

Education

Making Ease Easy
by Sheri McKillop



Making Ease Easy

Ease is a term that is used frequently, however it is often misunderstood. **Official explanation:** Ease is the amount of extra inches drafted into a pattern over and above body measurements. There are two types of ease: 1) Basic ease is the amount added to a pattern for comfort, movement, sitting, standing, eating, breathing etc. 2) Design ease: this is the amount of extra inches a designer adds to a pattern to create the "look" they want.

Let's use designers X and Y as examples. Designer X decides he would like to create a romantic, soft blouse so he drafts 12" (30 cm) bust ease to the basic pattern. This is an amount he chooses to create his "look". Designer Y would like to create a tailored blouse so he only drafts 3" (7.5 cm) over and above the basic pattern. Designer X and Y have both drafted from the same size basic pattern but have added different amounts of design ease. This creates two patterns that fit very differently even if the basic size and design details such as sleeves, collar, cuffs are similar.

If you have been using standard commercial patterns you have not had the advantage of knowing how much ease is in a pattern before you purchase it. Commercial patterns have the finished measurements - bust, waist and hips - printed on the tissue. Therefore, once you have purchased the pattern and opened it up, you can determine how much ease there is over your body size by subtracting your measurement from the finished measurement on the patterns.

Unique's patterns have the advantage of indicating the amount of ease before you purchase any particular pattern (the amount of ease for each pattern is stated in the description). For example, when the description says 4" (10 cm) ease at bust and 5" (12.5 cm) ease at hips, the pattern, when it is complete, will measure 4" (10 cm) more than your bust measurement and 5" (12.5 cm) larger than your hips. If you were to complete this pattern and when standing up pulled all extra fabric to one side of the garment and pinched it, this fabric would represent the amount of ease. So, in this example, if you were able to pinch 2" (5 cm) of fabric to the side of the hip line, you are pinching double thickness which is 4" (10 cm) ease.

How are you supposed to know how much ease you prefer? Browse through your closet and find your favorite fitting outfits. Use a chart to record your preferences. Record both fabric types and measurements. Try on your favorite jackets being sure to try them on over the proper garments. Pinch the amount of fabric off to one side at bust level and measure the fabric. If you have 2.5" (6.5 cm) pinched, this is 5" (12.5 cm) total because there are two layers of fabric you are pinching. Record this as ease preference at bust for jackets. Now pinch at the hips and record this. Repeat this process for blouses, dresses, skirts, pants etc. The chart you finish with will be your personal ease chart. Although these are your preferences remember that they are not necessarily the amount of ease you require in each pattern. Now you are thinking 'what was the use in doing this exercise if it isn't the right amount?' It is the education of understanding your ease preferences and use of that knowledge that will help you choose patterns that you will be happy with in the future.

Using your ease preferences, browse the catalog and choose patterns that best reflect these ease preferences. In the options section of the catalog, #40 is the option to change the amount of ease in any pattern. This will allow you to select a pattern that has the design features you want but change the ease to reflect your preference. Before you start scrambling for the catalog and ordering ease changes, let's take the concept of ease a step further.

Let's imagine you have made the perfect pair of pants with tweed wool from a pattern with 4" (10 cm) of ease at the hip – perfect for you. So of course, you begin to make this pattern again. This time instead you choose soft, medium

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weight rayon. When you finish the pants, you may be confused because the first pair fit perfectly but this pair is "way too big". What happened? Nothing. Just different fabrics drape differently and require different amounts of ease. The tweed wool was stiff and thick; therefore, the 4" (10 cm) allowed at the hips was necessary. They hung straight and in a tailored fashion. The rayon pants appear too large as the rayon hangs softly and moves around your body requiring less fabric to fit over your body. As a rule stiffer and heavier fabrics require more ease around the body. Have I completely confused you on how much ease to have? Hang in there.

Unique's patterns are drafted with ease amounts similar to industry standards. We are often asked why we don't adjust the ease in each pattern to each individual person? This would be like reading each customer's mind. We create ease standards so you can order with confidence a pattern that will arrive with the stated ease over your base measurements. This gives you the option to change ease if you wish. We sometimes have customers that feel it is too much ease on some of the fitted patterns, however, the ease is there to allow the option of fabric-fitting for your fabric. For example, take the pants we talked about earlier. If you had tried on the rayon pants you could have pinned down the side seam and known it needed a little less ease. If you had ordered the pants again and had requested less ease it might not have been enough and the pants would have been too small.

When to fabric fit? Do this before sewing princess and side seams. Be sure all darts and design details that would take up extra fabric have been sewn or pinned. Try on the garment and if it feels too big, take in the side seams. Next, set in the sleeves and try it on again. For lower body garments try on the garment before you put the waistband on to see if the hips need adjusting. Also, try on the garment again after you stitch the waistband. Skirt and pant patterns require easing into the waistband. This requires small basting stitches in the waistline that are pulled tight to reduce the size of the waist of the garment to fit the waistband. This easing helps the garment fall softly over the roundness of tummies, seats and hips.

By now you are wondering why you have purchased patterns that fit if you have to try them on and fabric fit? Fabric fitting is just fine-tuning. This does not involve doing major alterations just minor pinning and sewing to take the garment in or out at the side seams to adapt it to your personal preference and fabric choice.

If you are trying to make a decision about a pattern's ease and still have questions, please let us know and we will do our best to help you choose patterns that are suited to your taste. ◆

To Complete Your Personal Ease Chart

1. Choose your favorite garments
2. Measure the garment at the bust, waist and hip
3. Subtract your measurements
4. The remainder number is your ease amount
5. Note the fabric type

| | Bust | Waist | Hips | Length | Fabric |
|--------------------|------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| Jacket | | | | | |
| My Measurement | | | | | |
| My Ease Preference | | | | | |
| Blouse | | | | | |
| My Measurement | | | | | |
| My Ease Preference | | | | | |
| Skirt | | | | | |
| My Measurement | | | | | |
| My Ease Preference | | | | | |
| Pant | | | | | |
| My Measurement | | | | | |
| My Ease Preference | | | | | |

NOTE: Most ease preferences can be accommodated during fabric fitting