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Machine Buttonholes And Buttons

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Buttonhole Facts

Garments for women have buttonholes on the right side; men's are on the left side. You should determine the length of a buttonhole by the button's diameter and its thickness. Making the buttonhole too small will increase the wear around it. Always have the actual button you are going to use before making the buttonhole.

Diameter + Thickness = Length of Buttonhole

If you buy buttons according to pattern recommendations, you can use the exact markings on the pattern for placement of the buttonholes. If your button varies greatly from the suggested size, then the diameter of the button determines the point from the edge of the suit or coat where the buttonhole begins.

Relocate buttonholes if the pattern has been altered in this area. The distance between the last buttonhole and the jacket's hemline should be at least the same as the distance between buttonholes. It can be longer, but never make it shorter. Certain styles are more attractive when the space is longer.

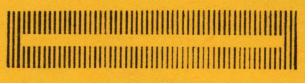
Remember these points in making buttonholes:

- Never make a buttonhole through the hem.
- Cording usually results in a more beautiful buttonhole.
- Because of strain, horizontal buttonholes are used on fitted garments. Tailored suits and coats are usually in this classification.
- Vertical or diagonal buttonholes are used for a particular design.
- Stabilize stretchy fabrics with a piece of lightweight fusible nonwoven interfacing. On each buttonhole marking, fuse a square to the wrong side of the fashion fabric. This is often necessary because interfacing used in construction has the same amount of stretch as the fashion fabric.

- Bound buttonholes are usually found in womenswear. The keyhole or the regular machine buttonhole is the accepted type for menswear.

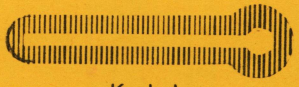
Machine Buttonholes

Buttonholes made by machine are rectangle, oval and keyhole.



Rectangular

Oval



Keyhole

There is little difference in choosing between oval or rectangular buttonholes. The keyhole is usually found on menswear and tailored clothing. It adds a "touch of class" to womenswear when machine buttonholes are selected in place of bound buttonholes. The keyhole shape stays closed better than the other two because the button shank has a ready-made space in which to rest. With the rectangular and oval, the shank somewhat distorts the buttonhole.

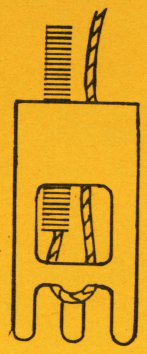
A special attachment is required on the machine to make keyhole buttonholes. A cam or a button is placed in the attachment to give the right size.

When using the attachment on thick or napped fabric, protect it with a piece of cellophane tape. Place the tape over the markings, and slip the fabric into the stitching position under the attachment. Then remove the cellophane tape and make the buttonhole. Replace the cellophane tape before sliding the fabric out.

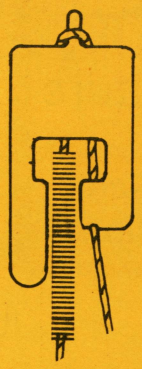
A machine buttonhole should always be tested through all the fabric layers involved (facing, interfacing and underlining). This will give you a chance to see how the fabric handles and to check the size. Use the same thread and needle that was used throughout the garment construction.

Some machines have to be manually guided in making buttonholes while others have built-in capabilities. Cording helps achieve a professional looking buttonhole. The cording can be carpet thread or polycord (heavy top stitching thread). It can be manually placed and zigzagged over if that is the type of machine you have. Other machines have a special presser foot that will help in placing the cording.

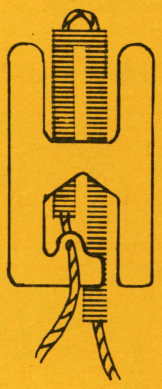
1. Cording is held in place by looping it around a center toe.



