Facings

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A facing is used to finish any curved or straight edge of a garment which is not hemmed or otherwise treated. It can be a separate piece of fabric sewn to the garment edge or an extended portion of the outer fabric. A facing is generally folded or turned to the wrong side of a garment, but for decorative purposes, it may be turned to the right side. For a lapel, a finished inside facing is partly rolled or turned to the right side.

Facings are usually made of the same fabric as the garment. However, a smoother or a lighter weight fabric may be used to reduce bulk or increase comfort. Sometimes facings are cut from contrasting fabric to add interest and decoration.

Well-sewn facings have sharp, clean edges which lie smooth and flat. When the facing is turned to the wrong side, neither the seamline nor the facing should be visible on the right side.

**TYPES OF FACINGS**

A *shaped, separate or fitted facing* is a separate piece of fabric which is cut in the same shape and usually on the same grainline as the garment. These facings, along with interfacings, are used on front and back openings, necklines and around the armhole of sleeveless garments. Patterns generally contain facing pattern pieces.

If the pattern does not include facing pieces, or if the design has been changed, a new facing can be created. Use the garment patterns and match the grainline of the pattern with that of the fabric desired for facings. Cut the facing the exact size and shape of the garment edge to be faced. The outer edge (Figure 1) of the facing may be cut any desired width, but is usually 2½ to 4 inches wide.

An *extended facing* is an extension of the outer fabric which is folded under to finish a straight edge. It is used on some front and back openings, cowl necklines and short, cut-on sleeves.

*Bias facings* are cut from a bias strip of fabric and sewn onto curved edges such as necklines and armholes. Bias facings differ from bias bindings because they do not show on the right side of the fabric as does a binding. Bias facings are never interfaced.

**INTERFACING**

The use of interfacing is generally specified in the pattern. If it is not, consider using interfacing in all faced areas such as collarless necklines, sleeveless armholes, front and back openings, and under buttons and buttonholes. Refer to Extension publication, HE-223, “Interfacings,” for selection, layout and types of interfacings.

If a pattern does not include an interfacing pattern piece, use the facing pattern for cutting the interfacing fabric. Interfacings for extended facings are cut to match the facing area only. The method used to attach the interfacing in the garment depends on whether the interfacing is a fusible or a...
sewn-in type and where it is used. Methods to attach interfacings follow:

**Attaching Sewn-in Interfacing to the Garment**

1. Cut off the pointed corners of the interfacing to reduce bulk. If the interfacing was cut following the facing pattern, trim ½ inch from the outer edge — not the center front, center back or neck edge — of the interfacing so that it will be hidden under the facing. Omit this step if a separate interfacing pattern piece was used (Figure 2).

2. Pin the interfacing to the wrong side of the outer garment.

3. Machine stay-stitch the interfacing to the garment along the shoulder, neckline and opening edges, making the stitch line ½ inch from the raw edge. Start stay-stitching at the shoulder and stitch to the center of the neckline. Stay-stitch the front opening from the neckline to the waist and the shoulder from the neck edge toward the armhole (Figure 3).

   If the facing is the extended type, catch-stitch (hand stitch) the interfacing to the garment along the foldline. Make sure that the stitches are invisible on the right side (Figure 4). Stay-stitch the interfacing to the neck and shoulder edges as directed above.

4. Trim the interfacing from the seam allowances, close to the stay-stitching.

**Attaching Sewn-in Interfacing to the Extended Facing**

1. Pin the interfacing to the wrong side of the facing, along the fold line.

2. Machine stitch close to the fold, using either a straight or zigzag-stitch. If the neck edge rolls back to form a lapel, hand catch-stitch the lapel area so that the stitches will not show on the right side.

3. Stay-stitch the neck and shoulder edges of the interfacing to the facing in two operations, making the stitching ½ inch from the raw edge. Begin each stay-stitching at the neck-shoulder point (Figure 5).

