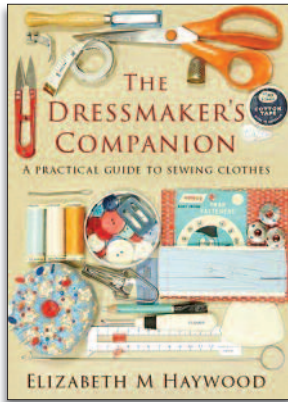


THE DRESSMAKER'S COMPANION: A Practical Guide to Sewing Clothes

by Elizabeth M. Haywood
reviewed by Joy Landeira



Out of all the sewing reference books on the bookstore shelves, you'll recognize this one by the clever picture of the bright red zipper down the spine. Patternmaker, author, and Australian Sewing Guild member Elizabeth Haywood shares her alphabetized notebook of tried and true ideas and hand-drawn illustrations of home sewing and industrial construction techniques. She includes cutting and pleating, hints for assembling garment sections (including pockets and yokes), and fabric care ideas. While not a step-by-step book for beginners, "The Dressmaker's Companion" develops skills beyond the basics with answers to questions and advice about how to get good results in a variety of applications, reminding us that there is not just one way to approach a problem. In the section on linings, for example, tricks for bagging skirt and jacket linings, turning and under-stitching a vest, and a clever method for reducing bulk on waistbands assist us in figuring out how to line garments even when a purchased pattern doesn't call for lining.

Her admonition "pressing requires a certain care, gentleness, and empathy, which you'll notice when watching someone who's really good at pressing," gives insight not only to ironing, but also to the way she approaches sewing tasks with gentleness and empathy. I am certain that I spend more time pressing than actually sewing seams together. By learning to value each step with care and gentleness, even empathy, all of us can delight in every moment of the process and enjoy our sewing time

more on our way to producing a superior product.

A few of the sections are just pure fun. Imagine a belt from one strip of leather that's plaited or braided in the middle section. How did she do that without sewing belt ends on either section? Or imagine a braided cord belt made from just one long

cord. Impossible? No, a breeze if you follow the very precise drawings. Helpful illustrations in the "Cutting" chapter answer the question "Running short of fabric?" and suggest eliminating skirt side seams, cutting pant legs one at a time, and adding pieced underarm sections to sleeves. Indeed, as the subtitle touts, this practical guide will encourage you to go beyond the pattern sheet and inspire you to be practical, gentle, and even empathetic when you take up your sewing with these thoughtful and thought-provoking applications as your companion.

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