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U. Y. THOMPSON

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## FRONT & BACK INTERFACING *for jackets*



Extension Service  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture Cooperating with the  
U.S. Department of Agriculture and the College of Home Economics  
J. L. Adams, Director



## MENSWEAR: FRONT AND BACK INTERFACING FOR JACKETS

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Methods of tailoring menswear have increased within the last few years. Fusing products have been used in tailoring to add a new element. Unstructured tailoring with few interfacings, often with no lining or shoulder pads, has introduced a casual look. Techniques used in constructing women's wear have been used in some men's jackets to gain a similar appearance. In others, basic construction techniques have been used to produce a washable garment.

Each method has given a different kind of appearance to a jacket. Still preferred by the man who wants a well tailored look is the structured jacket which requires the finer and more complicated procedures.

Traditionally, menswear tailoring has been founded upon custom-tailored techniques requiring many fine hand stitches. Manufacturers have reproduced this look by using a sewing machine. The individual who wants to tailor a jacket at home can use techniques from both the custom tailor and the manufacturer. This circular covers the method of preparing and applying front and back interfacings needed in the custom-tailored jacket.

Interfacings, though hidden in the well tailored jacket, are important to:

- keep the fabric from stretching in areas of strain such as shoulders, armholes and front edges.

- give crispness to particular design features such as pocket flaps, pockets, vents, sleeve hems and occasionally jacket hems.

- build shape and silhouette where it is needed, such as through the shoulder areas.

- preserve the tailored and pressed appearance of a well made garment.

Several layers of fabric are used on the front interfacing to mold and smooth the lines through the shoulder area. As you construct the interfacings work with both fronts at the same time to be sure that you have right and left interfacings.

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

In a structured jacket use a canvas interfacing consisting of polyester or rayon with cotton plus

some goat hair. If this is not available, use the cotton and rayon or cotton and polyester canvas. About two yards of interfacing canvas should be enough for the front interfacing plus undercollar interfacing and shoulder pads.

Since menswear interfacing is built up through the shoulder and chest area, you will also need about 1/2 to 2/3 yards of lightweight cotton, rayon or wool felt. Fairly good substitutes, if felt is not available, are pre-shrunk lambswool, lightweight wool flannel or a good grade of cotton flannel. White is the usual color but any light color that will not show through or bleed in color will be satisfactory.

Preshrunk, unbleached muslin or a similar lightweight, but firmly woven, fabric can be used in some areas instead of the hair canvas. About half a yard should be sufficient.

### PATTERNS FOR INTERFACINGS

Additional shaping and strength is gained if the interfacing extends about halfway across the jacket front and below the armhole. Patterns often do not have the interfacing extend this far (Fig. 1). Place the interfacing piece on the front jacket piece to check.

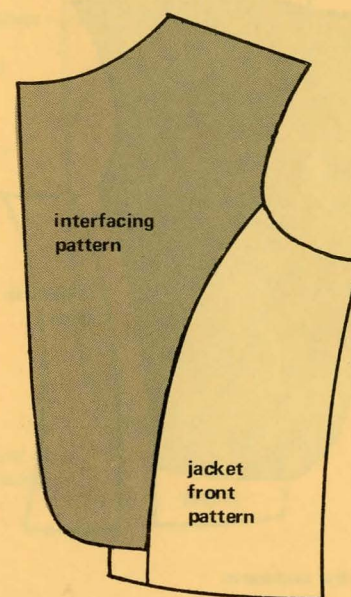


Fig. 1. Check interfacing with pattern



To cut your own interfacing pattern, superimpose a piece of paper on the front garment pattern and mark a line about 3" below the armhole seam. Extend the lower line of the interfacing piece out about halfway between the front and side seams. A curved line is drawn to connect the two points (Fig. 2). Trace the new interfacing shape on the tracing paper. The interfacing also can be extended to the seam joining the front and underarm sections (Fig. 3).

