Collars

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service
collars

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On a garment, a collar is a highly-visible mark of sewing ability. If it wrinkles, “rides up” or is uneven, it will spoil the looks of even the nicest outfit.

A collar should feel comfortable, fit smoothly around the back of the neck, and hide the neckline seam. The points, curves, and notches should be symmetrical and identical; and the undercollar should never be visible around the edge of the uppercollar. The collar should hug the neck or stand away, as designed; and the collar points should lie flat against the garment with no tendency to curl.

Interfacing is used in a collar to give a smooth finish plus the desired shape and support. Collars which are not interfaced will become limp after several launderings or drycleanings. The weight of the fabric, the collar type, and the style of the garment will determine the type of interfacing fabric used. For help with selecting, cutting and attaching interfacing fabrics, see Extension publication HE 223, “Interfacings.”

Either the upper, under, or both collars may be interfaced, depending on the weight of the outer fabric and the amount of support needed. Traditionally, only the undercollar was interfaced, but it is usually wise to interface uppercollars if the fabric is sheer (so that the clipped seam allowances and inner construction are hidden) or stretchy (so that the uppercollar has support and lies smooth without wrinkling).

Interfacing fabrics usually are cut so that the direction of greatest stretch goes around the neckline. Refer to Extension publication HE 223, “Interfacings,” for the type and direction of stretch for various interfacing fabrics.

1. To eliminate bulk, trim the points from the interfacing so that they will not extend into the seam line (Figure 1). If the interfacing will be fused to the outer fabric, trim 3/8 inch of the seam allowance from the interfacing fabric before fusing.

2. Fuse the interfacing to the garment following the directions for the fusible interfacing, or sew the interfacing to the collar with directional stay-stitching (Figure 2).

3. Pin the uppercollar to the undercollar, right sides together, matching notches and construction details. With the interfacing side up, stitch the outer edge and ends of the collar (leave the neck edge open). Reinforce the corners and curves with short stitches, approximately 15-20 stitches per inch (Figure 3). Take one small stitch diagonally across the collar point so that the seam allowance can be trimmed close to eliminate bulk when the collar is turned (Figure 4).

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4. To eliminate bulk, trim the seam allowances so that the undercollar is 1/8 inch wide and the uppercollar is 1/4 inch wide. If the fabric ravel easily, leave the seam allowance slightly wider (Figure 5). The interfacing is trimmed as close to the stitching as possible. Clip the seam allowance to the stitching line, and clip small notches along the seam allowance on round collars for a smooth turn (Figure 6).

5. Press the collar flat, then open the collar and press the seam allowances open. Finally, press all seam allowances toward the undercollar. To make this task easier, press over a point presser or tailor's board.

6. Understitch the seam allowances to the undercollar so that the seam line and undercollar will stay hidden when the garment is worn. On round collars, understitch the entire seam (after notching), but on pointed collars, start and stop the understitching 1½ inches from the points (Figure 7).

7. Turn the collar right side out, and either push out the corners carefully with a point pusher, or pull them out with a pin. Check to see that both corners or curves are identical. The raw edges at the neckline will be uneven since the uppercollar has been brought over the outer edge by the understitching. Do not try to pull the edges even; instead, accentuate this difference before stitching by folding the collar over your hand as it will be worn and pinning the layers together (Figure 8). When sewing the collar to the garment, match the raw edge of the undercollar to the neckline. This creates a narrow seam allowance on the uppercollar.

8. Press the collar on the wrong side. If the collar is to be sewn to the garment in one operation along with a facing, or if the collar is sewn to a stand, it can be topstitched at this time. If the uppercollar is stitched to the facing and the undercollar is stitched to the neckline, topstitching should be delayed until after the collar is sewn to the garment.
ONE-PIECE COLLAR
A one-piece collar may be interfaced completely or have interfacing only on the under portion. If the whole collar is interfaced, use a lightweight interfacing and pin it to the wrong side of the collar. Hand stitch the interfacing to the collar along the fold line with tiny stitches that are invisible on the right side. Start and end the stitching about 1 inch from the ends of the collar (Figure 9). Machine stay-stitch 1/2 inch from the outer edges.

