

Clothing Construction Standards

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Details of construction are important, whether you are constructing or selecting a garment. If you make a garment to enter a contest, you want it to be attractive and acceptable in the judges' eyes. Those judging a contest seek to be impartial and fair as well as critical and discriminating; personal preferences must be set aside so entries can be evaluated objectively.

There are a number of construction techniques that can be used to achieve an acceptable end product. In general, the result should be an area, finish, or detail that is:

Functional—Use is unhampered by the construction technique utilized.

Durable—Stitching is secure and garment is made of quality materials (fabrics, interfacing, notions, trims).

Inconspicuous—Area is free from bulk, flat, and smooth; stitching is straight and a uniform distance from the edges or folds.

The following standards are commonly found in garments of quality construction.

Appearance, Overall

- Notions compatible in color, fiber, weight, and design.
- Fabric used correctly—plaids, stripes, checks, or other designs attractively planned for matching.
- Fabric nap correctly used.
- Pressed to give smooth look to finished garment.
- Loose ravellings, basting threads, and thread ends removed.

Belts

- Style of belt suitable to garment design, uniform width.

- Ends well finished.
- Closure appropriate.
- Durable and attractive.

Buttons

- Neatly and securely fastened.
- Appropriate in size and design.
- Placement accurate and attractive, uniform distance from edge and in spacing between.
- Appropriate shank provided.
- Stitching started and ended under button.

Buttonholes

- Flat and securely stitched.
- Even in width and length.
- Placed at points of strain.
- Attractive and accurate in distance from edge and in spacing between.
- Cut on grain.
- Appropriate in size.
- Appropriate interfacing used.

For fabric (bound) buttonholes

- Lips an attractive size and even in width.
- Lips meet exactly at the center of the buttonhole.
- Corners square.
- Facing securely and appropriately fastened to the back of the buttonhole.

For machine-made buttonholes

- The stitches evenly spaced and smooth in appearance on front and back of buttonhole.
- Center cut neatly with all loose threads trimmed off.
- Interfacing an appropriate color.

Collars

- Free from bulk—seams graded, clipped, or notched.
- Understitching holds undercollar in place so it does not show.
- Appropriate interfacing used.
- Shape symmetrical on right and left.
- Curved edges smooth, points sharp and flat.
- Rolls smoothly or lays flat according to design.

Cuffs

- Flat, smooth, free from bulk—seams graded and understitched where applicable.
- Even in width.
- Undercuff does not show.
- Appropriately interfaced.

Darts

- Tapered and smooth—free from pucker or bubble at point.
- Securely fastened at ends.
- Symmetrical in shape, length, and spacing.
- Attractive placement.
- Pressed correctly—vertical darts pressed toward center, horizontal darts pressed down.

Facings

- Flat, smooth, free from bulk.
- Seams graded, clipped or notched, and understitched as needed.
- Securely tacked in place at seams, darts, and openings.
- Facing edges free from ravelling.
- Any edge finish flat, smooth, and free from bulk.

Fit

- Adequate ease for comfort.
- Fitting details (neckline, armhole, waistline) properly located on body.
- Silhouette lines follow silhouette of body.
- Lengthwise grainline perpendicular to floor; crosswise grainline parallel to floor.

- Darts point to and stop short of the fullest part of the area they fit.
- Free from strain and/or excess fullness.

Gathers

- Uniform, evenly distributed. Stitched so pleats are not formed.
- Adequately full—do not look skimpy or bulky.

Hems

- Flat and inconspicuous, unless meant to be decorative.
- Seams pressed as required and graded to reduce bulk.
- Hem fold pressed so hem hangs smoothly at lower edge.
- Hem edge smooth, flat, and free from ravellings.
- Excess fullness evenly eased, free from pleats.
- Seams aligned.
- Hem edge finish should not create ridge or add bulk.
- Hem even in width.
- Width appropriate for garment style and fabric type.
- Topstitching attractive in size and placement, straight.
- Hand stitches uniform, secure, and inconspicuous.
- Fused hems securely fused and flat.
- Hem hangs parallel to floor.
- Length attractive for wearer and appropriate for garment.

