

Bound Buttonholes *for All*

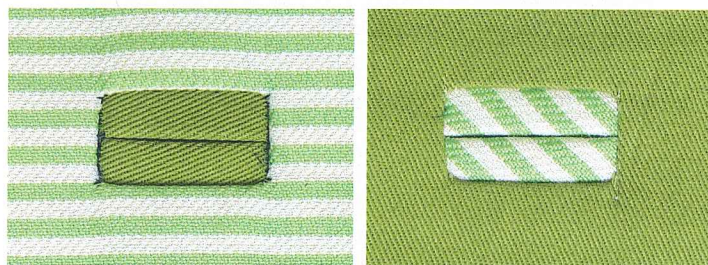
A method simple enough for a 12-year-old

BY DARYL LANCASTER

My mother taught tailoring. When I was 12 years old, she asked me to test her original bound buttonhole directions. She figured that if I could follow her written instructions successfully, her adult students would be able to, too. I had no trouble, and some 50 years later, I've never found a better way to make consistent, controlled, and perfect bound buttonholes.

My mother's method uses a separate strip of material to create the buttonhole lips. The strip is prepared and then cut apart into individual buttonhole sections. This method's accuracy relies on the preparation of the buttonhole location in the early construction stages. A machine-basted grid on the garment front is essential to making buttonholes that start and stop on the same warp thread and are parallel to a weft line.

The buttonhole lips can be made of any material that holds up to the stress of supporting a button. I love to use a contrasting material to flaunt the buttonholes. The buttonhole lips on a 1940s to 1950s couture garment would have been a scant $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wide, but I usually make them at least a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide for visual impact.



If you like, you can highlight your work by using contrasting fabric for the buttonhole lips.

Although this method has many steps, each is easy to do. More importantly, each element can be adjusted until perfect, up until the final step of cutting into the fabric. As with any new technique, I suggest practicing this method before using it on your garment. The results will not disappoint.

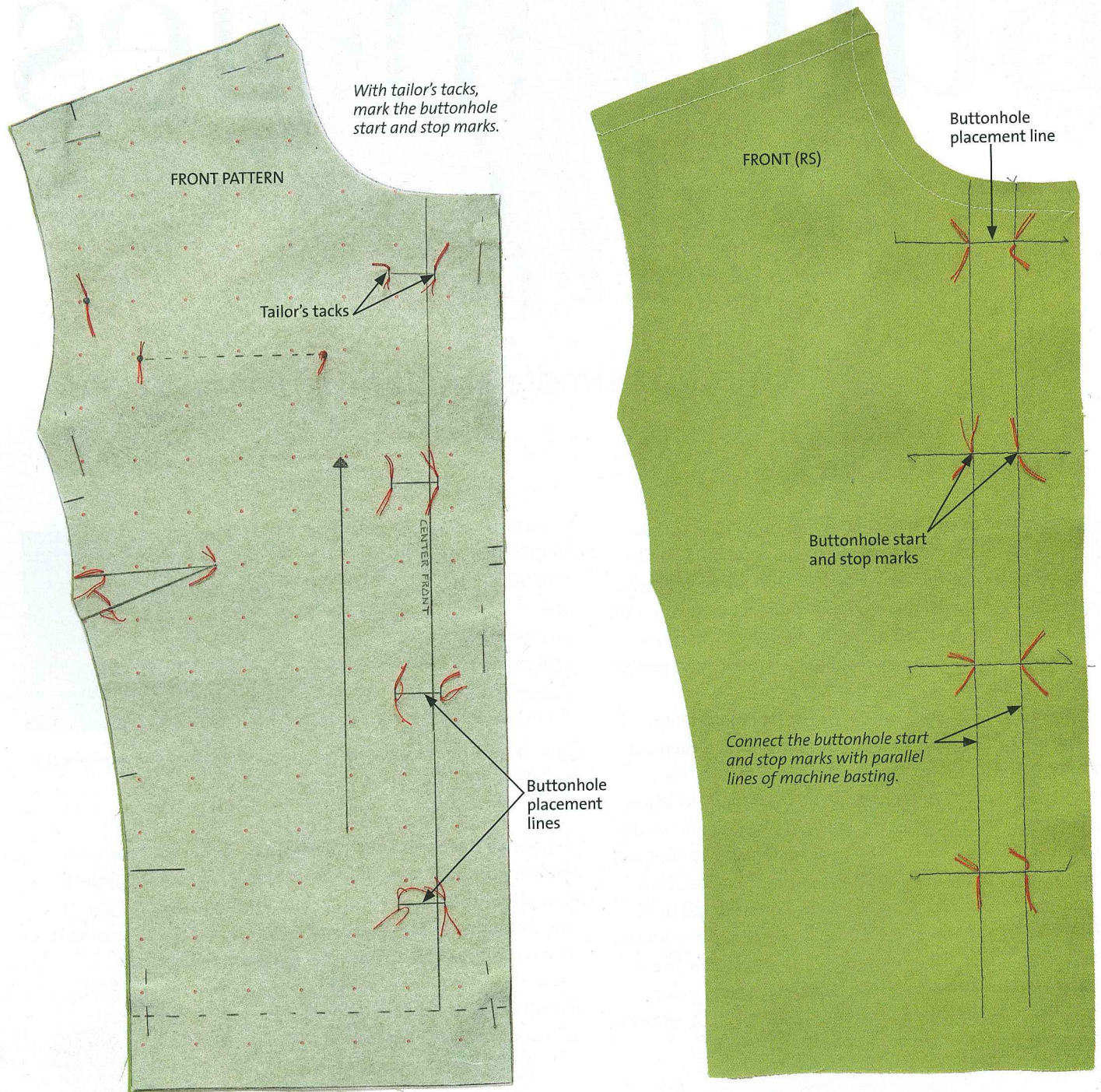
Daryl Lancaster has been tailoring garments for more than 50 years and teaches nationally. DarylLancaster.com.

