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BINDINGS

by Lois M. Gotwals, Extension Clothing Specialist

Bindings are used to finish a raw edge and provide a narrow, decorative trim. Bindings, which are purchased ready for sewing, are either knitted or bias cut strips of woven fabric.

Bias woven binding is a strip of fabric cut at a forty-five degree angle to the lengthwise and crosswise threads of woven fabric. This is the direction of greatest stretch and flexibility. Thus, bias strips can be sewn into a curve without wrinkling. Knitted bindings are not bias strips because they are not cut diagonally from fabric, but the knitting process gives the strip flexibility and makes it a useful binding.

SINGLE-BIAS STRIPS

Hand cut bias strips may be cut singly or as a continuous bias strip. If a small amount of bias is needed, it is economical to cut each strip singly.

Single-bias strips are cut 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 1). Cut along the diagonal fold. From this diagonal edge, measure the desired width of the strip and cut as many strips as needed. Trim the ends of the strips so they follow the yarn of the fabric and are diagonal to the length of the strip.

Join bias strips by placing two ends, right sides together, so the strips form a right angle. Align the strips so that a small triangle extends at each side; and machine stitch across the ends as shown, using a very short stitch (Figure 2). Trim off the extending triangles, and press the seam allowance open.

CONTINUOUS BIAS STRIPS

Cut a square or rectangle of fabric which exactly follows the lengthwise and crosswise yarns of the fabric. Fold one corner diagonally, so that the crosswise yarns of one layer lie on top of the lengthwise yarns of the layer underneath (Figure 3). Cut along the diagonal fold. From this diagonal edge, measure the desired width of the bias strips, and mark the cutting lines for as many strips as possible on the wrong side of the fabric. (Figure 4). Cut off the remaining diagonal end of the fabric. Exactly align the cutting lines, forming a tube so that the end of the first bias strip joins the beginning of the second strip and the seam spirals around the tube (Figure 5). Machine stitch a 1/4 inch seam using a very short stitch length, and cut along the marked lines for one long continuous bias strip (Figure 6).

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA 47907
COMMERCIAL BIAS TAPES

Commercial bias tapes are available in single and double fold tapes. Single folded bias tape has both raw edges folded under, and it is rolled or folded again when used as a binding. Double folded bias tape has both edges folded under, plus a slightly off-center fold. Generally, these two types of commercial bias tapes can be used interchangeably.

KNITTED BINDINGS

Bindings of knitted fabric are hand cut across (not diagonally) the fabric for greatest stretch flexibility. They are then sewn to the garment following instructions for bias strips with one exception. Since knitted bindings do not ravel, the edge which is turned to the wrong side of the garment does not need to be turned under during the final stitching. Commercial knitted bindings are knit in a continuous strip, and both sides of the strip are finished during the knitting process.

SHAPING

Before hand cut bias is used, it should be steamed and stretched to prevent seam line wobbling. Do this by steam pressing the strip while stretching it with the other hand. Depending on the fabric and the amount of stretch, the strip may become narrower in the process. Thus, cut and stretch a test strip of bias before determining the desired width of other strips.

To fold hand cut bias so that it is much like commercial binding, fold the strip lengthwise, wrong sides together, and press lightly. Open the strip, and fold both raw edges toward the center. Press. Single fold bias is ready for shaping, but double fold should be refolded in the center and pressed again.

Shape hand cut and commercial bias strips to fit around a curve by steam pressing the strip into the desired shape. Stretch one edge slightly while shrinking excess fullness along the other edge with the steam iron (Figure 7). This process is called swirling.
SEWING METHODS

Several methods can be used to attach binding, and commercial or hand cut bindings may be used interchangeably. If commercial double fold bias is used, the narrow side is stitched to the garment first. Commercial fold-over braid may be attached by the slip-on method or its variation.

If the pattern was designed for binding, check the pattern directions to see if the seam allowance has already been trimmed. If the pattern is not designed for binding, trim the seam allowance from the edge to be bound. Stay-stitch the garment edge at $3/16$ inch to maintain the shape of the curve.

REGULAR METHOD

1. Use commercial bias or cut binding strips four times the finished width. Hand cut strips should be stretched and folded. Swirl hand cut and commercial bias to fit the shape of garment edge.

2. Pin one unfolded edge of the binding to the garment, right sides together. Machine stitch the binding to the garment making the seam allowance width the same as the finished width of the bias (Figure 8).

3. Fold the strip up and over the seam allowance to the wrong side of the garment.

4. Fold under the raw edge of the binding, and either hand stitch the fold to the wrong side of the garment (Figure 9) or stitch-in-the-ditch. To stitch-in-the-ditch, pull the fold on the wrong side beyond the first stitching and pin securely. Machine stitch on the right side of the garment — close to, but not on the binding, so that the underneath fold is caught in the stitching (Figure 10). Note: If you desire to finish the bias with machine topstitching, pin and stitch the right side of the binding to the wrong side of the garment. Fold the strip up and over the seam allowance to the right side, and machine topstitch the binding in place (Figure 11).
SLIP-ON VARIATION
This quick and easy method uses hand cut or commercial double fold bias tape or knitted fold-over braid.

1. Slip the binding over the raw edge of the garment so that the raw edge is encased within the fold. Make sure that the wider edge of the binding is on the wrong side of the garment, and pin securely in place.

