Precision Placket & Vent

Enhance basic tops with a tab-front or side-seam opening

BY LOUISE CUTTING

Add interest to a simple pullover blouse with a buttoned placket.

Pattern: Cutting Line Designs Light & Shadow, modified. Fabric: linen, CuttingLineDesigns.com.

Your favorite top or blouse pattern is the ideal starting point for a fresh redesign. Keep the basic silhouette and fit, and revise the closures, collars, cuffs, or hemline—any of these elements can give it a new look.

Consider two details that provide style and functionality: The first is a beautifully engineered tab-front opening that can be casual or sophisticated, depending on the fabric and closures you use. Replace a full button-front opening with this, or add the tab neckline to a pullover top. The second adaptation is a lapped, mitered side vent. This feature is subtle and elegant.

Because the opening edges overlap, you can create a deeper vent that allows the blouse fabric to move without revealing too much skin. Once you learn the technique, consider trying it at the side hem of a skirt or pants.

These details are shown on two of my designs, but you can easily apply them to other patterns. Expand your wardrobe creatively without starting from scratch for each new garment.
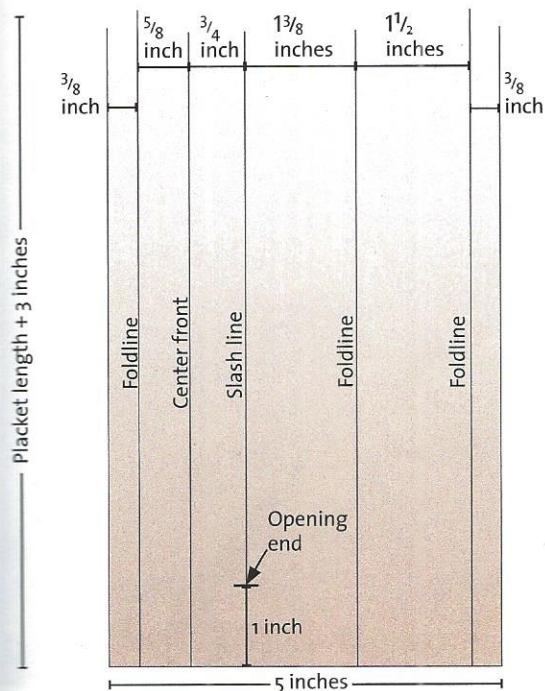
Contributing Editor Louise Cutting is a tireless teacher and pattern designer. Visit her at CuttingLineDesigns.com.
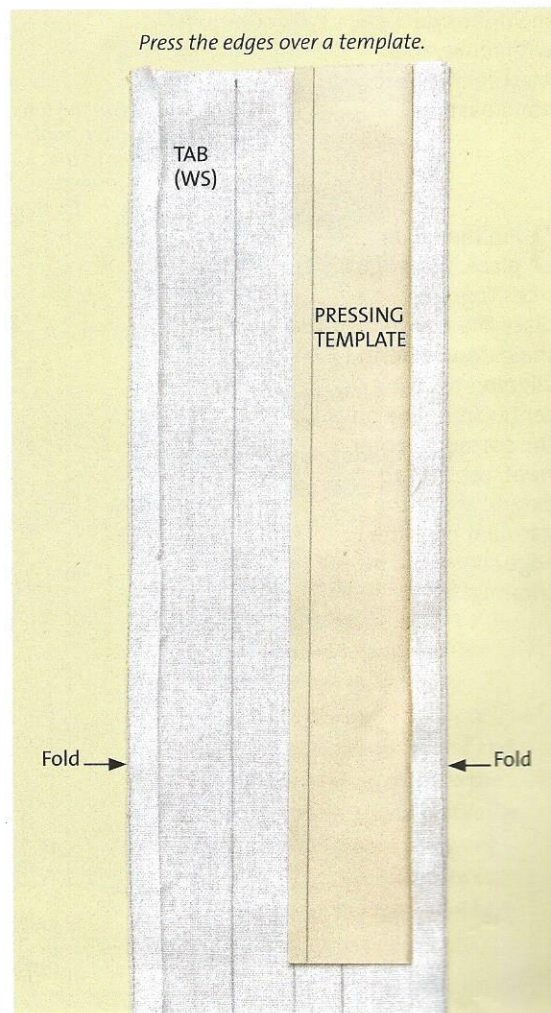
A tab-front opening

A tab-front shirt has a front placket that extends only partway down the shirt front, similar to the opening on a polo shirt. You can start with a button-front shirt pattern or with a pullover top. Add buttons, topstitching, or other embellishment to personalize your top.

