



## MORE PRESSING MATTERS

Often it is pressing that makes the difference between a professional-looking garment and one that looks homemade. Even seasoned sewers may become complacent about pressing without realizing it. Whatever your skill level, up-to-date knowledge about pressing techniques and equipment will help you achieve pressing success when you sew.

### THE BASICS

First, the term "pressing" means a lifting and lowering motion, gradually overlapping until the area is covered. Ironing, on the other hand, is done with a back-and-forth motion. The exception to this is in pressing seams where you may need to glide lightly in the direction of fabric grain.

Second, it is important to press as you sew during each step of garment construction. Most areas cannot be properly reached after being attached to another piece. Don't cross one seam with another until the first has been pressed. Most of the time, press on the wrong side of the fabric. A final touch-up may be done on the outside of the garment, but it is important to use a protective press cloth (that is usually wet).

Here are some further tips:

- Keep your iron and ironing board close at hand while sewing. If space permits, work in tandem with your machine in an "L" shaped work area.
- Use your iron right from the start of your project. If fabric is wrinkled, press on the wrong side before cutting. Make sure you don't have a permanent lengthwise crease from the bolt. If steam doesn't remove it, plan your cutting layout around it. Pattern pieces that are wrinkled may be pressed flat using a low, dry setting.
- See how your fabric reacts to pressing by testing scraps. Determine proper temperature setting and compatibility with moisture. Also, check for water spotting and possible color changes. Generally, the thicker the fabric and firmer the weave, the more moisture and pressure you'll need. More delicate fibers require less heat. A napped surface will need less pressure, often none at all.

Pressing expert June Tailor explains that most animal fibers take moderate heat (use moisture for wools and dry heat for silks). Vegetable fibers, such as cotton and linen, can take moist, high heat, while synthetics need lower temperatures with moisture as required. For blends, press according to the most delicate fiber in the fabric.



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It should be noted that the settings of various irons are not standardized. A temperature range, such as "wool" or "cotton," may differ by several degrees from manufacturer to manufacturer. This is all the more reason to test scraps of your fabric. Be aware of temperature variations, too, when you are fusing interfacing.

- Make seam pressing a step-by-step process. First press both seam allowances to one side to blend the stitches, then press the seam open (unless it is serged together). To prevent impressions or ridges on the right side of the garment, use strips of brown paper under seam allowances (or index cards, long envelopes, or adding machine tape).
- Avoid pressing over pins, zippers, and buttons.
- Allow fabric to cool down after pressing. If handled while still warm and moist, the fabric may "forget" the shape you carefully pressed in or create new wrinkles.

### PRESSING EQUIPMENT

Good pressing tools are essential to good results in sewing. They will actually make you more efficient, saving both time and effort. Today there are many choices. If you're new to sewing, or only sew occasionally, purchase the most basic equipment first, and acquire more gradually. Here's a rundown:

#### Ironing Boards

An ironing board, or similar surface, is absolutely necessary. Make sure your board is sturdy and level with a smooth, well-padded surface. June Tailor Inc., a company specializing in pressing equipment, offers a Hi-Loft Ironing Board Pad that cushions like a heavy wool blanket. As for the cover, most sewing experts now advise against the use of those shiny Teflon™ covers. A moisture absorbing cotton cover is best. A gridded design on the cover makes it an all-purpose craft surface as well. On any cover, pull the drawcords and tie them securely for a tight fit. Replace the cover when worn.

Roberta Carr of California teaches her Design Studio students how to make a large "grainboard" from ½ inch plywood covered with an old wool blanket. This is topped with a cotton gridded cover for a cutting/pressing surface.

#### Irons

Your choice of an iron depends on several factors--cost, space, and your particular needs. If your iron is old, think seriously about updating. It's a worthwhile investment.

**MORE PRESSING MATTERS - PAGE 3****Household Irons**

There are many new and useful features on today's irons—Teflon™ soleplate, self-cleaning, automatic shut-off, etc. Some familiar brands are Black & Decker, Norelco, Proctor-Silex, Sunbeam, Sanyo, Rowenta, and Sears. Bernina, a well-known name in sewing machines and equipment, offers an iron designed with homesewers in mind. Keep in mind the following points when choosing an iron:

- For consumers who sew and don't just iron, an automatic shut-off is not necessarily a benefit. Usually you want your iron to stay hot for a longer period of time, not to keep cooling down.
- Steam output is of utmost importance. Look for an iron with lots of steam holes at the front of the soleplate so that steam is concentrated near the tip where you need it most. Make sure there's a steam "burst" capability to penetrate fabric better.
- A reservoir window allows you to see the amount of water in the iron.
- Left-handed individuals may need a center-mounted or reversible cord.
- Irons that require distilled or demineralized water may not be as convenient as those that take tap water.
- Weights vary, so hold the iron in your hand to see if it will be comfortable for you to use.

Black & Decker's top-of-the-line iron, called the Advanced System Electronic, does have self-cleaning and shut-off features but a less expensive version, the Sure Steam Iron, may be an even better choice for sewers. This has adjustable amounts of steaming, plus a "burst" or surge, water reservoir, and coated soleplate. A new entry on the market is the Bernette Pro Glide Plus from Bernina, an iron designed with sewers in mind. The Rowenta line from West Germany is favored by many sewing authorities because its thick soleplate keeps the iron hot and it produces lots of steam. They offer a three-year warranty. Models include Tapmaster, Aquaglide, Powersteam, Excellence, and the new Cord or Cordless.

