

Measuring Up

Quality Standards for Sewn Items/Projects

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Introduction

An essential task for evaluating the quality of construction of any sewn item is to recognize and identify standards that give it a finished, professional look. The purpose of this publication is to list and describe specific characteristics that can be expected in high-quality construction of either home-sewn or ready-to-wear garments or other sewn items. These identified quality standards can serve as a basis for:

- ✓ Self-evaluation of construction skills;
- ✓ Goals to work toward in an instructional setting;
- ✓ Evaluation tools for comparing and evaluating ready-to-wear garments; and
- ✓ Objective criteria for judging home-sewn projects entered in contests or fairs.

This information can serve as a practical tool for individuals, young or old, seeking to improve their sewing skills, 4-H clothing and textile project members and leaders, teachers, and judges. In an objective evaluation, it is essential to play down personal preferences and base an appraisal on identified and accepted standards. Methods, techniques, and materials will change over time; but the identified standards apply to almost all construction techniques.

Many techniques can produce the same result. For example, a seam might be sewn by hand, sewn using a conventional sewing machine or serger, or even fused using an innovative product. Fashion, design, and notion trends continually change fit and technique. Impartial evaluation is not based on the method used, but on the end results when measured by consistent standards. The construction techniques used should be compatible with the item's fabric, style, and purpose and, for home-sewn garments, the individual's skill and available sewing equipment. Regardless of the method used, the product should result in a detail, finish, or area that is:

- ✓ Attractive or inconspicuous;
- ✓ Flat and smooth;
- ✓ Free from bulk;
- ✓ Characterized by secure stitching that is a uniform distance from an edge or fold;
- ✓ Functional; and
- ✓ Durable.

The standards outlined in this publication refer to basic characteristics of sewn garments or other items, are organized by techniques and/or garment areas, and are presented in alphabetical order.





Quality Standards Checklist

Ⓢ GENERAL APPEARANCE

- ✓ Overall neatness
- ✓ Plaids, stripes, checks, and other designs are matched at seams
- ✓ Pattern and fabric are compatible
- ✓ Fabric with a directional design (such as vertical flowers) or nap (such as corduroy) is cut in a consistent direction, unless garment design requires variation
- ✓ Notions are compatible with fabric and garment design
 - Color
 - Fiber
 - Weight
 - Design
- ✓ Basting threads and construction markings have been removed
- ✓ Garment pressing is appropriate for fabric and style

Ⓢ BELT

- ✓ Flat, smooth, free from bulkiness
- ✓ Straight belt is uniform in width
- ✓ Contour belt has smooth, gradual curves
- ✓ Interfacing, if used, is appropriate to maintain belt shape
- ✓ Even, uniform shape at end of belt
- ✓ Closure is appropriate, attractive, durable, secure, and functional
- ✓ Appropriate size and length for garment and individual
- ✓ If used, belt carriers are secure and even

Ⓢ BUTTONS

- ✓ Have a purpose, either functional or decorative
- ✓ Securely and neatly fastened
- ✓ Have a shank (to allow room for the buttonhole fabric under the button)
- ✓ Properly aligned with buttonholes; when buttoned, fabric is completely flat and smooth

- ✓ Reinforced with interfacing or reinforcement button
- ✓ Appropriate spacing for size of button and garment type
- ✓ Suitable type for fabric and garment (e.g., dressy or sporty; light or heavy weight)

Ⓢ BUTTONHOLES

- ✓ Reinforced with interfacing
- ✓ Flat
- ✓ Secure with all stitching intact
- ✓ Even in length, width, and equally spaced
- ✓ Uniform in appearance
- ✓ Placed with the grain or yarn direction of the fabric
- ✓ Appropriate length (large enough to allow button to pass through easily, yet small enough to hold garment closed)
- ✓ Correct placement
 - On right front of women's garments
 - On left front of men's garments
 - Overlap wide enough to cover button without gapping
 - Overlay occurs where it was intended (center front, center back, side seam, cuff)
 - Hold garment securely closed
 - Placed in the direction of strain from the button (eliminates gapping)
 - Placed at the area of most strain

