Pattern Skills

Oregon 4-H Clothing Construction Fact Sheets:
Basic Skills—Level 1

4-H 320-18 • October 2014

Welcome to the world of patterns! There are so many patterns available that you will probably be able to find one for almost anything you desire to sew. And when you have more sewing experience and have mastered many pattern skills, you will also be able to merge or even create your own patterns.

Choosing a pattern

To start, choose patterns that match your skill level. Your leader and your *Oregon 4-H Clothing Advancement Guide* (4-H 320-01R) are great resources to help you decide what skills to focus on for your age and experience level. In terms of style and design, choose patterns for garments that flatter your body type and that you will enjoy wearing.

Selecting the correct pattern size

To select the correct pattern size, you need to know your body measurements (figure 1). The tape measure must be snug to be accurate. Ask someone to help you take measurements, and wear lightweight clothing, such as a t-shirt and gym shorts.

You will need these measurements:
Items marked with an asterisk (*) are additional measurements needed for boys.

- *Neckline—around the neck plus ½ inch for neckband size
- Bustline or chest—around the fullest part
- Waist—around the natural waist
- Hip—around the fullest part
- Back waist length—from the prominent bone at the base of the neck to the waist
- *Sleeve length—from the center back neck base, along the shoulder, to the bent elbow (at 90 degrees), and down the wrist
- Height—when standing tall and straight

Record your measurements in a notebook for easy reference. Take this with you to the store when shopping for a pattern.
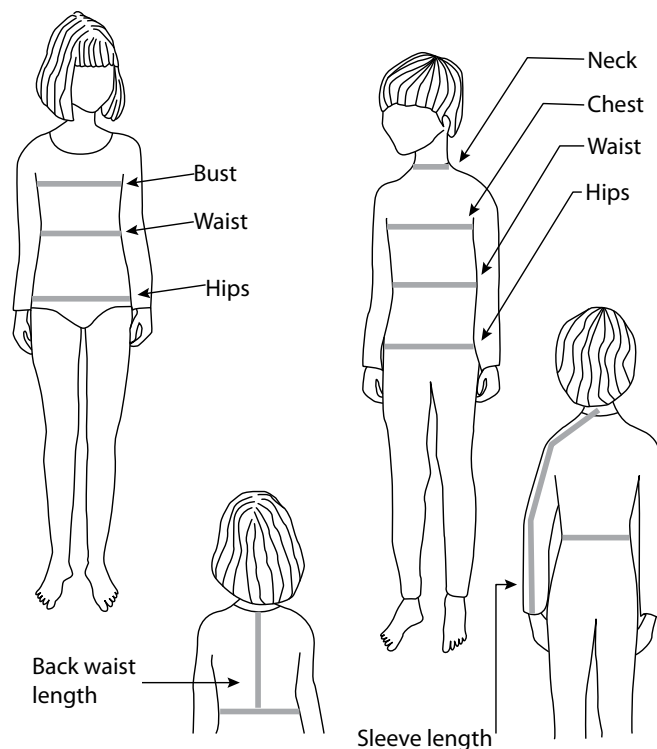

Figure 1. Body measurements.

Pattern charts for various body types

Girls' patterns (figure 2a) are designed for the girl who has not yet begun to mature.

| Size	S	M		L	
	7	8	10	12	14
Breast	26	27	28½	30	32
Waist	23	23½	24½	25½	26½
Hip	27	28	30	32	34
Back waist length	11½	12	12¾	13½	14¼
Approx. height	50	52	56	58½	61

Figure 2a. Girls' pattern chart.

Misses' patterns (figure 2b) are designed for a well-proportioned and developed figure about 5 feet, 5 inches to 5 feet, 6 inches without shoes.

Size	XS		S		M		L
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
Bust	30½	31½	32½	34	36	38	40
Waist	23	24	25	26½	28	30	32
Hip	32½	33½	34½	36	38	40	42
Back waist length	15½	15¾	16	16¼	16½	16¾	17

Figure 2b. Misses' pattern chart.

Boys'/teen boys' patterns (figure 2c) are for boys who have not yet finished growing or attained full height.
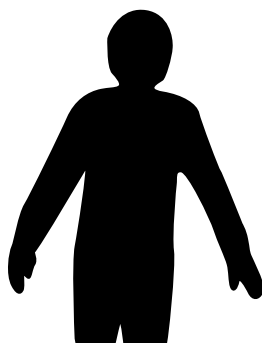
Size	7	8	10	12	14	16	18
Chest	26	27	28	30	32	33½	35
Waist	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Hip	27	28	29½	31	32½	34	35½
Neckband	11¾	12	12½	13	13½	14	14½
Height	48	50	54	58	61	64	66
Sleeve	22⅜	23¼	25	26¾	29	30	31

Figure 2c. Boys'/teen boys' pattern chart.

