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Members Only

American Sewing Guild

Notions

Tips from the Tops Sewing Hall of Fame Honorees

by Anne Marie Soto

The Sewing Hall of Fame was established in 2001 by Robbie Fanning, publisher of *The Creative Machine* newsletter. Two years later, when Robbie hung up her publishing hat, she bequeathed it to ASG. Since its inception, eight sewing industry notables have been inducted into the Sewing Hall of Fame.

The thread that connects these talented people is their love of sewing and their interest in communicating new ideas and techniques. So we asked each of them to dig into their sewing repertoire and share a favorite tip or two.

Joyce Drexler: Taming Metallic Thread

During her years of championing the use of decorative threads for Sulky of America, Joyce has gathered some tips to help those who have encountered “machine reluctance” with metallic threads. Metallic threads, even in just a small amount, add sparkle to your projects.

The Needle: For optimum results, use a 14/90 metallic-type needle. A few machines do better with a 14/90 topstitch or embroidery needle because they also have a longer eye. Each brand of machine, and in truth, each individual machine, seems to have certain preferences.

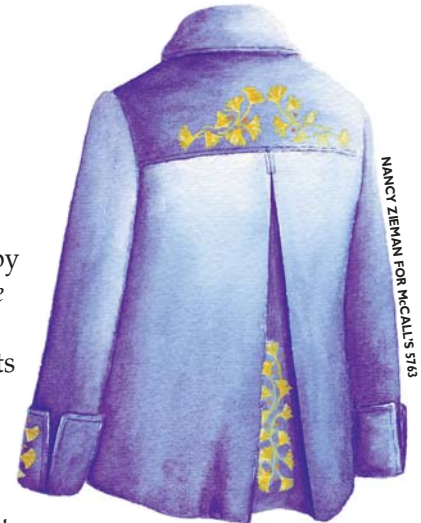
The Tension: Lower the top tension slightly. With a “flat” extra shiny thread, like Sulky Sliver or Holoshimmer, you may need to lower the tension even more—sometimes near 0 with Sliver, probably 1 or 2 with Holoshimmer—and use a vertical spool pin with a felt pad underneath. Because these are flat threads, the twisting action caused by the horizontal spool pins can cause breakage.

The Bobbin: For the bobbin thread, use a matching 40 wt. rayon thread or a polyester invisible thread. When winding the latter onto a bobbin, do it *very slowly*. Invisible thread is a monofilament thread and will stretch when wound too quickly, which can affect your tension. Wind your bobbin only about half full.

Add a Lubricant: When all else fails, a thread lubricant, like Sewer’s Aid or Tri-Flow, can work miracles. It may ease the path or clean out some minute obstruction that’s irritating the machine, and almost always works if everything else is



T-SHIRT: PICO TEE
STRETCH & SEW 310
PANTS: TODAY'S FIT
BY SANDRA BETZINA
FOR VOGUE 2948



NANCY ZIEMAN FOR McCALL'S 5713



McCALL'S 3080

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Tips from the Tops

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as it should be. One caution: Check with your sewing machine dealer to be sure that you can use this type of product on your machine.

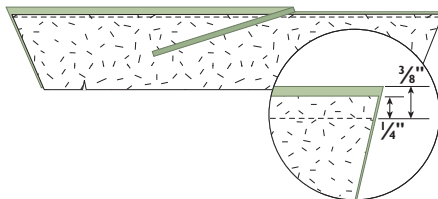
Joyce shared Sewing Hall of Fame honors with her husband Fred, co-owner of Sulky of America. Check out Joyce's most recent book: "An Updated Supplement to Sulky's Secrets to Successful Stabilizing." www.sulky.com

Nancy Zieman: Crisp Corners

Use this wrapped corner technique in place of pivoting and you'll be able to avoid those "dog-ear" corners. Although the example here is a collar, the technique can also be used on a cuff, a lapel, or anywhere two seams cross to create a corner.

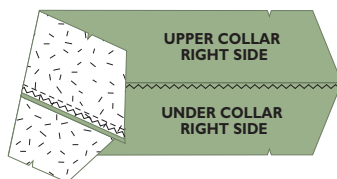
1. Apply the interfacing. With lightweight fabrics, you may want to interface both the upper and lower collars. With heavyweight fabrics, you may prefer to interface only one section. It's your choice.