Prepare the garment

Marking the placement lines accurately on the garment is essential for consistent results. Tailor's tacks and machine-basting lines provide removable marks that you can see on the fabric's right and wrong sides.

1 Transfer the buttonhole marks from the pattern to the right front section. First, reinforce the buttonhole location wrong side with fusible knit interfacing. Then mark the start and stop lines with a single-layer tailor's tack. Remove the pattern tissue.

2 Machine-baste the buttonhole locations. With a long stitch, sew along each buttonhole placement line, following a weft thread if possible. Then sew two parallel lines to connect all the start and stop marks, following warp threads.

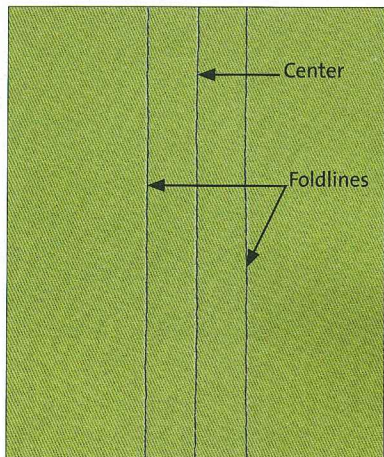


Make the buttonhole lips

You'll create a single long fabric strip, folded and stitched to form the lips. Then cut it into lengths for the individual buttonholes.

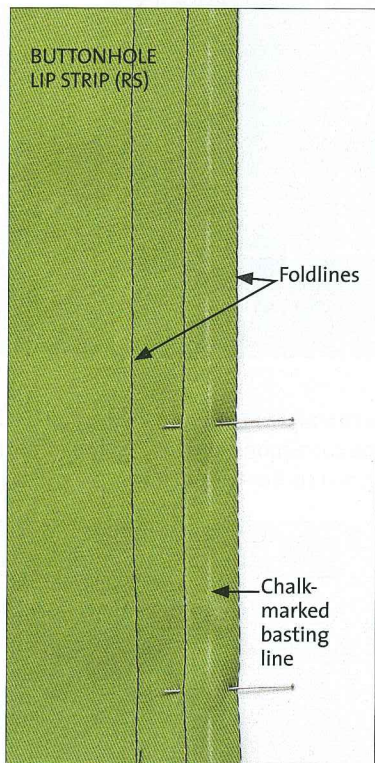
1 Cut and mark the strip. Make it 4 inches wide, by the length of the buttonhole plus 1 inch, times the total number of buttonholes (plus one for practice). If the fabric is unstable, fuse lightweight interfacing to the wrong side. On the right side, mark the lengthwise center with chalk, then machine-baste along the chalk line.

