AUSSEW Along

Couture Cardigan Jacket - Part 5

Buttonholes

What?! Now? Yes, now is the time to tackle the buttonholes.

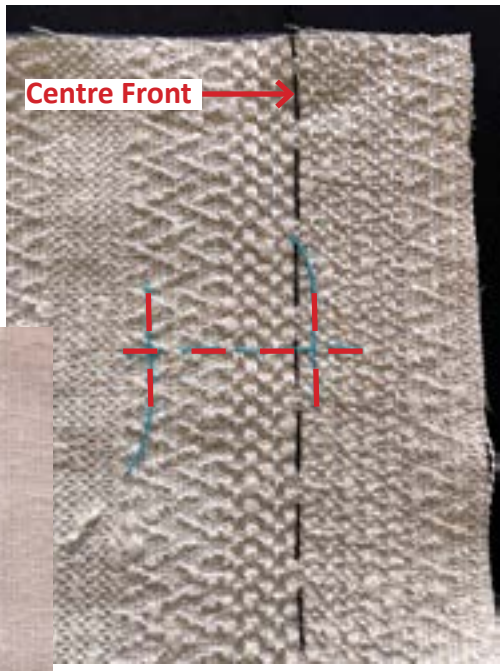
A feature of the Chanel jacket is the hand-stitched buttonholes which are finished with a faux bound buttonhole on the inside lining. Before you break out in a sweat, I'm going to tell you that you can stitch your buttonholes by machine if you want. In fact, I will admit to doing this for the jacket I made in preparing for this sew-along. HOWEVER, I would really like you to at least attempt one hand-stitched buttonhole on a scrap of fabric. You may surprise yourself and decide it's worth the extra effort and time.

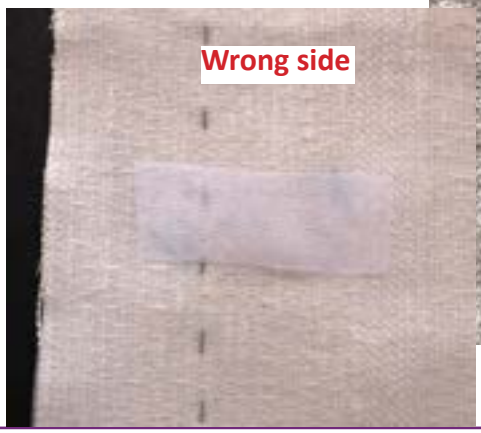
Regardless of whether you make hand or machine-stitched buttonholes, you will still finish them with the faux bound buttonhole on the inside of the jacket.

Silk buttonhole twist is the best thread choice for hand-worked buttonholes. If you can't find any, or you cannot get a good colour match, try topstitching thread or heavy machine-embroidery thread.

Always start by making at least one sample buttonhole on a scrap of fabric. If making a machine-stitched buttonhole, you will also need to determine the correct size and stitch density. Make as many test buttonholes as required until you get a good result. If making a hand-stitched buttonhole you should also do a test first to determine size and to get a feel for how the thread will work with your fabric.

1. You should already have your buttonhole placement marked with basting thread. Also thread-mark each end of the buttonhole. It should start 1/8 inch (3 mm) past the centre front marking and extend as far as is required to fit your buttons. To prevent fraying and to stabilise the fabric, fuse a narrow piece of interfacing to the wrong side of the fabric at each buttonhole placement (if you do not do this earlier, as instructed in Part 3).





