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Brenda Cleeve

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PRESSING WOOLLEN CLOTHES

By BRENDA CLEEVE

MANY women who make their own clothes find that after much painstaking work, their garments still have that "homemade" appearance. This applies particularly to woollen materials which are perhaps the hardest of all with which to achieve the "professional look."

The secret of obtaining this well-finished appearance lies largely in the pressing. Careful, thorough pressing at each stage of a garment can make a vast improvement to the finished result of home dressmaking.

PRESSING

Woollen materials must never be pressed with a really hot iron as the fabric scorches easily, and shiny marks are left where the iron has been placed.

A cloth should be placed between the iron and woollen fabric to protect the surface. The cloth may be made of any white or unbleached cotton material of medium weight but it must be without patches or hems as these may leave marks on the article being pressed.

Moisture is necessary when pressing woollens so that when the iron is applied, steam is forced through the fabric. This moisture may be obtained from the cloth which can be dampened or from the garment by pressing it when it is still slightly damp if it has been washed. Many people prefer to use two cloths for pressing, one dry and one damp. The dry one is placed next to the garment and the damp one on top. The iron is placed on the cloths and

left until the top (damp) cloth is dry and the steam has been forced through the fabric. The top cloth may then be removed and the garment pressed lightly over the second cloth to dry the fabric and obtain a smoother finish. This is particularly important where a sharp edge is required, as for pleats or the edges of facings and collars.

For a fluffy fabric such as flannel where a soft finish is required the steam which has been forced through the two cloths to the fabric should be patted into the material using the hand, or the back of a clothes brush or similar article. This raises the nap. Where only one cloth is used, the same principles should be applied.

After pressing, there should always be a slight dampness left in the material. If pressed until completely dry, the material is likely to look flattened and have a shiny surface. The moisture which remains must be dried out later.

Hang the garment where possible, or leave flat until dry. If the article is folded while still damp more creases will develop.

Where possible it is best to press on the wrong side of the material and only one thickness. Of course, this cannot apply to

sleeves and trousers or where an edge is faced back, so more care is necessary when pressing these. The iron should never be moved on the material. Most materials pull out of shape while damp, and heat and moisture combined with movement will cause the fabric to matt and shrink. The movement for pressing woollens should therefore be one of PRESS and LIFT to avoid these pitfalls.

Smooth out the material to be pressed and place the cloth or cloths in position. The moist cloth should only be damp, not wet. Place the iron in position and press just the area covered by the surface of the iron. To iron the next section, lift the iron and replace it on that area so that the iron is not pushed over the surface as when ironing normally. Pat the steam into each section as it is treated.

TO REMOVE SHINY MARKS

If the iron is too hot or the material has been pressed until quite dry, shiny marks may have developed over the material. These are most likely to appear on seam lines, around collars, lapels and pockets where pressing over several layers of material cannot be avoided.

To remove these marks (unless they are very severe and the cloth has been charred), place a double layer of damp cloth over the mark. Using a moderately hot iron, hold it over the cloth, so that it barely touches the surface, until a heavy steam has been raised. Beat this steam into the material immediately. For light marks only, one treatment should suffice, but in other cases two or three attempts may be required. The heavy steam is needed to raise the nap again.

As this treatment will leave the cloth fairly damp, it will probably need to be pressed lightly again under a dry cloth to obtain a better finish. Be careful, of course, not to make more shiny marks in the same place as they will be more difficult to remove.

PRESSING SEAMS

In many garments it is the pressing of the seams which distinguishes the home-made from the professional article. Wherever possible, seams should be pressed on a single layer of material. Sleeve, or skirt boards can be used to make

this easier. For the person who does much dressmaking a seam board may be very useful. If a sleeve board is used make certain that the material is not stretched over the ends to give a bumpy finish.

Press seams from the wrong side to avoid the ridges which appear so readily when pressing from the right side. When pressing seams, the fabric should be ironed until practically dry for a flat finish.

