



The Ultimate Sewing Pattern Glossary

1. Pattern Envelope & Info

Before you cut your fabric, study the "passport" of your pattern.

- Pattern Number / Style Number: The unique identifier for the pattern design in the brand's catalog.
- Size Range: The available sizes. *Note:* Pattern sizing (especially in vintage or indie brands) rarely matches ready-to-wear retail sizing. Always choose your size based on your actual body measurements.
- Finished Garment Measurements: The measurements of the *completed* garment. The difference between your body measurements and the finished garment measurements is called Ease.
 - *Wearing Ease:* The minimum extra room added for movement and comfort.
 - *Design Ease:* Extra volume added for style (e.g., an oversized fit).
- Body Measurements Chart: The size chart used to select your pattern size. Usually includes Bust, Waist, Hips, and Back Waist Length.
- Fabric Requirements / Yardage: How much fabric you need. This varies by size, fabric width (45" or 60"), and whether your fabric has a nap or directional print.
- Notions: The extra supplies needed to complete the garment, such as zippers, buttons, interfacing, elastic, and thread.
- Skill Level: The difficulty rating (Beginner, Easy, Intermediate, Advanced).

2. Lines & Contours

Pattern sheets are covered in lines. It's crucial not to mix them up.

- Cutting Line: The outermost solid line. This is the exact line you cut along.
- Stitching Line / Seam Line: The line where you will actually sew. It is located *inside* the cutting line, exactly the width of the seam allowance away (usually 5/8" in US patterns).
 - *Important:* Most modern US commercial patterns include the seam allowance. However, some European brands (like Burda) do not. Always check the pattern instructions!
- Fold Line: A dashed or dotted line. It means the pattern piece should be placed on the *fold* of the fabric rather than cut out entirely.
- Lengthen or Shorten Lines: Parallel lines (often marked with triangles or letters like A-B) placed across the middle of a pattern piece. They allow you to adjust the length of the garment without distorting the shape.



- Grainline Arrow: A long straight line with arrows on both ends. It must be placed perfectly parallel to the fabric's selvage. Even a slight deviation can cause the garment to twist after washing.
- True Bias Line: A line at a 45-degree angle to the grainline. Used for pieces that require drape or stretch (like bias tape, certain collars, or cowls).

3. Notches & Symbols

These are your assembly "GPS." Without them, putting the garment together correctly is nearly impossible.

- Notches: Triangular marks on the cutting line used to match pieces together.
 - *Single Notch*: Usually marks the front of a piece or the top.
 - *Double Notch*: Usually marks the back of a piece or the bottom. Helps prevent sewing the front to the back by mistake.
 - *Cutting Notches*: Always cut *outward* from the notch, never inward, to avoid cutting into your seam allowance.
- Circle / Dot: Marks the exact point where seams intersect, where a zipper starts/ends, or where a sleeve, pocket, or button should be placed. Transfer these to your fabric using tailor's chalk or tracing paper.
- Square / Diamond: Often indicates the center of a piece, a balance point, or a crucial match point for complex construction.
- Buttonhole Placement: Lines or symbols showing exactly where to sew buttonholes and their required length.
- Dart: A folded and sewn wedge of fabric used to shape the garment to your body curves.
 - *Dart Legs*: The two outer lines of the dart.
 - *Dart Point / Apex*: The tip of the dart. *Pro-tip*: Never backstitch directly at the dart point; stop 2-3 mm short and tie the threads in a knot to prevent a "pucker" or "beak."
- Pleat: Indicates a fold in the fabric. Usually shows the fold line and the placement line.
- Gathering Line: A dashed line indicating where to sew two rows of basting stitches to create gathers (e.g., at a sleeve cap or skirt waist).
- Zipper Placement: A line showing exactly where the zipper should be installed.

4. Pattern Pieces

- Self Fabric: Pieces to be cut from the main fashion fabric.
- Lining: Pieces for the garment's lining. They often have their own specific seam allowances.
- Facing: A piece used to finish raw edges neatly (like at a neckline, armhole, or hem). Can be a separate piece or cut as one with the garment (extended facing).



- Interfacing: Indicates which pieces need to be reinforced with fusible or sew-in interfacing for structure (e.g., collars, cuffs, waistbands).
- Pocket: Includes the pocket bag, flap, or welt. Each part usually has its own pattern piece.
- Collar: Often consists of an Upper Collar and an Under Collar. The under collar is sometimes cut on the bias for better roll.
- Sleeve Cap: The curved top of the sleeve. It must perfectly match the armhole. The notches here are critical for proper alignment.
- Cuff: The band of fabric at the bottom of a sleeve.
- Waistband: The band at the waist of a skirt or pants. Usually cut with interfacing.
- Yoke: A shaped piece (often at the shoulders or hips) that supports the gathered or hanging part of the garment.
- Godet / Gusset: A triangular or diamond-shaped piece inserted into a seam to add fullness (godet) or ease of movement, like in an underarm (gusset).

5. Construction Terms

You will see these terms frequently in the instruction sheet.

- Right Sides Together (RST): Placing the right (pretty) sides of the fabric facing each other. The standard position for sewing seams.
- Wrong Sides Together (WST): Placing the wrong sides facing each other. Used for specific seams like French seams.
- Selvage: The tightly woven, non-fraying edge of the fabric. Used as the anchor for aligning the grainline.
- Bias: The diagonal direction across the fabric (45 degrees). Fabric cut on the bias has natural stretch and beautiful drape.
- Staystitching: A line of standard stitching sewn just inside the seam line on a single layer of fabric *before* assembly. It prevents curved edges (like necklines and shoulders) from stretching out of shape.
- Understitching: Stitching the seam allowance to the facing or lining close to the seam line. This keeps the facing from rolling to the outside of the garment.
- Topstitching: A visible row of stitching on the right side of the fabric, used for decoration or to hold edges flat.
- Clip / Snip: Making small cuts into the seam allowance (especially on curved or inner corners) so the seam can spread or compress and lie flat when turned right side out.
- Grade Seams: Trimming the seam allowances to different widths (e.g., trimming the inner layer shorter than the outer layer) to reduce bulk in thick seams.
- Press Open / Press to One Side: Ironing the seams. "Press open" means ironing the seam allowances apart. "Press to one side" means ironing both allowances in the same direction.



- Baste: Temporary, long stitches (by hand or machine) used to hold fabric in place before final sewing.
- Backstitch: Sewing backward at the beginning and end of a seam to lock the threads and prevent unraveling.
- Easing: Distributing a slightly longer piece of fabric evenly into a shorter piece (like easing a sleeve cap into an armhole) without creating visible gathers or pleats.

6. Layout & Cutting

- Layout Diagram: The visual guide showing exactly how to arrange your pattern pieces on your specific fabric width to minimize waste. Always follow this!
- With Nap / Without Nap: If your fabric has a nap (velvet, corduroy) or a directional print, all pattern pieces must face the same direction ("With Nap"). This will require more fabric.
- Place on Fold: Aligning the "Fold Line" of the pattern piece with the folded edge of your fabric.
- Cut 1 / Cut 2 / Cut on Fold: Instructions on how many pieces to cut. "Cut 2" means two identical pieces. "Cut 1 on fold" means one piece placed on the fabric fold.
- Mirror Image: For asymmetrical or paired pieces (like left and right front bodices). The pattern may only show one side, instructing you to flip it over to cut the mirror image.