

INTERFACING

What is an interfacing? It is an inner construction material that lies between layers of fashion fabric. It adds shape, strength, and body. Almost every garment you make requires some type of interfacing for inner stability. Interfacing supports the fashion fabric and adds crispness, not bulk. It is used to reinforce areas that are subject to stress and helps a garment maintain its shape, wearing after wearing. Interfacing is also required for many home decorating items to add support and shape.

Years ago, dressmakers used whalebones, hoops, bustles, corsets, and metal bands to maintain shape in garments. Today, special interfacing fabrics — woven, knit, or nonwoven— can be used to give the desired shape.

Interfacing comes in a variety of weights — from sheer to heavyweight.

Standards

A suitable, well-applied interfacing should:

- Be appropriate to the fashion fabric in relation to fiber content, care, construction type (knit, woven, nonwoven) and manner applied (sew-in vs. fusible). Interfacing can range from commercially designed interfacing fabric to self-fabric.
- Be, or have the same “grain” or “give” as the fashion fabric with which it is used.
- Coordinate in color as closely as possible. Use light color with light colored fashion fabrics, dark with dark.
- Provide the appropriate support or reinforcement needed to improve the shape of the garment or fabric area.
- Be used in the appropriate location in a garment or home decorating item.
- Not alter color or hand of the fashion fabric. If an appropriate weight cannot be found, it is best to go lighter than heavier.

Hand – the feel and drape of a fabric.

- when applied, appear flat and smooth; no bubbles, wrinkles, or folds.
- suit the pattern design and construction situation. Multiple types and weights of interfacing could be used depending on the area and function.

Purposes of Interfacing

The purpose of interfacing is to:

- stabilize fabric preventing stretching and sagging
- customize seams
- reinforce areas
- support facings and/or garment details
- stabilize necklines and waistbands.
- soften edges
- give smooth, firm body
- provide shape to areas such as shoulders, hems, collars and cuffs

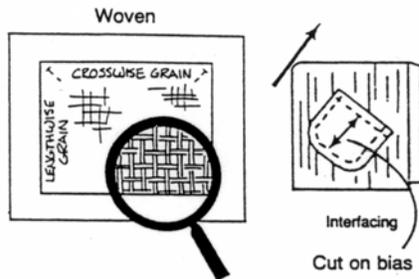
Interfacing strengthens and stabilizes areas where buttons, buttonholes, or other fasteners are sewn. It shapes and defines design features such as facings, necklines, collars, pocket flaps, cuffs, pockets, jacket hems, and waistbands. It gives body to facings and necklines and stabilizes areas of strain. It also increases the life of a garment.

Types of Interfacing

Even though there are a lot of interfacing fabrics on the market, there are only three basic types: woven, nonwoven and knit. They can be sew-in or fusible. Woven and nonwoven are available in different weights. Each type of interfacing creates a different effect on the fabric.

Woven interfacings have lengthwise and crosswise grain. Woven interfacing is usually cut on the same grain as your fashion fabric. This enables the fashion fabric to maintain its natural drape and hand. If using woven interfacing in a knit fabric, cut the interfacing on

the bias so the knit will maintain some of its basic “stretch” characteristics. Interfacings are mainly used on knits to stabilize and to prevent excess stretching.

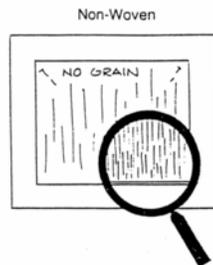


Self-fabric or some firmly woven fabrics such as organdy, tulle, net, or muslin may be used as the interfacing if it meets the criteria listed under “Points to Consider in Selecting Interfacing.” Self-fabrics should never add bulk to the area being interfaced.

Nonwoven interfacings are fiber webs. They are made by bonding or felting fibers together. These fabrics are flexible and do not ravel, wrinkle, or lose their shape.

There are several types of nonwoven interfacings.

- **Stable** – has little “give” in any direction. They are excellent for shoulder pads and craft items.
- **Stretch** – has stretch crosswise, but is stable lengthwise. They are used in fashion fabrics to maintain the natural stretch.
- **All-bias** – has stretch in all directions. Usually there is more stretch in the crosswise.



Knit interfacings are softer and more flexible because they stretch in all directions. They can usually be found in black, white, and neutral.



