

South Dakota State University  
**Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional  
Repository and Information Exchange**

---

SDSU Extension Circulars

SDSU Extension

---

1-1956

## A Look at Finishes

Anna Walker

Follow this and additional works at: [http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension\\_circ](http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_circ)



Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#)

---

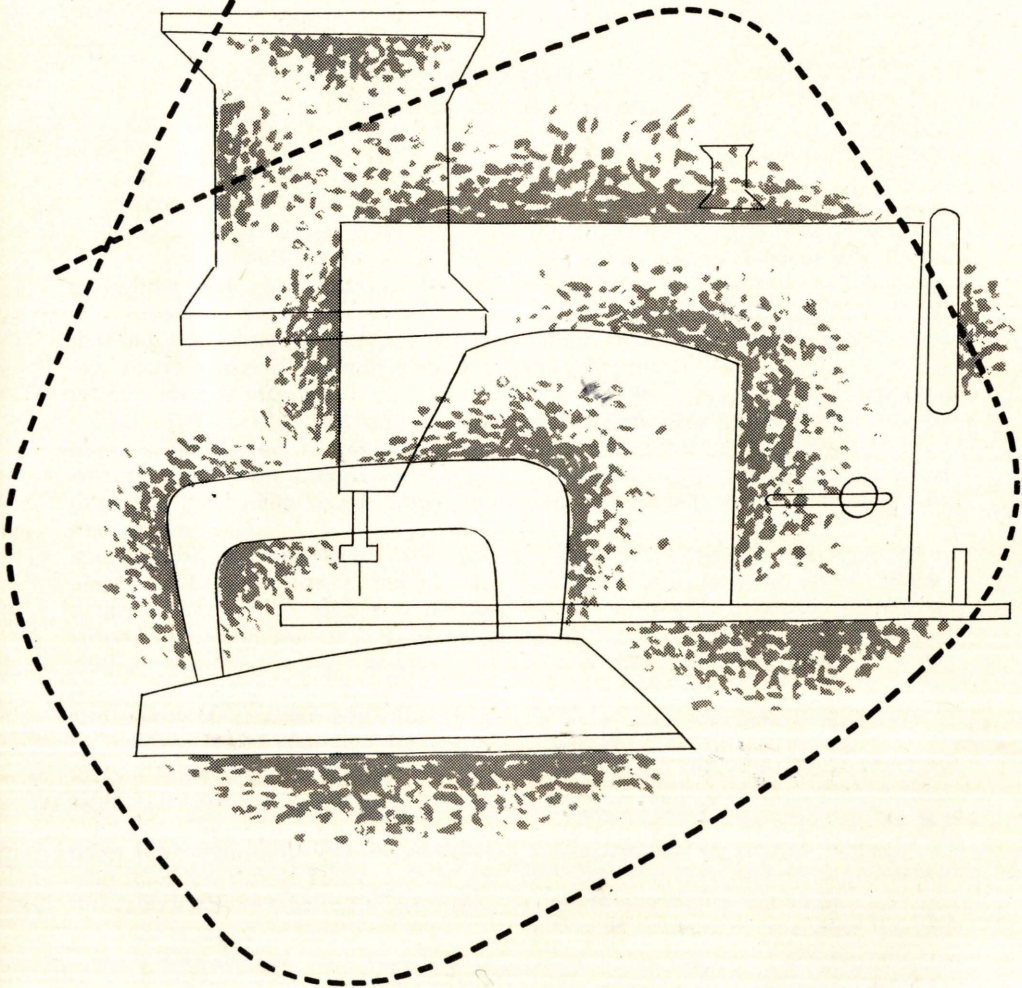
### Recommended Citation

Walker, Anna, "A Look at Finishes" (1956). *SDSU Extension Circulars*. 678.  
[http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension\\_circ/678](http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_circ/678)

