

QUICK!

HOW TO HANDLE SUIT ALTERATIONS WITH EASE

Hem Suit Sleeves Resize Suit Mid Section
Resize Suit Pants



Phyllis Smith
Alterations by Phyllis

Quick!
How To Handle 3 Suit Alterations
With Ease
Hem Up Or Let Down Sleeves
Take In Or Let Out Mid Section
Pants Waist Adjustment

Phyllis Smith
Alterations by Phyllis
with

Dancing Fabrics
Stillwater, MN, USA

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SHORT
(because you're in a hurry)
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QUICK!

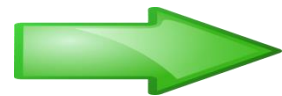
How To Hem Up or Let Down Suit Coat Sleeves

*“I just need info on
suit sleeves hemming!”*

*“Please – would somebody
just bite-size this
info for me without
a lot of introduction?”*

*“I have a deadline and I need
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If this is you, I’ve got what you need **starting on the very next page.** Let’s go, super-hero sewer!

Suit Coat Sleeves Hemming Either Up or Down

We're going to cover **Hemming Up** first.
How to **Let Down** comes later.

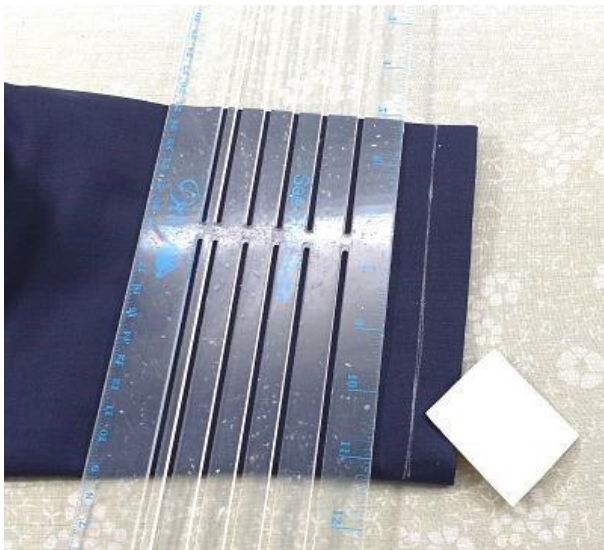
Begin by popping off the buttons with the seam ripper. If the button placket has the (not usual) fake button hole stitching, rip that out, too. If the button hole stitching surrounds a true button hole, the sleeves are going neither up nor down – the current length is where they will stay.



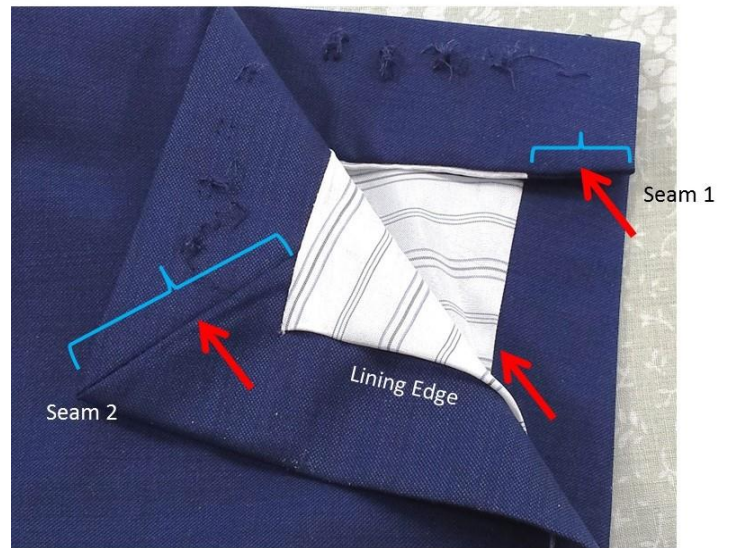
Detach buttons with nippers, seam ripper or small scissors such as embroidery scissors.



Once the buttons are off, lay on a flat surface, measure and chalk mark the amount necessary to reduce the sleeve length, as below. The chalk mark will be the new fold line or hem line.



