

MARKING FABRIC FOR SEWING

After all the pattern pieces are cut, you can begin marking each piece. This step is of the utmost importance. It provides “road signs” showing where to sew and press. It will also speed your sewing time when done correctly. Marking will take only a little time and is not as tiring as using the tracing wheel or placing the pattern back on the fabric to look for a lost detail. By using ready-to-wear tricks, like *nips*, *notches*, and *tailor tacks* for marking, you can make your sewing projects much easier to complete. There are two areas that must be marked when you transfer the pattern marking to the cloth: *outside edges* and the *inside details*.

Notches

There are two types of notches in sewing: pattern notches and center notches.

PATTERN NOTCHES:

Pattern notches are the single or double notches printed on the pattern's cutting edges. These notches:

1. Denote center front and center back pattern pieces
2. Allow for easing and stretching
3. Avoid confusion among a number of pieces that may look alike

CENTER NOTCHES:

Center notches are small V-shaped wedges of fabric removed from a seam allowance. They should be cut into all centers and folds to indicate center and grain.

For example, when matching the neckline to the facing, match the notches in the dress to the notches in the facing. The dress will be perfectly on grain.

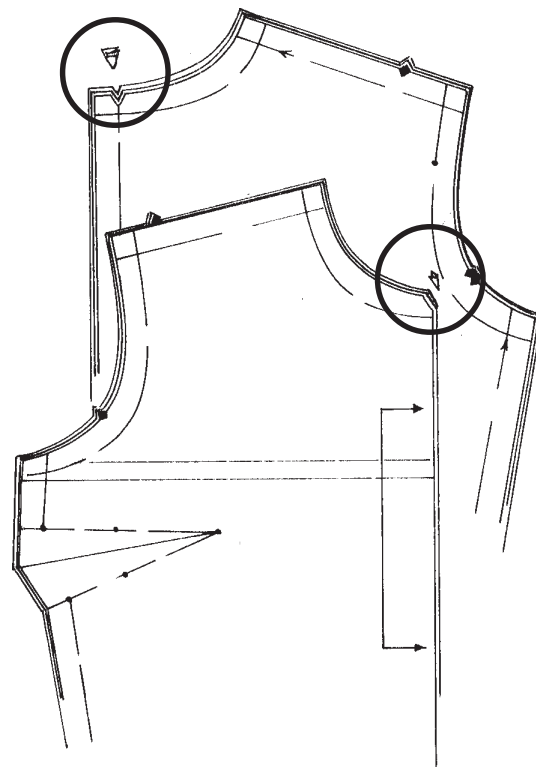
Notches should be placed on the pattern edge in the following areas:

1. All center dots in sleeve caps
2. All centers of the neckline, front and back of the garment, facings, and the collars
3. All centers in hems

Pattern Notches



Center Notches



Nips

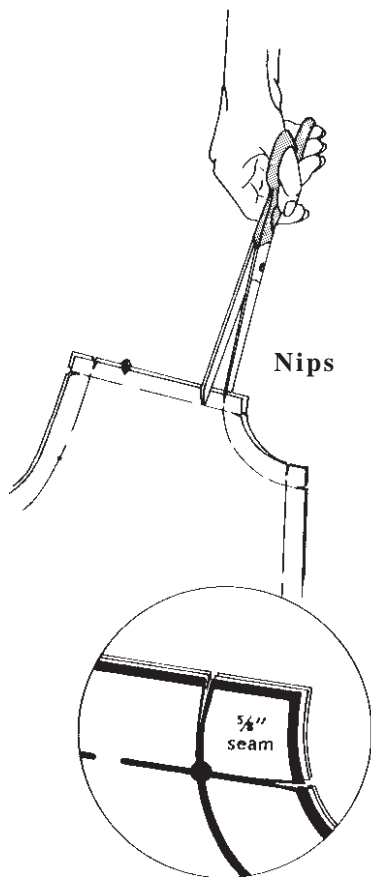
Nips are small cuts put into the outside edge of the fabric with the point of your shears. These are placed wherever the $\frac{5}{8}$ " stitching starts or stops at the edge of a seamline. When starting and ending a seam, if you match these two nips on each layer of fabric, all of your seam lines will be accurate.

It is better to sit down for pattern nipping, as you will have better control of the shears. You need to be near your work for control and simply to see what you are doing. Take one piece of the pattern and fabric (still pinned or weighted together) and carefully go all the way around each piece. Nip all the seam edge intersections:

Make nips in all the following areas:

1. $\frac{5}{8}$ " seam allowances
2. Hems at the turn-up fold line
3. Dart legs at seam edge
4. All zipper endings (or notch)
5. Pockets on seam edges (or notch)
6. Interfacing and underlining
7. Linings

If the layers of fabric are too much for the shears to nip when there are interfacing and linings, simply place the point of the shears on the fabric as if to cut. Give the point a swift tap with the edge of your left hand. This small tap will force the shears through the layers of fabric cleanly and quickly.



Nips are small cuts put in the outside edge of the fabric to mark seam allowances, hems, dart legs, zipper endings, pockets, interfacing, linings, and underlinings.

Tailor Tacks

There are many ways to mark the inside of a garment, but experts use tailor tacks most often. A tailor tack is a short length of thread placed in the fabric. Correctly done, it is the safest way to mark, and can be used on more fabrics than any other marking system.