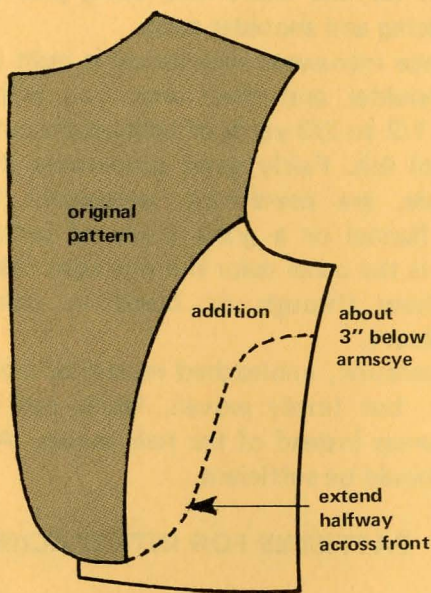


Fig. 2. Draw your own addition

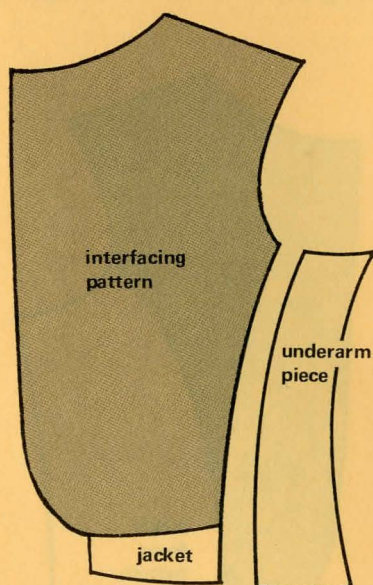
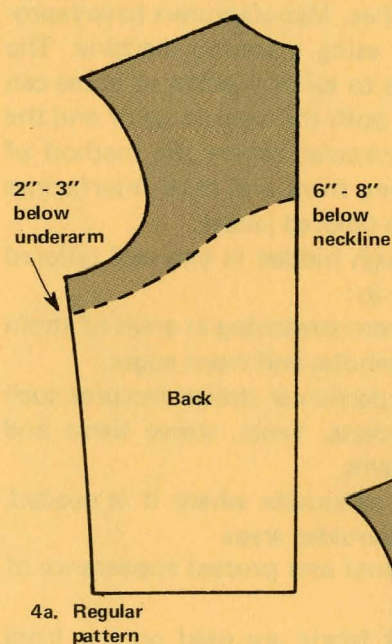


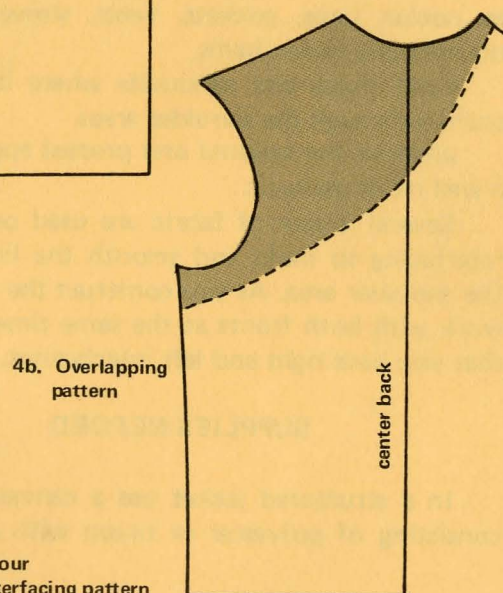
Fig. 3. Adapt to the underarm piece

Back interfacing pieces are not commonly used with men's jackets, but this additional reinforcement may be desired at times. Superimpose a piece of paper over the back pattern piece. Make a mark 2" to 3" below the underarm seam and another 6" to 8" below the center neckline seam. Draw a curved line between the two points and finish tracing the back interfacing from the back jacket pattern (Fig. 4a). If you have a half lining in the back, check the back interfacing pattern with the lining pattern. Trim off the lower edge of the interfacing pattern, if necessary, so that it will not show below the lining. This back interfacing is usually cut from muslin or a similar lightweight interfacing fabric. It is usually cut on the straight grain for woven, but a bias cut may work better for knits.

Another possibility is overlapping interfacing pattern for greater give. The procedure for drawing the pattern is similar to that of the regular interfacing except that a wing extends from the center back to the opposite shoulder. Each wing is cut separately and one overlaps the other (Fig. 4b).