Bound Buttonholes

- ✓ Rectangle has perfectly square corners
- ✓ Rectangle has the appearance of being about 1/4 inch (6mm) wide
- ✓ Lips are even width
- ✓ Lips meet exactly at center of opening
- ✓ Facing securely and neatly fastened to back of buttonholes
- ✓ If bound buttonhole is meant to be a decorative design detail:
 - Lips are even and stitched securely

- ✓ Fabric for lips match, blend, or complement the garment
- ✓ Outside of buttonhole is neat and flat

Machine or Hand-Worked Buttonholes

- ✓ Stitched in thread that matches or decoratively contrasts with fabric
- ✓ Stitching is regular and smooth in appearance, and uniform in length

Ⓢ CASING

- ✓ Flat and smooth, without bulkiness; does not twist
- ✓ Stitching is even and secure
- ✓ Even in width
- ✓ Width allows drawstring or elastic to be inserted easily and stay in place during wear

Ⓢ COLLAR

- ✓ Top stitching is even and secure, if used
- ✓ Free from bulkiness
 - Curved seams are clipped or notched
 - Seams are trimmed and/or graded
- ✓ Only the top collar is visible
 - Seamline is just under the edge of the collar
 - Built-in roll prevents under-collar from showing
 - Understitching or topstitching holds under-collar in place
 - Collar stays are inconspicuous, if used
- ✓ Interfacing is appropriate for design and fabric
 - Maintains shape
 - Reinforces fabric
 - Provides stability
- ✓ Enclosed seam allowance is invisible on outside
 - Appropriate use of interfacing to prevent imprints from seam allowances
 - Collar is smoothly pressed
- ✓ Left and right sides are uniform in shape, unless asymmetrically designed
 - Curve of collar
 - Angle of collar points
 - Position in relation to center front or center back

Collar Stand

- ✓ Even in width

- ✓ Flat, smooth, and free of bulkiness
- ✓ Appropriate button(s) and buttonhole(s)
 - Button size is suitable for fabric and design
 - Buttonhole size appropriate for button
- ✓ Interfacing is appropriate for design and fabric
 - Maintains shape
 - Reinforces fabric
 - Provides stability

Ⓢ CUFFS

- ✓ Flat, smooth, and free from bulkiness
- ✓ Enclosed seams are trimmed and graded
- ✓ Interfacing is used appropriately to prevent seam allowance imprints
- ✓ Interfacing is appropriate for design and fabric
 - Maintains shape
 - Reinforces fabric
 - Provides stability
- ✓ Even in width
- ✓ Built-in roll prevents cuff facing from showing
- ✓ Seamline is on the cuff edge, if two-piece cuff
- ✓ Topstitching is even and secure, if used

Ⓢ DARTS

- ✓ Tapered and smooth
 - Come to a tapered point
- ✓ Stitching line is smooth and free of puckers, bubbles, or folds
- ✓ Ends are securely fastened
- ✓ Appear as straight lines from the outside of the garment
- ✓ Evenly spaced, if in groups
- ✓ Symmetrical in shape and length on the left and right side of the garment body
- ✓ Placed and shaped to conform to the body
- ✓ Well-pressed
 - Vertical darts are pressed toward the center of the garment
 - Horizontal darts are pressed downward
 - On bulky fabrics, darts are slashed and pressed open

Ⓢ FACINGS

- ✓ Flat, smooth, free from bulkiness, pulling, or strain
- ✓ Enclosed seam graded, clipped, or notched

- ✓ Interfaced, if needed, to prevent stretching, provide stability, and maintain shape
- ✓ Free edge
 - Secure, stable, and free from raveling
 - If finished, finish is flat, smooth, free from bulkiness
- ✓ Not visible from the outside of the garment, yet securely held in place
 - Turned smoothly on the seamline
 - By understitching
 - By tacking only at seams and darts
 - Inconspicuously attached to garment
 - Smoothly pressed

Ⓢ FITTING

Fitting molds flat cloth pieces to the body contours and allows the garment to be comfortable and attractive. Good fit is based on five factors:

