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JUNE/JULY 2011 NUMBER 155
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We asked our authors:

“If you could sew with only one fabric, what would it be?”



PAMELA LEGGETT (“Flatlock for Fashion,” page 54) loves working with knits. “I started sewing with them when I was young (in the ‘70s) and have never stopped! Knits mold to the body nicely and are the most forgiving fabrics to sew, especially with serger and cover-stitch machines. These days, the variety of fibers in knits is so varied that there is always a challenge and a new experience. I especially love the soft feel of bamboo and the drape of rayon knits.” Pamela is the owner of Pamela’s Patterns; PamelasPatterns.com.



KATHLEEN CHEETHAM (“Sewing Destination: Vancouver, BC,” page 59) would opt for silk. “I find it so comfortable—warm in winter; cool in summer. Silk comes in many textures and colors, and I love how it feels on my skin. When I choose a fabric, over and above color, I consider its harmony to the person wearing it—a firm fabric for a firm body and a soft fabric for a softer body. I like noile for my sporty outfits, jersey for travel, jacquard for my blouses, and charmeuse for special occasions. Charmeuse brings me lots of compliments, maybe because like me, it’s soft and smooth!” Visit Kathleen at PetitePlusPatterns.com.



CHRISTINE JONSON (“Create a Carefree Summer Wardrobe,” page 34) would choose cashmere. “I love featherweight, Italian cashmere coating fabric and midweight cashmere sweater knits. I could sew with these two fabrics and have an entire, unique wardrobe. Not only can they be used as-is off the bolt, but they offer incredible creative opportunities.” Christine is a patternmaker, clothing designer, and couture dressmaker; visit CJPatterns.com.



BARBARA EMODI (“Go to Great Lengths,” page 22) loves to work with cotton. “Cotton wants to be sewn. It presses well, settles in under a presser foot, breathes, eases, and holds onto itself even when your fingers fumble. Best of all is the clean, fresh smell cotton emits, lifted by the steam of a good iron. It is the exact smell of summer dresses and of childhood, and of the first garment you ever made.” Barbara sews, teaches, and writes in Nova Scotia. Visit her at SewingOnTheEdge.blogspot.com.

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ThreadsMagazine.com

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Threads: (ISSN: 0882-7370) is published bimonthly by The Taunton Press, Inc., Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Telephone 203-426-8171. Periodicals postage paid at Newtown, CT 06470 and at additional mailing offices. GST paid registration #123210981.

Subscription Rates: U.S., \$32.95 for one year, \$54.95 for two years, \$78.95 for three years. Canada, \$34.95 for one year, \$58.95 for two years, \$84.95 for three years (GST included, payable in U.S. funds). Outside the U.S./Canada: \$38.95 for one year, \$66.95 for two years, \$96.95 for three years (payable in U.S. funds). Single copy U.S., \$6.99. Single copy Canada, \$8.99.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Threads*, The Taunton Press, Inc., 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

Canada Post: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *Threads*, c/o Worldwide Mailers, Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7, or email to mnfa@taunton.com

Printed in the USA



Photos: (Leggett) Picture People; (Cheetham) Darla Fulani; (Jonson) Auria Nascimento; (Emodi) Ben Emodi



Zero Waste

Simple approaches to sewing garments
with nary a leftover scrap

BY JUDITH NEUKAM

Waste not, want not is sage advice we've all heard and probably applied in our personal lives. In "No Waste Allowed," (*Threads* no. 149, pages 60 to 63) Sandra Ericson wrote about zero waste in garmentmaking. She explained the environmentally responsible effort of developing garment designs that produce no waste. This article takes a closer look at how to develop a zero-waste design.

Zero waste—not exactly a trend, school, movement, or even a process with well-

defined methods—is an ethos shared by like-minded individuals working with the common goal of eliminating manufacturing waste from garment production and using design to do so.