4a. Regular pattern



4b. Overlapping pattern

Fig. 4. Draw your own interfacing pattern



The underarm area may become too bulky if you extend hair canvas interfacing under the arm. If so, substitute a muslin strip cut on the same grain as the canvas for part of the hair canvas in this underarm area. The strip can be used for either a one or two-part front. You may cut this pattern when you cut the front interfacing or you may wait to check on the amount of bulk and cut and shape the strip later.

The muslin will be joined to the haircanvas by a strip of seam tape. Hold in place with zig zag stitches or a couple of rows of straight stitching along the tape. Curve the piece for the muslin as it enters the back portion if you have no back interfacing (Fig. 5). If you do cut a back interfacing, the pattern for the muslin strip can be cut straight on the edge that will join the back interfacing (Fig. 6).

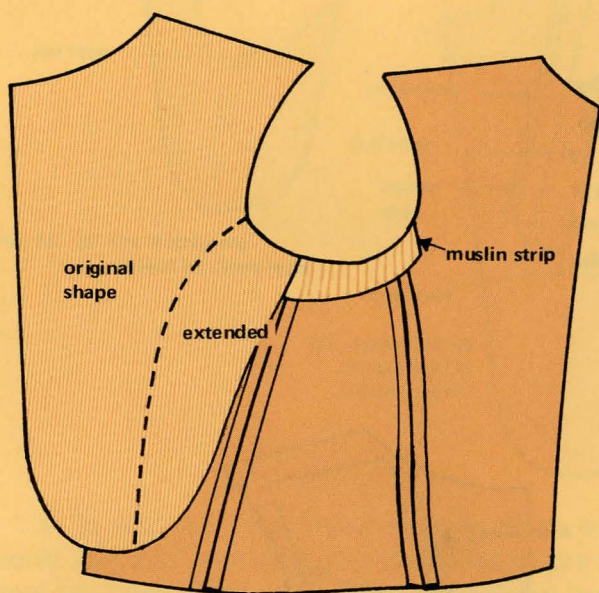


Fig. 5. No back interfacing  
muslin strip added

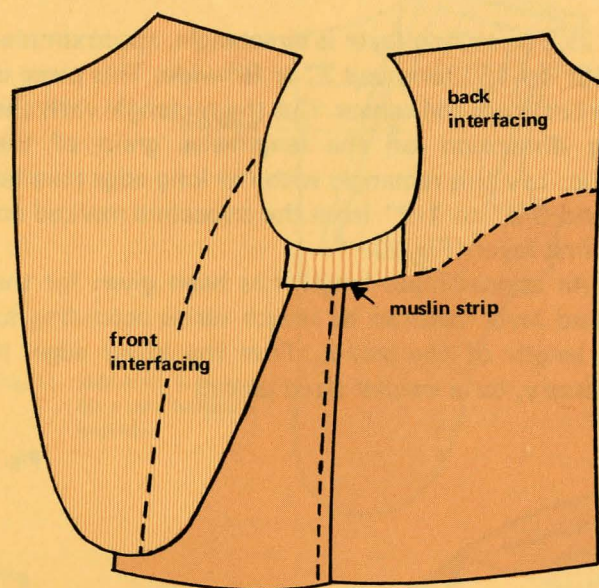


Fig. 6. Back interfacing added  
muslin strip added

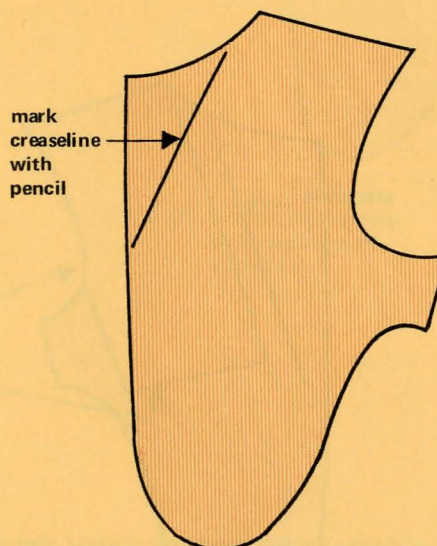


Fig. 7. 1st layer of  
interfacing

## PREPARING FRONT INTERFACINGS

1. The first layer serves as the base and is cut from the interfacing pattern. This layer should be cut from the canvas. Mark the creaseline with pencil on this layer (Fig. 7). Place this layer out on a flat surface and position the other layers upon it before final assembly.



