

# e**ducation**

All About Interfacing  
by Kathy Ruddy



## Interfacing

Many sewers, even the most advanced, consider interfacings a necessary evil. Let's try to break down the information and dispel some confusion.

There are two basic categories: Fusible and Non-fusible. Fusible has a glue or resin added to the back of the interfacing to allow you to attach it to your fabric with the heat of the iron. Non-fusibles do not have that glue attached so they need to be stitched to your fabric. Within these two categories there are many types including: woven, knitted and felted. Woven interfacings have a grain and need to be cut on the same grain as your pattern piece. There are many weights, from batiste to hair canvas. Felted or non-woven interfacing is constructed by using fibers and moisture. These are compressed and allowed to dry. They have no grain line and range from very lightweight to heavyweight. Knit interfacings have a small amount of give. They have a grain line and are usually light to medium weight. Weft insertion interfacings are a combination of knitting and weaving. A thread is woven through the knitted interfacing to stabilize it. Usually, they are medium weight.

More About Interfacing

Interfacing is an important component of a sewing project. It stabilizes finished edges so necklines don't gap or droop. It gives shape to the garment on collars, pockets, front closings, lapels and hemlines. It can be used to give fabric a different drape and stabilize texturized areas.

Fusible interfacings are the easiest to use. Instead of controlling three different layers as you stitch two fabric layers and one interfacing layer, you only have to control two layers because the fusible interfacing becomes one with the fabric.

Preshrinking fusible interfacing never hurts, even if the label says it is preshrunk. You can fold it into a square to fit your sink, then place it in the hottest possible tap water and let it soak. When the water is cool, carefully squeeze out the excess water, unfold it and lay it over a couch or shower rod so that it can dry smooth and not stretch out of shape.

Another preshrinking method is to place it on the ironing board one layer thick and glue side up. Hold the iron with maximum steam flow two inches above the interfacing supporting it from draping over the edges encouraging it to shrink as you steam.

Bigger pattern pieces like a jacket front can actually shrink through the bonding process. A process that I call rough cutting is one of my favorites to use on a project like a tailored jacket. Proceed as follows:

Cut the garment  $3/8$ " bigger than the pattern cutting line (you need not be accurate). Place the fabric pattern piece on the ironing board wrong side up. If the fabric is wiggly like rayon that has been preshrunk, it can distort between the cutting table and the ironing board. This can ruin the shape of a neckline or other details. Place the paper pattern on top and reshape or (block) the fabric to the pattern piece. Next place a rectangle of uncut interfacing glue side down on top of the fabric.

Bond them together down the middle by lifting the iron and then placing it on top of the interfacing and holding it down for ten seconds, until all but the edges are bonded. A good amount of steam is necessary to allow the resin to melt and form a secure bond. Place the paper pattern back onto the bonded cloth and re-cut the pattern piece accurately for a perfect undistorted interfaced unit.

I use interfacing in many unusual ways on my videos called *Breaking the Rules of Sewing* (tapes 1 and 4) and in my skills booklet called *breaking the Rules of Sewing*. You can order either of them with your pattern order.

There are almost as many types of interfacing as there are fabrics. They have different weights, different stretch or flexibility and different resins. For years, I instructed my sewing school students to use the fusible knit as a safe all-purpose interfacing that almost always worked without making the fabric look blistered.

I have recently replaced fusible knit with a new interfacing called *Textured Weft*. It works on all kinds of fabrics giving a lofty feel and control without ever being stiff.

This interfacing is 100% polyester. You do not have to pre-shrink it, although like I said before, it never hurts.