Reading a pattern envelope

The pattern itself contains a lot of valuable information to assist you in selecting and using the pattern.

The **FRONT** of the pattern envelope (figure 3) shows this information:

- Brand name
- Pattern number
- Size
- Sketches or photos of all views

The **BACK** of the pattern envelope (figure 4) shows this information:

- Description
- Body measurements and sizes
- View number and name of each item
- Amount of fabric needed for all views and fabric widths
- Finished garment measurements
- Suggested fabrics
- Notions (thread, zipper, buttons, etc.)

INSIDE the pattern envelope, you will find:

- Pattern pieces for all views
- Guidesheet of instructions

Figure 3. Pattern envelope, front.

Choosing fabric and notions

After you choose the correct size pattern, based on your measurements, it is time to purchase fabric and notions to complete your project. The fabric recommendations on the pattern envelope are a good place to start. Consult your leader and your advancement guide, too.

Most fabrics come in one of two widths: 44/45 inches or 58/60 inches. You will find this information on the end of the fabric bolt (the cardboard that fabric is wrapped around). If the fabric is a remnant or sold off a roll, the width will be listed on paper attached to the fabric.

The fabric bolt or attached paper should show this information:

- Brand
- Cost, by the yard
- Width
- Care instructions
- Fabric name

Figure 4. Pattern envelope, back.

To determine the amount of fabric needed:

1. Look for the yardage chart on the pattern envelope, and find your pattern size.
2. Look down the yardage chart and find the garment or item you are making.
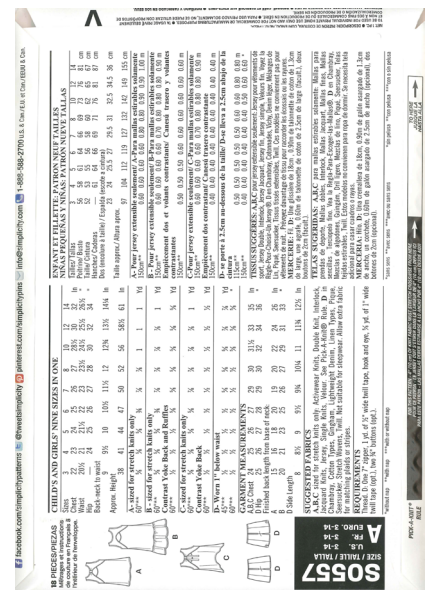3. Find the width of fabric, and then note the yardage listed for that width, item, and size.

Here is a sample yardage chart. In this example, you would need ¾ yard of 58/60-inch fabric to make shorts, size small.

	Small	Medium	Large	
	7	8–10	12–14	
View A—Pants				
44/45″	1	1¼	1⅝	Yds.
58/60″	⅞	1⅛	1⅛	Yds.
View B—Shorts				
44/45″	⅞	1	1⅛	Yds.
58/60″	¾	⅞	⅞	Yds.
View C—Top				
44/45″	1½	1⅞	2⅜	Yds.
58/60″	1	1¼	1⅝	Yds.

Next, read the pattern envelope to see what notions are needed for the project you are making. Remember to select thread that is slightly darker than your fabric.

Preparing your fabric

It is essential to properly prepare your fabric before you lay out pattern pieces or cut into your fabric.

Check that your fabric is in proper alignment. Woven fabrics should be on grain. For knit fabrics, you will want to straighten the ends as necessary. Ask your leader for assistance aligning your fabric.

Sometimes it is necessary to **prewash your fabric**. Ask your leader what is recommended for your fabric.

Open up your fabric to see if you can **remove the center fold line crease**. Press open the crease line and any other wrinkles. If you cannot remove the crease line or there is a faded streak, you will need to work around this in the layout and cutting process.

Identify the right side or "face" of the fabric. One way to do this is to look at how the fabric is folded. Cottons and linens are typically folded with right sides out; wools are typically folded with wrong sides out. If fabric is rolled on a tube, the right side is to the inside of the tube. Here are other tips to help identify the right side:

- Smooth fabrics are shinier or softer on the right side.
- Textured fabrics usually have a more distinctive right side.
- Fancy weaves are smoother on the right side and usually have an uneven back or loose yarn floats on the wrong side.
- Printed designs are sharper on the right side.
- The selvage edge is smoother on the right side.