4. Trim the interfacing from the seam allowances at the neck and shoulder edges.
Attaching Fusible Interfacing to the Garment

Before interfacing any fabric with a fusible interfacing, be sure to make a test sample. Cut a portion of interfacing fabric which has at least one straight edge that follows the lengthwise yarns. Fuse this to the wrong side of a larger portion of the outer fabric, placing the straight edge of the interfacing along a straight, but inner portion of the outer fabric (Figure 6). Check the following:

- Is the weight of the interfaced fabric correct — not too heavy nor too light? If the interfacing is too heavy, it will give the outer fabric a stiff, board-like appearance. If it is too light, the garment section (lapel, cuff, etc.) will not have enough body for support.

- Does the texture or color of the outer fabric remain the same or has it changed in the interfaced area?

- Is the right side of the outer fabric smooth along the interfacing edge? If there is a ridge on the right side of the outer fabric, cut another piece of interfacing fabric with pinking shears and fuse it to a sample of the outer fabric. If the ridge still shows, do not fuse the interfacing to the garment.

- Fold the unfaced portion of the fabric over the interfacing to simulate a front opening. Is the weight and stability correct? Is there enough stability in the crosswise direction to maintain the shape and length of buttonholes?

- Roll the folded fabric to simulate a lapel or collar. Is the roll as sharp or full as desired? Does the roll form a gentle curve or break into several unwanted points?

If the interfacing passes the above tests, fuse it to the wrong side of the garment. Otherwise, fuse it to the facing. Fusing the interfacing to the wrong side of the garment will make top-stitching and buttonholes easier since the outer fabric is stable.

1. If the interfacing fabric was cut from the facing pattern, trim \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch from all edges of the interfacing to reduce bulk (Figure 7). If the interfacing fabric was cut from an interfacing pattern, match it to the facing to determine which seam allowances should be trimmed. For optimum stability, fusible interfacings should be caught in the seamline when the garment is sewn.

2. Place the fusible side of the interfacing to the wrong side of the fabric to be interfaced, aligning the stitching lines in areas where the interfacing was trimmed.

3. Fuse the interfacing to the fabric following the directions for the specific interfacing. Use pressure as you fuse, bearing down with both hands; and overlap the areas covered by the iron.

4. Do not handle the interfacing fabric until it is cool, so that the fusing compound has time to bond thoroughly.
**Attaching Shaped and Fitted Facings**

1. If you are a novice home sewer or if the facing has a lot of stretch, stay-stitch the facings before attaching them to the garment. With right sides together, stitch the back and front neck facing pieces at the shoulder seams, and armhole facings together at the underarm seam, but refer to the pattern instructions since this procedure may vary with the pattern. Trim the seam allowances on the facing to 1/4 inch. Generally, the seam allowances should be pressed open.

2. Finish the outer edge of the facing by one of the following methods unless it is a knitted fabric which does not ravel and needs no finishing.
   - Light and medium weight fabrics can be stay-stitched 1/4 inch from the edge (Figure 8). Turn the raw edge to the wrong side on the stay-stitching line and top stitch along the fold (Figure 9).
   - Bulky fabrics which ravel a lot can be finished by machine zigzagging along the raw edge (Figure 10).

3. Firmly woven and bulky fabrics which ravel only slightly can be machine stitched 1/4 inch from the outer edge and trimmed to 1/2 inch with pinking shears (Figure 11).

4. Stitch and press the garment seams as directed in the pattern instructions; however, it is easier to attach the neck facing before sewing the underarm seams, setting in the sleeves or sewing the waistline seam. Neckline zippers may be sewn in before or after the facing is attached; but, zippers sewn in with the lapped method are easier if special techniques are used to attach the facing. See the instructions for lapped zippers. The garment should be stay-stitched along the edge where the facing will be attached, if this has not already been done.

5. Pin the facing to the garment, right sides together (unless the finished facing is to be turned to the right side). Match seam lines and notches. Stitch the facing to the garment on the seam line, removing pins as you stitch. As you sew, reinforce the corners by shortening the
stitch length to 15-20 stitches per inch (Figure 12).

