

Working With Fake Furs

Excerpted from Claire Schaeffer's Fabric Sewing Guide.

Select a fur with a dense, resilient pile. Fold the fabric, wrong sides together. If the backing shows through, it will probably show at garment edges.

Feel the pile with your hand; then brush the fabric in all directions with your hand. It should move easily and spring back without separation. If it mats, sheds, or feels sticky, select another fabric.

Examine the backing, which may be knitted or woven. It should be firm and supple, not too soft or too stiff. If it's soft and stretchy, it can be underlined so it will hang attractively; if it is stiff and heavy, it will be difficult to sew.

A few patterns are especially designed for fake furs, but many others are suitable. Some of the many choices include coats, capes, ponchos, ruanas, blazers, bomber jackets, cardigans, vests, hats, muffs, pillows, and bedspreads.

Generally, the best looking garments are simple, uncluttered designs with interesting silhouettes. Avoid intricate details, pleats, gathers, sharp creases, and double-breasted styles. Details such as darts, tabs, yokes, buttonholes, and welts will disappear into the pile.

Read the manufacturer's care instructions carefully. Some fake furs can be machine washed and dried, some must be line dried, and a few require dry-cleaning.

Preshrink the fabric, wither by steam pressing or laundering, before cutting. To avoid matting, treat the material as a fine fabric and handle as little as possible.

When laundering, use a delicate wash cycle, mild detergent, and fabric softener in the rinse water. Roll the fabric in a terry towel to remove excess moisture. Shake vigorously and gently stretch to the original measurements. Hang over a shower rod or on a plastic hanger to dry. Use a dog brush or comb to restore the pile's fluff.

Use a nap layout. Generally long piles run down; some piles can be run horizontally; and sheared fur lookalikes such as beaver and seal can run up.

HINT: *For easier cutting, trace around the pattern pieces with a lead pencil or felt-tip pen and remove pattern.*

Spread the fabric in a single layer with the wrong side up. A double thickness is not only more difficult to cut, it's so bulky you may inadvertently increase or decrease the garment size.

Double-check to be sure there is a pair of each section before cutting. Cut carefully through the fabric backing with the shear's points. Hold the fabric up off the table, separating the fur as you cut, to avoid cutting through the pile.

HINT: *Fake furs can also be cut with a single-edged razor blade, mat knife, or Olfa Touch Knife; but I find using the tips of the shears easiest.*

Mark the fake fur using the method of your choice: pins, temporary marking pens, pencils, or chalk. And, if you're using conventional plain seams, short clips work well.

For more detailed information on sewing with fake furs, please refer to Claire Schaeffer's Sew Any Fabric, available in our Notions Dept.