If you see no visible different between sides, choose a side to be the wrong side and mark it with chalk to avoid confusion.

Fold the fabric as appropriate for your pattern layout. The most common fold in layout guides is right sides folded together with lengthwise edges matching exactly. The wrong sides are folded together when you are working on napped fabrics or when designs need to be matched and marked. If you could not remove the folded crease line, you can open up the fabric and re-fold it lengthwise with two folds and selvages meeting at the center. Other options can be created based on pattern and layout needs. Ask your leader for assistance as needed.

Understanding and using your pattern

The pattern guidesheet will provide a list of the pattern pieces needed for your project. Circle this list, and then cut out the necessary pieces.

Handling pattern pieces

Assemble the pattern pieces you need for your view. Return the rest of the pieces to the pattern envelope to avoid confusion. Smooth out pattern pieces by hand, or press with a warm iron if they are exceptionally wrinkled. If you are going to alter the pattern, leave extra tissue paper around the cutting line to assist with the process. Make necessary alterations at this time, before layout and cutting. Read each pattern piece carefully to determine how many times it needs to be cut out.
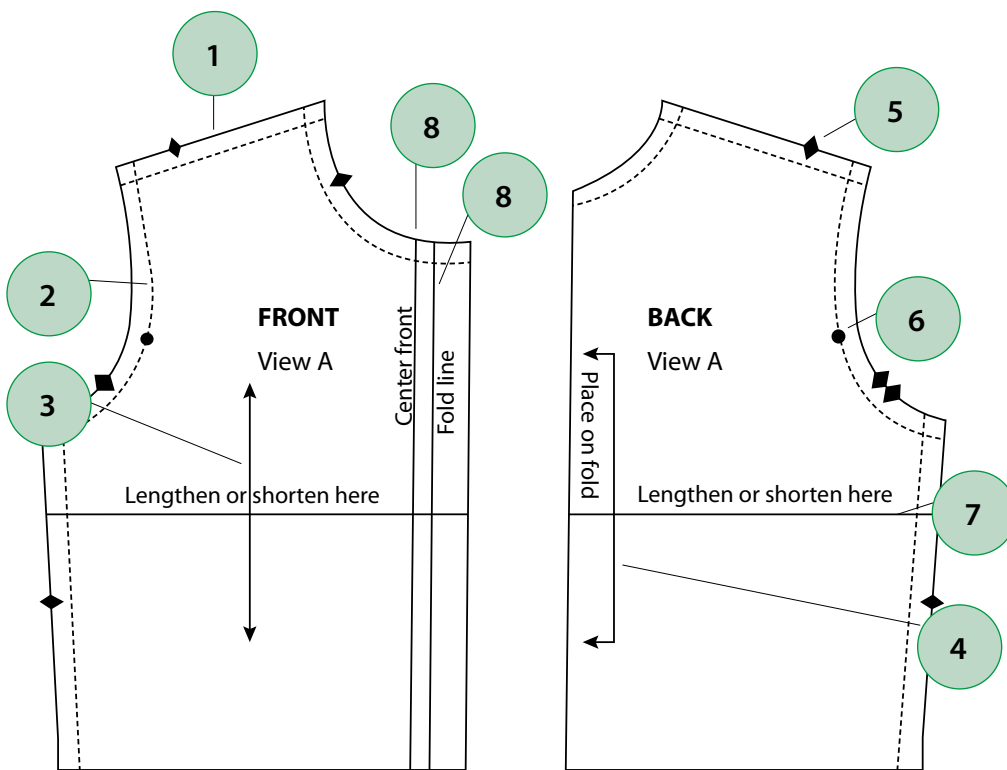

Figure 5. Typical pattern pieces and symbols.

Pattern symbols

To work with pattern pieces, it is helpful to know what each symbol and line on the pieces means. Here is a list of typical pattern symbols. These symbols are labeled in figure 5. Try to find some of the same symbols on your pattern, and work with your leader to understand them.

1. **Cutting line**—Line to follow when cutting out pattern pieces.

2. **Stitching line**—Where to sew your garment together, most often a ⅝-inch seam allowance. Note: Stitching lines are not typically included on multi-size patterns.

3. **Grainline arrow**—Should be parallel to selvage edge, matching the straight of grain of the fabric.

4. **Place on fold line**—Place pattern edge on the fold of the fabric.

5. **Notches**—Marks that help match garment pieces to each other when sewing. Use a marking tool or cut around these notches so you can see these marks when the pattern is removed.

