Special occasions call for special clothing. To make special clothing, you need special fabrics and new skills!

In this project, you'll make a garment or ensemble using one or more specialty fabrics for a formal or semiformal occasion. Some of these fabrics are lace; sheer or silky fabrics; sequinned fabrics; napped fabrics such as velvet or velour; and fur, suede, or leather and their imitations.

You'll learn how to:
- Choose fabric for your project
- Sew French seams and other specialty seams and finishes
- Work with one-way designs and napped fabrics
- Prevent puckered seams and skipped stitches by adjusting sewing machine tension, pressure, and needle size

Before shopping for a fabric and pattern, think about what you already have in your wardrobe and what type of occasion you'll be attending. Will you want to wear this garment more than once?

Read fashion magazines and try on garments similar to what you think you want to make. Notice the type of fabric, the style of garment, and those details that hold their shape and that seem the most flattering on you.
Choosing Pattern and Fabric

When you look for fabric, check the fiber content and care instructions carefully for all fabrics, notions, and trims. If there are or will be beads, sequins, or other surface decoration or finishes, ask your dry cleaner about the costs of caring for your garment.

Notice how many wonderful fabrics there are to choose from! Learn to recognize them, and read up on their characteristics and related sewing techniques.

Here are just a few you’ll find in fabric stores or through mail-order: velvet, velveteen, velour, satin, sateen, lace, brocade, taffeta, metallics and sequin fabrics, suede and ultrasuede, fur and furlike fabrics, chiffon, georgette, organdy, organza, and lamé.

Be aware that each type of fabric can be made from any number of fibers. These affect how it feels, how it drapes and wears, how much it costs, and how it should be cared for. For example, velvet can be made from cotton, wool, and silk as well as any number of manufactured fibers.

Notice that some special-occasion fabrics have unusual woven designs. Satin and sateen are actually types of weaves. You may see woven jacquard designs, too. Discover weaves by looking at them through a magnifying glass. How do these weaves look different from those found in a broadcloth apron, denim jeans, or a herringbone wool suit? Do the edges tend to ravel more?

If you are working with slippery, delicate, or very decorative fabrics, choose a pattern that has just a few seams and details. Some special occasion fabrics have applied designs. For example, moiré is a water-marked fabric. Care must be taken in cleaning and wearing this type of garment to prevent water from changing the pattern or removing it all together. Beads, sequins, embroidery, and other applied designs require special handling, too.

Some specialty fabrics are transparent, so you may need to attach a lining or convert faced edges to bound or self-edged areas. Select seam finishes carefully, so they don’t show through or ravel excessively. You may need a special presser foot or tear-away tissue to help you handle slippery fabrics.

Because special fabrics are often expensive, you’ll want to make a test garment out of muslin, gingham, or a fabric similar to the one you want to make (especially if it’s a knit). Many specialty fabrics cannot be altered midway through construction without damage to the fabric or the garment design.

Practice sewing details on scraps of the fabric before trying it on your final garment. Study the effects of pinning, removing stitches, and pressing on sample scraps of your fabric.

Some fabrics will need to be pinned or basted only in the seam allowance. Also, many special garments require just the right interfacing, boning, or supports to maintain their shape. Be very careful with your special fabrics, and keep hands and work area clean at all times.
Layout Activity

Beside the layouts below, list what is right and what is wrong with each one. (Answers on back page.)

1. **One-way design**
   - [Diagram of one-way design]
   - [Blank space for notes]

2. **Place pattern on bias**
   - [Diagram of pattern placement on bias]
   - [Blank space for notes]

3. **Place pattern on to conserve fabric**
   - [Diagram of pattern placement to conserve fabric]
   - [Blank space for notes]
What I learned in this project (new skills, new words)

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What I shared with others (presentations, helping other members, community service)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC OR SKILL</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NO. OF PEOPLE WHO WATCHED</th>
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Did I participate in Fashion Revue? __________

Where? _______________ When? _______________

Project story
Use this space to write about your project. What did you do? What did you enjoy doing most? Least? Tell where you wore or will wear your outfit.
Tell about the type of pattern you chose and the fiber content of your fabric(s). Attach sample swatches. Talk about the sewing resources you used, the resource people who helped you, and your group activities.
Include a photo or sketch of your final outfit, complete with accessories.
Formalwear Project Record

Name ____________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________

Age as of January 1 ____________

Club ____________________________________________

Number of years in this project ____________________________________________

Number of years in Textile Science projects ____________________________________________

Leader’s signature ____________________________________________

What I made for my project

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<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>FIBER CONTENT</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>HOURS TO MAKE</th>
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Total number of garments made this year ____________.

People who helped me and resources I used for this project

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Sharing What You've Learned
Give a presentation on a new skill, or share what you’ve learned about specialty fabrics and fibers.

Want to Know More?
Don’t be afraid to ask for help during your project. You may want to find someone with experience in making a similar type of garment. The fabric salesperson may be able to help you, and there are many books and articles to give you ideas and inspiration. Many are listed on PENpages at your county extension office.

Exhibits and Fashion Revue
Plan to model your garment or ensemble in the fashion revue and to exhibit it at your local fair or round-up. Read fashion revue rules and regulations for county, regional, and state exhibits. Your county extension office will have a current list of exhibit ideas. Don’t forget to attach a fabric label in a seam allowance or somewhere inside the garment itself. Include your name, age, 4-H club, and county on the label.

Taking the Project Again
You may want to take this project again another year. Try making a new garment or use a new specialty fabric. You may also make a special-occasion garment from a fabric with an unusual content, such as wool, or combine a woven accessory with a knitted accessory or design detail.

Prepared by Jan Scholl, associate professor of agricultural and extension education.


This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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