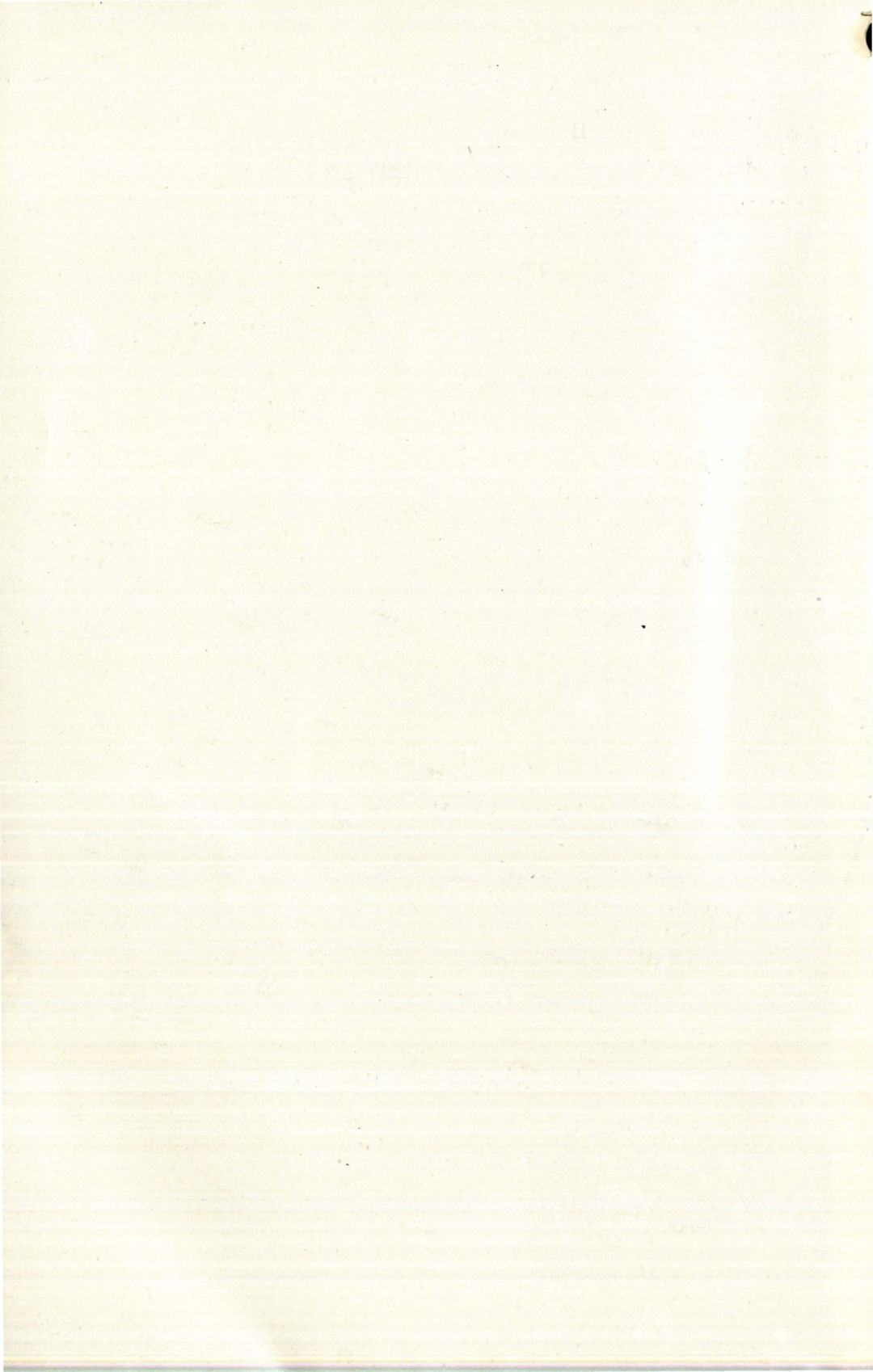
This Circular is brought to you for free and open access by the SDSU Extension at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in SDSU Extension Circulars by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact [michael.biondo@sdstate.edu](mailto:michael.biondo@sdstate.edu).

# A LOOK AT FINISHES

by Anna D. Walker  
Extension Clothing Specialist



Agricultural Extension Service  
South Dakota State College  
U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Cooperating





# A Look at Finishes

by  
Anna D. Walker  
*Extension Clothing Specialist*

“Does it pay to sew at home?”

This often-asked question is one every homemaker must answer for herself. Although many modern-day families buy the major part of their clothing, many homemakers still find that sewing pays dividends.

Time and energy, both nervous and physical, are factors to consider along with the cost of the fabric. The rule of three is a good guide to use when estimating the value of a new garment made at home. “One-third of a garment’s value is the cost of fabric, one-third is the fashion rightness of the style and its becomingness to the wearer, and one-third is the time and skill of workmanship put into it.” These are also points to consider when shopping for ready-to-wear. Shopping for ready-to-wear takes time and energy too, and some homemakers find sewing a more enjoyable way to spend it. To sew well takes time and skill. The homemaker who likes the feel of fabric and enjoys the experience of creating a good garment finds joy in her achievement.

Some homemakers find that it pays to make shirts for men and boys in the family. Others like to make house dresses and aprons while still others

feel that their sewing time is spent to good advantage in making best dresses because they feel that their skill in clothing construction can produce better dresses than they can afford to buy ready-to-wear.

