



Custom Tailoring

A tailored garment is always fashionable. Fine construction and good quality fabric are what make a tailored garment expensive. A working knowledge of the construction techniques used in tailoring makes an individual a better shopper of quality ready-to-wear clothing.



Tailoring is a method of garment construction that involves padding and shaping to produce a contour that will last through many wearings and cleanings. It requires special techniques, more patience and greater accuracy than does other construction. Tailoring should not be attempted until an individual has mastered the basics of clothing construction and fitting. The tailoring techniques which set tailoring apart from other construction are:

- ☐ applying interfacings
- ☐ pressing to mold the contour
- ☐ lining the garment

Reminders

1) Careful consideration should be given to the basic principles of construction when tailoring a garment. These include:

- ☐ selection of pattern, fashion fabric, interfacing and lining;
- ☐ altering your pattern for good fit;
- ☐ preparing the fabric for cutting;
- ☐ carefully cutting fabric on grain;
- ☐ marking and assembling pieces accurately.

2) A tailored garment will require more care in fitting and shaping.

Methods

There are many ways to tailor a garment. However, most of these methods involve some variation of two basic methods: custom and machine.

Custom tailoring involves much handwork. It is found in higher priced suits and coats.

Machine method tailoring consists almost completely of using machine stitching and

A combination or variation of these methods is frequently used. The method selected should depend on:

- ☐ sewing ability
- ☐ the fabric being used
- ☐ time available
- ☐ garment style
- ☐ the intended use of the garment



Selecting Pattern and Fabric

Pattern: Select a style with lines that will flatter the body frame and size. Simple lines and conservative fashions will stay in fashion longer. Purchase your pattern size by bust measurement. For help in altering the pattern for a perfect fit, refer to HE2-823 *Personalized Patterns*.



Fabric: Select your fabric with care, as this determines the appearance of the finished garment. Buy the best quality you can afford. The better the quality of fabric, the longer your garment will hold its shape. Select a fabric suitable for the pattern and the desired outcome. Generally, wool or wool blend fabrics lend themselves best to the molding and shaping required in a tailored garment. Heavy-weight woven cottons, linens, corduroy, linen-like suitings and synthetic fabrics may be used. True tailoring cannot be done on fabrics that cannot be shape. Textured fabrics may create problems when making buttonholes and pockets. For best results select a fabric that is:

- ☐ firmly woven
- ☐ somewhat soft and pliable
- ☐ medium weight
- ☐ medium color range (dark colors show lint and light colors show handling)



Fabrics that are too soft will not hold their shape and are not suitable for a tailored garment. Soft, firm fabrics are easier to handle than hard, firm fabrics. Lightweight fabrics may be used if they are underlined. Very heavy fabrics are more difficult to handle.



Interfacing: Interfacing fabrics are used to support, reinforce and add shape to a tailored garment. The type of interfacing used depends upon the fabric and the method of tailoring used. Wool and wool-like blends should be interfaced with hair canvas. There are several weights and fiber blends from which to choose. To preshrink—immerse in water, drip dry and steam press, or take it to the drycleaner and ask that it be drycleaned along with the fashion fabric. Goat hair wool hair canvas is the most resilient

and provides an excellent foundation for shaping the garment. However, the percentage of wool will be less in the hair canvas found in fabric stores in the South.

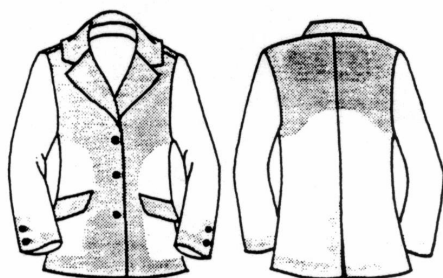
Select good quality muslin. Wash to remove sizing and be sure it is completely preshrunk. Woven interfacing of cotton and synthetic blends of various weights work well in woven cottons, linens and synthetic fabrics. Non-woven interfacings do not mold or roll as well as woven interfacings. They provide limited support for tailored garments of light-weight synthetic double knit fabrics.



Interfacing used to support, reinforce & add shape to tailored garments

Interfacing is needed in the following areas:

- ☐ front; shoulder area, lapels, front buttonhole area
- ☐ back; shoulder area and neckline
- ☐ collar; under collar
- ☐ hems; cushion for hems in sleeve and bottom of jacket or coat
- ☐ cuffs and pocket flaps.



