

Improved lapped zipper

Preserve the side-seam curve with a faced installation

Side-seam zippers just make sense. They are handy, easy to access, and from a design standpoint, fairly unobtrusive. The garment's back is left undisturbed, a better option than interrupting a beautiful print or a pretty lace with a prominently placed zipper. Side seams are often shaped, though, and that can be a problem with a zipper in the seam. You can't clip the seam allowances or zipper tape to accommodate a curve. Or can you? Actually, you can build in a beautiful curve while you install a lapped zipper successfully and easily by hand.

Traditionally, a nicely shaped seam is easy enough to attain by clipping into the seam allowances. When there's a zipper in the seam, however, your clipping options are limited. Clipping right up to the fold would be visible, and then there's the zipper tape. Happily, there's an extra step that enables you to clip those seam allowances: Add silk organza facings. Silk organza is stable, crisp, and lightweight. The organza facings stabilize the fashion fabric's seam allowances so you can safely clip them. Zippers in a garment's side seam are usually lapped, with the overlap fold facing the garment's back and hiding the zipper teeth. On a tightly fitted garment, it's difficult to wear a centered zipper without the fabric pulling open to reveal a little bit of the zipper underneath. So, a lapped zipper it is, with silk organza facings. I'll show you how to adapt a seam that ends with an open edge.

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Face and clip the plackets to prepare a lapped side-seam zipper that follows a curve.

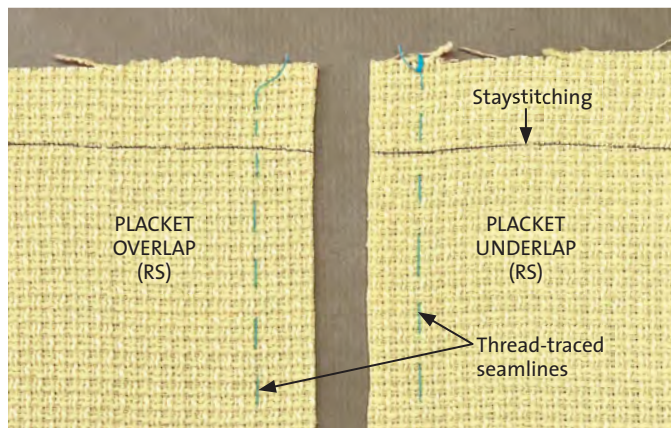
Pattern: Author's original design. Fabric: Cotton tweed from Fabrics-Fabrics.com and lace from A Fabric Place in Baltimore, Maryland.



Ready the placket

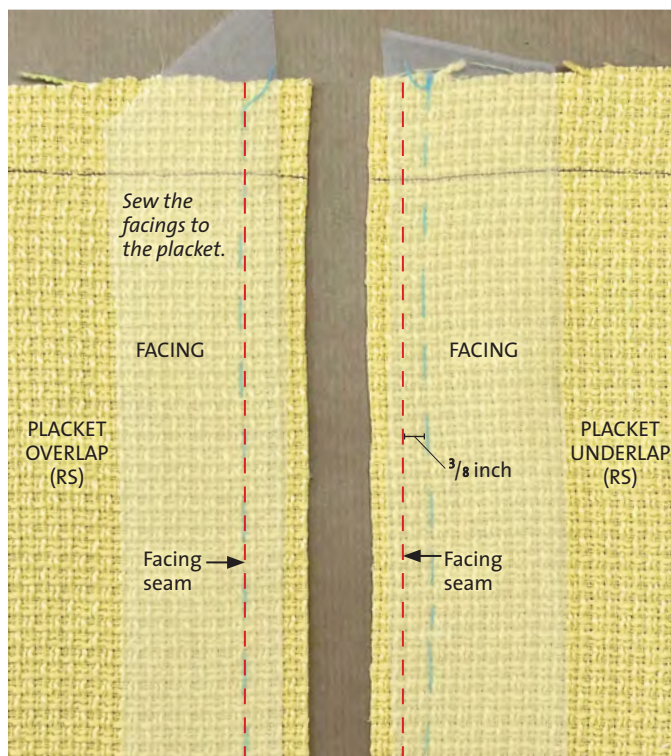
Before adding the silk organza facings, staystitch to stabilize the placket top edge, and thread-trace the zipper seamline on each side. The stitching acts as an accurate reference for the facing seam placement as well as the clipping depth along the zipper sides.

