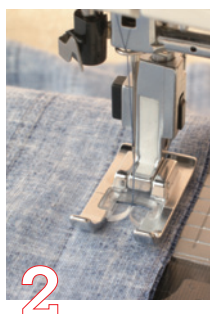


sewNEWS presents

Sewing Basics

4 **FREE**
SEWING
GUIDES



1 Fixing Sewing Accidents
by Barbara Deckert

2 Sewing the Perfect Seam
by Kristina Harris

3 Darts & Pleats
by Laurie Baker

4 Bound Buttonholes
by Thelma Horton

Sewing Basics

4 **FREE**
SEWING
GUIDES

Whether you're a sewing expert, dabbler or anything in between, everyone can use a refresher course from time to time. Find out how to repair common sewing mistakes (without having to start over) in "Fixing Sewing Accidents"; discover professional seam finishes, tips and techniques in "Sewing the Perfect Seam"; learn about shaping and customizing garments in "Darts & Pleats"; and create polished functional and decorative buttonhole applications with "Bound Buttonholes." These practical sewing guides will motivate you to get into the sewing room and stitch up a storm.

Happy sewing!



Kari Bjordahl
Assistant Editor, *Sew News*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Fixing Sewing Accidents	PAGE 3
2	Sewing the Perfect Seam	PAGE 7
3	Darts & Pleats	PAGE 10
4	Bound Buttonholes	PAGE 14

fixing sewing accidents

BARBARA DECKERT

Sewing accidents are inevitable no matter how careful or skilled the sewer. Irons malfunction and melt or scorch fabric, scissors slip and snip in the wrong place, pins leave unwanted holes and seam rippers rip more than stitches. Fortunately, there are ways to fix or mask common sewing accidents.

Tear Repair

Unlike holes that need to be covered with a patch or darning, tears can be fixed with a narrow seam.

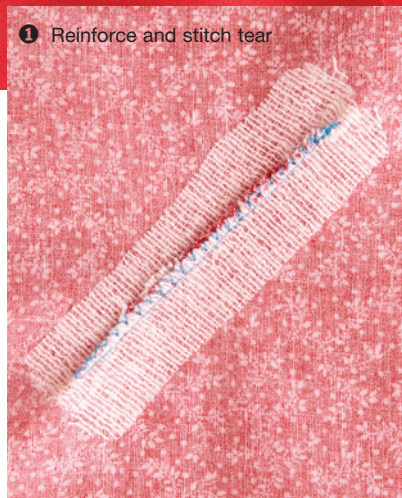
Reinforce the torn edges by placing $\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide strips of fusible interfacing as close as possible to both edges on the wrong side. Fuse in place following the manufacturer's instructions. Fold the fabric to bring the tear edges right sides together; pin.

With a short straight stitch, sew a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the raw edge. Stitch parallel to the tear, beginning and ending on the fold to form a point

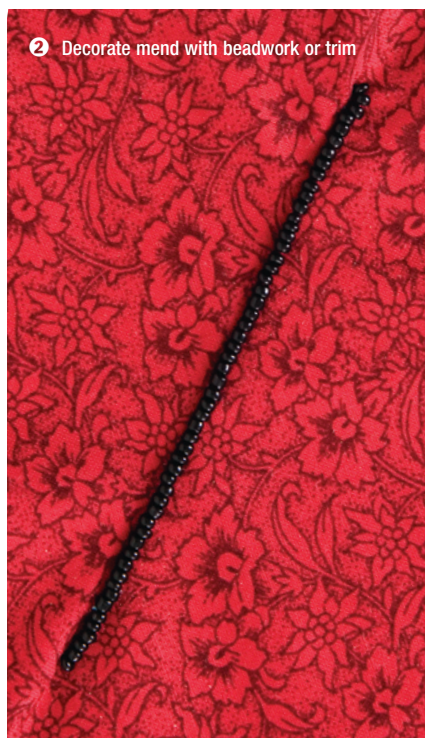


$\frac{1}{4}$ " beyond each tear end as for a dart point. Backstitch at each end to secure, and then zigzag the raw edges to prevent raveling.

Press the seam to one side, pressing the points as flat as possible (1). Disguise the mend by stitching a mirror-image tuck on the opposite side of the garment as if it were a planned design element. Decorate the mend with beading, appliqué or other



1 Reinforce and stitch tear



2 Decorate mend with beadwork or trim



3 Restitch collar point inside clip

tip: Be meticulous about keeping your iron's soleplate clean.

A buildup of fibers, detergent and fabric-softener residues, fusible resins or starch can scorch or rub off on fabric.

trim. For example, if you accidentally cut the foldline on the center-front fold, mend the cut and cover it with a row of beading (2). If the cut is near gathers or pleats, adjust them so the mend is hidden in the fabric folds.

Clips & Snips

Enclosed seams need to be graded, the curves clipped, and the corners trimmed and turned.

If you clipped through the stitching, reinforce the clipped area with a small circle of fusible interfacing. Over-stitch with a short stitch length, starting $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the clipped area. Stitch $\frac{1}{8}$ " inside the original seamline, stitching past the clip and blending into the original stitching line.

For symmetry, such as on collars, over-stitch the opposite collar end to match. If you poke through one of the collar points, restitch both points so they look the same on the finished garment (3).

Ironing Accidents

Good seamstresses know that pressing is a key sewing component, but irons can cause scorches, smashed pile, press marks, and bubbled interfacing, and spitting soleplates can cause water spots.

If the iron was set at too high a temperature, held down too long or the thermostat malfunctioned and left a scorch mark, spot-clean, launder or dry-clean the fabric.

If laundering, pretreat the scorched area with stain remover, and then use bleach that's appropriate for the fiber content and color. For woolens, spot-clean the scorch with a solution of one-half hydrogen peroxide and one-half water. Spot-rinse with water, and then blot with a dry cloth. Repeat the application as needed.

For fuzzy, thick woolens, use fine-grit sandpaper to carefully remove the upper layer of scorched fibers and reveal undamaged fibers. If all else fails, cover the scorch with a patch or appliqué.

Revive smashed pile with a steam treatment. Put the garment on a hanger, hang it on the bathroom shower rod, fill the tub with the hottest water available, and then close the bathroom door for about an hour. The pile will bloom and the wrinkles will disappear.

Unwanted pressmarks don't always go away with re-pressing since fibers can be smashed and damaged.