The zero-waste concept seems simple, and yet, grasping it and putting it into practice can be complicated. Still, it's creative, inventive, and proactive. It instigates change in design methods, construction and production processes, and is such a logical and wise solution that the zero-waste option is destined to

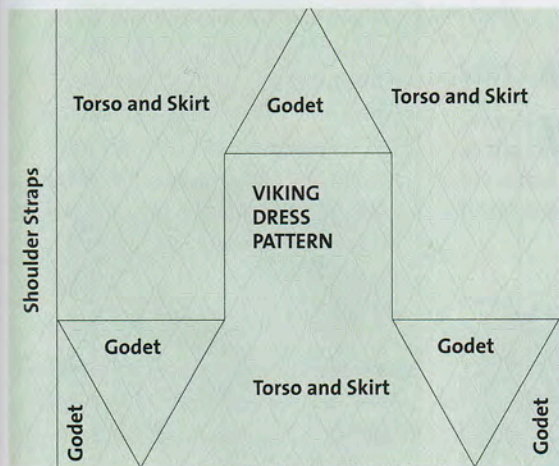
be in our futures.

Finding no-waste designers is easier today than it was just a year ago. There are a few trailblazers inventing their way with varied and inspiring methods. Here I'll explain some of the methods they use, so you can explore on your own as you venture into zero waste.

Judith Neukam is Threads senior technical editor. Special thanks to Sandra Ericson, Timo Rasmussen, and Holly McQuillan for their contributions to this article.

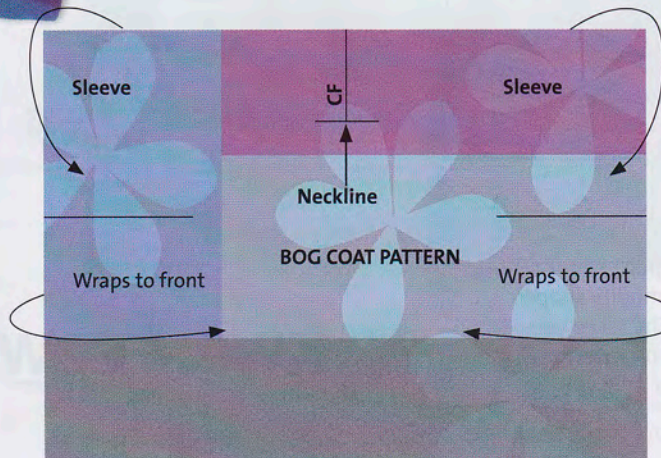
Borrow designs from the past

Thousands of years ago, the bog coat used every inch of fabric, as did the Viking dress. And Grandmother's one-yard apron created not a trace of leftovers. Below are the pattern layouts for these historical no-waste designs along with examples of the resulting garments. We can learn from the simplicity of these designs, their economy of resources, and find inspiration in their ingenuity.



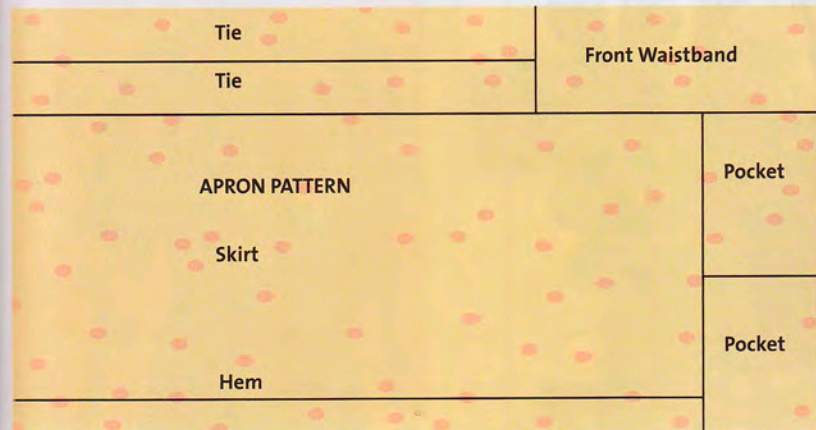
THE VIKING DRESS

Updated and daring, this godet-flared dress pattern is 10,000 years old. Measure your chest, add 4 inches, and divide by 3 for the horizontal lines. Measure from above your chest to your waist and add 2 inches for the length of the vertical lines. You can chalk in the lines as indicated in the layout at left. The seam allowances are included. Sew the godets to the lower skirt, then the vertical seams. Then finish the top edge, and add the shoulder straps. This garment was originally worn as a jumper over another dress.



