

## For dresses and long-line bustiers—

When your pattern calls for the lower edge of the piece to fall below the waist, there are some additional points to consider. If the lower edge of a bustier will be worn over a skirt, add ease to the hip measure (or proportionally as the edge moves towards the hipline) so that the total ease at the hip is between 2½ and 3 in. This will allow room for the skirt, and will keep the bustier from riding up.

The waistband we'll add is made slightly smaller than the actual waistline measure, in order to keep it in place. As a result, it dips into the waist, particularly at the side seams where the body is softer than at the tummy or the flat of the back. This shortens the underlayers at the sides, which can cause the now-longer outer layer of the bodice to ripple if it doesn't stop at the waist. To compensate, shorten the *outer-layer* pattern only by redrawing the waistline tapering from ½ in. above the old waistline at center back to ½ in. above at the side seam, then to nothing at the center front. If you have a center-back opening, start at ½ in. on the front and sides (to allow for the shape of the tummy), tapering to nothing in back. Cut the pattern on the new waistline, then align that with the old waistline and tape it back together. Redraw the grainline below the waist to match the one above.

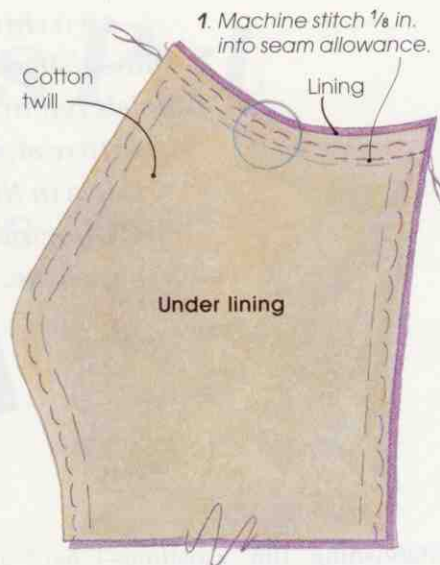
## Preparing the layers

From the inner-layer pattern, cut the lining and underlining pieces. I use luxurious, stable fabrics for linings, especially crepes because they are least likely to leave impressions on the skin. For the underlining, choose a strong, nonstretchy fabric like preshrunk linen or cotton twill, my usual choice because it is so tightly woven. The underlining takes most of the stress, which is primarily around the figure, so cut the underlining with the lengthwise, least stretchy grainline running horizontally across the figure. Baste the lining and underlining wrong sides together and from here on out handle them as one piece. (The exception is if you're adding boning to areas other than seams. In this case, add the boning first, then baste the lining and underlining together.)

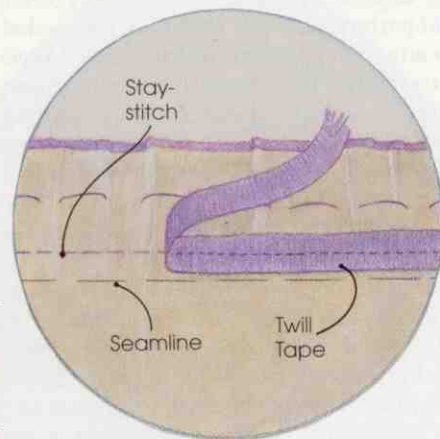
From the outer-layer pattern, cut the fashion fabric, then cut an interlining of wool felt (this can be a wool blend, but not less than 50 percent wool), or possibly a cotton flannel, if you want to keep things as lightweight as possible. (My clients have confirmed that the confidence they feel in a sturdy, felt-lined garment far outweighs any concern they may have over

## Easing edge seams

Shortened edges hold the garment to the body and contain the bust



2. Pull up stitches to shorten seamline desired amount.



3. Staystitch over twill tape in seam allowance, ¼ in. from seamline. Omit tape on fashion-fabric layer.

Illustrations by Marianne Markey

its thickness.) The interlining gives body to the fashion fabric, and protects it from any possible show-through from the layers underneath. It's also a useful support if you plan to stitch embellishments onto the fashion fabric.

If you want to use a fashion fabric that has no dimensional stability, such as crushed taffeta, pleated silk, knits, or bias fabric, you'll need an additional interlining to support it. I use black cotton batiste, which I cut out first, after transferring all the pattern markings onto it. Lay these batiste pieces onto the fashion fabric and use them as a cutting guide. After that's cut, sandwich the wool felt between the fabric and the batiste, baste the layers together, and treat them as one. Use the markings and the grainlines on the batiste as your guide when sewing.

## Easing

Before sewing any seams, the edges at the top of the bodice from the center front to the side seams (which are mostly bias) must be eased on all layers, so that they won't stretch when worn. The easing is also part of the containment of the bust, since it will cause the edge to grip the chest. In the typical princess-seam pattern, the pieces involved are the center and side fronts. The easing should continue to the side seam to help the underarm edge conform to the slight dip that exists there before the swell of the bust. The easing also keeps the boning tight against the chest. I generally ease each center-front edge ¼ in. shorter, and the side-underarm edges ⅜ in. shorter.

To ease either layer, machine stitch through both fabrics with a lengthened stitch (as if machine gathering) parallel to the seamline, but about ⅛ in. into the seam allowance, as shown in the drawing at left. Pull up one thread until the seamline shrinks the desired amount, then machine staystitch on the easing stitch line to hold the easing in place. On the inner layer, staystitch over a length of narrow twill tape to add more strength; the tape isn't needed on the outer layer.

## Seams and bones

The next step is to sew the vertical seams (and any darts) on both inner and outer layers. For the inner layer, press the seams open, and tack the allowances down with a feather stitch, as shown in the photo on the facing page, catching only the underlining. (I almost never touch my iron to these constructions, although I press every step scrupulously. Instead I steam thoroughly, then press with a wooden clapper.) No trimming of seam allowances is necessary, except near the bust point on the princess seam, but clip the curves there and at a few points along the other seams, so they'll lie flat. For the outer layer, press the seams open, and trim the felt to ⅛ in., the batiste to ¼ in., and leave the fashion fabric untrimmed except at the bust. Clip the curves, then tack the seam allowances down with the feather stitch.

Boning adds rigidity to fabric without adding weight, and without changing the texture of the fabric. Rigilene webbed boning (available at most notions counters, or by mail from G Street Fabrics, mail-order services, 12240 Wilkins Ave., Rockville, MD 20852; 301-231-8960 or 800-333-9191, orders only) is ideal because it can be shaped to the contours of the princess seam with steam and an iron, and you can stitch right through it without needing to create a casing.