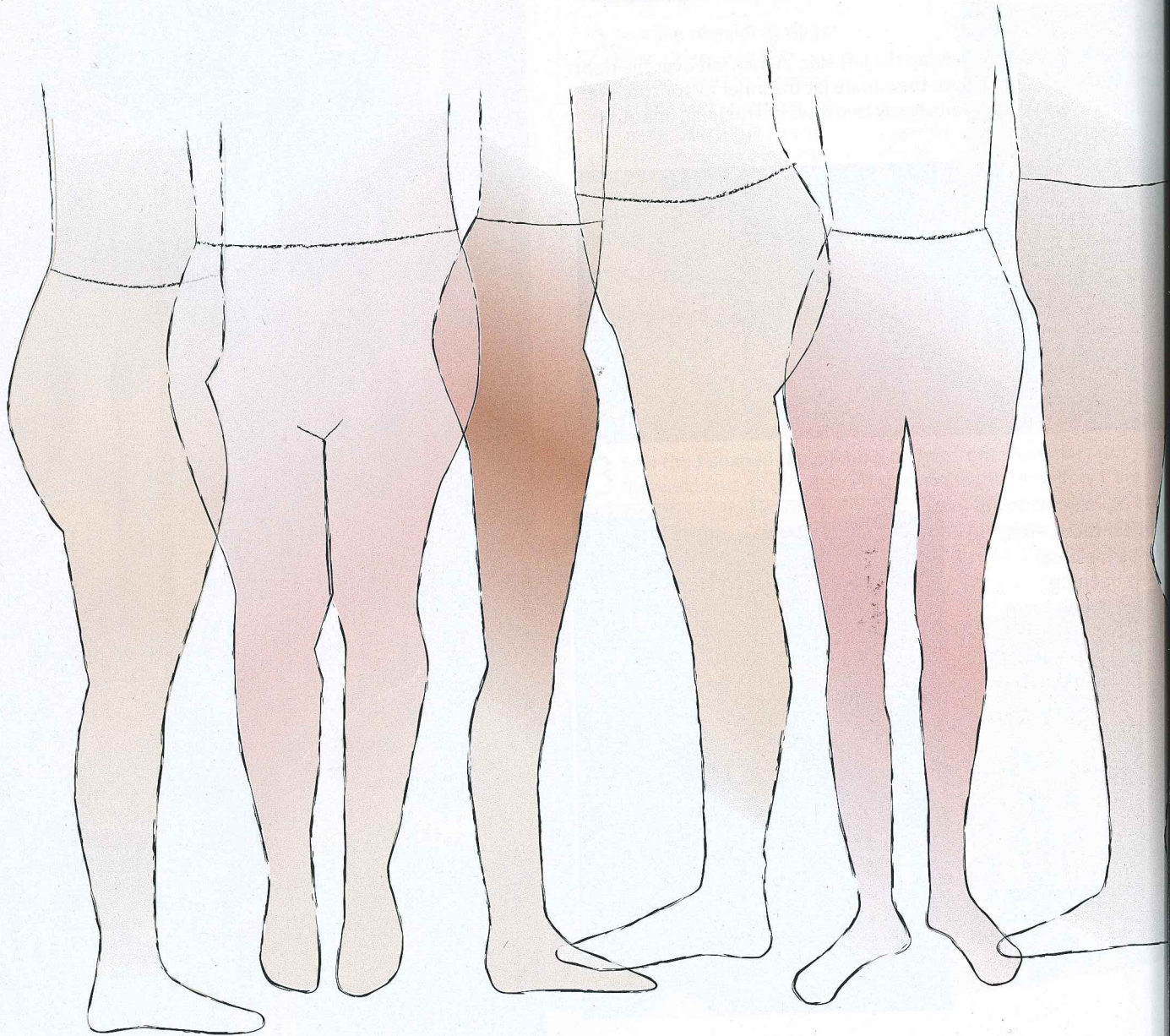


Vertical Seams *for* Pants Fitting

Create opportunities to custom-fit your shape

BY JUDITH NEUKAM



Maybe you've discovered how to get around the tricky business of pants fitting by drafting a pattern from scratch. To quickly fit a basic pants pattern, however, adding vertical seams to the front and back is the answer. There are so many variables with pants fitting, and successful results involve establishing the correct relationship between the pattern and assorted body parts. It's difficult to get all the necessary adjustments into two basic pattern pieces, yet I can show you how easy it is when you divide the patterns vertically, with a seam at the center of the front and back pieces.

