

Waistbands Made Easy

Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agriculture and
Home Economics



Guide C-234

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Waistbands play an important part in the fit and appearance of skirts and pants. Waistbands smoothly encircle your waist, so they need to be made to your measurement.

There are several kinds of waistbands. Select one that is best suited to your fabric and your body curve.

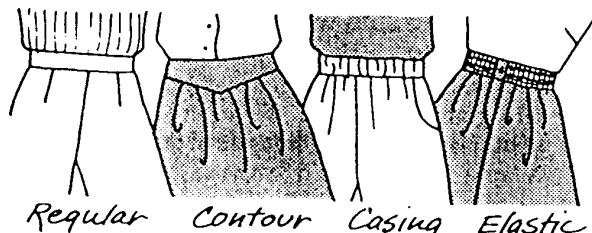
Regular—Cut on grain. Most patterns suggest using the lengthwise grain to go around you because it will be more stable. However, with today's fusible interfacing, this is not always necessary. Also, remember that some fabrics have a design or nap that requires the waistband be cut in the same direction as the garment.

Contoured or Faced—Shaped to fit at your waist and below. Contoured waistbands are on the outside of the garment. Faced waistbands have a facing to the inside of the garment.

Decorative Elastic—May be used as a finish in place of a waistband.

Bias—Usually a narrow, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch bias binding at the top of the skirt.

Casing—May be an extension of the skirt or a separate piece of fabric that encloses the elastic.



STANDARDS

Regardless of the kind of waistband, it should meet certain standards. For a good waistband, you should be able to answer "yes" to each of these questions:

- Is the waistband smooth and free from bulk?
- Is the width even?
- Is the waistband on-grain?

- Has it been interfaced or reinforced to maintain its shape?
- Is the overlap even with placket at opening?
- Is the underlap under the band at the opening?
- Are the corners on the ends of the band square?
- Is the skirt or pant eased onto the band?
- Is the waistband securely stitched?
- Are the fasteners properly located and secured?

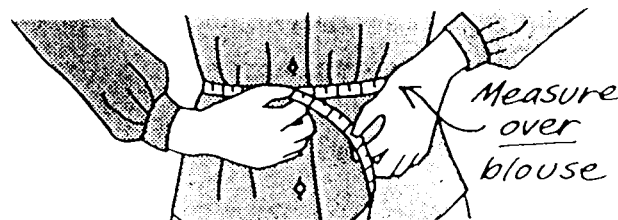
INTERFACING

Interfacing is used in fitted and contoured/faced waistbands to help them maintain their shape. Depending upon the look and the fabric, use one of the following:

- Fusible interfacing.
- Nonwoven or woven interfacing.
- Precut interfacing or stiffening.
- Grosgrain ribbon.
- Self-fabric.
- Waistbanding.
- Belting.

FITTING

It is important that a waistband be cut to fit you. Take your measurement over a shirt or blouse and decide how snug you want the waistband. Compare this measurement to the pattern. Make any necessary adjustments. Be sure to allow some ease, usually $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.



To find more resources for your business, home, or family, visit the College of Agriculture and Home Economics on the World Wide Web at <http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu>

CONSTRUCTION

Before you cut out the waistband, answer these questions:

- What finished width do I want the waistband to be?
- What is my waist measurement? How much ease do I want to allow?
- How much extension do I want on the underlap?
- For this fabric and design, which grain is best: lengthwise or crosswise?
- Can I cut the waistband on a selvage to reduce bulk?
- Do I need to match a plaid or stripe? If yes, where should the centers be? Will I need to add side seams to match both back and front?
- Because of nap or one-way design, do I need to lay the waistband pattern to the “top” in the same direction as other pieces?

