

Buttons and buttonholes add a design element to any garment. But believe it or not, a buttonhole's size, shape, and placement always depend on the button. To ensure that your buttonholes are accurate, it is a good idea to purchase the buttons for your project before stitching out the buttonholes. To determine your buttonhole markings, use the pattern as a guide for the placement—but not the size—of the buttonhole. Buttons are sized according to their diameter. However, it's a button's circumference (the diameter plus the height) that determines how large the buttonhole needs to be. For example, a flat 5/8-in. button will require a smaller buttonhole than a domed button of the same size.

To determine the circumference, wrap a piece of narrow ribbon, seam binding, or twill tape around the widest part of the button and pin the ends together (Figure 1).

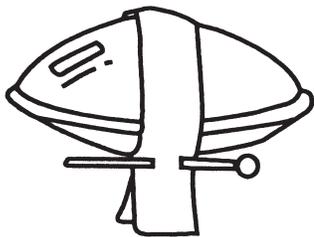


Figure 1

The length of your test buttonhole should be equal to half the button's circumference plus 1/8 in. (Figure 2). If your button is very thick, you may need to increase the size a little more. Test the size on a scrap piece of fabric before making any buttonholes on your garment.

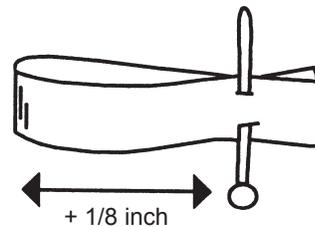


Figure 2

INTERFACING

Interface both the button and buttonhole areas of the garment to prevent stretching and to stabilize the fabric. You may need to further stabilize or protect the area where buttonholes will be placed; for example, stretchy fabrics must be stabilized so the fabric will not stretch when machine-worked buttonholes are used.

PLACEMENT

Horizontal buttonholes should extend 1/8 in. over the center front or back toward the garment edge (Figure 3). These buttonholes are best for closely fitted garments and styles without a placket.

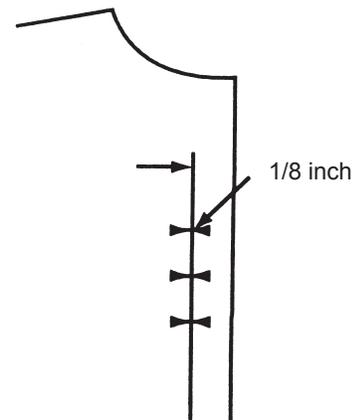


Figure 3

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Vertical buttonholes should be sewn on the center front or back lines, and are best for garments with a banded opening (Figure 4).

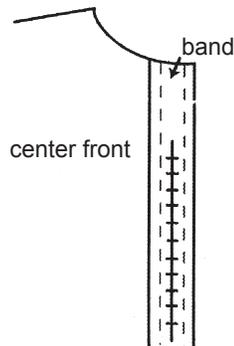


Figure 4

If the pattern was lengthened or shortened, the buttonhole placement must be altered (Figure 5).

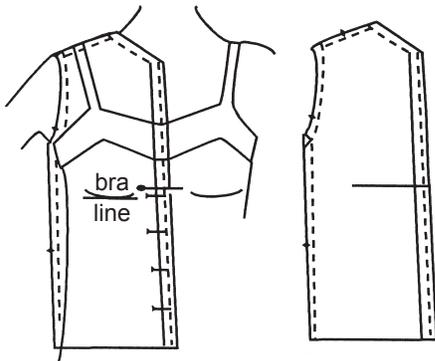


Figure 5

- Pin the front and back pattern pieces together at the shoulder stitching line. Place the pattern on your figure with the center front of the pattern to your center front.
- Mark the “bra line” on your pattern. A button and buttonhole are needed at the bra line to keep the garment from gaping at the bust.

Reposition the buttonholes if a buttonhole is not marked at the bra line. Keep these spacing guidelines in mind:

- If the pattern was lengthened, mark the same number of buttonholes below your waistline as indicated on the pattern (Figure 6).

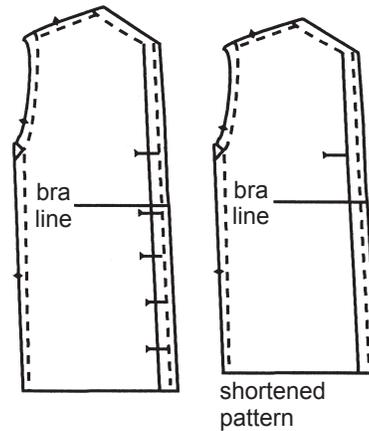


Figure 6

- If the pattern was shortened, you may need to eliminate a buttonhole so the spacing is not too close together.
- Place a buttonhole at the bra line.
- Standard buttonhole placement is 2- to 3-½ in. apart.
- Use a seam gauge to accurately space the buttonholes.

TRANSFERRING THE MARKINGS

While there are several methods of transferring buttonhole markings to the garment, you should use the one most suited to the fabric you are using. Here are some suggestions:

- Use transparent tape to mark where to begin and end and where to place the buttonhole (Figure 7).