Shaded Areas to be Interfaced

In wool and wool-like fabrics, hair canvas is used for the front interfacing and collar to provide stiffness for the collar and lapels and for body. Muslin is used across the back and in hems to add strength and to hold the shape of garment.

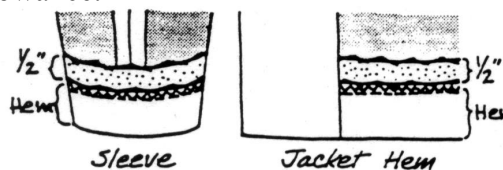
Do not use the interfacing pattern piece that comes with the pattern for the front, unless it extends under the armhole 3 inches (7.5 cm) and is wider than your front facing. It should look similar to this.



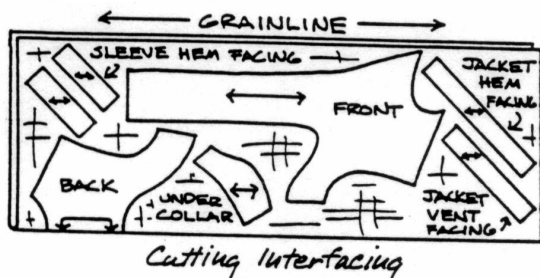
Interfacing depth at center back should be six to 8-inches (15.2 to 20.3 cm), and depth at armhole is 3 inches (7.5 cm).



The interfacing for sleeve and jacket hems should be 1 inch (2.5 cm) wider than the hem allowance.



Cut front interfacing on same grain as garment. Cut back under collar and hem strips on true bias.



Exception: If using woven interfacing with a knit fashion fabric, cut all interfacing on the true bias.

If using a jacket or coat pattern without set-in sleeves, use original pattern pieces to make interfacing patterns.

Lining: Lining fabrics are usually selected for attractiveness, as well as durability. The lining should be more pliable than the fashion fabric. A “slick feel” is desirable for ease in slipping the jacket on and off. An opaque fabric will hide interfacings and shoulder pads. Fabrics that may be used include lightweight woven fabrics, crepes, silks, satins and twills of various fiber contents.



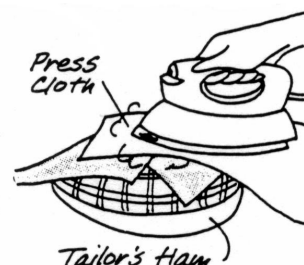
Light-weight polyester woven lining fabrics provide strength and yet eliminate extra bulk. Select a color that blends with your fashion fabric. The lining fabric should be of good quality that will last the life of the garment. Lining may be decorative as well as functional. However, a printed lining fabric may limit the versatility of the garment. The weight and type

of lining depends on your choice of outer fabric.

Pressing: One way to give shape to your garment is through pressing. A press cloth is needed:

- ☐ to protect your garment from scorching.
- ☐ to prevent shine.
- ☐ to hold in necessary moisture for shaping.

Pressing equipment - tailor's ham, sleeve roll, sleeve board, seam board, pounder - is needed to build in shape to the tailored garment.



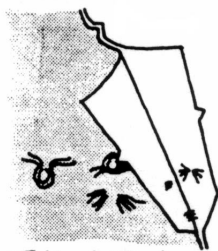
Preparing Fabric for Cutting: Read the instruction of the care label for information regarding shrinking. All fabrics (including lining, fashion fabric, and interfacing) **must** be preshrunk and on grain before cutting out the garment. Washable fabrics should be washed and dried according to directions on the care label. Drycleanable fabrics should be “drycleaned” and not just steamed pressed.



Pattern Layout and Cutting: The instructions for the layout that comes with the pattern is your best guide, since this has been carefully planned for the fabric amount specified. If the fabric has nap, use the pattern layout suggested for *napped*

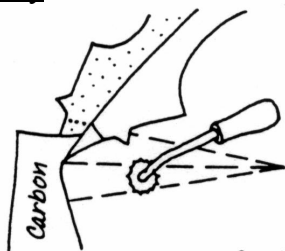
fabrics. Many wool fabrics may require observation to determine if they have nap. There may be one exception in using the pattern layout as your principle construction guide. The garment under collar should be cut on the true bias for the best results in shaping. **Before** cutting the upper collar, check its size against the under collar. The upper collar should be larger than the under collar to prevent the collar seam from rolling out. How much larger depends on the bulk of fabric - it is usually about ¼ inch (6.5mm). A very bulky coat fabric may require slightly more than ¼ inch (6.5 mm).

