

# Making Perfect Pants

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## Guide C-227

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Women's fashions come and go, but pants are here to stay. Although the basic shape may change from season to season, pants have become a favorite fashion for women of all ages and for all kinds of activities.

Every woman who wears pants wants them to look good and feel comfortable when she stands, sits, and walks. Three key factors contribute to successful dressing in pants: style, fabric, and fit.

### KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PANTS

#### Style

The first key is knowing which pants styles to avoid and which styles to use with your figure type. Pants styles fall into three basic silhouettes—fitted, straight, and flared. The silhouette you select should be flattering to your figure type.

Seams, darts, gathers, and pleats may be used to shape the silhouette and create a horizontal or vertical illusion in the pants design. Other design details include pockets, yokes, trim of any kind, and the waistline treatment. Select pants that have a flattering silhouette as well as flattering design features.

Follow these basic guidelines for selecting a flattering pant style:

- Shorter-than-average figures look taller when pants and top are the same color.
- A tall person looks shorter if the pants and top are different colors or textures.
- Wide legs create an illusion of fullness.
- Fitted legs are unflattering for the too-thin as well as for the too-full figure.
- Flared legs are flattering to tall, slender figures.
- Straight legs are a good choice for the figure with full thighs or a prominent derriere.

- Gathers or pleats at the waistline emphasize a protruding abdomen.
- If you have a very curvy figure, select a style that has two waistline darts on each side of center front and back. Avoid a side zipper opening.
- Avoid hip-hugger styles if you have full thighs and/or prominent hips.

#### Fabric Selection

The second key to attractive pants is correct fabric selection. Denim, sports cloth, corduroy, velveteen, gabardine, and a variety of medium-weight blends are suitable for pants. The fabric should be firmly woven to hold its shape and wear well. It should drape over the figure gracefully and should have good wrinkle resistance. Knits are usually a good choice for comfort, but the weight of the knit determines its success as a pants fabric. Avoid soft, clingy knits for most pants fashions—they emphasize figure flaws.

Consider fabric texture and design carefully. Some textured fabrics will be scratchy and require a lining; others will be too bulky for pants.

Select plaids and prints with color and size of plaid or print in mind. The appropriateness of a printed fabric for pants should also be considered.

White and light-colored fabrics may require a lining or underlining to prevent undergarments and seam allowances from showing through. Be certain the fabric selected for lining or underlining has the same care requirements as the fashion fabric.

#### Fit

Fit is the third key to pants comfort and attractive appearance. Pants should fit comfortably at the waistline and fall smoothly over the hips and thighs. In well-fitted pants, the lengthwise grainline is perpendicular to the floor and creases in the legs are on the straight grain. Pants length will vary according to the silhouette.

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Some problems to avoid when making (or buying) pants include:

- Ripples at the waistline.
- Wrinkles at the crotch.
- Baginess at the crotch.
- Waistline pulling down at center back or center front.
- Pressed creases that hang off-grain.

Avoid pants that are too tight. Not only are they uncomfortable, but they also accentuate figure flaws.

## SELECTING A PATTERN SIZE

If you are making pants for the first time (or for the hundredth time), the pattern size you select will be important in altering the pattern for an attractive fit. Because fit at the hip is difficult to alter, select a pattern size according to measurements at the fullest part of your hips, usually 8–9" below the waistline.

## FITTING YOUR PATTERN

Because patterns are designed for standard figures and because most of us are not very "standard" in size or shape, always fit your pattern before cutting. You will also need to fit the pattern because patterns vary in fit from design to design as well as from one brand of pattern to another.

What is your figure type? Some figures are full from front to back; others are wide from side to side. Some are round in front, while others are round in back. Your posture also contributes to your figure type. Because figure types vary, be aware of your own variations to help you fit your pants more successfully.

To determine your figure variations, stand in front of a full-length mirror and study your figure.

### Posture Type (Fig. 1)

Check the one that looks most like you.

*Average.* Stands fairly straight. Side seams of pants fall straight and are lined up with the ankle.