Now fold back the button placket and here's what's happening --The lining edge needs to be detached.
--Seam 1 needs ripping out.
--Seam 2 is an angular seam that needs to be ripped out.



Detach the lining all the way across and up the placket sides

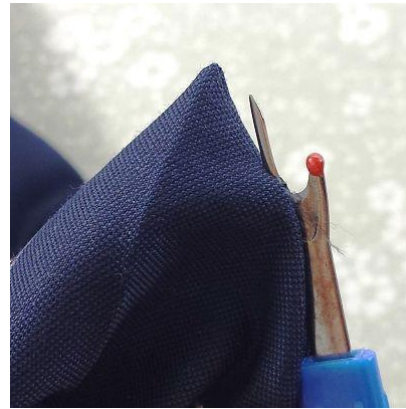
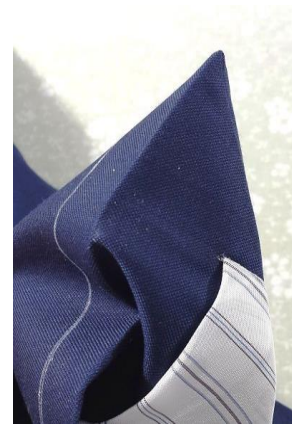


until current sleeve hem is entirely free of lining.

Release seam 1.



Release that angular seam 2.



Chalk mark the new cutting line the same width as the original. Use a sleeve board if you have one, otherwise lay on a flat surface.



Cut on the new cutting line.



Note whether there is adequate interfacing – there usually is -- but if not, you'll need to cut a strip of interfacing the width of hem line to cutting line, the length to fit and fuse or stitch on. This task is not illustrated here because there is enough.



Press the new hem line making sure to tuck the lining well back into the sleeve out of the way.



Press the new line all the way around. It's not a problem if the old hem line won't press out.



In the same way as was
done for the sleeve,
measure and mark both
new fold/hem and cutting
lines on the lining.



Press well.



Time to re-sew seam 1. At the new fold line, bend the fabric back in the opposite direction, or right sides together. Use a pin to mark if it helps. Then pin into place and sew.



Turn seam 1 right side out into a sharp point and press.



Time to deal with seam 2, perhaps the trickiest part of sleeve hemming.



Compare the different locations of old seam 2 point to new seam 2 point.

With a pin, if it helps, mark the new seam 2 point.





Finger crease or press a new angle.

Place a corresponding pin each in the new press / hem lines for guidance.



Fold the left side down and inward over the pin placement.

Then pin in place.



Fold the right side down
and inward over the pin
placement and pin
into place.

Thread a needle
single strand.





Sew with the intention
to make the point
as sharp as possible.

Take the unfinished sleeve and measure the distance between the sleeve hem and lining attachment. Chalk that measurement on the sleeve in progress.