THE BOG COAT

The bog coat silhouette can be a nightgown, blouse, jacket, summer dress, or winter coat. The fabric is used horizontally so the garment is on the cross-grain. The horizontal cut is the underarm seam when the sleeve section is folded to it. The body wraps from the back to center front.



THE ONE-YARD APRON

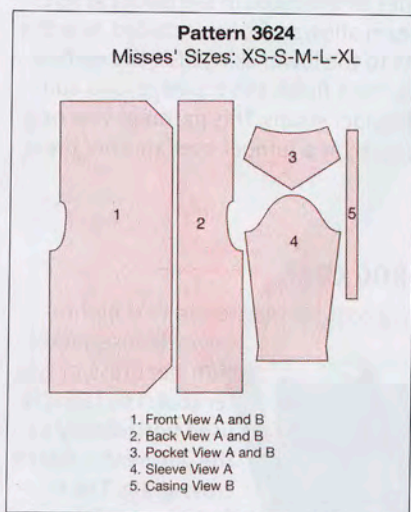
From Great Grandmother's sewing room to today's retro homemaker, a one-yard apron has been a hit. It's just a matter of blocking out rectangles to fit each of the apron elements: the ties, waistband, skirt, and pockets.

continued on page 68

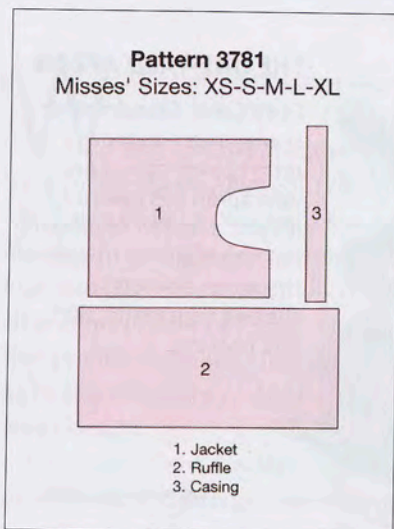
Use a pattern that comes close

There are commercial patterns that start with an almost zero-waste plan. Find these, and then create ways to take it the rest of the way. The puzzle is in changing the pattern enough to eliminate the waste sections. The two patterns below are very close to zero waste from the start. It's not difficult to envision ways to minimize waste in the design.

In Kwik Sew pattern 3624, pieces 1 and 2 make the vest. You can see how easily they can be used and manipulated to avoid making scraps. The pocket piece, 3, and the sleeve, 4, will challenge your design prowess.



On this Kwik Sew jacket pattern 3781, you can abut edges and modify shapes to control the leftovers. The more you experiment and use complex patterns, the more creative and exciting your designs will become.



WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THE LEFTOVERS?

How can you absorb the scraps into the garment? With consideration to the garment's shape, do you aim for embellishment or structure, both of which affect the style and silhouette? The challenge is not to cop out by sewing raw edged scraps all over the garment, but to design the silhouette in such a way that the garment consumes its own scraps. Here are a few ways to do this:

- Reverse pattern direction to interlock flare. You can see how to do this on page 71.
- Shape edges to fit the waste, or fit the waste to make the silhouette. This is especially effective on lapels and edges. See the back-neck facing on page 71.
- Split the difference between the waste and pattern.
- Pad out sections of the garment. Turn under areas, and topstitch them flat.
- Use leftovers for add-on details such as pockets, hoods, cuffs, yokes, collars, and lapels.
- Combine garments in multiple layouts and fabrics.

