



Improve the Bottom Line

Adjust your pants pattern to fit a shapely derrière

BY ADRENA JOHNSON

If your figure isn't exactly standard, ready-to-wear clothes will never fit the way you'd like them to. For those of us who have been blessed (or cursed) with a prominent derrière and a relatively small waist, finding a pair of pants

that fits can be a frustrating—perhaps even futile—endeavor. What fits at the seat is way off at the waist, and when the waistline feels comfortable, the pants are visibly too tight across the bottom. It's a lose-lose situation.

This same scenario can occur when you make pants for yourself. Most patterns provide just enough “sitting room” in the center-back seam for an average bottom, but a round bottom requires several inches more for a good fit. This

is a win-win situation: With very little effort, a sewer can craft pants that feel comfortable and make her curves look sleek and chic.

SMALL WAIST VERSUS FULL HIP AND SEAT

The fundamental problem with fitting a full seat isn't the hip/derrière measurement but the difference between the hip and waist circumference. Standard ready-to-wear clothes and commercial patterns generally accommodate a difference of up to 10 inches, so even the classic "36-24-36-inch" figure will have trouble fitting into a pair of slacks.

For comfort, you might try going up one or two sizes to accommodate a fuller bottom, but you then have to deal with a waistline that's too large. You can cinch the excess fabric with a belt, but this adds more visual width at the waist.

Or, you can turn to style as a solution, and limit yourself to tunics or other garments long enough to cover your derrière. This limits your fashion choices, and it's a shame to hide your trim waist because your pants don't fit well through the seat.

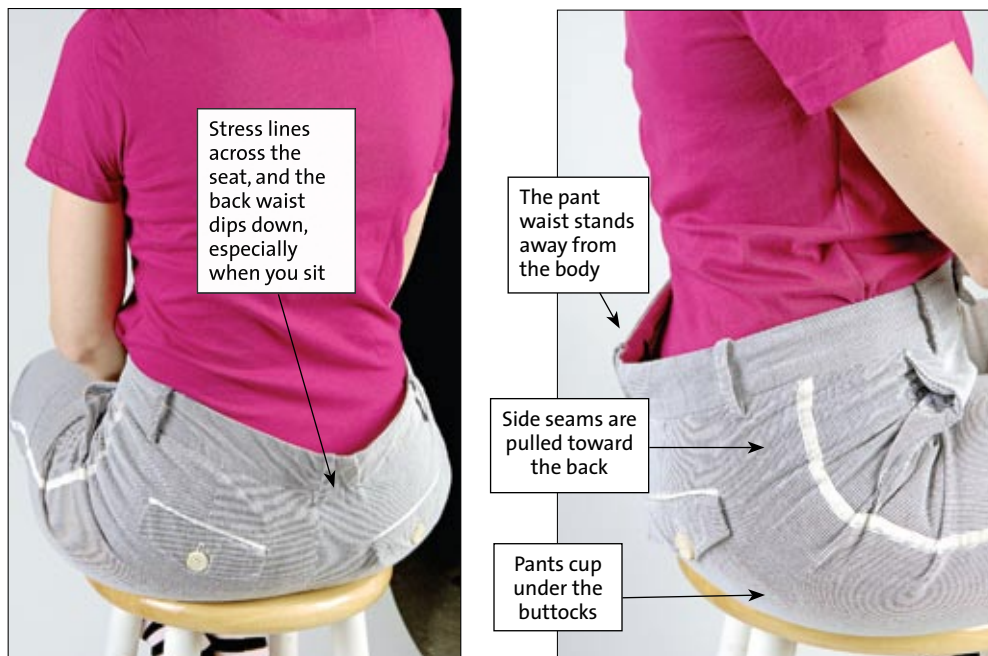
ANATOMY ISN'T DESTINY

The buttocks or derrière is composed of muscles and soft tissue. For the most part, a pronounced derrière is inherited as part of an overall body type that's often athletic-looking and shapely. Exercise, weight gain, or surgical augmentation can further exaggerate the contours of the seat. (Note that a round derrière often is