2. The second layer is a rectangle, approximately 12" to 15" long and 7" to 8" wide. This piece is also cut from the canvas. Cut the rectangle with the long dimension on the lengthwise grain of the fabric. Lay this rectangle with the long edge parallel to and  $\frac{3}{8}$ " to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the creaseline marked on the first layer (Fig. 8).

An approximate length has been given for the second layer because its length varies according to the length of the jacket. Trim the lower edge, if necessary, for a smaller sized jacket.

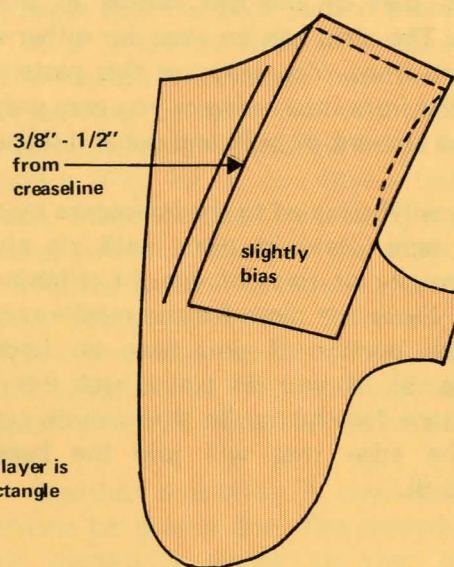


Fig. 8. 2nd layer is a rectangle

Shape the piece to fit the neckline, shoulder and armhole lines after you place it in position (Fig. 9a). If you prefer, the rectangle can be graded so that it does not extend to the edges of the first layer (Fig. 9b). The size of jacket may determine this for you as the rectangle may not reach the outer edges on the larger sizes.

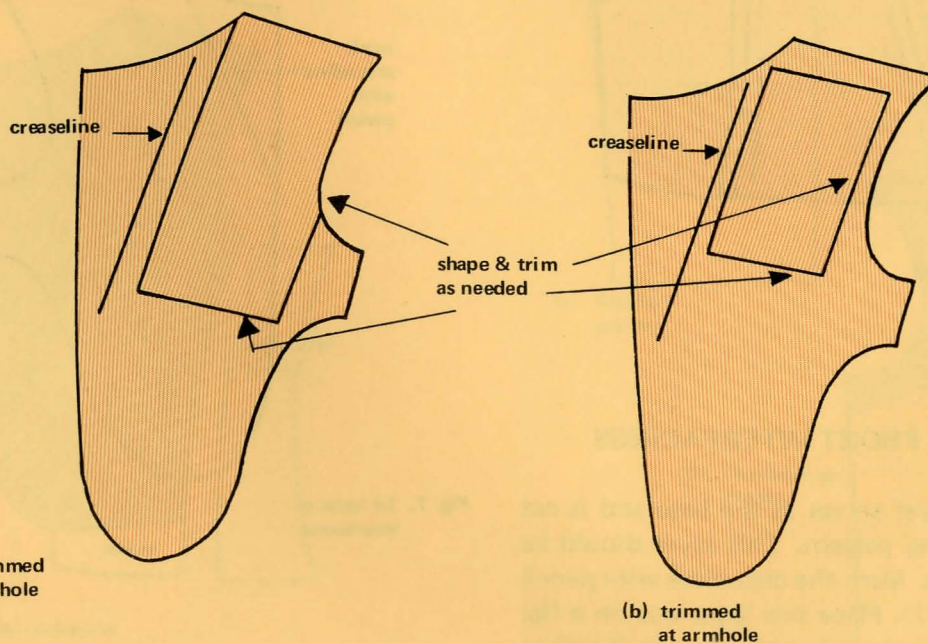


Fig. 9. (a) untrimmed at armhole



3. The third layer will be 18" to 24" long and will be cut from the felt. Follow the interfacing pattern between the armhole and creaseline (Fig. 10a). The armhole edges may be trimmed out if you feel they will add too much bulk to the garment seam. Make sure that the edge along the creaseline is graded so that it does not meet the edge of the second layer. Muslin strips cut on the same grain as the felt may be substituted under the arm or along the creaseline if you run short of felt or if the felt is heavy (Fig. 10b).