To remove a pressmark, hold the iron above the mark and steam generously. Rub the mark with your fingers or a clothes brush, and then re-press. For fabrics that don't water spot, spray the area lightly with water, rub the mark, and re-press. For delicate fabrics and woolens, always use a press cloth to prevent and treat the problem.

If water doesn't work, spray the mark with a one-half water, one-half white

AVOID bubbled interfacing

Even if you followed the manufacturer's instructions, fusible interfacing can look bubbled or blistered especially after a few launderings.

To undo the damage, first try re-pressing. Often a little more heat, steam and pressure will force the fusible's resins into the fabric and eliminate the bubbles.

If re-pressing doesn't work, try pulling the layers apart. Press the interfacing to soften the resins, and then quickly and carefully pull the layers apart. Allow to cool and don't re-press; the interfacing will now behave like a sew-in.

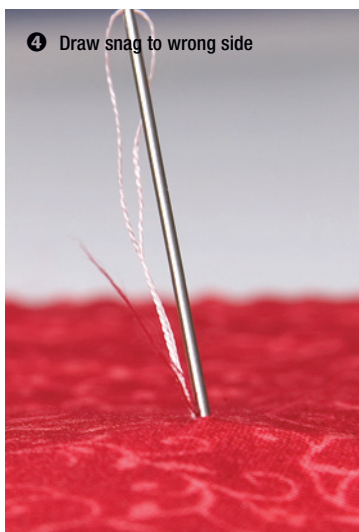
If the blistered look persists, try quilting or topstitching the area with decorative thread. Rows or grids of straight or simple utility stitches, scattered embroidered motifs or free-motion swirls sewn with a darning foot will make the problem look like it was planned.



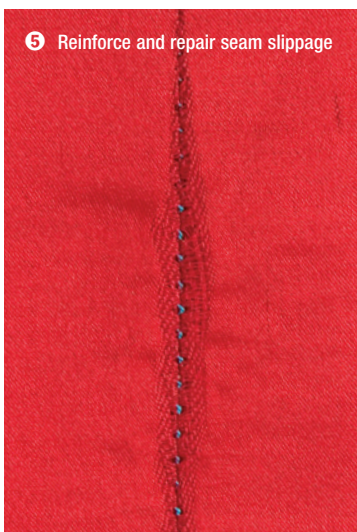
More tips for resolving the bubbled-interfacing dilemma:

- Preshrink the fabric by laundering or by steam pressing dry-clean-only fabric. Preshrink all fusible interfacing by immersing in warm water, soaking for 30 minutes, and then hanging to dry. Don't twist or wring the interfacing, as the twisting can remove the fusible resin.
- Use an ironing press if you have one. They produce approximately 10 times the amount of pressure as a hand iron. Allow the press or iron to heat up to the recommended setting. If the fusible requires a higher temperature than is appropriate for the fiber content of your fabric, use a sew-in interfacing instead.
- Use a plain cotton ironing board cover. Aluminum-type covers reflect too much heat, fusing at a too-high temperature.
- Press the area to be interfaced, and then immediately lay the interfacing resin side down on the hot fabric. Blow steam over the area; the interfacing may ripple or curl up as it shrinks. Lift and reposition the interfacing, cover with a press cloth and fuse.
- Use a firm up and down motion when fusing with a hand iron.
- Allow fused fabric to cool and dry completely before moving. Fuse fabric the day prior to cutting and construction.
- Since fabrics and fusible interfacings may have different fiber contents, they can shrink different amounts. If possible, launder garments in cool water and hang to dry to help prevent bubbling as the garment ages.

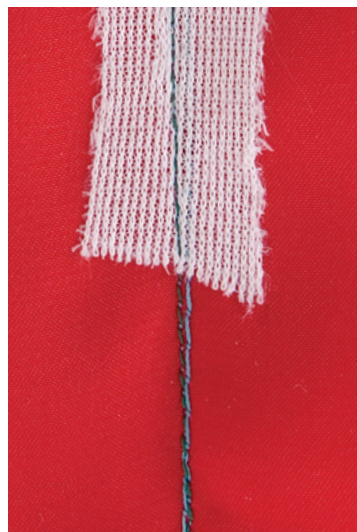
If fusible resin ends up where you don't want it, use rubbing alcohol to remove it. Alcohol swabs in foil packets are handy for this purpose. Test on a fabric scrap first.



4 Draw snag to wrong side



5 Reinforce and repair seam slippage



tip: If pressing doesn't remove pin holes, try the spit-and-scratch maneuver—moisten your finger tip, and then rub the holes gently with your fingernail. For dry-clean-only fabric, use a small paintbrush to dab the hole sparingly with water. Carefully scratch at the holes, and then cover with a press cloth; press.

vinegar solution; rub and re-press. Test the vinegar solution on a fabric scrap.

If your iron spits and drips leaving water spots on your fabric, don't panic. Place an absorbent, white press cloth under the water spot. Place another press cloth over the spot. Spray lightly with water; press. Often this will disburse the ring. Test on a scrap first.

Fabrics sold folded on bolts have a crease mark down the center. The crease can be difficult to remove even after washing the fabric. Try a one-half vinegar and one-half water solution, or use spray starch when pressing the crease. The starch bolsters smashed fibers, and the slight shine distracts from the crease making it less visible.

Snags & Seam Slippage

Whether on wovens or knits, resist the urge to simply clip off a snag since a hole could form as a result. Instead, use a tiny crochet hook to pull the loop to the wrong side.

Alternately, use a needle and thread.

From the garment wrong side, insert the eye end of a threaded needle through the fabric as close as possible to the snag. Wrap the thread around the snag, and then grasp the needle and thread together underneath, using them to pull the snag to the wrong side (4).

Seam slippage occurs when a garment is too tight or should've been underlined because the fabric is loosely woven or slippery. To fix a slipped seam, first perform the spit and scratch maneuver as you would for pinholes to realign the fabric weave where it has slipped.

Fuse two narrow strips of fusible interfacing over the stitching line on the seam wrong side. Over-stitch the seam (5). ✂

Barbara Deckert, a custom dressmaker in Elkridge, MD, writes more about trauma in the sewing room in *Sewing 911: Practical and Creative Rescues for Sewing Emergencies* from The Taunton Press.



