

# Facings and Enclosed Seams

Level  
2 & 3

## Oregon 4-H Clothing Construction Fact Sheets: Basic Skills—Levels 2 and 3

4-H 320-33 • October 2014

A facing is the fabric used to finish a garment edge. Facings may finish collarless necklines, sleeveless armholes, front and back openings, cuffs, and some details such as patch pockets. Facings are usually on the inside of the garment edge. Sometimes they are partly folded to the outside, as in a lapel.

The seam edge that results from applying a facing is called an enclosed seam. A well-finished facing has a sharp, clean, even edge enclosing the seam, and a smooth, flat surface on the right side of the garment.

There are two types of fitted facings:

- Separate shaped facings that are attached to the garment (figure 1)
- Extended shaped facings that are cut as part of the garment section, folded back along an edge (figure 2)

Separate shaped facings may be used to finish front and back openings, necklines, and sleeveless armhole edges. Extended shaped facings are used to finish front and back openings and part of the neck edge.

### Preparing the garment

Because shaped facings are applied to a curved edge, it is important to do directional staystitching to prevent the fabric from changing shape in the seam area.

Staystitching is a row of regular-length machine stitching placed just inside the seamline. It is done immediately after the garment has been cut out and marked, and the pattern pieces have been removed from the fabric pieces. Stitch through a single layer of fabric. Stitch with the yarn direction, and change the direction of the stitching whenever necessary (figure 3).

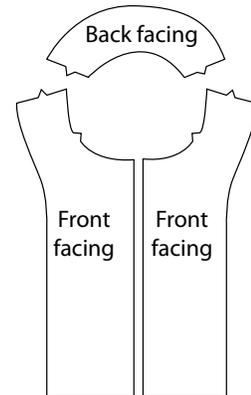


Figure 1. Separate shaped facing.

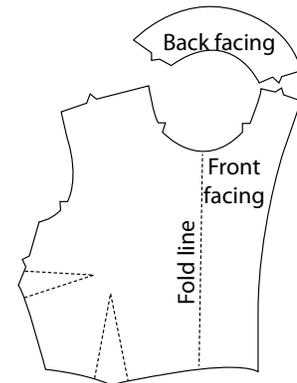


Figure 2. Extended shaped facing.

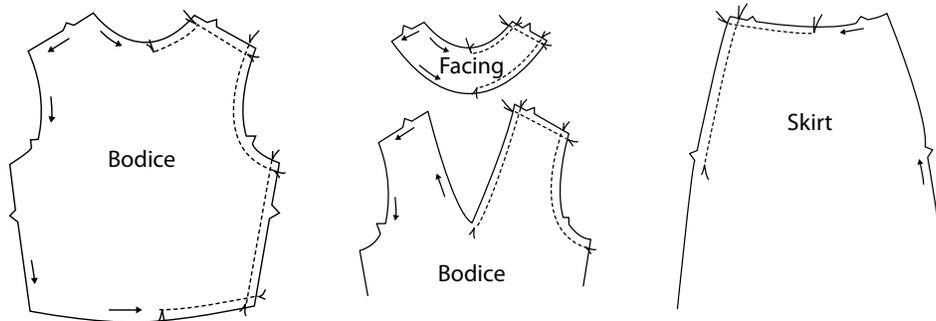


Figure 3. Staystitching on bodice, bodice and facing, and skirt. Arrows indicate direction of staystitching.



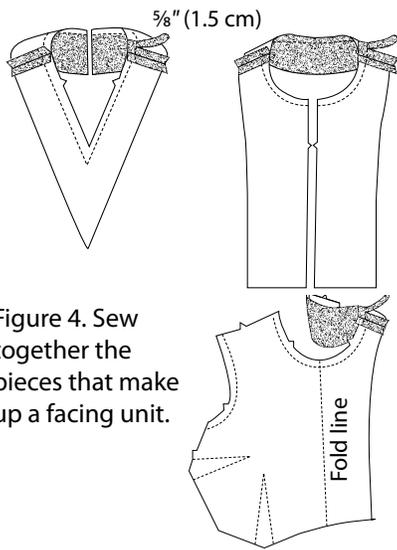


Figure 4. Sew together the pieces that make up a facing unit.

## Preparing the shaped facing

Sew together the fabric pieces that make up a facing unit, such as the front and back pieces that make up the neckline facing. Trim the seam allowances to half their width, and press open (figure 4).

Use a seam finish on the outer, un-notched edge. You'll probably use the same finish you're using on the rest of the garment. When choosing a finish, think about:

- Garment style
- Fabric weight
- How much the fabric ravel
- Care the garment will receive
- Equipment you have to work with (such as pinking shears, sewing machine, serger)

Examples of seam finishes include:

- Straight machine stitching
- Straight machine stitching and pinking
- Turned and stitched (figure 5)
- Zigzag (figure 6) or multi-stitch zigzag
- Serged: 3-thread overlock (figure 7) or 2-thread overedge
- Bias-bound edge, from lining fabric or commercially prepared tricot knit (figure 8)

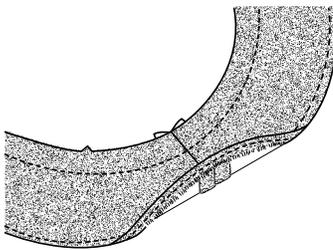


Figure 5. Seam finish—turned and stitched.