*Forward-tilted hip.* Stands in somewhat slouched manner; fairly flat, low seat, and a high prominent roll below the front waist or high prominent hip bones. This posture causes pants to sag under the seat unless the pattern is altered.

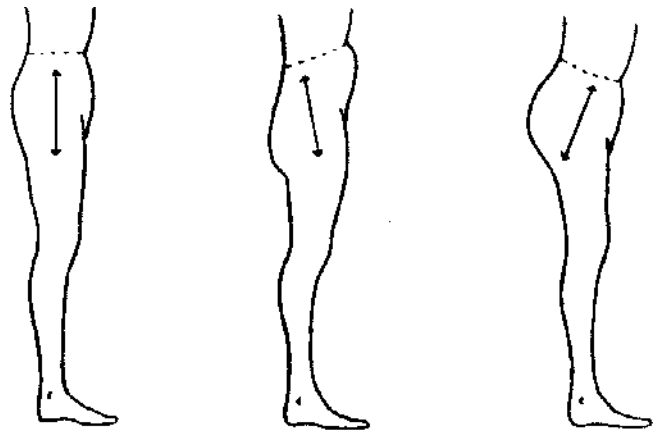


Fig. 1

*Backward-tilted hip.* Stands with tummy lower and posterior out and up. Pants hike up over the seat if the pattern crotch length is not corrected.

### Hip Type (Fig. 2)

Check the one that looks most like you.

*Average hip.* No excessive roundness directly below the waist at sides or back. There is no great side thigh prominence. The greatest circumference measurement is at the seat level, usually 7–9" below waist.

*Little difference.* Little difference between hip and waist measurement; generally doesn't have curves below the waist.

*Heart hip.* Great roundness just below the waist. The upper hip measurement taken 3–4" below the waist will be larger than the measurement at the seat level.

*Semi-heart hip.* Curves below the waistline may not appear to be as extreme as the heart shape. The lower hip circumference may be the same or up to 1 1/2" more than the measurements taken 3–4" below the waistline. There is no thigh prominence.

*Diamond hip.* Great thigh prominence at the side. The difference between the waist and lower hip measurements is 1 1/2" or more.

*Rounded diamond hip.* Great prominence at the sides as well as curves just below the waistline. This sometimes makes the difference between the waist and hip much less than a standard diamond.

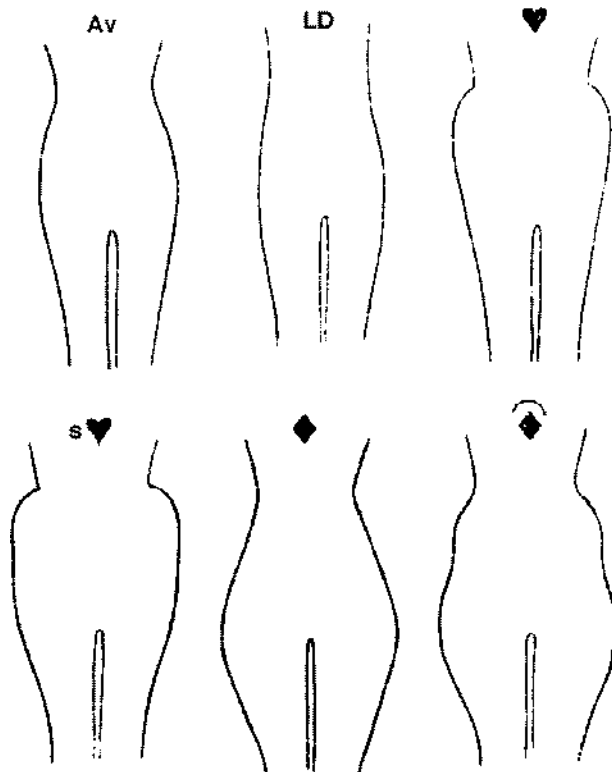


Fig. 2

After determining your figure variations, take your measurements and compare them with the measurements of your pattern. Measure over the undergarments you will wear with the pants. Have someone help you take the measurements listed on the following chart.