The benefit of fitting with these vertical seams is that you can make a pant leg larger and smaller in different places. You're able to shape the pant leg and the torso area, from crotch to waist, to match the body and stay comfortable. Common challenges that

this approach can solve include a protruding stomach; a flat or prominent seat; full or thin legs; wide or narrow hips; and high or low hip fullness.

I recently had a friend help me fit a pants pattern that came with vertical front and back seams as a design feature. We were delighted with the ease of fitting and the final result. I realized it would be simple to duplicate this feature on many pants patterns and achieve a similar fine fit with less effort. I'll show you how easy it is to effectively shape a pants muslin to your individual figure. If you, like many sewers, have problems getting a good pants fit, give this method a try.

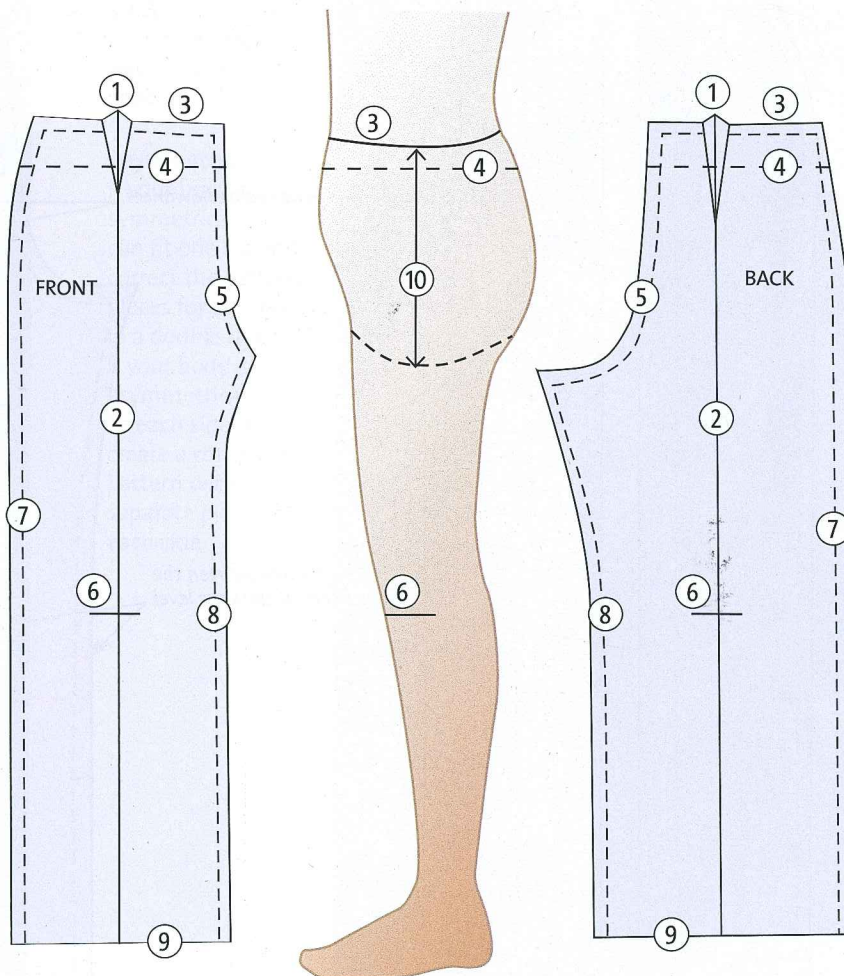
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Pattern landmarks

Start your fitting with a basic pants pattern that's free of design details such as a waistband, zipper, pockets, and leg shaping. Once a good fit has been established, style changes are easy to incorporate. For example, the waistline level can be raised or lowered, and the legs can be tapered, widened, or flared.

First learn the terminology, so you can follow my fitting approach. These are the basic pant and body areas.

1. Front/back dart
2. Grainline
3. Average waist level
4. Low waist level
5. Crotch seam
6. Knee level
7. Side seam
8. Inseam
9. Hemline
10. Rise



Adjust the pattern

For your pants muslin, begin with a pattern size based on your hip measurement. Then add vertical seams to increase your fitting opportunities. Cut only the front and back pattern pieces, and press them.

