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IDEAS FOR LENGTHENING GARMENTS

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APR 31 1978

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The fashion length of garments has received much attention during the last few years. The trend now is longer garments, below the knee or longer. Longer lengths often pose a problem for many since most clothing budgets do not allow for the purchase of a complete new wardrobe. In order to conform to this new fashion trend, people are asking "What can I do to up-date my wardrobe so it will exhibit the longer look and yet be in style."

There are several ways to up-date the length of garments. However, one should be aware of other fashion changes as well. This will help in deciding what can be done. For example, as garments get longer, we see more attention near the waistline and upper area of the garment.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

One of the things to strive for in up-dating a garment is that the intended treatment should appear to be a part of the overall garment design. Therefore, some garments may lend themselves quite well to being readjusted while others may not. As you look at each garment for possibilities, try to visualize how the garment will look after certain changes are made. The following questions will help in determining what might be involved in the change.

Design. What is the overall design line of the garment? Where are the structural seams located? Where are darts located? What are the decorative features of the design and where are they located? What kind of closure does the garment have, zipper, buttons and buttonholes? Would the addition or deletion of any of the design features add to or take away from the overall attractiveness of the garment?

Fabric. Is there additional self-fabric that could be used? Does the fabric lend itself to being coordinated with other fabrics, both in color and design? If the present hem is lowered will there be a line to show? If any stitching is removed will this show?

Time, effort and cost. Is the garment worth the amount of time, energy and money necessary to make the needed changes?

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

Do:

- .. Strive for a coordinated treatment that compliments the present design.
- .. Keep in mind individual figure proportions when adding length or using contrasting fabric or trim.
- .. Coordinate color and design if additional materials are used.
- .. Keep the adjustments simple.

Don't:

- .. Let the adjustment appear to be something just added on.
- .. Let the adjustment require major fitting alterations in the garment.
- .. Let the adjustment involve areas where major construction techniques are involved such as throwing off balance the spacing of buttonholes or pockets.
- .. Let the adjustment become too complicated.

SOME POSSIBILITIES

The following suggestions are given as ideas on ways to up-date present garments in line with the current fashion lengths. The possibilities for doing such depend upon:

1. The garment design
2. Fabric
3. Imagination
4. Overall look wanted
5. Time, energy, skill and money involved

The ideas given for Lengthening the Lower Edge, Lengthening Skirts, and Lengthening by Shortening are simple adjustments, relatively easy to do, and can be done on most garment designs.

LENGTHENING THE LOWER EDGE

- Idea 1. Lower hem. Garment can be lengthened the width of the hem if present hem line doesn't show and the width of the hem gives the extra length needed. The bottom of the garment can be faced with a light weight, hem width, bias facing or a wide stretch lace hem facing. Usually garments can be lengthened about 2 inches without interfering with the overall proportions of the garment design.
- Idea 2. Lower hem and apply a trim. This treatment is successful when the width of the hem gives necessary length, but original hem line cannot be removed. Place an uneven number of rows (1 or 3) of coordinated trim around bottom of garment. The number of rows used would depend on the width of the trim. Also, if more than one row is used, the spacing between rows should be pleasing to the eye and will depend somewhat on the width of the trim used. At least one row of the trim should be placed over the original hem line. The trim may be applied by machine or by hand. It may add to the attractiveness of the garment to repeat this treatment on some other area of the garment such as around the bottom of sleeves or around the midriff section.
- Idea 3. Add fabric band. Adding a band of harmonizing or contrasting color often provides an interesting effect. Apply the band as a facing around the bottom on the outside of the garment, or it can be cut double width and seamed to the bottom of the garment. The width of the band is determined by the additional amount of length needed and the width needed to give a pleasing proportion to the overall garment. The same treatment may be applied to the bottom of sleeves, or around neckline for a coordinated effect. If the band is very wide, consideration may be given to wearing a belt with the garment to help break the long line look. The belt may be made from the same fabric as the band or it may be purchased. Place belt in various locations to determine where it should be worn to give a pleasing proportion.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. W. R. VanDresser, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061.

LENGTHENING SKIRTS

- Idea 4. A skirt can be lengthened by adding a yoke at the top and wearing an over-blouse or tunic long enough to cover the yoke. This would involve, removing the waistband and placket or zipper, some adjustment in the fit around the hips, and replacing the band and placket or zipper.

LENGTHENING BY SHORTENING

- Idea 5. Shorten garment and add a new skirt of a pleasing fabric design and color. The skirt could be flared, pleated or plain. Strive for a pleasing proportion in relation to skirt length, bodice length and individual body proportions. This idea works well on garment designs that have over the bust, princess line structural seams, or A-line shift designs with French type darts. Location of pockets on the original skirt would be a prime consideration for this adjustment in order that good proportion be maintained. A collar or scarf made of the new fabric might also be added.
- Idea 6. Shorten garment and wear as a tunic over a separate skirt or pants. Or, if garment is already very short, it may be worn as it is over a skirt or pants.
- Idea 7. Open garment down front, shorten, remove sleeves, and bind all edges with an attractive trim. Wear as a sleeveless vest with other separates. Or, it can be shortened, made sleeveless and worn as a sleeveless pull-over over a long sleeved dress or blouse and pants or skirt.

The following ideas on lengthening garments in the waistline area are more difficult adjustments to make. Therefore, they should not be attempted by the inexperienced seamstress. However, the person who has the time, patience and skill needed can achieve some very interesting results.

These ideas are quite successful on simple A-line shift type garments with straight front and back fitting darts. Garments with French type darts, over the bust, princess type structural seams, down the front button closures, pocket detail, those that already contain a yoke of some type, and those with close fit do not lend themselves well to these adjustments.

LENGTHENING IN WAISTLINE AREA

- Idea 8. Inserted Belt. Divide garment at waistline. Insert band of fabric the desired width to give belt effect. Establish waistline of garment by putting garment on and tying a string or placing a belt at waistline. Place a row of pins around bottom edge of string or belt. Cut along row of pins. Baste fabric band in place and try garment on for fit. If garment has long line fitting darts in front and back, some adjustment may need to be made in the length of the front and back skirt darts or, if possible, remove darts and ease skirt on to insert band. This adjustment involves removing and replacing the zipper, and refitting the garment in the waistline and hip area. Buttons or some decorative feature could be added to the band for an interesting effect.
- Idea 9. Inserted Midriff or Waistline Yoke. Establish waistline and divide garment as in Idea 8. Determine width of finished yoke and additional length needed. Divide the yoke measurement into thirds. Measure up from waistline on bodice a

distance equal to one-third the yoke minus one-third of the additional length required plus a seam allowance. Cut around bottom of bodice along this line. Measure down from waistline on skirt a distance equal to two-thirds the yoke minus two-thirds of the additional length required plus a seam allowance. Cut around top of skirt along this line. Insert yoke. If garment has front and back fitting darts, try to have the bottom of the yoke come below the bottom of the skirt dart ends. Yoke can be top stitched to give an added attraction. This adjustment also involves removing and replacing the zipper and some adjustment in the fit of the skirt at the hip line may be necessary. Proportion of the added section in relation to individual figure proportions and total garment design should be considered here if the total effect is to have balance.