Take your body measurements (fig. 3) and record them on the chart on the next page.

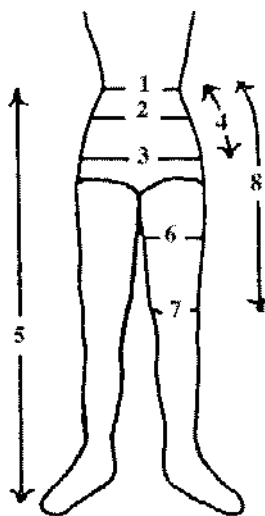


Fig. 3

1. Waist.
2. High hip (3" down at side).
3. Hip at fullest part (7-9" below waist).
4. Distance at side from waist down to fullest part of hip.
5. Pant length (waist to floor).
6. Thigh at fullest part.
7. Knee (1" above center).
8. Distance to knee from waist.

9. Crotch depth. Sit on a flat surface and measure from waist to surface on side. (Fig. 4)

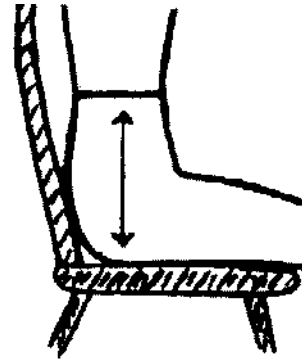


Fig. 4

10. Crotch length. Measure from center front waist through crotch to center back waist. Mark the measurement from the front waist to the center of your body and the measurement from back waist to the center of your body. (Fig. 5)



Fig. 5

After you have calculated your measurements plus "ease," compare these measurements to your pattern measurements.

### Measure Pattern

Measure your pattern at the places indicated in fig. 6 and record.

- Place the measuring tape flat across pattern for all straight measurements.
- Stand tape on edge for all measurements that are on a curve.
- Do not include darts or seam allowances in any of the measurements.
- Record these measurements on the measurement chart.

## PANTS MEASUREMENT CHART

Fill in with a pencil.

	You	+ Ease <sup>1</sup>	= Total	Pattern	Change (±)
1. Waist		1/2-1"			
2. High hip 3" down from waist at side		1/4-1"			
3. Hip at fullest part		2"			
4. Distance from waist to full hip at side		0			
5. Pant length at side (waist to floor)		for hem			
6. Thigh width at fullest part		1"			
7. Knee width 1" above center of knee		depends on style			
8. Distance to knee at side		0			
9. Crotch depth <sup>2</sup> sitting		1/2-3/4"			
10. Crotch length back		1/2-3/4"			
11. Crotch length front		1/2-3/4"			

<sup>1</sup>Ease is for comfort. It varies with style, fabric, and how you wear your clothes.

<sup>2</sup>Alter crotch depth on pattern first, as it affects crotch length.

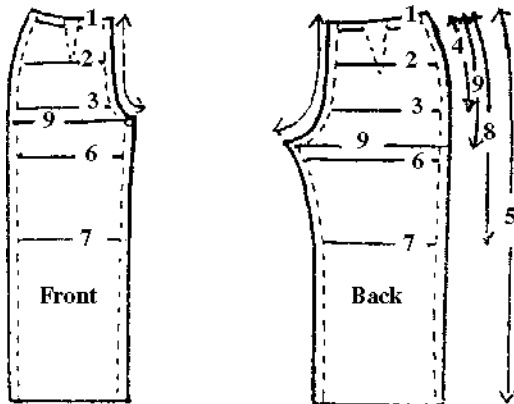


Fig. 6

Compare the measurements of your body plus ease to the pattern measurements and record any differences. If differences occur, you must alter your pattern to achieve a good fit. Techniques for altering your pattern are found below in the section "Altering Your Pattern."

### CUTTING THE PATTERN AND FABRIC

After your pattern is correctly fitted, you are ready to make your pants. Your first step will be to read the pattern guide sheet and study the pattern layout. After you are familiar with the pattern, carefully follow the instructions given on the guide sheet.