2. Match under and upper collars, right sides together. Stitch the unnotched edge from end to end. Grade the seam allowances, trimming the under collar to approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " and the upper collar to $\frac{3}{8}$ ".



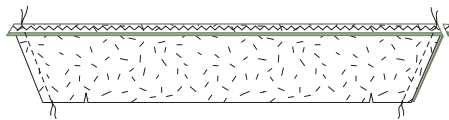
3. Press the seam flat; then press both seam allowances toward the under collar.

4. Understitch the entire seam, stitching the seam allowance to the under collar. Use a multi-zigzag stitch instead of a straight stitch or a conventional zigzag, as it places more stitches per inch, which helps make the finished edge crisp and neat.



5. Fold the collar along the first stitching line, right sides together. Match the remaining seam edges. Straight stitch from the fold to the neckline edge on both ends of the collar.

6. Grade the seam allowances; angle cut the corners.



7. Press the collar; turn it right side out. Using a bamboo pointer or awl, gently poke out the points.



In addition to the Nancy's Notions Web site, Nancy now has a companion Web site devoted to her books, her ongoing public television show "Sewing with Nancy," her personal appearances, and more. www.nancyzieman.com

Sue Hausmann: Simple Solutions

As the host of the "America Sews" television series, Sue has acquired an eclectic collection of tips for easier sewing and better results.

"No-pokies" buttonholes: Before stitching buttonholes on tweeds, wools, and other fabrics that tend to fray, cut a piece of Steam-A-Seam 2 fusible web larger than the buttonhole. Remove the paper and place the web between the garment front and the front facing where the buttonhole will be stitched. Steam-A-Seam 2 is pressure sensitive so it will "stick" in place until you have finished the buttonholes. Once you press the garment, the Steam-A-Seam 2 adheres permanently and will control those wayward threads when the buttonholes are cut open.

No-brainer press cloth: When fusing the interfacing to the wrong side of the garment or facing, place a piece of tissue paper over the fusible as a pressing sheet. Put the iron down onto the tissue paper and count to ten. Then move to the next area and



repeat. When you're finished, discard the tissue.

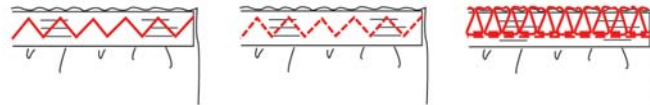
Sue's newest venture is traveling around the country with her husband Herb to present "America Sews On the Road." Sue has a blog where she chronicles their adventures. www.suehausmannsews.blogspot.com

Kerstin Martensson: Swimwear Elastic

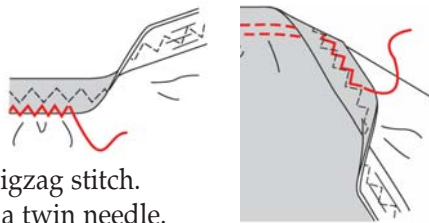
As the founder of Kwik-Sew Pattern Company, Kerstin's legacy lives on in the company's patterns. Swimwear has always been an important part of their offerings.

On swimwear, the outer edges, such as neckline, leg, and armhole openings, are finished with elastic. Choose $\frac{3}{8}$ "-wide elastic specifically designed for swimwear. This type of elastic has been treated to resist the effects of salt water and chlorine and will not lose its elasticity when wet.

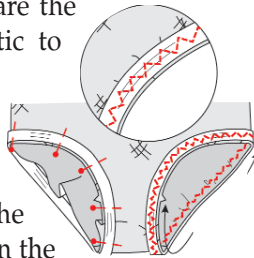
To finish edges with elastic: Place the edge of the elastic even with the raw edge of fabric. Stitch in the center of the elastic, using a zigzag stitch (wide width and medium length), a three-step zigzag stitch, or an overlock stitch.



Fold the elastic under to form a hem. Stitch over the inner edge of the elastic, using a medium-width zigzag stitch. Or topstitch using a twin needle.



