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“The Inside Story”

Selecting Interfacing, Backing, Interlining, and Lining Fabrics

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THE INSIDE STORY

Selecting Interfacing, Backing, Interlining, and Lining Fabrics

*Prepared by Beatrice S. Kalka, Extension Specialist
Clothing and Textiles*

Bustles, hoops, whalebones, and stays were the undercover work that gave clothes a fashionable look in days gone by. Today, fashion's hidden helpers are interfacing, backing, interlining, and lining fabrics.

The look of quality, both in ready-to-wear fashions and those you make, depends on the inside story. It comes from supporting fabrics used to:

- . provide the shaped foundation on which the garment is built,
- . shape the silhouette,
- . give collars, cuffs, and other fashion details smart professional lines,
- . support sheer and supple fabrics,
- . make a style fit and hang well,
- . prevent stretching and sagging during wear.

The inner construction of interfacings, backings, interlinings, and linings gives the desired line or style to garments. The magic they can work has long been valued by professional seamstresses who use them with satisfying results. And you can achieve the same results--the technique is simple once you learn the names, weights, characteristics of the materials and exactly how to use them to get the effect you want.

What function does each perform in the shaping of a garment, how does one decide which type of shaping to use in a garment, what are the kinds of interfacing, backing, lining, and interlining materials available? The information that follows can guide you in making the selection and in the application of these important parts to a garment's structure.

Interfacing

Interfacing is used as a reinforcement between the facing and the outer fabric of a garment to give body and shape. Most commercial patterns will indicate where to use interfacings. Those with experience in sewing may want

to experiment with the use of interfacing beyond recommendations given in the pattern. Patterns often recommend interfacing collars, cuffs, and fronts of jackets and other garments.

Purpose

The functions interfacings serve are to:

- . help keep fashion fabric from stretching--especially, in areas of strain,
- . add body and firmness,
- . give definition and emphasis to special parts of the garment,
- . cushion seam allowances so they won't show as ridges on the outside of the garment,
- . provide extra support for silhouettes shaped away from the body.

Selection

When you create a fashion, your pattern demands certain performance from the fabric chosen. The fabric, on the other hand, has its own characteristics and limitations. The interfacing you choose must help the fashion fabric to meet the demands of the pattern. It is impossible to choose the best interfacing for a sewing project unless you consider the fabric and the garment design together.

The degree of weight and crispness you want from the interfacing will depend on the effect you wish to achieve. A good rule to follow is: *An interfacing should not be heavier than the garment fabric with which it is to be used.* When you're in the store, before making a final decision, put a corner of your fabric over a corner of each interfacing you look at. Handle the layers of the two fabrics together shaping them as they'll be used. When you find a combination that feels right for your pattern--you've found your interfacing!

It is possible that you will want more than one weight or type of interfacing in a single garment. A lightweight might be used in the "easy" areas for support and a firmer one used in those areas needing more definition.

In color, interfacings should match or blend with the fashion fabric. Light colored garments require light-colored or white interfacings. Dark colored garments need a dark interfacing.

The comfort and stretch qualities of knitted fabrics require special consideration in the selection of interfacing fabrics. Some non-woven interfacings have an "elastic personality" and therefore do not hamper the stretch comfort of knits.

Type

There is a wide variety of interfacing materials available. One manufacturer has developed fourteen types for use in commercial and home sewn garments. Space limits stores in the variety of interfacing materials they can offer the consumer.

Interfacing fabrics vary in weight from light to heavy; some are woven and others are of non-woven construction. Many are made of man-made fibers, some are cotton or blends and others are of wool and hair. Some are fusible because of the addition on one side of a heat sensitive adhesive material that is activated with heat and pressure.

Woven Interfacing Fabrics

These fabrics like all woven fabrics, have a lengthwise and crosswise grainline. Woven interfacing is most often cut on the same grain as the garment section it is interfacing. If you are an experienced seamstress you may want to experiment cutting the interfacing pieces on the true bias. This will result in a softer, less rigid appearance and when applied to knit fabrics would not totally restrict their comfort stretch qualities as it would if cut on grain.

Non-Woven Interfacing Fabrics

These fabrics do not have a grainline because they are formed by bonding, fusing, or felting the fibers together. Two basic types are manufactured - Bias and Stabilized. The Bias group has "give" in all directions and is designed for use with the various types of knits and lightweight wovens where shape retention is required but where the interfacing must also "work" with the fabric. The Stabilized group offers more rigidity and is designed to use where a crisp "look" is required, or where it is desirable, in conjunction with knits and lightweight wovens, to stabilize the garment.

Press-on Interfacing Fabric

A press-on or fusible interfacing is a knitted, woven, or non-woven fabric which has been treated on one side with a heat sensitive material that will act as an adhesive when heat and pressure are applied. The heat sensitive material, applied in precise locations and amounts, may be in the form of granules, dots, or a web. When this type of interfacing is appropriate you can save time and stitches because it can be applied to the fashion fabric by pressing it on with an iron. Because of the unique characteristics of this type of interfacing it is important to read and follow the manufacturer's fusing directions for application.