With some seams, pressing with two cloths may be cumbersome so there is another method which may be more successful. This is to use a dry cloth and soap. Choose a dry piece of soap, preferably ordinary washing soap. The sliver of soap left after a cake has been used for some time and becomes too small for further use is ideal and is handy to keep in your sewing basket. A piece of soap which has been used recently is no use as it leaves a soapy line down the seam.

The soap should be rubbed down the line of machining of the seam. If it is a seam which is pressed flat and open as is commonly used on dresses and skirts, rub the soap down both sides of the machining on the wrong side of the garment. Only a dry cloth and a warm iron are needed for pressing. The heat of the iron melts the soap and, as the seam is pressed open, the edges are held flat by the soap which acts as an adhesive. Avoid using too much soap as it may show on the right side of the garment.

Any tacking threads used in the construction of a garment should be loosened when the article is pressed. Before the

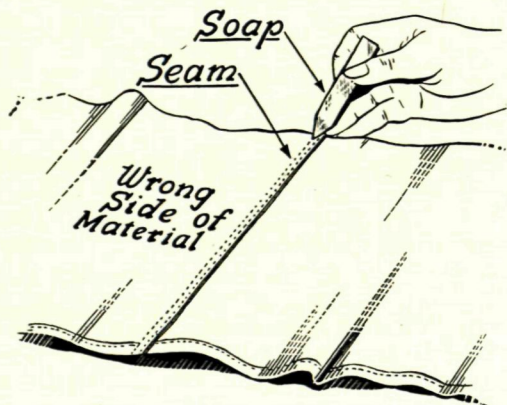


Fig. 1.—Using soap when pressing seams.

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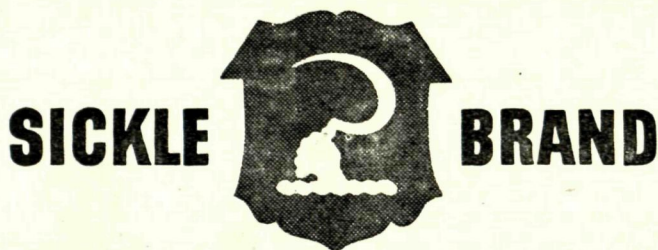
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final pressing they should be removed entirely, otherwise the impressions of the thread will remain in the garment.

TO REMOVE FULLNESS

Fullness caused by easing of various seams to improve the fit of a garment may be removed by pressing. In this case the aim is to shrink the fabric by matting of the fibres. As this matting cannot be removed once it has occurred any shrinking in this way must be done very carefully. If you are not sure of the method it is wise to practice on a scrap of material first.

To shrink the fabric, place the part to be treated over the end of a sleeve board or firm pad to give the shape desired. A damp cloth should be placed under the iron which may be moved about to increase the likelihood of shrinkage and matting occurring. In this way gathers may be made to disappear. Several pressings may be necessary to achieve the desired amount of shrinkage. This method can be only be applied successfully where a moderate amount of fullness is to be removed.

SEAM BOARD

This piece of equipment makes it possible to press seams which cannot be placed on the single for pressing, without the appearance of a ridge on the opposite side of the article.

To make a seam board a piece of smooth wood $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. square and from 18 in. to 24 in. long is required. The upper edges should be rounded off to give a half cylinder of wood with a flattened top.

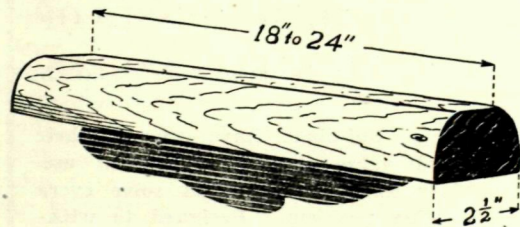


Fig. 2.—Seam board before covering.

The board should be covered with a layer of thick felt or, failing this, a piece of old blanket. The padding may be caught underneath with tacks, making sure that the points do not project above the level of the surface of the wood.

The padding may be covered with a layer of white or unbleached calico.