Marking: Your fabric will determine the method for transferring pattern marking to garment pieces. Tailor's tacks are most efficient for custom tailoring and should be used on softer fabrics.



Tailor's Tacks

Tracing wheel and carbon may be used on the interfacing only.



Tracing Wheel & Carbon

What to Mark: Center front, center back, buttonholes, collar, sleeve, pocket lines, darts, curved seams, roll lines.



Test Garment: If using a new pattern - one that has not been fitted-- it is a good idea to make a test garment of muslin. This gives an opportunity to make needed alterations. When making a "muslin", cut front, back, sleeves and under collar, and eliminated other details. Mark all details with tracing wheel. Assemble garment. To reduce the number of times the garment will need to be fitted and to find out if the design is suitable, try on the test garment and carefully check the following:

- ☐ overall fit
- ☐ position and direction of seams and darts
- ☐ fullness or ease
- ☐ proportion of the collar



- ☐ cut and set of sleeve
- ☐ the placement of buttonholes and pockets
- ☐ length of garment
- ☐ roll line of collar and lapels (mark, as this may differ from pattern markings)

After fitting the test garment, make appropriate alternations and translate to pattern. Refer to HE2-823, *Personalized Patterns* for additional fitting and altering information.

Darts: In most fabrics darts should be slashed to prevent bulk. Darts in interfacing are slashed and lapped.

Seams: Seams will not require a finish, if the garment is to be lined. Interfacing seams are lapped and either stitched by machine or by hand.

Thread: Use mercerized thread for basting. Fine cotton thread in 100 to 150 size or silk thread will not show press marks.

Shoulder Pads: The best ones are the shoulder pads made from the size and contour of the fashion pattern. They extend into the sleeve $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (1 to 1.2 cm), are 4 to 5-inches (10.5 to 12.7 cm) at the shoulder and 7 to 8-inches (18 to 20.3 cm) in the front and back. The front is squared off to fill the “hollow” in the chest/shoulder area, and the back is curved to the armhole.

Shoulder pads may be made from interfacing, cutting on the bias at top of shoulder. If padding is used, use lamb’s wool, batting, fiberfill or fleece. Refer to the Custom or Machine method section for specific instructions.

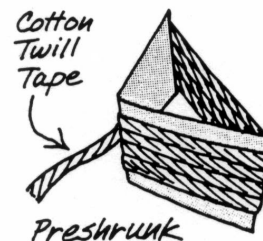
TAILORING – CUSTOM

Custom tailoring, the traditional method of tailoring, involves much handwork. Handwork is used to build and mold permanent shape into the garment. Custom tailoring is often found in the more expensive ready-to-wear suits and coats. Working over curved surfaces, hand stitching, taping, continuous pressing and molding is used to build stability and shape into the garment sections. Custom tailoring is primarily used on garments with simple lines and with quality fabrics that will be in style for several years. This method requires accuracy, patience and **TIME**.



Learning to tailor a garment has carry-over value, as all your other sewing will improve. A custom tailored garment is worth about seven times the cost of your fabric and notions, so it is also a way to save money.

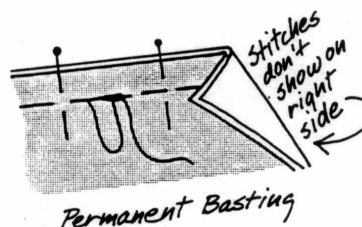
Cotton twill tape ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch or 6.5 mm to 1 cm width), which has been preshrunk, will be needed. It is used to tape the roll line and the front-edges of the jacket or coat.



Hand Stitches

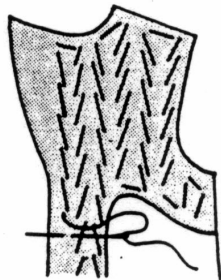
Custom tailoring requires more hand stitches than most construction. In addition to the stitches given in *Hand Stitches*, CT-LMH-002, the following will need to be used: *permanent basting*, *padding*, *diagonal basting*, *felling* and *stab stitching*.

