



## Tips For Successful Tailoring

If you are just learning to change a suit, it will not be a quick afternoon job. It may take you several days, depending on the time you have aside from other responsibilities. You will find it very helpful to set aside a space where you can safely leave your sewing project. When you come back to it, you will not need to spend a lot of time getting everything out again. Although you will not need to put everything away each time, it is essential to keep tools, fabric, and supplies organized and in order. A box with compartments or a cabinet with drawers will be a tremendous aid. It pays to get organized before you begin to sew. Here are some tips I have found helpful:

1. Don't sew on a complicated project such as a suit when you are tired and tense. I find I am more likely to misread instructions and make mistakes when my nerves are already frazzled. If this is your first suit, I also encourage you not to try to sew for hours at a time before taking a break. I find that doing an involved task in short steps makes it seem much less formidable.
2. From the first snip of the scissors to the last button, make sure you understand directions. Whatever materials you decide to use, this project involves a fair amount of money. If you are unsure of how to proceed, back up and read instructions just prior to the sewing steps you are trying to understand. If you know others with experience in tailoring, check with them to make sure you understand.
3. Assemble all your materials before you begin. You will save yourself a tremendous amount of time if you don't need to make special trips to town to buy this tool or that sewing notion to go on with your sewing. This tip relates to the suggestion in the beginning that you organize a space where you can work on this project over a period of time.
4. Don't take shortcuts. Follow directions to the letter. Sometimes tailoring instructions seem tedious, time-consuming, and unnecessary. It is only after

you have actually followed them and surveyed the results that you will find yourself saying, “Oh, yes, now I see why that was necessary!”

5. Take time to fit often as you work. It is so much easier to make small changes as you go than to spend a lot of time sewing and then realize the completed suit is too small here or too large there. Ripping out what you have done many steps back in a tailoring project is much more time-consuming than ripping a seam in a simple dress pattern. We hope your husband, son, brother, father, or whoever, will encourage you by being willing to try on the suit a number of times as you go along. This is especially important if you are just beginning to learn to change suits. After some experience you will know better what to look for in a fitting and will be able to change a suit with just a couple of fittings.
6. Don't neglect pressing according to instructions. Pressing properly makes the difference between a sloppy coat and one that can be worn anywhere without shame. Take time to use that iron!
7. When fitting a straight collar on the suit, always use the shirt the man will wear most often with the suit. It is best to fit the collar to a dress shirt, preferably one with button-down collars. Work shirts and shirts designed for casual wear may have larger necks and should not be worn while fitting.
8. Discipline yourself to keep going until you are finished. Hopefully you have set aside a block of time to work at this project at a fairly steady pace. Yes, unexpected interruptions may occur, but I urge you not to let a half-finished suit lie for weeks or months. Your enthusiasm will tend to wane. You will find it hard to pick up where you left off if too much time elapses between sewing times. When the last button is in place, the last thread snipped, and the last hem flattened, you will be so glad you stuck at it!
9. This is a note of encouragement from Janet, a sister who has changed hundreds of suits and has made many other tailored garments, “Remember to ask God to help you in whatever project you want or need to sew. The Lord opens many highlights in tailoring, and the way is clear.” What a precious truth!



## Pressing Tips and Tools

It cannot be stressed too much that pressing is *very important* in making a tailored garment. Never, never skip over instructions to press as you proceed with tailoring. First, let's discuss the basic supplies.

1. An iron and ironing board are the most essential pieces of equipment. A neat, tailored garment cannot be made without them.
2. A steam iron works much better than a dry iron. Steam is very important in molding and shaping fabrics. In fact, it is often helpful to use more steam than a regular steam iron provides. If you plan to make or change more than an occasional suit, check into buying special steamers which can be purchased from some fabric stores. One that was recommended to me is a Rowenta steam iron. You can also lay a slightly dampened pressing cloth on the fabric and apply a hot steam iron on top of it. This is especially helpful in pressing seams. One seamstress found it simplifies seam pressing to mist the seam or press cloth before pressing. She uses an inexpensive plant atomizer with an adjustable nozzle and distilled water only. Do not saturate the garment. *Always* use a pressing cloth.
3. A pressing cloth should be used on all fabrics to prevent iron shine. Never press suit fabric on the right side without it. A pressing cloth allows you to use a hotter iron without scorching. You can buy a specially treated pressing cloth at most fabric stores. Or you may use any medium-weight fabric: polyester, fleece, a terry cloth, or any fabric that will not fade when wet. Another option is a piece of 100% cotton muslin; there is no danger of it sticking to a hot iron, and the heat goes through it quickly. Dampen the cloth and lay it flat over the area to be pressed. Then lower the iron and move it slowly over the cloth with more of an up and down than a sliding motion.

**Note:** A Teflon Iron Cover can eliminate the need for a pressing cloth when working on the *inside* of a suit on *wool* and *wool blends*. Do not use it without a pressing cloth on 100% polyester suits.

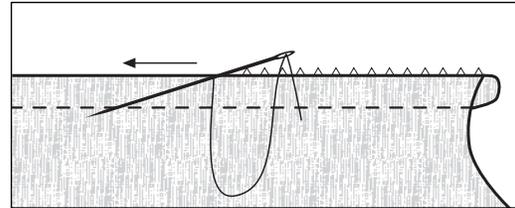
4. There is a difference between pressing and the normal ironing of clothes. The goal of tailoring is to have flat seams and sharp edges. To press, lift the iron up and down to move it, rather than sliding it back and forth. Leave the iron in place long enough to press a seam flat. Using extra steam and a clapper are very helpful in attaining sharp creases.
5. To remove iron shine, hold a steam iron ½ inch above the fabric for a minute or two, then brush it lightly. This works for a faint shine; but probably won't for heavier ones. The best precaution is to use a pressing cloth or a steamer. Always test a scrap of fabric to determine how much heat, pressure, and steam will be best for it. A hot steam iron can actually melt the finish of knit fabrics. Once that happens, we know of no remedy.



## Special Tailoring Stitches

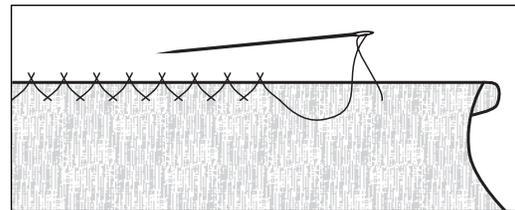
### 1. SLIPSTITCH

This stitch is used in areas where the stitching is to be invisible on both sides. It is used to join one folded edge to a flat surface. If the material will fray, it must be folded twice. Working from the wrong side, pick up one or two threads of the garment fabric, then stitch into and through the fold for  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Continue around the seam in this way.



### 2. CATCHSTITCH

This stitch is worked from left to right but the needle should be inserted from the right to the left. It provides some “give” and is therefore especially suitable for hems on knit clothing. Catch several threads from the top layer of fabric, then several threads from the bottom, and keep alternating in this manner. This stitch may be worked over an edge or between layers for a hidden seam.



### 3. HEMMING STITCH

This stitch is worked from right to left. Working on the wrong side, catch a thread or two in the garment. Stitch into the hem  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch beyond the point where you brought the needle up.