PREPARE THE PATTERN

1 Draft the tab pattern. Work on graph paper with a ⅛-inch grid for the greatest precision. Draw a line the length of the desired finished placket, plus 3 inches. For a placket that finishes at 1⅜ inches wide, draw lines at the intervals shown in the diagram. Draw a straight line across the top and bottom; the neckline curve will be established later. Label the lines, and mark the opening's bottom end 1 inch above the lower line.

2 Cut the tab. Cut one of fashion fabric, and transfer the pattern lines to the wrong side. Staystitch at the outer lines ⅜ inch from the long cut edges. Using a template as a guide, press under the long edges along this line.

Press the edges over a template.

Diagram labels (left): Placket length + 3 inches; ⅜ inch; ⅜ inch; 5/8 inch; 3/4 inch; 1⅜ inches; 1½ inches; Foldline; Center front; Slash line; Foldline; Foldline; Opening end; 1 inch; 5 inches

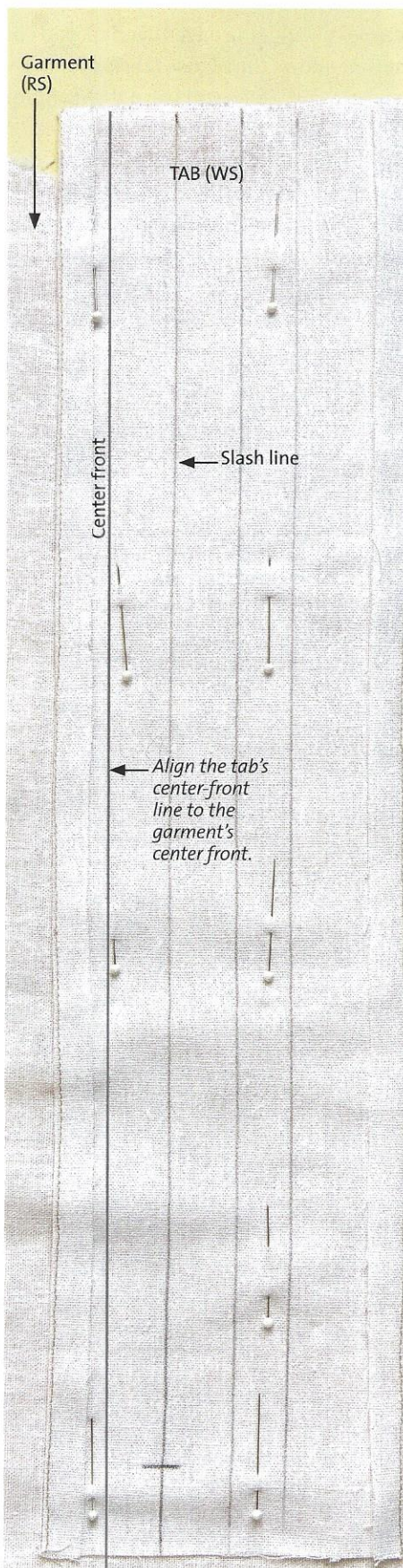Photo labels (right): TAB (WS); PRESSING TEMPLATE; Fold; Fold
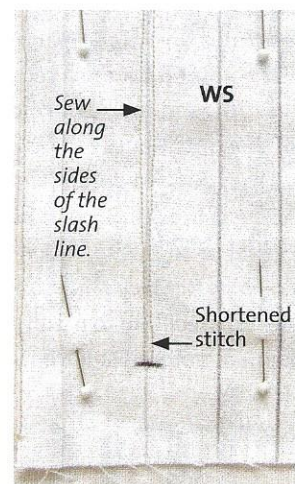
ATTACH THE TAB

1 Establish the garment's center front. If the pattern has no front opening, mark the center front on the garment's wrong side. If the pattern has a front opening, fold back any extensions or facings at the center front and mark this line "Place on fold."

