

Judging Clothing Projects

Revised by Wendy Hamilton¹

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Judging is necessarily a matter of opinion. But decisions should always be based on informed opinion. The judge should make every effort to make selections in accordance with established, up-to-date principles of clothing construction and fashion, even though the judge may prefer something else.

In judging clothing, the finished product is more important than the method used, except where certain methods are part of the requirements and must be taken into consideration. If the finished appearance is good, it makes little difference by which method the zipper was put in. If you were judging biscuits, could you tell whether the shortening was cut with a fork or with a pastry blender? And, if the biscuits were good, would you care?

WHEN YOU JUDGE ANY GARMENT LOOK FOR:

General Appearance

- Attractive fabric suitable for the pattern and purpose of the garment
- Well pressed and clean
- Current styling or good basic style
- Trimmings and findings attractive and easy to care for
- Pleasing color or color combination
- Attractive matching and placement of plaids or stripes
- Correct grain lines
- Thread and notions match fabric as closely as possible

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- Professional-looking finish
- Hems and facings inconspicuous from the garment's right side
- Linings, interfacings, and/or underlinings do not add excess bulk or cause unsightly wrinkling

Quality of Work

- Seam type selected according to fabric requirements using straight, even stitching with correct stitch length and tension
- Seam finish appropriate for fabric, garment, and probable care
- Ends of all seam lines secured with a neat, effective method
- Darts tapered to smooth point and firmly fastened at the point:
 - If wide darts are trimmed, they should be at least 1/2 inch wide
 - Closed darts should be pressed toward center of garment
- Pleats evenly spaced and hang straight without bulk at hemline
- Gathers evenly spaced
- Inside seams of collars, facings, necklines, bands, and cuffs graded and clipped for smooth finish
- Facing, collar, and cuff seams understitched to prevent rolling
- Underlinings, interfacings, and linings smooth and firm without appearing bulky
- Interfacing is used where buttons and buttonholes are included
- Facing and hem edges finished as fabric and garment require
- Plain seams pressed open before being crossed by another line of stitching
- Fullness at top of sleeve evenly distributed; no tucks, pleats, or gathers unless the pattern is designed for them
- Hem width even and selected according to garment; seams in hem should be graded to reduce bulk, if necessary
- Hem stitches evenly spaced and inconspicuous from outside
- Fasteners neatly and firmly attached, as fasteners require
- Belt and belt loops neatly made and sturdy
- Zipper appropriately finished and smooth
- Buttons securely sewn in place with shank, as required
- Hand stitching neat, even, and inconspicuous from the outside
- Stay tape or double stitching at waistline and double stitching in crotch seam and sleeve underarm are desirable. Crotch and sleeve seams may be trimmed

to one-half seam width below notches. Sleeve and/or crotch seams are not clipped.

- Staystitching on off-grain or bias seams is desirable if fabric requires it
- No loose threads or fraying seam edges

Garments sewn with a serger may be judged against garments sewn with a traditional sewing machine. When judging a serged garment, look for the same factors considered when judging the general appearance of the traditionally sewn garment. However, some factors must be evaluated differently when judging the construction of the serged garment. For example, seam widths will be narrow and will not be pressed open. Here are some general guidelines to follow when considering stitches and seams.

WHEN YOU JUDGE SERGER-SEWN GARMENTS LOOK FOR:

Stitches

- Correct length and choice (2, 3, 4, or 5 thread) for fabric type and garment style
- Sewn with correct length and balanced tension
- Thread color appropriate for fabric
- Stitches do not show on outside of garment (unless decorative)

Seams

- Smooth and secure with no ladders or puckering
- Seam ends secured neatly
- Seams pressed in correct direction:
 - Shoulder seams pressed toward back
 - Vertical seams pressed toward center back
 - Sleeve seam pressed toward sleeve
 - Seams in hems turned in opposite directions to prevent bulkiness
 - Seams incorporating fullness (yoke, waistline) are pressed toward smoother side
- When seams cross, seams can be turned in opposite directions to reduce bulkiness
- Seam width appropriate for fabric type and garment style

4-H CLOTHING PROJECTS

Judges should be familiar with project requirements and with any special requirements within the county.

