

Fine Shirt Making - Class Notes & Supplies

Location: Textile Center

Dates: Mondays, January 29 through March 5, 2018, 6-9 pm

Instructor: Steve Pauling

Pattern Selection

This series of classes will focus on fine tailoring techniques used in the construction of a traditional fine dress shirt. Although many of these skills are easily transferable to other projects, students will more easily understand and learn these techniques by constructing the same or similar garment as used in the class. If students choose to make something other than a traditional fine dress shirt during these classes, the student may not receive instructional support in working out details that differ from the pattern being used in class.

The pattern we will be using in class is Simplicity 1544. I strongly suggest you use this pattern to eliminate confusion and frustration in learning the techniques and following along. This is readily available at local fabric stores and on-line. It comes in two sizings: 1544AA is for smaller to medium sizes, 1544BB is for medium to larger sizes. I will also provide you with a few pattern pieces which have been modified for fine shirt making.

Having said this, there are a few other patterns that a student may use with some minor modifications. I do not recommend doing this except for experienced advanced sewers who can independently assess and make modifications to follow the techniques and progress of using the Simplicity 1544 pattern. Note that a women's dress shirt (without darts or other special fitting details) can be created using a men's pattern by simply exchanging the left and right front pattern pieces. If you choose to use a pattern other than the Simplicity 1544,

Elements to look for in choosing a traditional dress shirt pattern:

NOTE: Not all patterns use 5/8" seam allowances (i.e. Kwik Sew, Burda). We need that extra width for some techniques, so please adjust your pattern pieces to include a 5/8" seam allowance. After making your first shirt, you can change seam allowances as you desire.

- 1.) Yoke: The back of the shirt incorporates a two or four piece yoke. The finished yoke is two layers of fabric made of one or two pieces of fabric for each side. In order to bag the yoke, the depth (vertical height) of the finished yoke should be approximately 1/2 the total height of the armhole opening. Do not choose a pattern whose depth is only 1-2" at the armhole. The deeper the yoke, the easier it will be for you to learn the "bagging" technique.
- 2.) Shirt front placket: The 'button hole side' of the shirt front incorporates a 'ribbon-like' strip of folded fabric that adds structure and firmness to the front of the shirt. It should be constructed separate from the shirt front and not be a "hidden" placket nor unusually narrow.
- 3.) Long Sleeves: Long sleeves are a pre-requisite for a dress shirt. Look for a loose fitting sleeve cap – one that has a low rise, rather than a steep, fitted rise/cap.
- 4.) Standard Cuff: No "French" cuffs that utilize cuff links for closures (you can add this detail after you learn how to create a beautiful standard cuff).

5.) Sleeve Placket: No one-piece-ribbon-like bindings as in the example below on the right. Instead, we will customize a true box pleat placket as shown in the example on the left.



6.) Pocket: Pockets are optional (a true dress shirt would not have a pocket), but you won't want to miss out on learning the techniques to make beautiful, crisp and professional looking pockets. We will customize the pattern piece for a few basic stylistic options.

7.) Shirt Stand and Collar: A dress shirt has both a collar stand (narrow band between the bodice and actual collar) and the collar for a proper fitted look – NO one piece collars as found on a casual shirt.

My all-time favorite pattern is Vogue #7954. Unfortunately, it is out-of print but can often be found on-line at sites like Ebay and Etsy. Other out-of print, suitable patterns include Vogue #7925, Vogue #8096, Butterick #3217, KWIK Sew #2777 and Simplicity #9469. A quick internet search shows they are still available on Etsy, Ebay and other reseller sites.

I'm not familiar with any women's patterns having these features – maybe you have some recommendations? Other patterns are also suitable if they have the features noted above.

Do NOT use patterns with additional or other features unless you are familiar with their construction techniques and can manage them without assistance. Out of fairness to other students, I will not be able to provide assistance/mentoring for other pattern features during class time. You are welcome, however, to schedule private mentoring time with me at my studio.

