Precision Bound Buttonholes &
Welt Pockets using Graph Paper

I learned this technique for bound buttonholes when I majored in Textiles and Apparel Design at the University of Missouri in Columbia in the 70's. I have expanded it to include welt pockets. The graph paper aids in precision marking and sewing.   — Phyllis Carlyle
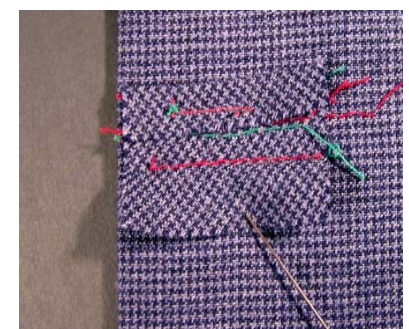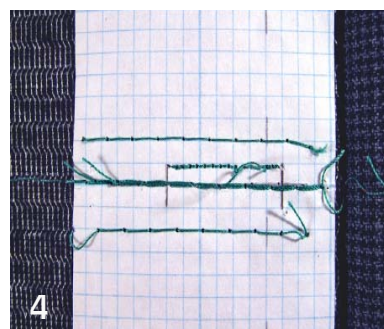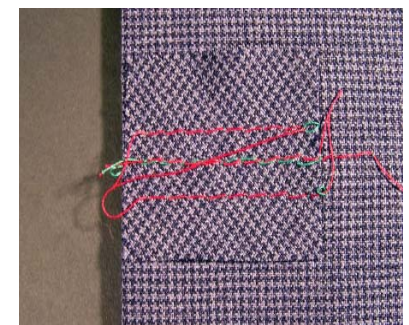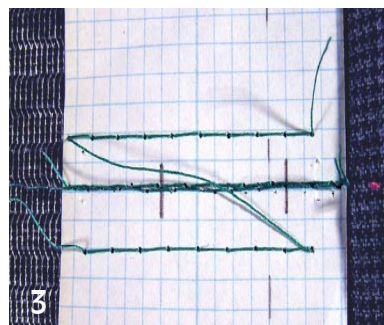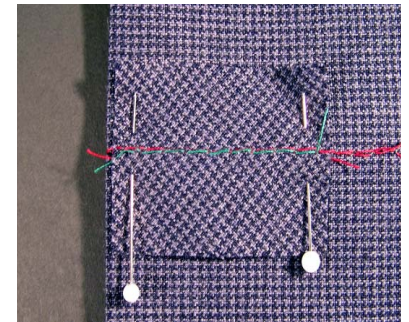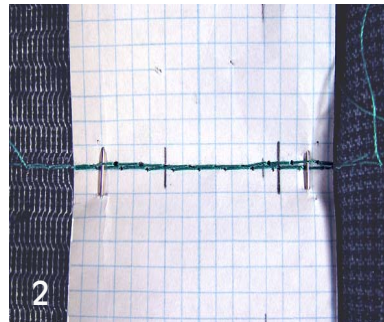

Bound buttonholes are sewn right after interfacing the fronts, before assembling the garment. Welt pockets are also sewn as at the beginning of the project, right after the seams they cross are sewn.

1. Fuse the interfacing to the inside of the garment.

2. For pockets, cut a fabric patch to be longer than the pocket opening by a couple of inches and 2-3″ wide. For buttonholes, **c**ut a patch about 1½″ to 2″ square. Contrast fabric or bias may be used, especially for stripes or plaids. Lightly interface the patch if loosely woven or thin fabric. Mark a center on the patch with basting or a pressed line.

3. Prepare the graph paper. Use four squares per inch for welt pockets, and 8 or 10 squares per inch for buttonholes. Cut a piece larger than the finished pocket or buttonhole but smaller than the patch. If you like, you can use a long strip to mark several buttonholes for precise spacing. Pencil a center line and the ends of the buttohhole on the graph paper for each buttonhole. *(Illus. 1)*

4. Mark the garment with the center of each pocket or buttonhole using a line of machine basting longer than the finished length of the buttonhole. If sewing a row of buttonholes, pin the graph paper to the inside before proceeding with this step and baste-mark at each buttonhole. *(Illus. 2 left)* If sewing welt pockets or just one buttonhole, sew the basted line first, then align and pin the graph paper to the inside garment and baste into place on the center line.

