

Dart Design

Move a basic fitting element for original style

BY ANNIE O'CONNOR

We often think of darts as merely tools to fit a garment. However, with a little creativity, they become much more. It's easy to change simple bust and waist darts by relocating them into stylish, one-of-a-kind design elements.

Using flat-pattern design methods, I'll show you how to combine or relocate darts to give your garments a new look. The basic process for moving darts is: Find and circle the bust point; decide where you want to place the new dart; cut the new dart open, and close the original dart or darts. To make this process foolproof, always keep the pattern flat. This clearly shows if the transferred dart fullness was accounted for accurately.

Before you alter darts on your final garment pattern, try these techniques on a half-scale pattern. This enables you to work out the design stress-free and learn how to manipulate darts. You'll have fun and enjoy the creative process.

Annie O'Connor is a Threads assistant editor.

The bust and waist darts on McCall's 5972 were transferred and combined into elegant angled waistline darts.



Darting from here to there

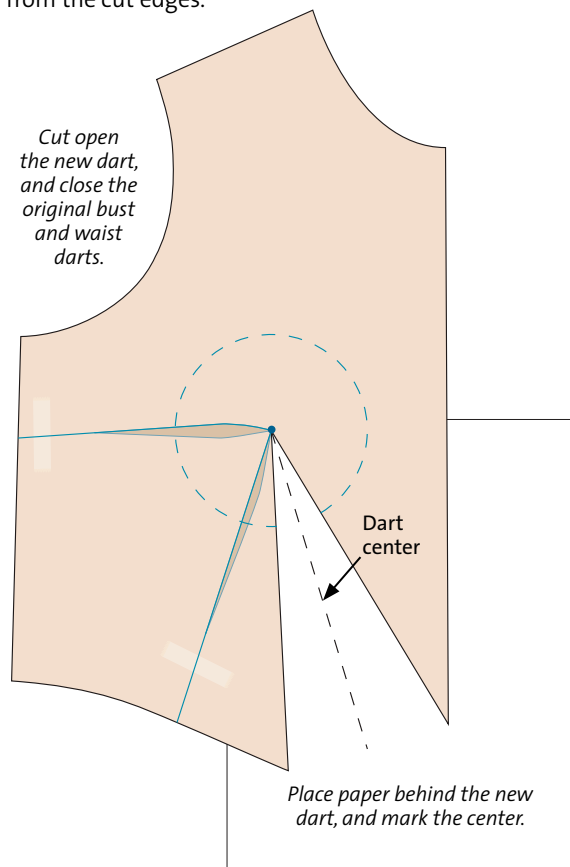
To transfer a dart to a new place, start with a pattern that has darts and fits you well, as this process is for design, not fit. You can move one or both darts to new locations, or combine them into a single, larger dart as shown here.

1 Mark the bust point (the fullest area of the bust) on the pattern. To determine this point, extend a horizontal line from the bust dart's top leg and a vertical line from the waist dart's center. The two lines intersect at the bust point. Note: The bust point may already be marked on your pattern. With a compass, draw the bust circle from the bust point using a radius of 1½ inches for a 30- to 35-inch bust or 2 inches for a bust of 36 inches or more.

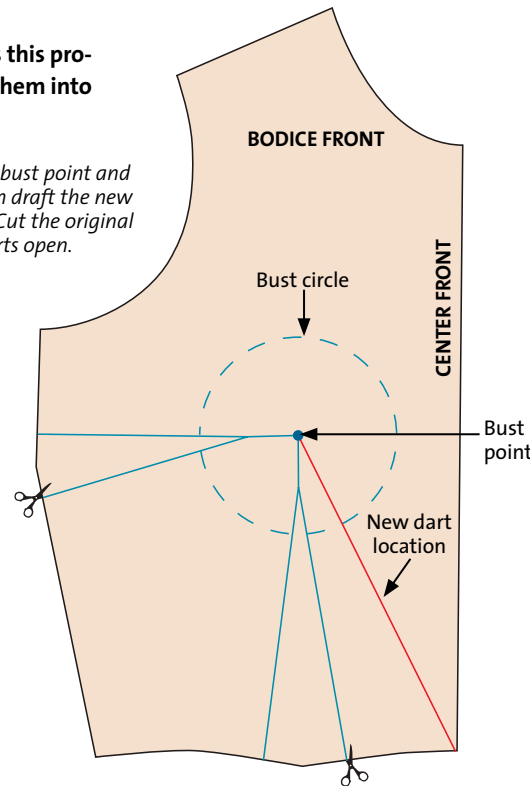
2 Draw a line or lines marking the new dart locations. Start from any seam, and end at the bust point. You can mark one or multiple lines for one or more darts.