Weft-insertions and **warp-insertions** are made on a knit machine, and then either a warp or weft yarn is inserted. The addition of the extra yarns makes this knit interfacing fabric more stable. These fabrics are softer than a woven interfacing. The weft insertion has the most stretch on the bias. The warp insertions have the most stretch in the crosswise direction, since the warp is inserted in a chevron design. They can be fused at a lower temperature than other fusibles.

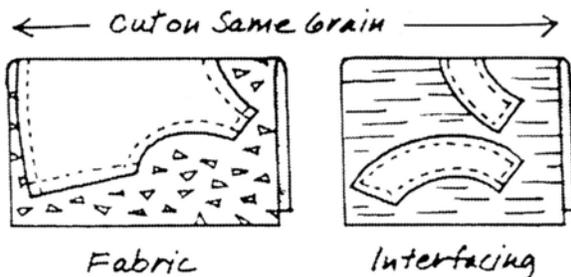
Points to Consider in Selecting Interfacing

Selecting an interfacing to create the desired look seems to perplex many home sewers. Some individuals want to use the same interfacing in all fabrics and in all areas of a garment. Learning a few basic principles will help eliminate much of the guesswork as to which interfacing to use.

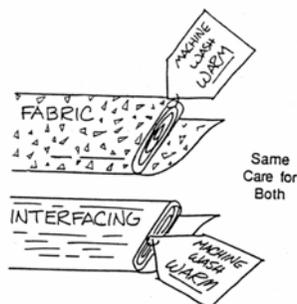
- Keep in mind that an interfacing should be slightly lighter in weight or the same weight as the fashion fabric being used. The only time this is not true is if you want to create an exaggerated effect or to change the hand and drape of the fabric.
- Always test the interfacing on the fashion fabric. Drape the interfacing over your arm, then place the fabric over it. Is it the effect you want? Remember that a fusible interfacing will give more body than an interfacing that is not fusible. The most suitable interfacing will give body, not bulk, to the fashion fabric.



- Interfacing should follow the same “grain” as the fashion fabric. Following this guideline will enable you to maintain the look and drape ability of the fashion fabric.



- Select an interfacing that is light in color for light-colored fabrics; a dark color if using dark colored fabrics. Interfacing can also show at buttonhole edges.
- Select an interfacing that requires the same care as the fashion fabric. Read care label on all fabrics. Interfacing will be sewn or fused to the garment, so both fabrics must be washed or dry-cleaned together.

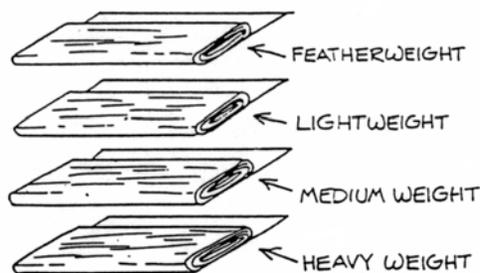


- Select an interfacing that does what you want it to do. Ask yourself these questions. Does it provide the shaping I want? Does it stabilize in the areas where needed? Does it stretch where I want it to stretch?
- Use a sheer interfacing when sewing with fashion fabrics that are sheer. Fabrics such as tulle, net, organdy, organza, voile, or a sheer weight nonwoven are possible choices.
- More than one interfacing may need to be used to achieve the desired look.

For example, you may need a heavier one in a belt than you need for a collar. The “right” interfacing is the one that does what you need it to do.

- Interfacing may be regular, firmly woven garment fabric or a fabric made especially for shaping purposes. Regular fabrics often used include batiste, organdy, lawn, muslin, and broadcloth. Sometimes, even self-fabric may be used. This is particularly true when sewing with solid-color fabrics and lighter weight woven fabrics that have a firm construction.
- There are a number of different commercial interfacings on the market. So many that, making a choice may be difficult. Sometimes your selection is limited by what is available in your area. Therefore, it is important to remember that more than one interfacing fabric, type, or weight, may be used in a particular fashion fabric.

Different Weights



- Consider the heat sensitivity of the interfacing selected for a heat sensitive fashion fabric. The two fabrics should be compatible.

Refer to the chart on page 6 for specifics.

Remember: There is no one interfacing fabric suitable for all fashion fabrics.

Preparing Interfacings

Interfacing fabrics need to be preshrunk. The purpose of this technique is to help eliminate

bubbling and distortion caused by shrinking after the construction process. Preshrink sew-in interfacing the same as you do the fashion fabric.

