

Backwards Shirt Collar

Well, not really. Nobody wants a backwards collar. I'm talking about **CONSTRUCTING** the collar backwards! This method is for a tailored shirt collar which means you have a collar pattern piece and a collar band piece. If your shirt collar has a collar and band in one pattern piece, this technique will **not** work. The collar and band in one, however, will not fit as well. If you check out the collar and band pieces you will see that there is a slight concave curve to each piece where they are sewn together which will fit the neck much better, so it is my preferred type of shirt collar.

Patterns will tell you to construct the collar and band completely before you attach to the neck edge of a shirt. But this creates lots of bulk right at the corner that shows the most, making it difficult to sew and have it look nice at the place where everyone can see it. If you change the order of construction, you will get a nice smooth seam where the collar band meets the neckline and it will look great! Here's how you do it:



You should complete the shirt to the point where the shoulder seams are sewn and the center front edges are finished with a facing, a placket, or a turned back edge. Here are the collar and band pieces. Note the curves that will give you great fit.



Interface one piece of each. Use the appropriate interfacing for your fabric. You can layer interfacings if needed. You can also layer just on the corner of the collar and/or band. Whichever side you interface, this will be the **UNDERSIDE** or the side that will **NOT** show when finished. This way, if the interfacing "bubbles" when washed, it won't show on the finished shirt. This is especially important if using a print that you have "fussy cut" – make sure you interface the other piece. Follow the instructions for fusing or sewing your interfacing.



Pin the collar pieces right sides together (RST), but pin the non-interfaced piece $1/16$ " TO $1/8$ " inside the interfaced piece. Thin fabrics will need less difference than thick. This will make the non-interfaced piece slightly larger than the interfaced piece and that means the seamline will be pulled to the underside of the collar and still lie smooth. You'll love this! Also use this technique on cuffs, facings, flaps, or any other piece where the seamline is at the edge of the piece. Just make the outside piece **BIGGER** by making its seam allowance **SMALLER**.



First pins should be the corners. Next, pin at the neck edges and the center back. As you pin the rest of the collar, push the excess fabric of the non-interfaced piece to the corners so that the excess will **EASE** to the interfaced piece without a huge tuck or pleat. Since we are talking $1/8$ " at each side of the corner, it should be relatively easy for most fabrics.



When you stitch the two collars together, add $1/8$ " to the seam allowance (SA) the pattern calls for. This will keep the collar the right size. At the corners, lower needle and pivot to take one stitch diagonally across the corner, then pivot again so you are stitching on the seamline again. This will allow you to trim more SA from the corner and you will get a sharper point to the finished collar.



Here's what the collar point should look like after sewing. Note that it does **NOT** lie flat. The "bubble" should be noticeable. You can also see that there are no tucks or pleats.



Stop and compare the two collar points. Hold them up next to each other and make sure the seam lines are the same on both sides. Re-stitch one side if necessary. I usually make the larger side smaller – then I don't have to take any stitches out!



To grade the SA's, place your collar with the **OUTSIDE** or non-interfaced piece down. Then cut with your shears or scissors lying on its **SIDE** as you cut. This will automatically cut the top layer shorter than the bottom one so the outside SA is the longest one. This will look the best from the outside when the collar is turned. It also automatically cuts the appropriate difference in width – the thicker the fabric, the bigger the difference between the layers. It's magic! Trim the corner last, cutting right next to the diagonal stitch.



Here's how it looks when the grading is finished. Now turn the collar right side out.



Here are the two tools I have found to help the most when turning corners. They are both called a point turner. The metal turner will actually turn the collar for you. The plastic or bamboo turner is a lot less expensive, and I find it has many more uses than the metal one does.



For the metal point turner, insert one tip of the turner into the collar point and the other tip on the outside. Pinch the ends together and pull the collar from one side to the other, turning it right side out.



For the plastic turner, insert into the corner and gently push until you get the seam line to the edge of the collar. You can also use the plastic turner to push against the seamline itself to get the seamline out to the edge.



Press the collar so that the seamline is slightly to the underside. Because of the way you constructed the collar, the seamline will fall to the underside with very little effort from you. You can press these SA open if you have the pressing tool called a point turner. Edgestitch/topstitch as desired. More stitching makes a garment more casual or sporty.



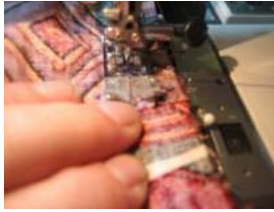
Pin RS of interfaced collar band to the RS or non-interfaced side of the collar. There should be markings on the collar band where the collar ends. Stitch from one of end of the collar to the other. This is the point where the directions really differ from the pattern directions. Only sew the interfaced band to the collar.



Give this seam a good press with SA's toward band.



Staystitch the neck edge and clip the SA about every 1/2". This allows the SA to spread as you pin to the collar band that does not curve as much as the neckline.



NOW, pin the RS of the non-interfaced collar band to the WS of the shirt neck. The shirt neck should be sandwiched in between the two collar bands. Stitch from one end to the other. There should be SA **ONLY** extending beyond the finished front shirt edges.



Grade this SA as described above. Remember to put the outside of the garment next to the cutting surface.



Put the two collar bands RST and pin between the edge of the shirt front and the collar. Roll or fold the shirt front so it is **NOT** in the SA.



Stitch this small area between the collar and the shirt front. Get as close as you can to the previous stitchings, but you do not have to stitch up to the previous stitching. One stitch length away will look just the same as if you stitched up to the other stitching. Grade as above. The grading and trimming at this corner is what makes this area of the shirt smooth and keeps this area from being bulky and unsightly.



Use the point turner to push the seamline to the edge of the collar band. Press. Turn the SA of the non-interfaced collar band under so that it barely covers the SA of the collar. Press and pin. Stitch the collar band in place. If you are edgestitching, that's all you will need to do. If topstitching only, or if you don't want any of the stitches to show, stitch in the ditch from the other side.



Here's the finished collar – smooth and flat and really good looking. Wowsa!

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