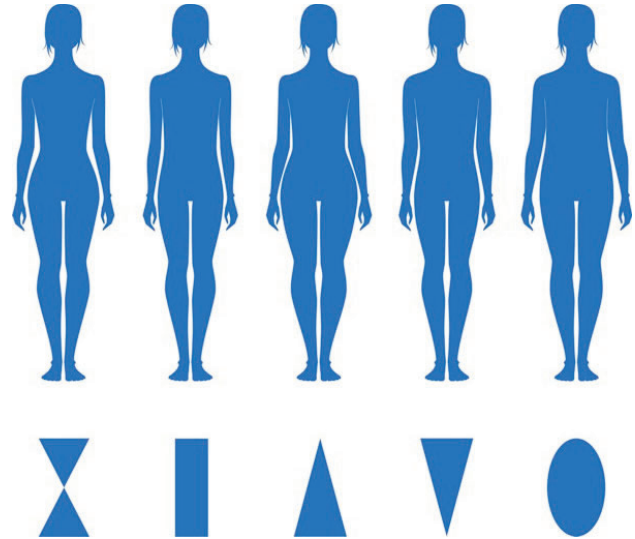


Build Textile Shape

THE FASHION PYRAMID—fit, fabric, and style—are the design and construction elements that most affect clothing appearance. Fit is part of building of textile shape and is key to how well your clothes enhance your appearance. Think about your favorite piece of clothing. Did you need to alter the length or the width of that garment in order to emphasize your best features? This unit details how darts, pleats, lapels, and curved seams help better fit your garments to your body silhouette.



Objective:



Describe how textiles are shaped and fitted.

Key Terms:



accordion pleats
box pleats
clipping
curved seam
dart
fit
foldline

French dart
grading
inverted pleats
knife pleats
lapel
notch lapel
peak lapel

placement line
pleat
princess seam
shawl collar
staystitching
textile shape
understitching

Shaping and Fitting Garments

TEXTILE SHAPE AND FIT

Textile shape is the use of clothing construction features to build and create form in a garment. Darts, pleats, lapels, and seams are construction features that create textile shape.

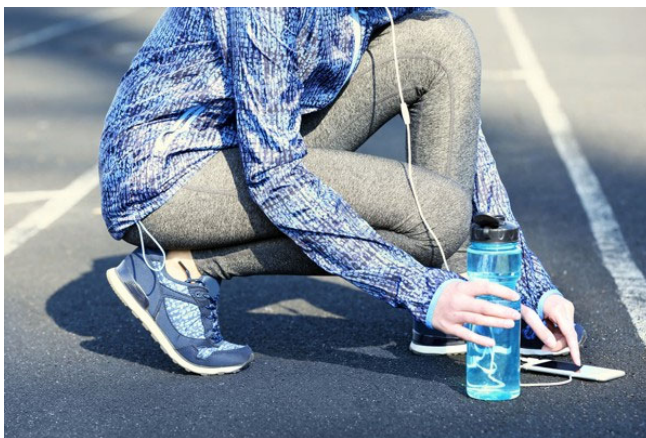


FIGURE 1. The man's sport jacket construction features are different than those for running clothes pictured here. What construction features are evident on the man's sport jacket? Which features are evident on the running clothes?

Other techniques, such as clipping curves, help create an excellent garment fit. **Fit** is the comfort, appearance, and functional ease of a garment. Fit takes into account the shape of the wearer, the drape and weight of the fabric, and the fabric's texture. Good fit is observable when clothing hangs smoothly from your shoulders and does not sag, bind, pull, twist, or cling to your body while standing still.

Types of Fit

The three types of fit are comfort, appearance, and function. Fit comfort is the absence of perceived pain or discomfort and is determined by the wearer. Fit appearance is the overall look, style, and fashion of the garment. Functional fit is how easily a garment adjusts to the movement of the wearer while maintaining its purpose. A garment for athletic activities will have fabric different from the fabric used for a business suit. A wearer working in a science lab may require a special, protective fabric.

Elements of Fit

The fit of a fashion garment is determined by grain, set, line, balance, and ease.

Grain of the Fabric

Lengthwise grain should fall perpendicular to the floor. Crosswise grains should fall parallel to the floor.

Line

Construction lines should lie on your body in the proper position. Shoulder seams should sit on your shoulder and side seams should run down the sides of your garment and remain perpendicular with the floor.

Set

No wrinkles should be observed when the wearer is standing still.

Balance

Balance is observed in symmetrical garments that hang away from your body identically on the right and left sides of the wearer.