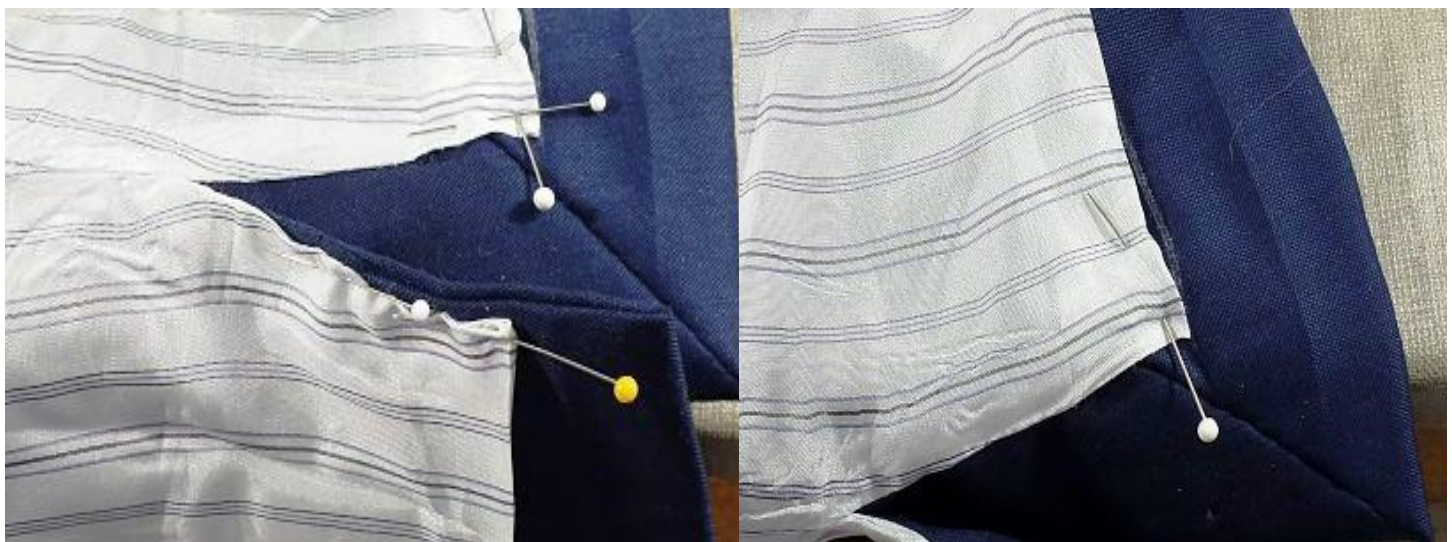
Lay the lining hem up to the chalk mark and pin in place.



With fingertips, crease out about $1/4'' - 3/8''$ extra to allow for “give” so that the lining is not too tight against the fabric.



Continue pinning lining into place.



Continue pinning lining into place. Before hand sewing the lining into place, lay out the entire sleeve inside out and check for placket edge matching.



If off a bit, hard steam press into place and pin down until fabric cools in a minute or two.

Turn wrong side out once again and hand sew lining into place.



Final look at stitched and pressed lining into place.



Home stretch – replace buttons. Lay sleeves alongside each other. Note that old tailor’s chalk marks may still show. Chalk mark new button placement either by eyeballing or measuring.



Pin together evenly the placket edges that have been so carefully reconstructed up to this point.



Begin sewing on the bottom button



starting from the underside where thread knot will hide under the lining.

Try, if possible, to sew only through the top layers and not the lining. This takes practice.



Continue on, snaking the needle and thread between sleeve and lining layers to the lower left of each chalk mark. Surface the needle, catch the next button,

thread through holes diagonally, pierce needle down and under for 2 passes on each criss-cross.



Continue on through all 4 buttons. Tie off as desired. Perhaps create a shank on the last button and hide knot in the shank.



Finished! Good job!



Suit Coat Sleeves Hemming Either Up or Down Here's How To **Let Down**.

It may not be possible to let suit coat sleeves with button placket down. It all depends on what's hiding within that sleeve hem and if enough material has been left by the manufacturer to do so. Rip out to the point where it can be assessed whether there's an adequate amount of fabric to let down. To find out if there's enough, rip out the lining near the angle seam enough to free the area, then pick out the angle seam and pull it out as in the photo below.



This photo shows that there is enough fabric to let down. Often the manufacturer trims the fabric severely at an angle as the pencil shows, and even shorter. This means there probably is not enough to let down as much as desired because the fabric must form a pointed right angle.

If there's enough fabric for the angle seam, release all as in previous pages until it's time to use a sleeve board (if available, otherwise lay on a flat surface) and mark the new fold line or hem line.

The photo below illustrates a solid line for shortening, the dashed line illustrates for lengthening – somewhere below the original hem line.



In conclusion, follow all the steps as for shortening suit coat sleeves except for:

- Assess if there's enough fabric inside the angle seam as shown above.
- Chalk mark the new sleeve and lining hems below (not above) the original hem lines as shown above.

There! You did it! Aren't you glad you're finished! Good job, Super-Hero Sewist!

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How To Take In Or Let Out Suit Coats

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Suit Coat Slimming or Letting Out

We're going to cover in large part taking in with insight into how to let out along the way.

