

Straightening the Fabric Grain

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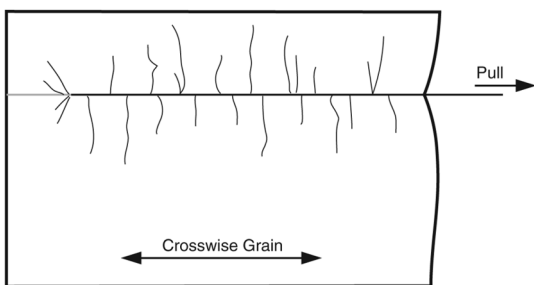


Straightening Fabric Ends

Woven fabrics, especially of lower quality, are often slightly off-grain, meaning their lengthwise and crosswise grains are not completely perpendicular.

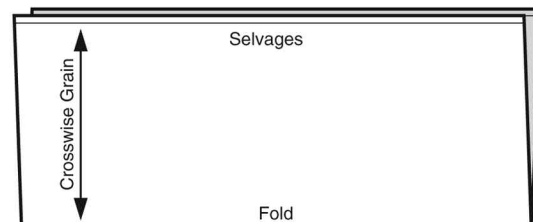
To make sure that the lengthwise and crosswise threads are at right angles, and that the fabric is "on-grain," it's necessary to straighten one of the cut ends. If there is a prominent design line, such as a woven stripe or plaid, cut along the design. Do not use a printed line as a reference; the print may not match up with the grain. If there is not a design line to follow, you need to pull a crosswise thread.

Snip through the selvage, find one crosswise thread and pull it, like a gathering thread, until you reach the opposite selvage. If the fabric is loosely woven, you might be able to pull the thread completely out of the fabric. If it is tightly woven, you will need to pull the threads every few inches or pull it slightly so it puckers (1); then slide the thread and push the fabric repeatedly until you reach the opposite selvage. Cut the fabric along the pulled thread.



(1) Pull thread from selvage to selvage.

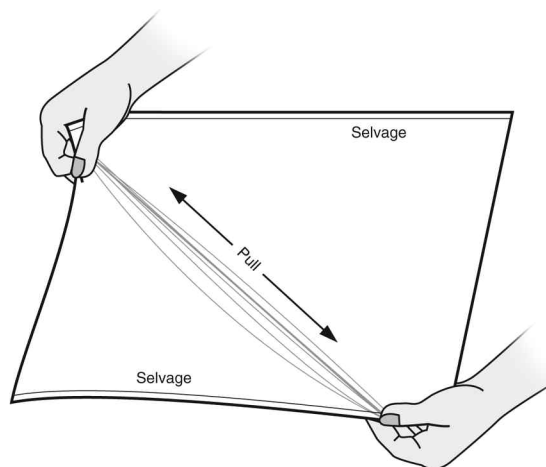
Once you have a perfectly straight cut edge, fold the fabric in half lengthwise (aligning the selvages). If the cut edge is not straight, or the corners don't form right angles (2), the fabric is off-grain and needs to be corrected.



(2) Cut ends are off-grain.

Correcting Distorted Grain

If a woven fabric is only slightly off-grain, pin together the selvages and one cut edge, placing pins every few inches. Steam press the fabric starting at the selvages and pushing the fabric toward the fold with the iron. If the fabric is truly off-grain, pull the fabric on the bias, in the direction it needs to be straightened (3). Pull firmly until the edges are even and all corners form right angles. Repeat for the length of the fabric.



(3) Stretch fabric to straighten grain.

Refold the fabric to check that the ends are even. Take care not to pull too strenuously, or the fabric will stretch out of shape.

If a fabric is off-grain when the print is applied, once you straighten the fabric grain, the print will be off kilter. Carefully inspect print fabric before purchasing, and avoid any fabrics with a print that is badly off-grain.

Fabrics with special finishes can't be pulled on grain either; examine them carefully before purchasing.

Knit Fabrics

You can't pull a thread on a knit fabric, and you can't steam or pull it to straighten the grain. However, unless the fabric is badly off-grain, it can be used. To find a straight line, use contrasting-color thread to hand-baste across a crosswise loop, and then trim along the basted line. This gives you a straight edge for folding the fabric and laying out the pattern. 