

Fasteners add function and details to any garment. The most common fasteners are hooks and eyes, snaps, and self-gripping devices. The fastener used will depend on the fabric you choose, the type of garment, the kind of opening (including its position and type), the amount of stress put on the fastener, and the effect you want to create. For example, a delicate fabric may call for covered snaps, while rugged active wear needs a heavy-duty snap fastener.

When selecting a fastener for your garment, consider the following:

- Choose a fastener that will fit the garment and placket. If it is a high-stress area like a waistband, a hook and eye may be a better choice than a snap.
- Choose a fastener color to blend with the fabric of the garment. Most fasteners should blend in rather than stand out.

To close and fasten most garments, one edge of the opening overlaps the other. On women's garments, the right side overlaps the left; on men's garments, left overlaps right. Most fasteners have two parts, one sewn to the overlap and the other sewn to the underlap.

HOOKS AND EYES

Hooks and eyes are hidden fasteners. They can be used to hold edges together or to overlap edges. Hooks and eyes are available in several sizes and colors to match different fabrics. Hooks come with either loops or straight eyes (Figure 1). Most must be sewn in place, but no-sew hooks and eyes are also available; the no-sew versions must be clamped in place. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. The smaller hooks and eyes must be used on light-weight fabrics. Larger hooks and eyes require heavier fabric.

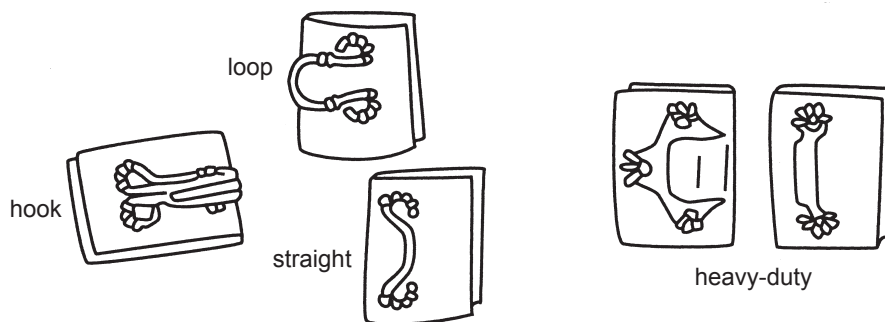


Figure 1

¹Extension Home Economist, Lea County Extension Office, New Mexico State University.

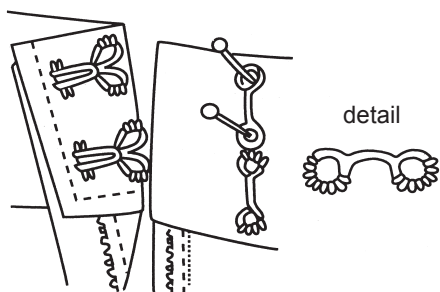


Figure 2

Hooks and eyes are placed $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from the edge of the fabric (Figure 2). The hooks are placed on the overlap, and the straight eye should be placed on the underlap. Loop eyes should be used for edges that just meet (Figure 3). Generally, only one set of hooks and eyes will be used; however, if the opening is wide, use two sets.

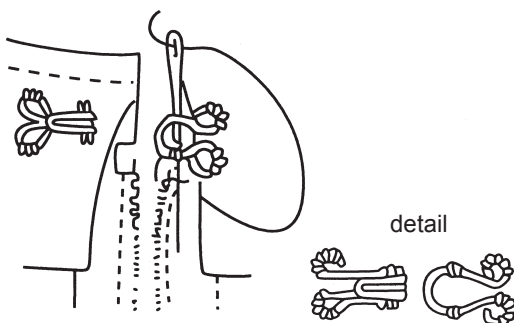


Figure 3

Each of the pieces should be stitched in place using a buttonhole stitch or overhand whip stitch. Stitches should be very close together and stitched around the ring of the hook and eye. As you stitch, be careful not to show your work on the right side of the garment. Additional stitches will be needed to secure the top of the hook and loop eye. To secure the top of the hook, add three wrapped stitches to the “bill” of the hook. To secure the loop eye, add some wrap stitches on either side of the U-shape to prevent any swinging or movement.