Lots of folks don't care for over-sized suit coats, whether men or women, so knowing how to "slimify" (my fun coined word) or letting out for comfort is useful to know for the experienced home sewist and crucial for the alterations specialist to master.



Begin by looking at the back of the suit.

There are 3 back seams, 2 extending down from the shoulder seams and a center seam.



Often there are vents, sometimes not. Whichever seams are NOT vented are the ones to take in or let out.

Have the subject in the suit coat, pin closed the vent(s) after the front buttons have been buttoned closed.



Pin out all the excess desired.

Take the jacket off the subject and evaluate for evenness of pinning and adjust pins as necessary until confident of uniformity.

Mark from pin to pin with chalk.

Mark both sides of the pin.
One side will be marked
with a long mark, the
other side 2 dots.



Taper to a point at the
shoulder blade where
determined.

Here are both seams well
marked uniformly.

Now make a point of
placing a pin in each chalk
mark from the top or coat
through the lining
underneath and chalk
mark the lining.





Transfer all the chalk marks just made to the lining below by sticking a pin through each chalk mark on the coat through the lining and mark.

Detach the lining several inches beyond the seam in question both directions for as easy access as possible into tight quarters.



Pull inside out until you reach the wrong side at the shoulder blade to see how much seam allowance you have, especially in the instance of letting out.

Hopefully there's enough to let out, and even if only a smidge, use your best judgment how close to get to the raw edges, and then let out as much as possible.



Two ways to handle the coat part of the seam, since the outside chalk markings can't be seen on the wrong side. From the outside, place your hand inside under the chalk marks and “pinch and pin.”

Pinch tightly enough and then carefully flip wrong side out and pin at your thumbnail.





Continue on with “pinch and pin” all the way up and down the seam at chalk marks.



Otherwise, simply transfer chalk marks to the underside by placing a pin in each chalk mark, turning wrong side out...



...and chalk marking.



For the task of letting out, simply assess how much seam allowance there is and run a new seam in the narrow area of the seam allowance.

Now it's a matter of sewing from pin to pin, chalk mark to chalk mark.





Remember the chalk marks you made on the outside of the lining? Just as with the coat, either “pinch and pin” or transfer chalk marks to the wrong side of the lining.

Once all coat and lining seams have been stitched, trim and clip slightly any curves.

If you have a sleeve board, use it to press flat the new seams.



Lining seam allowance can be pressed in one direction (usually toward the center).



Coat seam should have all old stitching removed, spread and pressed open. This is fairly easy to do at the bottom.

Pressing gets harder further up toward the shoulder blade,



so turn the coat right side up on the sleeve board and insert the hand and feel your way to finger press open and hold flat

Then steam press.
You'll get the hang of it.



Finally, reposition
the loose lining,
pin it, and
hand sew it down.

That's it! You're finished!
Good job!



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How To Take In Or Let Out Suit Pants

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Taking In & Letting Out Men's Pants Waist

Let's cover **Taking In** first. How to **Let Out** comes later.



Determine how loose pants are by grasping or “pinching” the excess right at the back waistband while subject is in front of the mirror.

It's usually too bulky to pin here, so you must measure how much excess there is.

No need to “pinch” in the rest of the seam as that would not usually be appropriate with a stranger or mere acquaintance. The natural curve of the seam is guidance enough.

First Let’s begin by looking at the rear seam. If there’s a belt loop, remove it with the seam ripper.



On a different pair of pants, see how there’s a continuous seam on through the waistband.



If only manufacturers would make women's pants in this same way with a seam in the waistband. You'll see shortly how slick this is.

Now look at this inside out. Release the white waistband facing over the back seam. Do this all the way in until you have freed the entire continuous seam through the waistband



Waistband facings are attached in many and various ways besides that shown below; suffice to say, the objective is to get it all released.



If it's tight quarters -- and often is right where the waistband meets the pants -- release as much on either side of the rear seam as possible to be able to get in there with the machine.

In this case, the two nearby beltloops had to be loosened to free up the area.



See how much more room there is now to grasp the seam and pin it. Waist reduction needs to be 2-1/4" total, so 1-1/8" on each side of the existing seam.



