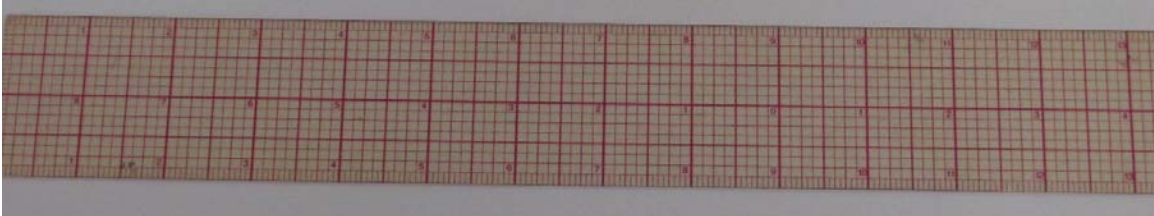


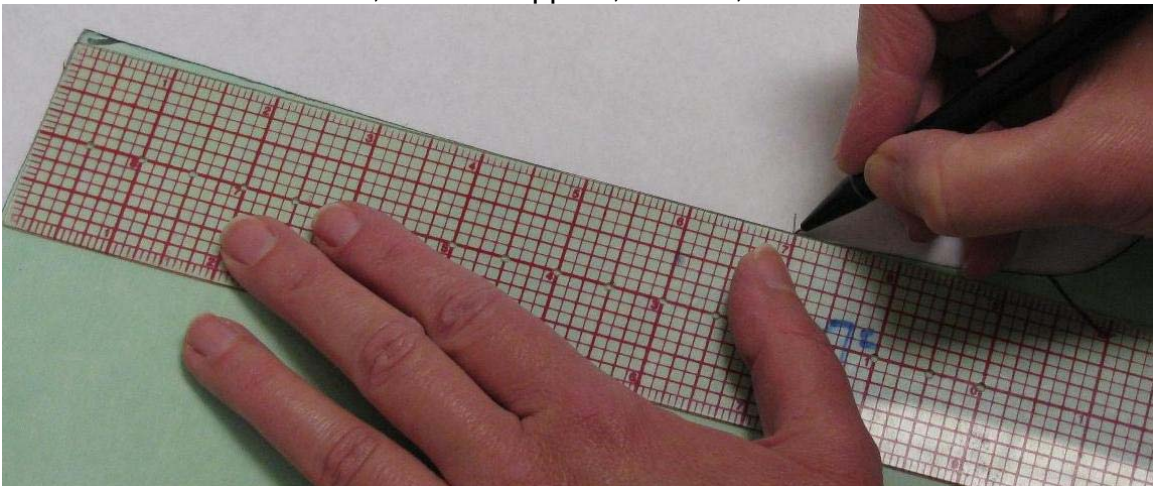
What Can You Do With a See-through Ruler?

By Elizabeth White, [TC]²

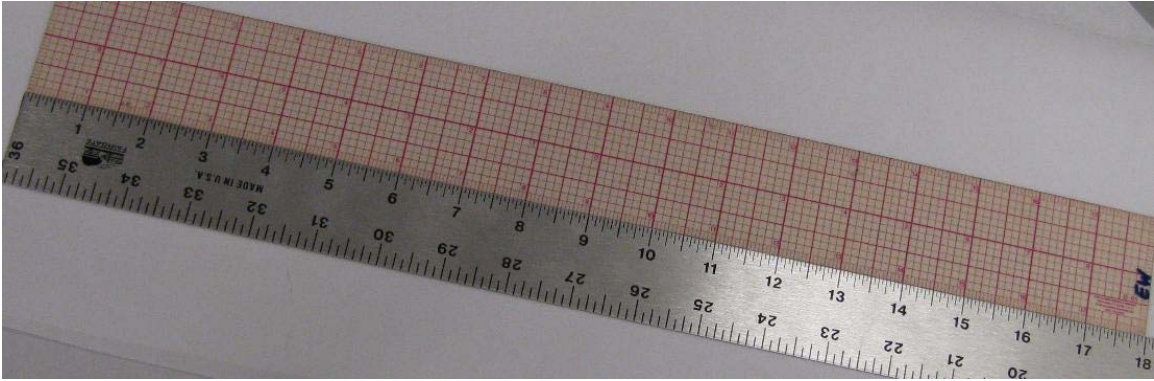
A flexible, plastic see-through ruler is one of the most common tools used by patternmakers. I was introduced to this tool in a patternmaking course in college. As I started using the tool for patternmaking exercises, I was surprised to learn how user-friendly the tool was for many types of tasks.



Of course, it is useful for basic measuring tasks. But since it is see-through, I can see all the prior markings as references when I measure. It can be used to find the center of an open span, such as a dart at a seam line. It can be used to mark locations of closures, such as zippers, buttons, and buttonholes.