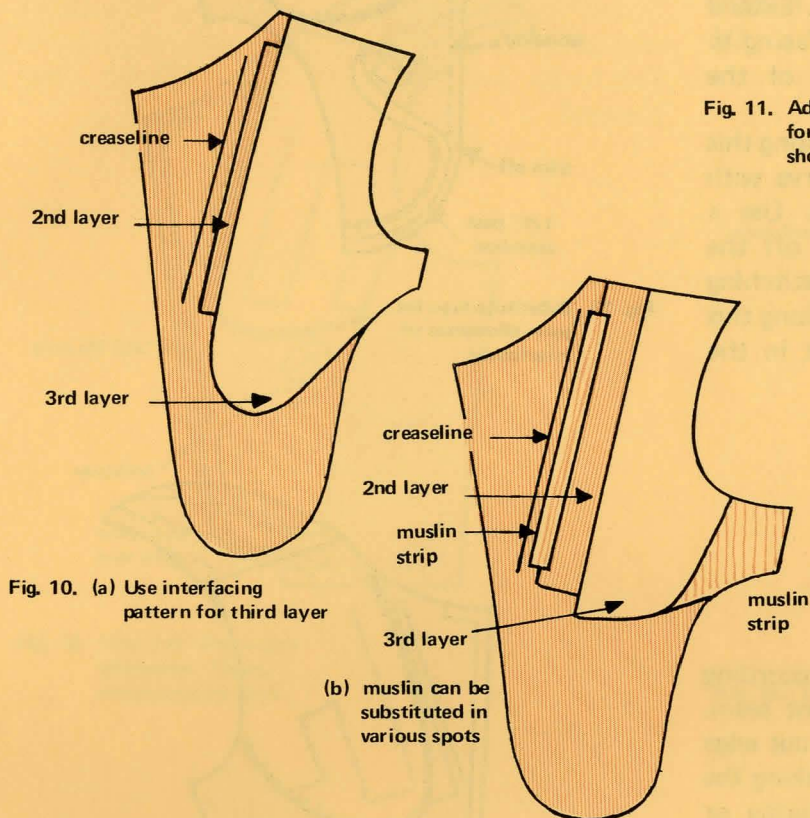


Fig. 10. (a) Use interfacing pattern for third layer

(b) muslin can be substituted in various spots

4. If the individual has a hollow chest, additional layers of interfacing may be added before the final felt layer is put on. Cut these additional layers on the bias of canvas. Take care that they are of different sizes so that edges do not lay directly on top of each other (Fig. 11).

5. Make several widely spaced rows of stitches to hold the layers. The rows may be 3" to 4" apart. These may be wide zigzag, long machine stitches or diagonal hand basting stitches. Follow the straight of grain and leave the portion through the shoulder area unstitched (Fig. 12).

The shoulder pad is slipped into place at this time between the first and second layers to give a better fit when the garment is fully assembled. Baste it in place until after the first fitting of the jacket.