2. Cording is held in place by looping it around a toe at the back.

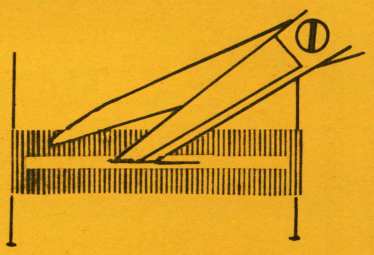


3. Cording is held in place by threading through an eyelet in front. However, the fabric must be manually turned to complete the second side of the buttonhole.



When the buttonhole is completed, pull the loop end of the cord under the end of the buttonhole. With a hand needle, pull the two free ends of the cord to the wrong side and tie a knot.

The buttonhole is opened only after stitching is completed. Place pins at each end to avoid cutting through the ends. Use a small pair of sharp scissors, and cut down the center of the buttonhole. You can use a seam ripper to create an opening for the scissors to start the cutting. Make this opening in the center, and cut to either end with scissors.

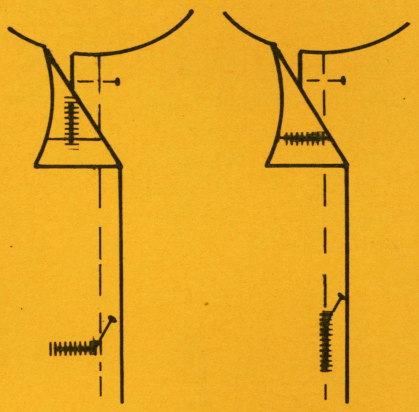


Buttons

Determine the final button placement only after the buttonholes are complete. Match the center front lines by lapping the buttonhole side of the garment over the button side. To secure, pin between the buttonholes.

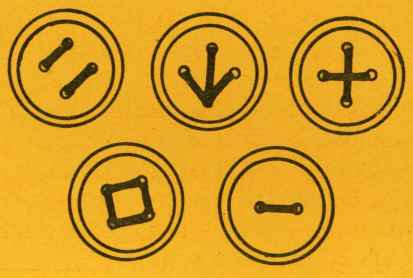
For horizontal buttonholes, mark the button location with a pin placed through the buttonhole opening. This is ⅛ inch from the buttonhole end that is nearest the garment edge.

For vertical buttonholes, place the pin ⅛ inch below the top of the opening.

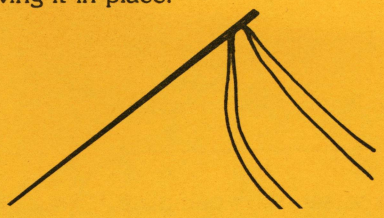


Carefully lift the buttonhole over the pin, and mark the exact location using tailor's chalk or a pin. This mark should be exactly on the center front line. The type of button will determine how it is sewn in place.

Use thread that is compatible in fiber content to the fashion fabric. Use thread that matches the fabric and button unless you want a contrast or decorative effect on sew-through buttons.



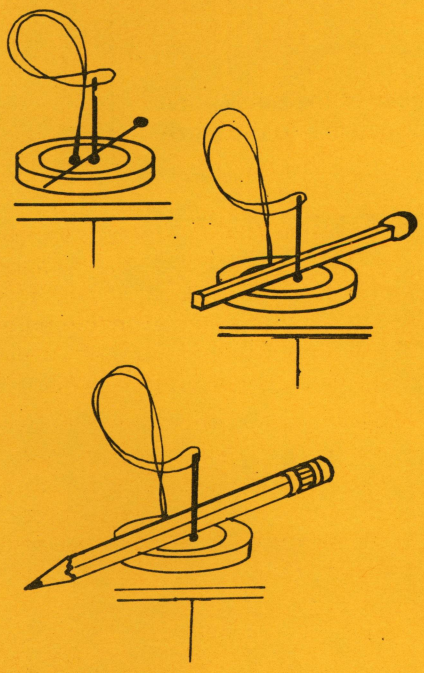
Double the thread before threading the needle. This will result in four strands of thread, meaning fewer times through the button when sewing it in place.



