

Let's Face It by Rebecca Kemp Brent

Altering a Garment Neckline

It's easy to alter a neckline; just draw the new neckline on an existing pattern, add seam allowances, and go. I do have a couple of reminders or tips:

- Make a paper garment front pattern, without seam allowances, and hold it against your body to check the new neckline. It's easy to be surprised. A square neckline probably looks narrower and shorter on the pattern than you'd expect, especially with the seam allowances, and you can easily wind up with one that's too wide or too revealing.
- Remember, you can always cut off more if necessary.
- As a rule of thumb, keep the back neckline pretty much the same width and depth, unless you're deliberately deepening it, too.
- If you want to make an asymmetrical neckline, place the pattern on a folded piece of paper to make a full front pattern.
- To make the facing pattern for your new neckline:
 - Trace the pattern neckline and about 2 1/2" of the garment seams or foldline on a separate piece of paper.
 - Mark a series of points 2 1/4" from the seamline. This determines the facing width; a bit more or less is fine for style. Connect the points to mark the outer edge of the facing.
 - Add seam allowances to the neckline and garment seam edges, but not to the facing's outer edge; there's already 1/4" there for finishing.

Finely Finished Facings

To make a beautifully shaped facing for the exterior or interior of your garment, you'll need:

- Garment fabric, cut to pattern
- Facing fabric, cut to pattern
- Fusible interfacing, cut to pattern

It's also nice to have a pair of pinking shears.

1. Cut out the pieces as usual.
2. If the facing will be on the inside of the garment, you can finish each section of the facing separately. If you want to put it on the outside of the garment, sew the facing sections together at the shoulders. Press seam allowances open.
3. Do the same thing with the interfacing sections. Trim seam allowances to 1/8" and finger press them. Don't fuse the interfacing to the facing yet.
4. Put the interfacing on the fabric facing, right sides together; that is, the non-fusible side of the interfacing goes against the fabric right side. Stitch them together along the outer edge.
5. Trim or clip the seam allowances as necessary. This is where the pinking shears are useful; they are the best and fastest way to notch curves evenly, which results in the smoothest shape when the seam is turned and pressed.
6. Turn the facing right side out. Use the tip of the iron to press the seam allowances only. Remember: now you are fusing the layers.
7. Match the raw edges of the facing and interfacing and fuse them together.

8. Attach the facing as usual for an inside facing. For an outside facing:
 - a. Place the facing's right side against the garment's wrong side when you sew the neckline seam.
 - b. Trim and clip the seam as usual. When you turn the facing to the right side of the garment, the seam allowances will be on the right side of the garment, but hidden under the facing.
 - c. Edgestitch the finished facing edge to the garment.

TIP: Because the interfacing is transparent, you can fussy cut the facings to feature an embroidered motif, fabric print, stripe, etc.