1. Grain or yarn direction (relationship of the yarns in the fabric to the hang of garment on the body).
 - ✓ Lengthwise grain is perpendicular to the floor
 - ✓ Crosswise grain is parallel to the floor
 - ✓ Grain on the right side of garment matches that on the left side of garment
2. Line (silhouette and seamlines of garment)
 - ✓ Silhouette lines on the garment follow the silhouette lines on the body
 - ✓ Vertical seams fall perpendicular to the floor
 - ✓ Vertical side seams divide the body in half visually
 - ✓ Circumference lines follow the body circumference at neckline, waistline, and armhole
 - ✓ Darts point toward and stop short of the fullest part of the area they shape
 - ✓ Hem is parallel to the floor, unless the garment design dictates otherwise
3. Ease (looseness or tightness of the garment)
 - ✓ Adequate ease for comfort
 - ✓ Correct amount of ease for smoothness
 - Neither too loose nor too tight
 - Free of wrinkles that pull and draw, indicating too little ease

- Free of wrinkles that lie in folds, indicating too much ease
4. Balance (hangs evenly from the body)
 - ✓ Design features and fitting factors are equal
 - From right to left
 - From top to bottom
 - From front to back
 5. Overall smoothness (freedom from wrinkles)
 - ✓ Smooth on the body
 - ✓ Free from wrinkles
 - ✓ Enhances the appearance of the wearer
 - ✓ Complimentary style on the wearer
 - Line
 - Color
 - Texture

Fitting, an Example—Set-In Sleeves

1. Grain or yarn direction
 - ✓ Crosswise grain or yarn direction is parallel to the floor above the elbow
 - ✓ Lengthwise grain or yarn direction is perpendicular to the floor above the elbow
2. Line
 - ✓ Sleeve cap rests at end of the shoulder
 - ✓ Curve of the armhole is smooth and gradual
3. Ease
 - ✓ Sleeve has adequate room for upper arm
 - ✓ Sleeve is smooth and free from wrinkles (diagonal wrinkles pointing to the cap indicate additional length needed in the cap; crosswise folds at the underarm indicate additional width needed in the sleeve)
 - ✓ Length is adequate for the style and wearer
4. Balance
 - ✓ Short sleeve is balanced on the arm
 - Hangs neither forward nor backward on the arm
 - Doesn't hug the arm
 - ✓ Ease at the cap seamline is smooth and even
 - Not puffy or puckered

- Fullness is evenly distributed between the front and back bodice

5. Overall smoothness

- ✓ Sleeve is eased into garment, rather than the garment eased onto the sleeve

Ⓢ FUSING

- ✓ Secure
- ✓ Smooth and free of puckers
- ✓ Invisible from the right side
- ✓ Garment edges are not stretched
- ✓ Does not significantly change hand, texture, and/or color of the fabric

Ⓢ GATHERS

- ✓ Uniform and evenly distributed (none are stitched so as to form pleats)
- ✓ Full and attractive
 - Are not pressed flat
 - Have enough fullness to not appear skimpy

Ⓢ HEMS

- ✓ Width
 - Appropriate for weight of fabric, style of garment, and size of the individual
 - Adequate to suit present styles and provide enough weight to hang well
 - Uniform in width
- ✓ Free from bulkiness
 - Fullness has been reduced or controlled by easing or shrinking; free from tucks or pleats
 - Seams are pressed open and graded
 - Seams are clipped at the edge of pleats
- ✓ Flat and smooth
 - Edge is finished to prevent raveling, if needed
 - If finished, finish does not add bulk or create ridge
 - Seams are matched
- ✓ Inconspicuous (unless meant to be decorative)
 - If topstitched, stitching is uniform and corresponds with other topstitching on the garment
 - Hemming stitches are evenly spaced, secure,

free from drawing, and invisible on outside of the garment

- Fused hems are acceptable if they do not alter hand or appearance of fabric, and are secure
 - Pressed to avoid ridges
- ✓ Hang evenly and are a uniform distance from floor, unless the garment design dictates otherwise

Ⓢ HOOKS AND EYES, SNAPS, OTHER FASTENERS

- ✓ Neat
 - Attached with small, even stitches
 - Stitches do not show on the outside of the garment
- ✓ Reinforced on the wrong side (usually with interfacing)
- ✓ Location
 - Fastener sets are aligned
 - Hooks are usually placed 1/8 inch (3mm) from the edge of overlap so it will be secure and lie flat
- ✓ Functional (correct placement of the two parts)
- ✓ Secure