Ease

Garment ease varies with the type of garment and the fabric choice. For example, a garment worn close to your body (such as a swimsuit) has less ease than one worn over other clothing (such as a coat or jacket). Fabric ease also affects fit. For example, knit fabrics require the sewer to provide less ease than for woven fabrics. Ease is judged in three ways:

- ◆ Wearing Ease (comfort): This is the amount of ease that is required to allow you to move and perform normal tasks.
- ◆ Design Ease (appearance): The designer selects the style ease to create the preferred silhouette.
- ◆ Functional Ease (functional fit): The amount of ease is determined by requirements of the activity (e.g., sports, lab work, dance, yoga, etc.).

GARMENT CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

Common garment construction techniques that build textile shape are darts, pleats, lapels, and seams.

Darts

A **dart** is a folded triangle of fabric that comes to a point and is stitched down to give shape to a garment. Tapered and stitched darts provide shape to a garment. It is one of the most basic structural elements of clothing construction. Darts allow flat fabric to create shapes that fit body curves. Darts are found primarily in women's clothing. They are meant to fit the contours of the female body in a flattering way. Patternmakers often manipulate darts to create a pattern or a tem-



FIGURE 2. Darts allow flat fabric to create shapes that fit body curves and contours. This image shows the reverse side of the fabric in which a dart has been stitched to tailor the shape of the garment.
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en>)

plate for garments that better conform to the contours of the body. For example, the tapered shape of the dart makes it easier to adjust a design to allow more fullness in the bust area or less fullness in the waist or hips. First and foremost, darts serve a functional purpose, but they can also create style lines in a garment to accentuate and enhance a design.

Dart Construction

The two parts of a dart are the point and the legs. The point is also known as the apex. The legs begin at the widest part of the dart. The dart legs are the two lines that are brought together to create the fold of fabric that is stitched. Darts are sewn in the correct direction—from the widest point of the legs of the dart to the apex—to ensure the darts lay flat, press well, and create shape. The general rule is that vertical darts should be pressed toward the center front or center back, and horizontal darts should be pressed downward.

Dart Types

Darts may be plain, double pointed, curved, French, or tucks.

- ◆ Plain, straight darts have one point with dart legs along the side seam edge or waist to shape the bust, waist, and hips of the garment.
- ◆ Dart tucks are a variation constructed much like the straight dart version with the points left open. The open ends create a pleated appearance that adds a softer look to billowy pants and blouses.
- ◆ Double pointed darts appear to be two darts joined together at their widest ends: one point toward the bust and one point toward the waist. Double pointed darts shape the mid-section of a garment such as a dress or fitted jacket.
- ◆ Curved darts are used when the straight line of a basic dart does not provide adequate contouring to fit the wearer's shape. Curved darts may be slightly concave (bowl-shaped) or convex (arched), depending on the desired shape or fit. A **princess seam** is an elongated curved seam sewn into women's garments in order to make a garment more fitted and create a design feature. This variation of a dart is sewn primarily on the bias grain of a fabric that requires little finishing. Princess seams can be let in or out to adjust the shape and fit of a bodice or skirt across a large section of a garment: hemline to waistline, waist to shoulder (over the bust line), or hemline to shoulder (over the bust line). These seams create a slimming look for the wearer.
- ◆ A **French dart** is an elongated dart that extends diagonally from the side seam, a couple inches above the waist, and ends near the apex (top) of the bust. French darts are used only on the front of a garment.

Pleats

A **pleat** is a fold of fabric, usually pressed, that can add or control the fullness of a garment. Pleats are formed by doubling fabric back upon itself and holding it in place with stitches that create controlled fullness. They also add movement to a garment due to the extra fabric.

Pleat Construction

Many types of fabric can be pleated. Most pleating diagrams show the recommended foldline. A **foldline** pattern marking without brackets indicates where the fabric will fold (will double) such as for a pleat or the center of a waistband. The **placement line** is the location where the foldline falls on the garment. Pleats add shape. For a sleek look, designers use bigger, well-anchored pleats that cause the fabric to lay flatter. In contrast, a number of small pleats work best for loose, empire waist designs.

Pleat Types

The main types of pleats are knife, accordion, inverted, and box. Other types are kick and sunray.

- ◆ **Knife pleats** are firmly pressed handmade folds of fabric, all facing the same direction. They have one foldline and one placement line. They add fullness to a garment and are usually found at the waistband of skirts and dresses.