3 Open the original darts. Cut along the bust darts' lower leg, and continue from the dart point to the bust point. On the waist dart, cut along the leg closest to the center front, and continue to the bust point.

4 Cut along the new dart lines, and then close and tape the original darts. This transfers the dart fullness to the new dart location(s). Note that when closing the dart, a small portion of pattern paper overlaps near the bust point. Place pattern paper behind the new dart opening. Find the opening's center by measuring and marking an equal distance from the cut edges.

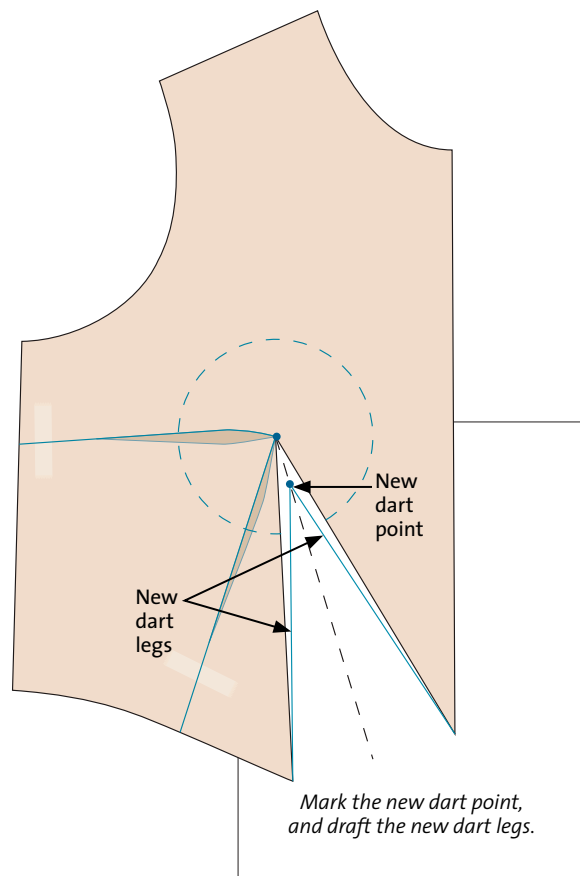


Mark the bust point and circle, then draft the new dart line. Cut the original darts open.



5 Determine the new dart point. All fitting darts must end within the bust circle and not extend beyond the bust point. The style and number of darts establishes the best dart point location. A single dart (when the bust and waist darts are combined) should end close to the bust point; multiple darts should end farther away, closer to the bust circle.

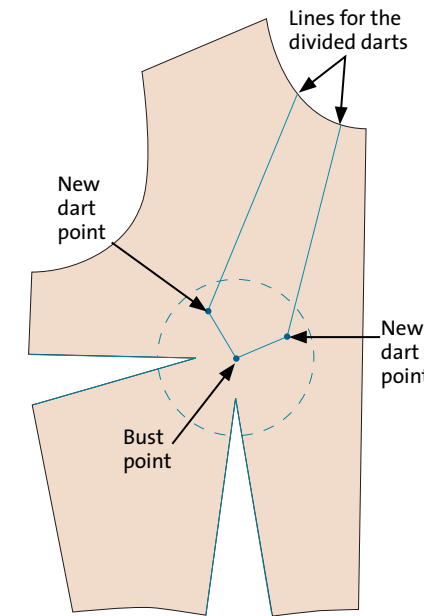
6 Draft the new dart legs. Connect the new dart's edges from the seamline to the new dart point. This is the finished new dart.



Divided darts

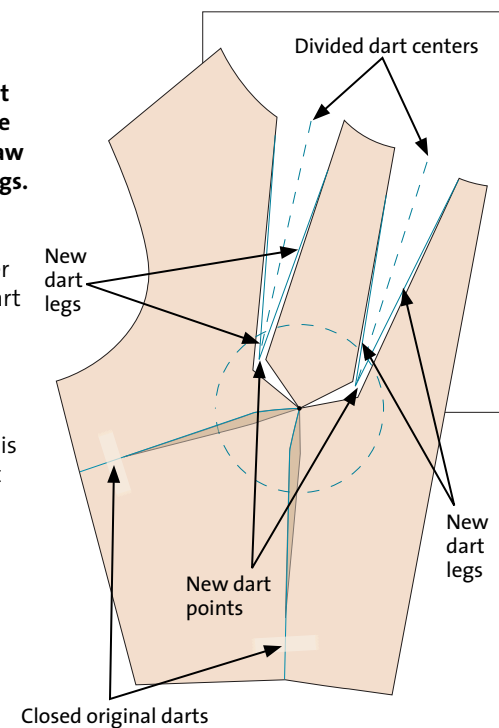
Now that you know how to relocate a dart, you can get creative. Divided darts result from splitting the dart control into two or more smaller darts. Generally, this is done after combining the bust and waist darts into one dart. Divided darts typically start from the waistline or neckline and can either radiate or be parallel.