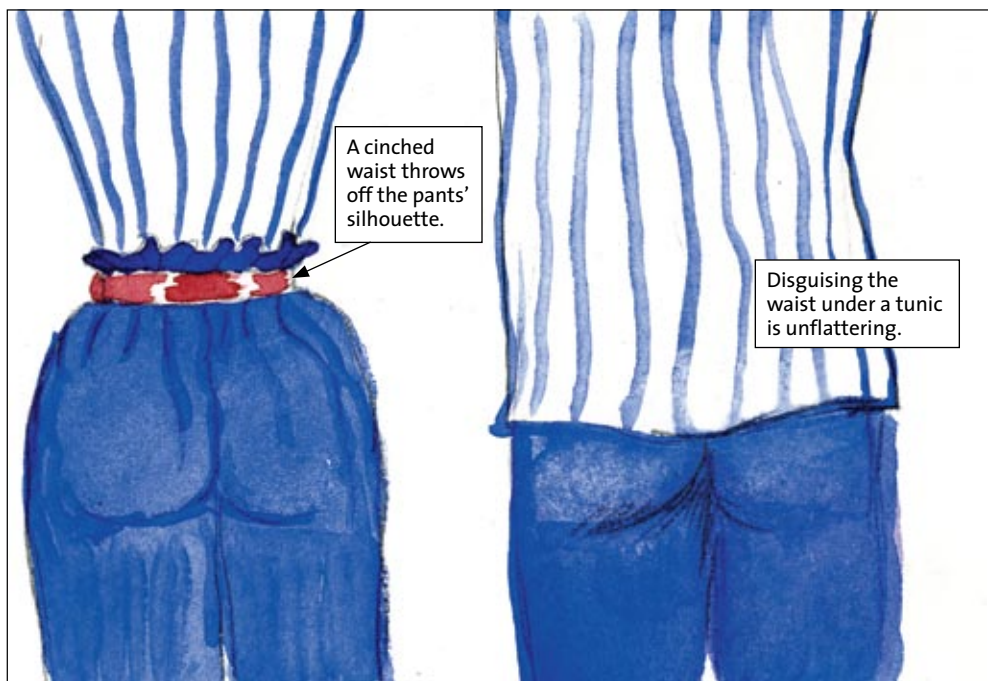
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Understand what not to wear

Symptoms of a poor fit vary according to the cut of the pants and the particular shape of your body. They show when seams and the waistband pulls out of balance.



You can tell when your pants don't fit. The real symptom is discomfort. When you tug at your pants or fear exposure when you sit, it's time to correct your pattern.



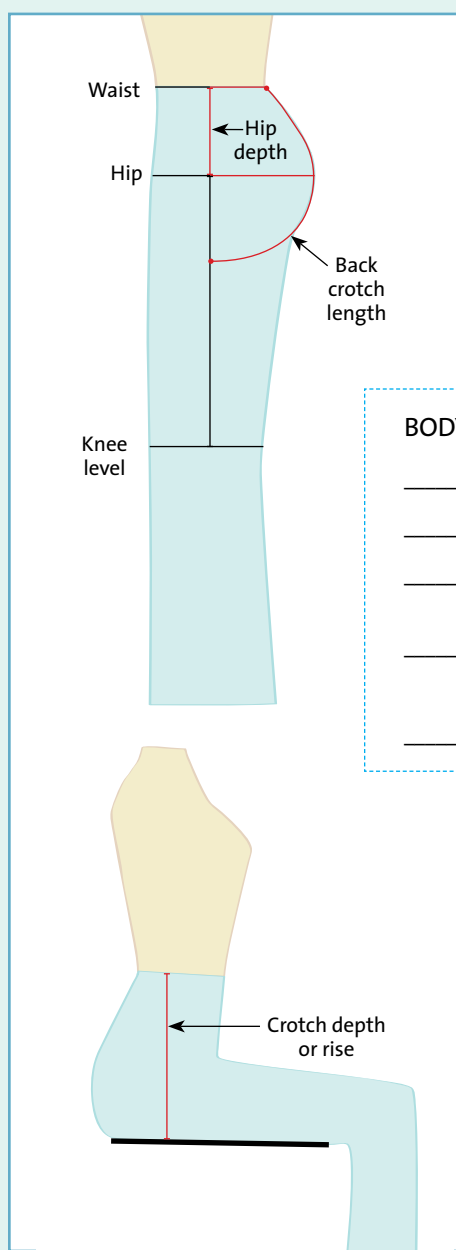
Buy to fit your hips. In ready-to-wear, we often choose pants that fit in the hips and then adjust the waist by cinching it in with a belt (above left) or covering it with a jacket or tunic (above right). Neither of these options have the appeal of custom-made pants that fit both the hips and the waist.

Measure yourself and the pattern

You need to measure your body and the pattern, so you can compare the two. The difference tells you how much to adjust the pant-back pattern.