Sewing the “Perfect” Seam

KRISTINA HARRIS

SEAMS ARE AT THE VERY HEART of all sewing—yet there are many sewers who take them for granted, hurrying over the details. But a bad seam can make an entire project look hopelessly frumpy and homemade, while a well-sewn seam results in a polished and professional-looking project.

mind your tools

The first step to creating great seams is to service your sewing machine. Like a vehicle, sewing machines run better and last longer if they’re “tuned up” regularly. If you don’t know how to do this yourself, take your machine to a neighborhood sewing machine center; a tune-up is generally inexpensive, but can make a world of difference to your sewing.

Dust the machine between projects; if you’re sewing for hours each day, you

may need to clean your machine a couple times a day.

Oil the machine. First, check the machine manual; if your machine is not self-lubricating, lubricate the machine frequently with sewing machine oil (found at fabric stores in the notions section). Oil every place that moves and comes into contact with another part—consult your machine manual to be sure you find every place. A single, small drop is all that’s needed. Machines should be oiled about every four to six hours of use. Failure to oil and clean machines can quickly lead to sloppy stitches.

Change the sewing machine needle frequently. Machine needles dull quickly, resulting in skipped and sloppy stitches. The average home sewer should change needles for every project. Those who sew for many hours a day should change

their needle every four to six hours. Also make sure you’re using the correct needle for the project. The basic rule of thumb is to use a sharp needle for woven fabrics, a ball-point for knits, and a universal for either. Also consider using specialty needles designed for particular fabrics (such as leather and denim) and particular tasks (like topstitching).

cut a straight seam

One of the keys to beautiful seams is accurate cutting. Many sewers find they can cut more efficiently with a rotary cutter and mat. Others prefer standard dressmaking shears. Still others prefer a combination of the two. A little experimentation with cutting tools is the best way to find what works most effectively for you. Remember, too, that if you haven’t preshrunk your fabric or straightened

its grain, even the most accurate cutting won't save the garment.

Never use ordinary household

scissors, dull shears, or any tool not designed for cutting fabric; you'll only end up frustrated, with inaccurate edges. To keep your cutting tools sharp, use them only to cut fabric. Paper (including tissue paper) dulls shears quickly.

A good cutting table will also help you to cut more accurately and easily. It should be big enough to spread out your fabric, and high enough that your back doesn't ache when cutting. If you must cut on the floor, it's best to use a hard floor, rather than a carpeted one. If you only have carpeted

space, put something hard down first (like cardboard).

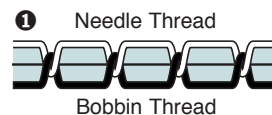
Take your time when cutting out patterns and follow the cutting lines carefully. For the most accuracy when using shears, use long, even strokes, instead of short, choppy ones.

sew a straight seam

Fortunately, actually sewing seams isn't difficult. The pattern directions will indicate how wide the seam allowance should be; line up the fabric edge with the corresponding seam guideline on the sewing machine. If for some reason your machine doesn't have the correct markings, make a

seam guide by measuring to the right of the needle position and indicating the width with masking tape. There are also a variety of seam guides available at notion counters.

Before you sew a single seam, test-stitch on scraps from the project to make sure your stitches are balanced and the machine is properly adjusted for the chosen fabric. Read your sewing machine manual for specifics on how best to do this. When the tensions are properly balanced, the upper and lower threads interlock halfway between the fabric layers **(1)**.



seam finishes

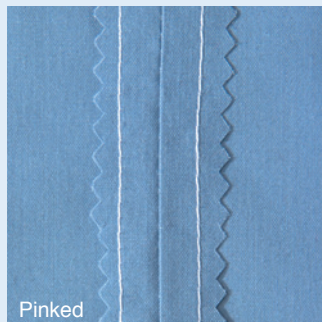
Every seam needs a good finish. There are a wide variety of finishes to choose from (some more appropriate for one fabric than for another), so when you begin a new project, it's a good idea to test a few different seam finishes on a scrap of the project fabric.

The correct seam finish prevents the fabric from raveling and helps the seam stand up to wear and cleaning. A good seam finish should be smooth and without puckers. It shouldn't add much bulk to the seam or show on the project right side.

Below are several of the most popular seam finishes. If you're not familiar with them all, why not try one on your next project?

Pinked Edges:

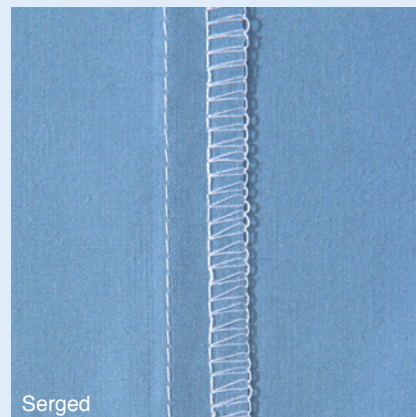
Pinking is one of the oldest forms of finishing a seam, and works best on closely woven cloth. This attractive seam finish is accomplished with pinking shears. Never use pinking shears to



cut out a garment. Instead, cut out the pattern with dressmaking shears or a rotary cutter, and once a seam is sewn, use the pinking shears to finish the seam allowances.

With lightweight fabrics, place the seam allowances together and pink both edges at the same time. For medium- to heavyweight fabric, pink each edge separately. Don't cut deeply into the allowance; snip off just enough to get a clean cut. For added assurance that the allowance won't fray, straight stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the seam allowance cut edge before you pink.

Serging: Perhaps the most common seam finish used today, serged seams are quick and easy. Use a three-thread balanced stitch, and allow the serger to trim and overcast the raw edges at the same time.



The easiest way to mess up a seam is to sew too quickly. Take your time and make sure the fabric edges stay even with the seam guideline on your machine. Watch the fabric edge, not the needle.

Be sure to sew “directionally”—*with* the fabric grain, not against it. This will help keep the seam from stretching or puckering. The stitching direction is sometimes indicated on the pattern. As a basic rule of thumb, stitch from the widest part of a piece to the narrowest (for example, from the hem to the waistline on a skirt). When in doubt, run your finger along the cut edge of the cloth; running your finger *against* the grain will make the edge start to fray, while

running your finger *with* the grain will smooth the threads.

Remember that old sewing adage “press as you sew”? It may be tempting to dismiss it, but your seams will suffer if you do. You can sew multiple seams without moving to the ironing board, but never sew connecting seams without pressing first. Also be sure to press seams directionally with the grain, to preserve the shape of the fabric.

If you’re still dissatisfied with your seams, consider using a walking foot; it will feed fabric more evenly into the machine, and may be particularly helpful for slippery or thick fabrics.

