

# Ease Into Place

LEARN TO PUT ROOM  
WHERE YOUR BODY NEEDS IT

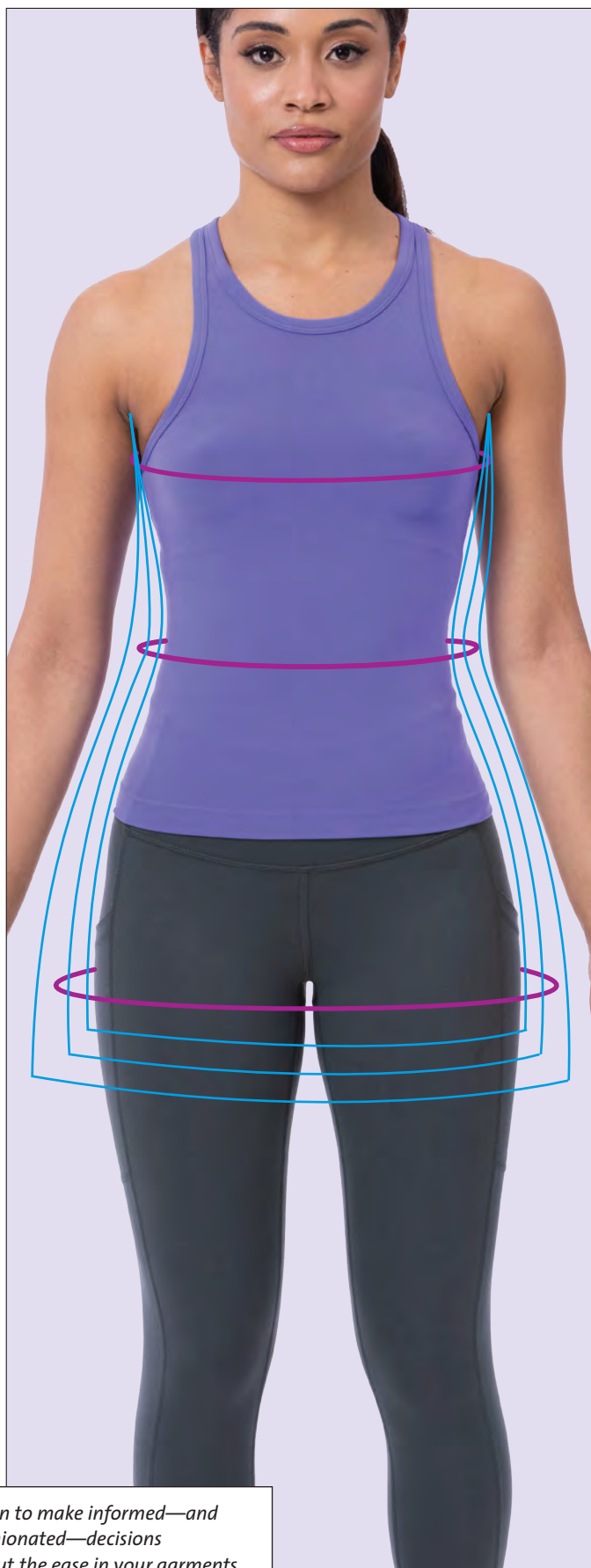
**W**hen working with clients on personal fitting, I usually ask them what size pattern they think they should wear. Often, they choose a size that corresponds to the largest area on their body. They believe this ensures a good fit because every part of them can fit into the garment. However, this makes alterations so much more difficult. Here's how I guide them to a better fit with fewer major pattern adjustments.

I start by having clients measure themselves in the usual way, and measure the pattern, but with one extra step: I ask them to measure the front and back of their body separately, at the bust and hip. These “half measurements” can be compared directly to the front and back patterns, providing key information about how the finished garment will relate to their shape.

Knowing how much total ease a person needs and likes in a garment is an important starting point in fitting. Getting that ease in the right place is the step that is often overlooked.

I'll walk you through assessing ease in clothing and in patterns, so you can choose the correct pattern size. Then I'll give you a couple of simple methods for adding or subtracting ease without unduly disrupting the intended design. The adjustments I talk about help to distribute the ease where your body needs it. Further fit refinements may be required to accommodate your posture and sleeve or armscye adjustments.

*Louise Cutting, owner and designer of Cutting Line Designs, is a Threads contributing editor.*



*Learn to make informed—and opinionated—decisions about the ease in your garments.*

# Understand Ease Options

In patterns, as in purchased clothing, different garments and styles include different amounts of ease. My guidelines help you get enough ease and then steer you toward figuring out how much additional ease will work for the garment you're making.

