

Enchanting eyelet

Open up to this pretty fabric

Eyelet fabric is at once nostalgic and modern. Garments made in eyelet fabrics can be simple, sweet, frilly, romantic, whimsical, elegant, or edgy, depending on pattern choice and application.

Eyelet is typically a lightweight woven in which a pattern is made by cutting small holes. The openings' edges are finished with buttonhole stitches in matching or contrasting embroidery thread. This form of cutwork isn't a true lace but can be used similarly. Eyelet may feature a border design, all-over design, or both.

These fabrics come in many colors, however white versions, called whitework, *broderie anglaise* (meaning English embroidery), or Madeira work (which denotes examples from the Portuguese island) are the timeless examples.

CUTWORK HISTORY

Examples of eyelet date to the 16th century in Eastern Europe. *Broderie anglaise* is tied with England because of its popularity there during the 19th century for women's underclothing and children's garments.

Eyelet was originally cut and embroidered by hand. In some cases, holes were punched with an embroidery stiletto before finishing the edge; in other cases, the fabric was embroidered first, then holes were cut with scissors.

MODERN MANUFACTURE

These days, eyelet is primarily made with a buttonhole stitch outline using a Schiffli embroidery machine. These machines were developed in the 1860s, and the technology is still used today. Base fabrics are usually cotton, polyester/cotton, or linen; batiste, broadcloth, and organdy are common. After embroidery, the shapes are cut or punched out.

The next time you're thinking of sewing with a print, consider using eyelet instead for lovely dimension and texture.

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Modern eyelet options include bold color.

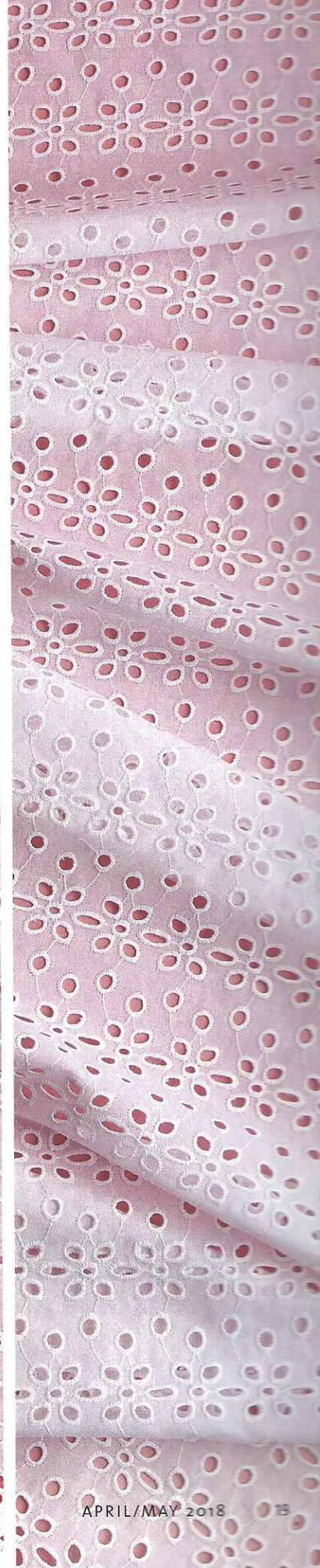
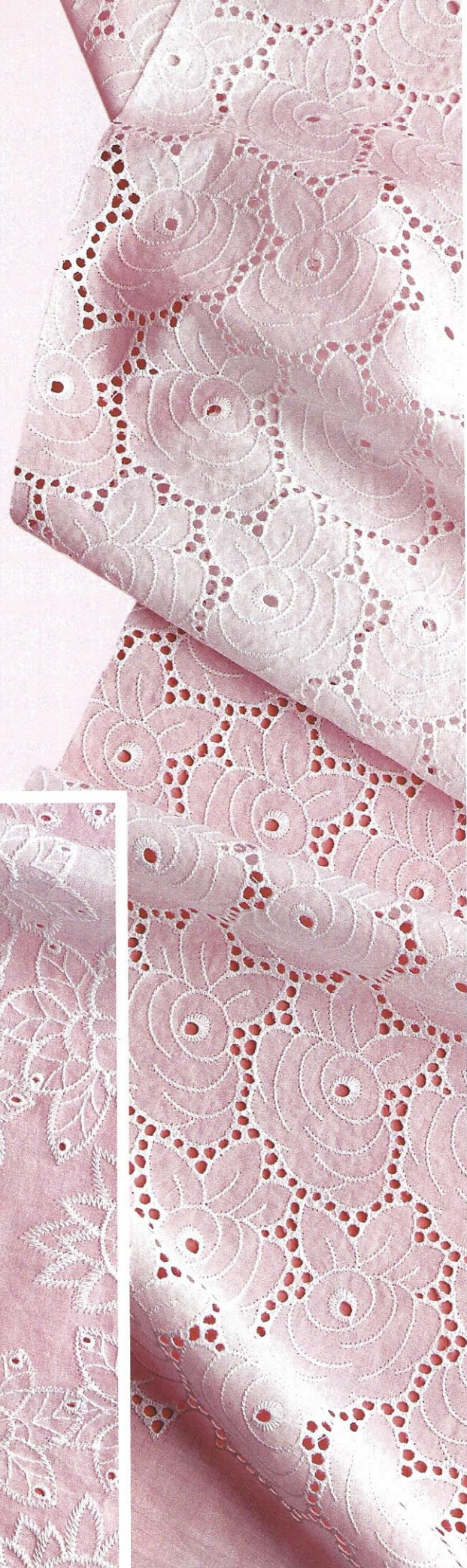
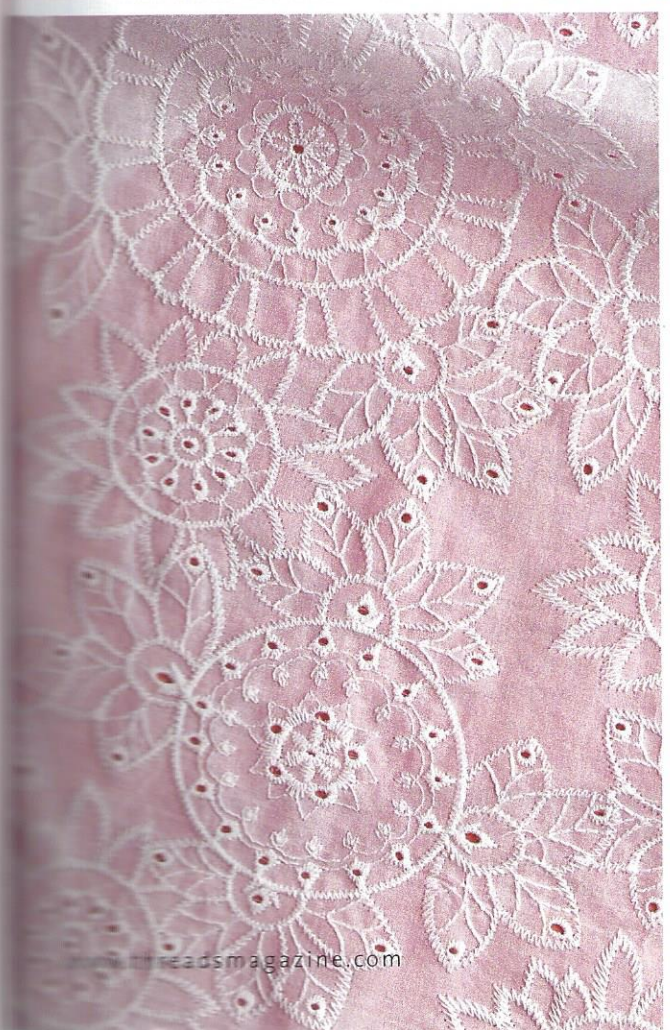
Pattern: McCall's 7356. Fabrics: cotton eyelet and shirting (underlining), New York Elegant Fabrics, New York.

