

THIRTY STITCHES

Dot Valcourt's 30-day method for making cheap clothes fit like couture

Never held a needle? In 30 days, make a \$40 jacket look like \$400.

"Fit is the only luxury you can't buy, darling."



DOT VALCOURT



Dot Valcourt, at home in Paris, hemming a pair of trousers the way she has for fifty years.

“Fit is the only luxury you can’t buy, darling.”

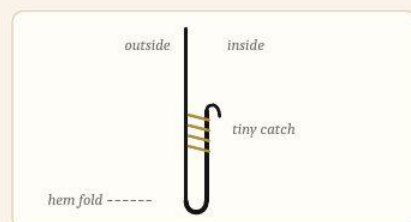
The Invisible Hem

Rule: If they can see the stitch, you have told them the price.

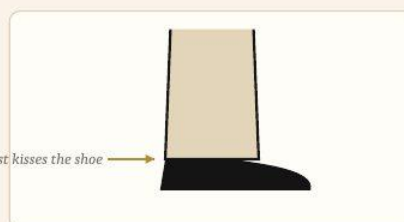
Darling, the first thing I look at is not your face. It is your trouser hem. A hem puddling over the shoe says “off the rack.” A hem that kisses the top of the shoe and shows no stitching from the outside says “made for me.” The difference is about forty minutes and one stitch you will learn today.

You need: trousers that are too long, the shoes you’ll wear with them, pins, chalk or soap, matching thread, a needle, an iron

Time: 40 minutes



Cross-section: fold, then tiny catches



Mark it wearing the shoes



From outside: nothing to see

- 1. Mark it wearing the shoes.** Put on the trousers and the shoes. Fold the excess under until the hem just touches the top of your shoe at the front. Pin. Do both legs; they are rarely the same, and neither are you.
- 2. Measure your allowance.** Turn them inside out. Chalk the fold line, then measure about 4cm (1.5 inches) below it and cut away anything longer. A deeper hem hangs better. A skimpy one flips.
- 3. Finish the raw edge.** Fold the cut edge under by 1cm and press it flat. This is Day 5 earning its keep.
- 4. Fold and press.** Fold up along the chalk line. Press hard. Pin every 10cm.
- 5. The stitch.** Single thread, knot hidden inside the fold. Catch one or two threads of the trouser just above the hem, so tiny it barely exists. Slide the needle inside the fold for 1cm and come out. Repeat all the way round. Don’t pull tight. Tight thread puckers, and puckers gossip.
- 6. Press again.** From the inside, then turn them right side out.

Dot’s warning: Most women hem barefoot in front of the mirror. The trousers then live their whole life with shoes on and are too short forever. Shoes first, always.

The test: Look at the outside from arm’s length. If you can find your stitches, take smaller bites next time. Not this time. This time you are finished.

The Tailor’s Bill: Trouser hem: often around \$15 to \$25. Write down what you just kept: \$_____

☐ **Done** **What I noticed:** _____