University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

Waistline Stay

A *waistline stay* is designed primarily to keep the waistline area from stretching throughout the garment's life cycle. A stay can be made from any lightweight, firmly woven material. It could be made from lightweight self-fabric using one edge of the fabric's selvage. Hem tape, seam binding, cotton twill tape or grosgrain ribbon may also are used as stay materials. Be sure to preshrink whatever material you use.

There are several ways a stay can be applied. The method you use will depend in part on when the zipper has been applied--before or after the stay. The method given below frequently is used when the seamline is at the natural waist location or between natural location and hipline.

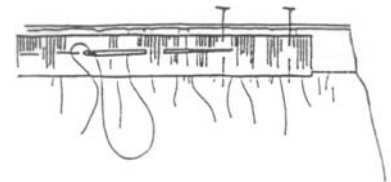**STANDARDS:** of a well-made waistline stay

- Stay material used is lightweight and appropriate for the weight of the fashion fabric.
- Stay material is cut and/or made with the straight grain of fabric. It does not stretch.
- Is not visible from the right side of the garment, but prevents the waistline from stretching.
- It does not create any addition bulk.
- Stitching is neat, even and secure.
- Is firmly secured; does not/will not curl or roll when garment is being worn or when laundered/dry-cleaned.
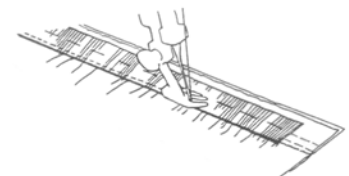
STEPS: Prior to zipper application:

1) Take waistline measurement; add one inch (1") for comfort. Cut stay this length.

2) Measure garment waistline bodice and skirt. Measurement should be the same as above plus a seam allowance on both sides. [Example: Waist = 34" + 2" (1" on each side) seam allowances for a total of 36".] Make adjustments to skirt and bodice as needed.

Position slightly below seamline
Figure 1

3) Pin and baste the stay to the inside seam allowance of the skirt. (Figure 1)

    Position the lower edge of the stay so that it is slightly below the waistline seam allowance marking (approximately 1/8" to 1/16"-- enough to catch it in the seamline later when it is stitched!).
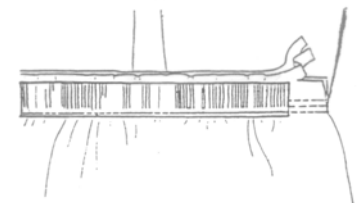
4) Machine baste or hand baste stay to the skirt seam allowance through the center of the stay. (Figure1)

Machine stitch on seamline
Figure 2

5) Match the bodice to the skirt. Pin and/or hand baste. Machine stitch, skirt side up, through stay and all layers. Stitch on the seam line. (Figure 2)

6) If either section of the garment is gathered, carefully "notch out" excess bulk created by the gathers.

7) On medium and lightweight fabrics, trim both seam allowances the width of the stay, taking care not to cut the stay. (Figure 3)

Trimming seam allowances
Figure 3

When the fashion fabric is heavy or bulky, trim/grade the skirt seam allowance (inside seam allowance).

8) Zig-zag or hand overcast all edges together at the top of the stay. This finishes the raw edges of the waistline seam and connects the top edge of the stay to the top edge of the seam.

STEPS: After zipper application:

1) Using a piece of grosgrain ribbon, cut a length equal to the waistline measurement of your garment from placket opening to placket opening + 2". Fold the ribbon back 1" on each end. Turn raw edges of ribbon under approximately 1/4" and machine/hand stitch in place. Secure hooks on one side, eyes on the opposite side. (Figure 4).

Figure 4

2) Position the stay over the garment waistline seam, securing at all seams, darts and at the edge of the placket. (Figure 5).
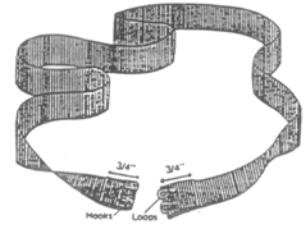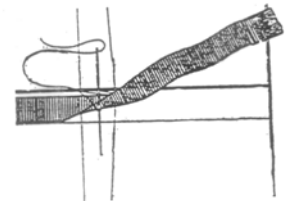
When the garment is worn, the stay will be hooked just prior to closing the zipper.

Figure 5

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