At the leg opening: Generally, when applying elastic to an opening, both the elastic and the edge are divided and marked into quarters or eighths. Markings are matched, and then the elastic is gently stretched to fit during stitching. Leg openings are the exception. When applying elastic to the leg openings, pin elastic to front leg opening without stretching and stretch the elastic on the back to fit. The result will be an opening that's smooth in the front and that cups the derriere in the back, which helps prevent the suit from riding up.



Kerstin passed away in 2002, but her company thrives and her books continue to educate new generations of sewers. Under the guidance of Eric McMaster, her son and current

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Tips from the Tops

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president of Kwik-Sew, the company continues to offer quality sewing patterns for knits and wovens. www.kwiksew.com

Martha Pullen: Behind the Beautiful Results

Martha's name is synonymous with an heirloom sewing business that grew out of a tiny shop in Huntsville, Alabama. She is constantly coming up with ideas to inspire others to jump on the heirloom bandwagon.

Joining strips of French lace: The technique for joining French laces is to butt them together and join with a zigzag stitch. If your machine doesn't have the world's best tension, use a very light tear-away stabilizer underneath.

Wash-away marker: To remove the marks, *always* soak the garment overnight in clear water to be sure the marks are gone. *Never* wash in detergent before soaking. Detergent surely sets the marks forever. And if your city water has a lot of chemicals, then use distilled water for soaking.

Martha's current passion is sharing collections of heirloom garments with the world through a collection of books that showcase her personal treasures, as well as ones from the Kent State Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. www.marthapullen.com

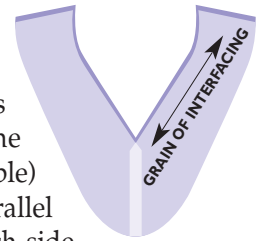
Pati Palmer: Go for the Grain

As the president of Palmer/Pletsch Publishing, Pati has pioneered a wide range of sewing books, DVDs, and some select sewing products, including interfacings. So it's no surprise that Pati has been collecting interesting ways to use interfacing for optimum results.

Most interfacings have crosswise give and lengthwise stability. You can take advantage of that stability to improve the look of your garments.

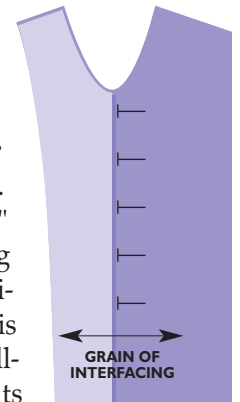
To stabilize a bias V-neck: Use the facing pattern piece to create a new interfacing pattern piece with a ¼"

center seam. Cut the interfacing sections so that the lengthwise (stable) grain runs parallel to the V on each side



of the neckline. Before fusing, make sure the bias facing hasn't "grown." Using the original facing pattern piece as a template, gently scoot the facing back to fit the pattern and then fuse the interfacing in place.

To stabilize buttonholes: Cut the interfacing so that its lengthwise (stable) grain mirrors the direction of your buttonholes. Choosing a 60" wide interfacing gives you the flexibility of using this technique on full-length garments that have horizontal buttonholes.



In addition to her own endeavors, Pati has been responsible for publishing the works of many other talents in the sewing industry. Newest from Palmer/Pletsch is the "Looking Good Live!" DVD, a companion to the book "Looking Good"—both by Nancy Nix-Rice. www.palmerpletsch.com

Ann Person: A Ribbed Finish

As the founder of Stretch & Sew Patterns, Ann's name has been synonymous with sewing on knits. So here are her tips for adding a classic crew neck ribbed finish to a neckline.

1. Trim the neckline to allow for the ribbing. How much you trim depends on (1) the pattern's original seam allowances and (2) whether the fashion fabric is a knit or a woven. For a pattern with ¼" seam allowances, trim ¾" from the neck edges for knits and 1" for wovens. For a pattern with ⅝" seam allowances, trim 1⅝" from the neck edges for knits and 1⅞" for wovens.

2. Sew the garment together at the

shoulder seams.

3. Determine the length of the ribbing. The ratio is 2" of ribbing for every 3" of neck edge or two-thirds the neck measurement. An easy way to do this is to measure the neck (along the seamline, *not* the cut edge), divide by three, then multiply your answer by 2. Add ½" for seam allowances.