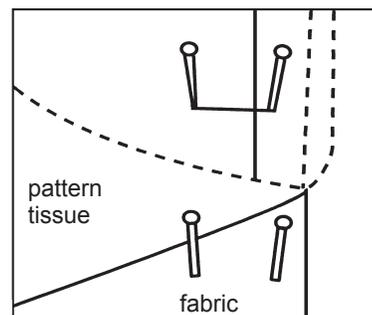


Figure 7

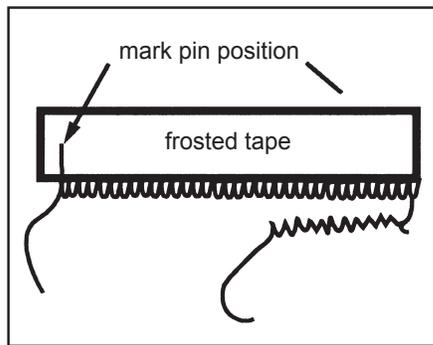


Figure 8

- Draw a line using a fabric marking pen (Figure 8).
- Use pins to mark the beginning and ending line of the buttonhole.

Make sure the markings are on-grain and are appropriate for horizontal or vertical buttonholes.

Mark the buttonhole placement on the right side of the fabric. You can do this during the cutting and marking stage when transferring all the other markings, or you can wait until just before you are ready to make the buttonholes. Even if you marked the placement lines when you cut out the garment, it's a good idea to check them when you're ready to make the buttonholes.

SOME BUTTON AND BUTTONHOLE BASICS

- Whenever possible, stick to the button size recommended on the pattern envelope.
- If you can't find a button you like in the right size, don't select a button that is more than $\frac{1}{8}$ in. larger or smaller. Otherwise, the buttons will either look out of proportion on the garment or the buttonholes must be re-spaced.
- To make sure buttonholes are accurately placed, begin stitching horizontal buttonholes at the marking closest to the garment edge (Figure 9); begin stitching vertical buttonholes at the marking closest to the upper edge of the garment (Figure 10).
- Always make a test buttonhole first on a scrap of fabric. Use the same number of layers (fashion fabric, interfacing, facing, etc.) as the garment will have.

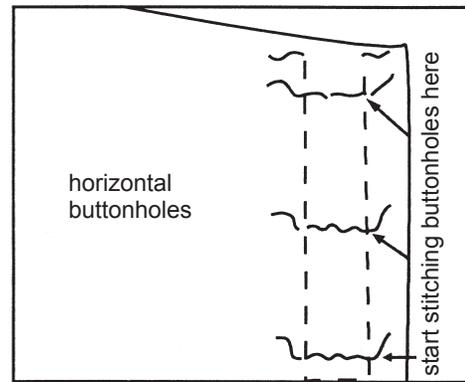


Figure 9

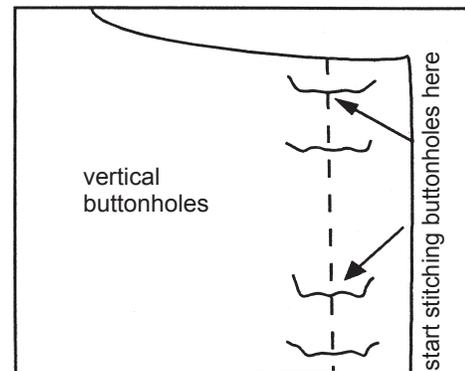


Figure 10

Tip

If your fabric doesn't feed evenly through the machine, try using a piece of nonwoven stabilizer or tissue paper underneath. If your fabric is very sheer or very fragile, try putting the tissue paper underneath and on top; it's easy to tear it away once the buttonholes are completed.

CUTTING THE BUTTONHOLE OPEN

Once all the buttonholes are stitched, cut them open using a razor blade, a buttonhole cutter, or a pair of small, sharp scissors. Start at the center and cut toward each end. To prevent cutting too far, put straight pins at each end of the buttonhole opening; place pins inside the end bar tacks (Figure 11).

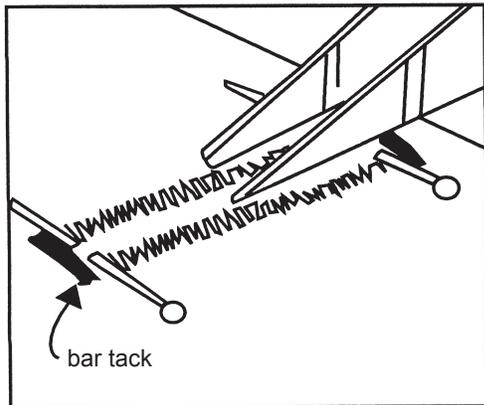


Figure 11

Tip

If, despite all your good intentions, you cut into the stitches, repair the damage with a dot of seam sealant (Figure 12).

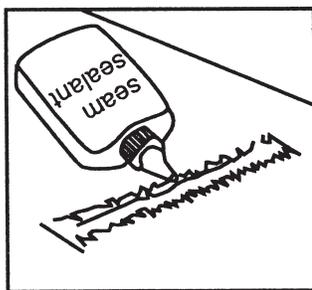


Figure 12

TO LOCATE THE BUTTON POSITION:

- After making the buttonholes and cutting them open, lap the garment edges, matching center, so it looks like it's buttoned (Figure 13).

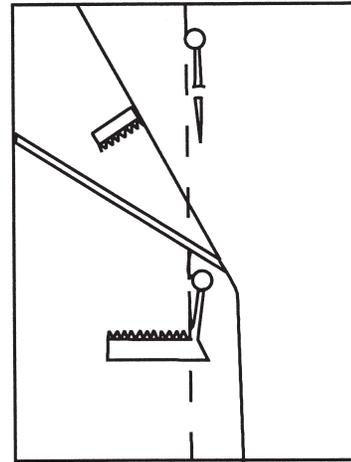


Figure 13

- For a horizontal buttonhole, stick a pin through at the center front or back marking, $\frac{1}{8}$ in. in from the end of the buttonhole.
- For a vertical buttonhole, insert the pin $\frac{1}{8}$ in. below the top of the buttonhole.

REFERENCES

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