You have chosen the perfect pattern and fabric. You have cut, pinned, basted and sewn; but have you pressed? Pressing affects the shape of any project you sew and is essential for achieving professional looking results. The pressing tools listed below and the pressing points on the back, will help you press your way to perfect results. Do not hesitate to ask your retailer for directions and demonstrations. When shopping, look for brand names, clear directions and guarantees, where applicable.

**IRONS AND STEAMERS**

The iron plays an important part in your home sewing projects since it is used throughout the construction process. A steamer on the other hand, is basically used for quick touch-ups and hard to reach areas.

**Iron** — a lightweight steam iron is essential for pressing needs. Some questions about features you should consider in selecting an iron are: Does the iron have temperatures listed? Is the soleplate coated with a non-stick finish? Does the iron steam in all settings? Is there a large water reservoir or water level gauge? Does the iron have a shot of steam or spray attachment? Also check for easy-to-read instructions and a manufacturers guarantee.

Before buying, lift the iron, try it in both hands, make sure it is comfortable and not too heavy. Test press the iron on a variety of fabric strips.

**Steamers** — are either lightweight, portable models or large (table top) professional types. Both will steam your fabric without scorching or marring. The portable model can be used in either the horizontal or vertical position, so that garment or curtains can be steamed while hanging.

**IRONING BOARD AND ACCESSORIES**

An ironing board with the proper pad and cover is a pressing necessity. There are also items available that can make ironing less of a chore. Some of these items are:

**Ironing Board** — available in two models,

**IRON CLEANERS AND PROTECTORS**

To help clean dirty irons, cover nicks and scratches and protect fabrics, it is essential that you have the proper iron cleaner and/or iron protector.

**Iron Cleaners** — are available in two formulas, one designed for hot irons, one for cold. Choose the one that is best for you.

**Iron Protectors** — cover the iron and protect the fabric from scorching or catching. They are available in non-stick finish or plastic.

**PRESSING CLOTHS**

Pressing cloths protect against iron shine, aid in steaming and protect fabrics against scorching. These cloths come in various weights for various fabrics and may be used wet or dry. Some styles are:

**Bristled Press Cloth** — for napped fabrics.

**Paper Strips** — for pressing seams, prevents seam edge impressions on right side of fabric.

**See-thru Press Cloth** — so you can see what you are pressing, especially useful to see placement of fusible interfacing.

**Silicone Treated Press Cloth** — iron glides easily, helps prevent scorching.
CONTOUR AND SEAM PRESSING

To help press hard to reach or curved areas try one of the following aids.

Boards — made of wood either with or without a cover. Different boards exist for “special” pressing needs, some are: sleeve boards — shaped for sleeves, needle board — for napped fabrics, point presser — for collars and other points, combination (tailor) boards — which combines some of the above features.

PRESSING

Proper pressing is essential in achieving professional sewing results. Pressing helps set curves, reduces bulk (by pressing seams open), as well as removes wrinkles.

For professional looking results, seamstresses recommend the following pressing points:

Note: There is a difference between ironing and pressing!

Ironing is used to remove wrinkles and is never used during construction. Ironing is done by moving the iron over the fabric with a back and forth motion.

Pressing is done throughout the construction of a garment. A steam iron or a steamer is lightly placed on the wrong side of the fabric, or on a press cloth, lifted, and lightly replaced until desired results are achieved.

• Scrap test a piece of fabric with all appropriate iron settings, steam and press cloths.
• Know your fabric and design. If your fabric needs special pressing equipment, (needle board, pressing cloth etc.), or your design would be aided by special pressing equipment (seam roll, point presser etc.), make sure you have them on hand before beginning to sew.
• Press as you sew. When you complete one step, seam, dart, etc. press before continuing on to next step.
• Do not under- or over-press. This may result in a worn or homemade appearance.
• Do not press over pins.
• Press seams in direction of fabric grain, from wide to narrow. Pressing against grain will cause seams to distort.
• Let garment hang for a while (24 hours if possible) before hemming and giving it a final pressing.

Clapper — a rounded wooden block, usually used in tailoring to achieve long lasting sharp creases such as pleats and darts.

Hams — contoured firmly packed cushions, in the shape of a “ham” used to press shaped areas, darts and contours. Available in various sizes. A ham holder will store hams when not in use.

Hem Ruler — a specially coated ruler over which hem can be pressed without pinning.

Mitts — padded glove-like cushion, worn on the hand or placed on the end of a sleeveboard to reach areas that a ham can not.

Rolls — stuffed long rolls to press long seams.

CREATING A HOME PRESSING CENTER

Proper pressing techniques and proper pressing equipment are investments in professional looking results and save time and energy.

Listed below are the basic items needed for regular everyday pressing. These items also serve as a base to which you can add more specialized pressing equipment.

Basics

Ironing Board
Iron Holder
Ironing Pad
Iron Protector
Ironing Cover
Mist Bottle or Sprayer

Specialty Items

Steamer
Steam Press
Various Press Cloths

In addition to these basics, there are other specialized items. To help you know which items are best for a specific sewing construction area or fabric-type, see the list below. Add this information to your sewing aids index.

Collars
Clapper
Point Presser
Curved Seams
Hams
Tailor Board
Hems
Hem Ruler
Man-Made Fabrics
(nonnapped)
Non-Woven Press Cloths
Steam Iron (lower setting)

Napped Fabrics
Bristled Press
Cloth
Needle Board
Natural Fabrics
( non-napped)
Pressing Cloths
Steam Iron (large temperature range)

Pleats
Clapper
Points
Point Presser

Shaped Areas & Darts
Hams
Sleeves
Pressing Mitt
Sleeve Board
Straight Seams
Point Presser
Seam Roll
Tailor Board

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Pressing aid information courtesy of the following AHSA members: Coats and Clark, Dritz, Imports by Clothilde, Iron Away, Jacobson Products, June Tailor, Oerow, Pellon, Riodon, Simplicity, Singer, Stacy Fabrics and White Sewing Machine.