

Sew Confident!

CLASS IN A FLASH

Setting in a Sleeve (and fitting, too)

By Linda Lee



THE SEWING WORKSHOP

The Sleeve

The set of a sleeve is the telltale sign of a quality garment. Men's suits in all price ranges have perfect sleeve settings. We can, too.

Whether you are tailoring a jacket or making a casual linen top, the sleeves should hang gracefully without drag lines, have enough room for comfort and movement, and be pucker-free.

This tutorial takes the mystery out of setting in perfect sleeves in any fabric.



Liberty Shirt with a set-in sleeve.

Anatomy of a Sleeve

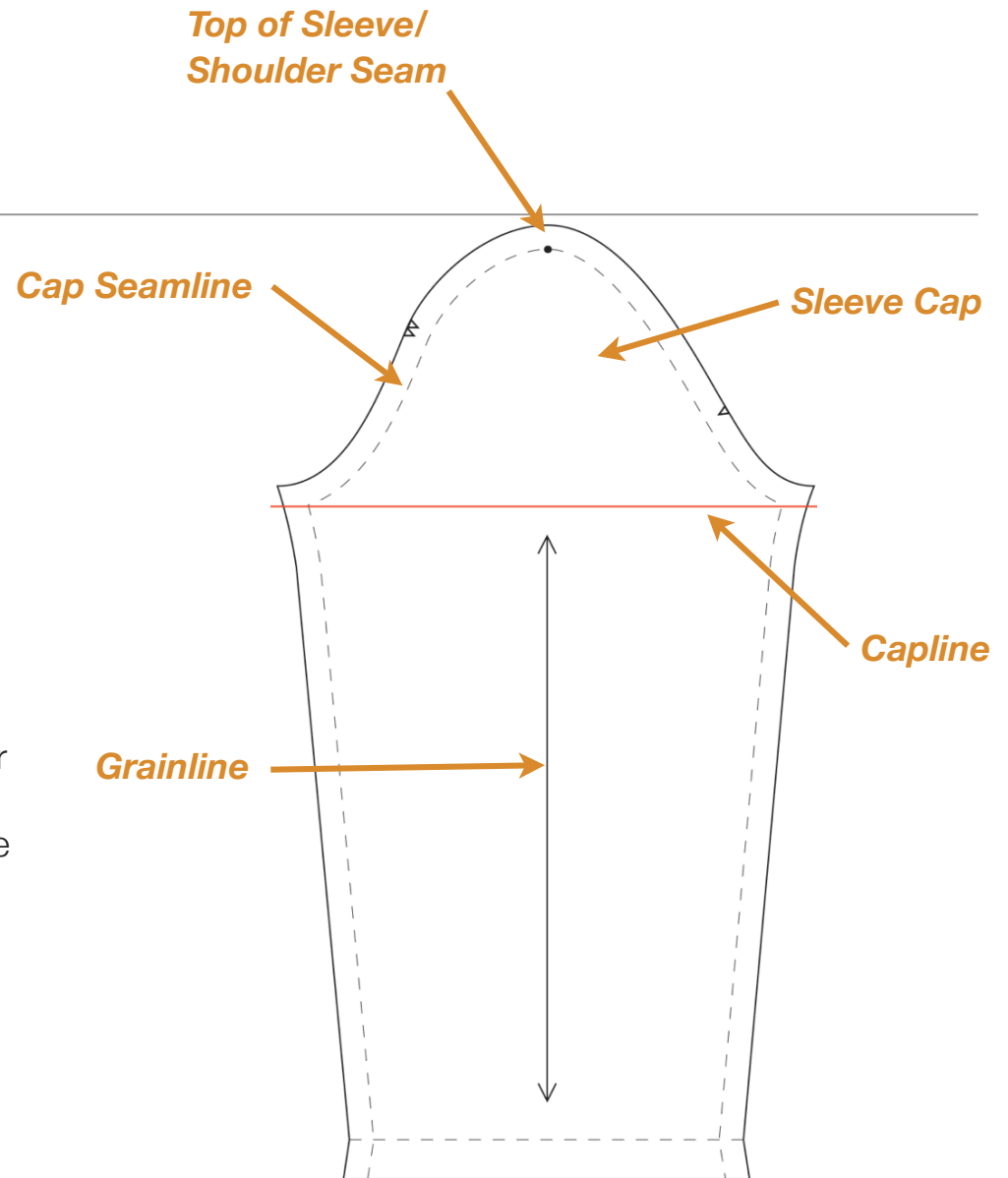
■ These terms will help you understand the elements of a sleeve that are important in fitting and sewing a good-looking sleeve.