This is what's so slick, the continuous seam run, rather than having to deal with the waistband separately, as in women's pants

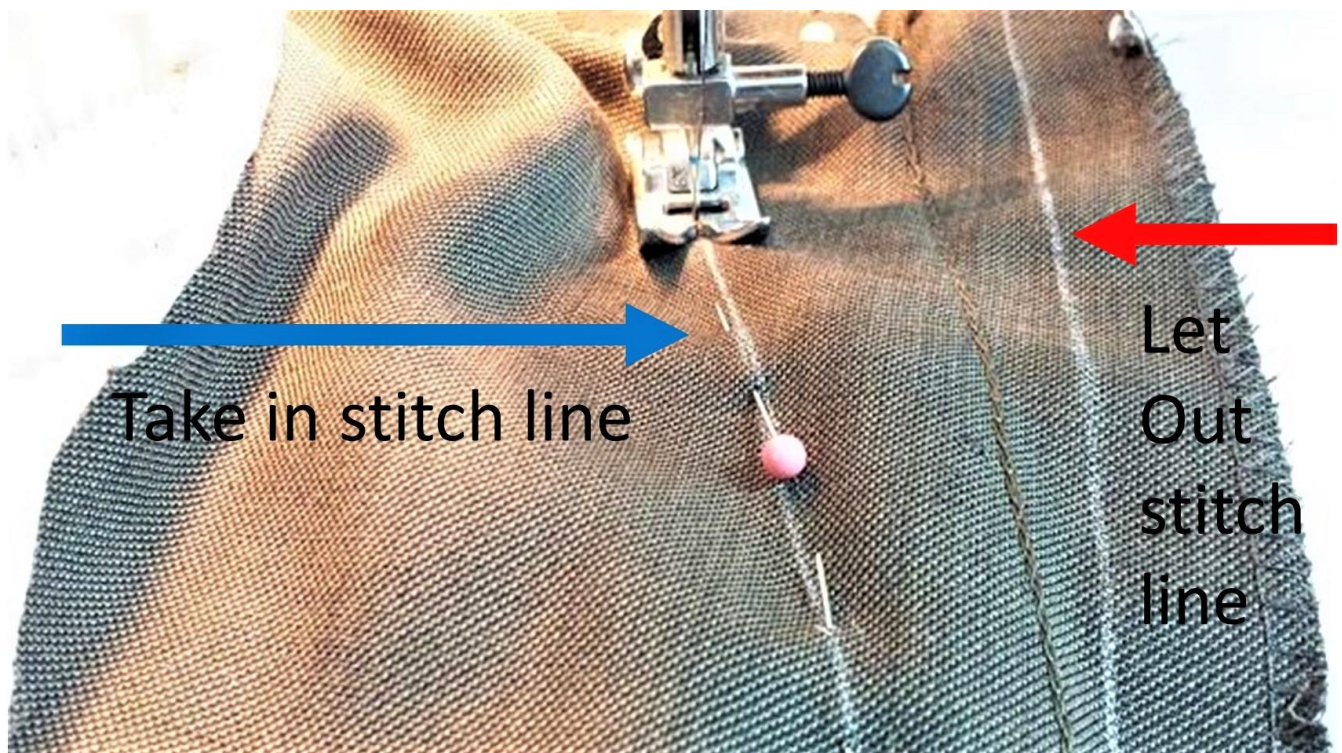
Chalk the sewing line. With practice, you'll be able to skip chalking and simply measure and pin, sewing from pin to pin.