Cut out your pattern only after the fabric has been prewashed or preshrunk. Prewashing allows the fabric to relax and removes excess fabric resins that can cause problems as you sew.

Lay out the pattern pieces on the fabric as the pattern guide sheet layout suggests. Be sure to follow the "with nap" layout if your fabric has nap.

After the pattern has been cut, take time to press a crease in the front of each pants leg if required. Use the pattern markings to determine where the creases should be. Stop the crease at the crotch. To ensure a firm crease, use a damp cloth and steam. Remember, it is difficult to remove creases set in synthetic fabric, so be sure to get them in the right places.

## PANTS CONSTRUCTION

Follow the guide sheet as you sew the pants. The order will generally be as follows: stay-stitching, seam finishes (if necessary), darts, inner and side leg seams, crotch seam, zipper, waistband, and hems.

### Fitting Your Pants

After the pants have been sewn together, but before the zipper is applied, try on your pants. Pin the opening and tie a string snugly around your waistline to hold the pants up (fig. 7).

Observing the fit in a full-length mirror, adjust the pants from the waistline until the legs hang straight and the crotch is comfortably positioned. Be sure the positions of the grainline and darts are correct. Then mark the waistline directly under the string and determine the amount the darts and side seams need to be taken in or let out to achieve a good fit at the waistline.

If you make any changes, mark them on the pattern so it will be correct the next time you use it.

### Pressing

Press as you sew to achieve the best results. Press the seams open, using steam to keep them flat. To prevent the seams from creating an impression on the right side, place a piece of paper under the seam allowance as it is pressed.

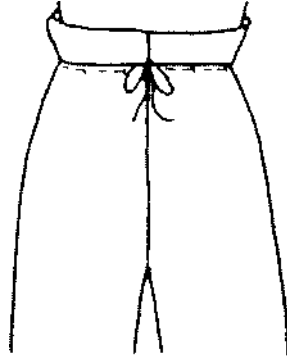


Fig. 7

## ALTERING YOUR PATTERN

### Waistline

*To increase:* Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total alteration required at each side seam. (Fig. 8)

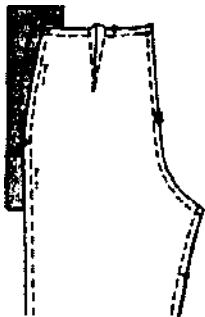


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

*To decrease:* Remove  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total alteration required at each side seam. (Fig. 9)

### Leg Shape

*To increase leg circumference:* Place a piece of paper under the front and back pattern pieces. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total increase to the inseam and outer seam of both front and back pieces. To do this, mark the addition outside the cutting lines at the hemline. Redraw cutting lines from marks at hemline, tapering to original cutting line at the desired point.

*To decrease leg circumference:* Remove  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total decrease from the inseam and outer seam of both front and back pieces. To do this, mark the decrease inside the cutting lines at the hemline. Redraw the cutting lines from the marks at the hemline, tapering to the original cutting line at the desired point.

### Length

*To increase:* Cut the pattern apart on length adjustment lines. Place tissue paper under pattern and spread the amount needed, keeping edges parallel. Pin or tape in place. Redraw seams and cutting lines.

*To decrease:* Measure the amount needed up from length adjustment lines and draw a line. Fold pattern on adjustment line and bring up to drawn line. Pin or tape in place. Redraw seams and cutting lines.

### Crotch Depth

*To lengthen:* Cut pattern apart on adjustment line. Place tissue paper under cut areas and spread pattern needed amount, keeping edges parallel. Pin or tape in place. Redraw cutting and seam lines. (Fig. 10)

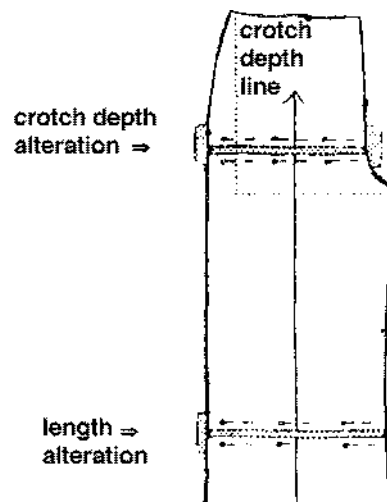


Fig. 10

*To shorten crotch depth:* Measure the amount needed up from adjustment line and draw a line across pattern. Fold pattern along adjustment line and bring it up to drawn line. Pin or tape in place. Redraw cutting and seam lines. (Fig. 11)