Capline - Line drawn from one side to the other at the underarm.

Sleeve Cap - Sleeve section above the capline ranging in height from 8" for a set-in sleeve to 2" or less for a dropped shoulder sleeve. The cap width should measure your arm girth plus ease. See slide 4 for sleeve ease chart.

Cap Seamline - Stitching line from front underarm to top of cap and back down to underarm.

Sleeve Grainline - Placed perpendicular to the capline extending from top of sleeve to the hem.



Check Arm Girth

Place the tape measure under the arm and measure the upper arm circumference over a hand that is inserted under the tape. This adds the appropriate ease for most sleeves.

NOTE: *If measuring without the hand, add ease to the measurement.*

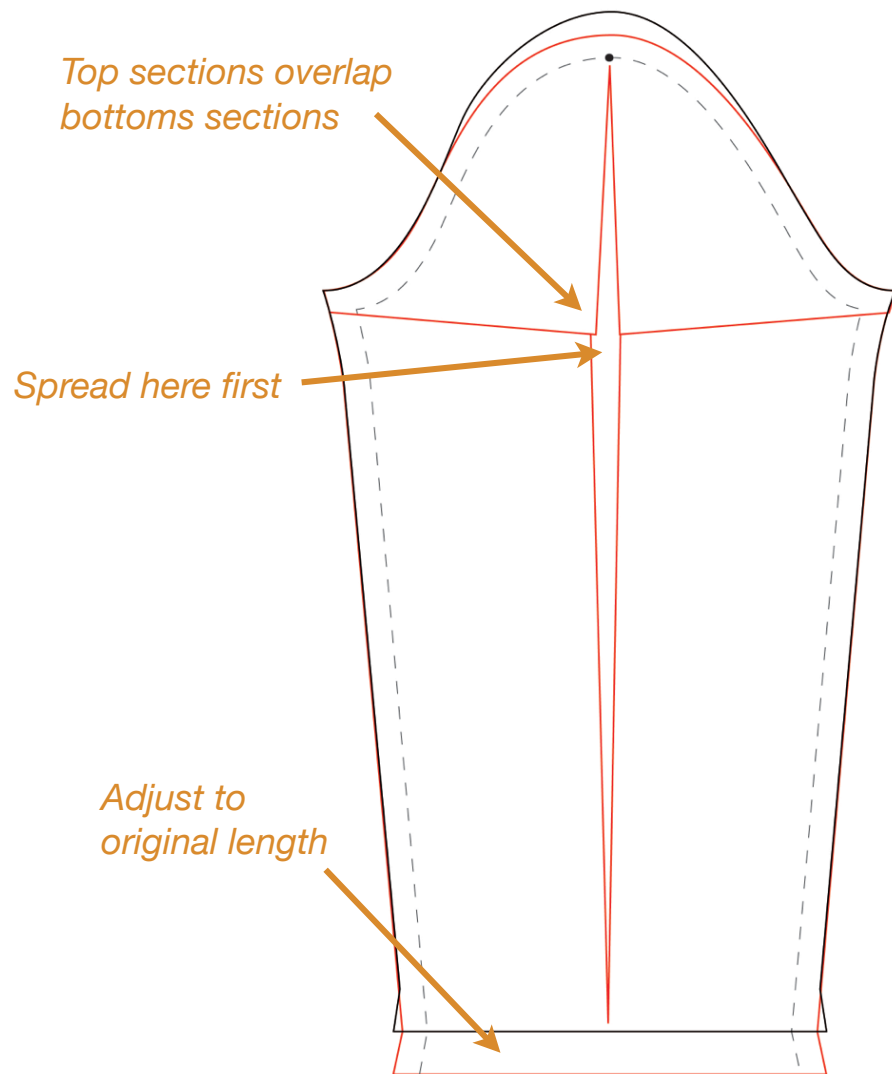
<u>Garment</u>	<u>Minimum Upper Arm Ease</u>
Blouse	1" to 1½"
Dress	1½" to 2"
Unlined jacket	3" to 4"
Lined jacket	3" to 4½"
Coat	4" to 5½"



3-thread stitch formation with a line of straight stitches to stabilize the edge.