Permanent basting is basically the same stitch as uneven basting, but it is left in the finished garment. Stitches should not show on the right side when it is used on lapels, collars, edges of interfacing.



Diagonal basting is a somewhat long stitch using single thread to attach interfacing and underlining to a garment piece. Contrasting thread is generally used, and it is removed upon completion of the garment or garment section. Stitch formation is diagonal in nature, forming a

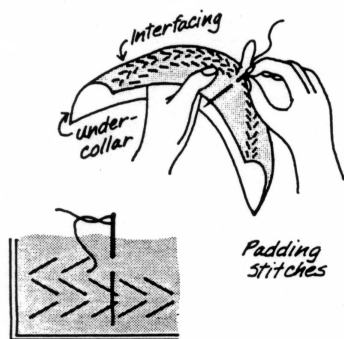
V-like structure. Rows usually run with the garment's lengthwise grain, and spaced one to 2-inches apart.



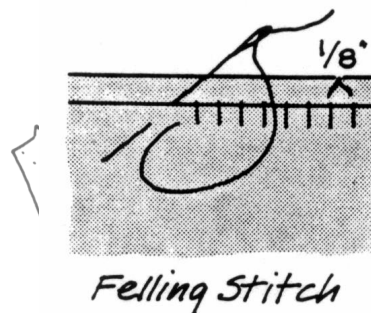
Padding is similar to diagonal basting. The stitching is permanent and the stitches are smaller and rows closer together. It is usually used on collars and lapels. Stitches are usually 1/4-inch long and the rows are 1/4-inch apart. The purpose of pad stitching:

- 1) to hold the interfacing to the fashion fabric.
- 2) to help provide shape to the piece, and
- 3) to give added body to the area. Stitch indentations may appear on some fabrics.

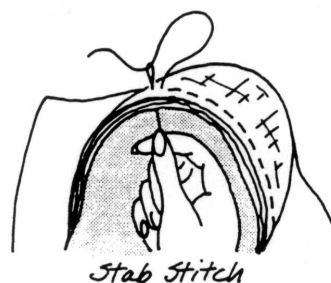
HOW TO DO: Molding / shaping is very important, thus the garment piece is held in a rolled formation. Hold the lapel or collar over your index finger / hand area, rolling the fabric in the desired location. As you stitch, pull threads snug, but not too tight.



Felling is sometimes called overhand or whipping. This stitch is used to attach garment pieces together— the collar to the garment. The stitches should be *no more* than 1/8-inch apart and pulled very secure.



Stab stitch is used primarily in making shoulder pads and joining several layers together such as the welt on the standing welt pocket.



General Guidelines

There are a few basics that you will want to follow as you tailor:

- 1) Fit the garment carefully as you sew. When trying on /fitting garment, insert the shoulder pads if they will be used in the garment. If you are making a jacket, fit over a blouse or sweater (if one is to be worn underneath when garment is complete). If making a coat, fit over a dress or suit.



2) Do as much work in sections (front, back, sleeve, etc.) as possible.

3) Be very accurate throughout custom tailoring.

4) Steam press frequently. Do a good job each time. Let the garment section cool naturally before repositioning the piece on pressing equipment. REMEMBER the object is to press and mold the shape desired.

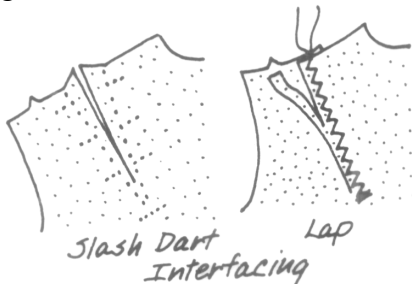
5) Begin hanging garment pieces over a padded hanger as soon as it has been cut. This will avoid undue wrinkles and the need for excess pressing.



Order of Construction

Marking. Mark fashion fabric with tailor's tacks and interfacing with marking pin. If underlining the garment, mark underlining instead of the fashion fabric (as these two pieces will be treated as one during construction).

Darts. Stitch in fashion fabric. Slash and press open; trim if the dart is wide. Position on a tailor's ham and press. Darts in interfacing should be slashed open, then edges lapped and zigzag stitched. Trim off excess.