- ◆ **Accordion pleats** are machine-made knife pleats formed to remain permanent even after washing and ironing: small, narrow, and uniform in width.

- ◆ **Box pleats** are knife pleats folded and formed in opposite directions: the folded edges face each other on the inside of the garment. They have a 3:1 ratio and may also be stacked to form stacked box pleats. Stacked box pleats have a 5:1 ratio with two foldlines and two placement lines. The two folds of the pleats are turned “away” from each other.

- ◆ **Inverted pleats** have pleats that have two foldlines and one shared placement line. They are two knife pleats facing each other: two folds are turned toward each other and meet.

- ◆ Other pleat types include kick pleats and sunray pleats.

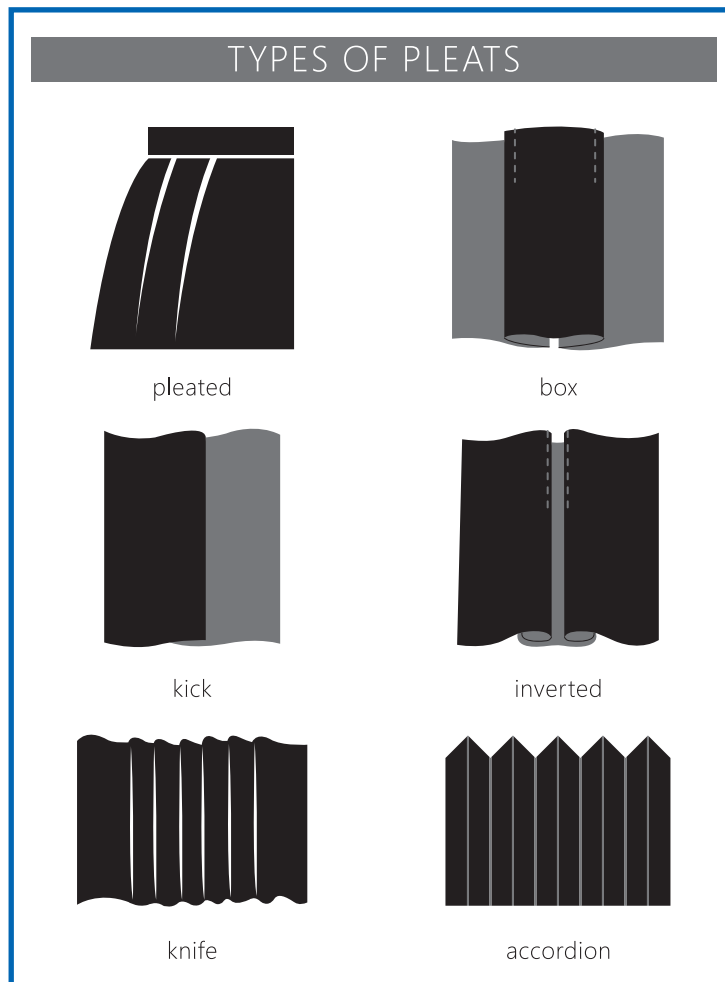


FIGURE 3. Pleats add fullness and movement to a garment.

Lapels

A **lapel** is the part of a collar that is formed by folding over the front edges of the jacket and sewing it to the collar. The lapel ends at the top jacket button or closer. The selection of a lapel style and shape depends on three things: the setting or occasion where the garment will be worn, the body type of the wearer, and the garment type. Notch lapels, peak lapels, and shawl collars are common lapels that can be created for garments.

Notch Lapel

A **notch lapel** is a construction feature at the point where the bottom of the collar meets the front opening, usually at a 75 to 90° angle. The notch lapel is cut from two pattern pieces: an upper collar and a lower lapel. The notch lapel is distinguished by a V-shape between the two pieces. A notch lapel is the most common lapel style and it is the most versatile. Notch lapels are found in both business and social settings. This lapel style suits all body types. A slim-notch lapel flatters the proportions of a slim frame. A notch lapel is best used for single-breasted suits, blazers, and sports coats. It is not recommended for double-breasted suits, jackets, and tuxedos.

Peak Lapel

A **peak lapel** is a design feature on each side of the front of a coat or jacket immediately below the collar that is folded back and the edges point upwards toward the wearer's shoulder.