Coats and suits require exceptional skill in their construction and unless the home sewer has plenty of time and has acquired these specialized skills it often pays to purchase these garments ready-to-wear.

Since few homemakers have time, energy, or skill to make all of the garments worn by the family, perhaps it would be helpful to consider these and similar questions when planning for the family’s clothing:

1. What garments are now made at home?
2. Are there other needed garments which could be made with less time and energy and at a greater saving than the ones we are now making?
3. What garments can best be purchased ready-to-wear for our family?
4. Would it help to specialize in the home construction of certain kinds of garments, boys’ shirts for example, so that greater skill could be developed in their construction?

5. Could home sewing provide more fashionable, better fitting garments for some family member?
6. What new skills need to be learned to improve the quality of the home sewing we do?

In this circular we will try to answer some typical questions which may help the home sewer achieve a more professional appearance in the garments she makes. Problems in constructing collars, cuffs, facings, bindings, button-holes, belts, and pockets are included in question and answer form.

★   ★   ★

**Collars and necklines are conspicuous parts of a garment because this part of the garment frames the face. What are some common problems in the collar construction which detract from their professional appearance?**

Let's consider the pointed collar first. A common error in the construction of a pointed collar is bulky, poorly turned corners.

This trouble is caused by lack of room at the point to accommodate the seam. For bulky fabrics, make one or two small stitches diagonally across the point, then cut at a diagonal as close to the corner as possible, so that the remaining seam in the point has enough room. This eliminates the bulk when the collar is turned. Good pressing before turning is important. Crisp cotton fabrics may be finger pressed but other fabrics need to be iron pressed. A wood collar board (Fig. 2) makes it easier to press these enclosed seams. A collar board may be home-made or purchased.

In lighter weight fabrics, machine stitches may be shortened for reinforcement as the corner is approached to lessen the danger of fraying.

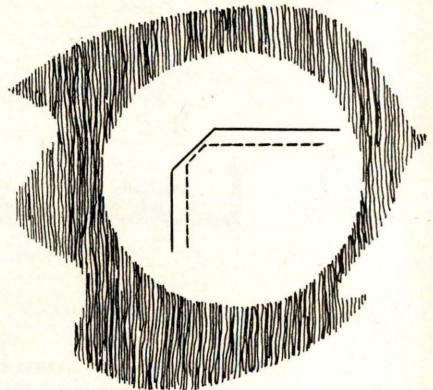


Figure 1

Now for the round collar problems: Ends of a round collar often fail to match because not enough care has been

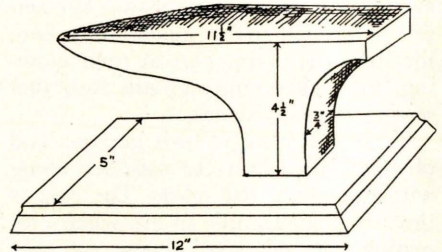


Figure 2

taken in stitching, to make the seams even in width and in turning, to have the seam well creased out. Use the cloth guide on the machine when stitching the curve, being sure that the edge of the collar directly opposite the needle is always touching the cloth guide. This will insure an even seam allowance. See Fig. 3.

Clip notches out of the seam after stitching and before turning to remove the bulk, as illustrated. Finger press or iron press, then turn. Fig. 4.

When turned the seam will take the position inside the collar that you see in the illustration. Notice that the notches close when the seam is inside.



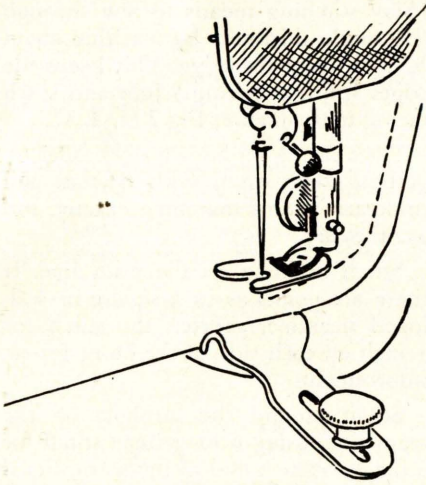


Figure 3

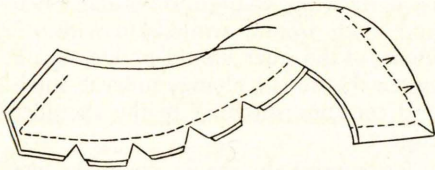
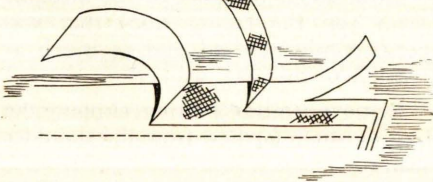


Figure 4

What does the expression "grade the seams" mean?