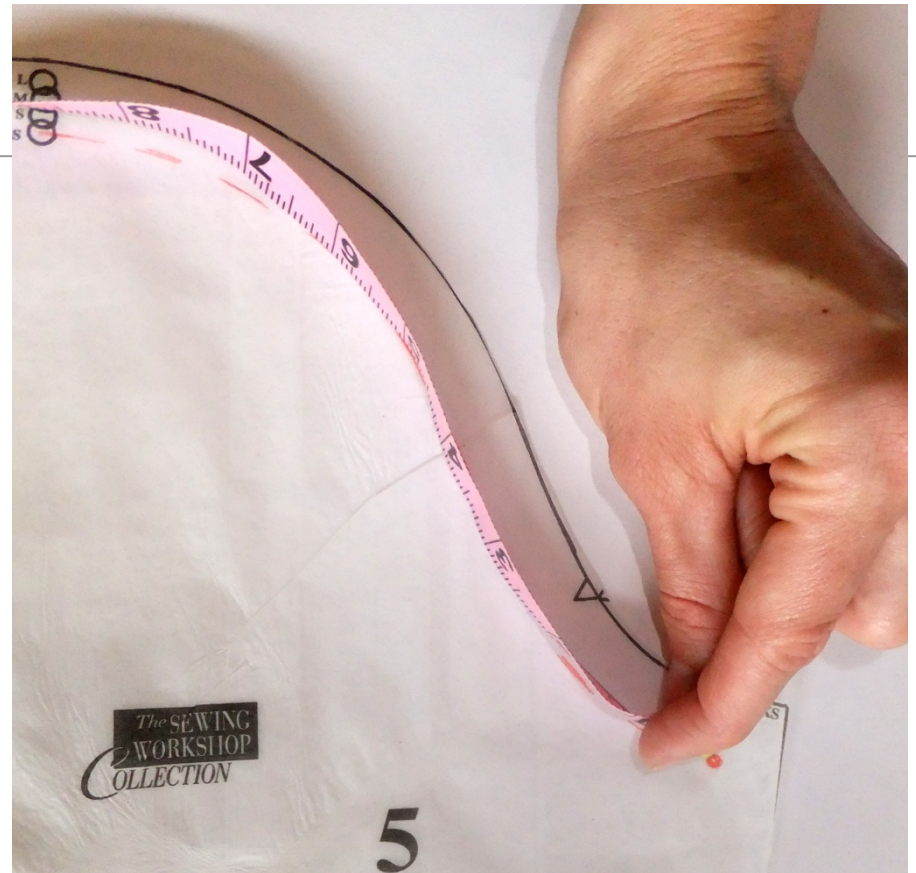
Adjust Arm Girth

- Draw a vertical line through the sleeve center. Draw a horizontal line perpendicular to the vertical line between the top corners of the underarm seam.
- Cut along these lines up to, but not through, the outer edges, leaving a hinge at the four edges.
- Pull the pattern apart the desired amount of increase and tape in place. Allow the upper sections to overlap the lower ones, forming a diamond shape in the center of the sleeve. Tape in place.



Check Sleeve Cap Ease

- Using a flexible tape measure on its edge, measure the *finished* (from dot to dot) length of the sleeve cap along the seamline.
- Using the same method, measure the *finished* armscye of the front and back of the garment pieces and add the two sums together.
- Compare the sleeve and armscye measurements. If the sleeve is 1 1/2" more than the armscye, then you will want to reduce the sleeve cap ease.