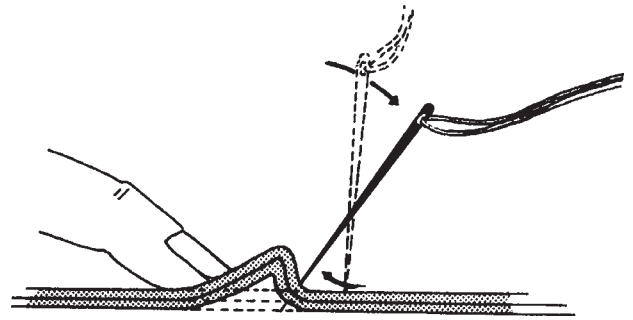
Tailor tacks should be used to mark inside details:

1. Dart points (on double pointed darts, also tack at the waistline)
2. Pocket placement
3. Anywhere the pattern shows a dot or square

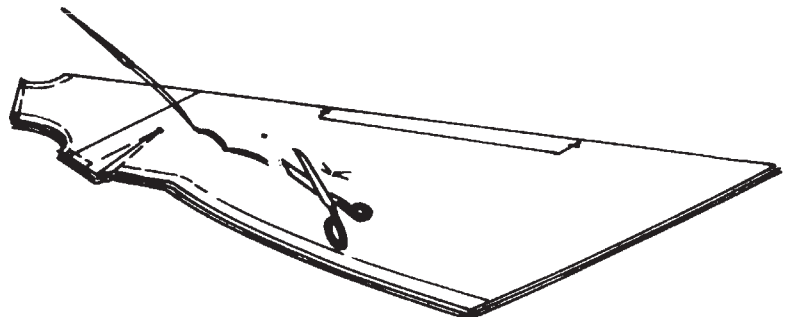
The thread used in making tailor tacks must be chosen with care. (Imagine using black thread on white fabric and having fine black fibers in the cloth, forever!) Even heat and moisture from an iron can fade some colors of thread into the fabric and leave a spot. The best thread to use will have a smooth finish (glazed basting thread or silk thread). Protect your fabric by making sure that the color and composition of the thread is high-quality. The needle should be approximately a size 7. Manufacturers label the needle packages as “sharps” (dressmaker) or “betweens” (tailor). Either can be used for tailor tacks.

TO MARK AND CUT TAILOR TACKS:

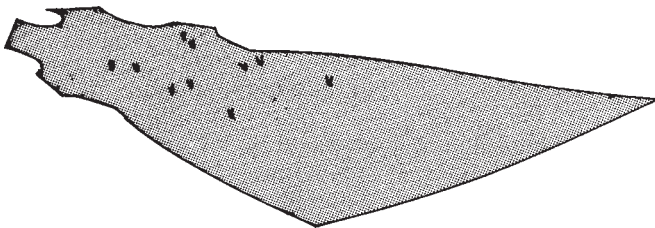
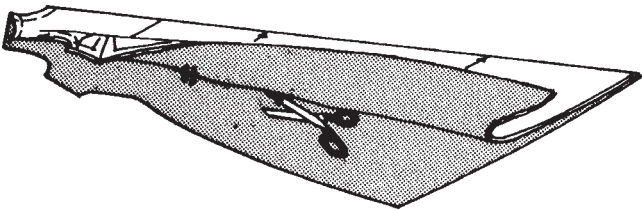
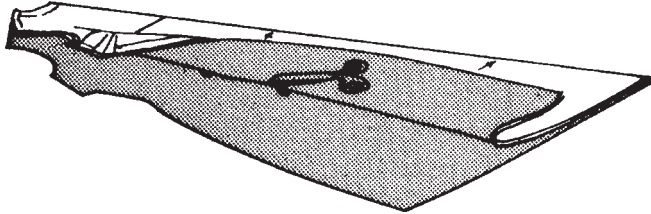
1. Use an unknotted, double thread. Place your needle straight in the fabric as if it were a thumb tack. Put the index finger of your left hand on the fabric in front of the needle, the same way you would put a pin in the fabric. Make a big stitch and push upward with the needle. Then go through both layers with as small a stitch as you can make. Do not put your hand under the fabric layers as you work, or slippage will occur. Place all stitches in a line at one time, pulling the thread loosely as you go.



2. Place your shears on the pattern and fabric at the end of the thread (where a knot would be). Press the point of the shears down on the fabric to keep it and the pattern from becoming bunched between the stitches. Pull the needle and thread until all stitches lay flat and you have 1" of thread at the end. Cut the thread 1" on the other side of the stitch. Again, pull the thread until it's 1" from the tack, and cut on the other side. Continue until all thread tacks are cut. Lift the pattern up and off.



Finishing Your Tailor Tacks



3. Now you must cut the tacks apart between the layers. “Hammer” a tailor tack down with your shears. (The tailor tack needs to be held down or it might pull out when lifting up the second layer.) Roll one layer away from you until you can see the thread color of the tailor tack. Cut the thread. The shorter you cut the tailor tack, the longer it will stay. Cut all the tailor tacks apart. On the top side of the fabric, trim the long thread as close as possible. Contrary to belief, long ends are more likely to pull out of the fabric and short ends stay in.

Fabric Markers

Another easy way to mark the inside detail on your fabric is with special fabric markers.

RULE: All pen and pencil markers need to be tested on the fabric before using.

Not all markers can be removed from all fabrics. Some can only be removed before heat is applied with an iron. Make holes at the pattern's dart points to allow the marker point to mark the fabric accurately.

Making the Most of Your Time

The length of time it takes to cut out a garment will vary due to the fabric and pattern style. A simple pattern may have five pieces, while a complicated one may have thirty. A simple pattern can be cut in thirty minutes. Others may have interfacing, underlining, or lining and will take longer to complete.

Do not work until you become tired. Your hands, back, and feet become tense, and then mistakes are easily made. Time your work so that you will enjoy the cutting step. When all of the cutting is finished you can say to yourself, “Now I know that my pajamas are half finished.”