

# Sewing Plaids with the AcuFeed System

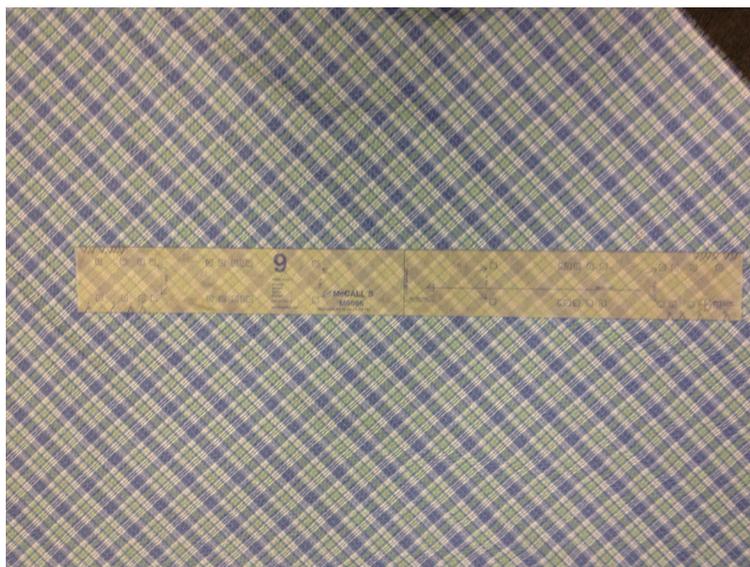
By Sam Fung

Plaids are a timeless classic in garments. Taking extra care when cutting out the pattern and using the AcuFeed system will produce perfectly matched seams.

If you have never sewn plaids before, then choose your pattern carefully. A pattern with curved seams may not look visually appealing. Avoid curved style lines such as princess seams and patterns with asymmetrical piecing or slanted hems. Patterns that don't work well for plaids are often marked as "not suitable for plaids." This indicates that the pattern may have design lines that make it very difficult to align stripes.

If the pattern has a photograph or illustration of the garment sewn in plaid on the cover, that is a good sign that it is an acceptable pattern to use with plaid. If possible, look at the pattern instructions and note if any pieces such as the skirt are cut on the bias. The bias cut could affect the desired visual effect for the fabric, but some pattern pieces such as the button bands and cuffs can add visual interest when cut on the bias.

Plan on keeping a plaid garment simple, eliminating any extra trims or overly decorative buttons to allow the fabric to shine. A simple shift dress like we used from Butterick 4386 is a great choice. These simple designs allow for easy matching along seams with any plaid type. The shirt dress is a fun choice! The pattern pieces allow for details to highlight the plaid fabric, such as cutting the waistband of the skirt on the bias.



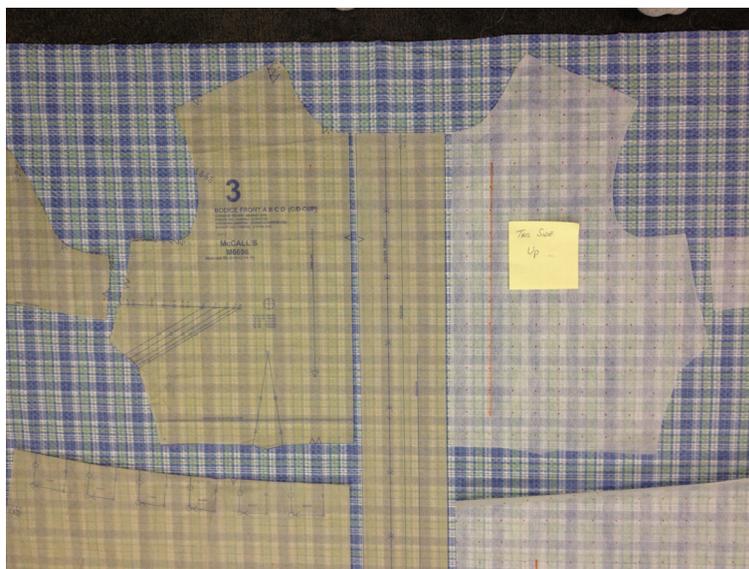
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First make a muslin fit sample before cutting into plaid fabric to make sure the fit is perfect. Making adjustments after cutting the plaid fabric may create problems with trying to match up the stripe.