REPOSITION THE GRAINLINE AND DARTS

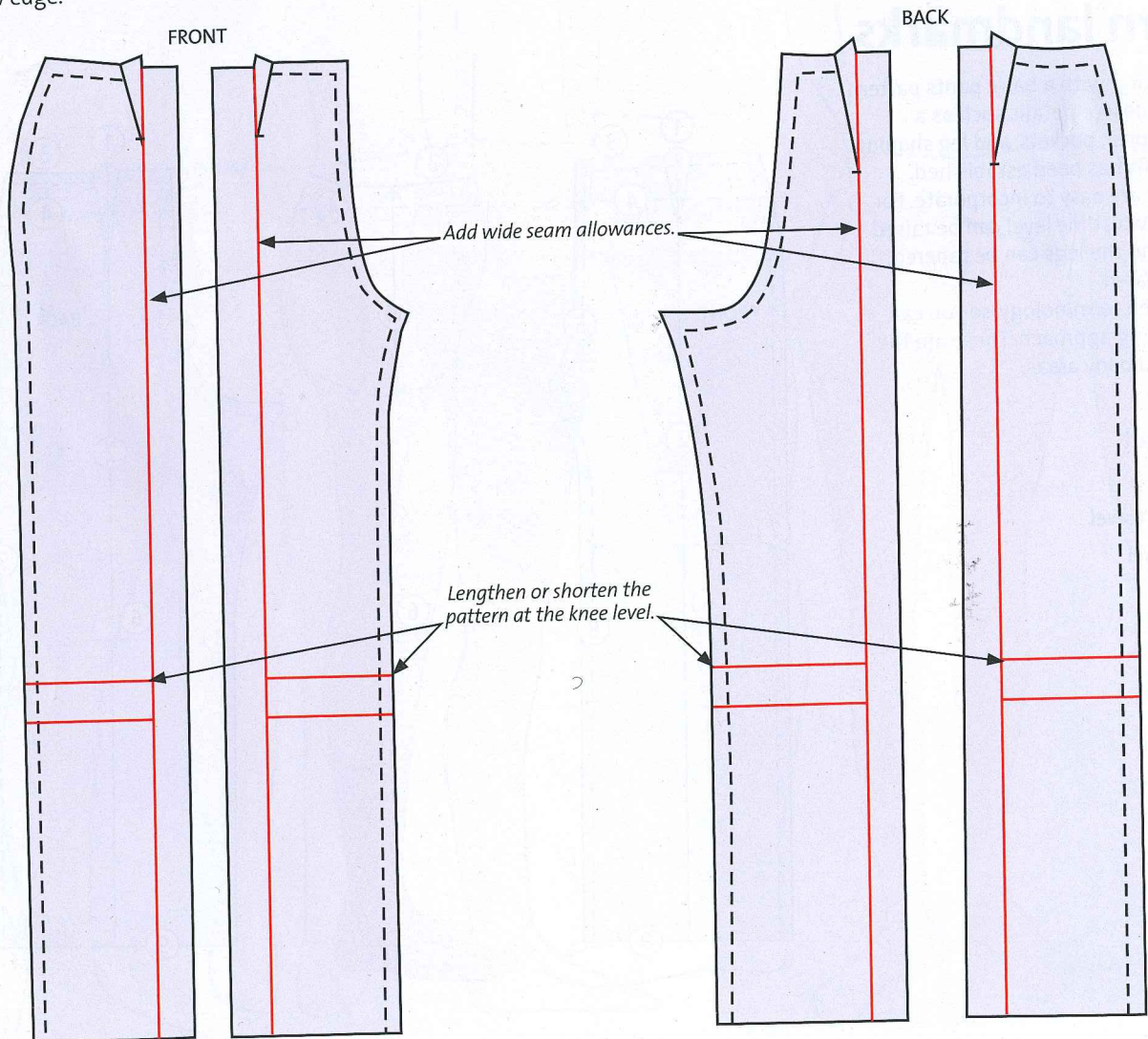
1 Position the grainline. A grainline should split the front and back leg vertically in half and indicate the pants' crease location. Establish a central grainline by folding the front and back pant leg in half at the hem and knee, aligning the side and inseams. Draw a vertical line from the hem's center point to the waist.

2 Move the front and back darts. Move these darts right or left so the dart point is centered on the new grainline. Ultimately, the darts will be aligned with the pant crease. Darts can be added or eliminated to adjust the waistline, but keep one on the grainline. The darts can then be sewn into the added vertical seamline.

