

PATTERN SELECTION & FABRIC COORDINATION

Selecting the Right Pattern and Fabric

- Which fabrics look best on me?
- What are my most becoming colors?
- What pattern style is most flattering?
- What is your correct pattern size and figure type?
- What is my sewing skill?
- How will the garment fit into, add to, or coordinate in my wardrobe?



As you reflect on these questions you are thinking about yourself, the fabric, and the pattern—all at the same time. The key to selecting fabric for a particular pattern is carefully looking at the structural and silhouette lines of the design.

- ✓ If the garment stands away from the body, you need a firmer, stiffer fabric.
- ✓ If the garment follows closely to the body, you need a softer fabric.

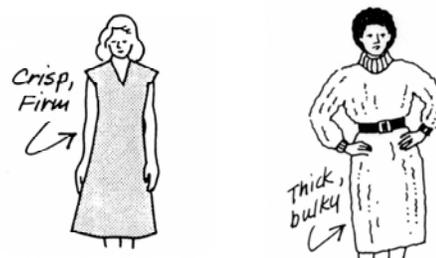
Study the pattern envelope carefully. The drawing represents what the designer wants you to know about how the item should look once it is constructed. If the envelope has a picture of a person wearing the item, you have an even better idea of what the pattern will look like after it is made.

wearing the item are better representations of what the pattern will actually look like than patterns with drawings.

HAND

The “hand” of a fabric is how it feels. It affects the way the fabric hangs and drapes. Here are some general statements about how the hand of fabrics can influence designs:

- Stiff, wiry fabrics (such as taffeta or satin) have a lot of body and tend to stand away from the body. They are not the best choice for large individuals.
- Crisp, firm fabrics (such as linen or gingham) are stiff enough to hold their shape, but pliable enough to mold. They are for all figures.



- Thick, bulky fabrics (such as velvet or fleece) should be used in straight, simple line designs. They tend to increase body size.

as voile or chiffon) hug the body and tend to reveal body shape and size. They are a poor choice for either the large person or the very small individual.



Surface Design & Texture

- Fabric with pile or napped surface (such as velvet or corduroy) have thickness and texture, and tend to increase one's size. Pile is most effective when used in simple lines with few pattern pieces.
- Other textured fabrics (such as terry, tweed, or mohair) have thickness, and tend to increase one's apparent size. Focus on the beauty of the fabric and keep pattern lines simple.



- Fine or smooth textures (such as crepe) are suitable for intricate or more complicated pattern lines. Fine textures are a good choice for all figures.



- Plain or smooth textures lack surface

interest so the emphasis can be placed on structural details.



- Printed designs, including woven plaids and stripes, have visual interest, so keep pattern selection simple using a simple pattern.

Other things to consider:

- Size of design to your size (large to large, small to small).
- The effect of the design on your figure. Drape the fabric over your body and look at yourself in a full-length mirror.
- Prints add interest and variety that liven up a wardrobe, but you may tire of them.
- How will the fabric look when seamed, darted, gathered, and/or draped around the body?

Combining Colors and Textures

Colors, textures and prints need to look "good" together when combined.

When combining colors, think about using:

- one common color (the dominant one) to tie a group of prints together.
- colors with warm undertones with other colors of warm undertones (the same is true for cool).
- using manufacturer's coordinated color collections.

When mixing textures, think about:

- softening a menswear tweed with a silky print.
- updating houndstooth with a leather accent.
- pairing a fuzzy texture with a flat,

- shiny fabric.
- using velvet on a wool flannel jacket.
- wearing a challis skirt with a mohair jacket.

Combining Different Fabrics

When combining more than one fabric to create a garment it is important that all the fabrics have the same method of care. Washable fabrics should be coordinated with washable; dry cleanable with dry cleanable. Mixing these two care methods can be destructive.

SUMMARY

Successful coordination is when two or more items look good together. Coordinating patterns and fabrics takes practice, patience, and perseverance. Remember the following as you consider your choices:

- Making good coordination decisions is based on your knowledge and use of the elements of design (line, color, texture, shape).
- When mixing and matching various pattern designs, one type of line should dominate.
- When sewing, it is best to select a pattern first then the fabric.
- Use the fabric suggestions as on the back of the pattern envelope as a guide to the appropriate fabric.
- Think of fabric as people. Just as people have different personalities, fabrics have different properties. Fabrics must be treated or handled according to “their” personalities.

- Analyze the pattern design for what properties are needed in a fabric to construct the style and which ones are needed or wanted by you.
- Think about which is the most prominent element, the fabric or the pattern style/silhouette.
- Your personal attributes—i.e. sewing experience, skill and time required to complete the project.

For clothing or other projects in which you invest time and effort, plan to purchase the best quality fabric available. Poor quality fabrics will yield a less than desirable item.

A good quality fabric will be on-grain, even in color and design, and be labeled as to fiber content, special finishes and care.

Additional fact sheets of interest:

CT-MMB.026 - Stripes

CT-BJD.143 - Sewing With Microfiber Fabrics

CT-LMH.165 - Sewing with Knit Fabric

CT-LMH.177 - Border Prints

CT-LMH.178 - Soft Fluid Fabrics

CT-MMB.179 - Sheer Fabrics

CT-MMB.180 - Fabric Selection for Sewing

CT-MMB.181 - Layout, Cutting and Marking

CT-LMH.183 - Interfacing

CT-LMH.203 - Mixing Prints & Textures

CT-MMB.210 – Understanding Fabric Grain

CT-MMB.211 – Fabric Preparation for Sewing

Source: Nadine Hackler, Associate Professor Extension Clothing Specialist. Permission to use granted by Nadine Hackler, Emeritus Extension Professor Extension Clothing Specialist, Institute of Food & Agriculture Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Adapted for use in Kentucky by Linda M. Heaton, Ph.D., Extension Professor for Textiles & Clothing, July 2002, rev 5/2004

Revised by Marjorie M. Baker, M.S.
FCS Extension Associate for Textiles & Clothing
February 2006

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.