This is an important step to prevent bulk in all collars, cuffs, and facing seams. It means trimming the seams so that the edges of the collar facing and interfacing are different distances from the stitching line. See Figure 5.

Figure 5



What is a machine cloth guide? Can one be purchased? How is it used?

This is a small attachment which is fastened to the bed of the machine with screws. There are holes in all machines to the right of the presser foot on the bed of the machine. (See Fig. 3.) Install and place a piece of the pattern with the marked seam allowance under the foot of the machine as for sewing. Put the needle into the seam allowance line and the edge of the cloth guide to the edge of the pattern. Fasten the cloth guide in place. Allow the edge of the seam to touch the cloth guide when the seam is sewn. Every seam will be exactly according to the seam allowance.

You may have one in your machine drawer or attachment box. If not, one may be purchased at a store or through a mail order catalog. This attachment is sometimes called a seam gauge or seam guide.

Front facings or underside of collars and cuffs are apt to show on the right side. This makes the garment look homemade. Is there any way, in addition to grading the seams and good pressing, to prevent this?

Understitching on the facing side next to the edge will help. This is easily done. Trim the seam, clip at the curves and then top stitch on the facing side, close to the edge. This stitching goes through the facing and the seam but not through the top side.

Should front facings, sleeve and neck facings be stitched by hand to the garment?

This is seldom necessary. In the case of a front facing on a dress or blouse, the buttons and buttonholes serve to hold the facing in place.

Fitted neck facings may be caught at

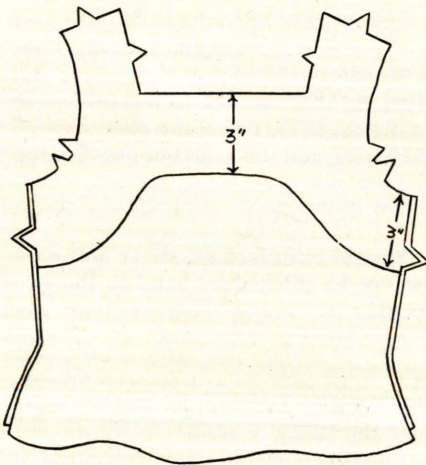
the shoulder seams, and occasionally at the center front and back. Care should be taken to hide the stitches on the right side.

**Jumpers with narrow shoulder seams are popular these days. What is the best way to apply the facings to the neck and sleeves so they aren't bulky?**

The facing for the neck and armholes for this kind of garment should be cut in one piece. If this kind of a pattern is not provided, use the pattern pieces for the bodice front and bodice back. Lay on the identical grain as the bodice; cut around the neck, shoulder and armhole edges and for about 3 inches along the bodice underarm seam line; remove the pattern and draw a curve from the point 3 inches below the armhole at the underarm to a point 3 inches below the neckline at the center front or back; cut along this line. See Fig. 6.

Proceed as follows in applying the facing: Complete the bodice, seams, darts, underarm seams, etc. Stay-stitch the armhole, neck and shoulder edges.

Figure 6



(Stay stitching means to sew through the single thickness by machine about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the edge. This keeps the edges from stretching.) Join and stitch facing to the bodice. Fig 7 (1, 2, 3).

Place facing on bodice right sides together, edges even, with notches and underarm seams matching exactly. Pin as necessary.

Stitch neckline on the seam line. If there are points as in a square or scalloped neckline, shorten the stitch for 1 inch on each side of the point for reinforcement.

Stitch around the armhole on the seam line, using a long baste stitch for 3 inches at each end of the seam. For a continuous stitching, begin at the shoulder edge, baste stitch for 3 inches, fasten the threads by lock stitching or back tracking, change to regular stitch and stitch around armhole to within 3 inches of the other shoulder edge. Again fasten the thread, change to baste stitch and continue stitching to the shoulder edge.

Press armhole seams open for the distance of the baste stitching.

Press neckline seams open for 3 or 4 inches below the shoulder on a rounded neckline or from the shoulder edge to the point of a square neckline. This is necessary because it will not be possible to understitch this part of the seams.

Trim the seams to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch along the entire neck edge and the part of the armhole that was permanently stitched. Slash corners to within a few threads of the seam stitching. Clip curves where necessary.

Understitch the part of the armhole seam (on the facing side) that was permanently stitched and as much as possible of the neck seam.