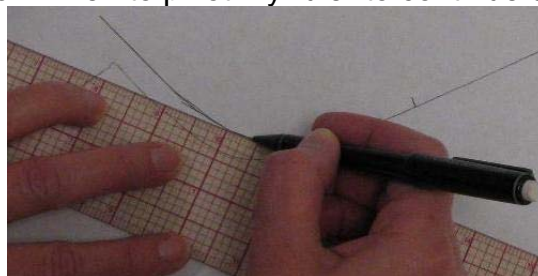
For working with garments, I often use a see-through ruler to measure the depths of pleats and tucks. It is also useful for measuring between styling features. However, if the measurement is to be used for a quality control application where accuracy is important, I check my ruler to a metal ruler. I want to confirm that the see-through ruler has not warped such that measurements would not be accurate.

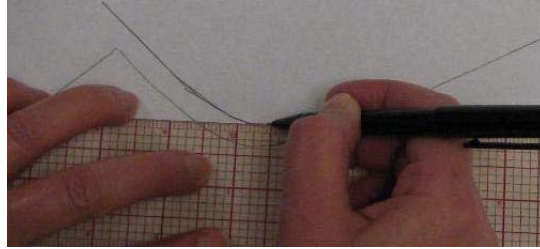


Because the ruler is printed with a grid, it can be used to square from an existing line to draw lines used for matching stripes across a seam. For pattern drafting, reference lines for locations of body landmarks, such as waist and hip, can be easily marked and drawn perpendicular to a sideseam length. When drawing a perpendicular line, it is best to align with a thinner ruler line instead of a thicker one to make sure that the new line is actually 90 degrees from the old one.

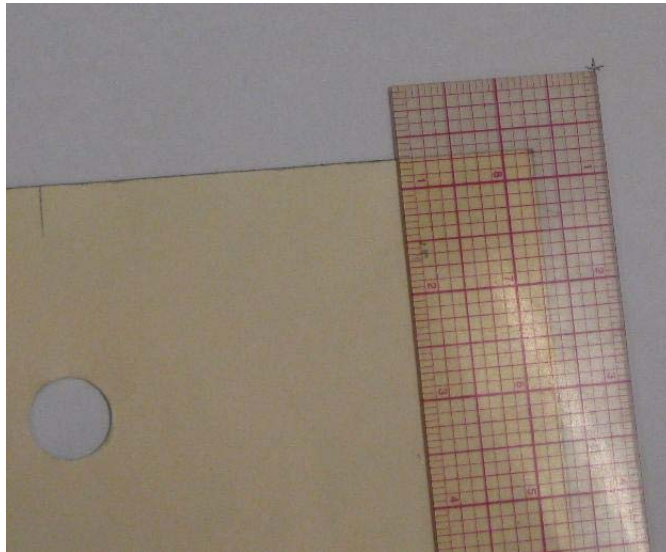


I can draw seam allowances at a particular distance from either a sewline or cutline without having to measure twice, once in the horizontal direction, once in the vertical direction, and then connect the dots. This functionality is especially helpful when drawing the seam allowance for a curved line. Since I can measure in two directions at one time, I could easily see if my new line would be parallel to my original line to know when to pivot my ruler to continue drawing the line.

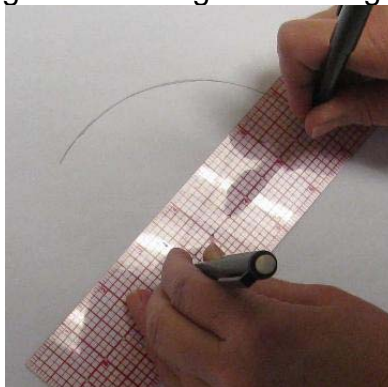




If I need to grade manually without a grading machine, I can take advantage of measuring in two directions at once when cross marking the location of a grade point on a new size.



If the ruler has small holes spaced at certain increments, it can be used as a compass to draw circles or arcs. Some products have restrictions on the tightness of a corner radius for sewing, so the ruler can be used to check those corners before the pattern goes to cutting and sewing.



As I have used my see-through rulers over the years, I have found lots more uses for the rulers for other tasks. I have used my rulers for marking the placement of closet shelf anchors and wall hangings, centering all kinds of designs and lettering, determining the sizes of clothing patches and paper signs,

drawing curtain contours, etc. Notice that I mentioned using several rulers – I have different sizes (2" x 18", 1" x 12", 1" x 6") to handle space and scale of specific applications. Searching the internet for see-through rulers will yield many paper and fabric websites where different variations of see-through rulers are recommended along with instructions for their use.

Since the see-through ruler is such a versatile tool, please let me know if you have found some practical ways to use this tool by commenting on the form in this link: [\[TC\]²](#)

Elizabeth White assists and instructs companies in the utilization of product development tools through [TC]² seminars and consulting services. See-through rulers are used in exercises in the Pattern Development, Grading for Fit, Fit for Retailers, and How to Build a Tech Pack seminars.

October 2011