2. From the right side of the garment, machine top-stitch the binding to the garment, stitching through both edges of the binding (Figure 12). If topstitching is not desired on knitted fold-over braid, machine stitch the right side of the narrow edge of the braid to the wrong side of the garment edge (Figure 13), and hand stitch the free edge to the right side of the garment (Figure 14).

DOUBLE OR FRENCH BINDING
1. This method is used only on sheer or very lightweight fabrics. Cut the binding strip six times the finished width.

2. Fold the strip in half lengthwise, right side out, and press.

3. Pin both raw edges of the binding to the right side of the garment. Machine stitch, making a seam allowance which equals the width of the finished binding (Figure 15).

4. Fold the strip up and over the seam allowance to the wrong side of the garment.

5. Hand stitch the folded edge to the machine stitching line (Figure 16), or roll the binding so that the fold extends beyond the first stitching line and stitch-in-the-ditch as described earlier. Note: If you want to finish the bias with machine topstitching, pin and stitch the binding to the wrong side of the garment. Fold the strip up and over the seam allowance to the right side, and machine stitch the binding in place.
BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

There are two methods for joining bindings which are sewn in a continuous circle, such as a neckline that does not have a zipper or button opening. The seamed joining gives a professional finish, but the lapped joining is quick and easy. Always start sewing so that the joining is located at an inconspicuous spot, such as the center back neckline or close to an underarm seam.

SEAMED JOININGS

When beginning to stitch the binding to the garment, leave approximately two inches of binding free. Also, stop the stitching before you reach the end, and leave another two inches of binding free. Fold the garment so that the binding strips are at right angles and the binding fits the garment edge. Open any fold in the binding, and seam together on the straight of the grain, following a thread of the binding (Figure 17). Trim the seam allowance to 1/4 inch, and press open. The binding seam will be diagonal to the edges of the binding. Finish sewing the binding to the garment.

LAPPED JOININGS

Before stitching the binding to the garment, fold 1/2 inch of the end of the binding to the wrong side, following a yarn on the binding. Begin sewing the binding to the garment, stitching over the folded end (Figure 18). When you’ve finished stitching the binding to the garment, cut the other end of the binding following a yarn and so that it laps 1/2 inch over the beginning of the binding (Figure 19). Finish the stitching.

ENDINGS

Bindings which end at the seam or opening require different finishing. Insert the zipper, or attach the facing before the binding is sewn to the garment. Allow the ends of the binding to extend beyond both ends of the opening, and complete the first stitching for a regular or double binding. Trim the ends of the binding so they extend only 1/4 inch beyond the garment, and trim the corner of the garment seam allowance on the diagonal to eliminate bulk. Fold in the ends of the binding even with the opening (Figure 20), and fold the binding to the other side of the garment. Machine or hand stitch the binding to the first stitching line.

Bindings sewn with the slip-on method should have from 1/4 to 1/2 inch of the binding turned in before the binding is machine stitched to the garment. Some bulk can be eliminated by trimming the corners of all seam allowances before attaching the binding.
MITERED CORNERS
The secret to flat, neat corners is mitering—forming a diagonal fold at the inside and outside corners. Mitering can be done by the folded or slip-on method. The folded method is applicable for hand cut or commercial bindings which are sewn on the garment with regular or double binding techniques. The slip-on method works easiest with commercial, double fold bias tape or fold-over braid.

FOLDED METHOD
For corners, stitch the binding exactly to the point where the seam lines cross and backstitch (Figure 21); cut the thread. Fold the binding back on itself, so that it is in the stitching position along the opposite edge (Figure 22). Begin stitching the bias strip to the garment at the exact point where the first stitching ended. Turn the binding over to the other side of the garment, and form a second miter with the fold in the opposite direction from the first miter. Hand or machine stitch the binding in place, and hand or machine stitch the miter fold (Figure 23).

Corners should be reinforced, then bound by stay-stitching close to the seam line with small machine stitches and clipping into the corner, but not through the stitches (Figure 24). Stitch the binding to the garment, stopping at the corner (Figure 25). Lower the needle and raise the presser foot to spread the clipped corner. Align the binding to the garment, lower the presser foot and continue stitching, being careful to keep the seam line flat (Figure 26). Form a miter at the corner by folding the binding diagonally. Turn the binding over the edge to the other side of the garment, and form a second miter with the fold in the opposite direction from the first miter. Hand or machine stitch the binding, and miter and fold in place.
SLIP-ON MITERS
This method is quick and easy when you use commercial double fold bias tape or fold-over braid. On outside corners, stitch the binding along one side completely to the edge of the fabric, and cut thread (Figure 27). Bring the binding around the corner, folding a miter on both sides of the fabric. Start stitching again at the miter fold, and finish attaching the binding (Figure 28). Hand or machine stitch the miter fold, especially if the binding is wide.

Reinforce inside corners by stay-stitching close to the seam line with small machine stitches before attaching the binding. Clip into the corner, but not through the stitches. Slip the binding over the raw edge of the fabric, and machine stitch to the corner stitching (Figure 29). Cut the thread, and form a miter on both sides of the binding. Start stitching again at the miter fold, and finish attaching the binding (Figure 30). Hand or machine stitch the miter fold, especially if the binding is wide.

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