

All About Ease

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Experienced sewers, by second nature, add ease to their patterns for comfort or to make it look a certain way. They don't think about it; they just do it. Less-experienced sewers will make a pattern based on their body measurements without wearing ease and then end up with a garment that does not fit and wonder where they went wrong. This is a very common mistake that can be avoided... with ease.

Wearing ease is the difference between your actual body measurements and the finished measurements of a garment. Most garments need at least a small amount of wearing ease in order to fit around the body and permit movement. Form-fitting garments are the exception. They rarely need wearing ease. Style ease, also called design ease is additional ease that contributes to a garment's overall silhouette. Wearing and style ease both directly affect the look, style, fit, and comfort of any garment. We also have negative ease which is used for Cotehardies and other tight fitting garments but that is a different article.

If you are creating a generic tunic and trousers you have more say in how much ease you add. You need to add some ease for comfort and then additional ease to achieve a specific look. For example, Norse tunics and trousers can be worn with either just a little wearing ease or a lot depending on how you want the end garment to look and feel. If you are recreating a style that has a form-fitting shape such as Elizabethan or Tudor then you have less flexibility in your wearing ease. These silhouettes do not allow for additional wearing ease without compromising the final appearance of your garment.

I have created a basic guideline for you to use to create a simple tunic, dress, trousers, etc. Make a garment out of an inexpensive fabric the first time around so you can decide if the ease you have added is enough or too much for your personal taste. **This ease is to be added to your original body measurements before any additional math is done for patterning or seam allowance.**

Areas to Add Wearing Ease	Smaller Figure	Larger Figure
Bust/Chest	2	4
Waist/Belly/Underbelly	2	4
Hips	2	4
Thigh/Calf	2	2 - 3
Upper Arm/Forearm/Wrist	2	2

As a side note: I highly recommend that you create a personal sloper to create all of your future patterns. A sloper is your figure with minimum wearing ease. It should be snug and made of nonstretch fabric. This sloper can also be used to create your own dressmaker's doll. Women can buy a sloper pattern from just about any fabric store. You will need your bust, waist, and hip measurements to choose a pattern. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any male sloper patterns but there are some alternate patterns that could be used. Also, in the past I have created slopers for men, women, and children through draping. For more information on slopers and/or draping, please contact me at Sabine@ParagonKeep.org.