5. Center and pin the patch over the machine basting on the right side of the garment, right sides together. Machine baste on the graph paper, over your original center basting line, to secure all layers. *(Illus. 2 right)*

6. From the graph paper side, baste two parallel lines to the center line, two squares away on either side of the center line. Baste beyond the end markings. Take care that your patch is flat on the under side while you are working on the graph paper side. *(Illus. 3)*

7. Press the sides of the patch toward the center along each basting line. This pressing forms the lips of the welt when the buttonhole or pocket is turned. *(Illus. 5 right)*
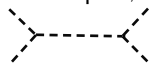

Inside   *Right Side*

8. It's time for precision sewing! Make sure your patch is folded to the center on only one side along the second basting, and stitch small stitches on the graph paper one square away, along and parallel to the center, between two of the rows of basting. This is where you need to start and stop exactly on the lines marking the ends of the pocket or buttonhole. Back stitch at each end. *(Illus 4. left)* Now, push the stitched side of the patch out of the way, fold the other side to the center, *(Illus. 5 right)* and stitch on the other side of the center line, one square away and between the center basting and the third row. Stop and start exactly on the marked ends again.

9. You should have five rows of stitching: two short lines of small stitches and three longer lines of basting. *(Illus. 5 left)* Pull out the basting stitches, and tear away the paper. Your two lines should be perfectly parallel and the same length to have a perfectly squared opening when you finish. *(Illus. 6)*

10. If you are satisfied with the stitching, cut the patch and garment to turn it. This is the point of no return! Cut down the middle and into each corner. Start cutting on the inside, also clipping on the right side if necessary, using your sharpest, smallest scissors. *(Illus. 7)*
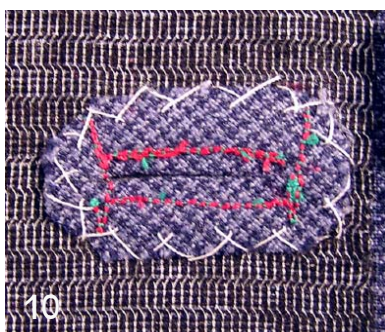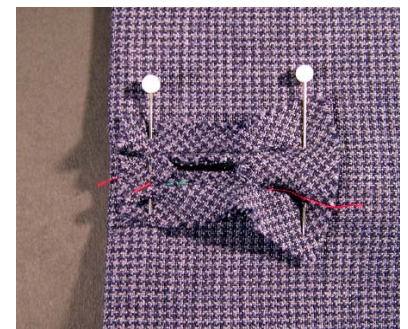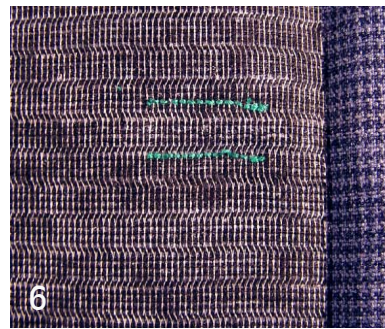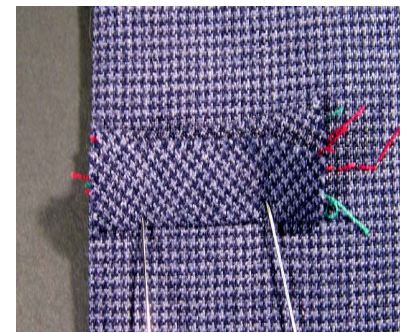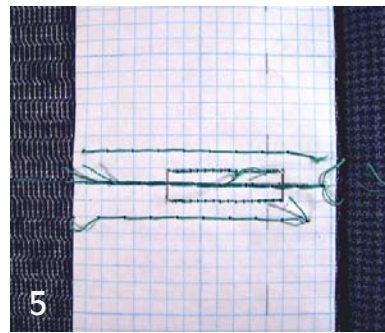
11. Turn the pocket or buttonhole. *(Illus. 8)* Baste the lips and press. *(Illus. 9 right)*