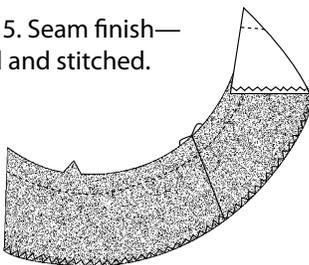


Figure 6. Seam finish—zigzag.

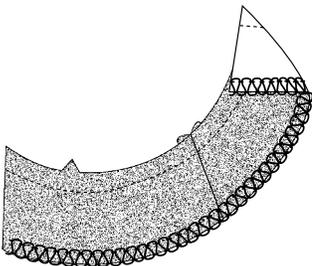


Figure 7. Seam finish—serged, 3-thread overlock.

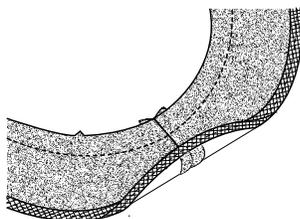


Figure 8. Seam finish—bias-bound edge.

## Attaching and stitching the shaped facing

Beginning sewers working with lightweight fabrics should sew in the zipper before applying the facing. After sewing the zipper in place, pin the facing to the matching garment area, right sides together. Carefully match edges, construction marks, and seams. After pinning the facing to the garment, fold the ends of the facing back, even with the teeth or coil of the zipper (figures 9 and 10).

- Centered zipper: fold back both ends  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (1.9 cm)
- Lapped zipper: Fold back end on the left side 1 inch (2.5 cm). Fold back end on the right side  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch (1.5 cm)

The facing and garment seam allowance should be stitched, graded, clipped, pressed, and understitched—except for the part where there is no facing. Trim the folded-back part of the facing to remove bulk (leave about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch or 6 mm). Later, you will turn the unfaced part of the seam allowance inside and hem it over the top of the zipper (figure 11).

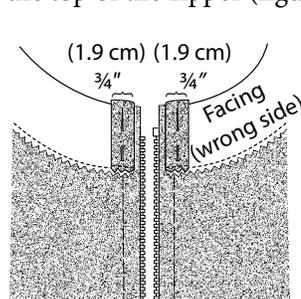


Figure 9. Facing with centered zipper.

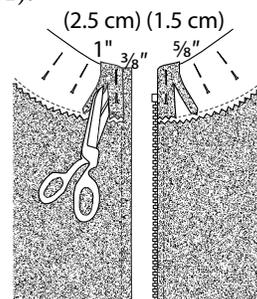


Figure 10. Facing with lapped zipper, before stitching.

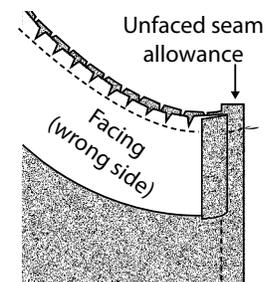


Figure 11. Facing with lapped zipper, after stitching.

## Finishing the enclosed seam allowance

**Trim outside corners**, such as those at the top of a front or back neck opening where there is no zipper. Trimming will reduce the bulk and make the corner easier to turn to the right side.

**Grade or layer the seam allowance** to reduce bulk (figure 12). Grading means to cut each layer of an enclosed seam allowance a different width. The narrowest layer should be toward the body. The widest layer should be toward the outside of the garment. How wide you trim each seam allowance layer depends on the weight of the fabric, how much it ravels, and the number of layers.

**Clip inward seam allowances** so they will spread rather than bunch and roll when you turn the facing. To clip, make straight cuts through the seam allowance but not through the staystitching. Clip each layer of the seam allowance separately. Alternate clips on each layer so they do not occur directly across from each other (figure 13). On gentle curves, few clips may be needed. On sharp curves, more frequent clips are needed.

**Notch outward seam allowances** to reduce bulk and allow the edges to squeeze together. To notch, cut out small, triangular wedges of fabric toward the seam but not through the staystitching. Alternate notches on each layer so they do not leave a sharp edge on the right side (figure 14).

**Press** the seam flat the way it was sewn. Then place the garment over a narrow surface, such as a seam roll, with the wrong side facing you. The seam will be hidden better on the inside if you first press the seam allowance open with the tip of the iron. Next, press all seam allowances toward the facing. Press carefully, and check the right side to be sure no creases form on the garment or facing.

**Understitching** prevents the edge of the facing from rolling to the outside, where it can be seen along the edge of the garment. All facing seam edges should be understitched—except very short ones, or ones that will be topstitched. This step is often not given on pattern instructions, but it is part of quality construction.