- 1 Mark the seamlines.** Staystitch the placket top by machine, with small stitches. Thread-trace the zipper seamlines.

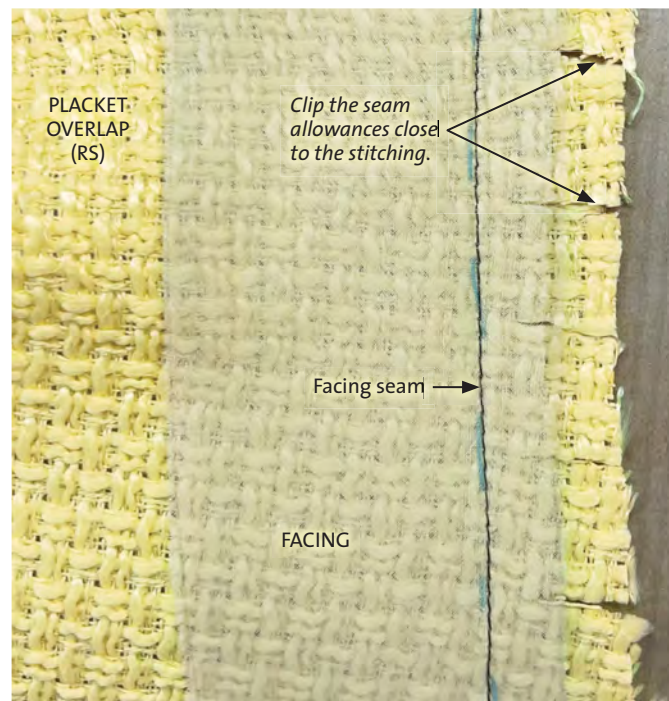


- 2 Prepare the facings.** Cut two silk organza strips on the bias, each 1½ inches wide and slightly longer than the placket.

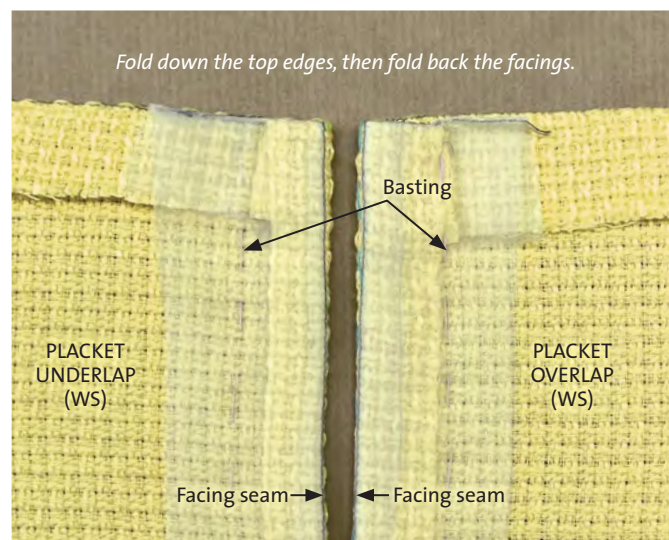
- 3 Machine-sew the facings to the zipper placket.** Sew the bias strip to the placket overlap along the seamline. Sew the bias strip along the placket underlap ⅜ inch from the seamline, to create a recess that helps hide the zipper.



- 4 Clip the seam allowances along the curvature on the placket sides.** The clips can be fairly deep, through the fashion fabric and the silk organza facings.