Whatever your skill level, you’ll find it isn’t difficult to stitch a great

seam. And with a professional-looking seam, you’ll be well on your way to creating a professional and beautiful project as well. ✂

references

Learn more about seams and seam finishes in these books, available from your local bookstore, library or fabric store.

Vogue Sewing by the editors of Butterick and Vogue patterns, The Butterick Publishing Co., 2000.

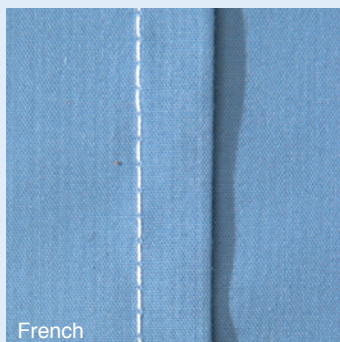
New Complete Guide to Sewing by the editors of Reader’s Digest, The Reader’s Digest Assoc., 2002.

Kristina Harris is the author of a dozen books on historical fashion, including *The Collector’s Guide To Vintage Fashions*. She lives and sews in Oregon.

French Seam: This classic seam finish works well with light-to mediumweight fabrics. With *wrong* sides together, stitch the seam $\frac{1}{4}$ ” from the raw edge. Press the seam allowances to one side. Fold the seam with right sides together, then press so the previously stitched line is on the edge of the fold. Sew a second seam $\frac{3}{8}$ ” from the fold, enclosing the first seam allowances.

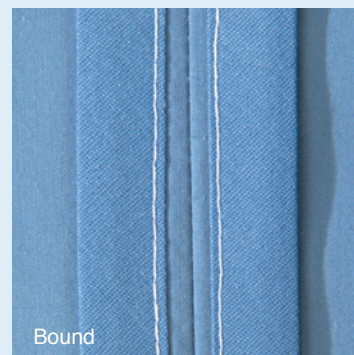
The following techniques encase the seam allowance and are best used for bulky fabrics or fabrics that ravel easily.

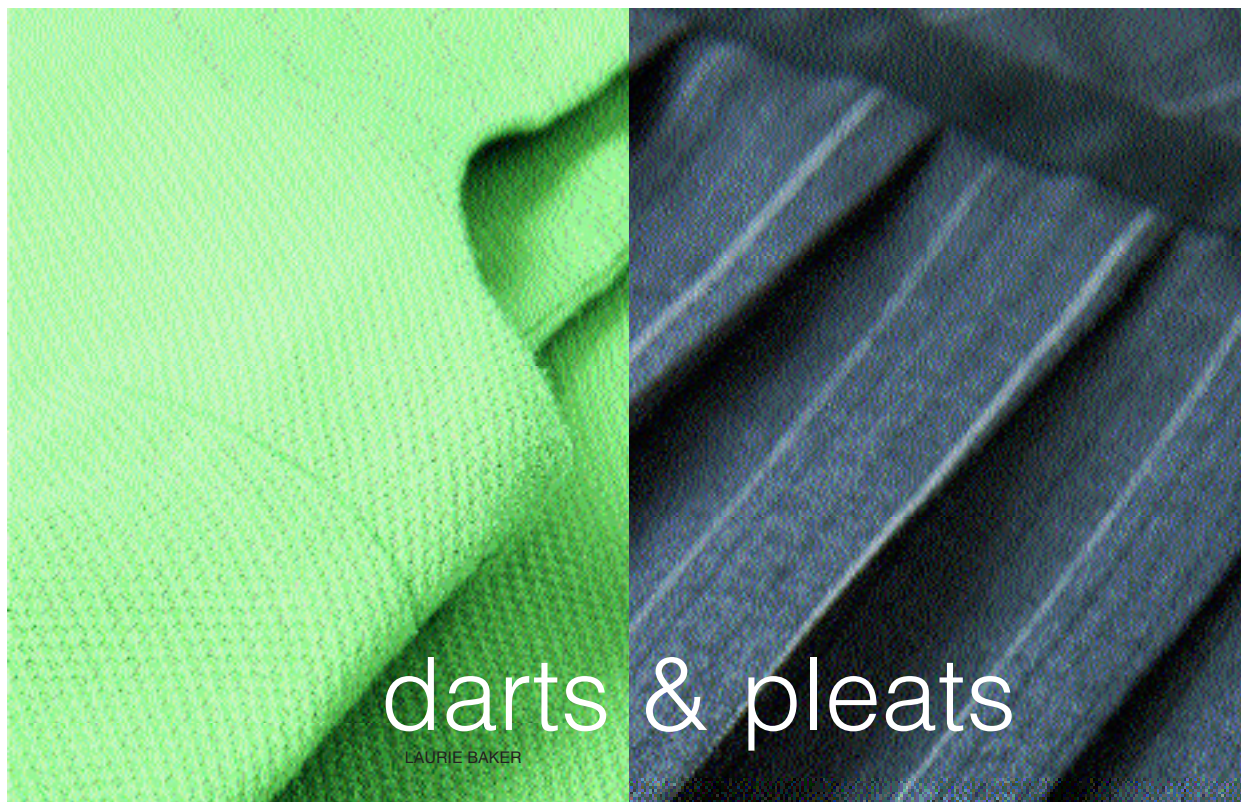
Hong Kong Finish: First press open a length of double-fold bias tape or



use 1”-wide bias fabric strips. With right sides together and raw edges matching, stitch the bias to the seam allowance using a $\frac{1}{4}$ ” seam. Fold the bias over the seam allowance, completely encasing the raw edge. Press and stitch “in the ditch”—in the small groove created by the first row of stitching. Trim the bias strip if necessary.

Bound Seam: Finger-press double-fold bias tape open, then lay the raw edge of the seam allowance against the tape’s fold so the slightly wider side of the tape is beneath the allowance. Fold the other edge of the tape over, enclosing the seam allowance. Pin in place. (The slightly narrower side of the tape should be laying on top of the seam allowance.) With the narrower tape edge facing up, stitch the binding to the allowance catching the wider binding edge underneath.





HOW CAN YOU MAKE a flat piece of fabric conform to the contours of a three-dimensional body? The answer is to fold out excess material. In garments, this is accomplished with darts and pleats.

DARTS

A dart is a fold of fabric stitched down on the wrong side of a garment to create a closer fit. You'll find darts used most often to shape the bust, back, waist and hips. There are three basic types of darts: single-pointed, double-pointed and curved. Each type has a different shape in order to achieve different results. As a rule, the more curved the dart, the closer it will fit to the body.