Remove armhole basting, clipping the basting stitch farthest from the shoulder seam.



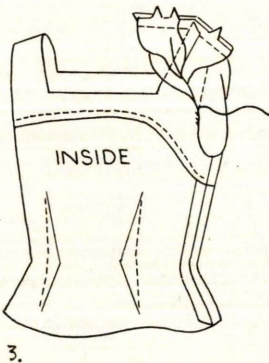
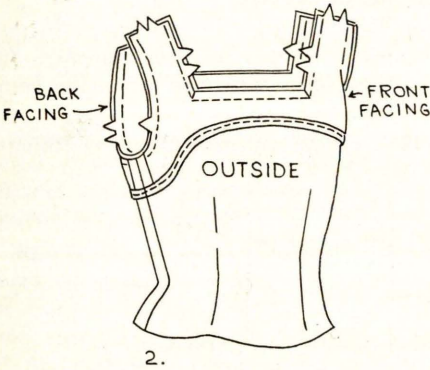
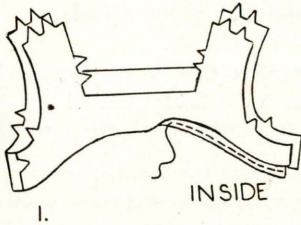


Figure 7

Turn facings to inside of bodice and press.

Pin the shoulder seams, right sides together, turning the seam allowance out. Keep the edges even and the neckline seams matched exactly.

Stitch the shoulder seams of the bodice and the facing with a continuous line of stitching.

Underpress the seam. Trim the seam of the facing only  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. Turn right side out and re-press the armhole along the original fold line.

Pin armhole edges of bodice and facing together.

Slip stitch armhole edges.

**When are interfacings necessary? How does one decide upon the kind of material to use for interfacings?**

Interfacings are used for a number of reasons: to give firmness, body and shape in turned back cuffs, collars, necklines, and lapels, and to give extra strength at points of strain to support buttons and buttonholes.

In choosing the kind of interfacing keep the weight of the garment fabric in mind. Generally the interfacing chosen should be lighter in weight than the fabric. In some cases the same fabric is used for interfacing as is used in the garment, i.e., chambray, if plain colored, is often used for interfacing in a chambray garment.

Think of the effect the design is intended to create when choosing an interfacing. Soft-draped lines call for a light weight fabric such as nainsook for interfacing. A crisp effect might call for a material such as permanent-finish orandy.

For medium weight cottons, rayons, and even light weight woolens, muslin or lawn is good for interfacings.



Surgical gauze, purchased as roller bandages, is good to support buttons and buttonholes in some cotton dresses and blouses.

Materials used for interfacings should be thoroughly shrunk before cutting is done.

Various weights of interfacing materials are on the market for use in coats and suits. Some are woven and some are non-woven or bonded. Generally woven materials prove best for collars because they may be cut on the bias, allowing proper shaping. The home sewer should beware of interfacing materials which give stiffness without shape unless stiffness alone is all that is needed.

#### How can shirt cuffs be made so that they iron smoothly?

If the top cuff and under cuff are cut from the same pattern before sewing them together pin the top cuff and under cuff together on the end and side with the two right sides together. Bubble the top cuff by pushing the seam up so a bubble forms as in Fig. 8. Baste or pin in position. Now stitch from the under cuff edge so the size of the cuff will not be altered.

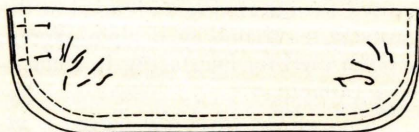


Figure 8

This method will make for a smoother cuff which will iron more easily and one in which the seam will not show from the top side. (If an interlining is to be used, baste it to the wrong side of the under cuff.)

What is an easy way to make a good patch pocket? Is it possible to reinforce a patch pocket to keep it from tearing off the shirt at the corners?

Perhaps the easiest way to make a good patch pocket is as follows: (Follow the illustration for each step. Fig. 9.)