If only the under portion of the collar is interfaced, hand stitch the interfacing to the fold line with tiny stitches that are invisible on the right side. Machine stay-stitch the other edges of the interfacing to the fabric, making a 1/2 inch seam (Figure 10). If the collar is cut on the bias or if the fabric is stretchy, machine stay-stitch the other edges of the collar as well.

If fusible interfacing is used, fuse it to the whole collar or to the under portion only. Be sure to trim the seam allowances to 3/8 inch before fusing to eliminate bulk.

1. After interfacing, fold the collar in half lengthwise along the fold line, and stitch the ends, reinforcing the corners with short machine stitches. Trim the corners, and grade the seam allowance at the ends of the collar to reduce bulk (Figure 11).
2. Understitch the seam allowance to the undercollar, stitching as far as possible into the points or corners of the collar.
3. Turn the collar right side out, and either push out the corners carefully with a point pusher, or pull them out with a pin.
4. Press the collar on the wrong side.

ATTACHING THE COLLARS WITH FACINGS
A collar can be sewn to the neckline in several ways, depending on the style of the garment. The pattern instruction guide will give the best method for your garment; however, several methods are given here for your information.

Before attaching the collar, stay-stitch the neckline of the garment 1/2 inch from the raw edge. If the collar is straight, clip the neckline of the garment to the stay-stitching so that the neck edge can spread to fit the straight collar edge.

A two-section collar must be sewn together before attaching, to prevent it from spreading. Overlap the ends so that the edges meet at the neck seam line, and baste together (Figure 12).

With A Neck Facing
1. Pin the collar, right side up, to the right side of the garment. Match the notches, and center front and back marks (Figure 13).
2. Join the back neck facing to the front facings. Trim and press open the seam allowances. If the outer edge of the facing needs finishing, do this before attaching the facing to the collar.
3. Pin the facing, wrong side up, over the collar, matching the notches and shoulder seams. If all pins are placed in the garment perpendicular to the seam, they can be left in the fabric and removed just in front of the needle when stitching (Figure 14).

4. With the facing side up, stitch around the neckline, making an even, 5/8 inch seam. After stitching, check all the layers of the seam for small tucks or folds that may have been accidentally caught in the stitching. Rip these areas, smooth out the mistakes, and restitch.

5. Grade the neckline seam, leaving the garment edge about 3/8 inch wide and trimming each layer shorter until the facing seam is only about 3/16 inch wide. Clip the seam to the stitching around the neckline approximately every 1/2 inch (Figure 15). At the ends of the neckline seam, trim the corners diagonally to help eliminate bulk.

6. Press the neckline seam, and turn the facing to the inside of the garment. Tack the facing at the seam allowances only (Figure 16). Never sew the facing to the garment because it will pull the fabric after it is worn and laundered.

Notched Collars in Heavy Fabric
1. If the under and uppercollars are both cut from the same pattern piece, trim 1/8 to 1/4 inch from the outer edge (not the edge which will be sewn to the neckline) of the undercollar. Reposition the seam line to make the seam 5/8 inch from the new edge. This step decreases the width of the undercollar and helps to keep it from showing when the collar is attached to the garment. After trimming, construct the collar as usual, except end the stitching 5/8 to 3/4 inch from the neck edge (Figure 17).

2. Pin the undercollar to the neck edge, right sides together, matching the notches and markings. Stitch between the markings, securing the stitching at the beginning and end (Figure 18). Clip and trim seam allowance to 3/8 inch. Press the seam allowance open.

3. Join the back and front facing pieces; trim and press the seam allowances open. Finish the outer edge of the facing, if needed, and stay-stitch the neck edge. Clip the neckline seam allowance to the stitching.

4. Pin the uppercollar to the facing, right sides together; and stitch between the markings (Figure 19), securing the beginning and ending of the machine stitching. Clip the seam allowance, and press open.