My suggestion still stands, however..... plan to purchase and use Simplicity 1544. It will make the process of learning fine shirt making techniques and skills much easier for all of us. If you must use another pattern, please contact me to discuss your decision.

Supplies/Materials

Fabrics:

Students are encouraged to make their first shirt out of inexpensive light to medium weight 100% cotton fabric – muslin, quilting fabric, chambray, oxford, etc. The finer the weave (but still opaque and firm), the better. Aim for a cotton fabric that maintains a crisp edge when folded and pressed. Also, it may be less confusing if the fabric has a simple pattern (that doesn't need matching) printed on one side for ease in determining the front from the back of pieces during assembly.

Be creative! – use scraps from your existing stash. Who cares if all the parts don't match? Just try to select fabrics with similar weight, content and weave structure. We're going to be focusing on techniques and skills. If you intend to wear your finished sample shirt, make certain your fabric is laundered before cutting.

Interfacing:

For ease of availability, Pellon's "Shirt Tailor", is an OK product. It is a non-woven fusible material and is readily available at JoAnn's, Hancock's and other fabric stores.

My new favorite fusible interfacing is from an on-line seller:

www.fashionsewingsupply.com

The product is "Pro-Woven Shirt Crisp" fusible interfacing. It's a bit more expensive than other fusibles, but it is in a 48" width and comes in both black and white colors. Best of all, it's really good quality – doesn't shrink and is of professional grade. You can find it listed on their website under "Designer Interfacing". It's available in both black and white, so choose accordingly based on the shirt fabric you will be using.

Purchase additional material if you like stiff collars and cuffs (apply double layers of interfacing). Interfacing won't be needed until after the first class so you should have time to order the "good stuff".

Notions/Tools/Supplies – bring to first class:

- 1) Sewing Machine in good working condition (straight stitch is all that is necessary, with 5/8" and 1/2" seam allowance markings), bobbins, typical accessories.
Remember to bring the cords and foot control!! ;-)
- 2) Required sewing machine presser feet:
 - a) Straight stitch, rolled hemmers (approximately 3/16-1/4" or equivalent), regular adjustable zipper foot
- 3) Optional sewing machine presser feet:
 - a) Flat felling foot, zig zag foot (for convenience in making wider top-stitching widths)
- 4) Your shirt fabric – see notes above.
- 5) Dress shirt tissue pattern pieces, pattern envelope, instructions and fabric.

- a) DO NOT CUT OUT ANY PATTERN PIECES for the first class - either tissue pattern or actual fabric pieces. You may cut to separate the pattern pieces but don't actually cut on the cutting lines of the pattern. We may be modifying a few of the pattern pieces which we will discuss during the first class.
- b) Don't bring any extra tissue pattern pieces that won't be used in your selected shirt pattern.
- 6) Fabric scraps of the same type/weight as your shirt fabric, cut approximately 8" wide by 12 to 18" long. These can be scraps of other fabric, but should be similar to your shirt fabric. We will use these to practice making flat felled seams and other sewing techniques.
- 7) Thread in appropriate colors and both machine and hand needles in appropriate sizes.
- 8) Hand and machine needles appropriate for fabric and thread
- 9) Pins and holder/cushion
- 10) Sharp sturdy scissors for accurately snipping seam allowances close to stay stitching, grading seams, etc.
- 11) Fabric shears and optional thread snips.
- 12) Seam ripper
- 13) Fabric markers (will also be discussed during first class)
- 14) Small ruler
- 15) Paper and pen/pencil for taking notes
- 16) If you need reading glasses, don't forget to bring them!!
- 17) Lastly, bring a desire to learn new skills, a positive "can-do" attitude, and a sense of humor!

If you have any questions regarding patterns, supplies, schedule of topics, please feel free to contact me via email (preferred) or phone.

See you in class!!

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