1. Turn back a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam at the top of the pocket and edge stitch it.
2. Turn a 1 inch hem to the right side and stitch the corners according to the seam allowance. Clip the corners of the seam on a diagonal to the stitching at the top.
3. Turn the hem of the pocket to the wrong side. The seam allowance on the pocket will turn when the hem is turned.
4. Turn the points of the lower corners

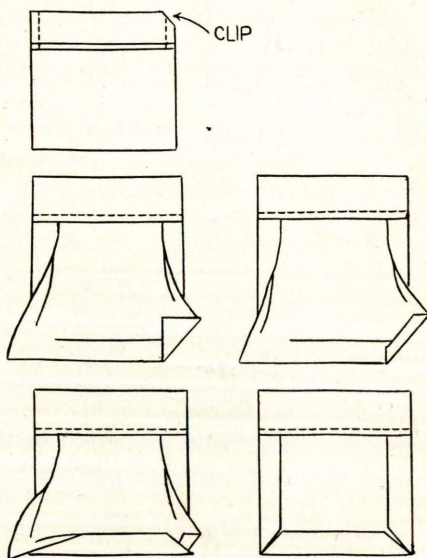


Figure 9

on the seam allowance and trim, leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch turn. Fold the bottom of the pocket on the seam allowance and

the side seams to finish the miter. Press well. Stitch across the hem if top stitching is desired.

To reinforce the fabric under the pocket, try stitching an inch wide strip of the fabric to the wrong side of the garment just a shade below where the top of the pocket will fall. Stitch this reinforcing strip or stay, top and bottom but not beyond the width of the pocket. The strip does not need to be hemmed. It may be pinked or left unfinished. The strip should extend about half an inch beyond the edge of the pocket on both sides.

Now place the pocket in position over the stay and stitch as usual, preferably with two rows for strength.

**How can bias bindings of self material (often used on the neckline of infants' and children's dresses) be made narrow and not bulky?**

Bias bindings of self material can be more successfully done on fine fabrics by using a French binding or double fold. Cut true bias six times the width of the desired finished binding. Fold right side out through the center. Stitch the bias to right side of the garment, raw edges together. Turn the folded edge over the seam and sew in place

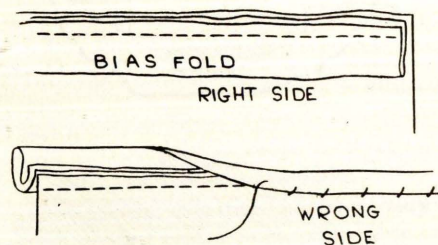


Figure 10

using small hemming stitches on the wrong side for the dainty effect desired in this kind of garment. Fig. 10.

**How does one decide upon the kind of buttonhole to use in a garment?**

The kind of buttonhole used in a garment will vary with the kind of garment and fabric. Machine worked buttonholes, when done well, serve a good purpose in such garments as boys' and men's shirts, some tailored cotton blouses, sport clothes, housedresses, and children's garments. However, to put a machine-worked buttonhole in a good wool dress or suit jacket tends to cheapen the garment. In such a garment beautifully made bound or corded buttonholes are a part of fine dressmaking. This buttonhole is identified by narrow, bias cut lips, square corners, good proportion, and even accurate stitching.

Various methods of construction can be used to achieve this desired result.

The diameter of the button, plus its thickness, ordinarily equals the length for the buttonhole. In placing the buttonhole follow the pattern directions or follow the rule that  $\frac{1}{2}$  the diameter of the button plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch gives its distance from the finished edge of the garment. One method commonly called the "Designer's Method" produces an excellent result with a minimum of difficulty. This method is described as follows:

1. Mark the position for the buttonhole on the right side of the garment. Two parallel rows of machine basting will serve as a guide for width and will keep the buttonholes an even distance from the edge. Mark across these two parallel lines the position for each buttonhole. This guide will look like a ladder.
2. For the lips or binding, cut 2 fabric squares from the straight of the material. Fold and press these squares into triangles. The fold line should measure at least 1 inch longer than the finished buttonhole. (See Fig. 11.)



Sew a stitching line X-Y on each triangle  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the fold (narrower if the buttonhole is short to keep the width of the binding and length of the buttonhole in good proportion).

3. Pin one triangle on one side of the cutting line for the buttonhole (A-B) so that the line of stitching (on the triangle) is exactly  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the cutting line. Stitch with machine stitch (16 stitches to the inch) directly over the stitching on the triangle, the width of the buttonhole. Back track at the beginning and the end to securely fasten the thread. Repeat with second triangle. Note on the illustration that the raw edges of the triangle are together like a tent.
4. Turn to the wrong side and check to make sure that both lines of stitching are the same length and that their distance apart is exactly the width of the two bindings. Make necessary corrections. At this point if the buttonhole is to be corded, thread a cord into the bindings (wool yarn is good to use for a buttonhole in a wool garment).
5. Begin at the center and snip along the cutting line. Make this a very short cut. Stop at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from each end—then clip diagonally to the last stitch on both sides. This will leave a small wedge-shaped piece of fabric at each end.
6. Tuck the triangles through to the wrong side. Be careful not to ravel out the wedges of fabric. Draw the garment fabric back across one end of the buttonhole holding the folded edges of the triangle together with the small wedge section flat against them. Stitch back and forth across this line (C-D in illustration) to attach the base of the wedge section to the triangles. The stitches extending beyond the base of the wedge should be