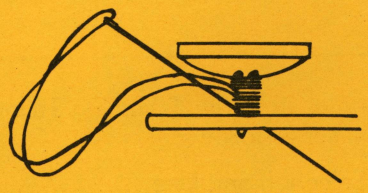
Use beeswax on the thread to reduce its tendency to knot. This will also strengthen the thread and allow it to glide easily through the fabric.

A functional button requires a shank to allow the buttonhole to close behind it. The length of the shank is determined by garment thickness at the buttonhole plus 1/16 inch for movement. If the shank is not long enough, puckers will be created down the garment front when it is buttoned.

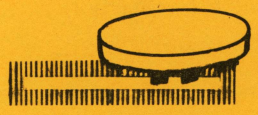
Different objects around the house that can be used to make a shank include pins, pencils, wooden matches, etc. The one instrument you choose will be determined by the desired length of the shank. You can buy commercial button gauges at the notions counter.



To make a shank, sew through the button over the pin or match as previously shown. When the desired strength is reached, bring the needle out between the button and the fashion fabric. Remove the object and push the button to the top of the thread loops. Wind the remaining thread on the needle around the shank several times. You can tie a knot through the shank, or pull the thread through to the facing side and knot it there.

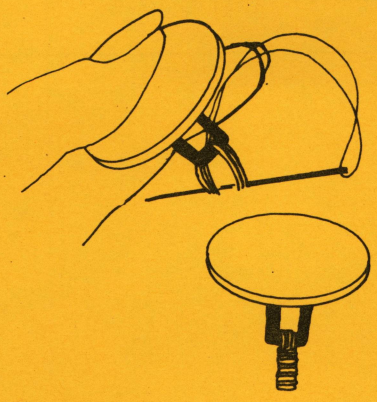


Some buttons already have a shank that allows them to rest on top of the buttonhole. In attaching this type of button, align the shank with the buttonhole opening so the buttonhole will close and not be held open by the shank.

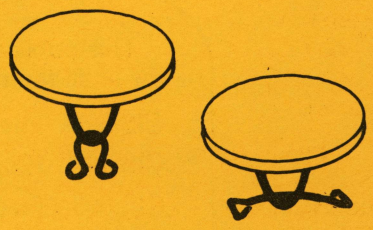


If shank buttons require an additional shank because of fabric thickness, hold your finger between the garment and the button.

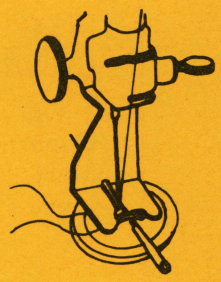
When the shank button is secure, wind the thread remaining on the needle around the thread extension forming the shank. Finish by knotting through the shank or on the underside.



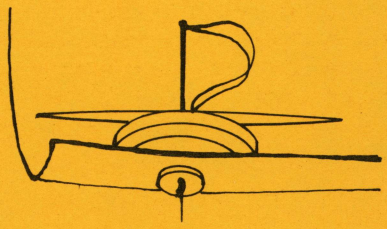
Metal shanks often cut through thread making it necessary to reattach buttons once every 6 or 8 months. To avoid this, use the eyes that are purchased on hook and eye cards. Use the round eye when a shank extension is needed. Use the straight eye to hold the button firmly in place.



When possible, sew buttons on by machine. Many machines have a special foot with a groove in it where a machine needle may be placed to make a shank. Stitches pass over the needle shaft, so the thicker it is, the longer the shank.



Reinforcing buttons are necessary on heavy materials. These buttons take the stress that is normally placed on the fabric and prevent the functional buttons from tearing it. A reinforcement button goes directly under the outer button.



Some of the ideas in this publication were adapted from Virginia Stolpe Lewis's *Comparative Clothing Construction Techniques,* Minneapolis, MN, Burgess Publishing Co., 1976.

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