

Interfacing Facts

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Gill Arnold writes about her experiences using a variety of woven, knitted and weft insertion interfacing used in industry and available to the home dressmaker, mail order.

It is very confusing to decide which is the right interfacing when there is so much choice. How do you choose? My reasons for using a range of fusible interfacings produced for manufacturing are, they are very economical to use as they are 150 cm wide. They are made from many different fibres, cottons, viscose, nylons, polyesters which are compatible with the fashion fabric, I fuse them to. These interfacings are woven, knitted and weft insertion, they produce soft, movement which is so important with all the new fashion fabrics today. These interfacings are produced in fine sheer to heavy dense weights. The fine sheer manufacturers interfacings have less resins, so when applied they do not change the character of the cloth. They are quick and easy to apply and give professional, manufactured looking results. New interfacings are appearing all the time, to compliment new fashion fabrics. Always keep an open mind and try new interfacings, never disregard any interfacing without testing for yourself.

Identifying a Range of Interfacings

1, Woven Fusible interfacings have a lengthwise and crosswise grain they are strong and resilient. These interfacings will react the same as the woven cloth they are fused too, cut on the same grain, when cut on a bias they will stretch. Loosely woven Polyester interfacing will have movement because it is a springy yarn. Fusing a polyester interfacing to a natural fibre fashion fabric can give excellent results as the fabric will crease less.

2, Knitted Fusible interfacings – are softer and more fluid than woven and non-woven interfacings. They are ideal to fuse to fabrics that are loosely woven and unravel easily. They will not change the character of a fabric if fused to the whole garment. They are particularly suitable for knitted fabrics and fabrics with draping qualities.

3, Weft-Insertion Fusible interfacing – are wonderful for soft tailoring. They are a woven, knit, not as firm or as stretchy as the previously described interfacing. They consist of a weft yarn held together by warp knitting. This structure combines softness and stability, so the results are supple with body. The closeness of the fibres produces various weights of interfacing.

How to avoid fusing failure

Prepare interfacing and fabric before fusing. Pre shrink fabric and interfacing. If the two layers react differently during laundering interfacing can bubble or delaminate.

Preparing Interfacings

To shrink fusible interfacing, fold and place in hand hot water and leave to soak for 15 – 20 minutes. Drain water and roll interfacing in a towel to absorb excess moisture. Then lay over shower rail or stair rail to air dry. Do not wring out or spin in washing machine as this may loosen resins. Fusible's will often shrink again so it is advisable to place cut interfacing into position resin side down over the wrong side of garment pieces and hover 25mm (2") above interfacing with full jets of steam for 5 seconds. Do not rest iron on fabric. This steam jet shrinkage is all that is required if your finished garment will be dry-cleaned.

Industrial interfacing are tested to produce data for the manufacturers. They will be tested to establish the best fusing equipment, the correct temperature, pressure, moisture and the time the fusing process requires. Home sewers also have to perform these tests for successful fusing.

No special equipment is required for fusing industrial interfacings a good domestic steam generator or a steam iron is adequate. In my experience a dry iron and a wet cloth does not fuse as well. A general guideline for temperature setting is wool but iron temperatures vary greatly according to make and model, so adjust your iron if required. When fusing sections of a garment I cover the ironing board with a cotton fabric and use a cotton pressing cloth over the garment piece and interfacing to prevent resins sticking to the ironing board and iron when fusing.

Test Fusing

Testing is essential for a number of reasons. Some luxurious fabrics may be effected by heat, temperature or steam. Fusible interfacings will not bond to glazed surfaces, or fabrics that have finishes for example water repellence and stain resistance. Fabrics will respond differently when fused. Always test different types and weights of fusible interfacing because more than one interfacing maybe used in a garment to achieve flexibility and body.

To test suitability follow this simple procedures:-

Cut a fabric sample 15 cm (6") square. Cut a piece of interfacing 15 cm x 7.5 cm (6" x 3"). Place fabric wrong side up and position interfacing on one side of square resin side down. Resin side is slightly shiny or has small raised dots. To prevent one corner of the interfacing from fusing to wrong side of fabric, place a triangle of fabric between layers. This is pulled to test the fusing at a later stage.

Cover test sample, with a dry cotton pressing cloth, apply a firm pressure with steam iron using extra shots of steam and count 10 seconds. DO NOT glide the iron across the garment piece, lift and press in one position. The resin will melt and be fixed to the fabric. If fused correctly often a pressing cloth will peel off the interfacing. Resins will have penetrated open weave interfacing and fused to pressing cloth. When the interfacing has been pressed all over, iron with a gliding action the entire piece on the wrong side, with the pressing cloth in position.

Turn test sample to the right side of fabric, using a silk organza pressing cloth cover the right side of fabric and iron the entire piece with a gliding action and very little pressure. The heat and steam will draw the resins further into the fabric structure. Allow fusing test sample to cool. Pull corner and try to peel off interfacing when cool. A fusible should be hard to pull off, if it comes off easily either the temperature of the iron is too low or you have not applied enough pressure or the steam output is too low. If the resins are visible from the right side of fabric the heat is too high or the interfacing is too heavy or there is too much resin on the interfacing. Fabric surface must be smooth and pucker free.

Tips to prevent fusing failure

1. Keep your test fusing samples; they are a great reference for future sewing projects.
2. Select fusible interfacing by weight of fashion fabric, the amount of structure the style of garment requires and consider the way the garment will be cleaned.
3. Interfacing is an inner layer to support areas of the garment and the weight and drape must be compatible with the fashion fabric, select the same weight or lighter.

4. Fold fabric after test fusing. If a sharp fold forms a crease in the fashion fabric, try a lighter interfacing. Fabric fused with interfacing needs to be flexible supple and recover from creases.
5. The ironing board needs to be in the correct position if too high, you cannot apply enough pressure. Some domestic presses do not have enough pressure to fuse manufacturers interfacings.
6. When fusing garment pieces begin pressing in the centre of each piece and overlap the area you previously pressed.
7. Heavier fabric and fusible interfacing may take a little longer than 10 seconds to fuse.
8. Always remember if fabric has movement choose an interfacing with stretch to avoid separation and bubbling.
9. Choose the most appropriate colour interfacing as this may change fashion fabric colour. A variety of colours are available white, cream, grey beige, black charcoal and skin tone.
10. Consider the density of cloth a soft, light interfacing fused all over can give depth of colour so that construction seams and inside details are not visible improving the finished appearance.
11. Interfacing the top layer of garment fabric for example an upper collar or an outer cuff of a blouse, to prevent the seam allowances shadowing on the right side.
12. If your fabric is soft or loosely woven to prevent the movement during cutting block fuse and cut the pattern section after fusing. If fusing afterwards check the grain has not been distorted by placing pattern over garment piece, realign take away pattern and fuse interfacing into position.
13. To apply fusible interfacing to area's such as pockets and hemlines fuse over a tailors ham, this produces curves that follow body shape.
14. Patch pockets that are interfaced with fusibles keep the shape the fabric is less likely to distort and stretch.
15. Seam allowances on heavy fusible interfacings can be cut off before fusing to reduce bulk, this is not necessary on fine fusibles.
16. Small pieces of woven fusible interfacings can be used to stabilise weak areas for example top of skirt vent opening. To strength and support pocket areas.
17. Woven fusible interfacing cut into strips and fused to the garment can be used for stabilising roll lines of jackets, or to prevent V-neck lines from stretching.
18. Fusible interfacings provide a firm surface to top stitch, it will help eliminate puckers or drags caused by the movement of layers of fabric.