Sew Clothes You LOVE

3 Important Steps You Might be Missing When Sewing Clothes

Have you ever made a garment, spent all the time and effort sewing it, not to mention money and not LOVED it?

Me too. Oh, is it frustrating.

You've only got this little bit of time and space to create something, and yes, the journey is really the point of it all and oh, look at all you learned, but honestly, you want a piece of clothing that you LOVE, that you strut around town in and proudly say, to the unsuspecting grocery clerk, "Oh, this dress?! Why yes, I made it!".

You want that sparkle in your eye that comes from not only a job well done and the power of doing this thing yourself, but from a garment that fits you...your body and your unique style.

Yup, I get it. I strive for that too. I strive for clothes that enhance my authenticity and allow ME to shine through. I made a lot of "not quite right" clothes and some downright "definitely not" clothes before I got really intentional about what I make.

When I got intentional, I found that we make three mistakes when we sew clothes.

1. We don't know how we want to feel or what we like to wear

How can we possibly make clothes we love to wear, when we don't know what it is we love to wear?
t's time to get clear on how you want to feel and what types of fabrics and clothing feels good on you. Find what brings a sparkle to your eye and a swing to your walk.

- Do a closet check. Try all of those clothes on. Set aside the ones you love, the ones you reach for when you want to impress, the ones you choose when you go on a date or meet a friend. Write down their characteristics. (colors, patterns, shape of the garment, types of clothing, kinds of material...)

- Make a mood board ake a mood board Do it on Pinterest or as a sweet craft project (you know the one with scissors, glue and magazines and maybe wine...). Don't overthink it. Choose images that appeal to you, for whatever reason, and then, when you're done write out what you like about them. How do you want to feel? (playful, energetic, artsy, peace-filled...)

- Write out 3-5 words that describe your style. Let's call these your STYLE WORDS

When you plan a sewing project - check the project against your style words...if it doesn't match, think really hard about whether or not it's the right project for you.

2. We don't take the time to plan our project and choose fabrics and patterns that play well together

I'll admit it right now, I love planning projects. Love it. I know not everyone does, but if you can make friends with planning, you'll have much better results in your sewing.

- Get to know fabrics. Even better get to know fabrics **you like** to wear and work with.
  Look at those clothes you loved in section one and find out what they are made out of. How do they move and how do they hang? Are they structured or flowy? Are they fitted or loose?

  A dress made from the same pattern but from two different fabrics; like a shirting cotton and, say, a rayon will look vastly different and could make all the difference between a garment you LOVE and one you don't.

  TIP: Get your hands on fabric. All the fabric. Go to the fabric store or order swatches from online stores and see how the fabric moves, feels and behaves. Learn what you like.

- Choose your sewing pattern wisely. Choose a pattern that fits your style, not a pattern that looks amazing on your favorite designer but that is not really something you love to wear. I almost always regret getting sucked into the latest sewing pattern trend (it's really a thing!) and sewing something that I've never liked on my body, only to wish I hadn't. That being said, occasionally I find a hidden gem and that's cool, but usually, I'm disappointed...and I don't feel like ME.

TIP: When I find a pattern I like, I type the sewing pattern into a google search or search on Pinterest to see it on a variety of bodies. This helps me visualize how it might look on my body.

- Plan your project! I love sketching my project on a body croquis (a croquis is a body outline on which to sketch clothes). To get you started, I included a planning page in this PDF!

  TIP: I like My Body Model in particular - it's so empowering. You enter your measurements and out pops (for a small fee) an outline of YOUR body! And it's better than you imagined. You can google My Body Model to see.

Mindfully match your fabric and pattern. The designer has some suggestions for you on the sewing pattern. You can certainly deviate from that, but know that it's going to look different.

I am often drawn to sewing patterns designed by independent designers, of which you can find hundreds online. To get you started, there are some great links in the resources box in this e-mail. I've also included links to some of my favorite online fabric stores.

3. We don't choose the right size on the pattern or adjust the pattern.

No pattern is made for every body. You know that problem you have buying clothes from the store? The "there must be something wrong with my body"-because-this-doesn't-fit problem.

It's not you. It's that every piece of clothing and every sewing pattern is made for a body, not your body. Unless of course, you draft it yourself...which I highly recommend you do, when you're ready. (by ready, I mean anytime, you don't have to be a great garment sewist to begin drafting. Truly.)

One of the superpowers of sewing your own clothes is getting a great fit on the clothes you make (and in any crazy style your heart desires) and you can't get a great fit if you don't choose the right size and adjust the pattern. Sure, sometimes you find a designer that seems to be drafting for your body and that's pretty cool...and rare.