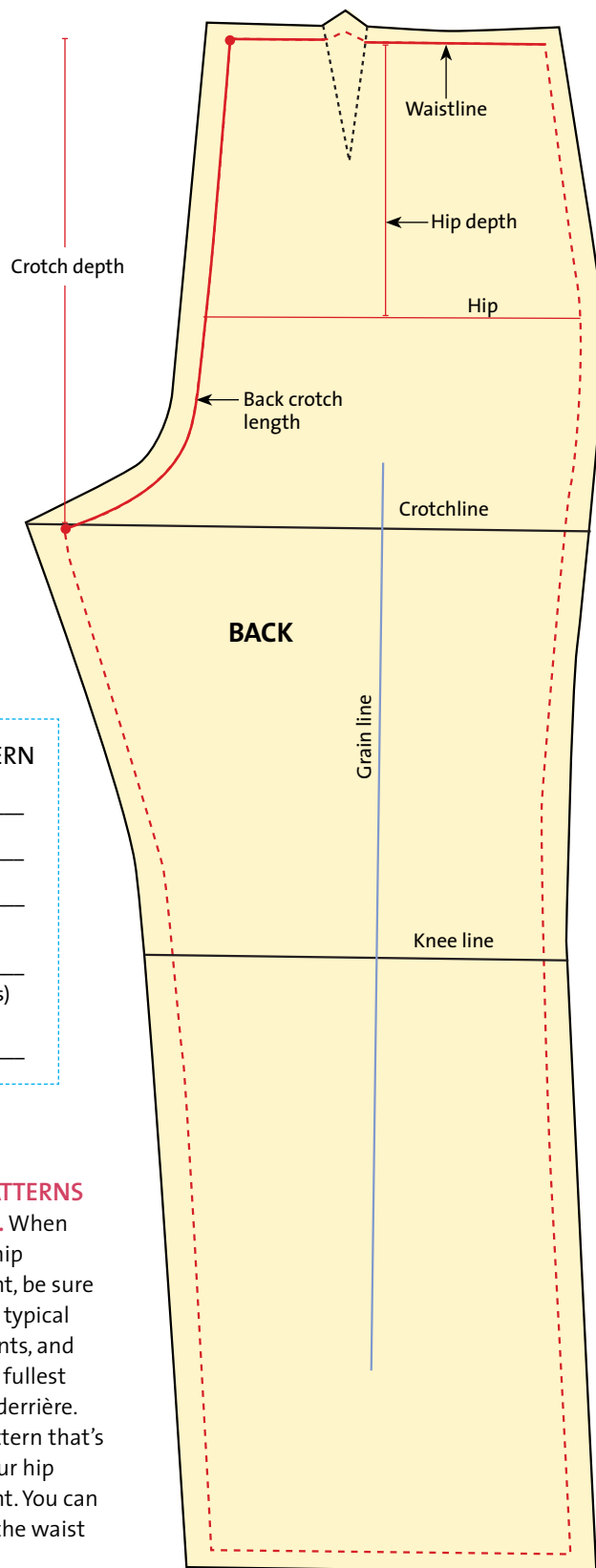
MEASURE YOUR BODY

Take measurements of the areas on your body indicated by red lines below. You will adjust only the back pattern piece, so take the measurements around the back only from side seam to side seam. Copy the chart below, and write the measurements in the "BODY" column.



MARK AND MEASURE THE PATTERN

If the pattern doesn't include seamlines, add them inside the cutting lines. Next, draw the lines shown at right on the pattern. Then, measure the pattern along those lines, omitting the seam allowances, and write down the measurements in the box below in the "PATTERN" column.



BODY	PATTERN
_____ Waist _____	_____
_____ Hip _____	_____
_____ Hip depth _____	_____
_____ Center-back crotch length _____ (from inseam to back waist between legs)	_____
_____ Crotch depth _____	_____

Tip

CHOOSE PATTERNS BY HIP SIZE. When taking your hip measurement, be sure to wear your typical undergarments, and measure the fullest part of your derrière. Choose a pattern that's closest to your hip measurement. You can then adjust the waist as needed.

balanced by a fuller front thigh, which can create additional fitting problems.)

The more prominent the seat, the more fabric you need to cover it (if you've ever made a full-bust adjustment, the required adjustment is similar). The shortage of fabric in most pants shows up clearly in the uncovered portion of your lower back as your pants pull down when you sit as well as in strain lines across and/or below the fullest part of the seat. Accommodating the derrière is a matter of increasing both the pants width and the length between the crotch point and the waistline. With these adjustments, you'll make comfortable, flattering pants every time.

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Tip

TAPE REFERENCE POINTS.