UNITS

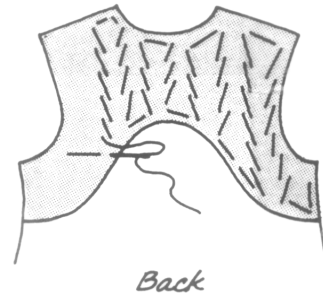
Put together front section, back section and the sleeve. Press.

Baste Interfacing to Garment Sections

Diagonally baste interfacing to the various garment sections.

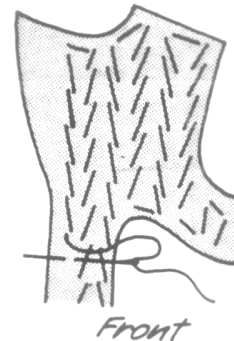
1) Place interfacing on wool side of tailor's ham, then fabric on top with wrong sides

together matching darts. Begin diagonally basting in the middle of the jacket back and work toward the armhole edges. Stitches should be about 2-inches long. **Do not baste into lapel area.**



2) Pin the necessary pieces together (front, back, under collar) to establish the roll line of the collar and lapel if a muslin test garment was not constructed. [If you did make a muslin test garment, you can mark the roll line on the muslin, compare and mark line on lapel and under collar.]

3) Diagonally baste jacket front pieces (fashion fabric and interfacing) beginning at the armhole and stitching toward lapel. Baste only to the roll line.

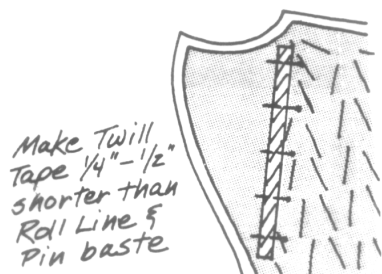


4) Permanently baste around the outside curve of the fabric and interfacing, stopping 1-inch from seams. If the garment is a two-piece jacket / coat front section, baste to the seam.

Taping the Lapel

1) Measure twill tape for roll line on the jacket front. Make it 1/2-inch to 3/4-inch shorter than the measurement. Determining the exact amount to be shortened is dependent on the length of the roll line and the weight of your fabric. [The

heavier the fabric, the shorter the measurement. This will allow the fabric to transition and roll back smoothly.]

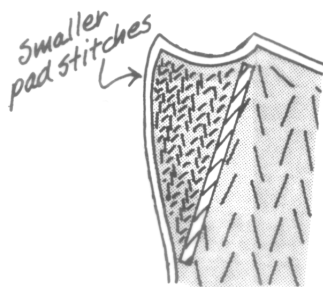


2) Place the tape to the right (lapel) side of the roll line mark. Pin baste about every 1-inch. Blind or whip stitch in place to the interfacing and fashion fabric using stitches about 1/4-inch apart.

Padding the lapel

Begin pad stitches on the lapel next to the twill tape. Follow the roll line and work parallel rows of pad stitches up and down pulling threads securely. Stitch to within 1-inch of the seam lines. Pad stitches should become very short and close together the last inch of the lapel point.

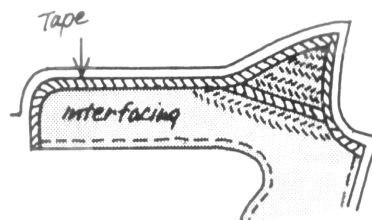
IMPORTANT: As you pad stitch, hold the lapel rolled over your hand and index finger. Maintain that roll as you continue stitching. The lapel should roll in the same direction as it will be when it is worn.



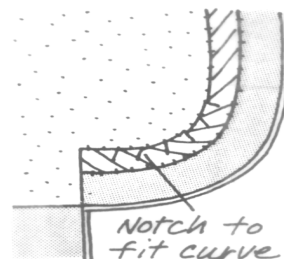
Jacket Front

1) Mark seam allowances around the piece at 3/4-inch. Trim away the interfacing from the front edge and the neckline to the point where the collar comes back along the 3/4-inch marking.

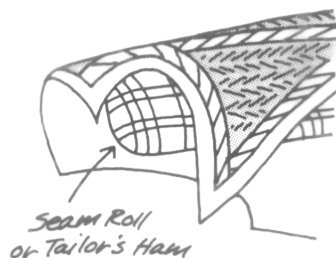
2) Pin baste twill tape along outer edge inside the 5/8-inch seam line. Pull tape taut at bottom curve of jacket and the lapel roll line. Butt and/or miter the tape at the corner or where it meets seam line at shoulder (top) and at bottom edge. Blind stitch or whip stitch interfacing to one side and to the garment on the other side. Pull thread secure, but not too tightly.