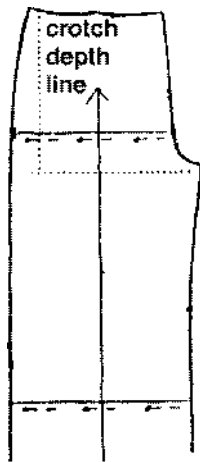


Fig. 11

### Crotch Length

*To lengthen:* Add to front and/or back inner leg seams by extending seam at crotch point. Redraw crotch curve from adjustment line to new crotch point on inner leg seam. Redraw inseam from new crotch point to the knee. (Fig. 12)

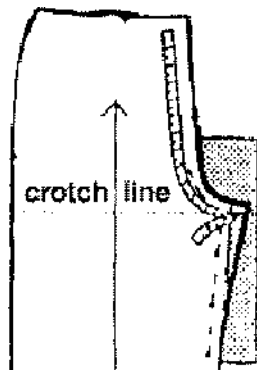


Fig. 12

*To shorten:* Mark amount needed inside cutting line on front and/or back inner leg seams. Redraw crotch curve from adjustment line to new crotch point on inner leg seam. Redraw inseam from new crotch point to the knee. (Fig. 13)

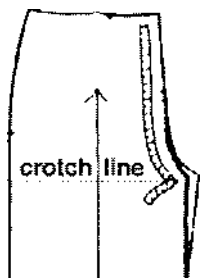


Fig. 12

### Hips

*To increase:* Pin or tape tissue paper under front and back pattern pieces along side seams. On both front and back pieces, mark  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total increase outside cutting lines along side seams. Draw new seam line. Adjust waistline as needed to achieve correct size. (Fig. 14)

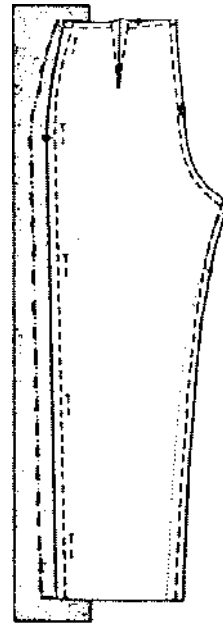


Fig. 14

*To decrease:* On both front and back pieces, mark  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total decrease inside cutting lines along side seams. Adjust waistline as needed to achieve correct size. Redraw seamline and trim off excess pattern paper. (Fig. 15)

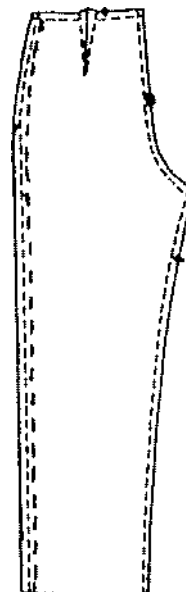


Fig. 15

## Thighs

*To increase:* Pin or tape tissue paper under front and back pattern pieces along both inseams and outer seams. Mark  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total addition along the side seams and inseams outside the cutting lines. Draw new cutting line through markings along side seam from hip, tapering into original cutting line near hem. On inseam, start new cutting line at crotch point and redraw cutting line, tapering back to original cutting line near hem. (Fig. 16)

*To decrease:* On both front and back pattern pieces, mark  $\frac{1}{4}$  the total decrease inside cutting lines of side seams and inseams. On the side seams, draw new cutting line through markings from hip, tapering to original cutting line near hem. On inseams, redraw new cutting line beginning at crotch point, tapering to original cutting line near hem. (Fig. 17)