1 Determine the new divided dart locations. Draw the new dart lines from the seam or edge, and stop within the bust circle at your desired dart points' location. Each new point should be at least ½ inch from the bust point. Connect the new dart points to the bust point. This creates a V shape between the new dart points to the bust point.



2 Open the new darts by cutting along the new lines to the bust point. A portion of the pattern between the new darts will remain connected only at the bust point, once you close the original darts as described on the facing page (see steps 3 and 4).

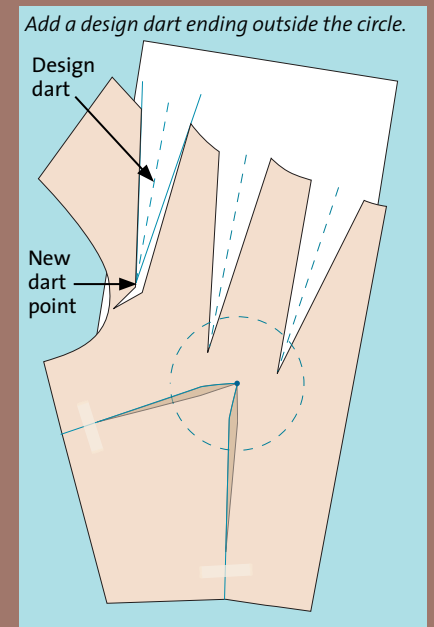
3 Determine the new dart points, mark the centers, and draw the new dart legs. Note: There is a small amount of pattern paper between the dart points and the bust point that is released to allow for these new darts. This is an insignificant amount and is normal.



DARTS FOR EMBELLISHMENT

Design darts end outside the bust circle and are added for looks, not fit. They usually finish a series of darts.

Add design darts after you've drafted the fitting darts. Mark the design dart location. Draw a line from a seam or edge to the new dart point, and connect to the nearest seam at an angle greater than 90 degrees. Cut along the line up to the seam and spread open. Back with paper, and draft the dart legs.



Four fit darts and two design darts create this neckline sunburst design on Simplicity 8523.



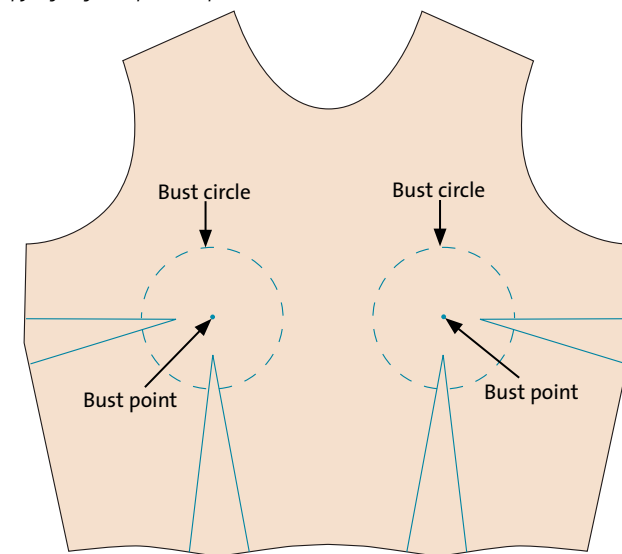


Curved asymmetric darts

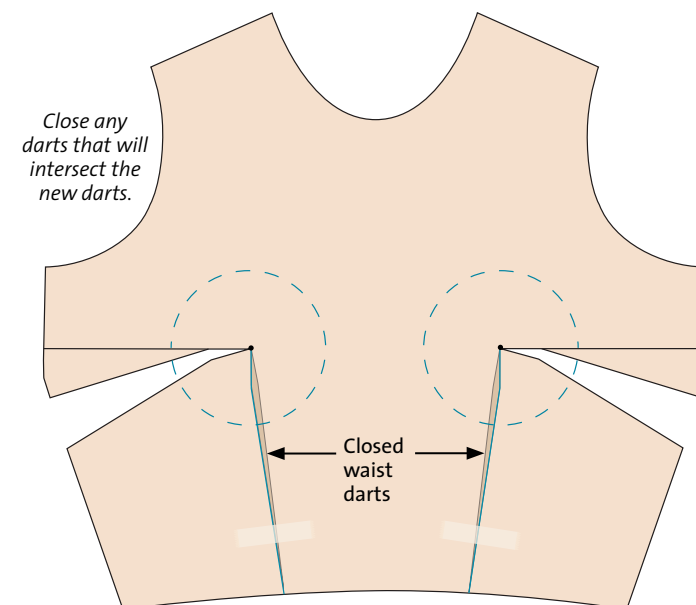
Add interest to a garment by replacing the traditional darts with curved asymmetric darts.