Design considerations

Eyelet fabrics are perfect for blouses, dresses, summer clothing, loose-fitting shorts, skirts, pants, and simple jackets. Eyelet can also be used as a border detail or insertion on a garment. Consider combining multiple eyelet patterns as if mixing prints.

For all their design possibilities, eyelet fabrics shine most beautifully in unfussy styles. Patterns with simple silhouettes and a minimum of seams and details are best, as such elements may get lost with an all-over eyelet, and construction details may show through to the right side. Consider replacing wide facings with narrow bias facings or bindings at necklines, armholes, and hems.

All-white eyelet is a classic, and you'll find motifs in a wide range of styles and scales.



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Sewing advice

The following techniques are recommended for working with cotton eyelet. When planning an eyelet garment, consider some of the same factors that influence lace designs, such as motif placement and seam-allowance show-through.

Pretreatment: Preshrink by machine washing on gentle with low or no spin and air-dry, as the embroidery thread might shrink at a different rate from the fabric itself. Iron on the cotton setting with a press cloth.

Marking: Use tailor's tacks rather than chalk, which may become embedded in the embroidery.

Cutting: Treat the embroidered motifs as you would a print. Place them thoughtfully, and use a complete pattern (both sides) for a single-layer layout if the fabric's design merits.

Needles and thread: Use size 11/75 needles and cotton or cotton/polyester thread for cotton eyelet. Test samples for the best needle, thread, and stitch length.

Seams, seam finishes, and hems: To reduce bulk in seams, finish the seam allowance edges with a three-thread serged edge or a pinked edge. To hide seam allowances, apply a Hong Kong finish with bias tape or organza.

Interfacing: Avoid fusible interfacings, as they will show through the open work. Silk organza in a color that matches either the skin or what will be worn under the garment provides practically invisible support.

Underlining: For modesty, underlining is essential for many garments featuring an allover eyelet design. To achieve a classic look, choose an underlining in a color that closely matches your skin tone. For a modern effect, try underlining in a contrasting color. Underlining provides an additional benefit: It hides construction details such as seam allowances.

Stabilizer: Use removable stabilizer on fabrics with large holes or a lot of open work. A wash-away type works well for any garment you plan to launder; otherwise, choose a tear-away stabilizer.

Enjoy the variety of colored eyelet designs, from the repeated leaf motifs on the yellow sample to the pink stitching on the white fabric to the effervescent, bubbly pattern on the green-and-white piece.