How to shorten and lengthen jacket or coat sleeves

YOU WILL NEED

✓ Tape measure
✓ Tailor’s chalk
✓ Scissors
✓ Seam ripper
✓ Sewing machine
✓ Thread to match your garment

DIFFICULTY

ADVANCED

METHOD

1. Try the jacket/coat on to determine how much you need to shorten the sleeves. Remember to allow for when the arm is bent.

2. Remove any buttons on the cuffs and put aside.

3. Using the seam ripper, unpick the cuff seam.

4. Ensure the cuffs are laid flat, then use tailor’s chalk to mark how much to shorten the sleeves – above the original cuff fold line.

5. For the hem allowance, draw on another line 5cm below the line you’ve just done.

6. Carefully cut off the excess sleeve length. Avoid cutting the lining fabric at this stage – pull it up into the sleeve out of the way.

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Make a mitred corner.

Here’s how:

- Fold the line you’ve just cut up onto the seam line you marked. Fold the raw edge of the corner down to make a diagonal line, then mark along this diagonal line with the tailor’s chalk.
- Fold the cuff hem back on itself on the hem fold line. Find the corner point and put the sewing machine needle in. Ensure the diagonal lines you’ve drawn on both sides are joined up, then sew along the line you’ve just marked.
- Put your finger in to the point of the triangle and turn it through, then push the corner out so you get a nice tight right angle.
- Repeat Steps 7–9 for the other side of the cuff, ensuring the finished cuff is the same length.

Pin the two sides of the cuff together through all layers. On the inside, hold the two sides of the cuff hem allowance together and tack using a few machine-tacking stitches to reinforce.

As it’s been cut, stitch the inside of the arm seam at the bottom to reinforce it, again using a few machine stitches.

Shorten the lining.

Pull the lining to the bottom of the sleeve. Mark and then cut the lining to the same length as the bottom of the sleeve. Again, as it’s just been cut, you’ll need to sew a few reinforcing stitches on the lining seam to reinforce it.

Join the lining to the jacket by:

- Turning the sleeve inside out. Carefully open up the sleeve lining seam halfway up the arm, using the stitch ripper.
TO LENGTHEN A JACKET SLEEVE

Follow the step-by-step guide above, but at Step 4, mark the amount you need to lengthen (rather than shorten) the arm below the original cuff fold line.

12. Turn the sleeve right side out. Carefully press the cuff seam and the edge of the cuff.

13. Sew the buttons in place on the cuff.

14. Sew the hole in the sleeve lining back together using a straight-stitch on the sewing machine.

15. Repeat for the other sleeve.