Darts appear on commercial patterns as triangles, diamonds or football shapes, depending on their type. Before cutting out a darted garment, be sure that each dart points toward the fullest part (or parts) of the body to which it is conforming. Redraw the dart to make it longer or shorter,

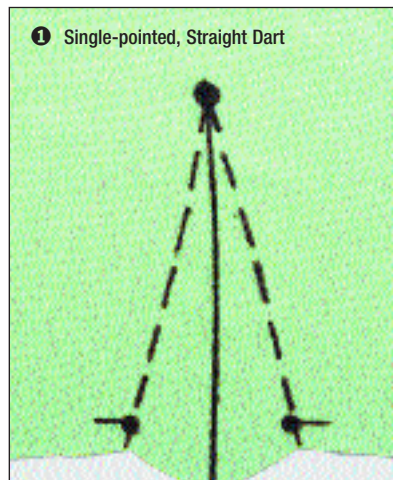
if necessary, to achieve the desired amount of fullness.

Transfer all dart markings to the fabric wrong sides before removing the pattern tissue. Mark delicate or lofty fabrics with tailor tacks for accuracy and to prevent damage. For more stable fabrics, use dressmaker's tracing paper and wheel, or pins and chalk to transfer the markings (see "Back to Basics: Marking Methods" in the April '03 *Sew News*).

single-pointed, straight dart

This is the most common dart. On a pattern it looks like a triangle with a line through the center (1).

To sew a single-pointed, straight dart, mark the dart lines and any matching points (usually indicated



on the pattern by small dots) on the fabric wrong side.

With right sides together, fold the dart on the center line. Make sure the outer lines and matching points align;

Darts and pleats add shape to a garment and can customize the fit.

pin at right angles to the stitching line, placing one pin at the dart point (2).

Stitch from the wide end to the point, making the last two or three stitches as close to the foldline as possible; *don't backstitch*. Remove the garment piece from the machine, leaving thread tails approximately 4" long.

With the thread ends together, tie a knot as close to the dart point as possible.

double-pointed, straight dart

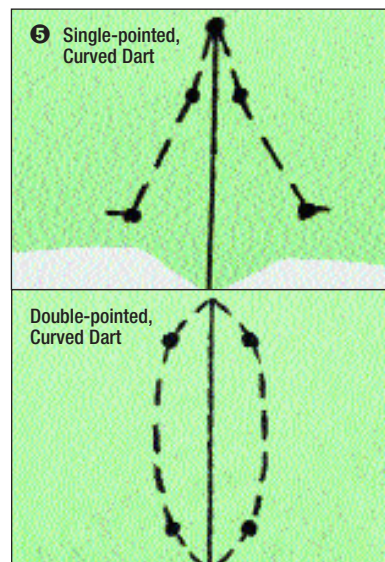
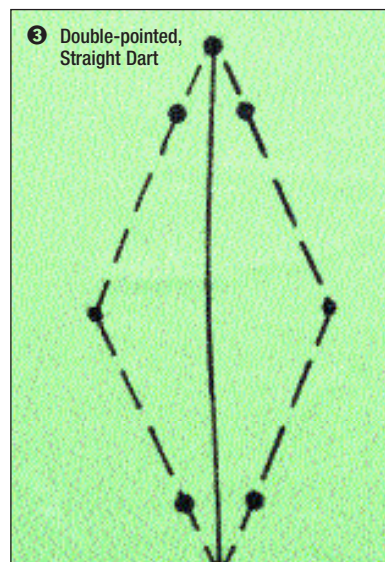
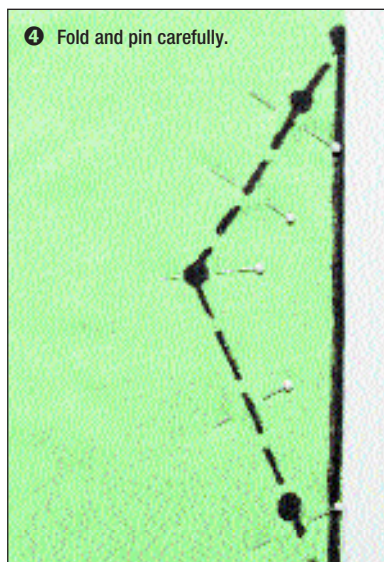
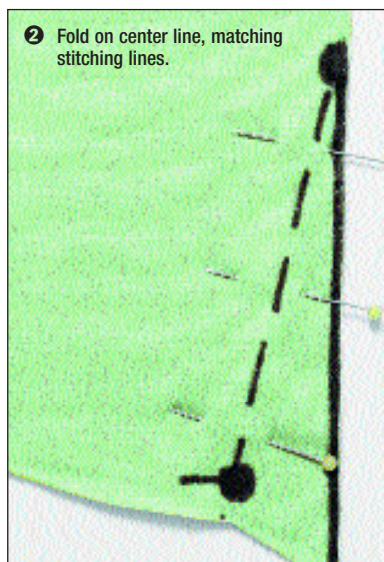
This dart has a point at each end, appearing as an elongated diamond (3). The double-pointed, straight dart can take the place of two single-pointed darts when placed at the waistline. The widest part sits at the waist, with the points toward the bust and hip.

For accuracy, stitch double-pointed darts in two separate steps and directions. Mark the dart lines and all matching points on the garment wrong side.

With right sides together, fold the dart on the center line. Match and pin the dart outer lines together, pinning first at the waist point and then at the end points. Add additional pins as needed (4).

Beginning at the center dot, stitch toward one end point, making the last two or three stitches as close to the foldline as possible; *don't backstitch*. Remove the garment from the machine, leaving thread tails approximately 4" long.

Stitch in the opposite direction. Start again from the dart center, and work toward the remaining point, overlapping two or three stitches of the previous stitch line. Leave 4" thread tails. Tie the thread tails into knots at each dart end.



Clip into the dart fold at the waistline, ending $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the stitching; press toward the garment center. Clipping the dart alleviates strain at the waistline by eliminating bulk and allows the dart to lie smooth.

curved darts

Curved darts are stitched very much like straight ones, but because of their shape curved darts fit closer to the body. On a pattern, a curved dart looks similar to a straight dart, except the stitching lines are curved rather than straight (5).

Mark the dart lines and all matching points on the garment wrong side.

