

Being a Tailor: My Math Profession

Ezat Gulla

BEFORE YOU READ: Consider these vocabulary words: tailor, stitch, fabric, pattern, adjust, and tension. Do you sew for your family? What do you measure?

I am a tailor. Math is very important in my work. I need math to make clothes.

For example, a tape measure is an important tool for a tailor. I use a tape measure to measure the customer. Some people are smaller. Other people are larger. So it is important to measure the person to get the perfect fit. I also need to measure the fabric.

I need math to make clothes.

I do not want to waste fabric. Fabric is not cheap. I do not use any patterns. I just measure.

I also have to think about math when I adjust the knobs on the sewing machine. For example, I can choose the length of the stitch. The normal length is 2.4 millimeters, but I can adjust that to be longer or shorter. I also have to adjust the tension of the thread. If I do not



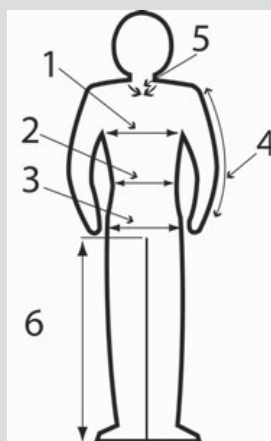
A tailor makes and repairs clothes. Here is the author, Ezat Gulla, working at her sewing machine.

adjust the tension, the machine will not work well.

I also use math to shop for fabric. If the fabric is on sale, I use math to figure out the sale price.

Finally, if I sell something, I need to use math to set my price. My price is based on the cost of fabric and the time it took for me to make it. For an Afghan dress, I need about two meters of fabric. For a shirt, I need about 1.5 meters. Some dresses are very hard, but pants and scarves are easy.

Measure This!



Each number on the image corresponds to a body part that a tailor measures.

Name the body part below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Try it! Use a tape measure to take some measurements.

AFTER YOU READ: The author talks about measuring stitches in millimeters and measuring fabric in meters. She is using the metric system. In the U.S., we use the metric system to measure some things (such as grams of medicine or liters of soda) and “U.S. customary units” for other things (such as pounds of meat or gallons of milk). Name more items and how we measure them.

Ezat Gulla is a student at the IRIS Mother & Child ESOL Program in New Haven, CT. She is from Afghanistan. Her mother taught her to sew when she was ten years old. Ezat would like to work as a tailor in the U.S., but she wants to learn more English because it is important to talk with the customers about specific styles. Right now, she is happy making clothes for her family and friends. She especially likes to make Afghan dresses for her daughters.