THREAD EYES

Whether it is for decoration or as a substitute for a metal eye, a thread eye can be used on a garment. The thread eyes are not as strong as a metal eye, but can be less conspicuous, and are therefore recommended for use in areas that do not have a lot of pull or strain, such as a neckline opening above a zipper. There are two different methods of making thread eyes: blanket or buttonhole stitch and the thread or crocheted chain.

The blanket or buttonhole stitch begins with a double strand of all-purpose thread. Hide the thread between the fabric layers. Take a stitch, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ in. long, across the thread eye position. If you are making a straight eye, pull thread tight; for a round eye, pull the thread to make a slight loop. Repeat this step until you have created a “bridge” of thread. Starting at one end of this bridge, make a buttonhole stitch over the thread bridge (Figure 4). Pull the thread tight after each stitch.

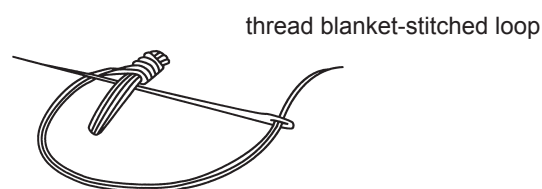


Figure 4

To make a thread or crocheted chain, use a double thread with a knot. Align the garment edges and mark with pins where the chain should begin and end. Bring the thread up through one of the markings. Take a tiny stitch to secure the thread. Leave a loop large enough for your fingers to slip through (Figure 5a). Slip your thumb and index finger through the loop and pull the thread through the loop to make a second loop (Figure 5b), tightening the first loop as you pull (Figure 5c). Repeat these steps (Figures 5d and 5e) until the chain is the right length. Run the needle through the last loop to lock the chain (Figure 5f). Tack the finished loop securely to the other mark (Figure 5g). There should be some slack in the loop.

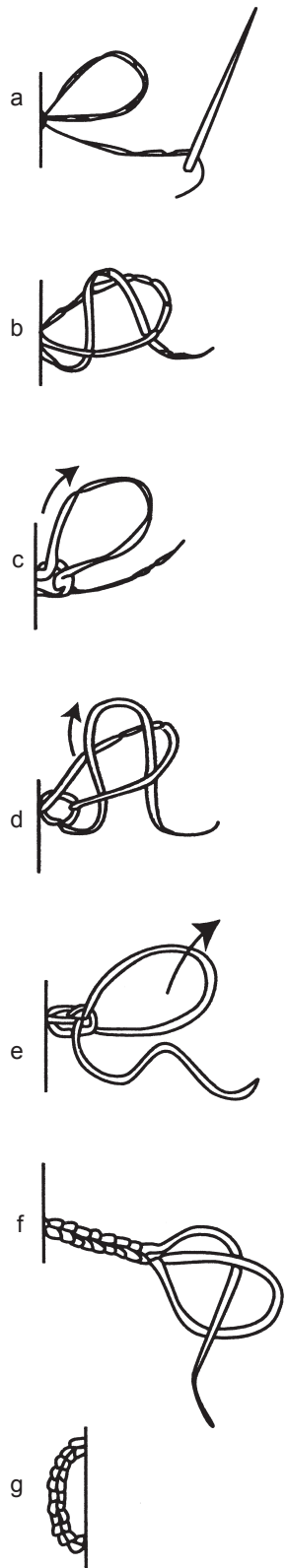


Figure 5

SNAPS

Snaps are fasteners that should be used to secure areas where there is little strain. They are primarily used to hold something in place, and can therefore be used in place of buttons and buttonholes or self-gripping devices. Snaps are generally made of metal and come in a variety of sizes for light-weight, medium-weight, and heavy-weight fabrics. The color of the snaps should blend with the fabric of the garment. Clear nylon snaps are also available.

Snaps come in several sew-in and no-sew styles. The sew-in styles are generally in two parts: the ball and the socket (Figure 6). The ball part of the snap is positioned on the overlap side of the placket, and the socket on the underlap. The snap pieces are stitched $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from the edge of the fabric (Figure 7). Begin attaching the ball portion by making several tacking stitches through each hole, and then run the thread under the snap to the next hole. The stitches should not show on the outside of the garment. To make the opposite side of the placket, rub chalk on the ball and close the placket; the chalk will mark the placement for the socket. The socket will be stitched onto the garment in the same way as the ball.