HELPFUL PRINCIPLES

- Remember that fabric drapes and is affected by gravity—it hangs from points on the body, such as the shoulders.
- Any edge can be joined to another, no matter the shape, as long as the seamlines are equal.
- Every line you design on your pattern has two sides, and both produce a pattern shape.

Create from simple shapes

Some of the zero-waste designers forgo traditional patterns and their shapes entirely. Take a new look at everything you know about patternmaking. Then convert it into simple shapes, such as squares and rectangles, to make everything. Develop ways to make these shapes conform to the human body. With this approach, instead of reshaping a pattern to the fabric, you take a shape that fits the fabric, and find a flattering and efficient way to make it fit the body.



START WITH A SQUARE OR RECTANGLE

Wrap a square or rectangle around the body with enough ease to give it style. Nip it together at the shoulders, down the center front, or on the side for dramatic fashion. This dress could be seamed down the center back leaving a slit at the hem. Two slits are cut on the top edge to serve as armholes, and all edges are finished. Use a belt or not.



A simple square can define form.



WEAVE AND MANIPULATE SHAPES

With long rectangular strips, you can cut exactly the number you need, sew them into narrow tubes, and weave the tubes into a desired shape. Turn them into any garment you want.

Cut the fabric into strips, and weave them to the shape.



Rethink a standard pattern

There are a few things you need to know to proceed in making a successful no-waste design: The garment you're going to make (jacket, pants, skirt, etc.), and the fabric width. Get started by using established patterns—a block, a sloper, or a favorite original or commercial pattern, depending on your experience and preference.

TIPS FOR SETTING UP YOUR LAYOUT

With this method, you don't need the actual fabric yet, because you can work on a table in either half-scale, which is easier to manage, or full-size on paper that represents the fabric. Or you can work digitally in a computer program such as Illustrator or Gerber/lectra, or even start with a pattern drafting program with editing features. If you're working digitally, all you do is establish the boundaries of your fabric and draw or scan in your patterns to scale. For manual drafting, use a piece of paper the appropriate size for your pattern scale.

Lay the patterns out to see how they occupy the given space. If you always lay out patterns on double fabric with a fold, don't assume that's the direction your no-waste adventure will go. That may work perfectly to a point, and then the design will suddenly resist symmetry. It's perfectly acceptable to change mid-design.

Anticipate the way the fabric behaves and how it will work into your design. By shifting seamlines and grainlines, you will change the way a print or pattern presents itself in the finished garment.

Experiment and invent ways to push the standard layout to a zero-waste version. You will need to keep some element of the pattern to maintain fit, such as the shoulders, armhole and sleeve cap, or crotch seam. But the fewer of these fixed shapes you have to contend with the easier it will be to arrive at a true zero-waste solution. Can seams meet? Can you shape with darts instead of seams? By using a familiar pattern, you know where you can sacrifice or add ease. Pattern manipulation methods work here to fill the spaces between pattern pieces. You can cut and spread, slide, shift, extend, reshape the seam and/or the edges until the layout is waste-free. Your challenge is to find a place for leftover fabric to go. (See "What can you do with the leftovers?" on page 68.)



This zero-waste approach of rethinking your pattern layout can change your whole way of looking at design and garmentmaking. I applied the idea to Simplicity pattern 4950 (discontinued).

MEET THE DESIGNERS

To read more about the zero-waste movement and to see more from thrift-minded designers, check out these online resources.

