How to Pad a Dress Form

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Time, energy and money are saved by the woman who uses in her dressmaking a dress form padded to her own measurements. She saves time because she can hang her own skirts and fit her own clothes more quickly on a dress form, and because she does not have to undress and dress again each time she tries on a garment; she saves energy because she does not have to stand for long fittings and because the making of garments is more easily done with a dress form; she saves money because she can make more of her own clothes and does not have to hire them made or buy them ready-made.

It is difficult for the average woman to find on the market a dress form which can be used without some alteration because, like commercial patterns, dress forms are made according to average measurements, and few women are average in every particular. Their waists may be a trifle larger or smaller in comparison with their busts or hips; their shoulders may be broader or more sloping; their busts higher or lower or more or less full, their hips large or small and their waist long or short. None of these individual variations is accounted for in the ordinary commercial patterns or in the usual dress forms, and there are many dress forms on the market that are not the correct shape. The commercial dress form, therefore, needs to be padded so that it will fit exactly the woman who is going to use it.

The padded dress form is quite inexpensive when one considers its usefulness. It is substantial, and is well worth the few dollars it costs.
To make a padded dress form the following are needed:
(a) A tightly fitted lining made from paper cambric or very firm unbleached muslin.
(b) A commercial form one size smaller than the person for whom the form is to be made.
(c) Three or four rolls of cotton batting.

**MAKING THE LINING FOR COVERING**

Select a fitted waist pattern which is long enough to come well down over the largest part of the hips and with enough seams so that it can be fitted tightly. Usually a pattern having three pieces in the front, four in the back and a fitted collar, is chosen. Paper cambric or a good grade of muslin are probably the most satisfactory materials to use for the covering of the form. Baste the seams in the front and back of the waist on the right side, leaving the shoulder and underarm seams to be pinned when the lining is fitted. Put the lining on the person for whom the form is being made with seams on the outside and fasten the front and back into place with occasional pins down the center of each piece. If this is done it is easier to pin the seams closely so that they will conform to the lines of the body and correspond with each other. Pin the shoulder seams directly on top of the shoulder with seam running straight from heavy cartilage in neck to bone on shoulder, and with the underarm seam directly underneath the arm extending from the hollow of the arm down over the hip. If front and back do not fit, cut bastin threads and pin seams. Be careful to fit the lining well around the armseye so that in fitting a waist on the form the armhole can be trimmed and the sleeve set in without trying on the waist. Often it is necessary to make darts at the armhole to make the fitting quite perfect. When the seams of the lining have been pinned very tightly, mark the waist line and remove from the model by opening the seam down the center back.

Trim all seams to one-half inch and trace seam line with tracing wheel, or mark with tailor’s tack. Remove pins from the lining, one seam at a time, turn the seam and baste securely on the opposite side, exactly on tracing. If a person were exactly alike on both sides it would not be necessary to baste the seams and fit on the right side and then open the seams and baste on the wrong side, but since very few women are alike on both sides this is necessary. When all bastin has been done, try on lining to see that it fits, stitch all seams and try on again to see that stitching is done correctly. Pin a well-fitted collar in place at the neck. The armhole should be marked with a pencil for any necessary trimming. Remove the lining and stitch the collar into place. Bind the edge at the armhole with a bias binding to prevent stretching of armseye.
A Foundation form on which the padded form is made may be purchased from a dry goods store or from a dealer in such materials. Care must be taken in the selection of this foundation form to get one small enough. The hip and bust measurements must be considered as well as the thickness of the form in comparison with that of the individual. Misses' dress forms are usually a little better proportioned than ladies'. The misses' sizes are bought by ages which correspond to the following bust measures: 18 years, 38 bust; 16 years, 36 bust; 14 years, 34 bust; 12 years, 32 bust.

Dress forms should be bought one size smaller than one's bust measure. For instance, if one's bust measure is 38, buy a 36-inch size. A foundation form for a child twelve years old is a good size to buy if a finished dress form is desired with a bust measure of 34 inches. Very good papier maché forms may be purchased from some companies without the stockinet coverings and equally satisfactory. Commercial dress forms cost $2 or more.

PADDING THE DRESS FORM

Three or four rolls of cotton batting are used to fill out the form to the proper fullness. The lining is first put on the form to determine where the form needs the most padding. The amount of padding necessary varies with the individual figure. The cotton is cut into pieces which may be handled conveniently and placed on the form where it is most needed. The padding should be done so that the form will be very firm when finished. Usually it is not convenient to pad the neck, shoulders and bust first. Cut a piece of cotton which will fit about the neck and pin it into place at the back. With most forms, long pieces of cotton extending from shoulders to hips may be used in both front and back. These long sheets when trimmed a bit at the neck, then pinned at the shoulders and hips, aid in holding any other necessary padding in place. When this padding has been done, slip the fitted lining on the form to see just how much, if any, additional padding is needed at the shoulders, neck or bust. Do this padding first and pin the lining together at the neck in the back. Then lift the lining and do any additional padding which is needed at the waist and hips. Before sewing up the lining at the back, pin it carefully and compare measurements of form at neck, bust, waist and hips with those of person for whom form is being made, to see that the padding has been done correctly. The padding must be done so that the form will be firm and smooth and no lumps or hollows should be visible. The form may be tested, too, by trying on a good fitting waist and skirt.

The opening left by the armhole may be filled in with a piece of the lining so that the stuffing will not fall out nor the padding inter-
here with the use of the form in fitting. Many find forms easier to use if this armhole is padded out slightly so that the form will have a bulge about like that of the arm. This is more easily done if a square piece of lining is placed at the sleeve opening with a corner at the top and the opposite corner at the bottom. The piece of cloth should be slipped underneath the bound edge of the armhole; pinned in place, so that the piece covers the opening smoothly, but does not draw and hemmed.

Finish the bottom of the form by pulling down the lining snugly, turning and tacking to the board at the bottom of the form.

STANDARDS

Various kinds of standards may be used for the home-made or padded form. Whatever kind is used, care should be taken to raise the form so that it will be the exact height of the person for whom the form is made. A very good standard can be made by placing the large end of a broom handle in a block to make it stand firmly on the floor. A hole is then made in the center of the hip board thru which the small end will just fit. A satisfactory standard may also be made from a block of wood slightly smaller than the hip board, and 4 to 6 boards about 3 x 3/8 in., and long enough to raise the standard the desired height from the floor. Nail the boards to the hip board on the form and to the block of wood which serves as the floor rest. Commercial standards may be purchased for about $2.50. These are found for sale by companies who sell dress forms.

A satisfactory dress form of some kind is within the reach of every woman if she will but take the time and pains to adapt it to her own measurements.