- 5 Press the seam allowances toward the facings.** Fold down the placket top edges, extending the folds along the tops of the silk organza facings. Then press the placket vertical edges into place on the wrong side with the facing seams on the folds. Firmly shape any curve to follow the seamline. To keep everything in place, hand-baste the pressed layers together.

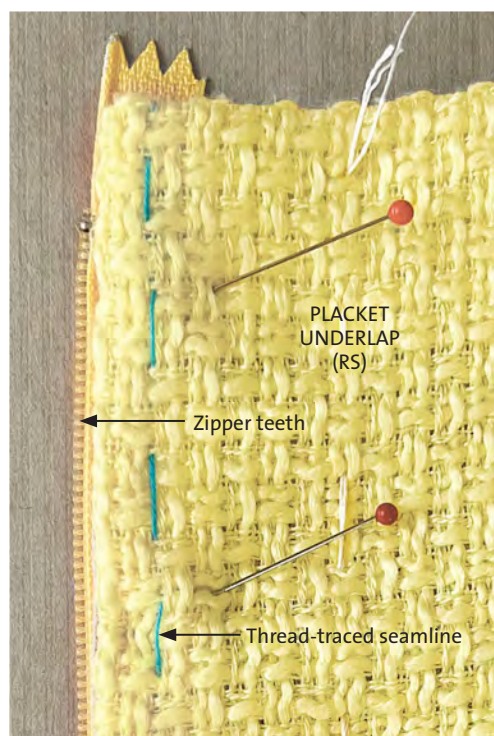


Sew the underlap

The back, or underlap, zipper side is sewn in place first with closely spaced pick stitches. This zipper side is sewn from the top down and placed to accommodate a small snap or hook fastener above the zipper.

1 Prepare the thread and zipper tape. Double the thread, coat it with beeswax, then press it to melt the beeswax into the fibers. Clip the back zipper tape as needed to follow the seam's curve. See step 1 at right.

2 Pin the zipper in place. Work from the top down, planning for a small snap, hook and eye, or hook and thread bar at the placket top. Without it, the front overlap tends to ripple. To accommodate the fastening, place the zipper top $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or so below the horizontal fold in the zipper placket. The extra bit of zipper tape at the top can be folded out of sight. The little cord alongside the teeth abuts the fabric fold.



3 Apply a pickstitch. Begin at the placket top, positioning the stitches as close as you can make them to the edge of the fabric and to one another. The thickness of the fabric influences how small those stitches are. Place your final stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or so below the zipper opening's base.



Stitch the overlap

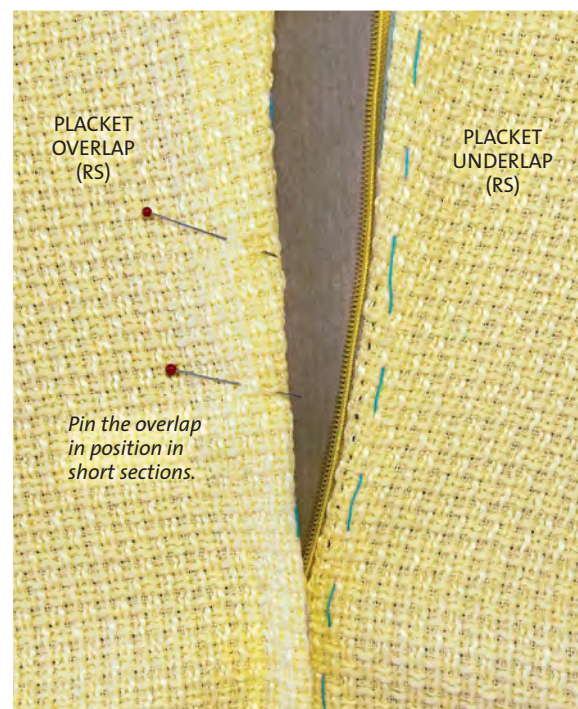
Carefully align the seamlines, then sew the zipper to the front or overlap side, starting at the base and working toward the placket top. If there's a pattern to your fabric, or a waistline seam to be matched, you'll find stitching the zipper by hand enables easy positioning.