Susan Dimasi and Chantal Kirby:

MaterialByproduct.com

Mark Liu:

Ecouterre.com/what-is-zero-waste-fashion-and-why-does-it-matter

Holly McQuillan:

SlowFashioned.com/archives/1529

HollyMcQuillan.com/2010/11/09/yield-making-fashion-without-making-waste-exhibition

Stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/arts-life/style/4772935/Zero-waste-fashion-coming-up

Timo Rissanen:

ZeroFabricWasteFashion.blogspot.com

CenterForPatternDesign.com/pages/Zero%252dWaste-Design.html

David Telfer:

DavidTelfer.co.uk

Sans:

Shop.sans.name/pieces

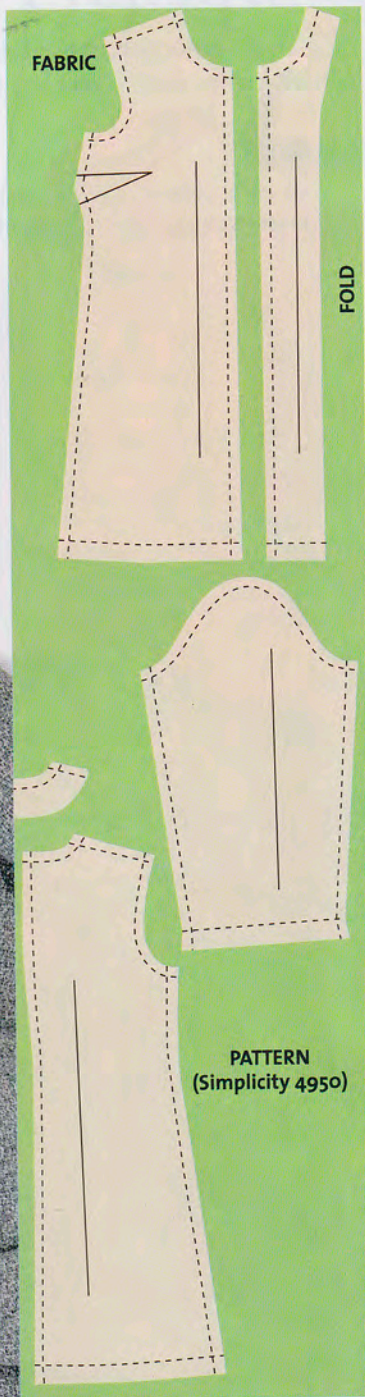
Yeohlee:

yeohlee.com/collections

PROGRESSION FROM A STANDARD LAYOUT TO ZERO WASTE

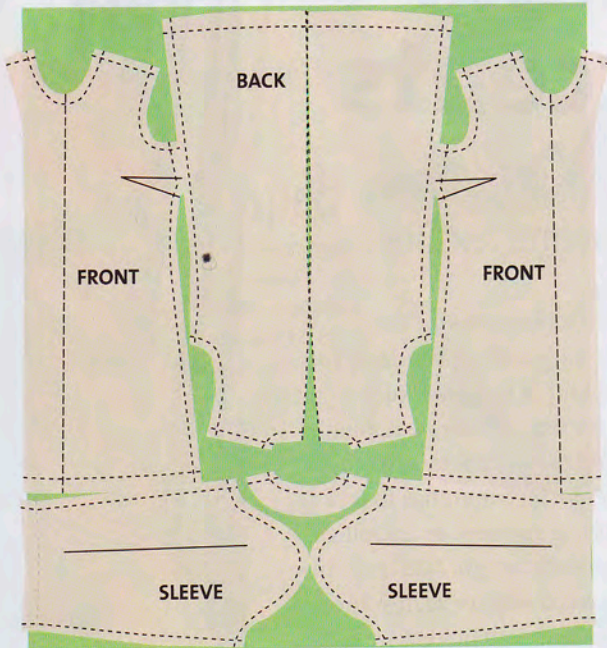
Standard pattern layout

At right is a standard pattern layout on folded fabric. The flared pattern pieces make it difficult to get an economical layout, and the folded fabric increases the amount of fabric waste. Compare the waste amount to the single-layer layout, far right.



Single-layer layout

By overlapping seam allowances, allowing pieces to extend off the fabric, and cutting in a single layer, waste is reduced and fabric amount reduced.



No-waste layout

Taking it even further, with subtle pattern modifications, letting shape dictate function, and creating uses for extra pieces, this coat-dress becomes a zero-waste garment.