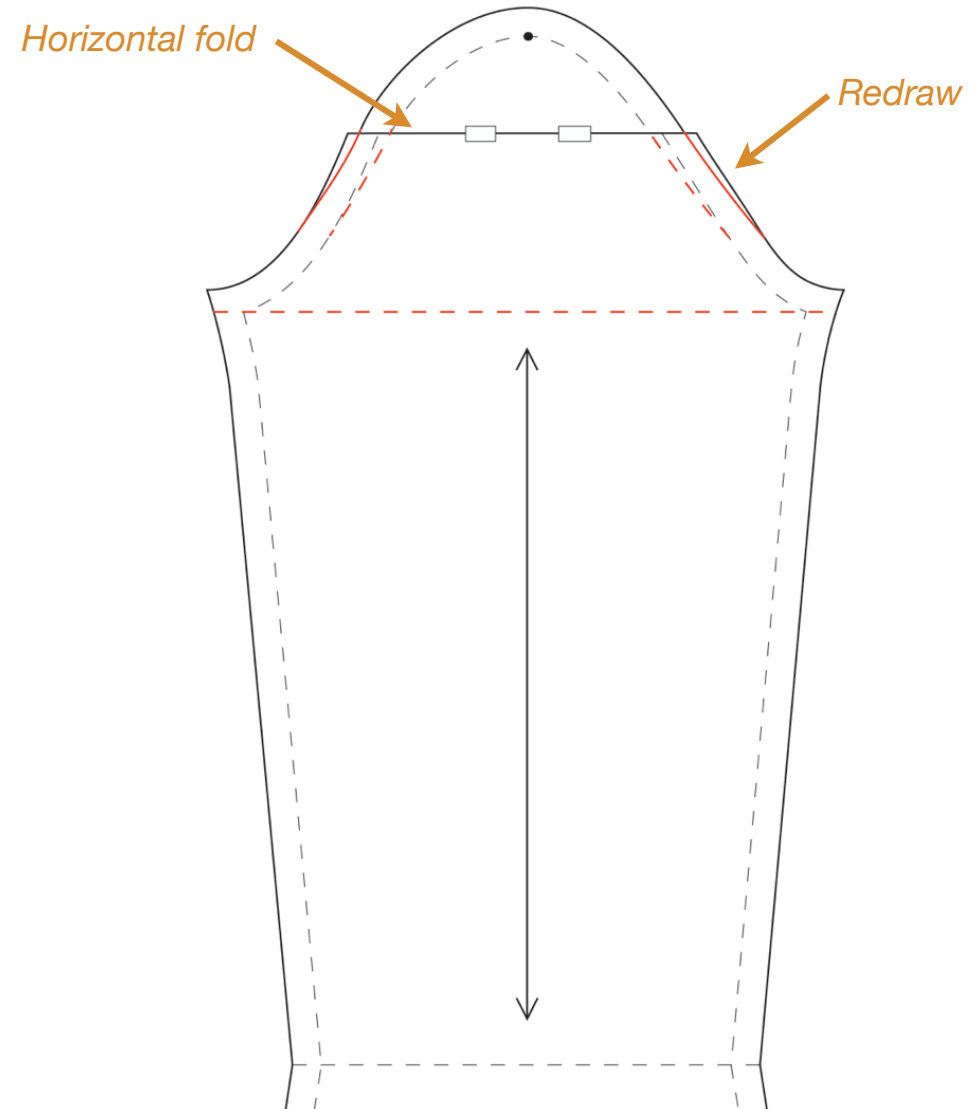
A flexible ruler is a handy tool, too.

Reduce Sleeve Cap Ease

■ In the upper third of the sleeve cap (about 3" down from the top of the sleeve), draw a horizontal line perpendicular to the straight of grain.

■ Fold the tissue 1/4" along this line, folding it upwards. Tape in place. This reduces the sleeve cap 1/2" and is considered the maximum alteration.

■ Redraw to blend the cutting lines of the sleeve cap.

