Adjusting Patterns to Fit Your Body

By: SewHappyClothes

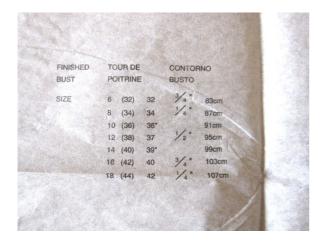## http://www.burdastyle.com/techniques/adjusting-patterns-to-fit-you

I recently discovered that my torso, or more specifically the distance between my waist and my shoulders, is three inches longer than the average pattern. THREE INCHES! This explains a lot, and also requires some pattern adjusting. Because that part of my torso is so long, the key for me is not just to make my garments longer, but to actually lower the waistline by three inches. This is very important to ensuring proper fit, not just making sure that my belly button is covered, especially for any garment that has waist shaping, darts, etc that are meant to contour to the body. While there have been entire books written on the subject, the following are some basic tips for adjusting your garments to fit properly. Check out more techniques at: http://sewhappyclothes.blogspot.com/search/label/Techniques.

Step 1 — Adjusting the waist

To adjust the waist on your pattern, first measure the distance between your shoulder and your natural waist (the part that goes in, or bends or creases when you bend to the side--not the place where your pants sit!). Then measure your pattern from the shoulders to the waist-line, which should be marked. To make it shorter, you can fold the pattern up. For longer, cut across the pattern at the waist line and position it with a gap between the top half and the bottom half.

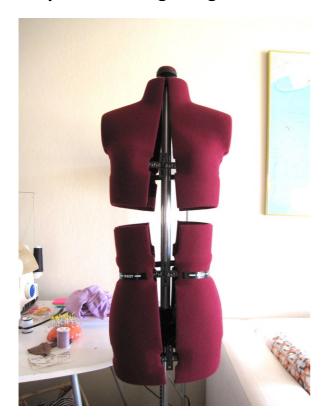## Step 2 — Ensuring proper fit (how to read garment sizing)

The pattern envelope usually carries a chart that lists standard bust/waist/hip measurements and the corresponding pattern size you should cut. This is a good starting point, because a pattern size 6 may correspond to your department store size 4, so act accordingly. To figure out how a pattern will fit, however, the important information can be found on the pattern pieces themselves, usually in a chart located on the main front piece of a garment. This chart tells you the finished measurements of a garment. So if you decide, based on your body measurements that you are going to cut the size 6, look at the finished measurements for that size. I may have a 32" bust and be a size 6, but if the pattern is meant to fit big then this chart might list that the finished measurement of the garment is 40" around. If you would like a closer fit, go down a size. For a looser fit, go up a size. To get a feel for how something is going to fit, hold a tape measure around your corresponding body part and imagine what those 40" will look like on you. This is good advice for a looser pattern like my Geometric Blouse.

Step 3 — Slimming or widening the garment

While my waist proportions came as a surprise to me, I always knew that I had a smaller than average circumference around my bust and back. So while I may be a size 6 in most parts of a pattern, I might need to take it down to a size 4 near the bust. To adjust for this, I usually do not alter a pattern when I cut it, but rather take the garment in while I am sewing to avoid cutting off too much. To do this, I baste or pin the side seams together and then try the garment on. I'll then mark it with some pins (it helps to have a dress form for this), and take it in accordingly. To widen a garment, cut the pattern at one size larger, and then take in as above where needed.

Step 4 — Making the garment taller or shorter

Much like with the waist line, dresses, robes and pants usually have a line near the hem where the garment can be lengthened or shortened. Measure your body and then the pattern piece and adjusting accordingly.

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