

Fluted ribbon trim

Sculpt a vintage-inspired embellishment

Recently, I discovered a beautiful vintage stole embellished with a ribbonwork trim that resembles little fluted flowers strung in a row, each one nesting into its neighbor. The shapes are reminiscent of calla lilies, and the trim was so extraordinary that I just had to figure out how to re-create it. So I purchased the stole and examined the ribbonwork. In this article, I'll show you how to recreate this vintage embellishment.

To form the lovely, dimensional shapes, you simply stitch the ribbon's edges together in a specific sequence, and repeat until you've created enough trim for your project.

This trim is extremely versatile; it's perfect for trimming straight lines, but it also navigates curves well. You can apply it in many ways on many types of projects. Work it in a narrow ribbon for use on delicate garments such as christening gowns, lingerie, or even ribbon embroidery. Use a wider ribbon (up to 2 inches wide) for a trim to embellish more substantial garments, like the classic cardigan jacket shown at right, or work it in a very wide ribbon for a bold trim on home furnishings and décor. Try different types of ribbon for different textural effects, as well: satin, grosgrain, velvet, even fabric strips all work well.

Making this vintage-inspired ribbonwork trim is simple and offers many embellishment possibilities.

Kenneth D. King is a Threads contributing editor.

Ribbonwork shapes that nestle into each other form a lovely trim and add a touch of vintage style to your garments.



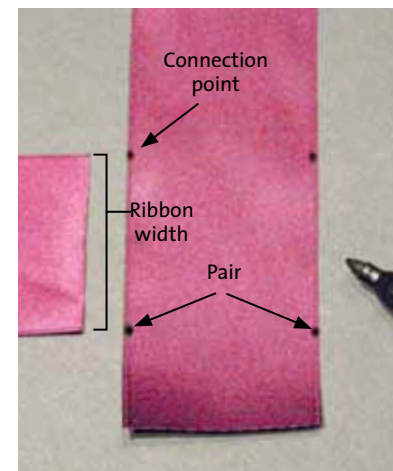
Mark, stitch, and fold the ribbon

Use ribbon or straight-grain fabric strips in any width, depending on the effect you wish to create. Choose a ribbon with body; it must be resilient so it will hold the shapes. To use straight-grain fabric strips, finish the edges. To make this trim, cut the ribbon 25 percent longer than the finished length needed for your project.

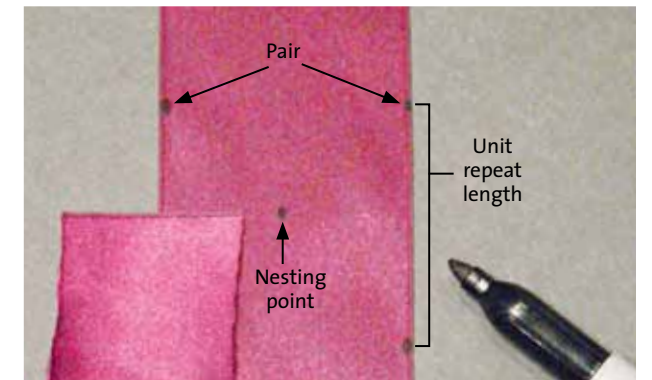
For this technique, I use "ribbon width" as the unit of measure, which I learned from Candice Kling's book, *The Artful Ribbon* (C&T Publishing, 1996). Using the width of the ribbon as the increment of measure makes this method easily scalable. The wider the ribbon, the longer the repeat necessary. You can use a longer repeat on a narrow ribbon, but repeats should be no shorter than the ribbon width. Each fluted shape is called a "unit."

MARK THE SEQUENCE AND FINISH THE END

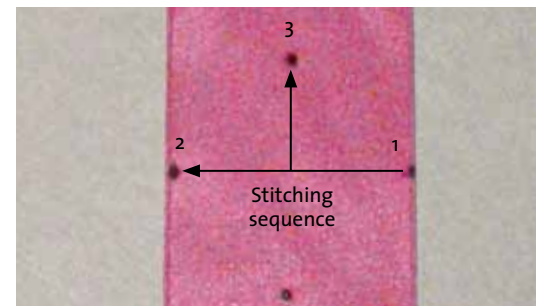
1 On the ribbon's wrong side, mark dots along each selvage, one ribbon width apart. These are the connection points; two points aligned across the ribbon's body form a pair. They also establish the unit repeats—that is, the length of the fluted units. Mark the connection points along the ribbon's entire length. To simplify this process, cut a piece of ribbon about 1 inch long, and use its selvage-to-selvage width to measure the distance between each pair.



