

*by Amber Heck*

# **Step-By-Step Tailoring Series: Loosen those sleeves**

# Introduction

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I frequently have this issue where I find something incredible to wear and it just doesn't fit right. Either the boobs are too big and the waist fits just right, or the waist is too big and the boobs fit just right. Or perhaps the sleeves are too tight and the you can't lift your arms up without showing your belly button! The possibilities are endless in a world where clothing size is standardized.

Recently, my step-mom asked me if it was possible to make the sleeves bigger on a dress. She has been working out and was concerned that her new (and might I say amazing) muscles would make it so she wouldn't be able to wear it anymore. The answer is "yes, we can loosen those sleeves!". However, it may require a little bit of creativity and patience.

# What the heck is a gusset?

A close-up photograph of a piece of fabric with a vibrant, multi-colored floral pattern in shades of blue, red, and green on a light background. The fabric is held together by a large number of silver pins, some with white pearl heads and others with yellow or purple heads. The pins are arranged in a way that suggests the fabric is being prepared for sewing, specifically to create a gusset. A blue speech bubble with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

I AM A  
GUSSET!

# Gussets are pieces of fabric that are added to enlarge or strengthen part of a garment.

**B**asically, any piece of fabric you sew into another piece of fabric to make the area bigger or stronger can be called a gusset. People may tell you it needs to be a specific shape, like a triangle, but nah.... That's not necessary. Sometimes you just have to work with what you have!

For example, my step-mom needed more room in the shoulder and sleeve, so I took the folded fabric at the end of her sleeve (purely ornamental) and sewed it into this little hole I made.

I DID NOT CUT THIS HOLE! I painstakingly took out the stitches with my itty bitty seam ripper. If you don't have one, I highly recommend you get one. They're cheap and SUPER helpful, especially if you accidentally sew something you didn't mean to. Just take out the stitches and start over.

Here is the hole I made with the seam ripper.



Ye mighty seam ripper hiding in the corner of my picture.

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# So, what do I do?

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- Find a part of the garment that's not really being used or can be moved. OR, find a fabric that is fairly similar. Then follow these fun steps.
- Use your handy-dandy seam ripper to gently rip open that problem area. You may need to clean up the threads a little bit so they're not just stuck in the fabric.
- Loosely measure the amount of fabric you will need based on the hole you've made. This is where you'll move the fabric from another part of the garment or add new, yet similar fabric.



#1



- Pin the fabric together as best you can and sew it down.
- You can iron the area flat and sew it again if you want a cleaner look, but sometimes it's not all that necessary.
- Try it on and see if it fits the way you want it to. If not, you know how to use your seam ripper now.



#2

#3



#4



#5



TAH-DAH!! YOU DID IT!

Remember, it's okay to make mistakes. I make mistakes ALL THE TIME. No, seriously... I can't tell you how many times I have to re-do things or tell myself I'm going to try to make it again when I have time. This is all part of learning and each mistake helps us grow.

