



Mimi's Handbook for Dollmakers

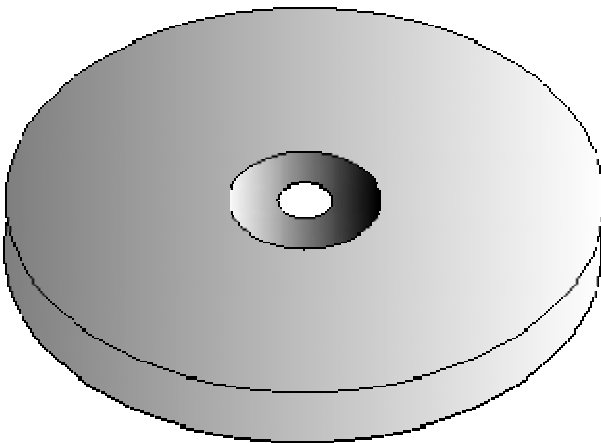
Sewing the Doll Skin

by Gloria J. "Mimi" Winer

Marking the Sewing Line

Mark the sewing line by tracing around a template with a purple air-soluble marking pen. (If you are in a humid area, mark the pieces just before you sew them.)

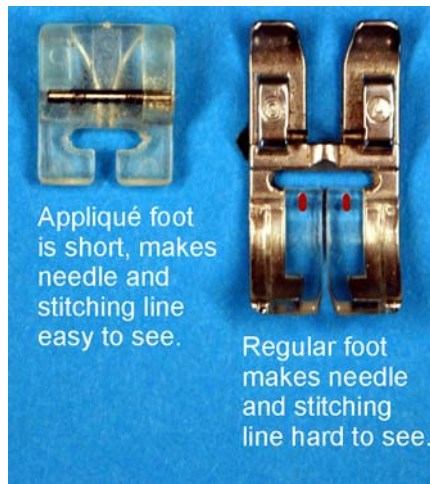
When possible, sew before you cut. If you need to cut before you sew, use a Dream Seamer (a brass button with a hole in the center) to add seam allowance by tracing around the template again with the tip of the marker in the Dream Seamer. (You can get a Dream Seamer in most quilt shops. Dritz also has a similar device available in fabric shops.)



Sew exactly on the sewing line and then cut (if you didn't cut before sewing).

Pressure Foot and Throat Cover Plate

- Use your appliqué presser foot. Some older machines have a metal foot that has one short side. This works well too. It is important you be able to see in front of the needle in order to do precision sewing.



- The Pfaff appliqué foot (shown in picture) will fit most machines that have a snap-on foot. It costs about \$6 US. It holds the fabric so tightly that nothing can slip, and it's short for better vision in front of the needle. Use the applique foot, or the metal one with one short side, so you can see the stitches.
- Use the straight stitch feed cover plate (the one with the single small hole). If you don't have one, ask your dealer to order one for you. The straight stitch feed cover plate will keep your machine from eating your fabric when rounding tiny places like fingers and toes.



- If you can't get a straight stitch feed cover plate, or while you're waiting for one, place a small piece of masking tape over each side of the wide zigzag hole (while the needle is in the down position so you know where to put the tape). Be sure to check the masking tape frequently as it comes off easily.

- If your machine is less than ten years old and is a computerized rotary-hook machine, the stitches should still be perfectly balanced. If your machine is older, or is not a computerized rotary-hook, it probably needs to have a check up by your dealer.
- If your machine winds its bobbin while in the case, it is not a rotary-hook machine.
- Non-rotary hook sewing machines have a history of skipping stitches often enough that it becomes a problem with my style of dollmaking.

For non-rotary hook sewing machines, you must use two layers of stitching on all seams; one directly on top of the other.

- I have a Pfaff 1475 that is about fifteen years old at this writing. When its stitch length is set for 1.5-2.0mm, the fabric will tear before the stitches will pop. So, I only need one stitching line.
- If your machine has a rotary-hook and perfectly balanced stitch, set it for the stitch length called for in these directions and only sew each seam once.
- Choose a thread color lighter than your fabric so the seams will not be noticeable. Darker color thread makes the seams stand out.
- I recommend using either Mettler Swiss Metrosene 100% polyester or Gutterman polyester thread. Mettler has no fuzzies on the thread which indicates a long staple, smoother and finer thread. Both brands are stronger than most other common brands. Most computerized machines do not seem to perform as well with other common brands of thread.

Pinning

Taking the time to pin carefully is important if you want a perfectly proportioned doll. (Especially for knit fabrics.)

The pins should point toward the center of the work.

I sew very slowly and carefully and do not remove the pin until the machine needle is only one or two stitches from the pin.

I never sew over the pins because hitting a pin can burr the sewing machine needle. A burred needle will cause tiny holes along the sides of the seams that will not be apparent until you are stuffing. Then it's too late to do anything about it and hours of work are wasted because the doll is ruined beyond repair.

Removing the pin too soon will cause the fabric, which has been stretched or eased, to slip and defeat the purpose of using the pin. If the fabric slips, you will wind up with an uneven and unsightly seam that is almost impossible to correct. It will distort the shape of the doll. (It's really faster to toss it out and do a new piece than to try and fix it.)

Seam Allowance

Trim to about 1/8 (2mm) except between fingers and around the ears and genitals where the trim is closer.

Trouble Areas

Sew slowly and carefully, especially around fingers and ears. If your machine has a feature that makes it stop with the needle down, use it — it will help you turn your work accurately without creating a glitch. Be careful not to catch fabric in the seams. This happens most often around the torso sides, at the shoulder, and with the foot sole at the back of the heel.

Double Sewing

All seams should be double sewn for strength. After sewing each seam, stitch exactly on top of the first line of stitches. Sew the second time on the opposite side of the fabric.