

Sew, You're Ready to Dabble in Dart Art

We sewers all know that darts are the triangular features of a pattern that must be sewn together in order to make a 2 dimensional piece of fabric fit a 3 dimensional figure. Whether you are new to sewing or an old hand at it, chances are that you dislike darts as much as I do.

I'll never forget the excitement when I read somewhere how to turn the two bust darts into a yoke for a simple dress I wanted to make. I had to simply divide the dress front into two using the bust darts coming from the side seams as the cutting lines, add a seam allowance and there it was.

Bingo! It felt like a major win. Why hadn't I thought of that – after all sewing was my passion and that seemed so obvious?

That was where it all started. I knew that to start my new study and adventure would be working with my most dreaded (but necessary) part of the sewing pattern, the darts. The beauty of the adventure ahead meant eliminating the darts without eliminating the fitting features.

Actually, I came to realize that this wasn't a matter of eliminating darts, simply changing them into dart-equivalent features. These features included things like gathers, tucks and yokes, which found their way into a variety of usual and not so usual places in the next few projects.

But, they didn't seem as fulfilling as expected. Something was still missing. Either they were coming from the wrong place or they seemed too plain and ordinary. Then came the discovery of adding extra fullness.

The difference this made was amazing. Instead of having a simple skirt with gathers rather than darts, I now had a classic dirndl skirt gathered all the way around and ready for a waistband. The nicest part was that the hipline was shaped, leaving less bulk in the waistband.

But what if I wanted gathers or a yoke at a place that has no dart? The trick was to move the dart... not as simple as it sounds. To cut and paste a dart from one location to another, simply didn't work. What a huge discovery it was to learn that there was a *correct* way to move a dart.

The *proper* way to move a dart is to rotate it around its dart point. The dart point is in the centre of the dart circle and identifies the apex of a bulge. Dart point? Dart circle? Apex? Bulge? What was all that about?

As it turns out the apex means the highest point and a bulge refers to a mass of flesh on the figure such as the bust or the buttocks. The dart circle is drawn around the dart point and represents the approximate size of the bulge. Darts come from a seamline, point to the dart point and end at or within the dart circle.

The biggest and most important dart technique to know is how to rotate a dart. Once you are comfortable with rotating darts, you will also be able to combine two or more small darts in to one larger dart or split larger darts into two or more smaller ones.

As soon as you have as many darts as you want in the places that you want them, you can start converting them into new features at those locations and be rid of the specifically triangular darts.

BE AWARE: When you convert a dart into a dart-equivalent feature, you are still affecting the same basic triangle of fabric and portion of your figure that were dealt with by the original dart. To benefit in a more stylish or even dramatic way, you may want to reconsider ease and fullness.

Added ease and fullness are a whole separate matter that will be dealt with as Styling with Ease. Watch for it, coming soon.

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