5. Stitch the facing to the garment, across the top of the lapel. Begin stitching at the outer corner of the lapel, and stitch into the center of the notch, backstitching to secure the threads (Figure 20). Check to be sure that every seam allowance is accurate and that both lapels are identical.

6. Grade and clip the seam allowance across the top of the lapel. Turn the facing to the inside and press.
7. Try on the garment, and check the roll line of the uppercollar and lapels, making sure that neither the undercollar nor the back neck seam line shows. Pin along the roll line (Figure 21).

8. Hand stitch both neck seams together as they fall, making no attempt to align the neck seams (Figure 22).
**Shawl Collar**

A shawl collar is cut as part of the garment front, and the outer edge may be notched, curved or scalloped.

1. Interface the front opening and undercollar area. Stay-stitch the exact seam lines and corners of the neckline and shoulder seams on the back and front pieces. Clip the inside corner diagonally to the stitching (Figure 23). Stitch the back and front shoulder seams together between the markings, backstitching at both ends to secure the threads (Figure 24).

2. Stitch the center back collar seam. Trim and press the seam allowance. Pin the collar to the back neck edge, clipping at the neck edge where necessary. Stitch between the markings, securing the threads at both ends with backstitching (Figure 25). Trim and press the seam allowance toward the collar.

3. Stay-stitch the neckline and inside corner of the facing pieces. Clip the inside corner diagonally to the stitching. Zigzag or turn and stitch the outer edge of the facing pieces (Figure 26). Join the center back seam. Trim and press open.

4. Pin the facing to the garment matching the notches, right sides together. Stitch, grade the seam and press (Figure 27).

5. Turn under the edge of the facing along the back, neck and shoulder seams, and hand stitch in place (Figure 28).
COLLARS WITHOUT A FACING

Some shirts and casual jackets have front bands and no neckline facings. Prepare collars for these garments by applying the interfacing to the collar as usual.

1. Stay-stitch the undercollar along the neck edge; press under the seam allowance and trim to 1/4 inch (Figure 29).

2. Pin the uppercollar to the undercollar, right sides together; and construct the collar as usual (Figure 30). Understitch the outer edge of the collar only, not the ends. Press the ends of the collar so that the seam line is right at the edge. Turn and press the collar.

3. Interface, stitch and turn the garment front openings. Stay-stitch and clip the garment neck edge. Pin the uppercollar to the neck edge, right sides together, matching the centers and markings. Stitch, trim, grade and clip the seam (Figure 31). Press the seam allowance toward the collar.

4. Pin the folded edge of the undercollar over the neck seam, and hand or machine stitch in place (Figure 32).
With A Separate Stand

Man-tailored shirts have collars with stands—a separate collar piece which stands up under the collar and is referred to as a band.

1. Begin by constructing the collar as usual. Interface the outer band piece, or, for more firmness, both the outer and inner band may be interfaced. Usually, the interfacing for the band is cut from interfacing fabric with very little stretch, and the most stable direction of the interfacing goes around the neckline. Refer to Extension publication HE 223, "Interfacings," for more information.

2. Stay-stitch the garment edge of the interfaced band (not the collar edge). Press under and trim the seam allowance (Figure 33).

3. Position the right side of the outer band to the right side of the undercollar and the right side of the underband to the right side of the uppercollar. Pin the unit together (Figure 34). Stitch the collar edge and ends of the band together, to within 5/8 inch of the neck edge. Trim, grade, clip and notch the seam allowances. Turn the band and press. The band now encases the collar (Figure 35).

4. Interface, stitch and turn the garment front opening. Stay-stitch and clip the garment neck edge. Pin the right side of the undercollar band to the wrong side of the garment neck edge. Stitch (Figure 36) and trim. Press the seam toward the collar band.

5. On the right side, pin the folded edge of the outer collar band over the seam. Topstitch the lower edge of the collar band, stitching from front to back on each side (Figure 37).

Note: If topstitching is not desired, apply the collar band to the garment in reverse. Pin and stitch the outer band to the right side of the neck edge. Turn under and hand stitch the inner band to the neck edge.

References: