

Most of the time cutting out your patterns does not have to be an exact science especially when using my patterns and stretch knit fabrics. There is a lot of room for subtle shaping that will not affect the actual “fit” of the garment, but there are those times when it is very important. Imagine that someone else was going to be sewing the garment (without the pattern pieces as reference) that you cut out and they were depending on your accuracy. If you think about it that way you will realize that cutting perfect side seams is not as important as cutting a perfect and easy to recognize lapel corner.

Once you have made your pattern alterations (if any) and you are ready to lay your pattern down, think about chalking around your pattern instead of pinning it down. Chalking around the pattern pieces instead of pinning them will make you aware of the shapes that you are working with before you cut into them. Just the motion of your hand following the tissue curves with the chalk is the first step toward visualizing your garment. Next is to remove the tissue and look at the chalked lines. First look at the whole piece then look individually at the details. Does the shape of the neckline look deep enough, round enough, wide enough or should you re-chalk the lines to get the neckline that you see in your mind’s eye. Does the armhole look too deep for the drape of the fabric that you have chosen? Now is the time to re-chalk the armhole and sleeve. The changes don’t need to be drastic to make a positive difference in your garment.

The next option is to make changes *as* you are cutting. Using long scissors (10” or longer) make smooth, long cuts either on the chalk line, inside or outside the chalk line to subtly change the shape. Gradually changing the shape of a straight skirt by tapering from the hip to hem is as simple as visualizing the skirt on your body and letting the

scissors follow your vision. It sounds harder than it is. Learning to visualize the flat fabric as it relates to your body and knowing when a hip curve, neckline or bust shaping “looks” perfect. Learning to be less dependent on the tissue will make fitting your patterns easier. Sometimes even after I have chalked my new cutting lines I find myself making changes as I am cutting. I continue these changes even as I am serging the seams. If I get scared that I have shaped a seam too much I will ease off on my seam allowance on the serger. After checking the ease in the pattern size that you are using and considering the ease in your fabric, these factors will determine how much play you have in your cutting.

Imagine that you are making the BaseWear Two Tee with the jewel neckline in rayon/LYCRA and while you are chalking around it you think, almost in the back of your mind, that the softness of the fabric will make the neckline fall lower than you would like. By having the chalk in your hand instead of your scissors and giving yourself the feeling of going around that neckline once with the chalk you have given yourself the opportunity to think about what you are committing yourself to.

Many fitting and design opportunities are lost while scissors are in your hand. Sometimes looking at the tissue is not enough to trigger your creativity and you should give yourself the opportunity to make changes even though it may seem like extra work to chalk around the pattern pieces.