## MINIMUM EASE

Also called “wearing ease,” it is needed for a garment to go around the body, be reasonably comfortable, and not look as though it is under much strain. Small figures can follow the list below; larger figures may need proportionally more wearing ease for comfort and mobility.

**Bust:** 2½ inches to 3 inches

**Waist:** dresses—1 inch or more; skirts and pants—1 inch to 1½ inches

**Hips:** 2 inches to 3 inches (more for plus or extended hip sizes)

**Crotch depth:** ½ inch to ¾ inch (for plus or extended sizes)

**Wrist:** 1 inch

## DESIGN EASE

This is volume added to a pattern to achieve a desired look. It can be a couple of inches or many. Note that this ease is usually circumferential. Lengthwise ease is added only if a garment is intended to drape or blouse.

## “YOU HAVE AN OPINION” EASE

Do you like your garments to be close-fitting, or do you like them to skim your body? Do you like a lot of volume? The good news is that you can have an opinion about the amount of design ease you include in your garments. While this is a benefit, it can lead to confusion. Read on for my recommendations of how to determine a reasonable amount of ease.

# Choose Your Ease Preference

A garment's silhouette is determined by the overall cut and, equally important, the amount and placement of ease. By controlling the ease, you can create clothes that look just the way you want them to. This calls for comparing your measurements, the garment's measurements, the intended design ease, and your preferred design ease.

## EVALUATE THE STYLE

Read the description on the pattern envelope. It should include a term such as “loose-fitting” or “semifitted.” This gives you an idea of the intended fit. The Fit and Ease table below gives standard ease allowances for various categories of fit. I've focused on blouses, dresses, and jackets.

Fitted garments have approximately what you need for wearing ease, that is, the minimum ease for a comfortable garment. Close-fitting ease amounts are for strapless gowns or other tight styles. For day-to-day clothing, most people like semifitted or looser clothing; these allow for mobility and slight size fluctuations.

FIT AND EASE		
Fit description	Blouse, dress	Jacket
Close-fitting	0 inches to 3 inches	n/a
Fitted	3 inches to 4 inches	3¾ inches to 4¼ inches
Semifitted	4 inches to 5 inches	4¾ inches to 5¾ inches
Loose-fitting	5 inches to 8 inches	5¾ inches to 10 inches
Very loose-fitting	8+ inches	10+ inches



**MISSES' BLOUSE:** Fitted blouse has collar, sleeve and hem variations, narrow hem. **A, B:** Collar extends into tie ends. **A, B, D:** Continuous lap, pleats and button cuffs on sleeves. **C, D, E, F:** Collar and collar band. **C, F:** Stitched hems on sleeves.

SIZES/TAILLES	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22
Bust	30½	31½	32½	34	36	38	40	42	44
Waist	23	24	25	26½	28	30	32	34	37
Hip	32½	33½	34½	36	38	40	42	44	46
Poitrine	77	80	83	87	92	97	102	107	112
Taille	58	61	64	67	71	76	81	87	94
Hanches	83	85	88	92	97	102	107	112	117

**Finished Garment Measurements/Mesures du Vêtement Fini**  
 Bust/Poitrine: **A, B, C, D, E, F: 34½" - 48"** (88cm - 122cm)  
**Note:** Remaining measurements included on pattern tissue./N.

Look for fitting information on the pattern and envelope.

continued >>>



### EXAMINE A SIMILAR GARMENT

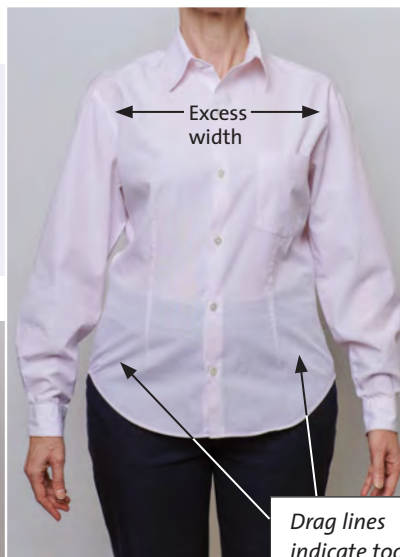
Start by finding a similar silhouette in your closet. Measure the garment's circumference at the bust and hem; also measure the waistline if it is defined. Record these dimensions—they are key information about your ease preferences.

*Find the dimensions of a garment similar in style to the pattern you plan to sew. This provides you with a reference for your preferred fit.*

### TRY ON THE EXAMPLE PIECE

Decide whether it fits the way you like: Can it button without strain? Do you need more room and, if so, where do you need it (front, back, or both)? Observe where the side seams fall to decide where additional ease might help. Estimate how many additional inches would improve the fit. If the garment seems too large, pinch to see how much excess you'd prefer to get rid of.