4. Cut the ribbing 3" wide x the determined length.

5. Sew the ribbing together to form a circle. Finger-press the seam open.

6. Fold the ribbing in half lengthwise with wrong sides together. Divide the ribbing into quarters and mark with pins. Do the same for the neck edge of the garment. (Note: Shoulder seams are *not* quarter divisions.)

7. With the garment wrong side out, pin the ribbing to the neck edge, matching the markings. Match the seam in the ribbing to the center back of the garment.

8. Stitch with the ribbing on top, gently stretching it to fit and using a ¼" seam allowance.

9. Using the tip of your iron, press the seam allowances down toward the garment.

10. Working from the outside of the garment and using a longer stitch length, topstitch on the garment a scant ¼" from the seam, catching the seam allowances in the stitching.

Now 84, Ann is still going strong and teaches an occasional T-shirt class. The day-to-day activities of Stretch & Sew are overseen by Mindy Moore (Ann's daughter) and Cory Pfitzer (Mindy's daughter and Ann's granddaughter).

www.stretch-and-sew.com

Sandra Betzina: Good-bye to Baggy Bottoms

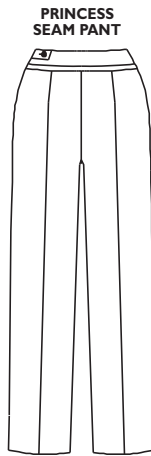
During her travels presenting sewing programs and seminars, Sandra has encountered all types of fitting problems. What she has learned often finds its way into the line of patterns she designs for Vogue. Case in point:

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Tips from the Tops

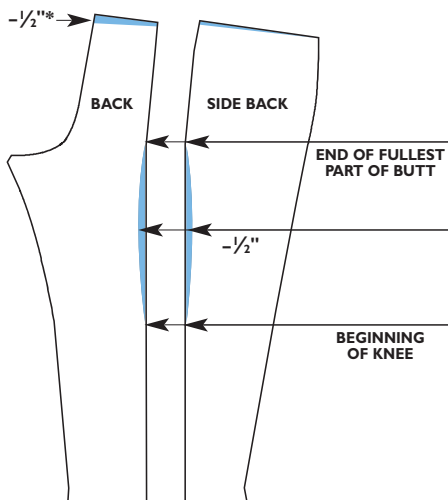
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Vogue 2948, a pair of tapered pants with front and back princess seams. If you have a flat and/or low derriere, you probably have a problem with a baggy seat at the back of your pants. The vertical back seam on this pattern provides an easy solution. Depending on your level of comfort with pattern adjustments, you can make this change on the pattern tissue, on a muslin, or on your "in progress" pants.



On your body, measure down the middle of one leg, from the waist to the bottom of the pant. Make notations as to where the fullest part of the butt ends and the back of the knee begins. This is the area where the pants can be taken in so they hang closer to the body.

Between these points, take in $\frac{1}{2}$ " (or more, if you need it). Taper out this amount so that you are back to the original seamline by the fullest part of the butt and the back of the knee.



*If your pants don't have princess seams, you can make an adjustment by lowering the waistline seam $\frac{1}{2}$ " at the center back, tapering back to the original seamline as you approach the side seam.

Sandra's newest venture is a series of

weekly Web-TV shows, which she co-hosts with Canadian sewing expert Ron Collins. www.powersewing.com

And finally, the tip to end all tips—also courtesy of Martha Pullen: Here is how to stop the guilt feelings over your UFOs. Gather up the unfinished project along with the pattern, the thread, and anything else needed to finish it. Get a Baggie that's just the right size and put everything in it. Write on the outside: "When I die, I will this to _____." Now, you've taken care of your UFOs and you can buy more fabric and start a new project—guilt-free!

Anne Marie Soto is the editor of Notions. She has written articles for many sewing publications and has authored a variety of books, including "Simplicity's Simply the Best Sewing Book," "Simplicity's Simply the Best Home Decorating Book," "Vogue's Sewing for Children," and "Good Housekeeping Stain Rescue." She was present at the birth of the American Sewing Guild, serving as its national administrator during the start-up years of ASG's first nine chapters.