CADTERNS 104: Ease

Ease represents the difference in measurement between your figure and a garment at the corresponding location. The ease in a garment that you are wearing now for example can be determined by the amount that you can pinch away from your figure between thumb and forefinger. A commonly accepted rule of thumb for a good fit in a garment made with woven fabric is to be able to "pinch an inch". Since the amount of fabric pinched represents two layers, pinching an inch means that two inches of ease have been included.

Ease Allotments

A certain amount of ease is necessary for simple movement including putting the garment on and taking it off. Additional ease affects the style and design lines, sometimes changing the basic silhouette and limiting the function of the garment.

In general, the smaller the amount of ease, the more rigid the appearance and the more stable the fabric ought to be. Consider a Ladieswear business suit as compared to an evening suit. The business suit will have little more ease than that needed for basic movement. Suitable fabrics include the classic suiting preferences of wool and linen. An evening suit, though it can start with the same slopers, could be lovely with additional styling ease and lighter weight, more flexible fabric.

There are however, many exceptions. For example, using stretchy fabric, some amount of ease is provided by the fabric itself. When seeking a "second skin" effect, a pattern may even require a *negative* amount of ease.

When some or all of the ease is to come from the fabric, be sure to know the amount of ease to factor in and whether the length and width of the fabric provide an equal amount of ease.

> ***Note:*** When changing ease allotments, consider each change independently. To allot the same amount of change at each location would be inappropriate if amount of stretch differs between crosswise and lengthwise grains.

Default Ease

Whenever you create a sloper, **CADTERNS** automatically applies an amount of ease by default. This default is assigned as a recommended minimum to use in the sloper chosen. Your own personal preference, the drape of the fabric used or specific function requirements of the pattern in progress may make the default ease inappropriate or simply undesirable.

All default measurements and ease values can be changed. Some changes have unexpected results which will appear on the Sloper Preview screen and can be changed before continuing.

The Sloper Definition page displays this as the Ease Description, which could also be appropriately called the Fit or the Cut. There are three descriptions from which to choose: Precise, Close and Gentle. One of these will be identified as the automatic default but can be changed by simply choosing a different description.

Precise describes the cut of a sloper drafted without ease, that is Ease = 0 cm (or 0"). This is suitable for some fabrics such as full recovery stretch fabrics, and some purposes where a second skin look or function is appropriate.

A disposable dressform as appears in the Reading Room for example, can be assembled using the torso portion of the sheath sloper, from neckline to hipline.

Close describes a sloper that fits closely to the figure and includes the minimum amount of ease recommended for that sloper. Close ease would be appropriate for most knit and flexible woven fabrics.

The amount of recovery that a stretch fabric includes should influence the amount of ease to be included in (or added to) the pattern. A different cut of sloper can and should be used for example, to style a sturdy hiking pant as compared to festive palazzo pant.

Gentle cut has *approximately* double the amount of ease that occurs in a Close cut. The Gentle cut may be an appropriate choice for sportswear garments where easy movement is a priority.

A quick way to determine your fitting preference is to measure a garment that you wear currently and for which you like the fit. When using this method it is appropriate to take some specific precautions.

- Use a relatively new garment for comparison to ensure minimal distortion from the shrinkage of laundering or from the uneven stretching of wear.

- Use a garment that is similar in weight and texture to the weight and texture of the fabric for the new garment.

Ease Modifications

An adjustment in ease may be appropriate to allow for either function or fabric. A knit fabric that does not have full recovery should be treated like a woven in sloper selection and pattern choice. If the fabric does not have full recovery (ability to return to original shape), disregard any ease adjustment for fabric. Sometimes it is appropriate to configure a sloper for a Gentle cut to avoid stretch marks such as bags at knees and elbows.

How can you determine amount of recovery in a knit or woven stretch fabric?

1. Fold a crosswise cut edge of fabric over by approximately 2.5 cm (1") in order to avoid using the cut edge.
2. Avoiding selvages, measure and mark a section of fabric identifying a 15cm (6") section.
3. Stretch the fabric along a ruler to extend the marked portion to 20cm (8") then release.

   Let the fabric relax for approximately a minute and re-measure the section marked.
4. Repeat three times at same location, recording new measurement each time.
5. Repeat three times along a lengthwise fold, avoiding selvages.

By doing this recovery test, you can determine the approximate:

- Stretch recovery level: does the stretched amount return to the original measurement?

  If it does, then record it as having full recovery, but if less than full, record as partial recovery
- Difference in recovery between length and width: is the amount of stretch and recovery the same along both length and width?
- Stretch repeat tolerance: does the stretched portion return to the same measure each time or does it change a little each time?

Consider findings from this stretch recovery test as approximate. Other things that affect fabric stretch

recovery include such things as fibre content, type of weave or knit, cleaning method and use.

Clerks from the store can provide much of this kind of information before you purchase the fabric. If they can't, they would probably be interested enough to test the general stretch and recovery test with you, one time that is, but probably not three.

Setting Length with Ease

The kneeline, because it is so easy to identify, is an ideal sloper length for both the skirt and sheath. Kneelines however, don't make very flattering hemlines. You can adjust the length up or down by modifying the ease from waist to knee.

Why modify the ease rather than simply changing the waist to knee measurement? It is a better project management technique to always leave your measurements unchanged until they actually do physically change. Flesh measurements such as waist are more likely to change than bone measurements such as waist to knee but there is logic and benefit in using one technique consistently.

Lowering a hemline can be a matter of simply adding an amount of ease that identifies how far below your knee you would like your skirt to end. You may know precisely that you prefer your skirt for example 10 cm (2") or 25cm (10") below your knee. If you don't really know, but do have a skirt or dress for which you like the hem length, measure the length of this skirt from waist to hem and apply this measurement accordingly.

Raising a hemline can be accomplished by removing ease from the waist to knee measurement. If your favourite skirt length is 10 cm (4") above your knee and your waist to knee measurement is 50 cm (20"), enter –10 cm (–4") as the ease for the waist to knee measurement.

Adding positive or negative amounts of ease at the waist to knee measurement to adjust the hemline enables you to design skirts with pre-set length. This provides you with your preferred skirt length while leaving all of your measurement in tact.

When you adjust ease beyond the amount that you require for a comfortable fit, you have entered the realm of designer ease, or fullness. To learn more about fullness, see Lesson 113: Adjust Fullness.