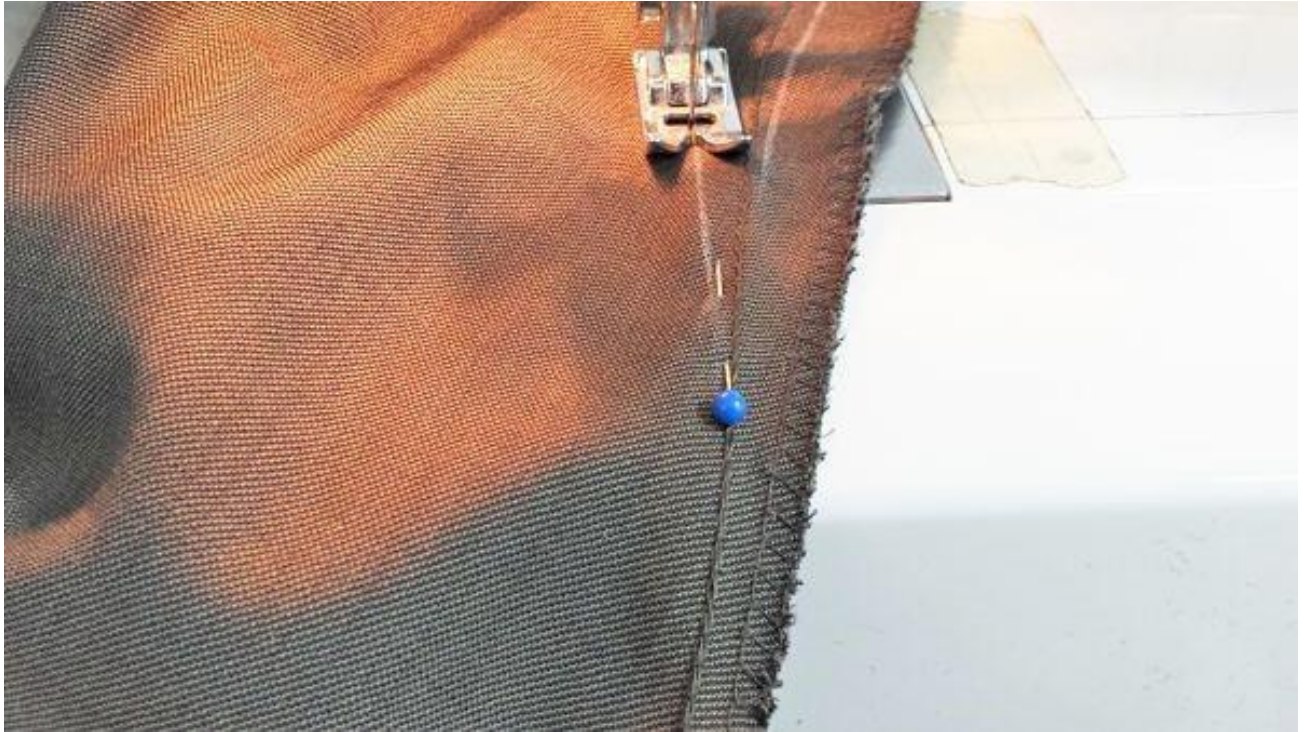


Pin the sewing line taking care to match evenly where the waistband meets the pants.



Time to sew a continuous line from waistband and down tapering and disappearing stitches into the original seam stitching closer to the crotch.





Check that you came out evenly at the waistband.



Run a second line of stitching on top or very close to the one just sewn for reinforcement.

Trim excess seam before ripping out old stitching. That way you'll have less old stitching to rip out.





At least pink the trimmed seam, ideally zig-zag the edge or serge.

Usually you can chain stitch unravel the old commercial seam stitching. Otherwise rip out old seam line as you would any other type of stitching.

Wrong side out, press the seam open flat.

Now stitch-in-the-ditch the waistband down. No need to put it all back the same way you found it, unless you want to.



Reattach any removed belt loops, usually by topstitching them back on as it is often not possible to sew them on as originally.

Letting Out

If pants are too tight to zip up comfortably, let out as much as possible even up to as narrow as a quarter inch seam if necessary. That's a tiny seam but can be done. Be sure to double stitch the new seam.

Since all is dependent on how much seam allowance there is and the fact that it's impossible to measure, you'll need to use logic or intuition, whichever works best for you, to determine how much to let out.

If pants can be zipped and only somewhat uncomfortable, let out 1 to 1-1/2" total.

Do everything the same as for taking in except that you are working on the opposite side of the original seam as shown in the chalk line above the original seam (not pinned).



Later, you'll need to very carefully remove old seam line stitches and steam press to remove old stitch holes because the area you've let out will show.

That's it! You're finished! Good job!