

Crinkled cloth

Learn about deliberately puckered fabric

Lightweight, textured fabrics are wonderful choices for airy warm-weather apparel. They come in a range of fiber types, but they share important characteristics. They're soft, drapable, and generally easy-care fabrics with ripples, minute pleats, or crumpled folds. The texture is permanent, and it lends these fabrics body, even when the foundation textile is fine.

PLISSÉ

Plissé, which means "pleated" or "wrinkled" in French, generally refers to a cotton fabric with a puckered texture. Other names for this material are "blister cloth" or "blister crepe." Plissé is typically created with a wet-finish application of a caustic soda solution. The chemicals cause the fabric in the areas of application to shrink, leaving the untreated areas puckered. Plissé fabrics are most often plain-weave cotton or polyester/cotton blends, but they also are made of rayon and acetate.

CRINKLE FABRIC

The name "crinkle" describes fabrics with permanent, ultrafine pleats along the lengthwise grain. These pleats are irregular in depth and shape; although they aren't perfectly straight, they are generally parallel. Other terms for this fabric include crepon, crinkle crepoline, and creponne.

Crinkle fabrics come in cotton, cotton blends, rayon, silk, and polyester. The texture may be created with a caustic solution, as for plissé, or through heat and pressure, which emboss the pleats in place. Another method of producing this effect is through the use of tightly twisted weft yarns. The overtwisted threads contract, pulling the weave into pleats.

Textured fabrics translate well into unstructured, loose-fitting tops, dresses, full skirts, lingerie, and nightgowns. You'll love wearing them as the weather heats up, and you'll love their easy-care nature.

Deana Tierney May is a writer and editor in Roxbury, Connecticut.



Care and handling

Treat these fabrics gently to preserve the texture.

Wash delicately. Wash in cool water with a liquid soap made for delicate fabrics. While some plissé and crinkled fabrics are machine washable, washing may weaken them over time. A gentle cycle with cool water is recommended. Stains can be hand-treated but avoid rubbing, which may cause damage.

Hang to dry. Drying by machine may cause shrinkage or loss of crinkles.

Iron gingerly. Set the iron for a low temperature and hover it over the fabric. If there are large creases to remove, test the iron in a hidden area to see if the fabric can withstand pressure.

Sewing advice

Choose simple, single-layer designs, and plan lightweight edge finishes that won't battle with the pleated texture.

Layout and cutting: Use a with-nap layout. Avoid distorting the fabric while pinning and cutting.

Needles and thread: Small, sharp needles are best. A 70/10 universal or 70/10 microtex needle works well. Choose silk or polyester thread.

Stitching: A narrow zigzag stitch is best for most seams, as it helps maintain the stretch inherent in a pleated fabric. Sew a test seam using a stitch length of 2.0 mm to 2.25 mm and slightly reduced tension. To stabilize cross-grain and bias seamlines, hand-sew stay tape to the seamline. Avoid staystitching, which may stretch the seamline as you sew it.

Hems: A narrow hem works best on these lightweight fabrics. If the fabric doesn't ravel, leave the edge raw. If it does, use a zigzagged, hand-overcast, hand-rolled (see "How Did They Sew That: Hand-roll a hem," p. 24), pinked, or serged hem.

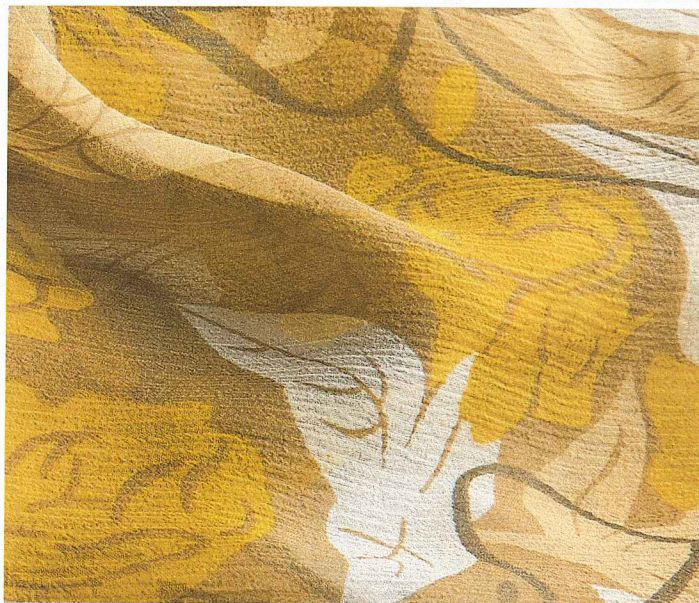
Edge finishes: Use a narrow bias binding or facing on necklines. If you prefer a facing, opt for net, organza, or nylon tricot for a lightweight, nearly invisible finish.

Underlining: Use organza or other lightweight silks to stabilize garment sections and control stretch when desired.

Pressing: Use steam and light pressure; avoid overpressing.

Closures: Buttons and loops are more attractive than stitched buttonholes on sheer crinkled fabrics. Sew zippers in by hand.

Crinkle silk chiffon acquires its texture from the contraction of its twisted weft threads.



Top: Cotton plissé has a texture like seersucker. Center: Crinkle chiffon comes in lovely prints. Bottom: Heat-set crinkles enhance an iridescent polyester textile.

Photos: Mike Yamin. Fabrics: (p. 17, middle right) FabricMartFabrics.com; (p. 17, bottom right) editor's stash; all others, MoodFabrics.com.