

THE COMPLETE PHOTO GUIDE TO PERFECT FITTING BY SARAH VEBLEN



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About the Author

Sarah Veblen is a custom fashion designer who focuses on teaching, creating clothing for her clientele, patternmaking and design consultation for young designers, and writing in several venues. She has a Certificate in Fashion Design from Baltimore City Community College and a BA from Stanford University. Dedicated to promoting the craft of clothing design and construction at all levels, Sarah teaches in her studio as well as other classroom venues and PatternReview.com. She has been a guest lecturer at PACC/ASDP chapter events and national educational conferences; at Threadneedle Fabrics in Essex, Vermont; for CG Garment Designs in Colchester, VT; at G Street Fabrics in Rockville, Maryland; at Calada College in San Mateo, California; and for ASG neighborhood groups in Maryland, Virginia, and California. In 2001, she launched her own Intensive Study Program in Fashion Design, developed for both home sewers and sewing professionals. With an emphasis on design, fit, and pattern development, she currently offers classes on patternmaking, working with knit fabrics, many aspects of design, and sewing techniques. Sarah has more than twenty articles and various other written contributions and garments for THREADS magazine, as well as several "how-to" videos for the THREADS website. She was one of the three designers featured in the 1999 THREADS Design Challenge, and she was the overall winner of 2008 THREADS/ASDP "Fluid Fabrics" challenge. She lives in Sparks, MD.

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Here is the ultimate reference for fitting test garments and transferring accurate adjustments to patterns! No matter what size or shape you are, wearing garments that fit perfectly makes you look and feel better. Rather than making commonly accepted changes to a commercial pattern, the method presented in this guide focuses on the way a test garment fits the body. The fabric is manipulated to improve the fit, and then those specific changes are made to the pattern. The result: patterns that fit perfectly!

With *The Complete Photo Guide to Perfect Fitting*, you'll learn:

- The importance of a fitting axis and how to use it during a fitting
- How to recognize fitting issues, such as drag lines and folds
- How to manipulate fabric to solve common and unusual fitting problems
- How to transfer the fitting changes to your pattern easily
- Basic pattern-making skills to ensure accurate alterations

See the fitting process from start to finish on basic garments, fitted on real people. Then follow fitting solutions on different body types. The lessons you learn will help you fit any body.

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on patternmaking, working with knit fabrics, many aspects of design, and sewing techniques. Sarah has more than twenty articles and various other written contributions and garments for THREADS magazine, as well as several "how-to" videos for the THREADS website. She was one of the three designers featured in the 1999 THREADS Design Challenge, and she was the overall winner of 2008 THREADS/ASDP "Fluid Fabrics" challenge. She lives in Sparks, MD.

Most helpful customer reviews

221 of 223 people found the following review helpful.

The New Gold Standard on Fit

By Nancy Robertson

Sarah Veblen has written an extraordinary book that's light year's beyond any of the other fitting books in your bookcase. I just finished reading The Complete Photo Guide to Perfect Fitting yesterday, and it's excellent in every respect -- clearly written, comprehensive and systematic with hundred of detailed photos that show every step of the way for a variety of basic pattern styles and figures.

In my five years of sewing clothes, I've picked up a fair number of fitting techniques. But like many people, I use an improvised, hit and miss approach that kind of, sort of works but doesn't give the best possible fit.

In contrast, Perfect Fitting outlines the steps we need to take in an orderly way. The process relies on sewing a series of test muslins which are revised on the body by: establishing the all-important Horizontal Balance Line (a new term for me); releasing tight seams by opening them; clipping tight necklines and armholes; remarking shoulder seams and waistlines; and pinning tucks, darts, and open and close wedges. Then in pattern work, the muslin changes are transferred back to the pattern, the revised pattern is walked and trued, and if necessary a second muslin is sewn for further fitting improvements.