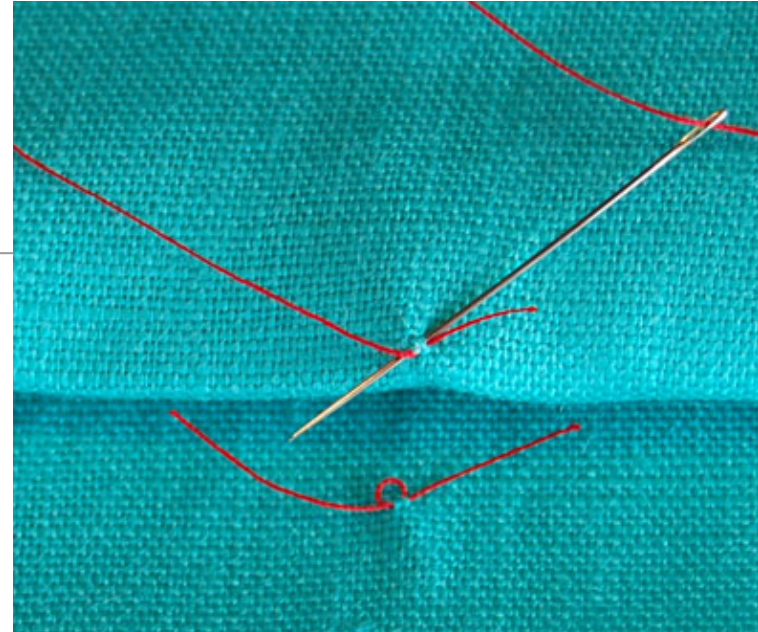


Mark

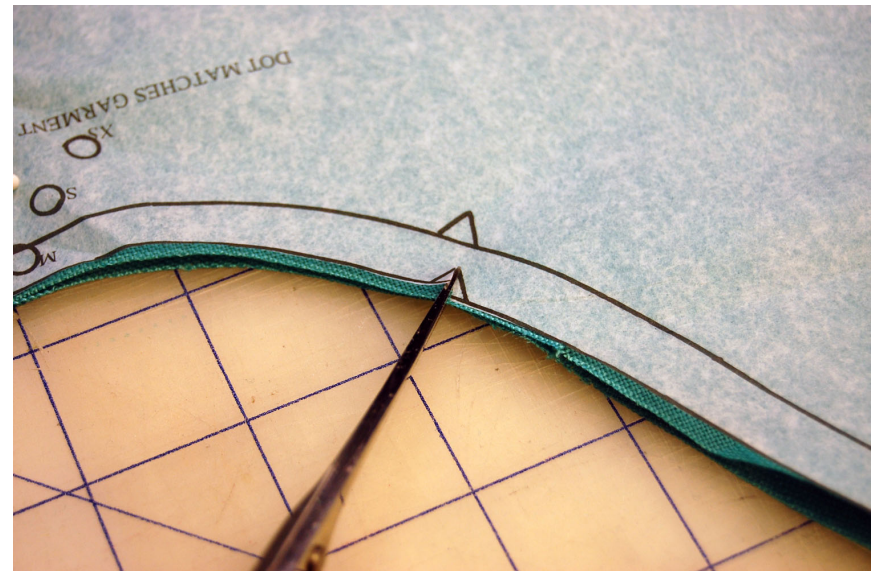
■ After you have checked your sleeve pattern and made any fitting alterations, it is time to cut out the sleeves, making sure to follow the straight of grain line on your pattern piece.

■ Before moving the pieces from your cutting table, mark the fabric pieces.

■ Use tailor tacks to mark the dots at the top of the sleeve cap, and snip into the seam allowances to mark the notches.



Knotted tailor tacks are more accurate.

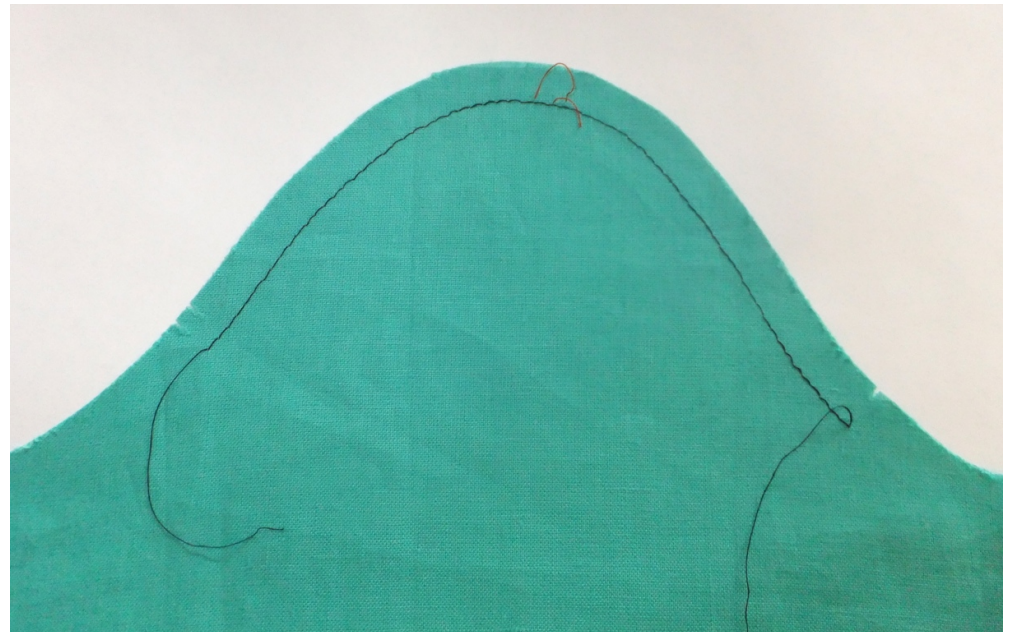


One snip for a single notch (front). Two snips for double notches (back).

Easestitch

■ Stitching on the right side of the fabric, sew a line of basting stitches (5mm long) around the sleeve cap between the notches.

■ In theory, the stitching should be just inside the seamline, but I find it easier and more accurate to sew exactly *ON* the seamline.



Leave the thread tails so you can use them to draw up the fabric when easing.