2 Cut the front. Place the center-front line on the fabric fold and cut. Mark the center-front line on the right side with removable marker, chalk, or hand basting.
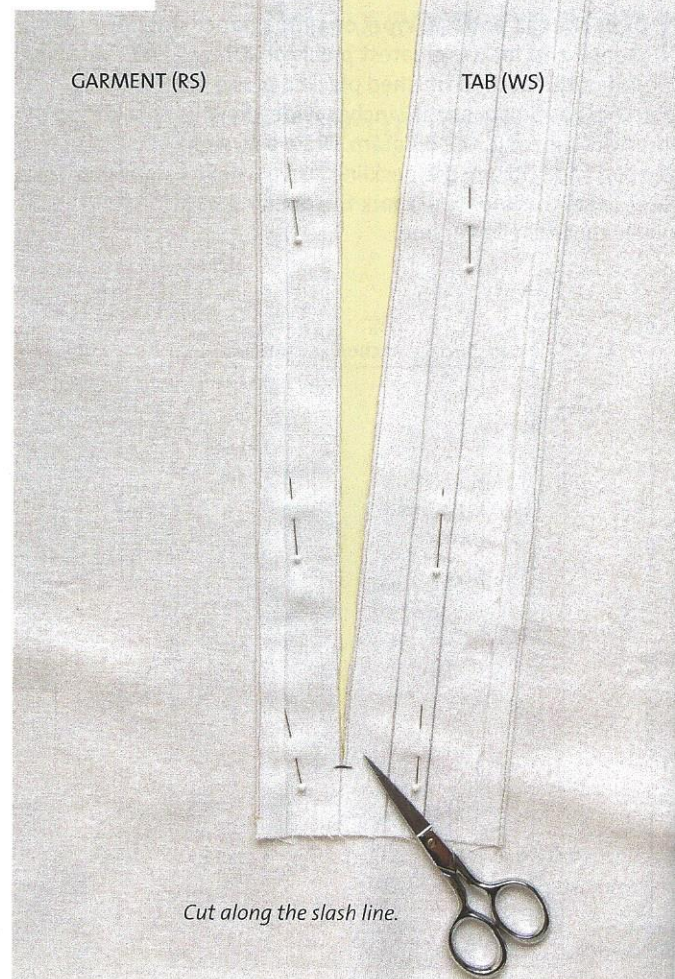
3 Pin the tab in place. With right sides together, place the tab on the garment front, aligning the tab's center-front line on the garment center front. Let the tab extend above the garment neckline edge slightly, to be trimmed later.
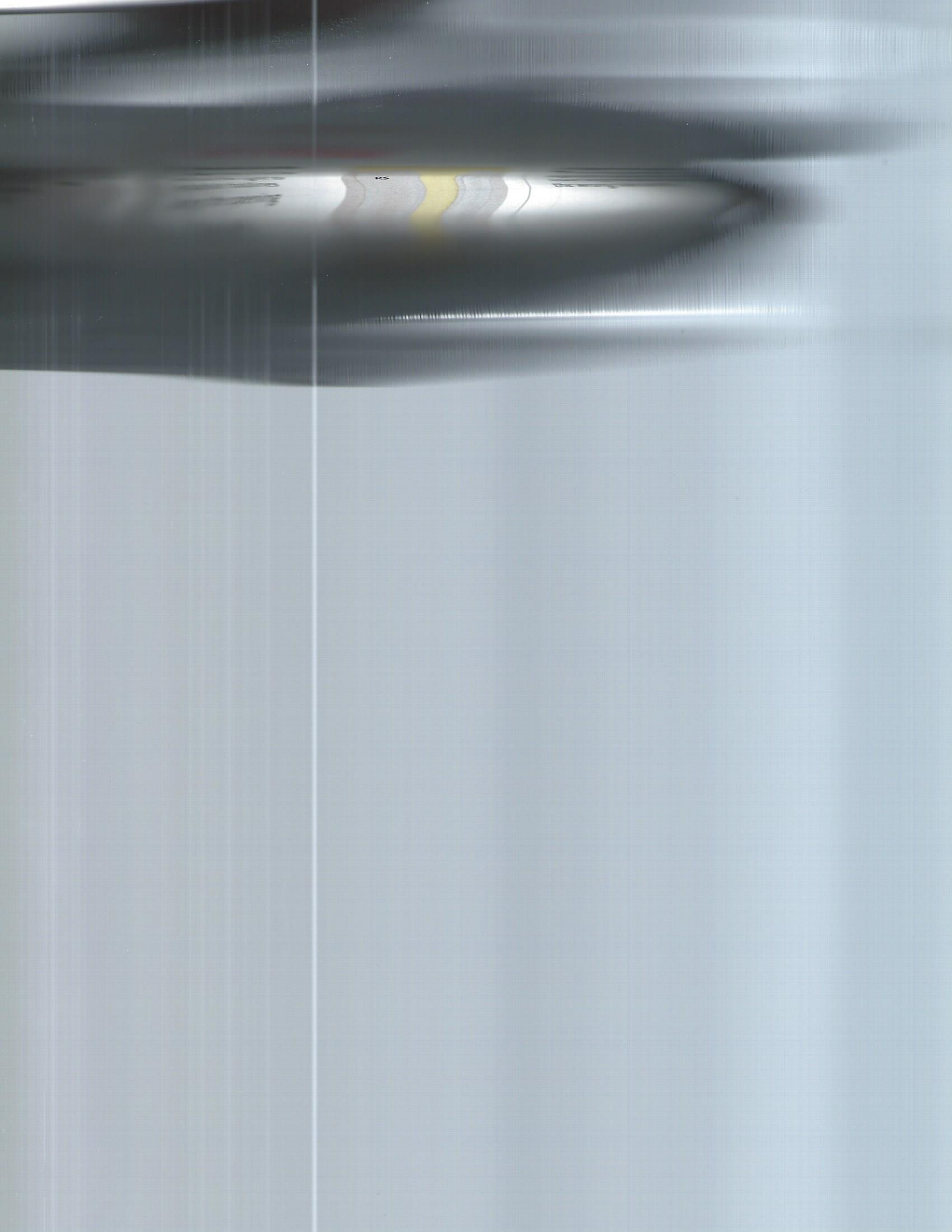
Garment (RS)

TAB (WS)

Center-front

← Slash line

← Align the tab's center-front line to the garment's center front.