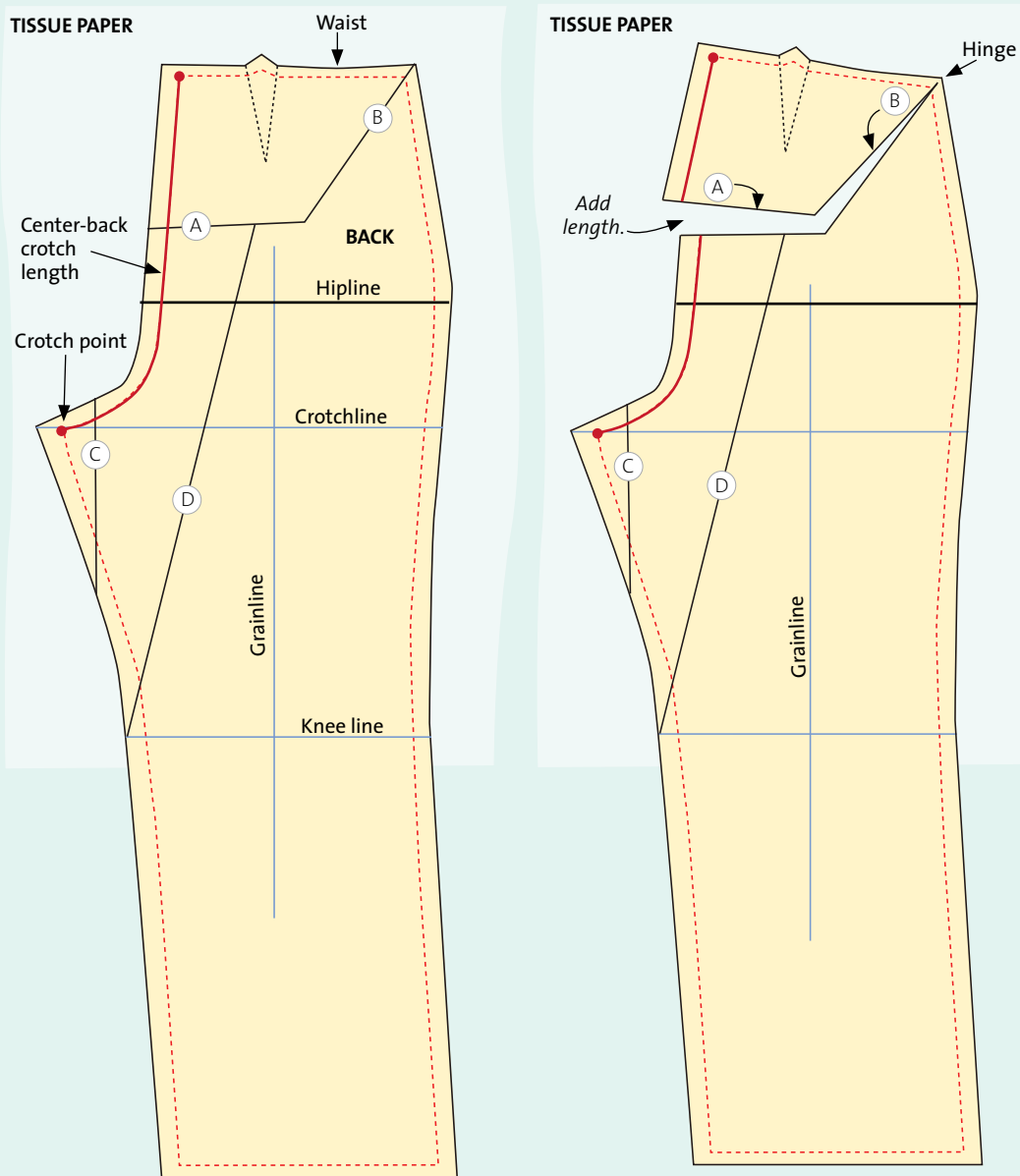
Cut two, 12-inch-long painter's tape strips. Draw a vertical line down the center, and make crossmarks at 1-inch intervals. Mark your waist with elastic, and position one tape on the side seam and the other at the center back, starting at the waistline on both. The marks provide stable reference points for measuring.

PROBLEMS IN FRONT?

For information on adjusting your patterns for a full abdomen, see "Full & Fabulous" by Kathleen Cheetham in *Threads* No. 142.

