

Hem Prep Sleeves

By: Linda74Sews

<http://www.burdastyle.com/techniques/hem-prep-sleeves>



Hems are usually the last step in the construction of a garment and that usually includes hemming the sleeves. But, is that really the best time to hem them? In the sequence of constructing sleeves the sewer is usually instructed to stitch the ease stitching on the sleeve cap first, then sew in the arm seams, insert the sleeves into the garment and then hem each sleeve. While all that seems logical and efficient, by the time you get to hemming the sleeves, that process becomes much more cumbersome than it has to be. Needless to say that sequence is intended to allow for any hem length adjustments. And yes, if you have a good sleeve board pressing the hem is less difficult. But, you still have to deal with the balance of the garment that is connected to the sleeve pulling at you and getting in the way.

Step 1 — Press the hem in place in its flat state



I always 'hem prep' and sometimes completely hem my sleeves before I attach them to the garment. That is of course if I know beforehand what the hem length should be. For me, it is literally the first step in the sleeve construction process. What do I mean by 'hem prep'? Well, it is nothing more than pressing up the hem in its flat state instead of the cylindrical state that occurs after the sleeve has been assembled and sewn into the garment armhole. Make sure to press the hem with a good, crisp crease at the fold line so that it is easily visible when you fold out the hem to sew in the arm seam. If you are working with a fabric that doesn't take a crisp fold, consider partially hand basting the hem leaving a big enough opening at each end so it can be unfolded in order to sew the arm seams.

Step 2 — Stitch arm seam



Then, sew in the arm seam making sure to unfold the hem portion.

Step 3 — Repress hem in place



Once the seam is sewn and the edges are finished, repress the hem fold (s) using the pressed creases you set in the first step as your guide. You won't believe how nicely it comes together. The sleeve is now ready to be inserted into the garment. Or, you can sew the hem in place before you insert it. Again, so much easier to do without the rest of the garment in the way. By hem prepping, or pressing the hem in place as a first step, it produces a more consistently measured hem that looks better, all contributing to a more professionally sewn garment.

Step 4 — Finished hem



Sewing doesn't have to be hard or challenging. Looking for ways to simplify the process, which sometimes means reworking the sequence of construction steps, makes sewing so much more fun and rewarding.

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