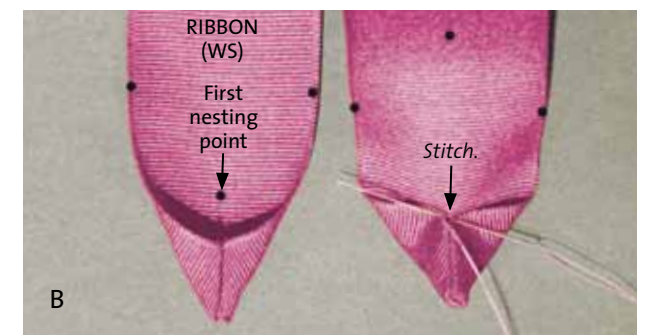
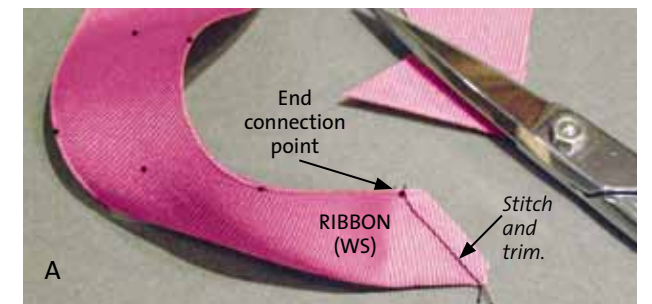
2 Mark dots down the ribbon's center to establish nesting points. Position dots halfway between each pair of connection points and spaced one ribbon width apart.



3 Each pair of connection points joins a nesting point, creating the fold that forms the fluted units. Here is the stitching sequence you will use later: Insert the needle at point 1 and stitch it to point 2, then stitch both to point 3. But the ribbon's raw end must be finished first.



4 Finish the ribbon's end at the starting point. Fold the ribbon lengthwise, right sides together. Align the endmost pair of connection points. Pin at an angle, less than 45 degrees. Stitch along the angle by machine or hand, then trim the seam allowance to 1/8 inch (A). Turn the point right side out. With needle and thread, stitch the end of the seam to the ribbon's first nesting point (B).

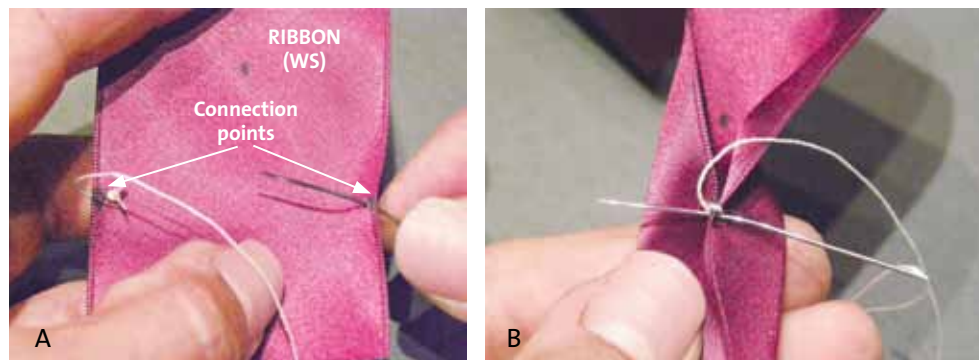


Tip

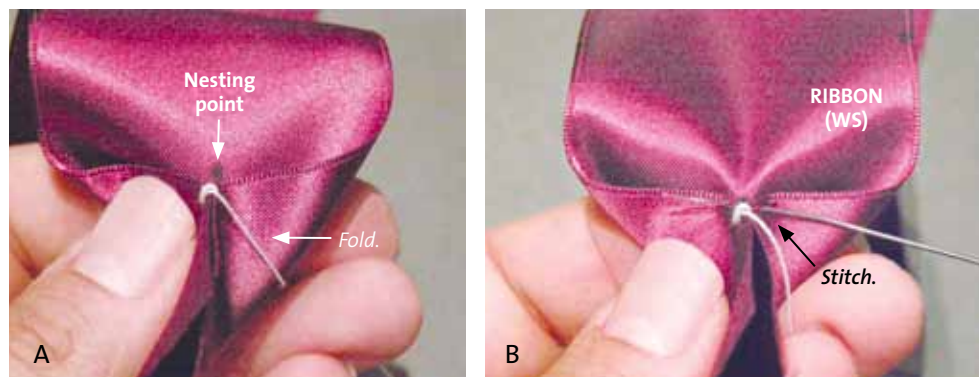
MIX TRIM SIZES. Combine narrow and wide ribbon trims on the same garment for variety of scale. Shown at left, I stitched a row of narrow trim and one of wide trim in opposing directions at the jacket's opening.