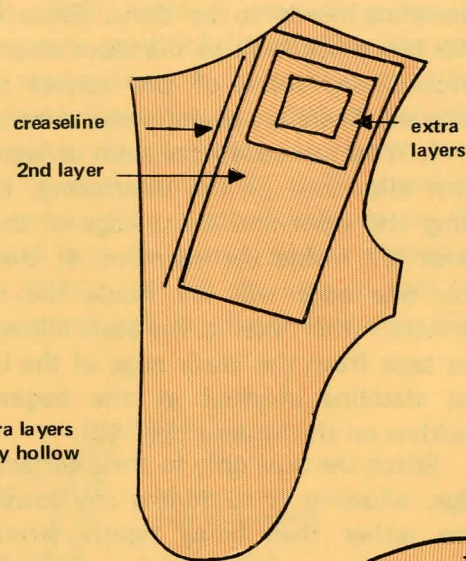


Fig. 11. Add extra layers for a very hollow shoulder

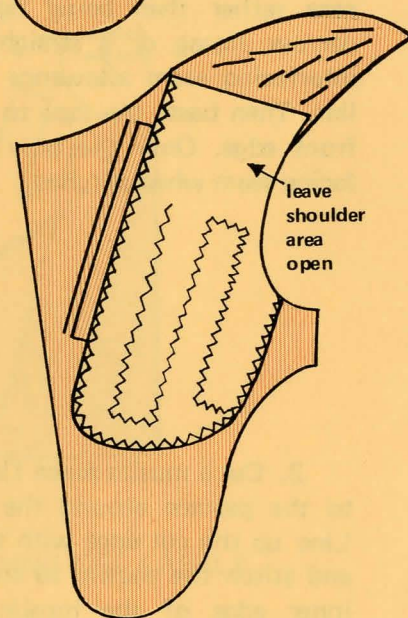


Fig. 12. Hold layers together by several rows of stitching

## APPLYING THE FRONT INTERFACING

Before applying the interfacing, be sure that any darts or underarm pieces are stitched in the garment front. Pockets are also usually applied to the garment front. Press the garment front and interfacing before proceeding.



Lay the front interfacing on the garment to check how much trimming of the interfacing seam allowance needs to be done. Since canvas often adds too much bulk to the seam when the facing is stitched on, some of the canvas needs to be removed. There are several ways to handle this.

1. You can substitute seam or hem tape for the seam allowance of the interfacing. Lay the tape along the lapel and front edge of the interfacing about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " inside the seamline of the interfacing. This one edge will lay inside the body of the garment rather than in the seam allowance. Extend the tape from the lower edge of the interfacing to the slashline marked at the beginning of the neckline on the pattern (Fig. 13).

Stitch the tape only to the interfacing along this edge, allowing it to follow any lower curve with ease rather than being tightly stretched. Use a narrow zigzag or a straight stitch. Trim off the interfacing seam allowance close to the stitching line. Then baste the tape to the garment along this front edge. Only the tape will be caught in the facing seam when stitched.

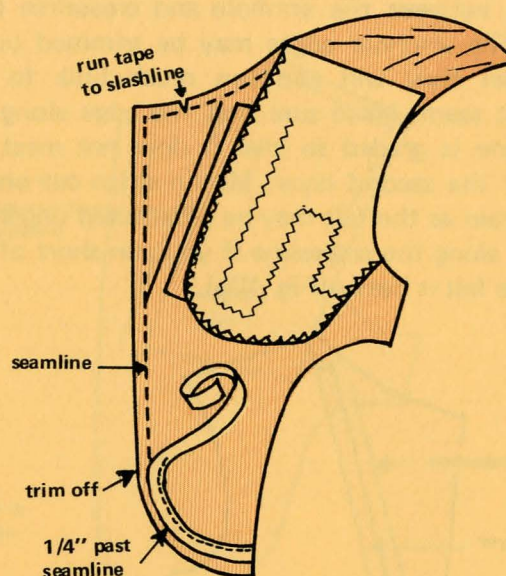


Fig. 13. Substitute tape for seam allowance of interfacing.

2. Cut a muslin piece  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " to 2" wide according to the pattern around the lapel and front seam. Line up the cut edge with the interfacing cut edge and stitch the muslin to the interfacing along the inner edge of the muslin. A narrow zigzag or straight stitch may be used (Fig. 14). Trim the interfacing close to the stitching line. Baste to the front. Then only the muslin strip will be caught in the seamline when stitched.