12. Machine stitch the little triangles at the ends to the lips, using very small stitches.   *Hint: If your welt pocket ends aren't nice and square, cover with a zigzagged bar tack, which also reinforces the ends.*

13. Trim seam allowances and press. *(Illus. 9)* You can catchstitch the seam allowances down to help them stay flat. *(Illus. 10)*
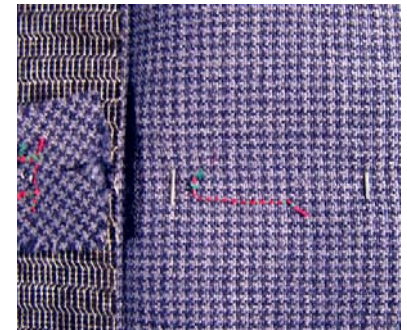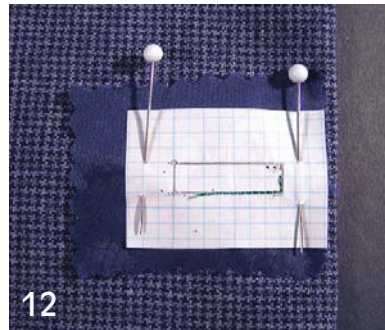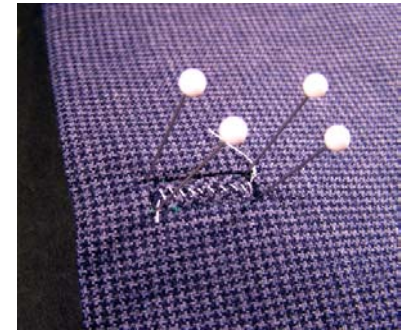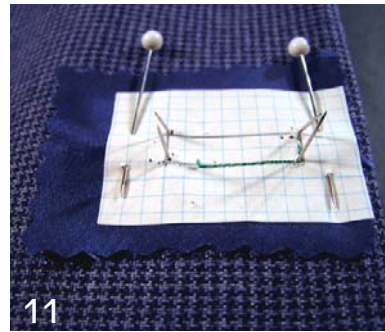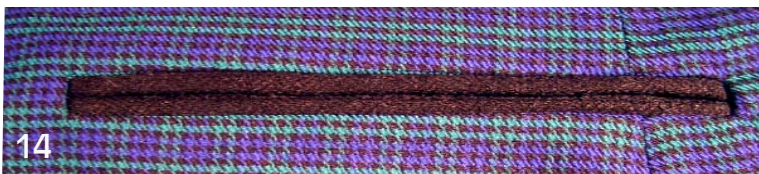
Finishing the Buttonhole

To finish the facing, stab a pin through each corner to mark the position.   *(Illus. 11 right)* Place graph paper over a lining or organza patch on the right side, lining the pins with corners marked the size of the buttonhole.   *(Illus. 11 left)* Sew a rectangle to create a faced opening. *(Started in Illus. 12)* Cut the opening using triangles at the ends, and turn and press. *(Illus. 13)* Hand stitch the window edges to the wrong side of the buttonhole.

Inside   *Right Side*

Finished bound buttonhole

Finishing the welt pocket

 Place the pocket bag fabric on top of the patch AFTER the lips are made and trimmed, and stitch over the short rows again. Turn it to the inside after tearing away the graph paper and slashing the opening. Sew the bag into a pocket after the welts are pressed and the triangles secured. Both lips will show. *(Illus. 14)*

 Pocket flaps the exact length of the pocket opening may be added by basting them in place before the patch. Use a narrow seam allowance with the cut edges aligning with the center mark basting.   This flap will cover both lips of the welt. OR, slip the flap into the pocket after it is slashed and sewn, and stitch in the ditch along the welt. One welt will show.   *(Illus. 15 & 16)*