

INTERFACING

By Patty Dunn

WHAT IS IT?

INTERFACING: The various materials used to reinforce, stiffen or add body to your fabric. Not to be confused with interlining or underlining. Interfacing is either sew-in or fusible.

UNDERLINING OR INTERLINING: Refers to fabric that is cut the same size as the fashion fabric. Both pieces are treated as one. Helps for support and weight in the finished piece.

FUSIBLE INTERFACING: Can be woven or non-woven. Fusible interfacing has a fusing agent on the underside. It is made to adhere to the fabric when pressed with a hot iron – usually using steam. The rough side is the wrong side that will be fused to the **WRONG** side of the fabric.

SEW-IN INTERFACING: Can be woven or non-woven. Fabric that is not labelled interfacing can also be use when there is not a compatible match to your fabric. Fabrics such as cotton batiste, high quality cotton organdy or silk organza. These work well when your fabric has natural fibers.

Information taken with permission from Designers Techniques – Kenneth King

THE FOUR TYPES OF INTERFACING:

- **WOVEN INTERFACING:** Feels and looks like fabric. Can be natural or synthetic fibers.
- **NON-WOVEN INTERFACING:** Synthetic fiber webs pressed together. Feels similar to paper or felt.
- **KNIT INTERFACING:** Soft and more flexible with some stretch. Feels similar to tricot. When fused it is lightweight but can offer strong structured support depending on the fabric it is fused to.
- **WEFT INSERTION INTERFACING:** Fibers are loosely woven and threads feel thicker compared to knit. Comes in several weights. When fused it tends to add more body and a thicker feeling to certain fabrics. Usually works well in tailored jackets.

How to pretreat your interfacing:

Pretreat all interfacing. To save time purchase several yards and pretreat it all at once. Place neatly folded interfacing in a sink with **HOT** tap water. Soak until the water cools to room temperature. When removing from water do not wring or twist. Roll folded interfacing together and press interfacing against the sink basin with your hands to remove excess water. Lay a towel on the floor or long counter. Interfacing does not need to be completely unfolded. Gently unfold some of the layers so you can spread it out on the towel and let dry. You can turn a portable fan toward it for a quicker drying time but usually it will dry within a few hours. When completely dry, place it in a gallon size zip-loc bag and label the type interfacing it is. As you use it keep the scraps for testing and save them in the same bag. Mark the bag with the type and brand of interfacing it is as this information will be helpful to you later. You may find you like a certain brand better than another once you have tested several types.

APPLYING INTERFACING:

Check manufacturers instructions before you start.

FUSIBLE interfacing requires heat, moisture and very firm pressure. You may want to use a press cloth to protect your iron, as some fusing agents will lift through the top of the interfacing. I recommend cheesecloth or silk organza. Both are thin enough that you can see through them. For more moisture you can mist the pressing cloth. Do not slide the iron. Hold it in each position for a full 15 seconds. Press again on the fabric side after the interfacing cools (use a clean pressing cloth as some residue of the fusing agent can lift to the pressing cloth).

HINT: Keep your dryer sheets after you dry your clothes. It works great for cleaning your iron while it is hot. Tip from Linda McGhee.

SEW-IN interfacing is applied to the garment by basting or temporary spray adhesive until it is stitched permanently in the seam allowance.

TEST FUSE: Evaluate your fusible interfacing after you test fuse it.

- Fold the fabric on the lengthwise grain. Feel the way the fabric handles. If the fold lays down it may be to light for the fabric. If the fold will not stay folded it may be to heavy for the fabric.
- Check the right side of the fabric for color changes or sheen caused by the fusing agent.
- Check to make sure the interfacing is fused well and will not pull away.
- Check for any bubbles or change in the texture on the right side.
- Launder and press the way you will treat the fabric later. Check for any undesirable changes or shrinkage.

KNOW WHAT THE FABRIC CAN TAKE:

The following is a list of fibers and the recommended heat and steam for ironing.

FIBER	IRON TEMPERATURE	DRY/STEAM SETTING
Acetate	250°	Dry Iron
Acrylic	250°	Dry Iron
Cotton	400°	Heavy Steam
Linen	450°	Heavy Steam
Tencel	320°	Light Steam
Nylon	250°	Dry Iron
Polyester	250°	Dry Iron or Light Steam
Ramie	400°	Heavy Steam
Rayon	320°	Light Steam
Silk	300°	Dry Iron or Light Steam
Spandex (Lycra)	320°	Dry Iron
Wool	300°	Medium/Heavy Steam

Note:

When a fabric contains several different fibers, use the iron temperature for the most heat-sensitive fiber. Experiment with steam settings.

This information was taken from Threads Magazine # 105 “Ironing Systems” written by Cecelia Podolak.

Fabrics that should not be fused:

Velvet

Satin

Fur

Leather

(If you can't iron it don't fuse it)

Remember... polyester and nylon take a lower iron temperature than cotton. Most interfacings have that content. Fusing time with the iron needs to be longer but your iron should not be hotter. Take your time. If you must use a dry iron (because of the fabric content) be sure and test the bond. You may not be able to use fusible on that fabric. Also consider some irons, such as the popular Rowenta, get hotter on the higher settings.

Some of this information was compiled from Threads Magazine #103 "Interfacing Update" and #75 "Interfacing Mysteries Solved"

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