METHODS TO MASTER:

Skirt Fitting
(by Ryliss Bod)

A skirt is one of the most versatile and cost-effective garments to sew. Learn how to create a well-fitting and flattering skirt, no matter your sewing skill level or body type.
Select a Skirt Style

Many sewists feel confined to certain looks because of their body types. However, when your garment fits well and the ensemble is proportioned correctly, you have more style options. The most flattering skirt style depends on the head-to-toe proportions of the entire outfit. For example, a full skirt balances a close-fitting top, while a close-fitting skirt complements a looser top. To determine a flattering hemline length, put on the entire intended outfit with the skirt sample, including the top, jacket or sweater, tights or stockings (or bare legs), and shoes or boots, and then view yourself in the mirror. Notice the proportions of the total look and determine what skirt length looks best with the entire outfit. Ask a sewing buddy to use a hem marker to mark the finished length, measuring from the floor upward. For more guidance on selecting a skirt style for your specific body shape, refer to “Flatter Your Figure” at left.

Ease Effects

The fit of any garment is affected by the amount of ease it contains in addition to your body measurements. The total

TIP: Use a fiberglass measuring tape to take accurate body measurements, as fiberglass doesn’t stretch or shrink.

FLATTER YOUR FIGURE

Some skirt silhouettes are especially suitable for specific body types because they highlight or camouflage different body areas. Refer to these suggested styles when selecting a skirt pattern:

- **Hourglass (evenly proportioned upper and lower body with a defined waist):** A classic well-fitted pencil skirt is very flattering for curvy figures. A full skirt emphasizes the smaller waistline.

- **Flute (straight with few curves):** A floaty skirt suggests curves, and a circle skirt helps define the waist.

- **Pear (larger lower body):** Pair a knee-length pleated A-line skirt with a tailored top balances the volume.

- **Apple (larger upper body):** An A-line gives the illusion of a smaller upper body and a short skirt shows off slimmer legs.

- **Petite:** A shorter hemline elongate the legs.

- **Plus-Size:** A classic well-fitting pencil skirt or a gored, pleated or circle skirt are all flattering options. Keep the fabric fullness at the waistline to a minimum.
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ease in a garment is composed of both the extra room needed for moving comfortably (wearing ease) and the extra room included to create the intended silhouette (design ease).

For any skirt, the minimum amount of wearing ease is 1” at the three critical fitting areas: the waistline, high hip and full hip (1). The skirt waistline has 1” of ease to be eased into the waistband or a waistline facing during construction. This prevents pull lines from forming below the waistband or a waistline facing during construction. This prevents pull lines from forming below the waistband or a waistline facing when constructed with only 1” of ease in the hip area. Adding more ease to the hip area will create fabric lumps and bunching under a top or jacket.

As skirt styles become fuller, they contain more design ease in addition to the wearing ease. A-line skirts have 3” to 5½” of design ease in the hip area. Gored, flared, and gathered skirts have additional design ease in the hip. Full and circle skirts have the greatest amount of design ease in the hip.

**Pick a Pattern Size**

To determine whether the finished garment will contain the correct amount of ease, first take your body measurements. Tie a piece of elastic around your midsection tight enough that it doesn’t move. The place where the elastic naturally lands is the location of your natural waistline. Use a fiberglass measuring tape to measure your body circumference at the elastic location; record.

**To find your high-hip measurement**, measure your body circumference 3” below your natural waistline; record.

**To find your full-hip measurement**, find the fullest point between your high hip and crotch. The location of the full hip measurement varies from one body to another depending on

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<tr>
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<th>WAIST EASE</th>
<th>HIGH-HIP EASE</th>
<th>FULL-HIP EASE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-LINE</td>
<td>1”</td>
<td>Minimum 3½”</td>
<td>Minimum 3½”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FULL SKIRT</td>
<td>1”</td>
<td>Minimum 3½”</td>
<td>Minimum 3½”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENCIL SKIRT</td>
<td>1”</td>
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**TIP:** Gored, A-line, pleated and circle skirts work on all figure types. Make sure to keep the fabric fullness minimal along the waistline for the most flattering effect.
the fullness of the abdomen or derriere. Measure your body circumference at the full-hip point; record.