Interfacing

- Enhances body and wear of garment.
- Color and care requirements compatible to outer fabric.
- Free from bulk and ravellings.
- Not visible on inside or outside of garment.

Lining

- Conceals inner construction of garment without adding excess bulk.

- Color and care requirements compatible with outer fabric.
- Fits smoothly inside garment with seams aligned.
- If attached at hems, has pleat for ease.
- If free hanging—attached at seams with French tacks.
- Hemmed shorter than garment—1/2 inch shorter than sleeves and 1 inch shorter than skirt or pants.

Neckline

- Free from bulk.
- Facings flat and inconspicuous—graded, clipped, and understitched.
- Design symmetrical.

Needlework (hand stitching)

- Uniform stitches, secure, inconspicuous.
- Correct technique used—stitch with single thread.
- No bulky knots at thread ends.
- Correct stitch used for purpose.

Placket

- Flat, free from excess bulk.
- Inconspicuous unless meant to be decorative.
- Correct technique used for purpose—faced, bound, hemmed.

Pleats, tucks

- Uniform in width (unless design varies).
- On straight grain of fabric when design allows.
- Neatly pressed as required.
- Stitching straight.
- Spacing attractive and accurate.

Pockets

- Flat, smooth, free from bulk.
- Stitching straight.
- Pressed neatly.

For Patch pockets

- Upper corners reinforced.

- Square corners mitered; round corners symmetrical.
- Hem appropriate width and neatly finished.
- Attractive placement.
- If in pairs, coordinated in size, shape, and fabric design (if applicable).

In-seam pockets

- Interfaced, understitched, lay flat when worn.
- Inconspicuous unless meant to be decorative

Pressing

- Garment smooth and free from wrinkles.
- Free from sheen and scorch.
- No ridges from seams or facings.
- Seams pressed flat and inconspicuous.
- Darts presses to shape garment.
- Pleats, tucks, creases pressed as design requires.

Seams

- Securely stitched, straight, flat, free from bulk.
- Stitches appropriate in size and tension.
- Fullness eased as required.
- Crossed seams intersect correctly.
- Pressed in correct direction.
- Graded or trimmed and understitched where appropriate.
- Fabric design matched as possible.
- If finish used, no added bulk or tension.
- Construction notches trimmed off after seams are sewn.
- Free from ravelling.

Sleeves

Set-in sleeves

- Fullness evenly distributed.
- Seam smooth and even in width around cap.
- Underarm section of seam trimmed and double stitched.
- Seam pressed toward sleeve cap.
- Free from ravelling.

Kimono or raglan sleeves

- Seams pressed open
- Clipped and reinforced as needed.

Snaps, hooks and eyes, and other fasteners

- Applied with small, neat stitches that do not show on right side.
- Reinforced with interfacing.
- Placed at least 1/8 inch from garment edges.
- Inconspicuous from right side of garment.
- Garment lays flat when fastened.

Stitching

- Stitch length and tension appropriate for fabric.
- Straight, free from tangles, knots, and skipped stitches.
- Beginning and ending of stitching locked in appropriate way.
- Loose threads cut off.

Topstitching

- Straight.
- Attractive in placement.
- Stitch length and tension appropriate for design and fabric.

Understitching

- Even distance from seam and inconspicuous.
- Holds seam against facing, under collar, or cuff without wrinkles.
- Prevents facing, undercollar, or cuff from rolling to right side of garment.

Waistband

- Smooth, even width.
- Free from bulk.
- On grain.
- Interfaced.
- Stitching straight.
- Corners square.
- Unless band is a design feature, the overlap is even with the placket and a 1 inch extension is on the underlap of band.
- Skirt or pants eased to fit band.
- Sets exactly at top of zipper.

Waistline Seam

- Inconspicuous, smooth, and flat.
- Seams and darts match if appropriate.
- Secured by waistline stay to prevent stretching.

Zipper

- Placket smooth, flat, and free from puckering.
- Stitching straight and even.
- Placket appropriate length and width.
- Seams and neckline edges match.
- Zipper completely covered.
- Zipper slides easily.
- Inconspicuous unless meant to be a design feature.
- Skirt and zippers end at band.
- Neckline zippers end 1/2 inch from neckline so fastener (hook and eye or snap) can be attached above zipper.