Ease with Steam

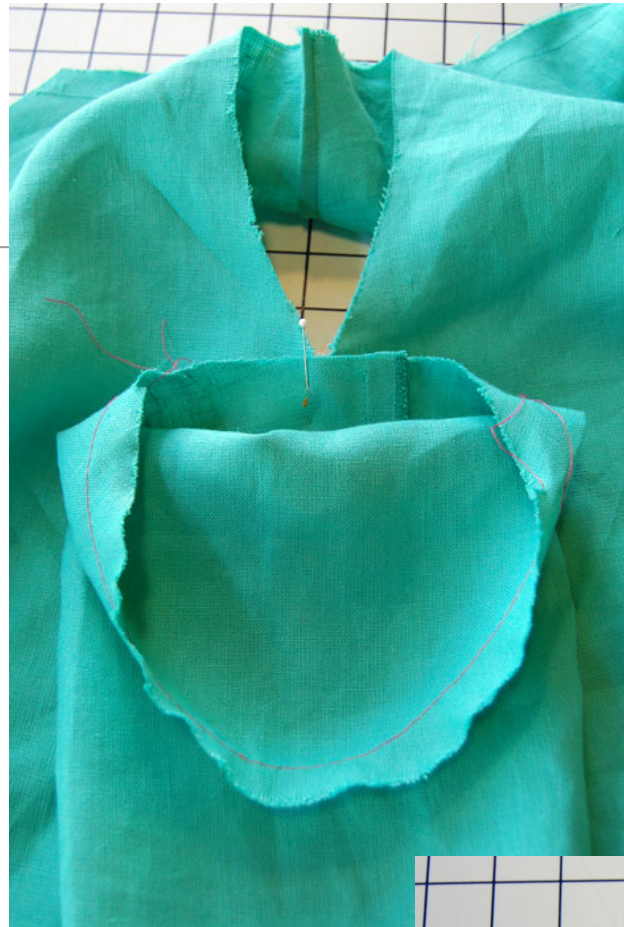
- It is important to give the sleeve some shape before beginning to pin it into the armscye.
- Hold onto the bobbin thread of the easestitching and begin to draw up the sleeve cap, making sure to even out the ease with no puckers.
- “Hang” the sleeve on the narrow end of a ham, aligning the sleeve seamline on the seam of the ham.
- Steam the seam allowance. Hand press to remove as much of the rippled seam allowance as possible.



Use your fingers to flatten and smooth the stitches along the seamline. Don't press beyond the seam allowance into the crown of the sleeve.

Pin in Place

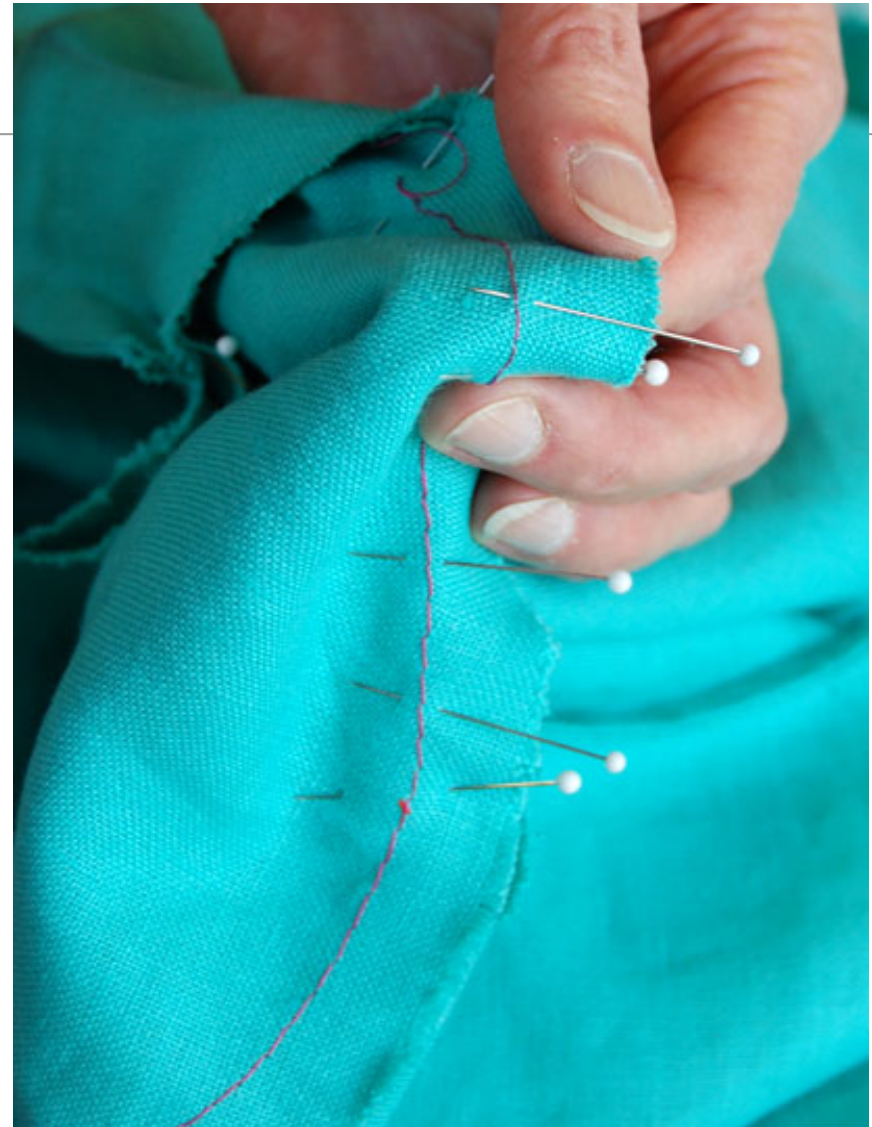
- To start, match the sleeve seam to the side seam of the garment and pin.
- Match the top of the sleeve to the shoulder seam and pin.
- Place pins to match the single and double notches.