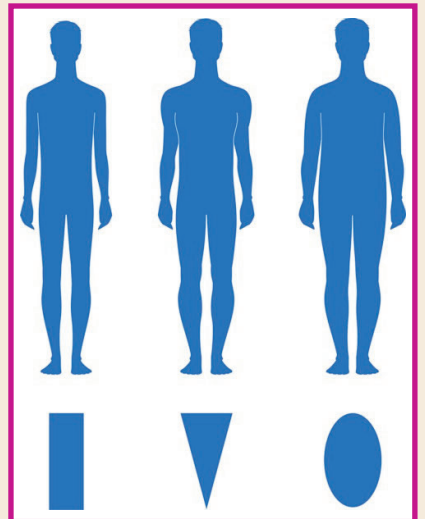


FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Sewing Construction Resources

Free online sewing construction tutorials are a useful way to learn new sewing techniques. Begin with the following:

- “How to Sew Darts: Beginner & Advanced,” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9x-i-tyfo>.
- “How to Sew a Pleat,” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4qdlozN8BQ>
- “Lapel 101,” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ3oeR-AP4A>
- “How to Sew with Curves,” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h27ZzDKAB0>



Fit is part of building textile shape and it is key to how well your clothes enhance your appearance. Darts, pleats, lapels, and curved seams help better fit your garments to your body silhouette.

They are the most formal of the lapels and are considered more fashion forward than the other two common styles. The peak lapel is cut from more than one pattern piece: an upper collar and lower lapels that point upward. This lapel is typically used on blazers and tuxedo jackets. Peak lapels are seen at weddings, formal dinners, and black tie events. They are rarely seen at the office. A peak lapel tends to elongate the body. Wearers, who are looking to add some height and/or a slimming effect, may select this style. Peak lapels usually appear on double-breasted suits and blazers and they are often seen on pinstriped fabrics.

Shawl Collar

A **shawl collar** is a continuous curved lapel, without breaks or points in the fabric, that is often cut from a single pattern piece. Shawl collars are seen at black tie events, red carpet galas, and weddings. While most body types can wear it, a shawl collar is not recommended for those with a round face or body, because the rounded lapel accentuates those features. Shawl collars are most often seen on tuxedos jackets.

Seaming

A **curved seam** is the joining of two or more layers of fabric to construct a garment in a rounded, arched, or bowed seam line. Most seams are constructed at right angles and to precisely form a curved seam requires accurate seam allowances, clipping, and pressing. Curved seams are either inward or outward. An inward seam is a concave curve, such as a neckline. An outward seam is a convex curve, such as a Peter Pan collar or a shawl collar. Seaming techniques include:

Clipping

Clipping is a technique to eliminate excess bulk from a curved seam to allow the seam to spread and lie smooth and flat. An outward curved seam is notched by cutting away small triangular-shaped pieces of fabric along the curve while avoiding cutting into the seam's stitching. Then, the curved seam is carefully pressed to ensure a crisp and evenly rounded, arched, or bowed edge. In contrast, many inward curves are also graded to eliminate bulk.

Grading

Grading is a technique of cutting seam allowances to different widths to reduce bulk and create a crisp curved line.

Staystitching

Staystitching (understitching) is a line of directional stitching, placed by hand or machine, just inside the seam line to prevent it from stretching out of shape. The purpose is to keep the facing and seam allowance laying flat in particular direction. Staystitching is used to reinforce both inward and outward seams.

Summary:



The fashion pyramid—fit, fabric, and style—are the design and construction elements that most affect clothing appearance. Fit is part of building of textile shape and is key to how well your clothes enhance your appearance. This unit detailed four clothing construction features: darts, pleats, lapels, and curved seams that help fit your garments to your body silhouette.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. State your definition of textile shape.
2. Describe how the fit of your clothing enhances your appearance.
3. Describe three types of darts.
4. Sketch three types of pleats. On what parts of the body silhouette is each best used.
5. Sketch the three basic lapel shapes.
6. Garments often have both inward and outward curves. Describe how to reduce bulk in these curved seams.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Investigate clothing construction details by visiting a department store that carries a wide range of clothing. Create a list with a picture of the different types of darts, pleats, lapels, and curved seams you identify. Create a pictorial scrapbook of each construction type. Use your pictorial scrapbook for reference as you design and construct garments.

Web Links:



“Fit on the Fly: How to Adjust for the Perfect Fit as You Sew” by Beth Galvin

<https://www.craftsy.com/sewing/article/fit-on-the-fly/>

“Perfect Pleats: How to Sew Pleats” by Julie Garza

<http://www.craftsy.com/blog/2013/10/how-to-sew-pleats/>

“Tips for Sewing a Perfect Collar” by Christine Haynes

<http://www.craftsy.com/blog/2013/03/sewing-collars/>