2 Add foldlines. On each side of the center line, chalk-mark and baste a line. Place them twice the desired finished lip width away from the center line. For a 1/4-inch-wide lip, the lines are 1/2 inch from the center line.



Machine-baste the center and foldlines.

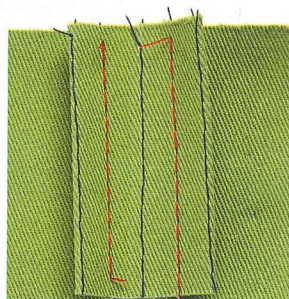
3 Fold and baste the sides. Fold one long edge under along one of the basted foldlines. Chalk-mark a line between the center line and the foldline, then machine-baste the layers along the chalk line. Open out the edge. Repeat on the other long edge.



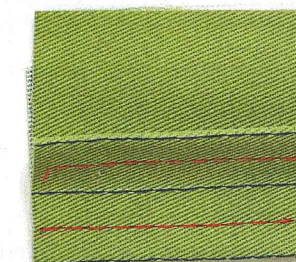
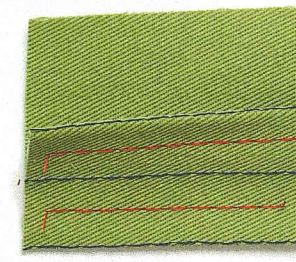
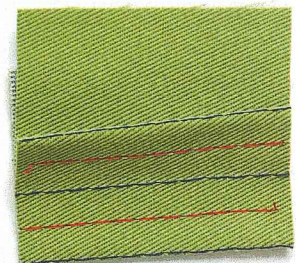
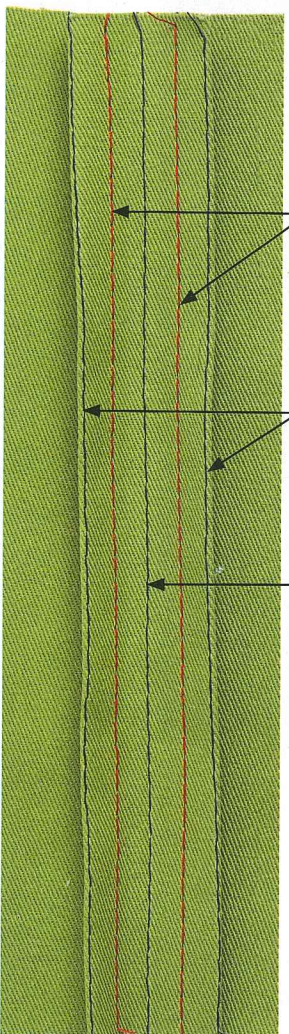
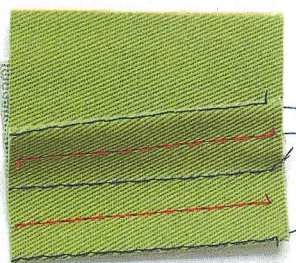
Fold one edge under and mark the basting line.

4 Cut the strip into pieces. Make each piece the finished buttonhole length plus 1 inch. Use a rotary cutter and ruler for the best results.

Cut the strip into sections, each the buttonhole length plus 1 inch.