Perfect Fitting concentrates on the bodice and includes all four basic styles: shoulder princess, armhole princess, side panel and darted. All the common bodice adjustments are explained and illustrated: full and small bust adjustments, forward shoulders, rounded back, sway back, etc. Armholes, set in and raglan sleeves, and skirts are also covered, again in a high level of detail. The book does include a section on basic pants fitting, though it is relatively brief.

It's quite obvious that Sarah Veblen's ability to teach rivals her ability to sew because this book conveys not just how to do something but why it needs to be done, and that leads to a deeper understanding. Sarah also stresses the importance of aesthetics in pattern fitting so the fitting changes will enhance the garment's style and the appearance of the figure.

Before Perfect Fitting was published, I read the sample pages that are posted here on amazon, and I urge you to read them, too. I was so impressed with the book, I not only bought it, I also signed up for Sarah's online Bodice/Sleeve Fitting class that starts on the patternreview.com website next week.

If you'd like to improve the fit of your garments and have the Tried and True patterns we all strive for -- the ones that skim our bodies and flatter our figures as only custom made garments can do -- I highly recommend The Complete Photo Guide to Perfect Fit.

95 of 97 people found the following review helpful.

Wonderful resource, so many photos!

By Cupcake of Destruction

This is a fantastic book. I just ordered it last week and it has already helped me advance by leaps and bounds. Within five minutes Sarah's photos and tips had answered three nagging questions. I am a beginning garment

sewer, but I have taken a few draping and patternmaking classes so I have an okay grasp of those fundamentals. I think if I were a rank beginner and not experienced at working with patterns this book would be too advanced. But it has already proven very, very helpful for me. I'm starting to work on a lot of projects where I need to create custom slopers by draping directly on duct tape dummies for out of town clients, so having these troubleshooting photos is a lifesaver. Fitting on a person is the best approach, but when your fit model can't move and tell you how things feel, a visual guide explaining so many fit issues is incredibly helpful!

I really have learned so much about fitting in just a few days. The only thing I wish was that the pants section was more comprehensive, but what is there is still very helpful. The book still gets five stars, and frankly just the tips on improving reach in the armhole are worth the price of five of these books! Not only is this helping with my work, but it makes me so excited to design some clothes for myself. Thank you, Sarah!

240 of 261 people found the following review helpful.

Narrow focus with redundant examples

By IreneDAdler

This book covers a narrow selection of fitting concepts using slopers, focusing almost exclusively on muslin draping, with only some passing mention of flat pattern work. The bulk of the pages are taken up with large photos illustrating repetitive applications of the same few techniques. The book boasts of "More than 650 large format color photos" but, to be honest, all that reflects is how bloated this book is with redundancy. It is missing a lot of information that I consider very valuable for home sewers and thus not worth the price. Ms. Veblen clearly has enormous experience and great expertise with individualized fitting, but this narrow focus on her viewpoint means that the book could turn out to be not helpful at all, depending on your personal situation.

The book starts by discussing the foundational techniques for muslin-fitting, such as proper clipping and pinning methods, and how to detect and interpret basic indicators of fitting problems, such as drag lines and fold lines. This section also includes a few pages on basic pattern manipulation as a way to record muslin alterations, such as how to use a curved ruler to blend seams, and how to walk a pattern. The second section takes up the bulk of the book and applies the basic techniques from the first section towards fitting slopers (basic garments used as the foundation on which other garments are designed) and every step is illustrated with a large photo. This section first covers the overarching procedure for fitting 6 different garments, and then focuses on the exact manipulations for different areas of the body for a couple different pattern types (e.g. bust adjustments for garments with darts, princess seams, and raglan sleeves). This section is more or less repeated exercises in the concept of "add fabric where it's tight, remove fabric where it's loose." There is a final short section (4 pages) on detail adjustments such as collars and cuffs. The book does not provide any instruction on common flat pattern manipulations because the author disapproves of using them outside the context of copying muslin changes. Lastly, this book assumes that you are always starting from a pattern with a reasonably-close bust measurement and provides no info on pattern-grading. This is unfortunate, as pattern-grading is an important skill to have, especially for people who enjoy working with vintage patterns, which are not always available in the ideal size.