To prepare fusible wovens and knits, loosely fold the fabrics before the construction process and immerse them in a tub of water as hot as your hand allows. Leave the fabric undisturbed until the water is cool. Transfer interfacing to a towel without squeezing or wringing it. Place the interfacing flat on a towel. Roll the towel gently. Gently squeeze out the excess water (do not disturb the resins/glues) or allow the fabric to drip dry. Unfold carefully and hang wovens and weft insertions over a shower rod to air dry. Lay knit interfacing flat on a dry towel or nylon rug to prevent distortion.

Steam shrinking is a technique used on nonwovens that are less prone to shrinkage. Layer interfacing with fusible side down to wrong side of the garment section. Hold the iron 1 to 2 inches above the layered fusible nonwovens and apply shots of steam for 7 to 10 seconds. Allow the interfacing to sit, rest, and dry. Then fuse to the garment section as usual.

Application of Interfacing

Interfacing can be applied by sewing it in or fusing it to the garment. The type of interfacing you select will determine the application method. Fusibles are not suitable for some fabrics such as metallics, beaded, raised design, and open work. Before using any type of interfacing, always test on a scrap of the fashion fabric.

Sew-in interfacings may be woven or nonwoven. To determine which one to use and which weight to use, sandwich the interfacing between your fabric and check the body, look, feel, and weight. Try this with several different weights until you find the one that gives you the desired look and meets the necessary construction needs.



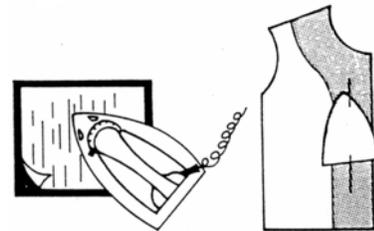
Sew-in Interfacing

Fusible interfacings may be woven, nonwoven or knit. They are applied to the fashion fabric using heat, moisture, and pressure following manufacturer's directions. Always test on a scrap of the fashion fabric before applying the interfacing to the fabric.

How to Fuse

Here are a few general hints to assist you when using a fusible interfacing.

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Position the resin/glue side to the wrong side of the fabric to be interfaced.
- Work from the center out, lifting and lowering the iron. Use a timer or second hand on a watch to count the seconds or count one thousand and one, etc.



- As you fuse, overlap the iron positions to ensure complete fusing.
- Exert pressure on the iron to secure a good bond.
- After completing the fusing, let the piece cool undisturbed before moving.
- Turn to the right side and repeat the process.
- Using a press cloth is a good idea. It prevents the fusible adhesive from getting on your iron and protects the fashion fabric from excess heat.

Keep a press cloth for interfacing purposes only. Label one side "up" and always press with this side up towards the iron surface.

- After cooling look carefully at the following:
 - Is there a permanent bond?

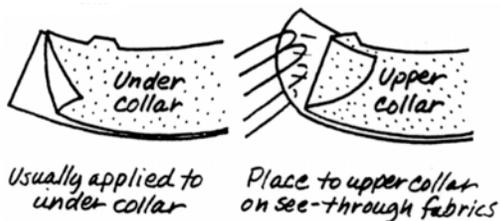
- Is the fashion fabric and interfacing smooth?
- Has there been a color change in the fashion fabric?
- Does the interfaced piece handle as you want when folded or rolled?
- Did any of the “adhesive” come to the front of the fashion fabric?

Note: Since iron temperatures vary, you may need to increase or decrease the temperature when fusing. This can be identified when a sample is tested.

Some Things to Know

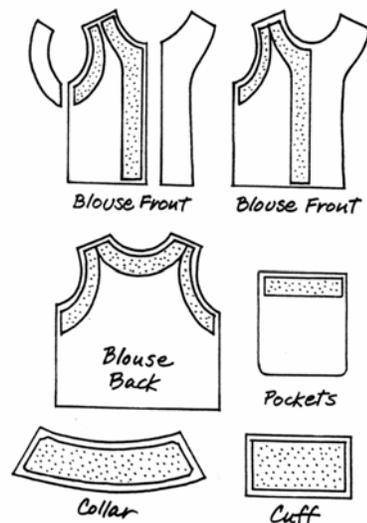
There are a few additional pointers about using interfacing fabrics that may be of help.

- The pattern may instruct you to interface the garment (not the facing) and the under collar (not the upper collar). Where the interfacing is placed depends on the fabric (fashion fabrics and interfacing) and the purpose. For example, on “see-through” fabrics (when you can see the construction details) interface the upper collar. If the fashion fabric is bulky, interface the garment section to cushion the seams.



