

Machine Embroidered Buttonholes

By Eileen Roche

Many of you wrote that buttonholes are a struggle when it comes to sewing. I agree! One of the worst parts about adding a buttonhole is it's just about the last thing you do when making a garment. I begin to sweat thinking about marking the buttonholes, spacing them evenly, stitching them perfectly straight, even and parallel. How many times has the foot jammed against the seam allowance resulting in a shorter than planned buttonhole?

Hmm... I don't think it's the machine. In fact, most machines have the ability to make a very professional buttonhole. The problem is the operator, me. My sewing/tailoring skills do not equal my embroidery skills. It might have something to do with my attention span but that's material for another blog! If you're like me, you might consider using your embroidery machine to create buttonholes.

Why machine embroider your buttonholes? The number one

reason for me is control. Machine embroidered buttonholes give me total control over the length of the buttonhole and the placement because I'm starting with a digital file that will stitch perfect duplicates since I don't have to guide the fabric under the foot.

So let's take a look at how to embroider buttonholes.

First, select the buttons. Measure the buttons and add a small amount (such as .10 of an inch) to the diameter. That measurement will be the length of the buttonhole. [Click here](#) for four buttonholes for you to download. You'll find two 1" buttonholes (square and round) and two 2" buttonholes (square and round). Resize the length only of the designs to accommodate your button.

Naturally, you must make a test buttonhole on the same fabric as the final garment. The sample must include the sample interfacing, facing or lining. You can't cheat here – it's the only way to guarantee positive results and this is when

you'll tweak the length.

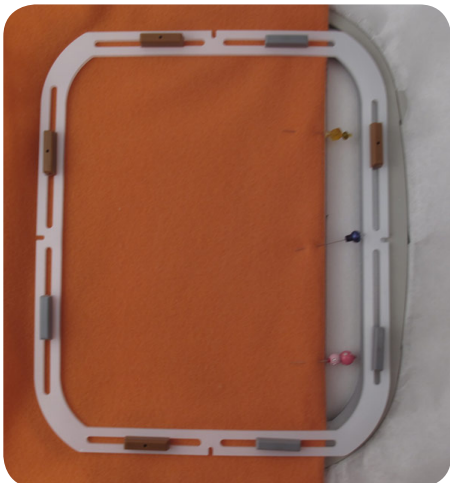
Crisp or lightweight tear-away stabilizer works beautifully on buttonholes because it tears cleanly. Once hooped, draw a straight line down the length of the hoop to use as an alignment mark.



Insert the metal frame of Magna-Hoop Jumbo. It's not mandatory to use Magna-Hoop Jumbo but it sure does simplify the task.

Place the garment edge next to the drawn line and place Magna-Hoop Jumbo's acrylic frame on

top. Slide magnets into the slots to hold the garment firmly in the hoop.



Attach the hoop to the machine and select the tested (and tweaked) buttonhole design. Rotate the design so it runs perpendicular to the garment edge for horizontal buttonholes. Also, advance to the first stitch to see what end of the buttonhole will stitch first. You want to stitch the end closest to the edge first and sew away from the edge. The fabric will not bulge next to the seam if you do this (a frequent occurrence in manual buttonholes). Rotate or mirror image the design if necessary.

Measure the distance from the garment edge to the end of the buttonhole. For pleasing proportions, it's best to leave a space between the end of the buttonhole and the garment edge that is half the diameter of the button. For the 2" buttonhole, move the end of the design 1" from the garment edge.



Stitch the buttonhole.



Reposition the design to the next marked position. You won't have to measure the distance unless you're changing button sizes. Here I'm stitching the 1" buttonhole.



Continue adding the buttonholes until you've finished the required quantity.



Remove from the hoop and tear away the stabilizer. Use a seam ripper or a chisel and wood block to open the buttonhole. If using the seam ripper method, insert a pin at one end of the stitch to avoid slicing beyond the buttonhole.

Or place the buttonhole over a wood block, and insert the chisel into the space between the satin stitching. Press down to cut the fabric.

Design Tips: Buttonhole Placement

It can be challenging to determine evenly-spaced buttonhole placement. For garments, mark the widest point of the bust and the top of the garment. Fold the garment, meeting the top mark to the bust mark. Place a third mark at the fold. You now have the positions for the top three buttons. Measure the distance between two buttons. Use that measurement to mark the remainder of the buttons below the bust point.

Fuzzy Fibers

Place a piece of fusible web (protective paper removed) over the buttonhole area. Stitch the buttonhole. Tear away the excess fusible web. Press the buttonhole with a hot steam iron to melt the fusible web into the satin stitches. Once cooled, cut open the buttonhole. The fusible web will tame the fuzzy fibers.