1 Clip the front zipper tape.

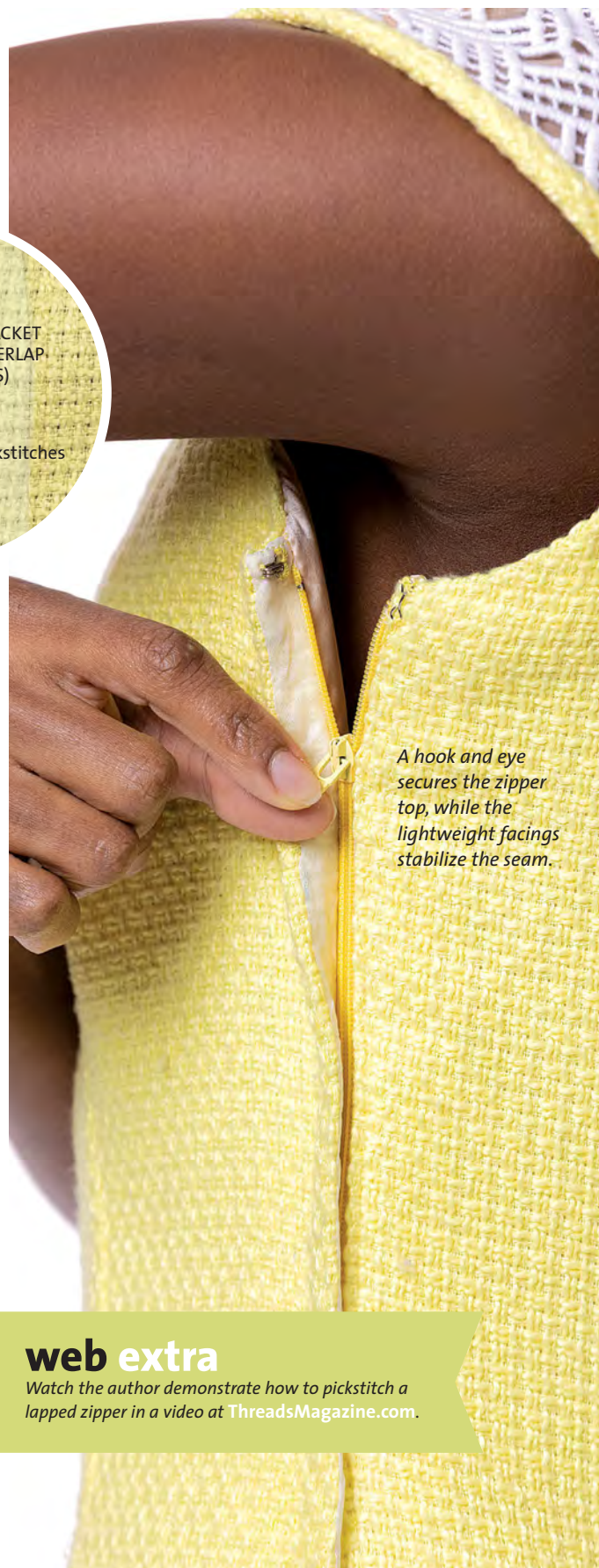
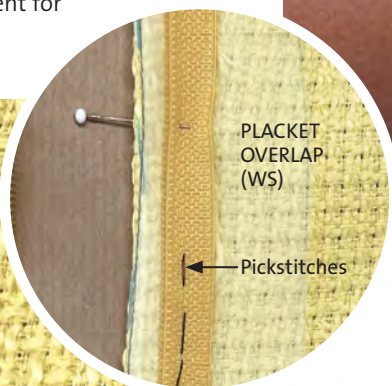
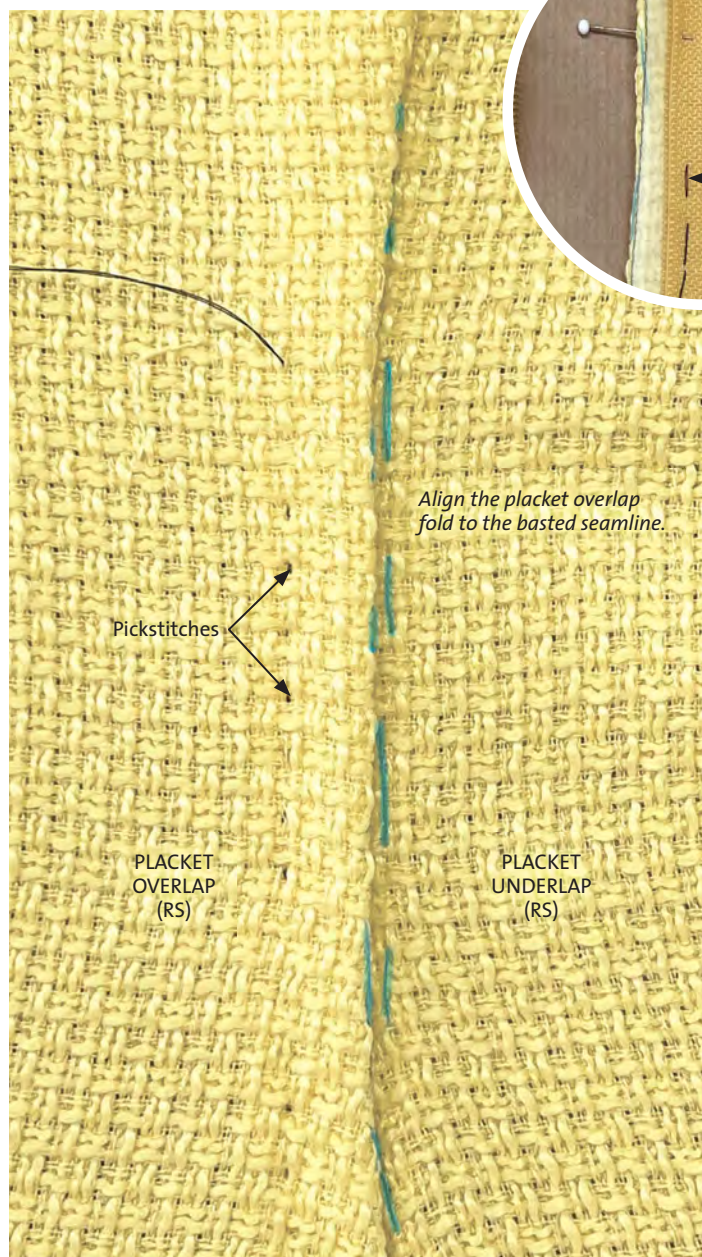
You want to give the zipper the same flexibility you've given the seam allowances. Cut close to, but not through, the coils. You can cut to about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. The lining will eventually cover the clips.



2 Pin a portion of the front zipper tape in place. You won't be able to pin the entire zipper; you simply can't access it. Close the zipper a couple of inches, then pin the overlap into place, carefully lining it up with the basted seamline.



3 Sew the pinned section. Do not pull the stitches too tight, as this makes the fabric look tufted and the stitches sink out of sight. Ideally, the stitches form tiny beads of thread on the right side. If you run your hand over the work, you should feel the stitches. Stitch placement and size varies, but I generally stitch about 1/2 inch from the fold and space the stitches 3/8 inch apart. Once the pinned section is sewn, repeat the pinning and placement for the next few inches of the zipper.



web extra

Watch the author demonstrate how to pickstitch a lapped zipper in a video at [ThreadsMagazine.com](https://www.threads magazine.com).

4 Complete the installation. Once you have finished stitching in the zipper, remove the basting and thread tracing. Add a small snap, hook and eye, or hook and thread bar at the top. The placket top is never perfectly flat because the zipper pull sits underneath, but fastening the layers together helps.