To determine the pattern size with the correct amount of ease, compare your body measurements with the finished garment measurements, often found on the pattern envelope back. This information may also be located on the front pattern pieces in the area referenced. For example, to select the pattern size for a pencil skirt, add 1” (wearing ease) to your full-hip measurement, and then select the pattern size that corresponds to that measurement. Many pencil skirt patterns include more wearing ease than 1” in the suggested sizing. Therefore, it’s important to refer to your body measurements in conjunction with the finished garment measurements rather than following the sizing printed on the pattern envelope to achieve a good fit. If the finished garment measurements aren’t included, measure the pattern pieces. For example, to find the finished garment high-hip measurement, measure the front and back patterns 3” below the waistline, subtracting the dart width and seam allowances. Select the pattern size with finished measurements that correspond closest to your hip measurements. Refer to “Fit with Ease” at left for the ideal ease at for various skirt styles.

Make Adjustments
After selecting your skirt size according to your hip measurements, it might be necessary to adjust the waistline and waistband to fit your waist measurement. One easy method is to decrease or increase the dart width according to the amount you need to add or subtract

CONSTRUCTION TIPS
Follow these construction pointers for stress-free skirt sewing:

• Before cutting your fabric, clean it as suggested by the manufacturer to eliminate shrinkage and any softeners or sizing. If the fabric is lightweight or slippery, lightly apply spray starch to give it more body and make it easier to cut and sew.

• Read all pattern instructions before beginning. Whether or not you want to follow the steps exactly, some steps are set up in a sequence that must be followed. Reading through the steps allows you to make decisions about the process before you begin.

• Alter the pattern before cutting out the fabric. You wouldn’t cut the boards after you nailed a house together, and the same process applies to constructing clothing.

• Test fusible interfacing, stitch length, seam finishes, buttonholes, topstitching and hemming before stitching the final skirt. Use a new sewing machine needle appropriate for the fabric weight.
from the waistline. If you increase the dart width, the waistline decreases. If you decrease the dart width, the waistline increases. Evenly distribute the total amount you need to add or subtract among the darts. For example, if you need to reduce the waistline by 1” and the pattern has two front darts and two back darts, add $\frac{1}{4}$” to each dart. Mark the waistline $\frac{1}{8}$” beyond each dart leg along, and then draw new dart legs, following the guidelines at right for the correct dart length (2). To add 1” to the waistline, subtract $\frac{1}{4}$” from each dart. Mark the waistline $\frac{1}{8}$” inside each dart leg, and then draw new dart legs (3). Note that if the dart width changes, the length must also change to maintain the correct dart proportions. Follow these guidelines for darts below the waistline:

- $\frac{5}{8}$”-wide dart: 3” long
- $\frac{3}{4}$”-wide dart: 3½” long
- 1”-wide dart: 4½” long
- 1¼”-wide dart: 5½” long
- 2”-wide dart: 6½” long

If there are two darts in one location, add $\frac{1}{2}$” to each dart length. If there are three darts, add $\frac{3}{4}$” to each dart length.

**Sources**

Common Era provided the cardigan; Active Basic ($26): mycommonera.com.

Kenneth D. King (fashion designer, author, Fashion Institute of Technology Instructor and faculty ambassador) provided the dart length guide: kennethking.com.
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- ⅝”-wide dart: 3” long
- ¾”-wide dart: 3⅛” long
- 1”-wide dart: 4½” long
- 1½”-wide dart: 5½” long
- 2”-wide dart: 6½” long

If there are two darts in one location, add ½” to each dart length. If there are three darts, add ¾” to each dart length.

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