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Do buttonholes frighten you away from a particular pattern? If so, why not learn to make them?

The ability to make a perfect bound buttonhole sets you apart as a skilled seamstress and gives an expensive look to your garment. And the principles of making a buttonhole will carry over to the making of many kinds of pockets and other dressmaker details.

Bound buttonholes are not difficult to make, but they do take patience, time and attention to detail. There probably are as many methods of making buttonholes as there are people who teach. It doesn't really matter what method you use as long as you get a beautiful but-

tonhole; however, with some methods it seems easier to achieve perfect results.

A good buttonhole should be as narrow as your fabric will allow. The finer the fabric, the narrower the buttonhole. On most materials, aim for a finished buttonhole no wider than 1/4 inch. On bulky woolsens, the buttonhole may need to be slightly wider. On fine silks, the finished buttonhole should be no wider than 3/16 of an inch.

If your fabric ravel badly, cut the binding pieces on the bias, and use a patch of lightweight press-on fabric on the wrong side of the garment area to be slashed. Or stitch a piece of organza or lining fabric to the right side of the garment in a narrow rectangle, slashing to each corner and pulling it back as a facing before attaching the lips of the buttonhole. Use a fine machine stitch (20-22 stitches per inch) to help you achieve accurate results.

The correct position of the buttonhole is all important. Your pattern is a good guide unless you have added some creative touches of your own. The direction of the buttonhole

is a common error in certain styles. Usually a buttonhole is placed horizontally because it stays fastened better. An exception is the style with a decorative band down the front where the button must remain on center front of the body. This requires a vertical buttonhole, but choose a flat button so it will be less apt to pop open.

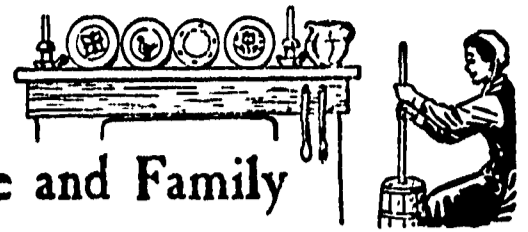
Using a button larger than that called for in the pattern design is another common error. When the garment is fastened, the button slides over to the end of the buttonhole and many extend over the edge of the garment opening. There should be enough distance between center of the garment and the facing edge so that the entire button will rest on fabric.

If you change the size of buttons from those indicated on the pattern you may need to reposition them so they appear in better proportion. The larger the buttons, the more space you will need between them. Interfacing beneath the buttonhole will give added support and strength.

Machine buttonholes are most often made in garments that will be washed and ironed frequently. And lucky you, if you have one of the new sewing machines that makes them easily. They are so easy to make that the making of a beautiful hand-worked buttonhole (once the height of sewing skill) is becoming a lost art.

Don't let buttonholes stop you — tackle them head on. You'll be surprised how easy they are.

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By Doris Thomas, Extension Home Economist

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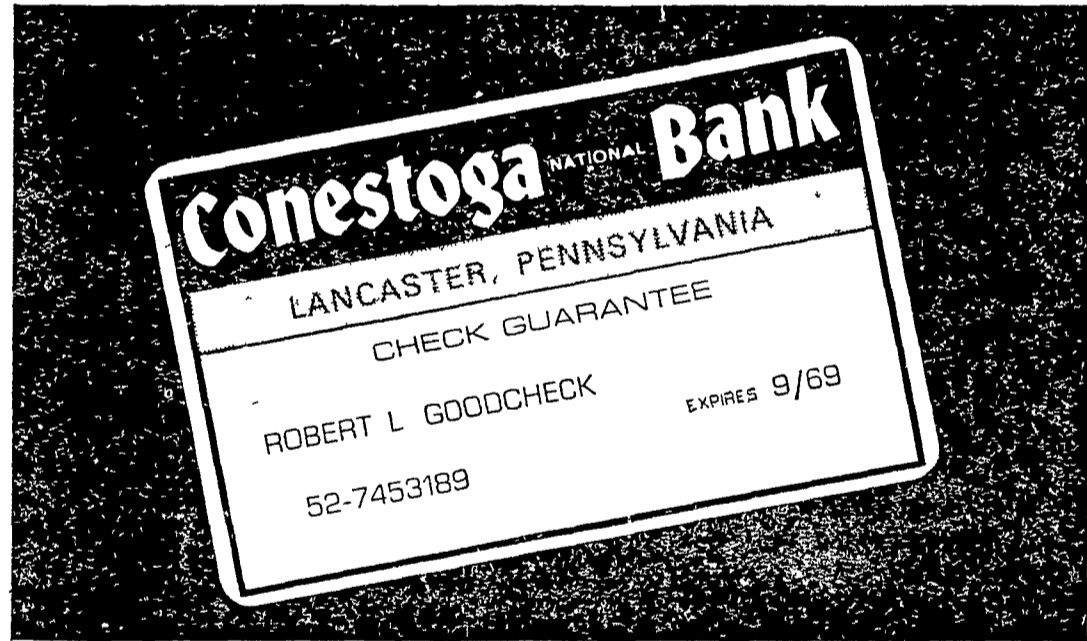
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