FOLD AND STITCH THE UNITS

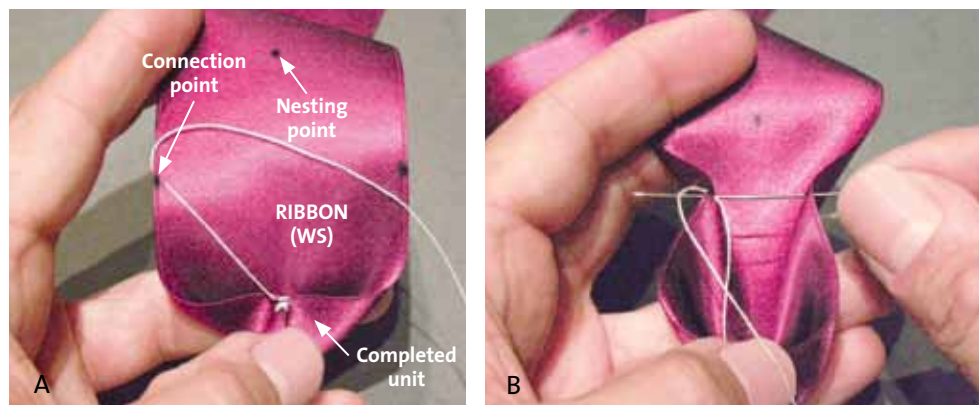
1 Begin stitching from the finished end. Stitch together the second pair of connection points, inserting the needle at one connection point and drawing it through the opposite point. Take a few whipstitches to secure the pair together. Do not tie off or cut the thread. Make sure the ribbon's selvage edges lay flat within the stitches.



2 Fold this stitched pair to meet the nearest nesting point in the ribbon's center (A). Then, stitch the pair to the nesting point. Sew a few stitches to secure, but don't tie off or cut the thread (B).



3 For the next fluted unit, stitch the third pair of connection points. First, catch one of the points with the needle and thread. Pull the thread through, but don't draw it tight; it should lay flat against the ribbon's wrong side (A). Take a stitch through the opposite connection point. Then, stitch through the first connection point of that pair again. Whipstitch them together (B).



4 Fold this stitched pair to meet the third nesting point. Secure it with a few stitches. Continue folding and stitching units in this manner. Once complete, each fluted unit nests into its neighbor. Stitches are invisible on the ribbon's right side, which has a raised profile; the wrong side is flat.

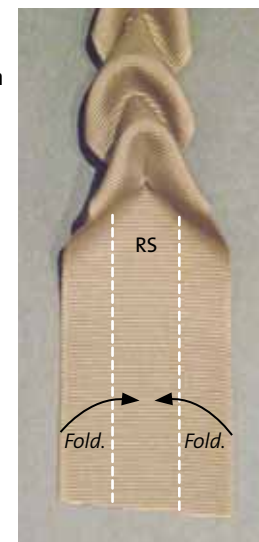


Finish the ribbonwork ends

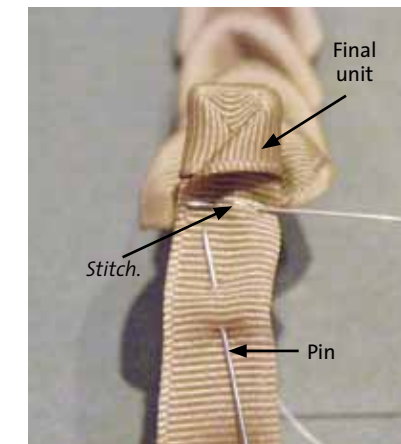
You can create a simple folded point as in step 4 under "Mark the sequence and finish the end" (page 21), or use one of the following methods to create elegant termination points. The fold-under finish creates a clean end on a line of trim that runs to a garment edge, while the fluted finish is perfect for abutting two trim ends nearly invisibly.

