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## Sew It Seams - the Sewing Series

### Introducing the Series

You're all excited. You've squirreled away some time and space. You've selected the perfect fabric and the perfect pattern. The fabric is prepped, cut and ready to sew. Then... You begin to read the instructions. (Cue Beethoven's Fifth – the first 4 notes...)

The instructions might as well be written in Sanskrit, and your excitement dwindles away.

If you're anything like me, written instructions are your greatest nemesis. Trying to decipher what someone wants you to do with words scribed to the page – not always an easy task.

If you're anything like me, getting through the instructions can be quite cumbersome and wrought with frustration. I call it “spatial dyslexia”: I have the darndest time translating directions from a two-dimensional page into the 3-dimensional world.

Many people consider me quite adept at my craft. I appreciate that. Like many others, it was hard-earned, fraught with many, many mistakes along the way. (And yes, I still make more mistakes that I care to admit to...)

Over time, I realized that pattern instructions are simply a person's attempt to direct you through the construction process. They may be the best instructions for a particular step or process, but they may not make sense to you. Over time, I also realized that there are many ways to get to the same (and sometimes better) end result.

So, if you are struggling with the instructions provided for setting the fly in a pair of trousers, or a welt pocket in a jacket, or a Y-seam, but you know another way, I'm here to tell you it's OK to take the detour!

When constructing something from a pattern, it's easy to forget that a welt pocket is a welt pocket, a fly-front zipper is a fly-front zipper, a two-piece fold-over waistband is still just a two-piece fold-over waistband, a sleeve placket is still just a sleeve placket, even though the instructions may make it appear to be some new type of alchemy. The road is wider.

I was thinking, wouldn't it be great to have a repository of techniques under your belt so that when you sit down to sew, you could just pull them up? (Yes! That would be great!)

To that end, I thought I'd begin a series of articles (errr... more written instructions – albeit with photographs!), “Sew It Seams”, going over the construction of some of the elements that show up over and over and over. And, to sweeten the pot, I'll include links to recorded video instruction to bolster the written word? What do you say? I say, let's get to it!

## *Installment 1 – the Patch Pocket*

I thought I'd start with a fly-front zipper (I've got a full-proof way of making them work every time!) However, fly-front zippers can be a bit intimidating, even for seasoned sewing enthusiasts. So... let's start smallish – the patch pocket.

The patch pocket? Really? Yes – really! But why? Because it's front and center, and it better be amazing! And if the fabric is printed, the pattern should match – unless, of course, you've chosen to run your vertical stripes horizontal on the pocket as a design choice.

So that your patch pockets will align perfectly precisely and your points will be the pinnacle of pointed precision (how many “p's” can he put in a sentence?), add these two elements to your plethora of sewing protocols: 1) freezer paper; 2) school glue.

What? Freezer paper? School glue?

Yep! Stay with me...

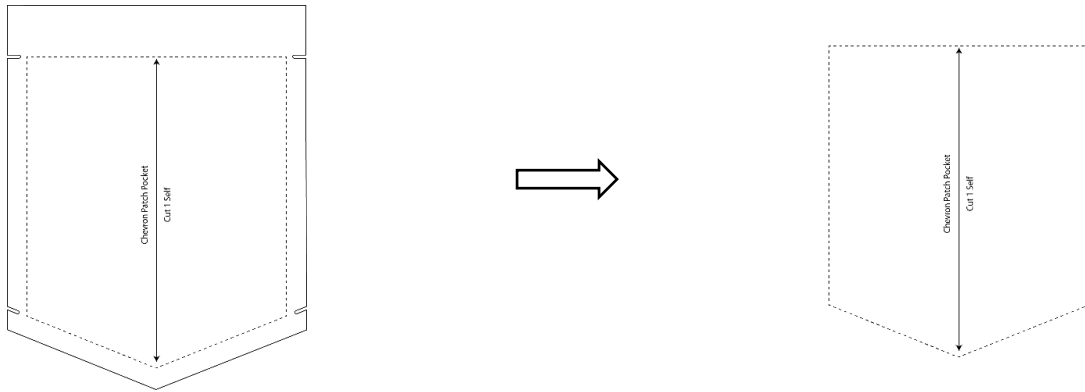
Freezer paper is an amazing hack. It has a plasticized finish on one side that acts like a temporary adhesive, providing stability to otherwise squirrely textiles. (It works amazingly for needle-turn applique and double-welt pockets, and writing notes on quilt squares for memory quilts, too! More on that later.)