*The example shirt is clearly too tight at the abdomen and hip area. Plus, there's excess width at the shoulders and upper chest.*



*Drag lines indicate too little ease.*

*Excess ease at the upper and middle back blouses out above the too-tight hip area.*



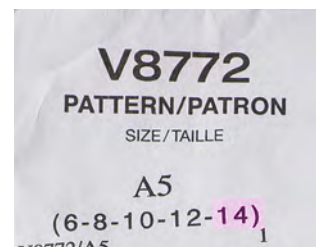
### CHOOSE A PATTERN SIZE

Look at the finished garment measurements listed on the pattern envelope or tissue or, if these are not listed, measure the pattern (minus seam allowances) to determine the finished size. In the size that corresponds to your body measurements, does the pattern offer the desired amount of ease? If the finished garment measurements are similar to what you determined from the example garment, you're good to go. Note: You still may need to make personalized adjustments, such as for a forward shoulder, or higher/lower bust point.

If the pattern has more or less ease than you prefer in the torso, you may be tempted to go up or down a size. I discourage doing so, as that changes the neck circumference, sleeve width, and overall length, too. You're better off selecting the size that more closely reflects your upper body measurements—high bust, shoulders, and neck—and making ease adjustments by adding or subtracting tissue within the bodice, to bring the design to your preferred silhouette.

BUST	WAIST	HIP
6 34 1/2" (87CM)	6 29 1/2" (75CM)	6 39" (99CM)
8 35 1/2" (90CM)	8 30 1/2" (76CM)	8 40" (101CM)
10 36 1/2" (92CM)	10 31 1/2" (80CM)	10 41 1/2" (105CM)
12 38" (96CM)	12 33" (85CM)	12 43 1/2" (110CM)
14 40" (101CM)	14 35" (89CM)	14 45 1/2" (116CM)

*Use the finished garment measurements as a guide to select a pattern size that includes adequate ease at bust, waist, and hips.*





# Fit with Half Measurements

To refine a pattern's fit, make ease changes where you need them: front, back, or a little in both areas. To target the right place, start by taking your half measurements—front and back. These guide you in distributing any added or removed ease.

## RECORD YOUR HALF MEASUREMENTS

Wear a close-fitting T-shirt and leggings. Fill in the chart below by taking full and front measurements. Take the front measurements from side seam to side seam. To arrive at the back measurement, subtract the front from the full circumference. Additionally, measure across the front and (with the help of a fitting friend) the back between the underarm creases.



## FULL AND HALF MEASUREMENTS

	Full circumference	Front	Back = Full - Front
<b>Bust</b>			
<b>Waist</b>			
<b>High hips</b>			
<b>Full hips</b>			
<b>Cross-chest</b>	N/A		N/A
<b>Cross-back</b>	N/A	N/A	

continued >>>

**COMPARE WITH THE PATTERN**

You've already determined the total amount of ease you'd like in your finished garment and chosen a pattern size that reflects this. Now compare the front and back body and pattern measurements. Depending on your figure, you may discover that the ease isn't distributed evenly.

