

Shirt Front Versatile Buttonhole/Button Plackets

This is the type of front placket I now use exclusively, rather than a cut-on placket. The three main reasons are that a sewn-on placket construction allows for the decorative use of different fabrics or fabric orientation (bias, cross grain), it works better in matching plaids and stripes, and it uses less fabric.

Notes:

- > For CLASSIC PLACKET-FRONT SHIRTS ONLY. These instructions do not apply to camp shirt-type faced fronts.
- > Dimensions given create plackets to fit classic 3/8-1/2" shirt buttons. Placket width may need to be adjusted for smaller or larger buttons.
- > Men's shirts have the buttonholes on the left front (LF). For women, buttonholes can be on either side, though traditionally they are on the right front (RF). These instructions are for LF buttonholes.
- > **ALWAYS COMPLETE LF PLACKET FIRST.**

LEFT FRONT

Instructions for LF placket with a PLAIN or CONTRASTING top surface

Note: This method results in the WS of shirt fabric probably being visible at the outboard edge of the buttonhole placket. For fabric with a definite "wrong" side, this may not be desirable. If so, use the next method, using a piece of shirt fabric for the fabric extension instead of contrasting fabric.

- 1 Cut LF with 1 1/4" added outboard of CF ("extension").
- 2 Cut a separate placket piece 2 1/2" wide and as long as the LF. This is the piece that shows on the RS, so ensure that any horizontal pattern lines match with the LF, and any primary vertical pattern is centered 1 1/4" in from each raw edge. (Suggestion: To check pattern alignment, fold under 5/8" on each side of cut placket and lightly press. CF will be the mid-line. Lay on top of LF, matching CFs, to check pattern alignment. This process is especially important for large plaids.)
- 3 Stitch RS of placket piece to WS of LF (reduce SA to 1/2" for bulky fabric). Press SA towards LF. Turn under outboard raw edge 5/8" and press. Apply approximately 1 1/8" (exact width will depend on whether fabric is bulky or lighter) strip of IF between SA and pressed under outer edge. Fold extension unit over LF, matching CFs, and press.
- 4 Turn under outboard raw edge 5/8" (1/2" for bulky fabric) and press. Apply 1 1/8" strip of IF between SA and pressed under outer edge. Fold extension unit over LF, matching CFs, and press. Press seamline right on outer edge, i.e., do not allow either top or bottom to roll out.
- 5 Stitch 1/4" from each folded edge.

Instructions for a LF placket with an INSIDE CONTRAST ("hidden" side of placket)

- 1 Cut LF 1/4" inboard of CF.
- 2 For the contrasting inner LF placket, cut a separate extension piece of contrasting fabric/pattern that is 2" wide and as long as the LF. Stitch RS of extension piece to WS of LF with 1/4" SA. Press SA towards extension.

- 3 Cut a separate placket piece matching the shirt front that is 2 1/2" wide and as long as the LF. This is the piece that shows on the RS, so ensure that any horizontal pattern lines match with the LF, and any primary vertical pattern is centered 1 1/4" in from each raw edge. (Suggestion: To check pattern alignment, fold under 5/8" on each side of cut placket and lightly press. CF will be the mid-line. Lay on top of LF, matching CFs, to check pattern alignment. This process is especially important for large plaids.)
- 4 Stitch RS of placket piece to WS of LF (reduce SA to 1/2" for bulky fabric). Press SA towards LF. Turn under outboard raw edge 5/8" and press. Lay 1 1/8" strip of IF between SA and pressed under outer edge. Fold extension unit over LF, matching CFs, and press.
- 5 Turn under outboard raw edge 5/8" (1/2" for bulky fabric) and press. Lay 1 1/8" strip of IF between SA and pressed under outer edge. Fold extension unit over LF, matching CFs, and press. When pressing, do not favor either side.
- 6 Stitch 1/4" from each folded edge.

RIGHT FRONT

Instructions for PLAIN RF placket (the one remaining use of the "old" cut-on placket; used because of it's simple)

- 1 Complete LF placket, including cutting open buttonholes (see Tips, below).
- 2 Cut RF with 3 1/8" added fabric ("extension") outboard of CF.
- 3 Fold in extension 2 1/2", WS to WS, and press. With WS up, open up fold. Bring outer edge to just short of FL and press. Fold on original FL and press all three layers.
- 4 To mark button placement, lay LF placket over RF placket, and match CFs, NOT stitching lines. Insert marking pencil through each buttonhole and make a dot for the button location.

Instructions for a RF placket with a TOP CONTRAST in RF placket

- 1 Complete LF placket, including cutting open buttonholes (see Tips, below).
- 2 Cut RF with 1 1/4" added ("extension") outboard of CF.
- 3 Cut a separate contrasting placket piece 2 1/4" wide and as long as the RF. Stitch RS of placket piece to WS of RF. Press SA towards RF, then press extension over SA/shirt.
- 4 Lay LF placket over RF, matching CFs. Fold under raw edge of RF placket piece so it is just hidden by LF placket. Press. Top stitch RF placket on fold so it will be hidden by LF placket.
- 5 To mark button placement, lay LF placket over RF placket again, matching CFs, NOT stitching lines. Insert marking pencil through each buttonhole and make a dot for the button location.

Buttonhole tips

- > The buttonhole markings on the pattern piece are almost always NOT in the best position. *NOTION TIP: A Simflex expanding gauge device works great for marking buttonhole positions. I didn't own one until I inherited my mother's, but now I am a big fan of this device.*

- > Keep a record of desired placement for topmost button for different patterns/wearers. A higher button placement will enable the collar to "stand up". A lower topmost button placement is usually preferred by those who have a "forward neck" posture since it gives more space for the neck.
- > Try loosening top thread tension for smoother buttonhole stitch. Cotton thread makes nicer buttonholes.

- > Apply a little Fray Check on back of buttonholes and let dry before cutting open.
- > *NOTION TIP: Buttonhole chisel works best to open buttonholes (easier to avoid cutting into stitches). Give it a sharp tap or two with your hammer. (Another NOTION TIP...all sewists need a hammer!)*
- > *NOTION TIP: A matching Sharpie marker can be used on the raw edge inside buttonholes to make contrasting IF and stray threads less obvious.*