**Professional/Commercial Irons**

There are several professional/commercial irons available for home use. One is the Vapor Simac, made in Italy by Simac and distributed by Lello Appliances Corp. It has its own water reservoir and pump in a base unit. It supplies steam for hours, has a filter for tap water, and is more costly than household irons but less than gravity feed types. There's a single-function push-button model for continuous steam, and a new one that gives automatic bursts of steam as well.

If you're seriously into sewing or in business, and if you have the space, consider a pressure iron called gravity feed. This is more expensive, consisting of a tankless soleplate unit that's tethered to a hanging water tank by a water tube power cord. It has steaming power and penetration 10 to 20 times that of conventional irons, and is very durable. You'll need a ceiling hook to hang the reservoir, and the iron is heavy for pressure.

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The HiSteam/Naomoto gravity feed systems are in industrial and home use worldwide. There are several models, standard and deluxe (with electronic temperature control). This company makes excellent professional vacuum pressing boards, too.

From Sussman, the Prolite Gravity Feed Iron is user-friendly, easy to maintain, and durable. This one is lighter, weighing only 3 pounds, and the water container is smaller. Sussman also makes pressing boards for sewing like a pro.

**PRESSING ACCESSORIES**

To do a good job of pressing during garment construction, you'd be wise to invest in some supplementary items. The Dritz Corporation manufactures many fine products for pressing. Among their accessories: Dressmaker Ham, Seam Roll, Pressing Block and Point Turner, Needle or Velva Board, and several press cloths. They also make a hot iron cleaner called Iron-Off, which is especially good for removing melted fusible webbing from the soleplate.

Sewing expert Clotilde likes the versatility of her new catalog product called Shammy, a viscose press cloth that holds water but wrings out nearly dry. She also recommends the use of a soleplate cover called IronSafe to prevent scorching and shine of fabrics. Remember that this only fits standard size household irons.

June Tailor offers a guide to pressing techniques called Custom Detail Pressing. She also has a full line of quality pressing accessories, which are described below.

The **Sleeve Board** is a double-sided small ironing board developed to press lengthwise seams in long, slim areas such as sleeves. It's also useful for necklines, sleeve hems, buttonholes, etc. June Tailor's new version, with a steel end-bracket, provides free arm convenience.

The **Seam Roll** is a long stuffed cushion that helps avoid seam impressions on the right side of the fabric. (You may improvise by rolling up a small terry towel or covering a tightly rolled magazine with a towel and muslin.)

A **Pressing Ham** is essential for correct shaping of curved areas. There are several varieties available—a regular ham filled with either sawdust or polyurethane filler, or "silhouette" ham that's contoured. They all have one side covered in cotton and one in wool blend. There's also a handy Hamholder that frees your hands as you press.

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The **Tailor Clapper** is a hardwood block used to flatten bulky areas and create hard edges and creases. The Point Press/Clapper is a combination tool. To use a block like this, put lots of steam on the area to be flattened. Remove iron and press cloth, and apply pressure with the wooden block to hold the steam.

The **All-Purpose Tailor Board** is a wooden pressing aid that has 12 different edges, surfaces, and points to accommodate every kind of facing, edge, and seam. According to Tailor, pressing on bare wood generates the most steam, but padded covers are available.

A **Cushioned Pressing Pad** is designed for pressing raised details, lace, beaded motifs, etc. The velva board is for steaming napped fabrics. A pressing mitt fits over the hand, and is helpful for reaching hard-to-get-at areas.

**Pressing Cloths** are essential. Because you sew on a variety of fabrics, you'll probably want several. The transparent cotton cloths are most useful for pressing on the right side, and can be used wet or dry. A bristled cloth is a steam-penetrating cloth for pile fabrics. Steam 'N Shape is excellent for wools because it holds moisture longer.

The **Needle or Velva Board** makes the pressing of pile fabrics much easier. They can be used with steam or dry irons. The pile side of the fabric always goes toward the needles, and the fabric is always pressed from the wrong side.

**Sources for products mentioned in this article:**

Bernina—3500 Thayer Court, Aurora, IL 60504-6182

Black & Decker—10 N. Park Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030

Clotilde—1909 S.W. First Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33315-2100, 1-800-772-2891

Dritz Corp.—P.O. Box 5028, Spartanburg, SC 29304

The Fabric-Carr (Roberta Carr)—P.O. Box 32120, San Jose, CA 95152-2120

Hi-Steam Corp.—610 Washington Ave., Carlstadt, NJ 07072

June Tailor Inc.—P.O. Box 208, Richfield, WI 53076-0208

Rowenta Inc.—281 Albany Street, Cambridge, MA 20139

Sussman-Automatic Corp.—43-20 34th St., Long Island City, NY 11101

Vapor-Simac (Lello Appliances)—355 Murray Hill Pkwy., E. Rutherford, NJ 07073

Nancy's Notions, Ltd., P. O. Box 683, Beaver Dam, WI 53916-0683, 1-800-833-0690

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