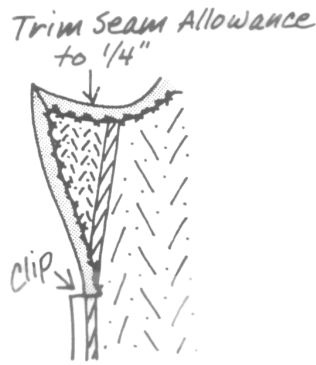
3) Press the lapel on the curved edge of the tailor's ham or on the seam roll to help retain the curved lapel shape. Press with fashion fabric side down next to the wool side (if working with wool or wool-like fabric) of the pressing ham.



4) To finish jacket front, trim seam allowances around lapel and neck edge to 3/8-inch. Clip at the end of the roll line. Miter corners at point. Clip neckline curve slightly as necessary stopping short of the seam line.



5) Fold remaining seam allowance back over interfacing and catch stitch to interfacing, stopping at least 1-inch from shoulder seams to allow seams to be stitched.



Buttonholes

Following customary tailoring techniques, tailored garments *need* bound buttonholes if the design calls for buttonholes. There are many bound buttonhole techniques. Select and use the method that will give you the best product. If you do not have a preference, you may want to refer to CT-LMH.175 *Bound Buttonhole Variation of Tuck Strip* and CT-BJD.011 *Bound Buttonholes*.

Pockets

Refer to the following publications and fact sheets for additional information: CT-LMH.170 *Tailoring: Welt Pocket with Flap*; CT-LMH.168 *Tailor: Patch Pocket*; CT-LMH.167 *Tailoring: Standing Welt Pocket*; CT-LMH.166 *Tailoring: Slot Pocket* or CT-BJD.021 *Pockets: Simplified Methods*.

Seams

- 1) Join fashion fabric seam allowances together at shoulders and side seams and stitch (1-inch seam allowances were recommended when cutting – take only the amount you allowed).
- 2) Press seams open over pressing ham.
- 3) Lap interfacing seams one edge over the other. Catch stitch or back stitch together. Trim edges down to 1/4-inch.

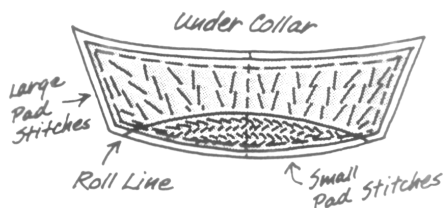
- 4) Removing bulk where necessary finish folding seam allowance over and catch stitching in place.

Jacket Back

- 1) Mark and trim interfacing along the neck edge to 5/8-inch. Clip along seam allowance curved edge stopping just short of the seam line.
- 2) Turn seam allowance back over interfacing and press. Pin baste in place. [Clip more if needed to turn smoothly.]
- 3) Continue catch stitching seam allowance to interfacing along neck line edge.

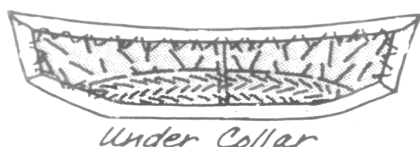
Under collar

- 1) Stitch seam in under collar. Press.
- 2) Lap under collar interfacing seam edges one over the other. Stitch. Trim edges to 1/4-inch.
- 3) Trim outer edges of interfacing to 5/8-inch. Place interfacing to wrong side of under collar matching markings and seam lines. Using a permanent basting stitch, secure interfacing to fashion fabric approximately 1/4-inch from the edge around all edges except neck edge.
- 4) If a muslin test garment was constructed, baste under collar to jacket / coat. Try the garment on to mark collar roll line. Use the drawing-in-stitch on the roll line. Bring needle up, throw thread in front, take small stitch, pull up and back.
- 5) Remove the garment and undo under collar.
- 6) Pad stitch collar stand, beginning at and following the roll line marking and working toward the neck edge. Rows should be approximately 1/8-inch apart and stitches 1/4-inch long.



7) Using a large pad stitch and beginning at the center back, secure interfacing to collar stopping short of the roll line. These stitches should be about 1/2-inch apart and 1/2-inch long.