FOLD-UNDER FINISH

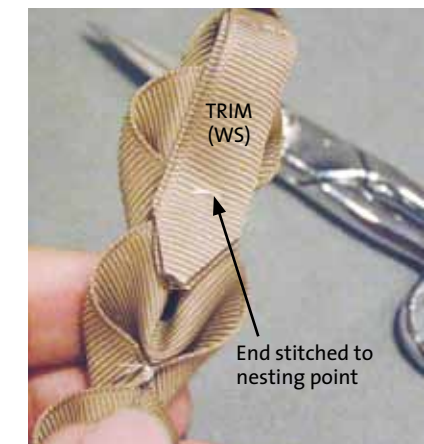
1 Below the final unit, fold the ribbon end in thirds, lengthwise. Fold each of the outer thirds right sides together atop the center third. Pin in place.



2 Just below the final unit, stitch across the ribbon's width, through all three folded layers.

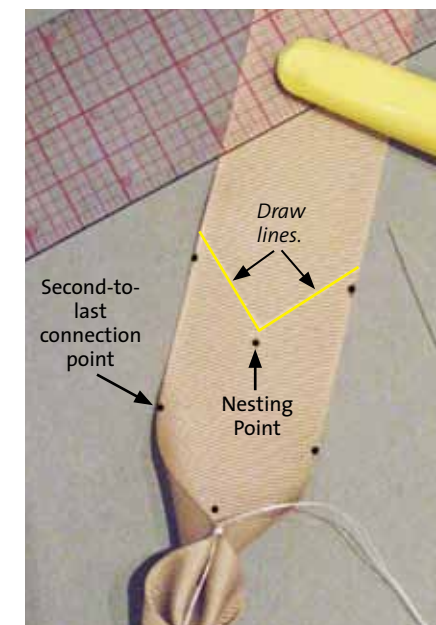


3 Fold the end to the trim's wrong side. Hand-stitch it to the nearest nesting point. Cut the ends at an angle.

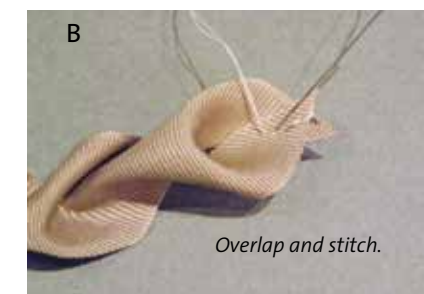
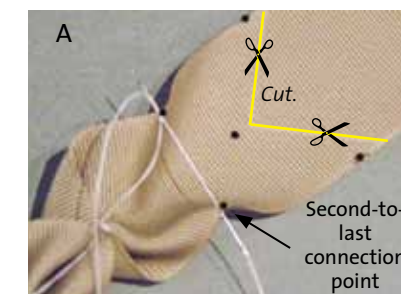


FLUTED FINISH

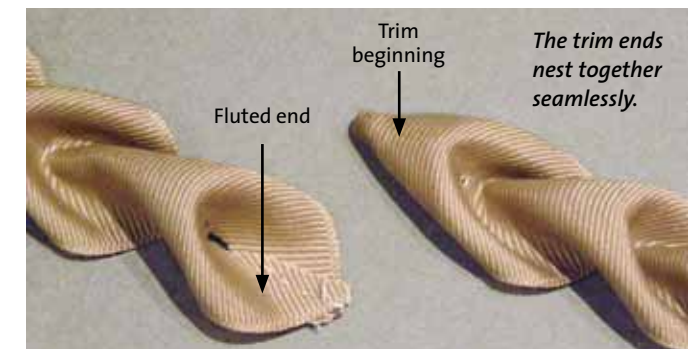
1 Leave the final two marked ribbonwork units unstitched. About 1/8 inch beyond the last unit's connection points and nesting point, draw two 45-degree angles, forming a chevron.



2 Stitch together the connection points on the second-to-last unit (A). Cut ribbon along angled lines, then overlap cut edges, and bring the connection points together (B). Sew through the overlapped ends with a running stitch.



3 Trim the overlapped points. When joined, the beginning and end of the trim nest together nearly invisibly.



Photos: (p. 20) Jack Deutsch, stylist; Amit Cajwani for Mark Edward Inc., hair and makeup; Patricia for Halley Resources; all others, Kenneth D. King, Styling credits: top—Sosie (Shopsoeie.com), pants—(RalphLauren.com), earrings—(Charter Club (Macy's.com)), necklace—(BananaRepublic.com), ring—(SkinnyStyle.com)