

Collar and Collarband

These techniques are mainly drawn from Pam Erny's blog and David Page Coffin's first book on shirtmaking, and will likely be completely different from any printed pattern. Also included are tweaks from many other sources, and the method for final assembly of the collar/collarband/shirt is something I've not seen anywhere else (although I'm sure I'm not the only one to figure it out.)

ALERT! *As you read in my introduction, these information packets were developed to go along with an in-person presentation during which I demonstrated the techniques. The Collar and Collarband instructions probably have the biggest need for in-person demonstration. Without seeing a demo, I'm worried that this written information will be more confusing than helpful. Photos (or even video!) would help, but I haven't figured how to make that happen. Feel free to contact me at [jlr dot 6955 at gmail dot com] if you'd like to make arrangements for an in-person session in my home studio.*

Notes:

- > Drafting custom collar and collarband pattern pieces is not necessary, but adjust SAs of printed pattern pieces according to the instructions below.
- > *Order of construction tip: Most pattern instructions have you making the collar/collarband at the end of shirt construction. It took me a long time, but I finally figured out that this was misery. Just when I wanted to be done, came the most fiddly part of the whole process. I now finish the collar/collarband unit as early in the shirt making process as possible, and it has really made a difference. (But, shhh - don't tell the sewing police.)*

Instructions:

- 1 Cut collar with 5/8" SA at neck edge and 1/4" SA on other three edges.

Cut collarband with 1/4" SA on long curved edge, and an SA on the neck edge to match the shirt neck SA. (Because easing the band to the neck is usually needed, a smaller SA is better - I like 3/8".)

- 2 Interface (IF) as desired. The following instructions are based on interfacing as follows: outer collarband (the layer that is NOT next to the neck) and inner collar (the collar that shows when shirt is worn).
- 3 After IF, lay collars flat and trim so they exactly match, including the front collar points. Repeat with collarbands. No marking is needed at this point.

Collar

- 4 Reduce stitch length to 1.5, sew collars together on long edge, RS together, non-IF collar up, starting at CB, and stitching to and off the corner. Pull gently on top collar piece while stitching. Repeat in other direction. This produces excess fabric at each end; trim off. Do not be alarmed at the collar curving - this is good.
- 5 Press flat as sewn, then press SA open on WS using point press/tailoring board, then press seam on RS. Press WS together, favoring IF collar. No need to understitch if top/edgestitching will be done later. Otherwise, understitch, stopping 3/4" short of each end.

NOTION TIP: A tailoring board, or at the very least a point press, will help make your shirt sewing easier, faster, and more professional looking. They used to be very expensive and hard to find, but they are now generally available and somewhat cheaper. I do not recommend the cloth pads, and if you forego those the cost is lower.

6 Still using 1.5 stitch length, RS together, sew short ends of collar from point to inner edge, IF side down. Pull gently on top collar piece while stitching.

7 Press seam flat as sewn, then press SA open using point press.

8 Use favorite method* to turn collar points. Check to see if collar points match.

**My preference is to use a hemostat (NOTION TIP) to turn the collar points, a method I learned from Pam Erny and David Page Coffin, and one that I demonstrate in my shirt-making presentation. Photos and descriptions can be found on the web by searching for "turning collar points hemostat".*

9 Top/edgestitch collar as desired. (Hammer down lumpy points, as needed.) Use stabilizer "handle" to get around collar points.

NOTION TIP: Every sewist needs a hammer!

NOTION TIP: I use a heavy weight tear-away stabilizer underneath the collar points, extending out far enough to grab so I can help the sewing foot and feed dogs edgestitch around the collar points without jamming.

10 Lay collar on the ironing board with the non-IF side of collar facing up. Starting at CB, fold raw edges over 5/8" and press. The 5/8" is MEASURED BY THE INTERFACED LAYER. (While doing this fold, the non-IF layer will creep out underneath, which is actually desirable - in fact, push gently toward the fold to encourage this and prevent bubbling. Collar will curve which is also good.) Stop before pressing the ends to do any final adjusting to make sure each side of the collar is even in front, i.e., the points match.