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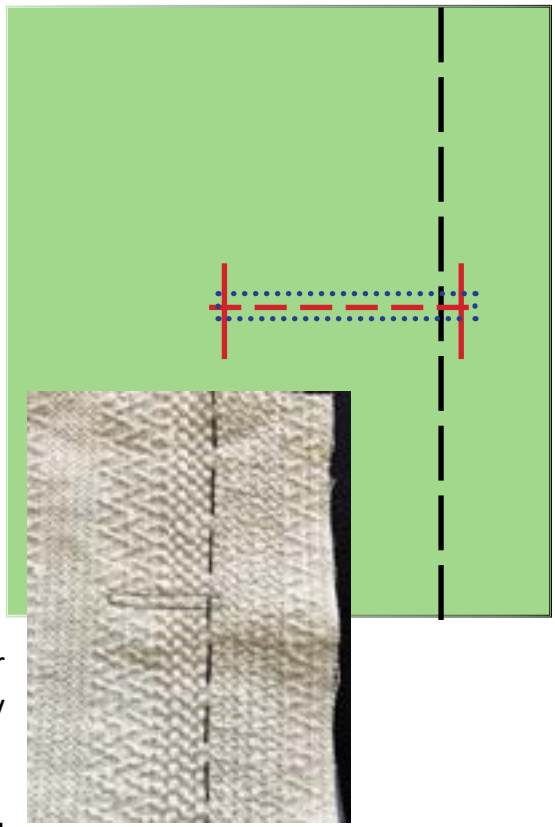
The following steps apply to hand-stitched buttonholes



2. Using a straight machine stitch of 1.5 mm (20 stitches per inch), stitch a rectangle around the thread that marks the buttonhole location. The stitching should be a scant 1/16 inch (1.5 mm) on either side of the thread mark. You are stitching through the fabric and the organza interfacing. Use a slightly contrasting thread colour. These threads will be used as a guide when stitching by hand and will be covered when the buttonhole is finished.

3. Remove the buttonhole thread-tracing. Cut the buttonhole open with a small, sharp scissors. Start at the centre and snip to within 1/16 inch from the machine stitching. Take care not to cut into the stitches. Seal the raw edges with a small dab of fabric glue or fray retardant. Clear nailpolish also works well. Allow the glue to dry thoroughly before continuing.

4. Prepare your thread before you start stitching. Unwind several metres of silk buttonhole twist (or whatever you are using) and run it across a piece of beeswax to coat it. Now place a paper towel on your ironing board. Place the beginning of the thread on top of the paper towel, place a hot iron on top of the thread and pull the thread under the iron. This serves two purposes - it removes any kinks or bends in the thread and it melts the wax into the thread, which allows the thread to move smoothly through the fabric as you are stitching.

Watch the video showing you how to make hand-stitched buttonholes. Don't rush - it's OK if it takes you all week (or longer) to stitch your buttonholes.

Watch video

The following steps apply to machine-stitched buttonholes

1. Refer to Step 1 for hand-stitched buttonholes.

2. Using the thread markings made in Step 1 as a guide, stitch each buttonhole.

3. Remove the thread marking and run a fine line of fray-stop along the centre of the buttonhole. Once the glue is completely dry, cut the buttonhole open. A buttonhole chisel is the ideal tool for this as it makes a nice clean cut. Be very careful not to cut into the thread bar at each end of the buttonhole.

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Faux bound buttonhole

On the reverse side of the jacket you will now create a faux bound buttonhole.

1. For each buttonhole, cut two strips of lining fabric approximately 1 inch (2.5 cm) longer than the buttonhole and 1.5 inches (4 cm) wide. Fold the strips in half with the **wrong** sides together; each strip will now be 1 inch x 3/4 inch (2.5 cm x 2 cm).

2. Pin the welts to the wrong side of the jacket, covering the buttonhole stitches and butting the folds together at the centre of the opening.

3. Sew the welts in place with small running stitches. Try to catch only the silk organza interfacing. These welts will be covered later when you finish the jacket lining.

Jacket Back

1. Stitch the centre back seam using the method described in Part 4 when you stitched the front to the side front. Pin the lining out of the way as you stitch.

2. Attach the side jacket pieces to the back. Press all three seams over a seam roll.

3. Retrieve the back neck interfacing piece and remove the seam allowance at the neck and shoulder edges.

4. Use a catch stitch to attach the interfacing at the neck edge of the jacket, matching the newly cut edge of the interfacing to the thread tracing on the fabric.

You should now have:

- Jacket front pieces and side front pieces quilted and stitched together.
- The front edge of the jacket stabilised with stay tape.
- Bust darts/shaping completed
- Buttonholes stitched, either by hand or machine, and faux bound buttonhole created on reverse side.
- Jacket back assembled and jacket side pieces attached.

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