1. First, create a template for your pocket using two sheets of freezer paper. Place the shiny sides of the freezer paper face down on an ironing surface, one on top of the other, and fuse them together with the heat of the iron. (Use two sheets so your pocket template is more rigid.) Don't worry, the plasticky adhesive won't permanently stick to your ironing surface. But, it's always best practice to do a test first.



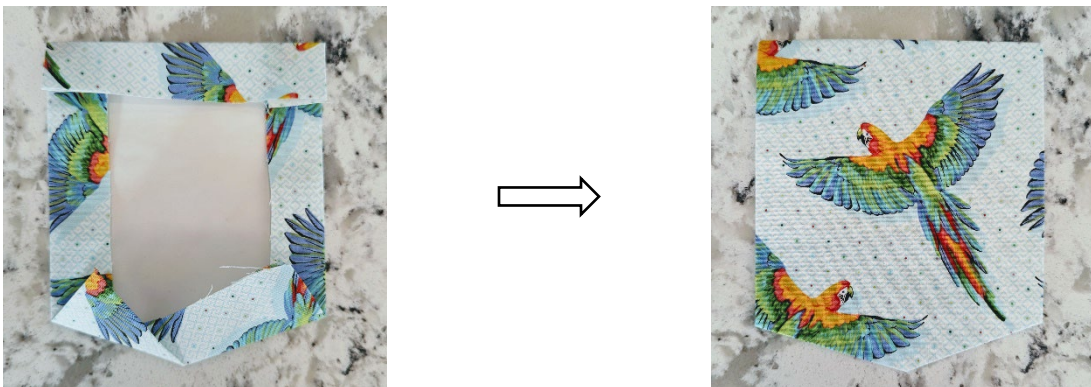
- Next, either trace off your pocket pattern or cut it out, removing all seam and hem allowances.



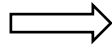
- Follow this up by cutting out a piece of fabric that is no less than  $\frac{1}{2}$ " larger at the sides and bottom and 1" at the top. (I typically cut a rectangle about 1" bigger all around. The larger you cut the fabric for the pocket, the easier it is to match pattern to your project.)
- Place the fabric face down on the ironing surface and the freezer paper template shiny side down to the wrong side of the fabric. Using the heat of the iron, temporarily fuse the freezer paper template to the wrong side of the fabric. Be respectful of the fabric grain.



- Using the template as a guide, starting at the sides, press the side seams of the pocket, the bottom, then the upper hem. Use a bit of spray starch to help keep the edges really crisp.



6. Once pressed, remove the freezer paper template (just give it a slight tug at one of the corners to release), and give one more press – starch optional but quite helpful.



7. Trim side and bottom seam allowances to  $\frac{3}{8}$ ". You can trim them to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", but  $\frac{1}{4}$ " is more difficult to manage.



8. Trim hem allowance at top to 1" if not already trimmed. Open the side seam allowances, fold-and-fold the upper hem at  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and edge stitch.

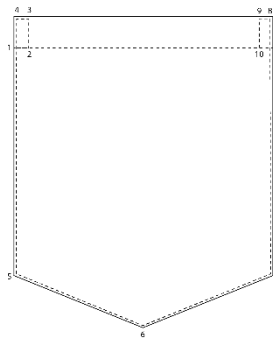




9. Turn side and bottom seams back into position and give another press. (Yes, I press a lot!)
10. Now, apply a small bead of school glue (not the permanent kind – just the standard issue white school glue) to the side and bottom edges – just a little. Stay toward the middle of the seam. (If you glue on the stitch line, sometimes it can be more challenging to sew.)



11. Position the patch pocket on your project (more “p’s” ...), heat set with the iron (yep, a little heat dries the glue and helps set the pocket), and sew the pocket to the project. (The diagram in the middle shows the stitch path.) Backstitch between 1 & 2, and 10 & 11. To make the “boxes” symmetrical, count the number of stitches between 1 & 2 as you sew them, then duplicate the same number for 3 & 4, 8 & 9 and 10 & 11.



That's it! Now, a few other notes:

- I like to use a sharp needle, size 70/10 for woven fabrics.
- A 50 weight cotton thread seats into the fabric quite nicely and gives a really nice finish.
- If you are making a shirt and the pattern of the pocket doesn't exactly match the placement on the background, move the pocket until it does. A quarter inch up or down or side to side isn't going to make that big of a difference. What everyone will notice is that you matched the pattern!

Until next time (when we'll go over darts), have a great day sewing!