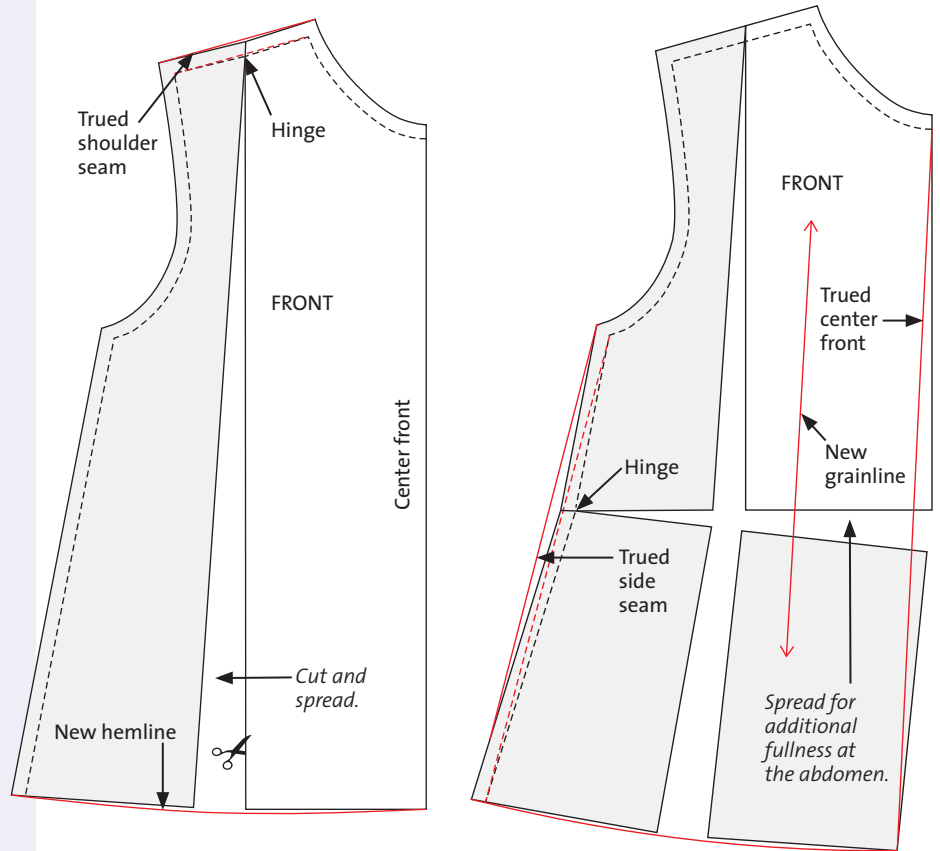
**Full abdomen or bust**

If you have a rounded abdomen or a full bust, your front body may pull the side seams forward. In this case, there are quick fixes to add ease to the front torso at the stomach (A) or bust (B).

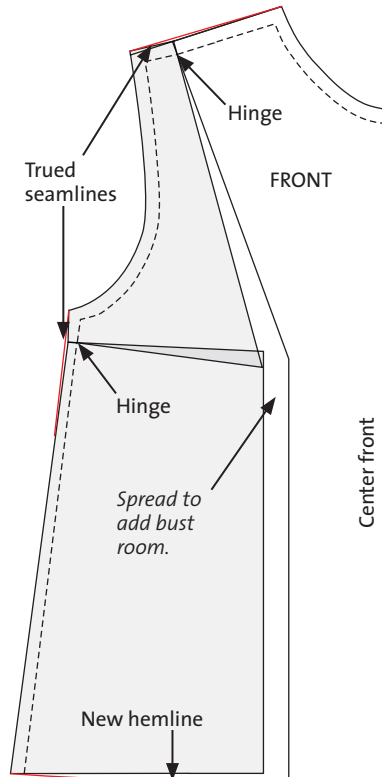
**Full hips**

If your upper half is a size or more smaller than your lower half, you've been advised to choose a pattern that fits the shoulders and neck. The adjustment (C) can be used on the front, back, or both, to accommodate a fuller hip size. It increases the pattern's circumference gradually from the armscye to the hem. Your half-measurements help you decide how much to add at each place.

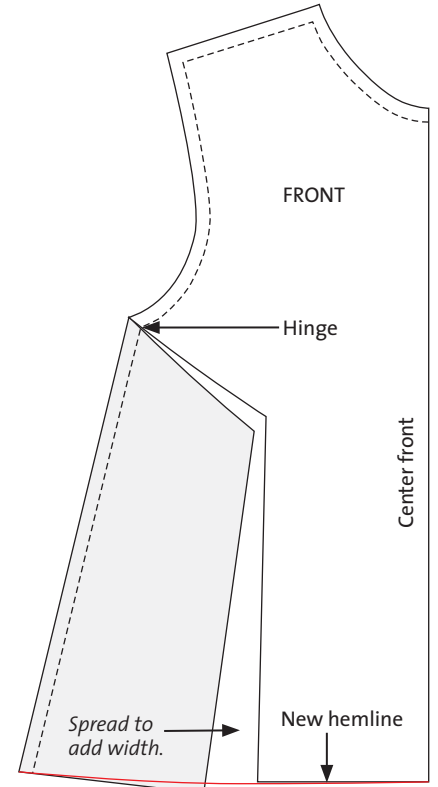
**A: FULL-ABDOMEN FIX**



**B: FULL-BUST ADJUSTMENT**



**C: FULL-HIP ALTERATION**



*The final garment, made from Vogue 8772 in a size with less ease in the upper body, was expanded to accommodate larger hips.*

Photos: (pp. 70-73) Jack Deutsch; all others, Mike Yamin. Illustrations: Steven Fleck. Stylist: Jessica Saal. Hair and makeup: Charina Redugiero. Styling credits: tank top—Shop.Lululemon.com, leggings—Z by Zella (Nordstromrack.com).