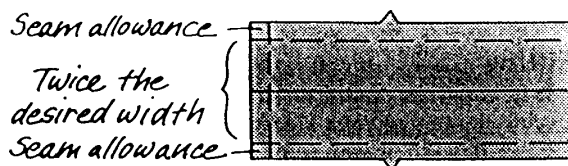
CUTTING

Before cutting, decide on the waistband length (based on your waist measurement), desired ease, an underlap extension of at least 1 inch; and width. Be sure to allow seam allowances on all edges.

MEASURING

The width of the waistband is determined by preference, the method of interfacing, and the method of finishing:

- The typical width measurement is twice the desired width plus two seam allowances.



- If you are using either a selvage, overlock stitch, or binding the back side to reduce bulk, the width measurement should be twice the desired width, plus one seam allowance, plus $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.

APPLYING INTERFACING

There are several types of interfacing or stiffening that can be used to help the waistband maintain its shape:

- Fusible interfacing may be woven, nonwoven, or precut. It is usually used on both the front and back of the waistband.

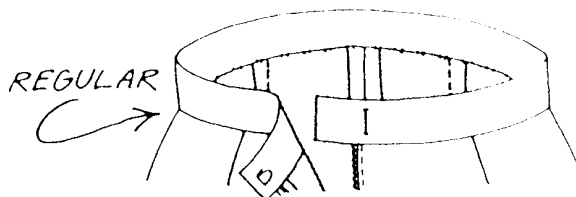


- Woven or nonwoven interfacing is usually applied to both the front and back. Machine baste or hand stitch right at the top fold or just below the fold on the back side to hold in place.

APPLYING A REGULAR WAISTBAND TO THE GARMENT

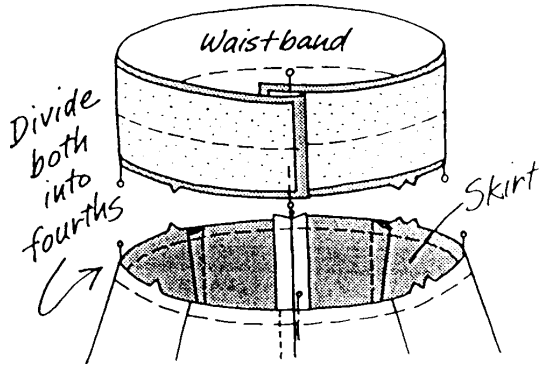
As you apply the band to the garment, remember:

- The garment is usually eased $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch to the waistband.
- The overlap is flush with the placket.
- The placket is on the left side, left back, or center front or back depending on garment design.
- The underlap should be at least 1 inch.
- The garment seams are finished and pressed.
- The average figure is 1 inch larger in the front than in back.
- Measure the waistline of the garment if you are using more than the necessary ease. Decide whether you can ease more on this fabric OR whether you need to make adjustments in the garment.

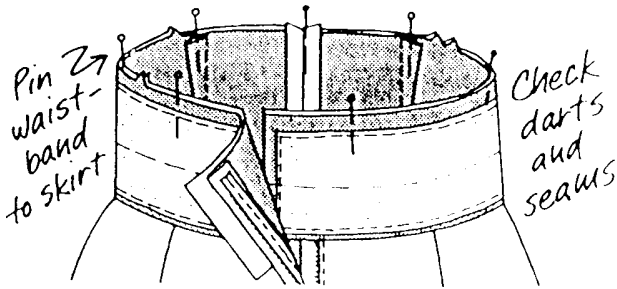


Now you are ready to attach the waistband to the garment.

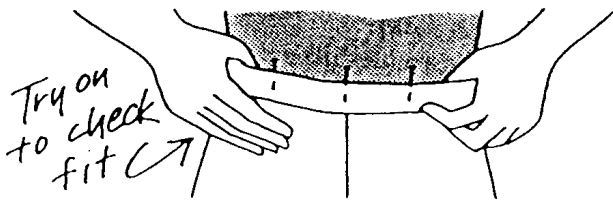
1. Divide the skirt and waistband in fourths.