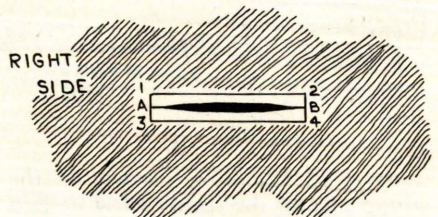
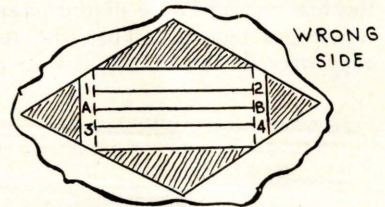
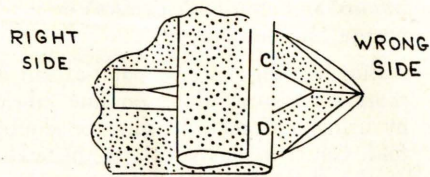
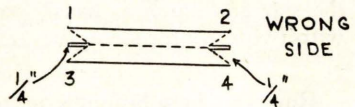
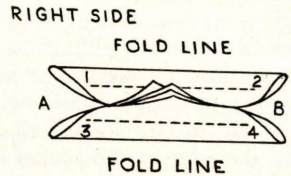
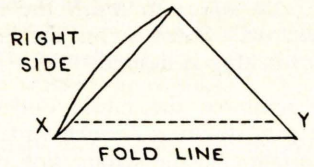


Figure 11

kept in line with the fold of the garment to make a firm, perfectly squared corner. Repeat the same process on the other end of the buttonhole. On the wrong side, the excess fabric may be trimmed away to within  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of the stitching line. The buttonhole is finished by cutting a slit in the facing behind it, turning in the edges of the slit and stitching it down by hand as is done in all bound buttonholes. A bound buttonhole is never used where there is not a facing unless it is used as a slit for a belt to go through.

**Most ready made dresses have better looking belts than I can make. How can a home sewer make a belt that has a professional look?**

Often a dress will lack the professional look because of a poorly-made belt. One method of making a belt, using the commercial belting which may be purchased in various widths, is as follows: (The illustrations will help in following the directions.)

Cut or tear a length of fabric about 5 inches longer than the waist measure and twice as wide as the belting, plus a seam allowance and enough extra width to permit turning.

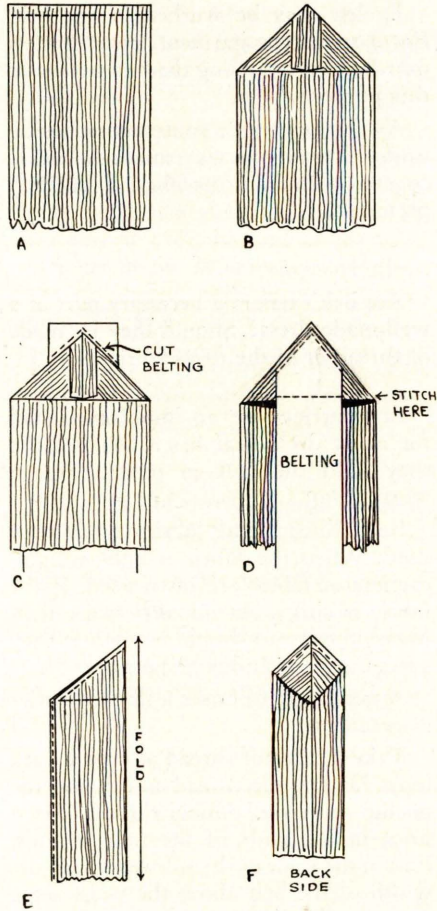


Figure 12

1. Fold in half lengthwise, and stitch across the end. (Figure 12.) (A)
2. Clip the seam at the fold and finger press.
3. Fold the end to a point, forming a triangle as in (B).
4. Place belting over the belt fabric and trim belting to the same point as the fabric. (C)
5. Stitch belting to the base of the triangle formed by the belt fabric and up the sides of the triangle as close to the edges as possible. (D)
6. Fold the fabric together and, using the belting as a guide, seam the fabric together (E) as close to the belting as possible, leaving just enough room for turning. Press the seam open.
7. Poke the belting point back into the belt fabric and, with the aid of a small curtain rod or similar object, turn so that the fabric covers the belting with the seam running down the center back.
8. Edge stitch the belt on the right side to finish.