6. **Circles**—Other aids used for matching garment pieces when sewing. Be sure to mark these, too.

7. **Lengthen or shorten line**—Used to alter the length of the garment piece.

8. **Center front and back, fold line, and hemline**—These markings indicate helpful positions needed during garment construction.

Pattern layout

Now it is time to lay out the pattern pieces on your fabric. The pattern guidesheet (figure 6a) will show different cutting layouts (figure 6b). Select the one that matches your fabric yardage and project view. Circle the layout you will be using for your project.

As you continue your project, refer to these and other 4-H clothing construction fact sheets for more information and basic instructions:

- *Cutting Skills* (4-H 320-12)
- *Pressing Skills* (4-H 320-14)

References

Zieman, N. (1991). *Let's Sew! A Beginner's Sewing Guide.* Beaver Dam, WI: Nancy's Notions.
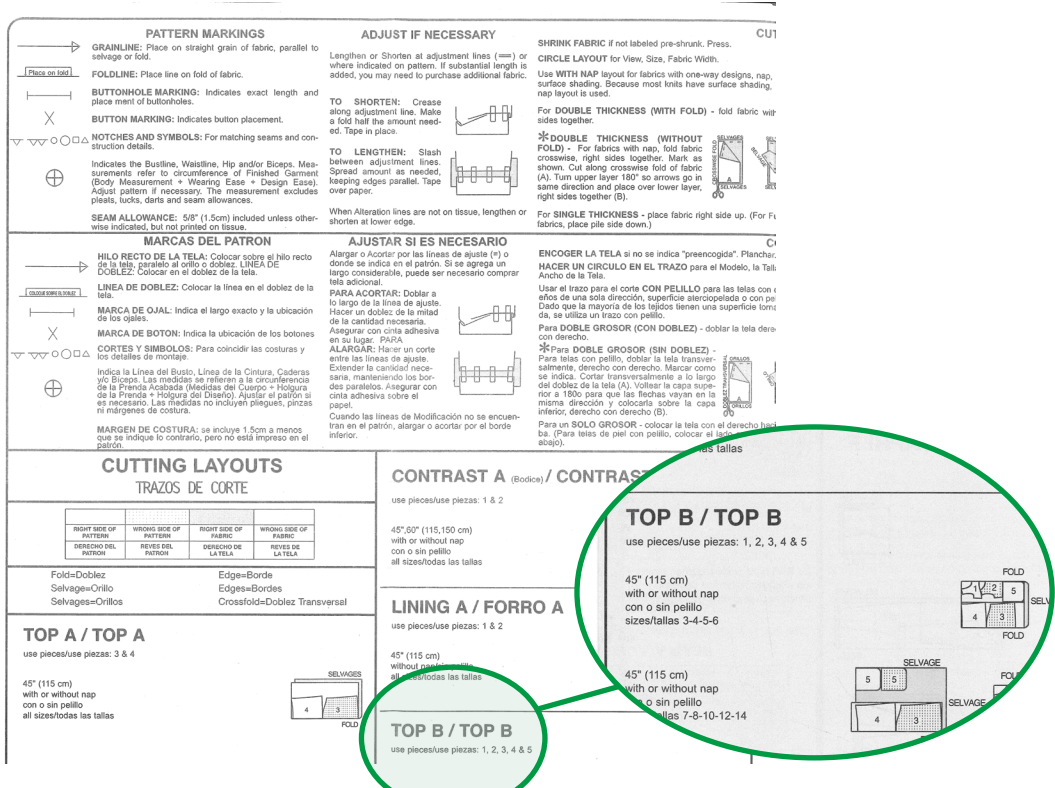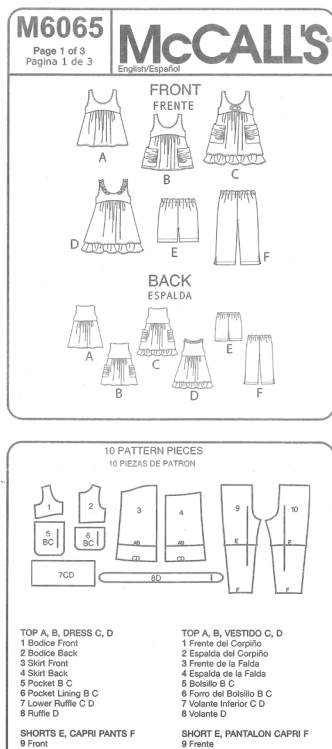
Figure 6a. Pattern guidesheet.

Figure 6b. Cutting layout.

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Published October 2014.