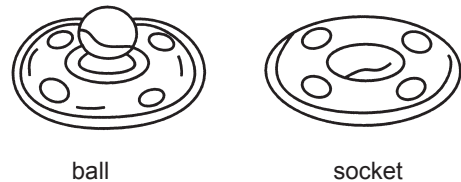


Figure 6

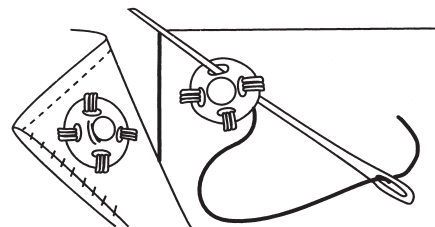


Figure 7

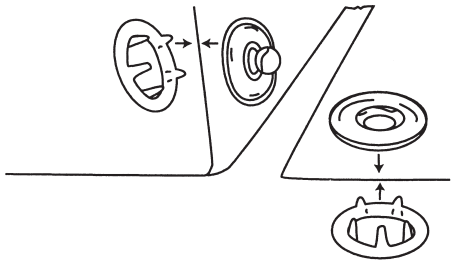


Figure 8

No-sew snaps generally come in four parts. The inner and outer parts pierce the fabric to make one snap piece. These types of snaps can damage the fabric where the snap is placed, so you don't want to make any mistakes when installing no-sew snaps. These snaps are also visible on the outside of your garment.

Post snaps use a center post to pierce the fabric and join the pieces together. This type of snap is stronger than a pronged snap and is used in heavy-weight or thick fabrics.

Prong snaps use knife-like points to pierce the fabric and join with the inner pieces (Figure 8). The prongs do minimal damage to the fabric and work well on light-weight fabrics. The snap's cap can add embellishment to the garment using gem-like stones or coordinating colored ring caps.

Specialty snaps can be used for a variety of garments, accessories, and home interior projects. Magnetic snaps have strong magnets inside to draw the two snap pieces together. This four-part snap works like a prong snap, but is generally hidden in the facing or lining. The snap tape, or gripper tape, is a fabric tape of prong-type snaps. The snaps are pre-set into the fabric tape, and the tape is stitched into place on each side of the garment opening. The socket side of the tape is stitched to the underlap and the ball side is stitched to the overlap. You will find this type of snap in infant clothing and some sportswear.

You may not want a snap to show on your garment. In this case, you can cover the snap with fabric. To cover a snap:

- Cut two circles of matching fabric or lining. The circles should be twice the diameter of the snap.

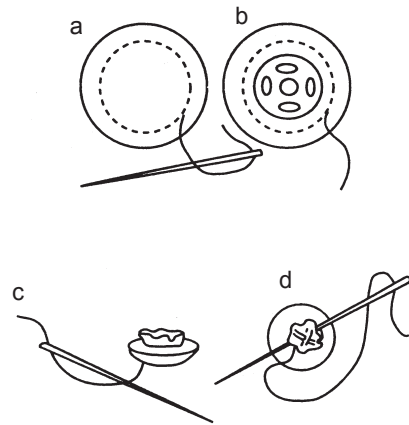


Figure 9

- Run a gathering stitch along the outside edge of one circle (Figure 9a). Place the socket of the snap face down in the center of the circle (Figure 9b). Draw up the thread (Figure 9c) and tack it securely to the underside of the snap (Figure 9d). Cover the ball of the snap in the same way.
- Sew the snap in place on the garment. Opening and closing the snap will open the center hole.

HOOK AND LOOP FASTENERS

This variety of fastener is closed by pressure and opened by pulling it apart; the most common example is Velcro®. Because they grip with strength but peel apart easily, they are ideal for people with poor or limited finger and/or hand mobility, such as children or people with arthritis. Hook and loop fasteners can be sewn on by hand or by machine. These fasteners are made of tiny, firm, polyester hooks on one piece and soft nylon loops on the other (Figure 10). The size of the fastener indicates

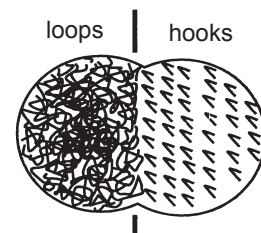


Figure 10

its holding strength. Hook and loop fasteners are packaged in several shapes and come in fashion colors. These fasteners should always be kept closed when not in use to prevent damage to nearby fabric.

Hook and loop fasteners are easily stitched on by machine or hand.