Placing four pins to start is all you need before beginning the easing process.

Pin with Ease

- Starting at the top of the sleeve (dot) and working on the sleeve side, place your finger under the fabric about 5/8" to one of the top pin.
- Roll the seam allowance over your finger and place a pin through both layers of fabric, straddling the stitching line.
- Continue down one side of the sleeve to the side seam, pinning about every 5/8".
- Start at the top again and pin the remaining side.

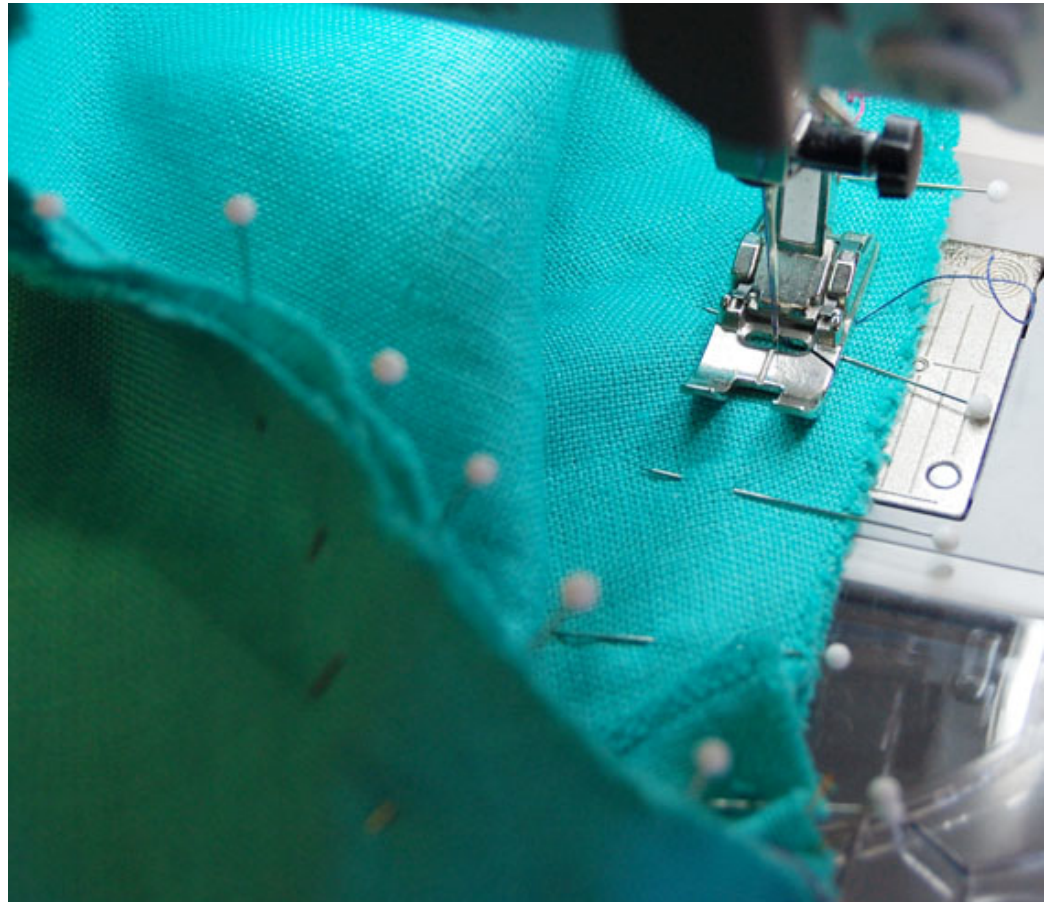


This technique of rolling the fabric over your finger automatically builds in the necessary ease.