4-Hers should be encouraged to wear garments before the fair, if they wish. Judges should disregard signs of ordinary wear. Boys and girls of 4-H age often grow so rapidly that they receive little benefit from garments kept from two to six months before they can wear them.

Score cards are available for judging 4-H garments, or similar score cards can be developed at the county or district level for general entry garments. Special requirements will vary with the project.

Special points should be given special attention when judging selected items. Below, find tips specific to selected garments. Judging score cards may be available that have special categories.

WHEN JUDGING SELECT ITEMS LOOK FOR:

Shirts

- Sturdy, easy-to-laundry fabric
- Matched/well planned use of plaids, patterns, and/or stripes
- Napped fabrics, such as corduroy, run in same direction, except where crosswise nap is used for trimming
- Correct placement of grain line
- Fasteners firmly secured and correctly spaced; buttons sewn on with a shank, if required
- Flat fell seams on shoulders turned toward sleeve. Underarm seam turned toward the back. With permanent press fabric, flat fell seams and top stitching need not be used because of possible puckering.

Aprons

- Firm, smooth, easily laundered fabric, unless strictly for party wear. Party aprons may be more impractical, but in good taste as far as color, design, and decorations are concerned.
- Work aprons of size to provide ample protection
- Simple, easy-to-laundry trimmings
- Pockets are desirable, but should not be large enough to catch on protruding objects
- Avoid large ties and bows that may catch on objects

Tailored Coats, Jackets, and Suits

- Good general appearance as in any garment
- Fabric selection appropriate for intended use
- Avoid obvious pressing resulting in a shiny appearance or seam lines that show
- Coats and jackets interfaced in the front facing, across the shoulders and chest, and in collars and turn-back cuffs
- A bias strip of lightweight fabric in hems is desirable to cushion garment hem; should extend about 1/2 inch above hem edge
- Bound or corded buttonholes with 1/8-inch welt and square corners
- Appropriate style of buttons evenly spaced and firmly attached with shank



- Set-in pockets and lined patch pockets neatly made
- Facings, collars, and cuffs rolled so that seams do not show
- Seams graded, clipped, and understitched, as needed for flat finish
- Linings caught to seam at armhole, sleeves, and underarm seams, but not so tightly that the seam pulls
- A 1/2- to 1-inch ease in linings (sleeve and hem) except in long coats, where hem may be made separately and fastened to coat hem with long bar tacks at seams. Coat linings should be 1 inch shorter than the finished coat length.
- A 1-inch pleat in back of lining at neckline neatly caught 2 or 3 inches below neckline and at waistline
- Hems inconspicuous from outside

Children's Clothing

General Appearance

- Colors suitable for a child
- Fabric design—stripes, prints, and/or plaids—in proportion to a child's size
- Matched, well-planned use of plaids, patterns, or stripes
- Washable fabric desirable, especially for small children
- Trimmings simple and easy to care for

Self-help Features

- Front openings, where possible
- Buttons and fastenings that a child can manage

Suitability for Purpose and Ease of Care

- Sturdy, easy-to-laundry fabrics for play or school
- Plenty of ease so activity is not restricted
- No frills and extra fullness that will restrict activity

Growth Features

- Ample hems and sleeve sizing and elastic at waistline are desirable

Sturdy Work Quality with No Bulkiness

- Machine and hand stitching firm
- Fasteners securely attached and plackets reinforced

JUDGING 4-H AND GENERAL ENTRY GARMENTS

When 4-H or general entry garments are entered in the fair, requirements should be given careful consideration. In the case of 4-H projects, the ability to follow instructions is an important part of the project.

General Requirements for Garments Include:

- Stay stitching on off-grain or bias seams
- Double stitching on sleeve underarms and in crotch of pants
- Shortened stitches for reinforcement at corners
- Interfacings, where necessary, for professional appearance
- Appropriate finishes on seams and facings
- Grading, clipping, and under stitching on facings, collars, tops of pockets, cuffs, and other areas, as required
- Waistline taped or double stitched for reinforcement
- Hems finished with appropriate hand stitch or machine hemming

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