Ⓢ INTERFACING

- ✓ Adds shape, body, and support
 - Free from bulkiness
 - Does not change the character of the fabric
- ✓ Enhances the hang of the fabric
- ✓ Color blends with the color of the fabric or is inconspicuous, especially at buttonholes
- ✓ Prevents seam allowance from showing through to outside of the garment
- ✓ Not visible (covered by the facing)
- ✓ Free from raveling
- ✓ Interfacing seams and darts are treated to eliminate bulkiness
- ✓ Interfacing weight is appropriate for fabric and detail

Ⓢ LAPELS

- ✓ Lie flat against body
- ✓ Free from bulkiness

- ✓ Left and right sides are uniform in shape and size
- ✓ Interfacing appropriate for design and fabric
 - Maintains shape
 - Reinforces fabric
 - Provides stability
- ✓ Reinforced or taped on roll line in tailored garments
- ✓ Only facing is visible above end of roll line
 - Seamline slightly under edge of lapel
 - Inner edge of facing is not visible

④ LINING

- ✓ Conceals inner construction
- ✓ Color and weight are coordinated with garment fabric
- ✓ Care requirements are compatible with garment fabric
- ✓ Fits smoothly inside the garment
- ✓ Has a neat, finished appearance
- ✓ Lining and garment seamlines are aligned
- ✓ Fit allows for body movement
 - Vertical pleat in the back lining of jacket or coat
 - Ease length allowed in the fold at the bottom of the sleeve and at the garment hem of jacket
- ✓ Free-hanging lining linked to the garment seams at hemline with thread tacks

④ NEEDLEWORK, DECORATIVE

General standards to consider when used as decoration on a garment:

- ✓ Secure
- ✓ Uniform
- ✓ Flat and smooth; free from unwanted pulling
- ✓ Appropriate technique used
- ✓ Enhances the garment and is attractive
- ✓ Care requirements are compatible with the fashion fabric

④ PLACKETS

- ✓ Flat, smooth, and neat
- ✓ Free from bulkiness
- ✓ Secure and durable; end does not pucker

- Does not pull at the corners
- Free from raw or raveling edges

- ✓ Functional (opens wide enough for use)
- ✓ Constructed with matching or coordinating fabric and thread

④ PLEATS, TUCKS

- ✓ Uniform in width, unless design requires variation
- ✓ Flat and pressed in one direction, except released tucks and unpressed pleats
- ✓ Pressed appropriately
- ✓ Free from pressed-in ridges from hidden edges
- ✓ Free from marks from basting, pins
- ✓ Hang straight and even with adequate fullness

④ POCKETS

Patch Pocket

- ✓ Flat and smooth
- ✓ Decorative and attractive
- ✓ Positioned correctly on body
- ✓ Even topstitching
 - Length of stitch
 - Distance from edge
- ✓ Stitching suitable to fabric and garment design
- ✓ Facing on hem in proportion to shape and size of pocket
- ✓ Upper corners are reinforced
- ✓ Square corners are mitered
- ✓ Seam allowances on square corners are flat and inconspicuous

In-Seam Pocket

- ✓ Not visible, unless meant to be decorative
- ✓ Lies flat; does not gap; lining invisible
- ✓ Seam or foldline reinforced to prevent stretching

Welt Pocket – Single Welt, Double Welt (bound), Flap

- ✓ Flat, smooth, and even in width
- ✓ Free from bulkiness or buckling
- ✓ Corners are secure and symmetrical

④ PRESSING

- ✓ Garment surface is smooth and free from wrinkles

- ✓ Original appearance of the fabric has been maintained
 - Free from overpressing or iron imprints
 - Free from shine, scorching, or melting
 - Free from flattened nap or pile
 - Free from imprints of construction details on outside of garment
 - Free from water or mineral spots
- ✓ Seams and darts are pressed smoothly on the stitching line; fabric does not fold over stitching line or look bubbled
- ✓ Garment areas pressed over curves where garment will fit over body curves (shaping pressed in)