Machine understitching is done from the right side of the facing close to the seamline. Stitch through the facing and the seam allowances with a regular-length machine stitch (figure 15). For facings with pointed ends, start and stop about 1 inch (2.5 cm) short of the corner.

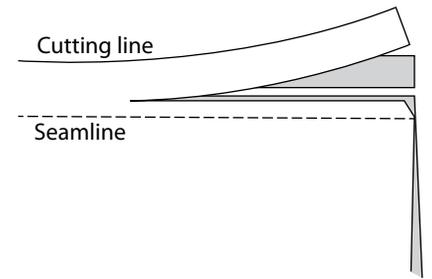


Figure 12. Trim and layer seam allowances.

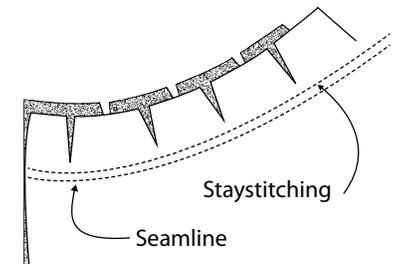


Figure 13. Clip inward seam allowances.

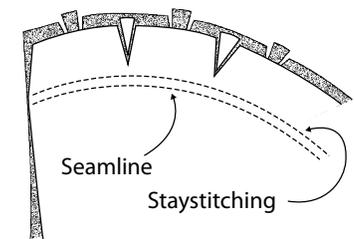


Figure 14. Notch outward seam allowances.

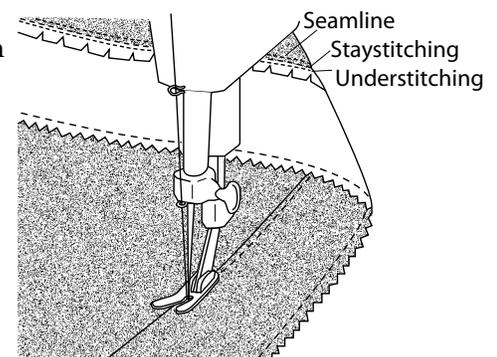


Figure 15. Understitching.

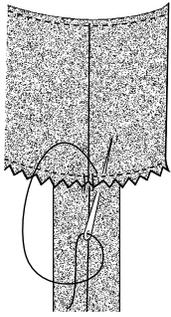


Figure 16. Attach facing to seam—whipstitch.

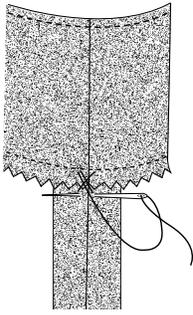


Figure 17. Attach facing to seam—cross-stitch.

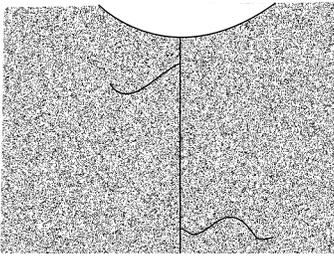


Figure 18. Attach facing to seam—stitch in the groove.

**Press** the facing to the inside along the seamline. Be sure the seamline is hidden on the inside. Press using the tip of the iron with the facing side up.

**Fasten** the facing in place where there is more than one thickness of fabric, such as at seams and darts. Never completely hem a facing into place.

Fastening methods include:

- Whipstitch or cross-stitch between the facing and the garment seam (figures 16 and 17).
- Machine stitch in the seam groove from the right side of the garment, then bring the ends of the thread to the inside and knot (figure 18).

If the facing finishes the top of a lapped zipper, hem the unfaced seam allowance down to the zipper tape. For both lapped and centered zippers, hem the ends of the facing to the zipper tape (figures 19 and 20).

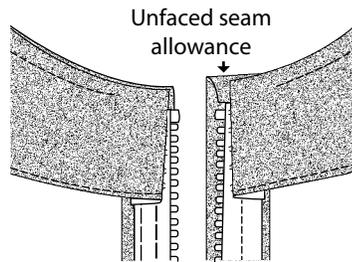


Figure 19. Facing, seam allowance, and zipper—lapped application (wrong side).

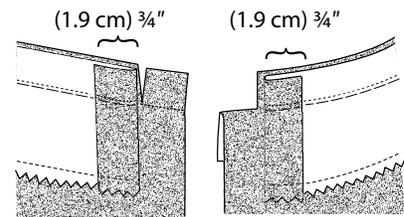


Figure 20. Facing, seam allowance, and zipper—centered application (right side).

By Pamela Rose, 4-H Youth Development specialist, family and consumer science and expressive arts, Oregon State University.

This publication is based on and replaces OSU Extension publication 4-H 92124, *How to Sew Facings and Enclosed Seams: 4-H Clothing, Skill Level 2*, by Ardis W. Koester, Extension textiles and clothing specialist emeritus; and Barbara J. Sawyer, Extension specialist emeritus, 4-H Youth Development; both of Oregon State University.

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Published October 2014.