Interfacings are used to give shape and support to a garment. Although they are a small portion of the cost and are seldom seen in the finished garment, they can mean the difference between satisfaction and dissatisfaction of a garment. Basic considerations to keep in mind are choices of interfacing materials available and their relation to the style of the garment, the fashion fabric used, your sewing expertise, and the care the garment will be given.

Backing

A backing is a shaping material cut the same as the garment section that it will back and is applied to the wrong side of corresponding outer sections before any seams are joined. The two pieces are treated as one during construction. Sometimes a backing is called an "underlining."

Purpose

The fashion of the time and type of fashion fabric used may demand that an underlining be used to give body or shape or to control stretch. Shaped styles that hang free and are supported only at the shoulders usually require backing fabrics to hold a silhouette away from the body. Backing materials are also used when the fashion fabric is sheer or loosely constructed. The backing gives support and "veils out" seams and hems resulting in a smooth, one-color appearance.

Selection

The backing of a garment should be a smooth slippery material that is pleasant to touch and comfortable next to the skin if the garment is to be unlined. Compatibility with the fashion fabric in the care required is a necessity. Shrinkage control precautions should be taken and the color should match or blend with outer fabric as closely as possible.

Type

There are many types of fabric that you will find appropriate to use as backing. Some fabrics are designed especially to be used as backing but this doesn't exclude the use of other fabrics. The fashion of the time and the fashion fabric that you are using are key considerations when choosing the type of backing fabric.

Application

To back or underline a garment, cut the backing from the same pattern piece as the garment section, carefully following the same grain. Make all construction marks on the underlining fabric only. Pin the underlining to the wrong side of the garment section; match notches and edges. Machine baste through the center of darts and tucks to secure the backing to the outer fabric. Secure both layers of fabric with diagonal basting, hand basting or stay stitching.

The success of backing rests upon the two fabrics acting as one.

Interlining

Interlining also helps to create and maintain a specific shape. *It is a layer of fabric used to give additional warmth and is placed between the outer fabric and the lining. It is shaped like the lining.*

For extra warmth, soft wool or part wool flannel interlinings are ideal. Fur like detachable interlinings can solve the problem of an all-season coat.

Lining

Lining is assembled separately as though it were a second garment, and is then sewed into the garment as an inside finish. To line or not to line is the choice of the individual. Most coats and jackets are lined since the inside of these garments will be seen. Patterns for this type of apparel include lining pattern pieces as well as detailed sewing instructions. Dress, blouse, skirt, or slack patterns rarely include lining pattern pieces or lining instructions. Here lining becomes a matter of personal preference, a question of added luxury.

Purpose

As an inside finish, lining serves a two-fold purpose. It is more than merely decorative, providing a smooth and beautiful interior for your garment--lining is functional as well.

- ...By protecting seams from abrasion, lining eliminates the need for seam finishing, except where the outer fabric ravel badly.
- ...By protecting your skin from any harshness of outer fabric, lining provides comfort.
- ...By resisting static electricity, a lining of anti-static fabric will eliminate annoying clinging and allow the outer fabric to hang properly.
- ...By preventing stretching, lining in skirts or slacks (especially knits), will help preserve shape.

Selection

The selection of your lining fabric is almost as important as the selection of the fashion fabric. The lining should be durable, opaque, smooth, pleasant to the touch, not wrinkle easily, require the same care and be compatible in weight with the outer fabric. A lining should be tightly woven so it does not stretch or split. The color can match, blend, or contrast with the outer fabric. It's smart to test the two fabrics together over your hand to be sure that the contrasting color does not show through.

Type

Both natural and man-made fibers are used for lining fabrics. Some are finished so as to inhibit perspiration odors and repel germs. Others are weather insulated by quilting or by the addition of a metallic finish on the wrong side that helps to hold in body heat. It is important for you to know that after repeated cleanings the metallic treated lining loses some of its insulating properties.

Linings come in a variety of weaves. The two most popular are satin and twill weaves. The satin weave is most luxurious but the least durable. The twill weave is the most durable. Knits are also appropriate for linings, especially when the garment fabric is a firm knit.

The lining of a garment is often its hidden asset: a lining prolongs the life of the garment and adds a touch of elegance.

Fashion is fickle! There's a long and a short to every skirt and jacket, an up and a down to waistlines, necklines and hemlines. But there's one thing that we can agree on--the secret to creating shape and holding it is the careful selection and use of interfacing, backing, interlining, and lining fabrics.

RECORD OF USE OF SUPPORTING FABRICS

As various supporting fabrics are used, you may want to keep a record for future reference.

Date	Type of Fabric & Brand Name	Description of Fabric	Garment Used on	Results	Small Swatch