

## Pre-shrinking Fabrics and Removing Finishes

Fabric lengths can change in appearance and size when laundered, it is a good idea to spend time preparing fabric before making a garment. To avoid the disappointment of puckered seams, limp cloth and small linings wash, dry and press fabric lengths that you intend to make into washable garments, before cutting out.

We do not always know what the fibre content of fabric is. To determine if a cloth will shrink or change character after washing cut two 10 cm (4") swatches of fabric and wash as you would wash the finished garment.

The majority of fabrics can be machine washed on a delicate cycle. Washing a fabric supplies valuable information to a dressmaker. Fabrics may fray badly during washing, which will confirm method of neatening.

Washing the fabric can remove finishes that change the character of the cloth, making it unsuitable for the style chosen. The colour may bleed and fibres shed. Combinations of fabric in one garment may be unsuitable if they require different iron temperatures to smooth wrinkles or creases after laundering.

Pre-testing one of the 10cm (4") swatches by washing and ironing then, comparing it with the unwashed 10cm swatch, you will be able to confirm the laundering requirements of the fabric and the best method to proceed sewing.

Before machine-washing the fabric length zigzag or over lock the raw edge after straightening the grain, this will prevent cloth from unravelling. Machine wash delicate fabric in a pillowcase with the open edge tacked closed. Delicate and hand wash machine cycles treat fabrics gently, cool water, with minimal agitation. If using a machine dryer use a low heat and remove fabric damp. Dry press from the wrong side to flatten texture and remove wrinkles.

Test iron temperature, gradually increasing temperature and add steam if required. Interfacings made from fibres such as cotton and nylon/viscose mixtures must also be pre shrunk. Fold cut lengths of interfacing to a manageable size and submerge in hand-hot water for ten minutes. Remove and place onto a towel and roll to absorb the moisture, and then air dry over a drying rack.

Lace, trims, tapes all notions should be pre shrunk to prevent puckering. Small items can be put in a pillowcase and pre shrunk at the same time as fabric length.

Testing small swatches of fabric will confirm the most appropriate laundering methods, the correct ironing temperature and often improves the fabric texture and draping qualities. The most important reason for preparing fabric lengths in your garment will remain the same size after washing.