Good pressing is essential in achieving the quality look in tailored garments. The home seamstress should learn to press each detail of the construction as well as to give a careful final pressing to completed garment.

A WELL-PRESSED GARMENT WILL HAVE:

- smooth seams
- crisp, sharp creases on the collar, lapels, hems, and pockets
- a natural finish on the right side, free from shiny areas or "show-through" seam allowances
- a smooth, rounded look over curved areas of the body
- a neat, finished, professional appearance

PRESSING VS. IRONING

Pressing is a lifting and lowering motion with an iron to mold, shape, and smooth a garment. Here steam is more important than pressure.

Ironing is gliding the iron over dry or damp clothes after they have been washed. Ironing techniques are never used in tailoring.

EQUIPMENT USED IN PRESSING:

**Necessary tools**
- Iron
- Ironing board
- Double-fabric press cloth
- Tailor's ham
- Pounding block
- Point presser
- Tissue roll
- Tailor's roll

**Other helpful aids**
- Velvet or needle board for pressing fleece, velvet, and other naps
- Dart opener
- Sleeve board
- Pressing mitt
- Clothes brush for napped surfaces
- Metal hem gauge for pressing hems
- Strips of plain paper

USING PRESSING AIDS

A steam iron is preferable, but a dry iron may be used. Select an iron with a thermostatic heat control.

- Set iron temperature for WOOL (med. low-350°-375°)
- Use minimum amount of pressure on iron.
- Press mainly with the tip of the iron.
- Leave some moisture in the wool to dry naturally.
- Always press with the grain of the fabric.
- Always use a wool press cloth between the iron and your garment.
- If a dry iron is used, use a damp cheesecloth over your wool press cloth to create steam.
Surface should be padded and large enough to press long seams and large areas.

Place between the iron and your garment fabric to prevent shining or crushing the surface of the fabric. A good press cloth for tailoring can be made by sewing a light-weight, color-fast wool back-to-back with cotton duck or drill. A 12-to-14 inch square is a convenient size.

Use for molding curved areas around darts, hiplines, shoulders, etc. They may be purchased or made at home. A good ham is of sufficient size, firmly stuffed, and has a smooth wool covering on at least one side. Your home economics Extension agent has directions for making a ham.

Also called a clapper, beater, or spanker, it is used to make sharp creases at the edge of the jacket and coat collars, lapels, and hemlines. Clappers are made of oak, ash, maple or any other hardwood cut to size and sanded. Your home economics agent has a pattern for making a pounding block, or you can buy them commercially.

Designed for pressing into corners of collars, pockets, and other details, it is also useful for pressing seam allowances open since the seams do not show through if pressed over this tool. Point pressers are made of smoothly-sanded hardwood. Your home economics agent has a pattern for making one. They are also available commercially.

NOTE: A point presser can be mounted on a pounding block, making a dual purpose pressing device.

Used in steaming out fullness from the seam allowance of a sleeve cap. They are not available commercially, but are easy and inexpensive to make by covering a roll of toilet tissue neatly with color-fast wool.
Useful in pressing seams open without allowing them to show on the right side of the garment. They are especially useful in pressing sleeves and pants legs. Tailor's rolls can be bought or made either of two ways:

1. Cut a lengthwise slice from a rolling pin so it has a flat surface. Use the larger portion.

2. Roll a heavy magazine tightly and cover with color-fast woolen fabric. Whip the fabric cover along the lengthwise edge and across the ends.

Fleece coating or any fabric with a thick nap should be pressed on a velvet or needle board to avoid crushing the nap. These boards have a surface of short, fine wires or a sturdy napped fabric made especially for this purpose. These are available commercially.

A thin piece of wood (such as a tongue depressor) trimmed like the illustration is helpful in pressing darts open to the point.

This small version of a regular ironing board is useful for pressing sleeves, children's clothes, pants legs, and other small hard-to-reach areas.

This padded mitt may be slipped over the hand or end of a sleeve board for pressing shoulders, sleeve caps, and other small curved areas to be molded by steam. It is similar to a tailor's ham.

This flexible aluminum gauge is very handy for measuring and pressing hems of any width on both straight and curved hemlines. It prevents the possibility of imprinting the hemline on the right side of the garment.
These strips can be placed under seam allowances, pocket flaps, etc., to avoid imprints on the right side. They are cut approximately 3"-4" wide and 12" long. Brown wrapping paper or thin cardboard is suitable; newsprint is never used because the ink may rub off on the fabric.

PRESSING YOUR GARMENT DURING CONSTRUCTION

Press each step before proceeding to the next one. However, avoid unnecessary or too much pressing as this makes your garment look old before it is completed.

Always press seams open (or as directed in your pattern) before stitching another seam across it. On smooth-finished flannels and worsted fabrics imprints imprints of the seam allowance and other details show through on the right side. Test press a seam in your fabric to see if this will be a problem.

