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The image of a fashion designer sitting up all night with a sketch pad and pencil, some fabric, a sewing machine, a model, and a dream is a romanticized one from the past. In today's fashion world, CAD (computer-aided design) has become a major part of the design process. If you're interested in becoming a fashion designer or manufacturer, it would be in your best interest to understand the importance of CAD software in today's fashion industry.

## Function

CAD stands for computer-aided design. The uses for CAD software are almost endless: to create blueprints for a building, to design a machine, or to create layouts for a fashion piece. CAD is most often used in the drafting of architecture and contracting, or technical designing by engineers. It has just recently been adopted by the fashion industry, but its popularity is growing.

## Benefits

With CAD software a designer can not only see her creations as a digital image, but also create scale on her pieces and denote dimensions of sleeves and hems. This saves time by limiting the need for tailoring and other later adjustments. Another benefit of using CAD when designing clothes is a designer can see her design on a virtual model, and then play with color and fabric choices to perfect that design.

# Significance

Fashion is already an important industry—just open any magazine. Celebrities are critiqued on which designers they favor. Designing creations digitally helps further fashion design. When runway shows are put on every day by many designers, everyone wants to see new exciting pieces. CAD saves the design time, getting the pieces from the designer to the runway faster.

Because CAD significantly streamlines the design process, it opens the doors for independent designers who may have fewer employees and therefore can't waste time and resources doing sketch after sketch. (It also opens up fashion to people who might have some good ideas about clothes but can't

draw very well.) Lastly, computer-generated sketches are more reliable and easy to interpret, reducing the chance that manufacturers will make mistakes while constructing a garment.

# Features

To address the CAD learning curve, software manufacturers have come up with several solutions. For starters, there is now a CAD software component specifically designed for fashion designers. Another useful tool is built-in tutorials to aid the transition into CAD designing. Designers can create pieces using the measurements for a particular model. These and many other features make using fashion design CAD a lot easier for the beginner.