1 Using pattern paper, trace a full pattern piece. Mark the bust points and circles, as well as the original bust and waistline darts.

Copy a full front pattern piece.



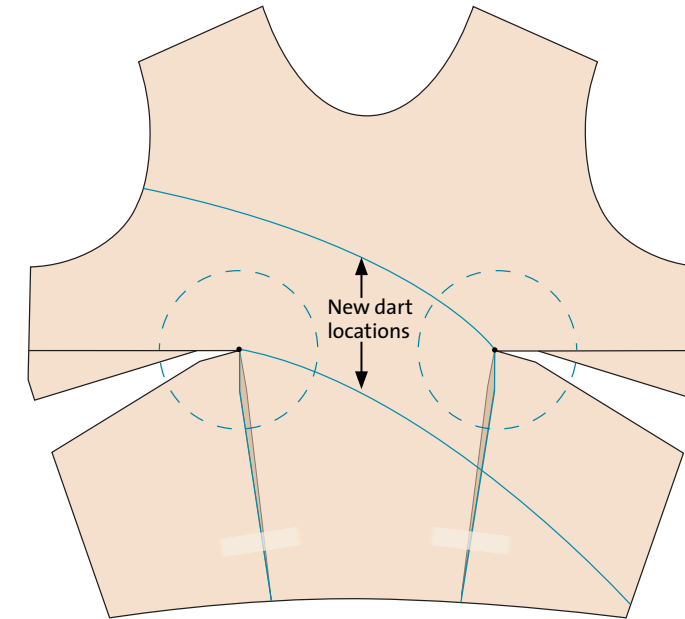
2 Close any darts that your new design will cross over, and transfer their fullness to the unaffected darts. In the design shown, one of the new darts will cross over a waistline dart, so close both waistline darts and allow their fullness to move to the bust darts by cutting them open. If a new dart placement intersects the bust and waistline darts, move their dart control to a temporary dart location not affected by the new dart or darts (such as the shoulder or armscye).



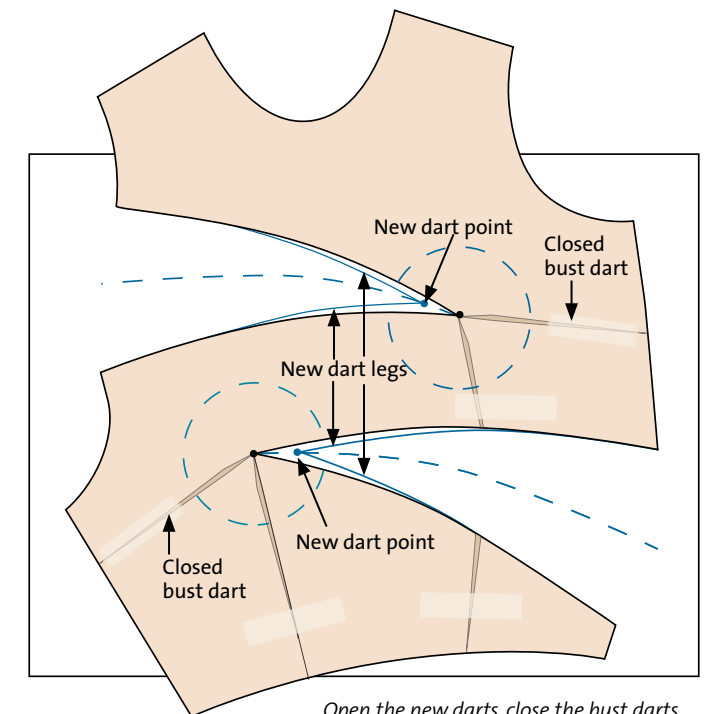
Asymmetric darts reinvent the bodice of McCall's 5972. The skirt darts are converted to an asymmetric dart using the same principles.

3 Draft the new asymmetric darts. For the design shown, I used a curved line. Using a French curve as a guide, draw from the desired seamline to the bust point on the opposite front side. Use tape to mark the exact curve on your French curve to ensure that you use the same curve for each new drafted line.