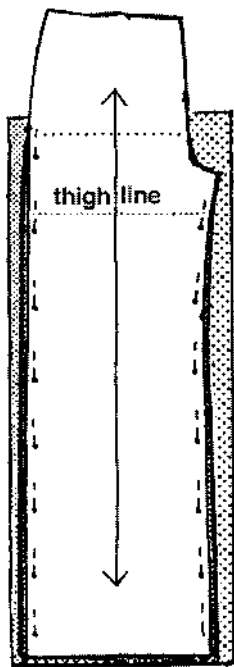


Fig. 16

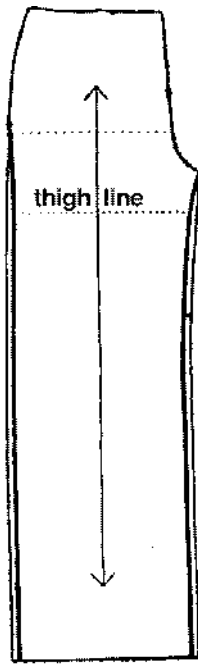


Fig. 17

## Abdomen (Adjust pants *front* pattern piece only.)

*To increase:* Draw a line parallel to the grainline through the center of waist dart from waist to hem. Draw a horizontal line about 3–4" below waistline from center front to side. Cut pattern apart on lines, then place paper under pattern. On the horizontal slash, spread the pattern the necessary amount at center front and taper to no spread at side seam. Spread vertical cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  the total increase, tapering to no spread at hem. Pin or tape in place. Redraw cutting lines, seamlines, and darts as needed. (Fig. 18)

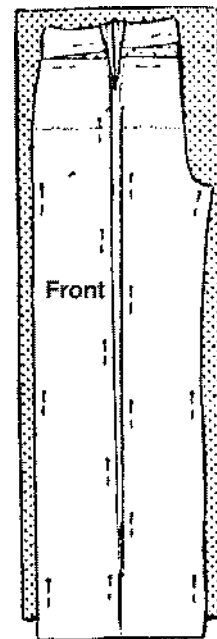


Fig. 18

## Buttocks (Adjust pants *back* pattern piece only.)

*To increase:* Draw a line parallel to grainline through center of waist dart to hem. At hipline, draw a horizontal line across pattern from center back to side. Cut pattern apart on lines, then place paper under pattern. On the horizontal line, spread the pattern the necessary amount from center back, tapering to no spread at sideseam. Spread vertical cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  the total increase, tapering to nothing at hem. Pin or tape in place. Redraw cutting lines, seamlines, and darts as needed. (Fig. 19)

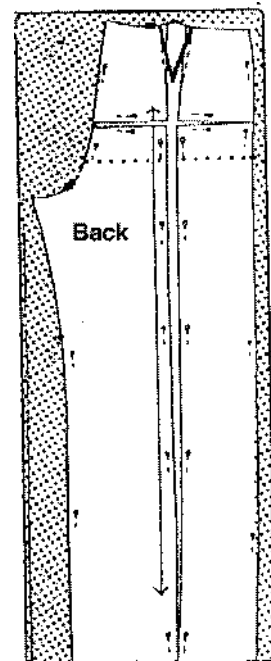


Fig. 19

*To decrease buttocks:* Draw a line parallel to grainline through center of waist dart to hem. Just above the hipline, draw a horizontal line from center back to side. Along the horizontal line, fold a tuck to remove the desired amount at center back, tapering to no tuck at side. Along the vertical line, fold a tuck to remove  $\frac{1}{2}$  the desired decrease. Pin or tape in place. Redraw cutting lines, seamlines, and darts as needed (Fig. 20).

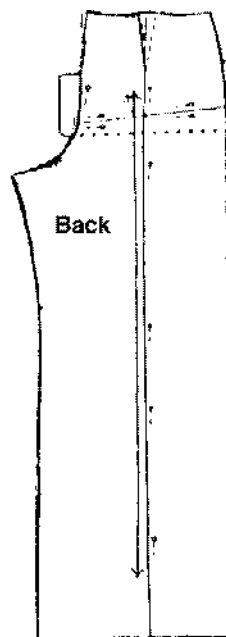


Fig. 20