

The Beginners Guide to Cutting Out

You can be the finest seamstress in the world, but your garment will not look right if it is not cut out properly. You can also be a poor seamstress but get a good result if you spend time making sure that you have cut your fabric properly.

To divert into physics. The way your garment hangs depends on understanding that you want gravity to work directly on the warp threads, which are the strongest in the fabric and run along the length of it. In modern terms this is 'straight of grain'. If you get that wrong, the garment will distort.

Back to the basics.

To make life simple, I am assuming that the garment is a simple t-tunic. I am sure you can adapt these easy rules to whatever you want to make.

I always start by trimming one end of my length of fabric into a straight edge. To do this I make a small cut, find a warp thread and draw it out to give me a line to cut along. If you have a clear weave you can just follow a warp thread across, which is less messing around. From that edge I measure the length of the tunic along the selvedge (including any seam allowances), make a small cut and follow the weft thread across. Dependent on the width of the fabric and the width of the tunic, I then trim to the size I want by cutting along a warp thread (or two). This gives a rectangle that will stay rectangular and is the basis of all I do. For the sleeves, I measure up the selvage for the sleeve length I want (including the seam allowances) and cut as before.

And that, basically, is that.

If you are doing a garment with diagonal sides, fold your fabric in half along the warp thread and pin the fold in place before marking and cutting. Pinning the 2 layers together before cutting is a good idea to make sure the bottom one does not shift.