My biggest critique of this book is that most of it is very redundant, and spends most of its pages repeating itself rather than teaching other techniques. It's like a book that tries to teach you math by showing you 300 different addition problems: Chapter 1 - How to solve 2+2; Chapter 2 - How to solve 2+3. Because this book dwells too much on specific examples, it leaves out too much that should be covered in a book marketed towards a general audience. If the step-by-step photo illustrations had been limited to a few examples, it still would have been enough to demonstrate and reinforce the draping concepts covered in this book, while freeing up pages that could be used to teach other things like pattern grading and flat pattern alterations.

As this book stands, it is fully useful only if you are trying to fit basic slopers. If the pattern you are trying to fit does not fall under one of the specific instances illustrated in this book, or you do not have the same figure features as the models, then the only part of the book that you will find useful is the 50 pages on the basic techniques. Those basic techniques are covered in other books that also include a large quantity of useful information that this book doesn't have, and so I don't really feel like this book brings anything new to the existing reference library. *Vogue Sewing, Revised and Updated* and *Reader's Digest's New Complete Guide to Sewing* both have fitting tutorials that cover the same basic principles, though addressed through flat pattern manipulation instead of draping. Another book that is often recommended though I have not yet read is *Fit for Real People*.

I also take issue with the almost complete absence of information on flat pattern manipulation. It is helpful that the book teaches you how to identify fitting issues by looking at the muslin, but after that, not everyone will be able to make the alterations purely through draping, nor is it always necessary. Firstly, notice that all the pictures in the book are of one person making the changes on another. Slashing and draping is a great skill to have as a professional dressmaker working on someone else, but can be difficult to do by yourself. Setting aside the author's stated disapproval of dressforms for a moment, not all home sewers even have access to a good dressform they can use for draping muslins. Sometimes, it is much easier to address a fit issue through flat pattern manipulation. Secondly, a person sewing for herself will likely have identified her figure requirements and honed in on the particular set of alterations needed, at which point those alterations can be applied to other patterns with similar sizing and styling. For both these reasons, understanding and being able to correctly apply flat pattern alterations is a very important skill for all home sewers to have and should not be dismissed outright.

One aspect of this book that is interesting (though your mileage may vary) is that it is written in the tone of one person fitting a second person, and the word "client" is used throughout. This tone might be a bit odd for a home sewer fitting herself, but it could be argued that injecting a bit of professional detachment and viewing yourself as your own client could help the sewer be more objective about her figure needs and thus achieve a better fit.

To sum up, I don't feel this book contains enough information to justify its cost for most home sewers. The range of information covered might be useful for someone who wants to be a professional dressmaker since draping is much more useful in that context, the extensive photos could help build confidence for working with a variety of different figures, and fitting slopers to a client from which to create a various garments makes more sense than fitting a bunch of different patterns. However, I would think that *Helen Armstrong's Patternmaking for Fashion Design* would be a better value for someone in that position because it not only covers making slopers, it covers pattern alterations for design as well. If you are interested in buying this book, I strongly recommend you try to borrow a copy from the library or a friend first, to see how much of it you can actually use. I fully appreciate the author's point that fit is a very complex problem and it would be impossible to give step-by-step instruction on every instance of garment fitting people might come across, but the fact that the book then devotes the majority of its pages to excruciating detail about a handful of fitting scenarios instead of trying to concisely teach you how to tackle a wider variety of scenarios severely devalues the instructional value of this book. If you have the specific fit issues that this book addresses, then this could be a great follow-along guide, but if you do not, this book is mostly repetitive photos of a handful of concepts covered in 50 pages.

See all 230 customer reviews...

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