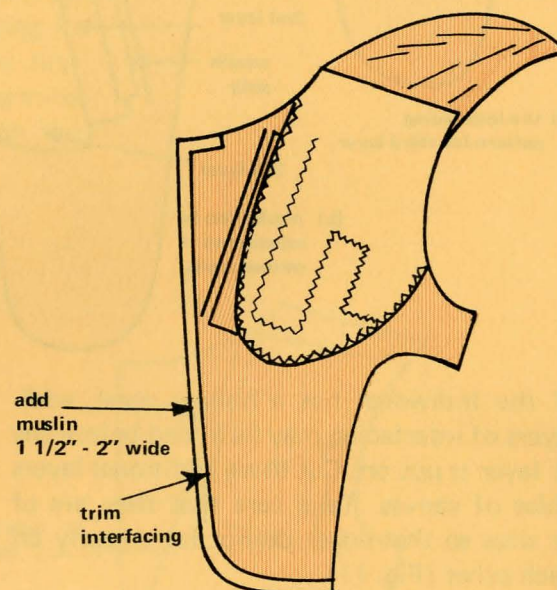


Fig. 14. Substitute a muslin piece along edge

3. Trim about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the interfacing seam allowance along the front edge and around the lapel to the slash mark on the pattern at the beginning of the neckline. Catchstitch, pin or baste the interfacing to the garment along the front seam and lapel edge up to the slash mark shown by the pattern.



Place one edge of a narrow twill or seam tape just inside the seamline on the garment and lap the other edge over the edge of the interfacing. Then whip both edges of the tape by hand. One edge will be fastened to the garment, the other to the interfacing. Be careful as you work so that none of the tape is caught in the stitching seam (Fig. 15).

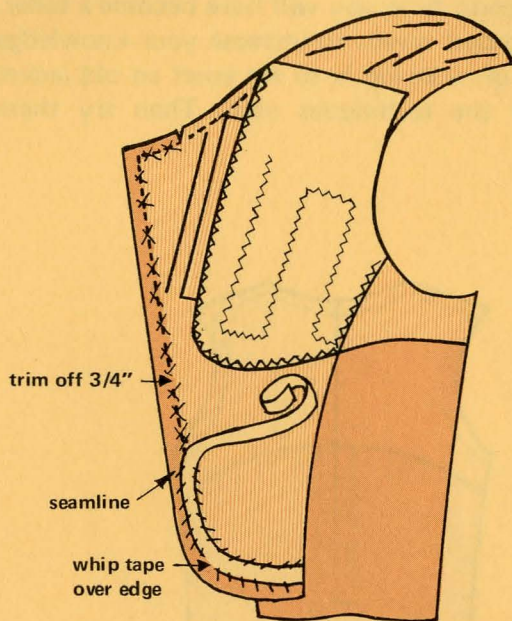


Fig. 15. Trim 3/4" from seam allowance. Fasten interfacing by hand.

Temporary basting or pins can be used to hold the body of the interfacing in place until the garment is assembled and pad stitching is completed. The interfacing is not stitched into shoulder seams nor fastened to the body of the garment along inside curved edges. Slashes can be cut into the curved edges, if necessary, to allow the interfacing to "float" inside the garment.

### TAPING THE CREASELINE

The lapel and collar break at the creaseline. In women's wear this is called the roll line or breakline. The line usually begins just above the top button, though occasionally, it may extend lower on a two or three-button suit. You have previously

marked this line with pencil on the interfacing.

The tape used for the creaseline should be 3/8" to 1/2" wide. Twill, linen or seam tape may be used, but be sure to preshrink it first. The tape runs just along the creaseline on the garment body rather than on the lapel. One edge should cover the edge of the chest piece placed on the interfacing base. The tape should start about 1 1/2" to 2" above the end of the crease line and extend up to the neckline. Attach it to the canvas with a whipstitch or hemstitch. Slightly stretch the tape so that the lapel of the garment will stay flat as it is worn (Fig. 16).