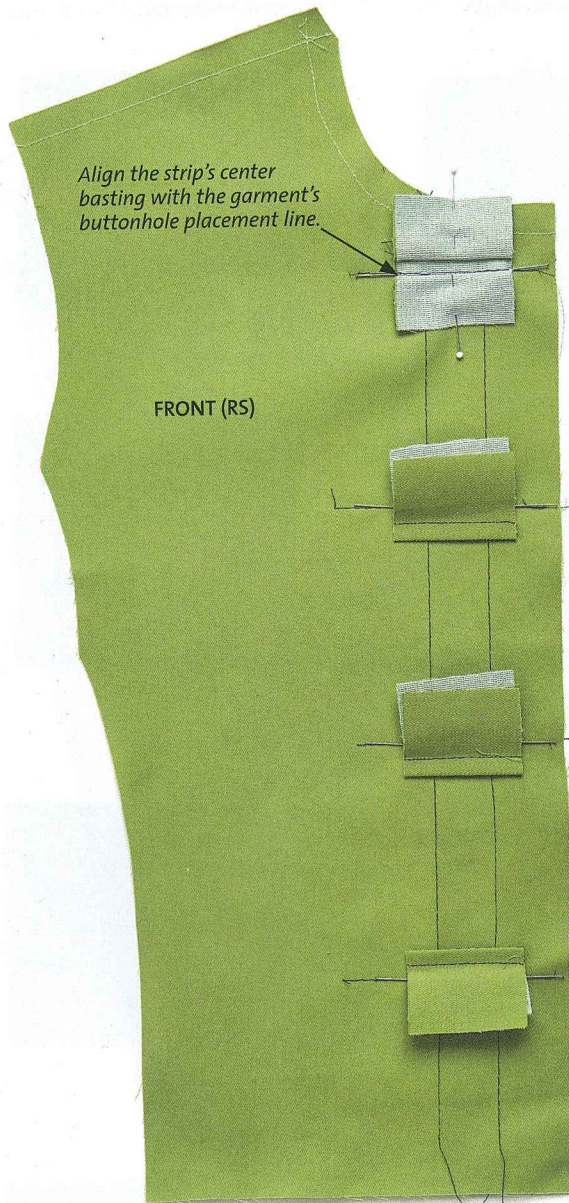
Make a section for each buttonhole.



Attach the lips

These steps position the lips, so it's important to mark accurately and follow your marks. If you don't sew exactly where you should, you can remove the stitches and try again.

1 Place a strip piece at each mark. With right sides together, align the strip's center stitching with the buttonhole placement line. Pin to secure.

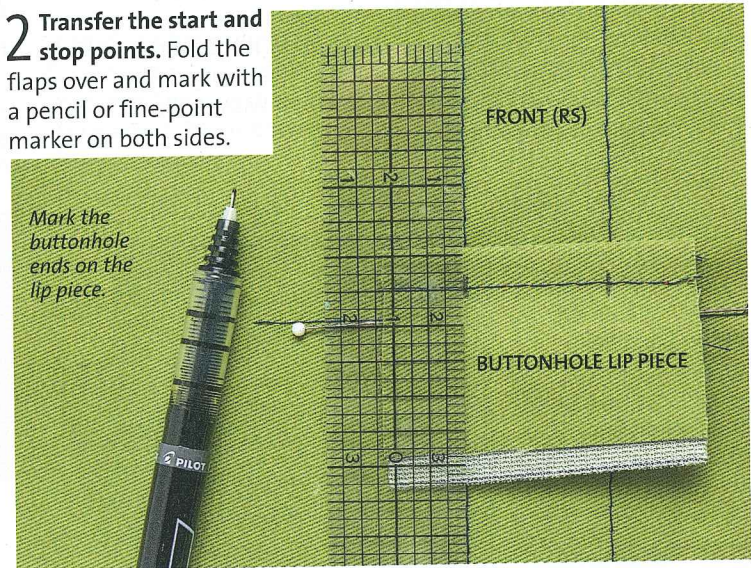


Pin each buttonhole lip section in place.