Add inches where you need them

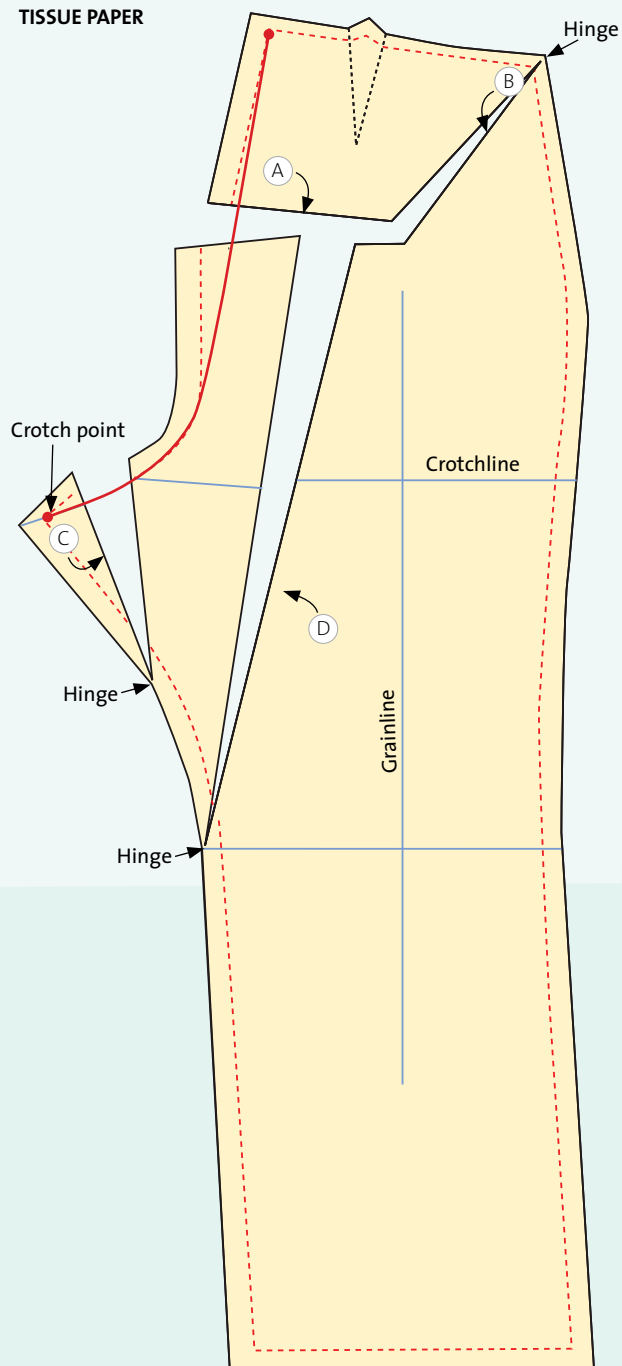
In the method shown here, the pattern is cut into pieces and "stretched" to add length and width where it's needed. Add all of the length but only half of the width since you cut two back pattern pieces from the altered pattern. The width is added to the hip and the length is added to the center-back seam and crotch curve. All the corrections are made to the back pattern only.



1 Mark cutting lines. Follow the diagram above to draw slash lines on the pattern. You don't have to measure—just place the lines approximately where the width and length are needed most. Label the lines as shown. Slide a sheet of pattern or tissue paper under the pattern.

2 Lengthen the center-back seam. Cut along line A and diagonally along line B. Leave a paper hinge at the waist seamline. Spread the pattern vertically, as shown, to increase the center-back crotch length (CBCL). Subtract the pattern CBCL from your personal CBCL. You will add 1 to 1½ inch to the crotch point in step 3. Add the remaining length at line A. Tape the top section of the pattern to the tissue paper.

TISSUE PAPER



3 Extend the crotch point and widen the hip area. Cut lines C and D, and leave a paper hinge at the inseam seam allowance. Extend the crotch point outward to increase the center-back crotch seam length by 1 to 1½ inch. Tape the crotch point to the tissue. Now, spread line D in the other direction to create half the desired back-hip measurement from side seam to center-back seam. Tape this section to the tissue. Finally, using a fashion ruler or French curve as a guide, connect the broken seamlines smoothly; then draw corresponding new cutting lines.

Fine-tune the fit of the waist

Once you've added the extra fabric for a full *derrière*, you still need to refine the fit for your narrow waist and to adjust the waistband.

1 Custom-fit the darts. When sewing the pants, don't stitch the darts until the side, front, and back seams are in place.

2 Then, put on the pants, and pin darts to fit. You may wish to reposition and lengthen them. If you need to take up a lot of width at the waist, consider increasing the number of darts to two or three per side. This creates a smoother transition from the full *derrière* to the waistline.

3 Adjust the waist treatment. If necessary, redraft the waistline or waist facing to reflect the changes you've made by fitting the darts.