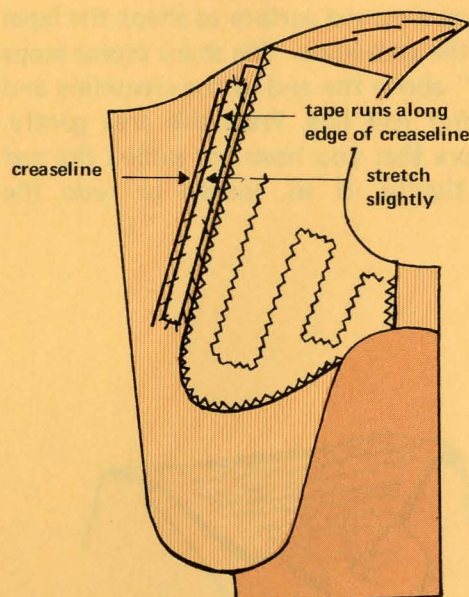


Fig. 16. Tape the creaseline

### PAD STITCHING THE LAPELS

A single thread is used with the pad stitch. No knots are made in the thread; instead make a few short stitches to secure the thread. Make the stitches in the fabric at right angles to the row. This gives a diagonal effect (Fig. 17). Stitches need not

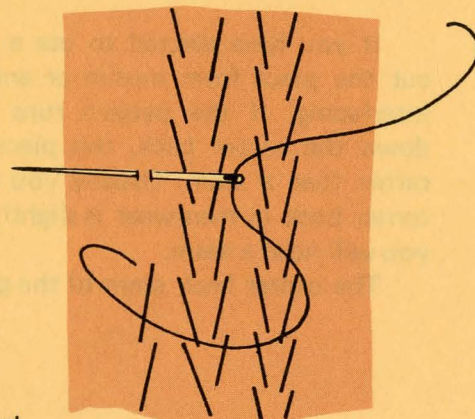


Fig. 17. Pad stitch lapel



be of a definite length and should be firm but not tight. The smaller and closer together the stitch, the firmer the area.

Start the pad stitching at the creaseline and work parallel to it. Hold the lapel firm with the thumb, the lapel point toward you (Fig. 18). Support the lapel between the second and third fingers as you pad stitch. Rows of stitching should be  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart. In general, stitches run  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in length. Be sure not to pad stitch into seam allowances.

After the taping and pad stitching have been finished, steam press the front garment piece. Lay the garment over a curved surface to shape the lapel and to define the creaseline. The sharp crease stops about 3" to 4" above the end of the creaseline and becomes a softer roll line. Press this area gently. Check to be sure that you have not pulled the pad stitching too tightly. If so, loosen or redo the stitches now.

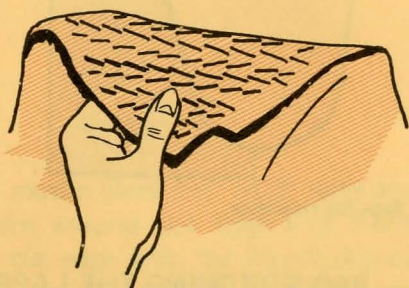


Fig. 18. Hold lapel point toward you. Support with thumb.

## BACK INTERFACING

If you have elected to use a back interfacing, cut the piece from muslin or another lightweight interfacing. If the pattern runs straight of grain down the center back, this piece may use a fold rather than a seam. Usually you will find that the center back in menswear is slightly shaped and that you will need a seam.

The center back seam of the garment should be

stitched and pressed before applying the interfacing. If a half lining is to be used in the back, also finish the center back seam of the garment.

Place the interfacing on the garment wrong sides together, and baste around the neckline and armholes (Fig. 19). The lower edge remains free. The basting stitches can remain in the garment.

Once the front interfacing is installed the most complicated part of the jacket is finished. Mastery of the technique may seem difficult the first time, but the second time you will have become a tailor. One of the best means to increase your knowledge and skills of tailoring is to rip apart an old jacket and study the techniques used. Then try them yourself.

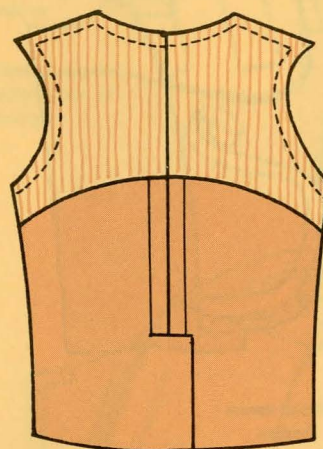


Fig. 19. Baste on back interfacing