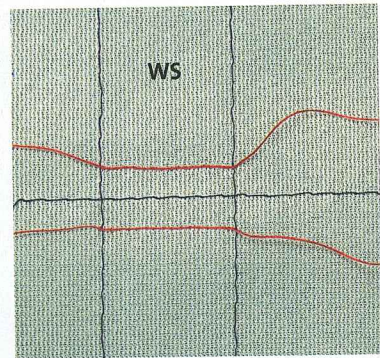
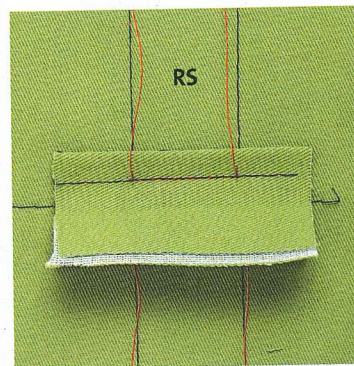
tip

Cord the lips. For a corded look, you can thread a stuffing material, such as yarn, through the lips at this stage.

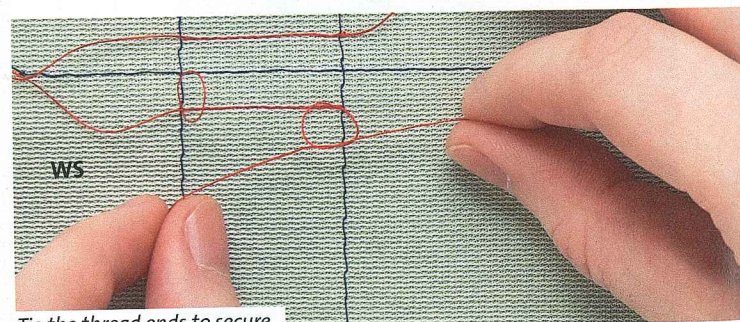
2 Transfer the start and stop points. Fold the flaps over and mark with a pencil or fine-point marker on both sides.



3 Stitch the strip. Adjust the stitch length to 1.6 mm to 2.0 mm, and install an open-toe presser foot. Lower the needle into the start mark, and sew to the stop mark. Leave long thread tails. Repeat on the other side. If the stitching doesn't start and stop precisely at the basting lines, thread the tails into a hand needle and correct it.



4 Pull the threads to the wrong side. Pull each bobbin thread tail to bring the corresponding needle thread to the wrong side. Tie the threads at each corner to secure.

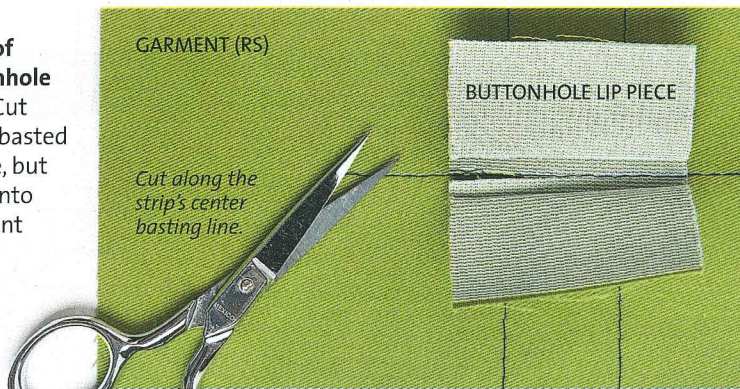


Tie the thread ends to secure.

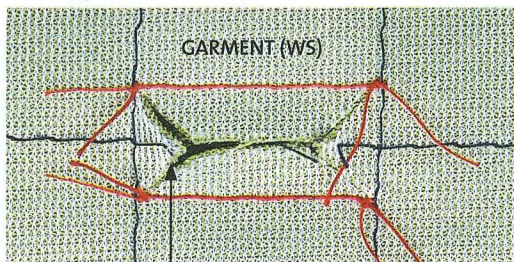
Create the opening

When the prepared strip has been sewn to the garment, cut the opening and align the buttonhole lips within it. Use sharp-pointed scissors and cut carefully.