To avoid imprints on the right side:

1. Slip strips of paper under the seam allowance before pressing.

   or

2. Press seam open over a point presser or tailors' roll.

Open the seam, cover with a wool press cloth, and press lightly with the tip of the iron.

Curved seams, such as hiplines, raglan sleeves, etc. should be pressed over a ham to maintain the curve.

Always press darts over a ham to maintain the curve created by the dart. Never press beyond the tip of the dart.

If the dart is wider than \( \frac{1}{2}" \):

a. Trim entire dart to a width of \( \frac{1}{2}" \).

b. At the point where the dart tapers to \( \frac{1}{2}" \), make a
diagonal slash toward the tip to within 1/8" of the stitching.

c. Open dart and press down to the slash.

d. Slip dart opener or slender knitting needle into point of dart and press this section, spreading bulk evenly on both sides of the stitching.

If dart is narrower than 1/2":

a. If fabric does not ravel easily, slash 1" down through the fold line of dart from raw edge. Press as for larger dart.

or

b. If your fabric ravel easily, do not slash fold, but press entire dart in the direction indicated on the pattern.

If your fabric does not ravel easily, slash 1" down through the fold line of dart from raw edge. Press as for larger dart.

a. Press open the seam along these edges and grade seams. Turn facing back to form a crease. Roll seam very slightly to the facing side.

b. Working from the facing side, place wool press cloth over the crease and thoroughly steam a small area. Hold the weight of the iron in your hand while the steam is being formed.

c. Remove the press cloth and "spank" the steaming fabric sharply with the pounding block. Hold it firmly against the fabric for a few seconds to force the steam through all layers of the fabric.

d. Continue steaming and pounding along the crease line until the entire crease is flat and sharp.

Apply pressure on the pounding block according to your type of fabric. Wiry woolens may require extra pressure and perhaps repeated pressure.

The most important pressing in a sleeve is done before the sleeve is stitched into the armhole.

a. Pin sleeve into the armhole, gather threads around sleeve cap to fit armhole, and tie threads securely. Unpin sleeve.

b. Place seam allowance of sleeve cap over one end of a tissue roll. With the tip of the iron, gently steam fullness from the seam allowance. Do not steam beyond seamline.

c. When fullness has been molded smoothly, baste and stitch sleeve into armhole. Top press if necessary over a pressing mitt or ham.

A sleeve board or tailor's roll should be used in pressing sleeves to prevent making a lengthwise crease.
For straight hems, place the hem gauge on the marks indicating the measured hemline. Press hem up over gauge, thus eliminating an extra row of basting.

For curved hems, the fullness of the turned-up hem should be gathered by a row of stitching to fit the outer fabric. Slip hem gauge between the hem and the outer fabric and ease the fullness smooth with steam. The gauge prevents the steam from affecting the outer layer of fabric.


A pounder may be used along the edge of hems to give them a sharp creaseline (see Pressing Lapels, Collars, etc.). Never press hem at the stitched edge because this may cause an imprint on the right side.

PRESSING FABRICS WITH SPECIAL PROBLEMS

Lining fabrics:

Many lining fabrics will water-circle very easily so be careful to avoid excess steam or drops of water spattered from the steam iron. (One type of lining that may be affected is the acetate tricot bonded to wool flannel.) Since linings are usually made of man-made fibers, they must be pressed with a temperature lower than is used for wool. Before pressing your actual lining, test your lining fabric to see how it is affected by moisture and heat.

Fleece and fabric with a deep nap:

These fabrics must be pressed over a needle board or velvet board to avoid crushing the nap. Sharp, crisp creases cannot be achieved in a long-napped fabric. Hand-picking may be used to give a professional appearance to edges of collars, lapels and front edges. For best results, choose a loose-fitting style with a minimum of tailored details.

Woolen fabric laminated to foam:

Never let the iron touch the foam side. Use a pressing cloth or paper strips to protect the foam while pressing. Top stitching by hand or machine is necessary to achieve a flat edge around collar, lapels and down front edges.

FINAL PRESSING AFTER CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETED

Final pressing, unlike construction pressing, is done on the right side. A garment pressed carefully during construction should need very little touching-up. Caution: Unreliable dry-cleaners may ruin your garment by over-pressing.

- Be careful to use a wool press cloth to avoid iron-marking your fabric.
- Press only where necessary, molding curved areas (such as shoulders) lightly over a ham or pressing mitt.
- Close the zipper placket before giving that area a final pressing.
- Press over any areas that have been wrinkled during construction or storage. Remember—always press with the grain of the fabric.

After the garment has been pressed, place it on a wooden or padded hanger. Close all buttons and other closures that will help keep the grain straight. Store in a closet with enough room to guard against crushing or crowding among other garments.

Published by

THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE


October 1965

Home Economics 27