5. Grade the seam allowances to reduce bulk. Grading consists of trimming each seam allowance to a different width. If there are no more than two thicknesses of fabric, grade the facing seam allowance to ¼ inch and the garment edge to approximately ¼ inch (reverse these directions if the facing is turned to the right side of the garment, as for a lapel or cuff). When there are more thicknesses of fabric, grade each successive seam allowance to a slightly narrower width, making the seam allowance which lies against the outermost layer of fabric the widest (Figure 13). This step also may be called layering or beveling. Trim excess thickness at seam allowances and darts.

6. Clip curves and corners of the seam allowance so it can spread to fit the larger area onto which it will be turned. Notch the seam allowance (cut V-shaped wedges) along a convex curve so that it will fit the smaller area onto which it will be turned. Clip to the seam line, approximately every ½ inch, being careful not to clip the stitches (Figure 14).

7. At the neck opening, trim off the points close to the stitching. Turn the facing to the wrong side, and flip out the corners with a point Turner. Be careful not to push the point Turner through the stitches (Figure 15).

8. Press the seam allowance under the facing, not under the garment (Figure 16). Understitch the seams so that the finished edge will be sharp and flat and so that the facing will not roll to the right side of the garment. Do this by laying the garment on the machine with the facing opened
out, right side up. Stitch the facing to the seam allowances very close to the seam (Figure 17). If there is a corner, begin and end the under-stitching approximately one inch from the corner. On a facing with a lapel, stop the under-stitching just short of the area where the lapel is folded to the outside of the garment. Note: When the facing is turned to the wrong side of the garment, the understitching does not show on the right side.

9. Turn the facing to the wrong side. Press carefully over a tailor’s ham. Use a press cloth if the fabric has any tendency to shine.

10. Tack the facing to the garment at the seams and darts. The outer edge of the facing is never entirely sewn to the garment (Figure 18).

DECORATIVE FACINGS

Sometimes shaped facings are designed to be a decorative feature of the garment, and the finished facing is turned to the right side of the garment and stitched in place. The interfacing is sewn or fused to the garment or facing as usual, and the back and front facing seams are sewn. The outer edge of the facing is not finished before it is attached to the garment, but it should be stay-stitched 1/2 inch from the raw edge.

Pin and sew the facing to the garment with the wrong sides together. Clip and grade the seam allowances. To make understitching easier, press the seam allowances under the garment, not under the facing. Understitch with the wrong side of the garment up, close to the seam, stitching on the garment and catching the seam allowances. Press and turn the facing to the right side. Turn under the raw edge of the facing seam allowance and top-stitch to the garment, along the fold.

FINISHING ALONG THE ZIPPER

- If CENTERED zipper application is used, the zipper can be sewn into the garment either before or after the facing is attached. Sew the facing to the garment as usual. Trim and clip the seam allowances. Sew in the zipper, if you have not already done so, and trim the bulky zipper tapes from the facing seam allowance. Under-stitch to the ends of the facing. Press under the ends of the facing so they will clear the zipper teeth, and turn the facing to the inside of the garment (Figure 19). Pin and hand stitch the ends of the facing to the zipper tape. The finished facing should be even at the neckline and lower edges and should not be visible on the right side of the garment. Usually a hook and eye are sewn above the zipper (Figure 20).

- If you use the LAPPED method for inserting the zipper, attach the facing before sewing in the zipper.

When you pin the facing to the garment, turn back one inch of the end of the facing on the zipper, lap side only; and trim the seam allowance to ½ inch. Then, stitch the facing to the garment, continuing to the end of the opening. Trim, grade, and clip all seam allowances except the unfaced portion (Figure 21). Understitch the facing to the neckline seam allowance, and turn the facing to the wrong side of the garment. Press.