Check to see if the pattern envelope states to “allow extra fabric to match plaid or stripes.” Patterns usually don’t list the exact amount of yardage needed for plaid fabric because the pattern company doesn’t know how wide your plaid repeat is so there is no way to provide specific information. Plan on buying extra plaid yardage to ensure that you have enough to correctly match each stripe.

When planning on how to lay out the fabric for the garment, the placement of the strongest colored lines in the plaid will greatly affect the appearance. Usually, a dominant line should run down the garment center front. The dominant line should also go down the center back and sleeve center and be centered on smaller pieces such as collars, cuffs and pockets.

The placement can change the way the colors in the fabric appear. When planning the cutting layout, examine the horizontal stripes as well. The bodice, skirt or pant’s plaid lines should match at the center front, center back and side seams. The plaid lines at the bodice front arm notch and front sleeve-cap notch should also match. Position these areas along the same plaid stripe to ensure that the plaid creates a continuous line around the body.



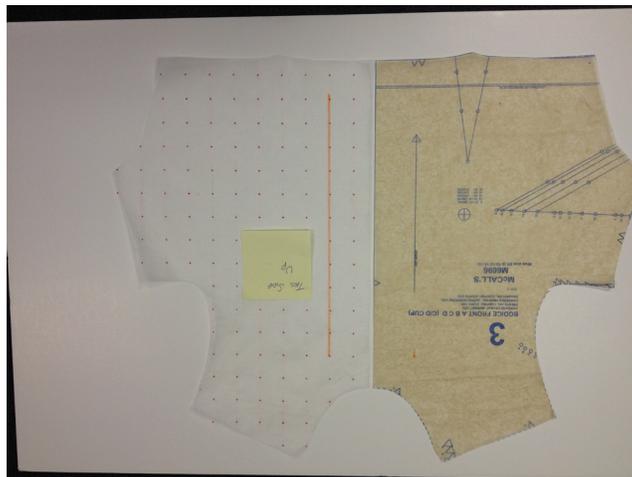
Any pattern pieces such as two pockets and two cuffs should be cut from identical plaid sections. It is not possible to match the plaid along every garment area.

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Shoulder seams often don't match and darts above the bust line may make matching impossible. It is more important for the front bodice and arms to match than the bodice side seam. The sleeve back arm likely won't align with the back bodice as well as any area with pleating or gathering. If the pattern pieces don't have the same angle such as a skirt side seam, they won't correctly pair up.

If you are new to working with plaids, Sam suggests that before you start cutting into your fabric, you first need to cut out any pattern pieces that calls for cutting it out on the fold, out of a piece of muslin or pattern paper so you can make sure that when you lay it out it is straight with the plaid.

Before cutting the pattern out of the fabric, cut any pattern piece that needs to be cut in multiples first. This will help to make sure you have the lines matched up and to keep from forgetting to flip the pattern piece over after the first piece is cut. When cutting, make sure you are cutting the fabric single layer.



Sewing plaid requires careful planning because the cutting affects how the plaid pieces match. Lay out all of the pattern pieces on the fabric before cutting if possible so that you can make sure you have the plaids matched up.



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Once you have taken the time to cut out plaid pieces, it is important to sew them together carefully so that the plaid stripes match up. Carefully pinning your garment along each strip.



When sewing the garment, make sure to use the AcuFeed system. This system allows the fabric to be fed evenly on the top and bottom, giving you the perfect match. Be sure that you are not pulling on the fabric and allow the AcuFeed to pull the fabric as it is sewing. Pulling on the fabric will cause the plaid to not match up.