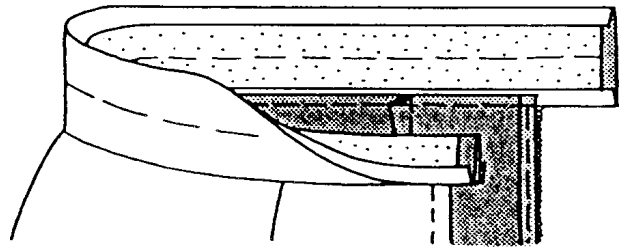
2. Match the waistband to the skirt (right sides to right sides) at these four points.
3. Pin the waistband to the skirt between these points, making sure seams and darts are turned to the correct positions.



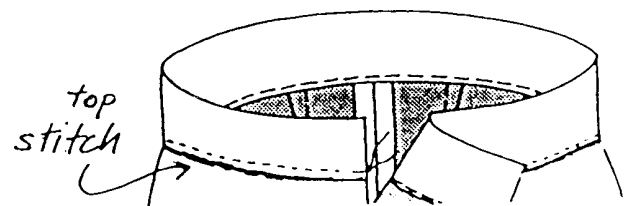
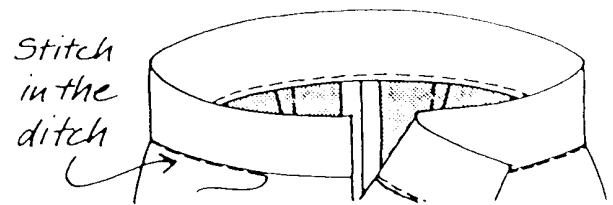
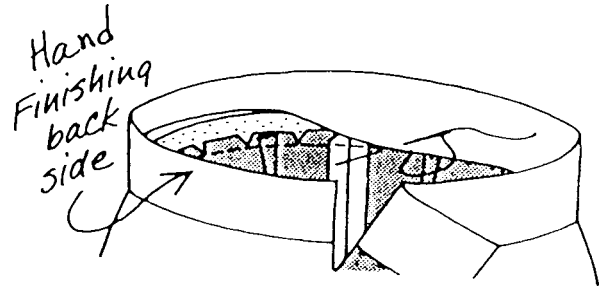
4. Check that there is an even distribution of ease or gathers and that there are no tucks. Be sure that the placket is the same length on both sides and that the waistband seam is right at the top of the zipper teeth. Also, check grain and evenness of width.
5. Machine baste on the seamline.
6. Try garment on to check the fit. If it is too tight or too loose, make the necessary adjustments.



7. Permanently stitch waistband to garment by stitching over the basting. If the fabric ravels easily, stitch again slightly inside the first row of stitching.
8. Grade seam to reduce bulk, with the longest graded seam to the outside of the garment.
9. Finish the ends of the waistband by folding them with right sides together. On the overlap have the seam a continuation of the edge of the placket.



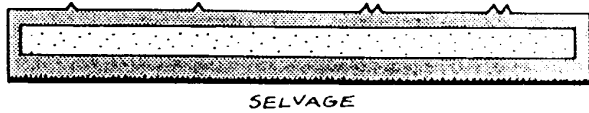
10. Turn to the back of the garment. If you are finishing the edge by hand, pin the pressed edge to just cover the machine stitching. If you are finishing either by stitching-in-the-ditch or topstitching, pin on the front in the waistband at the seamline.



FINISHING THE BACK

You can use one of these methods to finish the back side of the waistband:

- Turn under the edge.
- Cut on selvage (reduces bulk).
- Bind the edge (may reduce bulk).
- Zigzag or overlock the edge (reduces bulk).



APPLYING BELT LOOPS

Belt loops can be attached after completing the waistband. Cut a strip of fabric four times the desired width. Press the strip, folding it in half; then press it again, folding each raw edge to the crease line. Stitch close to folded edge on each side.

Topstitch the belt loops to the waistband. Be sure to use a larger machine needle for topstitching.