DIVIDE THE PATTERN

1 Draw a dividing line. On the front and back patterns, make a vertical line from the center hem through the center knee, and through the waist, following your established centered grainline. Cut the patterns apart along the new line and through the dart center. Add a 1-inch-wide seam allowance to each new edge.

2 Adjust the leg length on each pattern piece before cutting the muslin. Make the change in the knee area. To shorten, draw two parallel horizontal lines the distance apart of the needed reduction, fold the pattern to bring the lines together and tape. To lengthen, draw one line, cut across it, and spread the amount of the needed increase. Add paper and tape together.



MAKE A MUSLIN

1 Lay out the patterns on the muslin.

Place the new vertical seamlines on the straight grain. Cut the patterns.

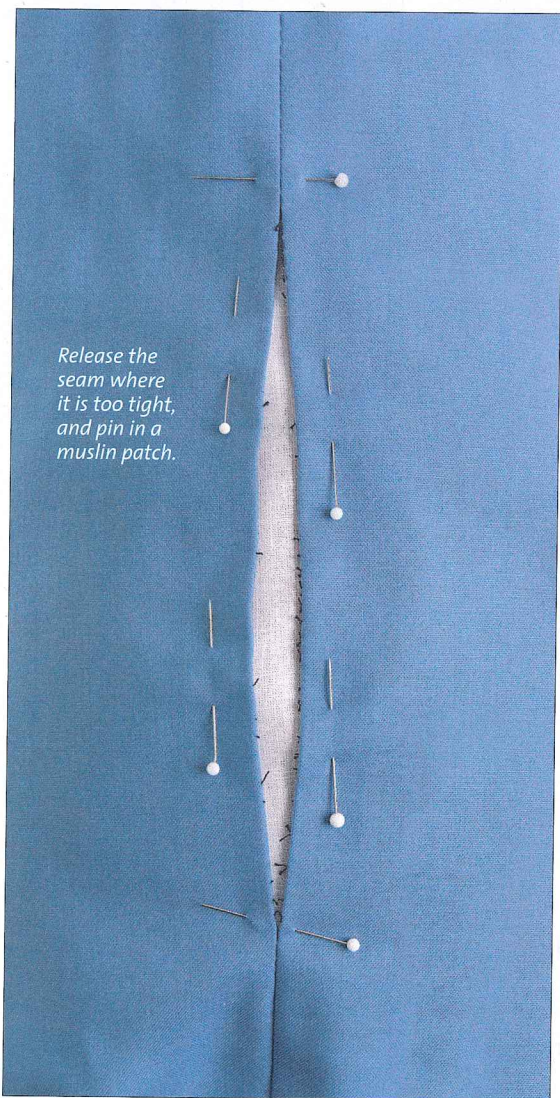
2 Assemble the muslin. Use machine basting for easy removal later. Sew the long vertical seams on the original seamline, leaving the extralarge seam allowance. Press the seam allowances open, and turn the garment right side out.

PIN-FIT THE MUSLIN

Open the center-front seam enough to pull on the pants, and then pin the opening closed for the fitting. It's easiest to make fit adjustments at a vertical seamline.

Evaluate the fit, working from the waist to the hem. Determine any tight or large areas. Move around the body, and address issues on the front and the back as you progress to the hem. Fit along any vertical seamlines, but keep the seams balanced.

Too tight: If an area is tight, open a vertical seam just in that area. Allow the seam to spread as needed to fit. When the shape is good and the fit is right, add a patch of muslin under the opening. Pin it to the spread seamlines along the folded edges.



Too loose: If an area is too large, pinch out the excess fabric along the seamline where the looseness occurs. Pin so that an equal amount is removed from both sides of the seam.

Asymmetry: If your body is symmetrical, you can fit one leg and correct the pattern pieces for cutting in a double layer. If your body is asymmetrical, fit each side, and create a complete pattern with separate pieces for each side.

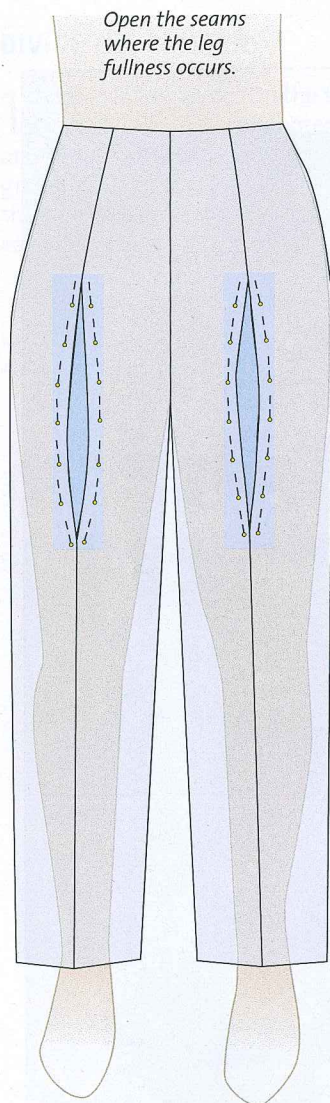


Address common fit issues

The following cases show how common fitting problems can be fixed by working with the vertical seams in the muslin.