1 Cut the center of the buttonhole lip piece. Cut along the basted center line, but don't cut into the garment fabric.

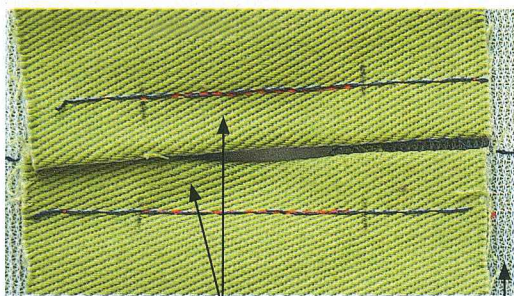


2 Mark and cut the garment fabric. With a pencil or fabric marker, draw cutting lines on the wrong side. Then cut along these lines. Snip to the corners, creating a seam allowance on all sides of the "window" for the buttonhole lips. Hold the lips out of the way to avoid cutting them.



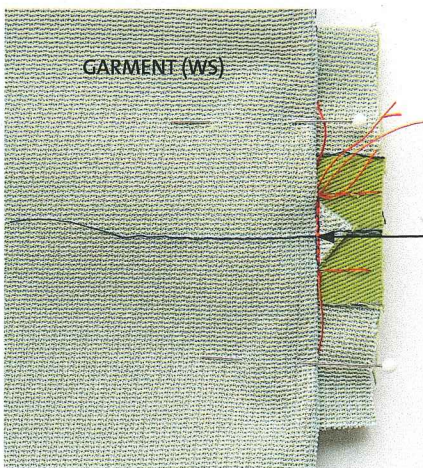
Cut the garment, snipping into the corners.

3 Turn the strip to the garment's wrong side. Push it through the opening and smooth it. Arrange the strip so it aligns with the side edges and the lips abut, with no gaps or overlapping. Press from the right side.



Buttonhole lips Garment (WS)

4 Secure the ends. Fold back the garment fabric at one buttonhole end, exposing the triangular seam allowance. Stitch back and forth over this seamline to secure. Repeat on the other end. Gently pull out all basting stitches, and press from the right side. When the buttonholes are finished, construct the garment through the stage of attaching the facing behind the buttonholes.



Sew across the buttonhole end triangles.

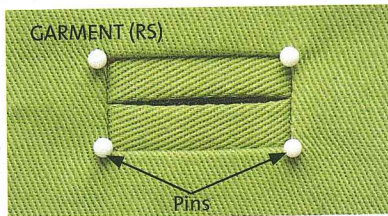


You can't argue with classy details like bound buttonholes on a sharp little jacket.

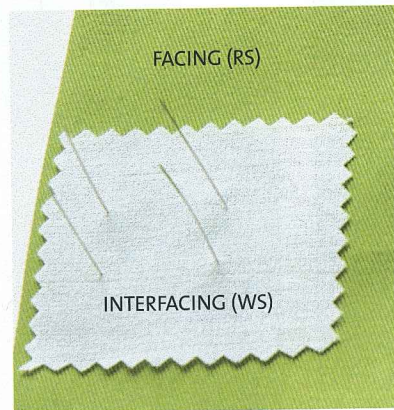
Frame the wrong side

The buttonhole's wrong side requires a neat finish. Typically, it is covered by the garment facing (or lining). You'll create a faced "window" in the facing behind the buttonhole, to cover the buttonhole seam allowances and make an attractive, durable opening. Begin by attaching the garment facing along the edge with the buttonholes.

1 Mark the buttonhole locations. Fold the facing into its final position and push pins through the garment from the right side at each buttonhole corner.



2 Cut a facing patch. From woven fusible interfacing, cut a patch larger than the finished buttonhole. With right sides together, place the patch on the garment facing, having the pins extend through the interfacing.



3 Mark the window opening edges. With a black or white pencil, draw the window around the outside of the pins. Follow the edges of the original buttonhole opening, so the window is the same size. Pin the interfacing flat, and remove the corner pins.



4 Sew the window edges. Fold the facing away from the garment. Sew around the window on the marked lines. Backstitch.



5 Cut the opening. Mark and cut the cutting lines as for the original buttonhole opening.



6 Push the patch to the wrong side. Work it gently to be sure the corners are square. Then fuse the interfacing in place.



7 Secure the window edges. Fold the facing into position, aligning the window with the buttonhole; pin to secure. With waxed thread, hand-slipstitch the window edges to the buttonhole edges.



Hand-sew the window edges to the buttonhole edges.