Insert the zipper using the lapped method. Turn the facing and zipper to the wrong side of the garment. The folded end of the facing will automatically clear the zipper teeth. Hand-stitch the end of the facing and the upper neckline edge in place. Turn the other side of the facing to the
wrong side, and hand stitch the facing to the zipper tape. Finish the lapped placket with a hook sewn on the inside of the garment and an eye sewn to the outside or inside of the garment (Figure 22).

- If you decide to sew in the zipper (lapped method) before sewing on the facing, finish the facing as follows. On the lapped side of the zipper, turn the facing down over the zipper. Mark the top, inner corner of the zipper stop on the facing with a pin or sewing pencil. Clip diagonally to the mark (Figure 23). Turn under the raw edges above the clip, forming a small square. Below the clip, trim off any extra seam allowance and fold the raw edges under, exposing the zipper teeth. Sew securely with small hand stitches. Sew a hook on the wrong side of the overlap above the zipper stop and the eye on the right side of the underlap (Figure 24).
COMBINATION ARMHOLE-NECKLINE FACING

The following method can be used if the garment is sleeveless and has any type of back or front openings — zipped, buttoned or center seam.

1. Join the shoulder seams on the garment, and press the seams open. Do not join the underarm to the center front or back seam of the garment.

2. Join the back and front facings at the shoulder line only. Trim the seam allowance to ¼", and press the seam open (Figure 25).

3. Pin the facing to the garment, right sides together. If the garment will have a center seam or zipper, stitch only around the neck edge. If the garment will be closed with buttons and buttonholes, continue this stitching down the center front or back (Figure 26).

   Grade, clip, turn and stitch this seam as described under ATTACHING SHAPED AND FITTED FACINGS, steps 5 through 8.

4. Return the facing to the right side and stitch the armhole seam. Grade and clip the armhole seam allowance as you did the neckline (Figure 27).

5. Turn the garment right side out by bringing sections A and B through the shoulders toward C (Figure 28). Press and understitch the armhole seams. The understitching will need to be done in four operations, each beginning at the underarm seam and stitching toward the shoulders.

6. Pin and stitch the underarm seams, being sure that the facings are extended or opened out from the garment (Figure 29). If the garment has a center seam or zipper, sew it at this time.

7. Fold the facings inside the garment so that none of the facing shows on the right side. Press. Tack the facing to the garment at the seam allowances (Figure 30) and (if the garment has a zipper) to the zipper tape.
BIAS FACINGS

Bias facing strips can be hand cut from woven or knitted fabric or use single fold, commercial bias tape. Wide bias facings will not lie smoothly on a sharp curve, so a two-inch finished width of bias commonly used for hem facings will not work on a neckline or armhole curve. These sharp curves need tape which has a finished width of ½ to 1 inch. If you decide to use commercial bias tape, begin with step 1.

Make hand cut bias strips from woven fabric by folding the fabric diagonally, so that the crosswise yarns lie along the selvage or on top of the lengthwise threads (Figure 31). Cut along the diagonal fold. From this diagonal edge, measure and cut strips so that they are the finished width plus two seam allowances. If necessary, join bias strips by laying two ends right side together, so that strips form a right angle. Align the yarns of each fabric, and machine stitch across the ends as shown (Figure 32). Trim off extending points.
1. Shape both hand cut and commercial bias so that it will lie flat around the curve. Steam press firmly, stretching one edge while easing the other (Figure 33).

2. To reduce bulk, place the bias on the garment edge with the right sides together, so that the seams in the bias do not lie on top of the garment seams (Figure 34). Let ½ inch of the bias extend beyond any zipper opening. Pin, keeping the bias strip flat.

3. Machine stitch the bias to the neckline on the pattern's designated seam line. Grade, clip and understitch the seam allowance as directed in *ATTACHING SHAPED AND FITTED FACINGS*, steps 5-10.

4. Turn the bias facing to the wrong side of the garment so that no bias shows on the right side (Figure 35). Press.

5. Hand or machine stitch the free edge of the bias facing to the garment.

**References:**


*The Vogue Sewing Book*, Butterick Division of American Can Company.
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