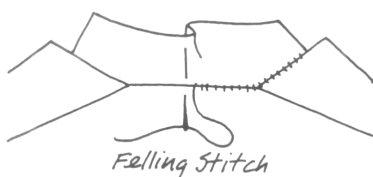
8) Trim outer edges of under collar seam to 3/8-inch. Fold seam edge over interfacing, miter corners. Catch stitch in place to the interfacing.



9) Shape the under collar along the roll line and secure with pins to the small end of the tailor's ham. Steam. Allow collar to dry naturally before removing it.



10) Remove from ham. Pin baste the under collar neck edge to the garment neck. Using the felling stitch, secure to garment. Stitches should be approximately 1/8-inch apart and pulled securely.



Facing and Upper Collar

1) Stay stitch back neck edge facing at 5/8-inch seam marking.

2) Stitch facing pieces at shoulder seams. Trim to seam allowances to 3/8-inch. Press open over pressing roll.

3) Along the neck edge of the upper collar, turn seam allowance to the inside along seam allowance. Clip or notch slightly as necessary, stopping short of seam line. Press.

4) Catch stitch seam allowance in place in the same manner as the under collar.

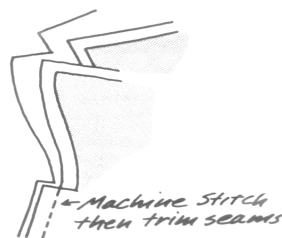
5) Place and pin baste neck edge of the upper collar to neckline edge of facing matching seam edges. Stitch together using the felling stitch. Stitches should be small and should not show on the garment's right side.



Attaching Facing to Jacket

1) Pin right sides of garment and facing units together starting at the roll line and moving to the bottom of the jacket. Stitch; grade the seam.

2) Press seam open. Then press on the right side rolling seam slightly to the inside. On some fabrics, baste before pressing.

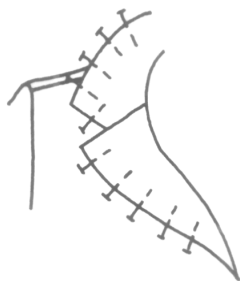


Attaching Upper Collar to Under Collar and Lapel

1) Match wrong sides of the two collars together. Baste the neckline seam of the upper and under collar together. Go inside and catch stitch the two together. Working carefully, smooth the upper collar over the under collar. Do not stretch.

2) Baste at roll line and $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch from the edge. Turn under the seam on the upper collar, letting it extend over the under collar about $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch. Miter corners. Continue this process on the lapels. Finish edges with *tiny* slip stitches. Pull firm. Stitches should be invisible.

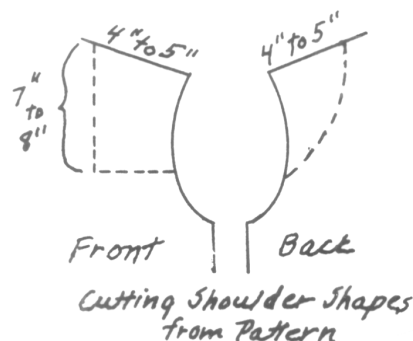
3) Press edges, then press over a tailor's ham to complete pressing.



Shoulder Pads

To construct shoulder pads from the garment pattern.

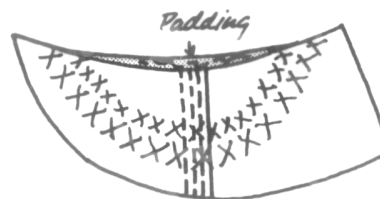
1) Lap shoulder seams of the front and the back pattern pieces. Trace around the armhole $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inches on each side of the seam. At the shoulder seam line, measure 4 to 5-inches toward the neck; mark. On the back, curve outer edge to armhole. On the front, square off outer edge to armhole. This is your basic pattern for the shoulder pad. Mark true bias grainline at shoulder.



TO MAKE TWO SHOULDER PADS:

2) Cut two layers of interfacing the size of your pattern. Cut two layers $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch smaller. Cut two more layers that are $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch smaller than the pattern. **Do not cut smaller at armscye edge.**

3) If padding is needed use lamb's wool, batting, fiberfill or fleece between each of the layers.