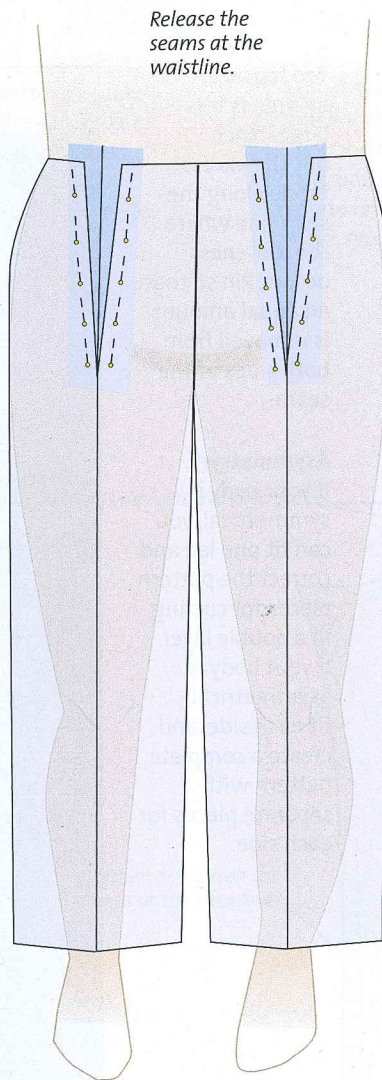
ATHLETIC LEG

The front thigh curves forward beyond the stomach. Open the front vertical seams from the thigh crease down toward the knee. Insert a muslin patch into the opening and pin to secure.



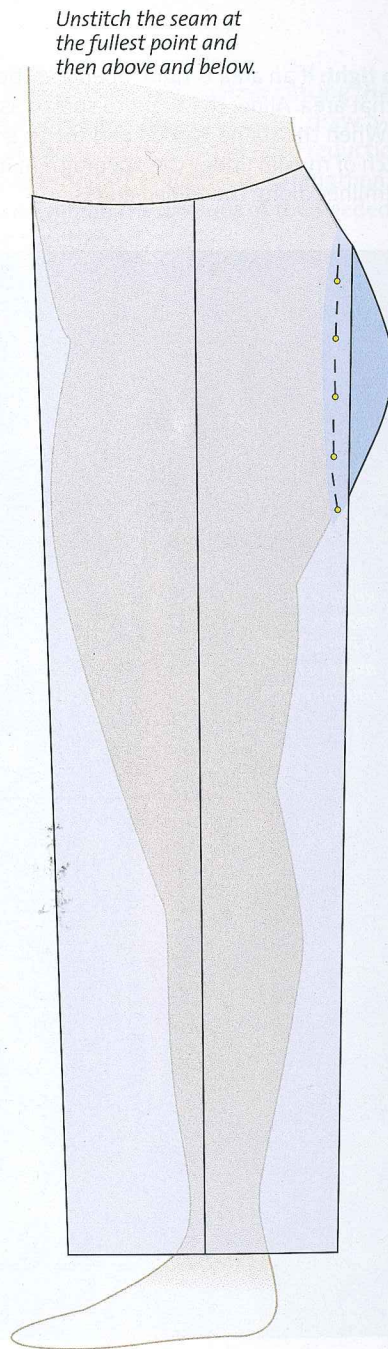
FULL TUMMY

Open the front vertical seams starting at the waistline and working down until the top edge fits without strain. You can add up to 3½ inches across the front. You can gain more space by eliminating the waist darts. If you need more, add to the front side seams.