With right sides together, fold the dart through the center so the outer stitching lines and match points align; pin in place.

Stitch the dart and secure the thread tails, following the instructions above for either a single- or double-pointed dart.

Clip the fold edge, perpendicular to the stitching, in several places along the curve to prevent puckering.

tip: If you prefer not to tie off threads, decrease the stitch length to 20 stitches per inch as you approach the dart point and stitch off the fold; leave ¼"-long thread tails.

pressing darts

The steps for pressing darts are simple. Begin by pressing the dart flat as stitched. Lay the dart over a tailor's ham, and press the dart to one side. For horizontal darts, such as bust darts, press the fold downward; for vertical darts, press the fold toward the garment center (6). See "Best Pressed" on page 64.

If the dart is wide or the fabric is heavy, slash the dart to within 1" of the point, and trim the seam allowances to ½" from the stitching line. Press the slashed allowance open and the point flat (7).

dart tucks

Also known as released tucks, these folds are used to take in fabric at a specific area and release it at another point (8). You will most often find this method for controlling fullness used at the bust and hips. Unlike darts, the tuck portion can be on the inside or outside of the garment. Only part of the fold is stitched, releasing the fabric's full width where the stitching ends. The tuck may be secured across the top or bottom, or with a short line of stitching through the center (9). The upper or lower portion of the tuck also can be enclosed in a seamline, eliminating

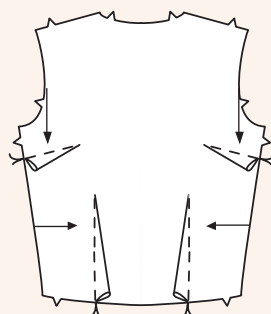
the need for any additional stitching. Tucks are usually marked on patterns as broken lines. Tuck lines are usually straight, but they can be curved to create a small amount of shaping.

To make a released tuck, mark the tuck lines on the garment piece,

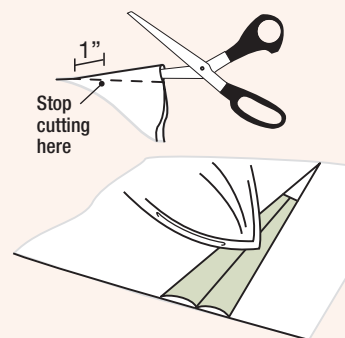
using the best marking method for the fabric. For tucks on the garment outside, mark the lines on the fabric right side; for tucks on the garment inside, mark the wrong side.

Bring the marked lines together; pin in place. Stitch as indicated in the

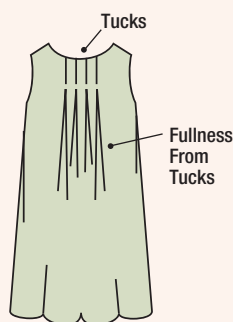
- 6 Press horizontal darts down and vertical darts toward garment center.



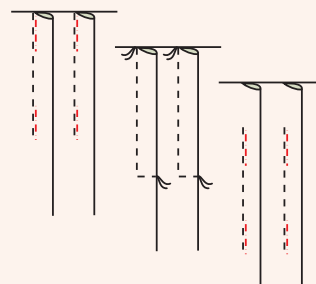
- 7 Slash dart and press allowance open and point flat.



- 8 Dart or Released Tucks



- 9 Tucks can be secured at top, bottom, or center.



one-thread dart stitching method

This technique eliminates the need to secure a dart by knotting the thread ends. It works for any dart type but is especially useful if the knots might show through a sheer fabric.

Set up your machine as you normally would, but don't pass the upper thread through the needle. Bring the bobbin thread up through the throatplate, passing it through the needle eye from *back to front*.

Tie the upper thread and bobbin thread together in a small knot. Wind the upper thread back onto the spool, pulling the bobbin thread up through the tension disks and thread guides. Wind enough thread to stitch one dart.

Mark the dart as previously described, but stitch from the *point* to the *widest end*.

pattern instructions. Secure by backstitching at the beginning and end of the stitching line or by knotting the thread ends.

Press the folds in the direction indicated in the pattern instructions.

PLEATS

These fabric folds are wider than tucks, and they're always formed by stitching straight lines. Pleats can be stitched or pressed into place and used either singly or as a group to control fullness. They can be formed from the fabric right or wrong side, depending on the type of pleat. A pattern will indicate where the fabric is to be folded and where the fold is to be aligned to form the pleat. Generally these lines are labeled *foldline* and *placement line*, but patterns

vary, so be sure to read the instructions carefully.

Use tailor's tacks or a chalk marker and ruler to mark the lines on the fabric wrong side, making sure the lines are straight. Use a different color thread or chalk for each of the two types of lines. Transfer the markings to the right side, if necessary.

By folding the fabric in different ways you can achieve several pleat variations. The most common are *knife pleats*, *box pleats* and *inverted pleats*.

knife pleats

Knife pleats, also called straight pleats, have folds that all lie in the same direction (10). The pattern will be marked with one foldline and one placement line per pleat.

To make a knife pleat, fold the fabric on the foldline and bring the fold to the placement line, following the arrow on the pattern.

Hand-baste or pin each pleat along the folded edge to temporarily secure in place.

Baste across the pleat upper edges.

Refer to "Pressing Pleats" (at right) for how to press the pleat edges before attaching the pleated section to the rest of the garment.

Follow the pattern instructions if edgestitching or topstitching is required for the desired look.

box pleats

Box pleats have two folds that face away from each other on the right side and toward each other on the wrong side (11). The pattern will show two foldlines and two placement lines per pleat. Follow the pattern instructions to fold the pleats; baste as you would a knife pleat; and refer to "Pressing Pleats" (at right) for the correct pressing technique.

inverted pleats

Inverted pleats have folds that turn toward each other on the right side and away from each other on the wrong side (12). The pleat inner portion can be a separate section stitched to the garment piece to add an accent that is seen when the pleat flips open. The pattern will show two foldlines and one placement line per pleat if the pleat is formed from one fabric piece.

pressing pleats

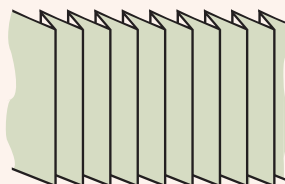
Proper pressing is the key to the best-looking pleats. Pleats can be lightly pressed to create soft folds, or they can be pressed sharp for more distinct folds. Because you will be pressing through several fabric layers, use a steam iron for best results, and always use a press cloth. To eliminate ridges on the garment right side, place strips of brown paper between the pleat folds and the outer garment when pressing.

