

Eliminate separate facings for elegant edges

A lining technique goes couture

Generally speaking, independently applied facings are seldom used in couture garments. While machine-sewn facings are a fast and easy finish for ready-to-wear clothing, couture garments use another approach.

The cumbersome facing, along with its seam allowances and rows of machine stitching and understitching, is eliminated. The seam allowances are then cut generously enough to serve as built-in/cut-on facings.

Linings are applied by hand—often right up to the garment's edge. An underlining is included to strengthen the area and to serve as a base for the hand stitches that are a part of the process.

Using the shell shown at left, I demonstrate how to apply a lining to a curved neckline and an arm-hole edge for an elegant couture technique.

Susan Khalje is a Threads contributing editor.

1 Cut three layers of fabric

The shell has three layers: the fashion fabric, the underlining, and the lining (in this case, herringbone-weave raw silk, silk organza, and silk crepe de chine). When you cut out your fabrics, increase the seam allowances of the neck and armholes on your commercial pattern or muslin from $\frac{3}{8}$ inch to 1 to 2 inches. They'll be trimmed down later.

continued >>>

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2 Mark seamlines

Use old-fashioned, wax-based tracing paper and a tracing wheel to transfer the neckline and armhole seamlines from your pattern or muslin to your underlining and lining. Choose your carbon color carefully and trace lightly; it mustn't show through to the right side of the fabrics.



3 Make the fashion-fabric unit

Hand-baste the fashion fabric and the underlining together, following the traced marks. This double layer is the fashion-fabric unit.



A WORD ABOUT UNDERLINING

FIRMLY WOVEN FABRICS

When the fashion fabric is silk dupioni, silk shantung, linen, or a silk-linen blend, use silk organza, lightweight silk broadcloth, or cotton batiste as the underlining. They mimic the hand of the fashion fabrics.

SOFTER FABRICS

For three- and four-ply silk crepes and wool crepe fashion fabrics, use silk crepe de chine as the underlining. It duplicates the flowing nature of these fabrics. Silk organza, for example, would be too firm and would restrict the natural flow of the fashion fabrics.

4 Sew the seams

Machine-stitch the fashion-fabric unit's shoulder and side seams; press the seam allowances open. Repeat this step for the lining.



Photos: Scott Phillips

5 Staystitch the curved openings

Machine-staystitch the neckline and armhole edges on the seamlines of both the fashion-fabric unit and the lining.



6 Press before clipping

Press the neckline and armhole seam allowances on the fashion-fabric unit toward the inside, carefully manipulating the fabric so that no creases are pressed in. Inching your way, carefully work the tip of the iron along the seamline. By creating a memory of the folded edge in your fabric before clipping into the seam allowance, you discourage the little depressions that tend to appear along clipped curved edges. Favor the staystitching to fall inside the neck edge to keep it hidden from the right side.



7 Clip the seam allowances

After this initial pressing, clip the seam allowance as deeply and as often as necessary to establish a smooth, undimpled, curved armhole and neckline. Trim the seam allowance down to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, and re-press.



8 Tack seam allowances

Catchstitch the seam allowances to the underlining. Perform the same pressing, clipping, and re-pressing on the lining along its traced neckline and armhole edges.



9 Sew in the lining

Align the pressed edges, bring the lining slightly inside the fashion-fabric edge, and join it to the neckline and armhole edges with small, firm fell stitches, placing them right at the fashion fabric's line of staystitches.



10 Understitch the edges

Prevent the lining from ever peeking around the edge of the fashion fabric by understitching it to the underlining with a prickstitch (a tiny backstitch). Stitch approximately 1/2 inch below the neckline edge and inside the armhole edges, with each stitch catching the underlining and lining layers but not the fashion fabric.