Use a French curve to draft the new dart locations.

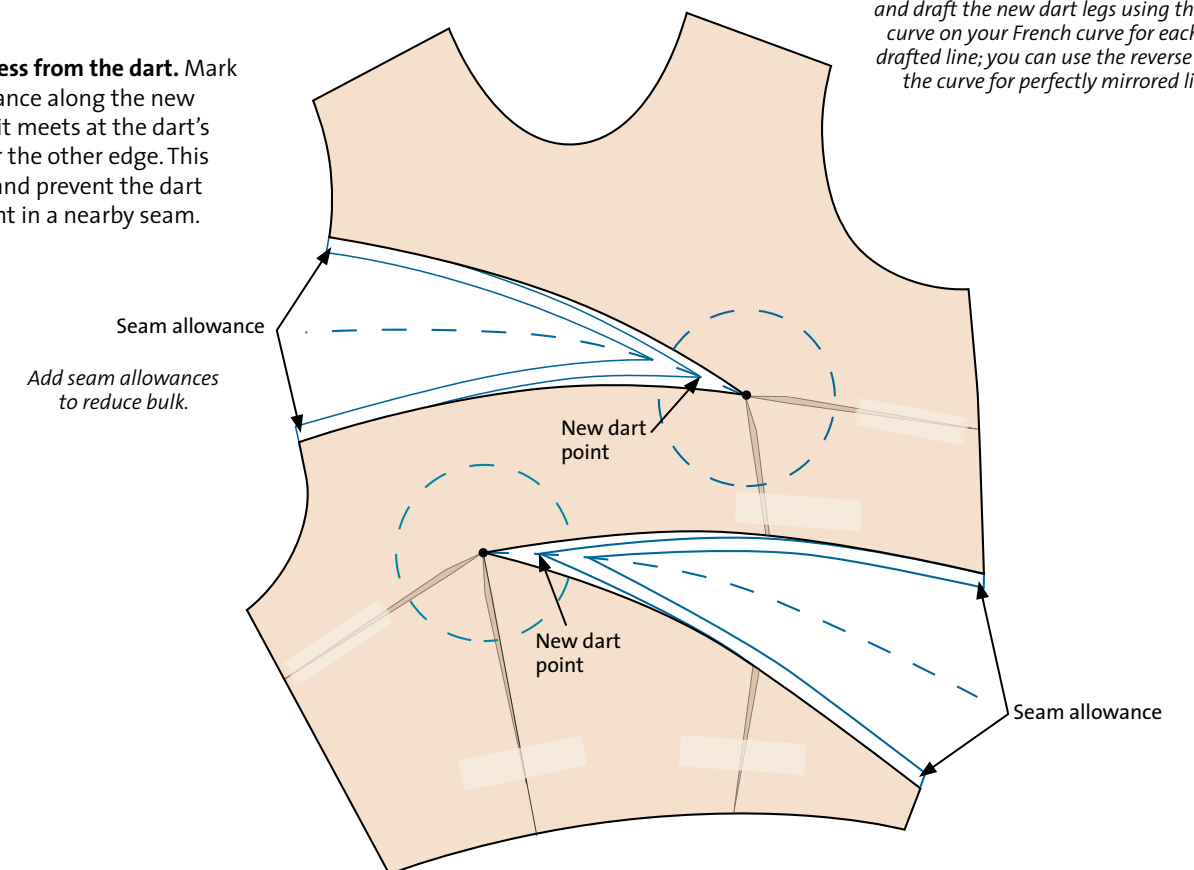


4 Open the new darts, and close the original or temporary darts. Place paper behind the new open dart location. Mark the new dart point locations. Use the taped area on the French curve to mark the dart's center and the new dart legs.



Open the new darts, close the bust darts, and draft the new dart legs using the same curve on your French curve for each new drafted line; you can use the reverse side of the curve for perfectly mirrored lines.

5 Eliminate excess from the dart. Mark a seam allowance along the new dart's edge until it meets at the dart's center. Repeat for the other edge. This will reduce bulk and prevent the dart from being caught in a nearby seam.



Photos: (p. 43; p. 45, right; p. 46 left) Jack Deutsch, stylist; Jessica Saa, hair and makeup; Clelia Bergonzoli/UtopiaNYC.com. Illustrations: Rosann Berry. Styling credits: (p. 43) earrings—Jones New York (Macy's.com), necklace—(Anthropologie.com), bracelets—(BananaRepublic.com); (p. 45) pants—Paige (Anthropologie.com); (p. 46) earrings—Kenneth Cole (Macy's.com), bracelets—(BananaRepublic.com)