It's magic!

Sew Sleeve to Garment

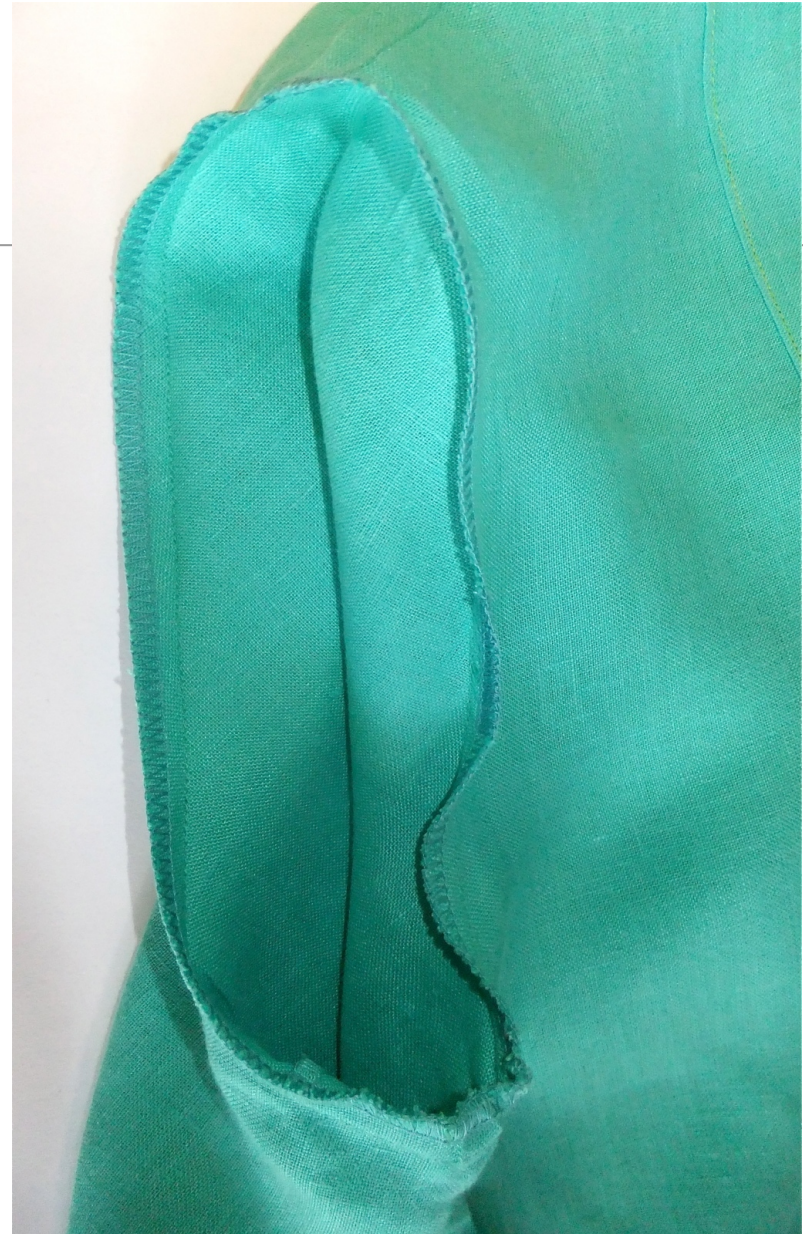
- Working on the inside of the sleeve and beginning at one notch, machine stitch the sleeve just to the left of the original basting stitch.
- Sew 1/8" from the seamline in the seam allowance from notch to notch through the underarm. This is an optional step and is used if there will be a lot of strain on a fitted garment.



Sew slowly and carefully to retain an even seam allowance width, and remove the pins as you sew.

Finish Raw Edges

- Position the sleeve opening so you are sewing on the sleeve side and the opening forms a tube.
- Serge the seam together using a 3-thread stitch formation.



If you do not own a serger, pink the seam to prevent raveling.

Final Steam

- You do not want to “iron” the sleeve after it is sewn in place.
- Working over a press mitt, hold the iron near the sleeve seam and steam the area.
- Use your hand to press the sleeve through the cap area from notch to notch.

Press Mitt



Voila!

■ You can have beautiful sleeves, too.

■ To review:

Sew a line of basting stitches on the seamline.

Pre-shape over a ham.

Roll over your finger to build in the ease.

Steam only to finish.



Verona Jacket

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