For soft pleats, lay a dry press cloth over the pleat fold on the garment right side. Lightly steam the pleat by holding the iron about 2" above the area. Allow the fabric to cool and dry before moving the garment.

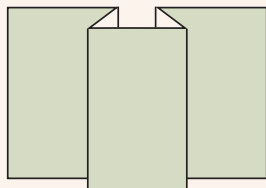
For crisp pleats, lay a damp press cloth over the pleat fold and apply the full pressure of the iron. Press both the right and wrong sides of the pleat, again letting it cool and dry before moving. ➤

Laurie Baker has more than 35 years of sewing experience and is a former *Sew News* editor. She lives in central Illinois with her husband, two children and two cats. She enjoys working as a freelance writer, editor and designer for the sewing, quilting and crafting industries.

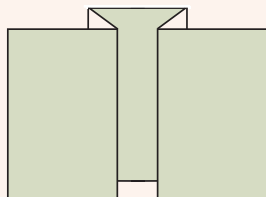
10 Knife Pleats



11 Box Pleat

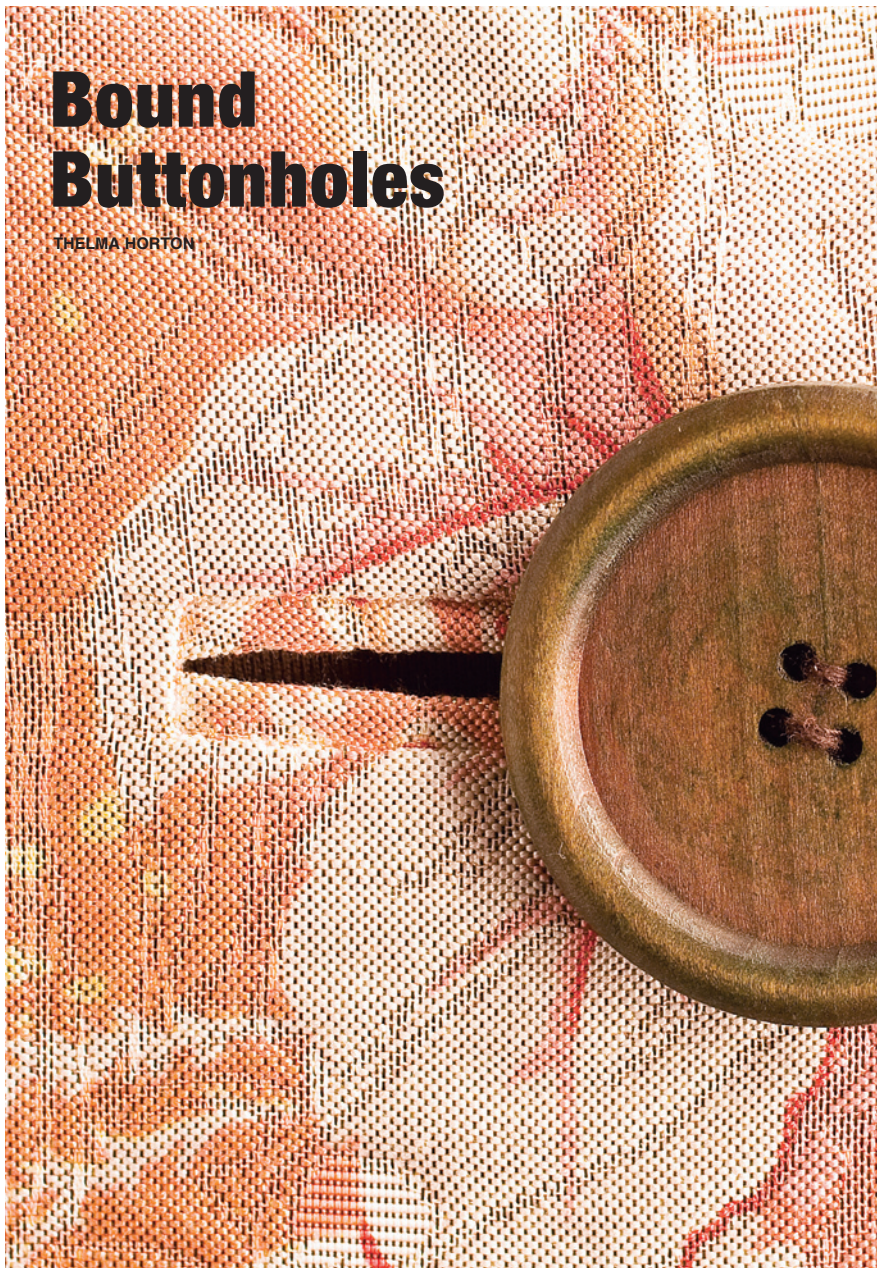


12 Inverted Pleat



Bound Buttonholes

THELMA HORTON



BUTTONHOLES HAVE BEEN AN ESSENTIAL PART of wearing apparel and fashion for decades—both for functional fastening applications and for elaborate decorative applications.

Certain buttonholes are only considered and applied by couturiers and tailors, not the typical home

sewer. Persons in the trade take great pride in the buttonholes they make, and many of them judge the other's skill by their buttonholes alone.

Couturiers use bound buttonholes for a tailored, professional look; hand-worked buttonholes for soft or delicate fabrics; and machine-worked buttonholes

for man-tailored and casual garments. From tailored bound buttonholes to delicate thread loops, decorative buttons to inconspicuous snaps, there's a wide variety of closures to choose from. But a criterion of fine tailoring is bound buttonholes.

Quality Counts

Bound buttonholes are fancier buttonholes that are surrounded by fabric instead of thread. They give a polished look to coats and jackets, tops, blouses and even jeans.

Sewing any type of buttonhole can be nerve-racking and time-consuming, but a well-placed buttonhole makes all the difference in finished projects. The making of perfect buttonholes demands practice and the use of proper tools and materials.

A bound buttonhole is made slightly larger than a standard buttonhole. Make several test samples to check the finished buttonhole length. Before attempting bound buttonholes on the garment, master the technique in the fabric type you're planning to use.

Size Matters

The toughest part about sewing buttonholes is knowing what size to make them.