Here's how to begin your sewing project...

a. Measure your body. Be kind and gentle with yourself...sewing is an act of self-care after all. Pull the tape snug but not tight and for goodness sake, don't lie to yourself. Well-fitting clothes are the most flattering.
Compare those measurements to the chart on the sewing pattern.

b. Choose your size based on your high bust measurement. Then get comfortable making YOUR regular adjustments. For example, I always make a full bust adjustment (and a full butt adjustment for that matter!) and I shorten the bodice pattern for my short waist. So...I choose my size based on my high bust measurement and plan to make my adjustments to the pattern.

c. Adjust the Pattern. I like to make simple adjustments before I ever cut my fabric. Using your measurements and the measurements on the pattern chart will allow you to see early on if the pattern needs adjusting

Rules of thumb when adjusting patterns...

1. Make Length Adjustments First
   Consider your sewing pattern and determine if you need to adjust the sleeve, bodice, skirt/bottom or both. Use the shorten/lengthen lines to adjust the length. You do this so that you maintain the shape of the garment. If your pattern does not have a shorten/lengthen line, then you can adjust the length at the bottom of the pattern piece (or as you gain experience, eyeball a place that feels good to you).

2. Next, make Circumference Adjustments (for a total of an inch or less)
   Add or subtract at the side seam and/or **grade between sizes.** (ex. from bust to waist and from waist to hip). Grading between sizes is the most frequent adjustment I make.
   TIP: Remember that the pattern piece is only a fraction of your total circumference (usually 1/4 or 1/2) and add or subtract accordingly.

   note: Large changes, more than an inch total in circumference, need more sophisticated adjustments, done internally to maintain the style of the pattern, not at the side seams.

3. Then make Large Circumference Adjustments (larger than an inch)
   Slash & Spread - Sounds aggressive, but it's actually fairly straight forward and gentle! It's also the beginning of pattern drafting! You literally slash (cut with scissors!) open the pattern and either spread or overlap the pieces to add or remove the amount you need to change. Much like we did with simple length adjustments.

   Adjusting patterns for fit is a deep topic and we're just scratching the surface here to get you started. Here are some common (but more involved) adjustments to google for video or more detailed instructions on how to do them: (also be sure to check the resources box on the e-mail for this download)

Full Bust Adjustment	**Small Bust Adjustment**
Full Butt Adjustment	**Flat Butt Adjustment**
Sway Back Adjustment	**Full Belly Adjustment**

d. Sew a muslin (or mock-up)
I know, I know. You just want to sew your garment for crying out loud, but you've come so far! Sewing a muslin will allow you to truly perfect the fit and to test those adjustments you made to your pattern before cutting into your good fabric.
TIP: I usually make a "wearable" muslin...one that I would want to wear of everything works out swimmingly on the first go-round! I choose a less precious fabric, but one I like nonetheless.

Let's recap!

1. You've audited your closet, learned what you feel good in and further defined your style with a mood board.
   You have an idea of what silhouettes/shapes, colors, prints and fabrics you like to wear.
   You know how you want to feel in your clothes.

2. You've mindfully chosen fabrics that you like to wear and found sewing patterns that excite you!
   You've planned your garments and outfits and, just maybe, had some fun sketching your projects.

3. You've been brave and honest with yourself and measured your body, compared it to the sewing pattern and made adjustments to your pattern.
   THEN, you sewed a muslin and perfected the fit...and finally you sewed your garment and you LOVE IT!

Those changes you made to the pattern? It's likely those are the same changes you'll make to most patterns. It gets quick and easy, I promise.

Want to take this further and work through the learning curve of **sewing well-fitted clothes** and **pattern drafting** with a friendly guide and friends?

You have a couple of options!

In-Person...from several day retreats to day-long workshops & classes.
Online...a new companion course to this PDF will launch October 2019!

You can find more on the website **www.kinshiphandwork.com**

Pattern(s): _____

_____

Size: _____

Adjustments to pattern: _____

_____

_____

_____

Fabric: _____

_____

Yardage: _____

Needed

- ☐ Thread
- ☐ Binding
- ☐ Elastic
- ☐ Zipper
- ☐ Other Notions:

_____

Swatch

Pattern(s): _____

_____

Size: _____

Adjustments to pattern: _____

_____

_____

_____

Fabric: _____

_____

Yardage: _____

Needed

- ☐ Thread
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Swatch