

/fabric preparation - aligning your fabric's grain

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<http://www.burdastyle.com/techniques/fabric-preparation-aligning-your-fabric-s-grain>



Have you ever had a piece of fabric that when folded, won't go into a proper rectangle, or noticed a finished project looks a little wonky, even though you KNOW you finished everything properly? Your fabric's grain probably isn't perfectly aligned to begin with, and it's especially not after preshrinking. The following is what I do to virtually every piece of fabric I work with (considering fabric care instructions, of course). I like to be sure my grains are perfectly aligned, and to guarantee that there will be no surprises while sewing – besides the results of terrible late night sewing mishaps :)

Step 1 — /pre-washing



Always pre-wash and dry your (casual, washable & dryable) fabrics! Pay attention to the fabric's fiber content while buying, because you'll wash it accordingly. I usually stitch around the edges before washing, but please ONLY do this in small amounts. Stitching will only make the process of finding & straightening the grain easier. The edges of your fabric will look similar to the photo after pre-washing.

Step 2 — /finding your fabric's grainline



There are many ways to accomplish this, one way is to snip and tear (wonderfully easy, but only useful for sturdy, woven fabrics), another is to pull out an entire thread of crosswise grain and cut along that line (also only for fabrics with very sturdy -synthetic- fibers). This solution is more time consuming, but quite reliable. First, snip the tangled & frayed threads off the edge of the fabric. Next, pull off any threads that do not go the entire length of the edge. STOP once you have pulled out a thread from end to end. It helps to pull threads if you snip a bit of the selvedge at an angle.

Step 3 — /finding your fabric's grainline continued...



When you've pulled your last thread, you'll have some dangling weft/ crosswise threads (pictured). Snip them all off as close to your whole lengthwise thread as possible. Ta-dah! You've found your grainline, but not so fast... you're not done preparing your fabric yet!

Step 4 — /straightening your fabric's grain



The goal here is to have all of your lengthwise (parallel to selvage) & crosswise (perpendicular to selvage) grains at 90 lovely degree angles. Perfectly perpendicular. Line up your selvages (factory-bound edges) to each other and pin exactly. While folded, line up the cut sides and pin.
*Please use all-metal, dressmaker's pins so they won't melt under your iron!

Step 5 — /straightening your fabric's grain continued



If your fabric is at all wonky (more than likely), it will bunch, twist & bubble up at the bottom near the fold. It may be much worse, or less extreme than this example.

Step 6 — /straightening your fabric's grain... still



Starting at the selvages, take a very steamy iron to your fabric and work your way down. The steam will loosen & relax the threads, making them more likely to go where you need them to go. Work the fabric with your iron until it lies flat. This may be a battle, but you will WIN! *If working with a patterned fabric, keep in mind that perfectly aligning your fabric doesn't necessarily mean a perfectly aligned print. (See photo.) People make mistakes, and fabric can be printed not exactly in alignment with the fabric's grain. I have thrown away what I thought was good quality fabric because this drove me batty. * *For fabrics that don't appreciate an aggressive, steamy iron (wool, silk), use the bias-stretching method. This method is faster for me and appropriate for the fabrics I usually work with.

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