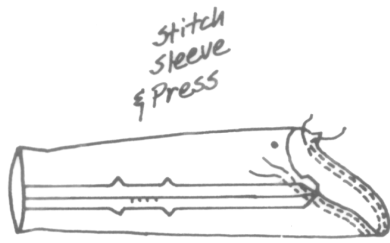
4) Match the shoulder seam line and the armhole edge. Hold the pad cupped over your hand to shape it as it will be when it is in the garment.

5) Stab stitch to hold layers together. Begin stitching at the shoulder seam and work down, shaping as you stitch. Check the pattern against the garment. If the armscye has stretched, use drawing-in stitch to get back into shape.

Sleeve

1) Stitch seams. Press.

2) Prepare sleeve cap for application into garment.



3) Baste the sleeve into armhole matching markings.

4) Pin in shoulder pads. Check fit of the sleeve and correct if necessary. Mark the sleeve hemline.

5) Permanently stitch the sleeve into the armhole. Trim the interfacing around the armhole to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch. Double stitch between notches under the arm.

6) Trim under arm area between notches to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch. Press.

7) Grade the garment section around the sleeve cap (notch to notch) to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch. If there is excess bulk in the sleeve cap, try to steam out or notch only as needed.



8) Insert shoulder pad matching it to the shoulder seam. Extend into seam about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch. Secure with permanent basting stitch.

9) Add a sleeve head to shape and firm the cap area. Use lamb's wool, fleece or muslin, depending on your fashion fabric. Cut a bias strip about 2 or 3-inches wide and 6-inches long.

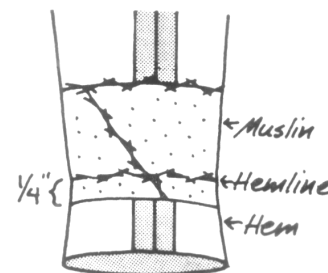
Fold lengthwise with one edge $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch from the edge of the armhole. Hand sew as close to stitching line as possible. Press. If a folded strip is too heavy, use a 1-inch bias strip and center it over the seam.



10) Permanently baste the edge of facing to interfacing.

Sleeve Hem

1) Cut true bias of muslin, hair canvas or other interfacing about 1-inch wider than sleeve hem. Place so $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch extends beyond hem fold line. Catch stitch both edges to the wrong side of fashion fabric. Stitches should not show on right side—this is permanent stitching.

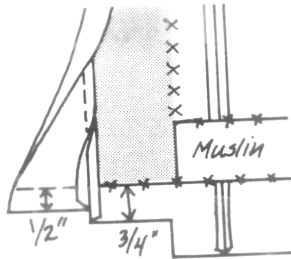


2) Fold up the hem. Catch stitch the sleeve hem to the interfacing. Press.



Jacket Hem

1) Cut bias strips of interfacing 1-inch wider than hem depth. Apply with catch stitch in the same manner as sleeve hem, butting the edge of the front facing and bias strips.

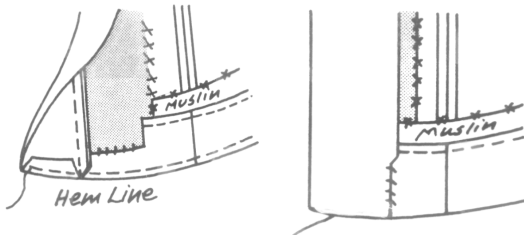


2) Remove bulk within hem at seam lines and underneath facing. See illustration above.

3) Turn up the hem. Press.

4) To finish the bottom edge of the facing where folded edges of hem and facing come together, slip stitch edges. Stitches should be invisible.

5) To finish edge of facing that will not be covered by lining, use a very small catch stitch or buttonhole stitch over raw edges.



Finish Bound Buttonholes

Bound buttonholes need to be finished through the facing. Refer to bound button hole information.

Sew on Buttons

Buttons need a thread shank beyond any built on shank. To determine the amount, consider the thickness of the fabric when the garment is buttoned. Buttons can be gently caught to facing, but should not be sewn through facing.

Apply Lining

Refer to lining publication CT-LMH.004 *Lining Techniques Made Easy*.

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Mauck, Frances F. *Modern Tailoring for Women*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

Prepared by Nadine Hackler, Retired Clothing Specialist, and Barbara Taylor, Retired Family Environment Specialist, University of Florida.

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Linda Heaton, Ph.D
Extension Professor Textiles & Environment.

LMH 9/99
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