- To conceal stitches, sew fasteners to the facing before joining the facing to the garment. Sew the hook piece on the underlap side of the placket—away from the skin. The loop is stitched to the wrong side of the placket overlap.
- Secure fasteners in place with pins or glue stick before stitching.
- When sewing fasteners directly to the facing, use 12 to 15 machine stitches per inch.
- If you apply fasteners after the garment is complete, hide the stitching on the outside with buttons or trim. Hook and loop tape is available with an adhesive backing, which is useful for positioning the fastener. However, the adhesive alone is not strong enough to secure the fastener. Be careful when stitching through the adhesive as it may gum your needle and cause skipped stitches when machine sewing.

DECORATIVE FASTENERS

Some popular decorative fasteners are frogs, toggles, and ties (Figure 11). Such fasteners can be used instead of buttons. Frogs can be bought or handmade. You usually see them on oriental-style jackets and on capes, velvet jackets, or quilted vests. Toggles can be used on all kinds of outerwear. Ties make an easy closure for all types of clothing. You can use ribbon or matching fabric.

FOR FROGS AND TOGGLES:

1. Complete the garment before sewing on the fastener.
2. Lap or match the garment edges according to pattern directions.
3. Pin the ball of the frog or toggle in place on the left side of the garment. Pin the loop on the right side. Be sure the garment closes properly when it is fastened.
4. Hand-tack frogs neatly in place. Toggles may be stitched by hand or machine.

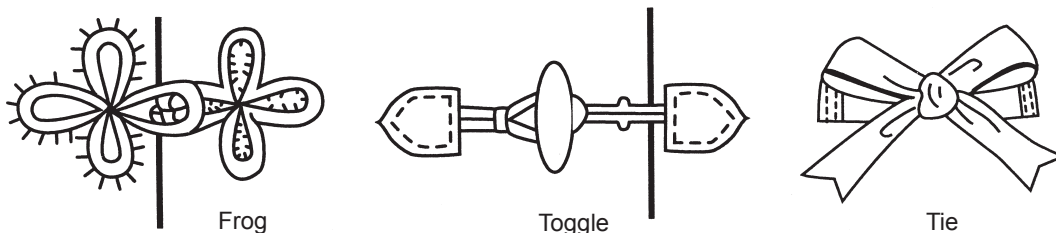


Figure 11

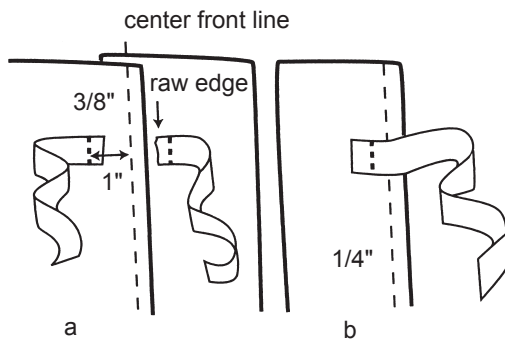


Figure 12

FOR SELF-FABRIC TIES:

1. Cut two strips of fabric for each tie. They should be four times the desired width. Add $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. to the desired length.
2. Fold the raw edges of the long sides to the middle of the strip. Turn one short end under $\frac{3}{8}$ in. Then fold the strip in half lengthwise. Stitch the three folded sides, about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from the edge.
3. Lap the garment so the center front lines meet. Mark the positions for each tie. The marks should be 1 in. from the center front line.
4. Pin the raw edge of each tie to the garment with $\frac{3}{8}$ in. extending over the mark (Figure 12a).
5. Stitch on the mark. Trim the raw edge to $\frac{3}{8}$ in.
6. Press the tie toward the center front line. Stitch through all layers $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from the turned edge (Figure 12b). Backstitch to secure stitches.

FOR RIBBON TIES:

Follow steps 3 through 6 of "For Self-Fabric Ties." After stitching, notch the raw edges or cut them diagonally to prevent raveling.

REFERENCES

Baker, M.M. 2004. *Hooks & Eyes, Snaps, and Tape Fasteners* [CT-MMB.029]. Lexington: University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

Original author: Adapted by Susan Wright, former Extension specialist, from a publication by Evelyn Brannon, Clothing Specialist, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.

Notes

Brand names appearing in publications are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. Persons using such products assume responsibility for their use in accordance with current label directions of the manufacturer.

Contents of publications may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. For permission to use publications for other purposes, contact pubs@nmsu.edu or the authors listed on the publication.

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.