispness. If too soft, the garment may tend to look skimpy. If too crisp, the garment may puff out where gathers are used.
Darts	Most fabrics are appropriate.
Pleats or tucks	Crisp fabrics that will take and hold a crease, but not appear stiff or bulky. Firm weave or knit.
<b>DESIGN DETAILS</b>	
Simple design (few seams)	Interesting fabric with striking design details or interesting texture. Good for plaids and other designs that require matching.
Detailed structural design (many seams)	Solid color fabric with flat texture so garment design will be the dominant feature of the garment.
Tailored or tailored-looking garment	Firm fabric of medium weight and crispness. Pliable fabrics with body.

## DESIGN DETAILS continued

Soft-looking design  
(cowl neckline, full  
but close to the body design)

Soft fabric with enough weight to hang in soft folds. Lightweight or sheer fabrics.

## Fabric crispness

## Appropriate patterns

Very soft

Full garments with gathers or draped effects such as cowl neckline. Patterns intended to fall close to the body. Designs intended to be clingy or slinky.

Soft

Fullness in garment. Gathers or draping. Designs intended to fall close to the body.

Medium

Pants. Tailored garments with design intended to stand slightly away from the body. Slight gathers or darts for shaping. Can be used in A-line or tubular silhouette.

Crisp

Garments with design intended to stand away from the body. A-line or design that hangs from the shoulders. Good for basic pants without pleats.

Stiff

A-line, structured patterns that are intended to stand away from the body. All shaping in darts or seams unless design is very bouffant. Gathers tend to puff out.

## Type of fabric design

## Appropriate pattern

Small or all-over print  
or other design

Almost any style pattern will be suitable.

Large and bold prints

Pattern with only a few seams and darts shows fabric off best. Match print carefully. Be careful in placement of fabric design on the body.

Border prints

Watch for pattern with hem and sleeve on straight grain so border can be used to advantage. Consider using border in yokes, collars, and cuffs also. Watch for patterns pictured in border prints.

Stripes and plaids

Matching is a must, so watch for patterns with few seams and yokes. Garments are interesting when fabric is cut on the bias and a chevron forms on main parts of the garment. Look for patterns pictured in stripes and plaids.

Plain color  
(no decorative design)

Any pattern. Most interesting if garment pattern has details. Very good for topstitched details.

## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

As you select fabrics and patterns for the garments you construct, keep in mind the three-way compatibility that is important in creating the garment that is just

right for you and for each other. Practice will help you to be able to recognize those "right" combinations more easily.

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