4 Sew the placket opening edges. Set the stitch length to 2.0 mm and stitch 1/8 inch from the slash line, from neck to base. At 1/2 inch from the bottom, shorten the stitch length to 1.0 mm or 1.5 mm. At the bottom, pivot with the needle down and sew one or two stitches across the bottom. Pivot again and sew up the opposite side of the slash line, 1/8 inch away. Sew for 1/2 inch, then lengthen the stitch length to 2.0 mm.

Sew → along the sides of the slash line.

WS

Shortened ← stitch

5 Slash the opening. Cut carefully along the slash line, all the way to the tip.

GARMENT (RS)

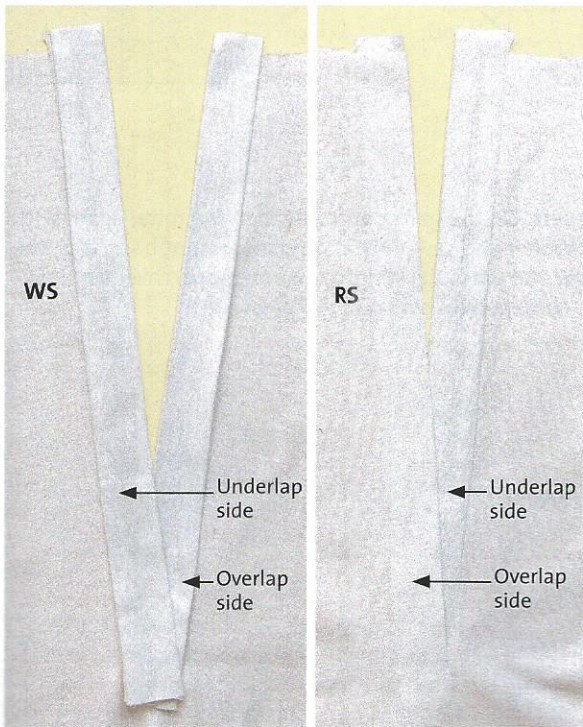TAB (WS)

Cut along the slash line.

1 Press and turn the tab. Press it to the left and the right to re-establish foldlines along the opening edge. Then turn the tab layer to the garment wrong side.

The narrower edge faces the overlap side; the wider edge forms the underlap.

Turn the tab to the wrong side.

RS

WS

2 **Press the tab creases.** Press the wider underlap edge along its remaining foldline, so the first fold aligns with the slash stitching. Verify that all the slash seam allowances are enclosed within the tab folds, and press the tab layers. Secure the folds with Lite Steam-A-Seam 2.

WS

RS

← Underlap side

← Underlap side

← Overlap side

← Overlap side

3 **Clean-finish the tab bottom.** Serge across the raw edges or, if preferred, finish with a low-bulk binding.

4 **Edgestitch the overlap side.** From the garment wrong side, *edgestitch along the tab's fold edge.* Leave long thread tails. Pull them to the wrong side and tie.

RS

5 **Edgestitch the underlap side.** From the right side, edgestitch on the tab side of the slash seamline, to anchor the tab's folded edge. Sew from the neckline to the bottom of the opening and backstitch.

6 **Topstitch the tab bottom.** Press the tab over- and underlap into position and pin. From the right side, sew a rectangle across the tab bottom. Pull the thread tails to the wrong side and tie.

WS

Underlap edgestitching →

Topstitched rectangle →

Overlap edgestitching →

Topstitched rectangle →

7 **Trim the neckline.** Cut off the excess tab fabric extending beyond the neckline edge.

NECKLINE CONSIDERATIONS

These instructions place the placket overlap edge ³/₄ inch to the left of center, so buttons can be centered. If you prefer to have the opening edge centered, place the slash line on the garment's center front in step 3, p. 34.

If the neckline is finished with a facing, collar, or band, you'll need to adjust those pattern pieces. You may need to divide a one-piece front facing or neckband and add seam allowances to the center-front edge. For a collar, determine where you want the collar's front edge to sit relative to the top opening, and adjust as needed.

Shortened stitch

WS