Eyelets may be worked in the belt. For a sport-type garment, metal eyelets may be inserted using the tool made for this purpose.

Avoid the use of a conspicuous buckle unless the waist is very small. A buckle covered with the dress fabric is generally preferred.

**Are belt carriers a necessary part of a well-made dress? Should they be made of thread or of the dress fabric?**

Belt carriers are an important detail for every dress that has a belt because they hold the belt in position when worn.

Both thread and fabric carriers are used. When the fabric is light weight, carriers of fabric are often used. If the fabric is bulky, thread carriers are best. Matching thread should be used so they are as inconspicuous as possible.

A good way to make a thread carrier is as follows:

Take a piece of thread at least a yard long. Double the thread and thread the needle with the double thread. Tie a knot in the ends of the four strands. Fasten the knot in the side seam half the width of the belt above the waist seam on the wrong side.

Push the needle through to the right side. Take a stitch in the material where

the needle was pulled through, but save the loop. Reach through the loop and pull the thread from the needle through the loop. Pull the loop tight and continue to crochet this chain by hand (a crochet hook can be used) until the belt carrier is the right length. Draw the needle through the last loop and pull the thread up firmly until the loop disappears. Pass the needle inside the dress at a point half the width of the belt below the waistline and fasten securely. See illustration for help in following directions. Fig. 13.

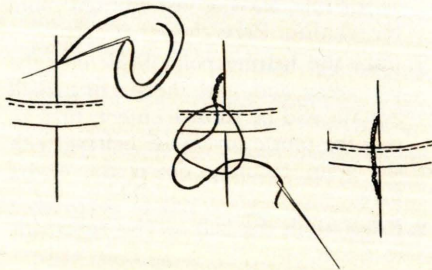
To keep the belt in position in the front as the garment is worn, a small loop keeper can be made to hold the tongue of the buckle. This loop also keeps the belt from pulling down on the waistline as the dress hangs in the closet.

Fabric belt carriers are made from a strip of material which is folded, seamed and turned so that the seam is inside. It is not possible to do this successfully if the fabric is too bulky.

To make this finished bias cord proceed as follows:

1. Cut a strip of bias about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide and from 3 to 4 inches longer than the desired length of the finished cord.
2. Fold this strip lengthwise, with the right sides together. Pin or baste with a very loose stitch.
3. Machine stitch  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (or width of the desired cord) from the fold, making a funnel at each end to allow the fabric to slip through easily when turning. Pull the bias strip while stitching to remove the stretchiness and keep the stitches in the cord from snapping when the cord is turned.
4. Trim the seam allowance to slightly less than the width of the cord. Trim diagonally across the end of the funnel.

Figure 13



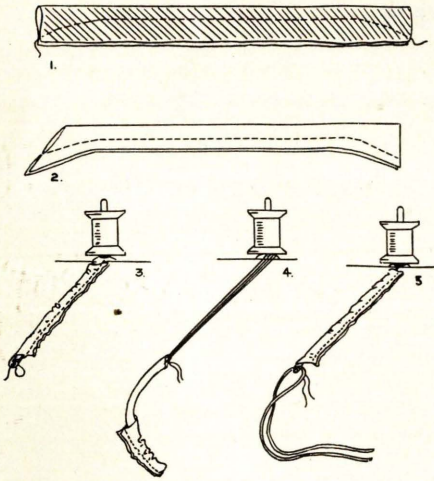


Figure 14

5. To turn, cut a thin wire twice as long as the bias, plus 6 inches. Fold this wire in half and twist the cut ends together into a loose knot.
6. Run the wire through the bias. Place the loop end of the wire over the spool holder on the sewing machine. Fold

the point of the fabric over the loop in the wire and fasten with enough stitches to hold it firmly in place for turning.

7. Squeeze the wire and fabric together and turn the cord by pulling the fabric off the wire. A soft cord or wool yarn may be drawn through the bias by slipping it over the end of the wire loop as in the illustrations. (Follow the numbered steps in the illustration. Fig. 14.)

This kind of bias cord is often used for button loops, lingerie straps and decorations.

#### What kind of thread should be used in stitching a wool garment?

Silk thread is the best! It is more elastic than cotton, comes in colors to match and keeps its color nicely through repeated dry cleanings. Its use will give your wool garment a more professional appearance.



**NOTES**

**NOTES**



---

EXTENSION SERVICE, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
AND MECHANIC ARTS, BROOKINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

Published and distributed under Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914, by Agricultural Extension Service of the South Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Brookings, George I. Gilbertson, Director. U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.