- When using fusible interfacing, it is usually better to interface the upper collar. This cushions the seams and provides stability when top stitching edges.
- On lightweight fabrics, if it is obvious a fusible interfacing has been used, the interfacing is too heavy. It is very important to test on a scrap before using.
- Sometimes a pattern does not call for an interfacing. However, most garments will look more professional and wear longer and better with interfacing. Interfacing strengthens and improves the appearance of edges.
- Use a stable interfacing that does not stretch behind buttons and buttonholes. On knits and stretchy fabrics, reinforce buttonhole marking with an extra patch of interfacing to maintain the area’s shape.

- Some patterns include separate interfacing pattern pieces; others do not. If there are no interfacing pattern pieces, use the facing, collar, cuff or other pattern pieces to cut the interfacing.
- Interfacing should be 1/8 to 1/4 inch narrower on the outer edge than the facing on unlined garments. This will prevent the interfacing from showing and prevent a ridge when pressing.
- On loosely woven and slippery fabrics, block fuse interfacing to fashion fabric before cutting pattern pieces. This will stabilize the fashion fabric for a more accurate cutout.
- On medium to heavyweight fusible interfacing, trim off 1/2 inch of the 5/8-inch seam allowance around the edges before applying it to the garment or facing section.
- Apply interfacing to garment sections before stitching seams.
- When possible, transfer pattern markings (darts, buttonholes, dots) to the interfacing instead of to the fashion fabric.
- There are several areas on a garment that should be interfaced. These are: collars, necklines, sleeveless armholes, pocket hems, pocket flaps, cuffs, underneath buttons and buttonholes, waistbands, and belts.



- Add a 1-inch circle of fusible interfacing at garment stress points (for reinforcement) – top of pockets, and top of slits.
- Interfacing is sometimes used to stabilize an area before inserting a zipper, such as an exposed zipper. It is also used in hems to provide a soft roll on the folded edge.

SUMMARY

Interfacing should be similar to or lighter in weight than the fashion fabric with which it is used. Always carefully test a sample of the interfacing on the fashion fabric before using to determine if it is compatible with the fashion fabric and garment design. There is no one interfacing fabric suitable for all fashion fabrics, all garment designs, and all construction situations.

FABRIC AND USE	INTERFACING	
	<i>For a soft effect</i>	<i>For a crisp effect</i>
<p>Very light to lightweight fabrics (voile, gauze, crepe, challis, calico, chambray, interlock knit , jersey, single knit, batiste)</p> <p>Use: dresses, lightweight suits, active sportswear</p>	Batiste, organza sew-in sheer, regular, or stretch very lightweight nonwoven; self-fabric	Organdy; sew-in or fusible lightweight or sheer (nonwoven or woven, fusible knit)
	Do not use fusible on chiffon or seersucker.	
<p>Medium weight fabrics (linen, denim, poplin, flannel, gabardine, satin, duck, chino, velour, stretch terry, double knit, sweater knit)</p> <p>Use: dresses, lightweight suits, active sportswear</p>	Sew-in or fusible medium weight woven; regular or stretch light to medium weight nonwoven, fusible knit	Sew-in or fusible lightweight hair canvas; sew-in or fusible medium weight (woven or nonwoven)
	Do not use fusible on rainwear fabrics.	
<p>Heavyweight fabrics (corduroy, tweed, worsted. camel hair, melton, sailcloth, canvas, gabardine, coatings)</p> <p>Use: jackets, suits, coats</p>	Soft, lightweight canvas; sew-in or fusible medium weight nonwoven	Sew-in or fusible medium weight woven; crisp medium or heavyweight hair canvas; fusible heavyweight nonwoven
<p>Leather types (Suede, suede cloth) Do not use fusibles on real leather</p>	Crisp or soft canvas; fusible or sew-in medium weight nonwoven or woven	
<p>Waistbands</p>	Fusible nonwoven precut strips; woven stiffener sold by the width; sew-in or fusible medium to heavyweight (woven or nonwoven)	
<p>Crafts (belts, hats, bags, camping gear, home decorating items)</p>	Sew-in nonwoven in all weights; fusible medium to heavyweight (woven or nonwoven)	

Chart: Courtesy of Simplicity's Simply the Best Sewing Book

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July 2006