If you're working with a pattern, the pattern markings usually include exact placement, button size and recommended buttonhole types, unless you've altered the pattern. If so, adjust

Use a contrasting fabric for an inset bound buttonhole to add an unexpected detail to a button-front blouse, dress or jeans.

the buttonholes by evenly spacing them between the top and bottom buttonholes. Or mark the sewing lines for all the buttonholes with whatever spacing, length, and distance from the edge you choose. Make sure to allow enough overlap for proper garment closing.

If you're not sure what size to make the buttonhole, there are several ways to determine the length. Measure the button's diameter plus the thickness, and then add the two. Another option is to cut a slash in scrap fabric until the button slides through, and then measure the cut to find the buttonhole length. If the button is an unusual shape, pin a strip of paper around the fullest part of the button, and then measure the paper between the pin marks.

Bound buttonholes are made from a rectangular window or frame and two approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ "-wide insets or lips. The lips are an even width and meet exactly at the center of the opening. There are several methods for making this kind of buttonhole. Your choice should depend on the fabric, the desired decorative effect and, of course, your personal preference. This timesaving bound-buttonhole technique will help you create an eye-catching garment quickly without the difficulty of tailoring.

Bound for Glory

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Fabric

- Garment fabric (amount indicated by pattern)

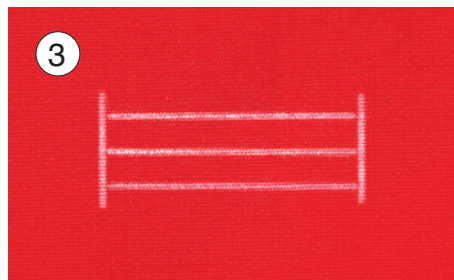
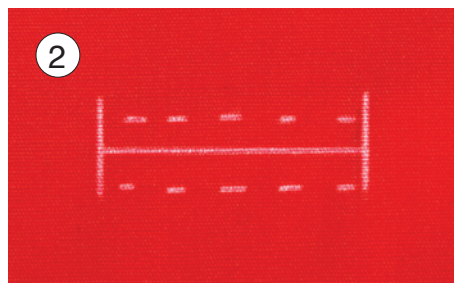
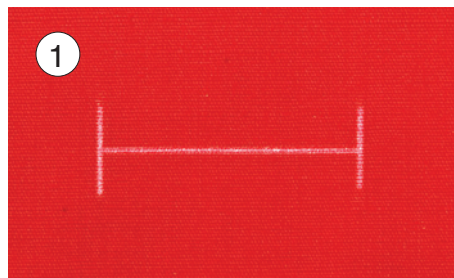
Other

- Garment pattern suitable for bound-buttonhole application
- Disappearing ink pen or marking pencil
- Clear ruler or sewing gauge with $\frac{1}{8}$ " and $\frac{1}{4}$ " markings
- Embroidery scissors
- Press cloth
- Fusible interfacing (amount indicated by pattern)

Cut 3" squares from the garment fabric, cutting one for each buttonhole. Adjust the square size if larger buttonholes are desired. The square should be at least 2" wider and 1" longer than the buttonhole. The fabric squares will become the buttonhole "lips," so use a contrasting fabric for the squares for a unique design element if desired.

Mark the buttonhole positions using the pattern markings as a guide (1).

Using a clear ruler or sewing gauge and marking pen, draw small dots parallel to and $\frac{1}{8}$ " away from either side of the drawn lines (2). The span between dots should only be $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

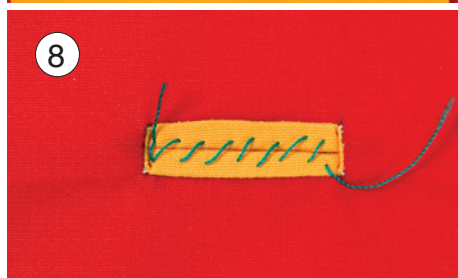
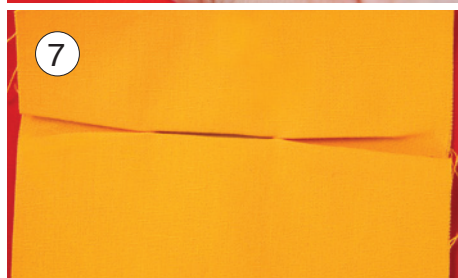


Draw a line through the dots, forming a small rectangular box around the line (3). Repeat for each buttonhole.

Place a pin through the line on the garment wrong side (4).

women vs men

On women's clothes, buttonholes are made on the garment's right-hand side, closing from right to left. On men's clothing, buttonholes are on the garment's left-hand side, closing from left to right.



Contrasting thread was used on the featured samples for readability. When you stitch in the ditch, the stitches won't be visible.

Fold one fabric square in half with right sides facing; press. Position the square over the buttonhole on the garment right side; align the foldline with the pin and unfold the square. Pin the square in place along the outer edges.

Set the machine for a very short straight stitch. Stitch along the outer lines of the drawn box, pivoting at the corners.

Fold the buttonhole in half lengthwise with the fabric right sides facing. Using a pair of very sharp embroidery scissors or a small rotary cutter, cut open the buttonhole. Begin cutting midway through the buttonhole, and end about 1/4" from the edges. Then cut up to, but not through, each corner, forming small triangles (5).

Pull the fabric square through the buttonhole opening to the garment wrong side (6). Work the fabric square so the corners lay flat on the right side.

Press carefully on the garment wrong side, placing a press cloth between the fabric and patch so the patch outline doesn't show on the right side.

Fold the patch upper edge toward the patch lower edge, aligning the edges. Unfold the upper edge so it overlaps the previous fold by 1/4" and encases the buttonhole upper edge; press.

Repeat to fold the patch lower edge (7).

Turn the garment piece so the right side is facing up. Check that each buttonhole lip is balanced and the folds align in the center. Baste the buttonhole lips together (8).

Fold one patch short edge away from the garment fabric to expose one triangular buttonhole end. Stitch across the triangle through the fabric square, stitching back and forth several times and using a very short stitch (9). Repeat to stitch the triangle piece to the other patch side.

Stitch in the ditch of the upper and lower buttonhole seams on the garment right side (10).

Remove the basting stitches.

Repeat the process to create the remaining buttonholes. ∞

Thelma Horton lives in Houston, Texas. She has a degree in Home Economics and has taught hundreds of high school students and adults how to sew. Thelma offers free sewing tips and techniques on her Web site at sew-it-yourself.com. She also authored two e-books: *Sew-It Like a Pro* and *Hem-It Yourself, Hem Finishes*.