



## SEW-lutions Guidelines

Your Guide  
to  
Successful  
Sewing

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### Marking Tools & Methods

The printed symbols and markings on patterns must be transferred to the fabric to accurately match seams and position pockets, folds, buttonholes, darts, tucks and pleats. The object is to create precise marks that don't remain permanently or mar the fabric but are visible during construction.

It's imperative to always pretest marking tools.

#### Chalk or Soap

Chalk is easily removed on most smooth fabrics. Test first to see if the chalk mark is visible and if it can be removed by brushing the fabric between the thumbs. If the chalk is still visible, only use it on the fabric wrong side.

The chalk should show up on the fabric, but it shouldn't leave a lasting residue. Some "chalks" have a waxy binder so the chalk can molded into a pencil or a "chip." Always test-press chalk on a scrap of the project fabric to see if a wax stain remains.

Chalk is available in a small, cake-like chip; pencil; pencil cartridge; or dispenser and in a variety of colors (1).

Pencil cartridges come with chalks in up to eight colors. Some have a brush for "erasing" the marks. Sharpen pencils with a handheld pencil sharpener. If the chalk lead is too sharp, the point breaks easily.

A chalk dispenser leaves a fine powdered line as you roll it over the fabric (2). Use a double-

cartridge for marking seam allowances or parallel lines, adjusting the space between the wheels as necessary.

In a pinch for a marking tool? Use a sliver of white hand soap. Marks from hand soap don't brush away but will wash out when the fabric is sponged or laundered. Only use white soap, and periodically sharpen the edge by whittling the edges with a sharp knife or rubbing the edges on a sandpaper or concrete.

#### Fabric-Marking Pens

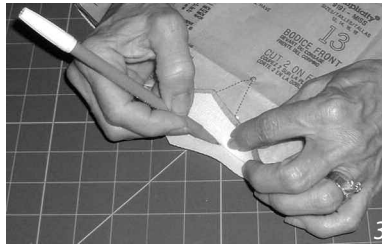
These pens come in two varieties: water- and air-soluble. Their blue or pink inks disappear either by themselves or when dampened with water. Use water-soluble pens on fabrics that won't water spot or distort when dampened. Sometimes the mark faintly reappears after pressing or after the fabric dries. If this occurs, wet it again.

Use air-soluble pens on fabrics that can't be washed or dampened. Because the marks evaporate within 24 to 48 hours, sew the project shortly after marking, or seal the marked fabric in a plastic bag with the air squeezed out. If you need to "erase" the marks and can't wait for them to disappear, dab the marks with a cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol.

Be sure you erase the marks before laundering the project; detergent can permanently set the ink. Also, quilting authorities report that the chemicals in air- and water-soluble inks deteriorate fabrics over time. Don't use them on heirloom projects.



For precise placement when marking with chalk, soap or fabric-marking pens, stab a pin vertically through the pattern and the fabric layers. If the fabric is folded with wrong sides together, spread the fabric slightly and mark next to the pin (3). If the fabric is folded with the right sides together, lift the pattern slightly from the fabric, and mark next to the pin. Then flip the fabric to the other side, and mark where the pin protrudes. To mark a straight line, mark several points along the line, remove the pattern, and connect the dots with a ruler.



## Tracing Paper & Wheel

Tracing paper is sold in packages with several sheets and colors of coated paper (4). Choose a color that can be seen but doesn't show through the fabric. Tracing-paper marks "erase" with water. Some papers leave marks that evaporate after a few hours of air exposure. Test to make certain. Always mark on the wrong side of the fabric. If marks are needed on the fabric right side, choose another marking method.



Use a serrated tracing wheel to mark tightly woven fabrics; the wheel leaves a dotted line. Use a smooth wheel on fabrics that snag easily or on textured fabrics where a dotted line won't show.

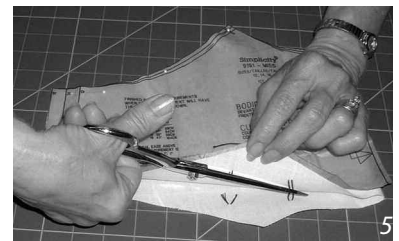
To mark with tracing paper, place it under the pattern with the coated side of the paper against the wrong side of the fabric. Roll the tracing wheel along the pattern marks to transfer the markings to the fabric. Move the tracing paper as needed for marks that are longer than the paper. To mark a dot, square or dart

point, make a small X with the wheel. When using a serrated tracing wheel, protect your work surface by placing a cutting board or a piece of tag board underneath the fabric.

## Tailor's Tacks

Tailor's tacks are thread markings hand stitched with contrasting thread. They're easily removed and are especially effective for marking fabrics that stain with pens, chalks or tracing paper. Although any thread will work, six-strand embroidery floss or darning thread stays put better than smoother threads. Prior to using, check the embroidery floss to be sure it's colorfast.

Thread a needle, but don't knot the thread. (If using regular sewing thread, double it.) Insert the needle through the pattern and both layers of fabric. Bring the needle up about 1/8" from the insertion point, and pull the thread up. Clip the thread leaving 2" tails on each end. Repeat for additional marks. Remove the pins and the pattern without pulling out the threads. Spread the fabric layers about 1", and snip all threads in half. Clip thread tails to 1/4" or 1/2" (5).



## Marking With Scissors

Since rotary cutters are frequently used, cutting around notches is neither practical nor accurate. Cut off notches along the cutting line. Then, with sharp scissor points, snip 1/8" into the center of the notch. Use snip-marks to mark the ends, or "legs," of darts, tucks and pleats if they end in a seamline. When sewing, simply match up the snips. 🖱️