Ⓢ RIBBED NECK, CUFF, HEM

- ✓ Flat and smooth, with no puckering
- ✓ Stitching is secure, even, and durable
 - Even seam allowance
 - Reinforced, if needed
- ✓ Even in width
- ✓ Free from bulkiness
- ✓ Fullness is evenly distributed

Ⓢ SEAMS

- ✓ Stitching is secure and even
 - Balanced tension
 - Stitch length is appropriate for fabric and even, except where shortened for reinforcement
 - Uniform pressure from presser foot
 - Free from puckering, and skipped or broken stitches
 - Free from tangles or knots
 - Reinforced at ends with backstitching or knotting
 - Loose threads have been clipped
- ✓ Thread color matches or blends with garment fabric
- ✓ Thread fiber and type is appropriate
- ✓ Seam allowances are flat and smooth
 - Even in width
 - Crossed seams have been trimmed to eliminate bulkiness
 - Enclosed seams have been trimmed and graded to reduce bulkiness

- Curved seams lie flat and are clipped or notched
- Free from puckering
- Pressed open or in correct direction without leaving an imprint on the outside of the garment
- Finished to prevent raveling, if needed
- Finish is flat, smooth, and free from bulkiness
- ✓ Fullness is eased and smooth
- ✓ Crossed seams meet
- ✓ Design patterns and plaids meet
- ✓ Fabric is free from runs or pulling
- ✓ Reinforced where appropriate for technique and fabric (shoulder, armhole, waistline, crotch; stretchy knit or loosely woven fabric)
- ✓ Crotch seams and lower armhole seam
 - Curve smooth and gradual
 - Reinforced by stretch stitch, multiple rows of stitching, or tape
 - Free from bulkiness
- ✓ If done, top stitching is even and attractive

Ⓢ SLEEVES

- ✓ Smooth
 - Curve or armhole is smooth and gradual
 - Smoothly rounded cap
 - Ease, gathers, darts, or tucks are evenly distributed
- ✓ Appropriately trimmed, clipped and reinforced for the type of sleeve
- ✓ Free from raveling (finish on seam allowance if needed to prevent raveling)
- ✓ Free from drawing or pulling

Ⓢ UNDERSTITCHING

- ✓ Holds facing in place (neckline, collar, cuff, pocket)
- ✓ Not visible on outside of garment
- ✓ Thread blends with fabric
- ✓ Done from right side of facing through facing and all seam allowances after seam allowances were trimmed, graded, clipped, or notched

Ⓢ WAISTBAND

- ✓ Smooth and free from bulkiness

- ✓ Uniform in width
- ✓ Corners are square, tab comes to a point, unless design indicates
- ✓ Cut on grain or with yarn direction
- ✓ Interfacing appropriate for design and fabric
 - Maintains shape
 - Reinforces fabric
 - Provides stability
- ✓ Overlap is flush with placket; underlap extends beyond the placket and under the band for side or back closure
- ✓ Waistband is sewn onto skirt or pants smoothly

Ⓢ WAISTLINE SEAMS

- ✓ Inconspicuous, smooth, and flat
- ✓ All seams and details finished and pressed before waistline was stitched
- ✓ Secured with a waistline stay, if necessary
 - Adds reinforcement
 - Prevents stretching
 - Stay can be woven seam binding, twill tape, or grosgrain ribbon

Ⓢ ZIPPERS

- ✓ Stitching is straight and even
- ✓ Placket, when closed, is flat and smooth
 - Free from puckers and ripples
 - Zipper tape is covered by the placket
 - Placket is open to end of zipper teeth unless zipper has been shortened, then chain or coil is securely held with several stitches
 - Horizontal seams meet across the placket opening
- ✓ Zipper does not buckle or poke
- ✓ Zipper tape does not show, unless part of design
- ✓ Correct length to be useful
- ✓ Slides easily and does not catch
- ✓ If the zipper tape is intended to be exposed, it should show evenly the length of the zipper and equally on both sides of the zipper
- ✓ Compatible weight with fabric
- ✓ Color compatible with fabric



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