PROMINENT DERRIÈRE

Open the vertical seams on the back at the fullest part of the seat, and then up and down from that level until the muslin settles into place with no strain lines. Pin a muslin patch inside the opening.



tip

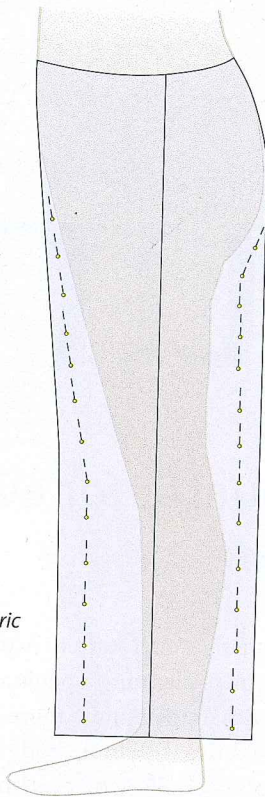
Hip-fitting trick. If you have extrawide hips and a normal to small waist, you may have trouble pulling pants over your hips. Instead of making a center-front fly zipper, add a zipper to each of the front vertical seams as a style feature. They can end slightly lower on the legs for even more ease in stepping into your pants.

THIN OR FULL LEGS

For thin legs, pin out at all vertical seams if the pant legs are very large. Start from where the fit is incorrect and blend back to the original seamline where the pants fit correctly. The width of adjoining seam allowances must remain equal or the pant leg might spiral.

For fuller legs, open the center vertical seams from the crotch to the knee. Pin in a muslin patch.

Pin out excess fabric to fit thin legs.

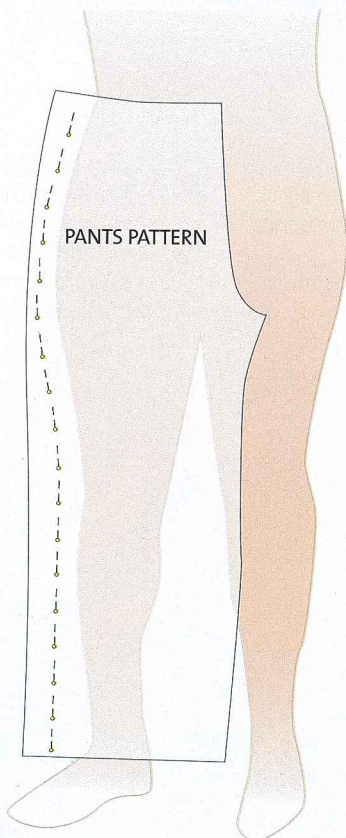


CURVY OR STRAIGHT HIPS

If the pants pattern has curvy side seams at hip level but your hips are straight, pin out the side-seam curves to fit your hipline. If your hips are broad, open the side seam where it is tight, and let the seam open naturally. Then pin a muslin patch under the open space.

If you need to straighten or reduce the pant width significantly, adjust the pattern first. Pin the hip shape before you split the pattern in half; this helps to keep the grainline centered.

Remove excess width from the pattern before adding the vertical seamline.



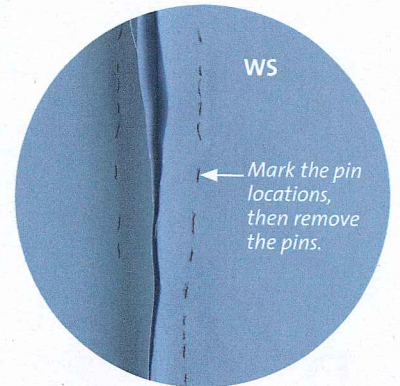
Transfer the changes

After you've completed the muslin fitting, mark the muslin and transfer the changes to the original pattern. Remember that you may need to reduce and enlarge on the same pattern piece.

REDUCE THE PATTERN

1 Mark the pin locations on the garment's wrong side. Then dismantle the muslin.

2 Trace the marks to the original pattern. Pin the muslin to the pattern along the grainlines. With a tracing wheel and dressmaker's carbon, copy the newly shaped seamlines to the pattern.



ENLARGE THE PATTERN

1 Mark the pin locations on the muslin's right side. Then dismantle the muslin except along seams where a muslin patch has been pinned in place.

2 Split the muslin patches. On each added patch, draw a line from top to bottom, connecting the seamline above and below the patch and splitting the patch vertically.

3 Cut the patches. Leaving the patches pinned in place, cut along the lines to establish the new seamlines.

4 Adjust the pattern. Pin the muslin to the pattern, matching the grainlines. With a tracing wheel and dressmaker's carbon, trace the new seamline onto the pattern. Refine the lines as needed using a curved ruler as a guide. Add seam allowances.