SLEEVE BOARD

A sleeve board is one of the most useful accessories for laundry work and dress-making. It is handy for pressing short seams and for ironing sleeves and small fancy garments, especially babies' and children's dresses with puffed sleeves.

To make the board two pieces of wood approximately 1 in. thick are necessary. The top section needs to be 18 in. to 24 in. long and sloping from 5 in. to 6 in. at the end to 3 in. at the other. The second piece of wood forms the base and should be 5 in. or 6 in. wide and 15 in. long. The top section should be mounted on a block of wood measuring 4 in. x 2 in. x 2 in. This should be set 3 in. from the widest end of the top board and the same distance from one end of the bottom. The three sections should preferably be joined by screws set flush with the wood as nails tend to loosen under pressure.

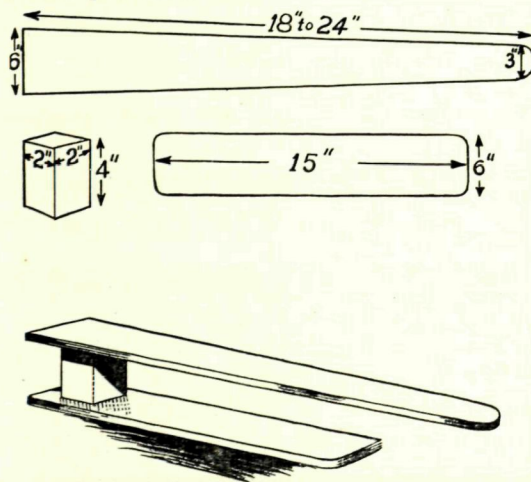


Fig. 3.—Construction details of sleeve board.

Instead of being mounted on the base the sleeve board may be bolted or hinged on to an ironing-table or skirt board.

All edges and surfaces of the wood must be thoroughly sand-papered to avoid possibility of sharp edges and corners catching delicate fabrics.

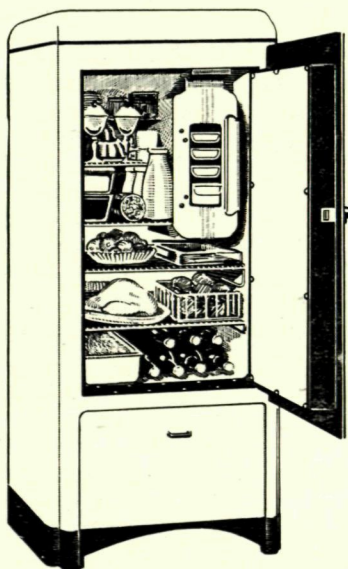
The upper section of the sleeve board must be padded. For this purpose a piece of an old blanket or thick felt may be used. Terry towelling is not suitable as it gives a bumpy surface to fabrics ironed over it.

The padding must be quite smooth and a reliable one as far as colour is concerned as the dye may run into another fabric while it is being pressed. The padding may be tacked into position and should be stretched tightly to avoid wrinkling when ironing over it.

The padding layer should be protected with a cover of some smooth fabric such as calico or duck. Avoid materials such as pique with a definite pattern as this will probably be transferred onto the cloth being ironed over it. A removable cover is ideal as it can then be washed as it becomes soiled.

Cut the top section of the padding the same shape as the top board, allowing for turnings and approximately 4in. longer at the large end. The bottom piece should be the same as the narrow end of the board and about half its length. Join the two pieces together to form a pocket which fits firmly over the narrow end of the board. Place tapes on the single end of the cover and tie these around the connecting block of wood.

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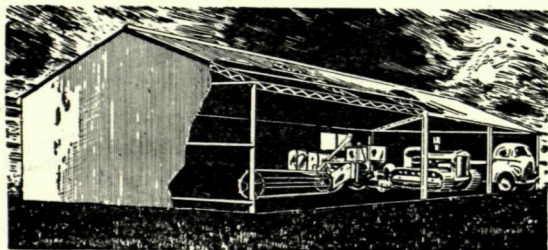
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