This is my best attempt to describe this in words. It is crystal clear when demonstrated.

11 Pin collar to ham as if it were the wearer's neck, steam, and let dry completely to set the roll line of the collar. Check again that collar points match.

NOTION TIP: A tailor's ham and ham holder are key elements in producing sharp looking shirts. Tailor's hams are widely available, and very inexpensive. Ham holders used to be hard to find, but that is no longer true. The wood ham holders are by far preferable over the molded plastic ones.

12 With body of collar held vertically and the folded under section under the sewing foot, and the foot bumping up against the vertical collar, stitch from CB to the end. Repeat in the other direction. Don't allow the collar fabric to pucker. (Pulling slightly will help stop puckering, as will the use of a walking foot). When doing this line of stitching, put the needle in whatever position will equal a stitched line 1/4" (light fabric) to 3/8" (heavier fabric) from the vertically-held collar.

This is described in David Page Coffin's book, Shirtmaking. My experience is that most people find both his and my explanation confusing. Again, it is crystal clear when demonstrated.

13 Trim raw edge of collar just barely outside stitching line. Don't be a timid trimmer - it won't hurt if you cut through the stitches a little; it's more important to trim closely.

Collarband

14 Lay IF collarband down, RS up, curved edge facing away. Lay collar on top, IF side up and raw edge facing away, matching CBs. Starting at CB, stitch to end with slightly less than 1/4" SA. Repeat in the other direction. Check to make sure front edge and points of collar match - any small discrepancy can be adjusted by tweaking the roll of the collar. Also check to make sure the collarband "noses" are even at front. If slightly off, trim excess.

15 Press the seam on the RS, then, on ham, IF collar on top of collarband and SA rolled under, press collar to refresh roll line.

16 Staystitch the back neck of shirt yoke and yoke lining together. Trim any yoke lining extending beyond outer yoke.

17 Lay down non-IF collarband, RS up, long uncurved edge facing away. On top, lay down shirt, RS up, making sure collarband extends beyond shirt placket edge by 1/4" at both ends. Pin at one end, at CB, and at the other end. Continue pinning, easing as needed. Starting at one end, stitch with 1/4" SA. Check for puckers.

18 Lay shirt down again, RS up and neck SA facing away. On top, IF upwards, lay down IF collarband (with the attached collar), long uncurved edge of collarband facing away. Repeat the pinning process in Step 17, making sure that the collarband extends 1/4" beyond the shirt front placket edge. Stitch from one end to the other, with 3/8" SA. (Stitch with eased side towards feed dogs.)

19 Press SA flat as sewn, then open on point presser. Press seam again from the inside and then the outside of shirt. Line up collarband "noses" and, if needed, trim so the curves match and both extend 1/4" beyond placket edge. On ham, from the inside of the shirt, press non-IF collarband towards collar. Press same area from outside.

20 Using 1.5 stitch and 1/4" SA, burrito stitch noses of collarband, starting just on the collar. Trim nose SA to scant 1/8", stopping 1/4" short of collar. Trim/grade rest of neck/collarband SA. Turn, shape noses as needed and press.

Unfortunately, this requires demonstration. I know of no online resource that demonstrates exactly this process. Again, feel free to contact me to arrange for an in-person session in my home studio.

21 On ham, working on inside, fold and press under top of inner collarband so fold just covers stitching line. Secure by pinning or your favorite basting method. This is an inside curve so the fabric will really want to creep as you stitch it, so baste securely.

NOTION TIP: My favorite notion here, and the only thing I've found to consistently stop the fabric "creep", is WashAway Wonder Tape.

22 Edgestitch collarband by starting on outer side, just under the collar, with a 1.5 stitch (no backtack needed). Stitch around collarband nose, across back neck (changing to regular stitch length if desired). Just before the other nose, change back to 1.5 stitch and continue to just past the collar edge. Turn shirt over and stitch top of collarband from inside.