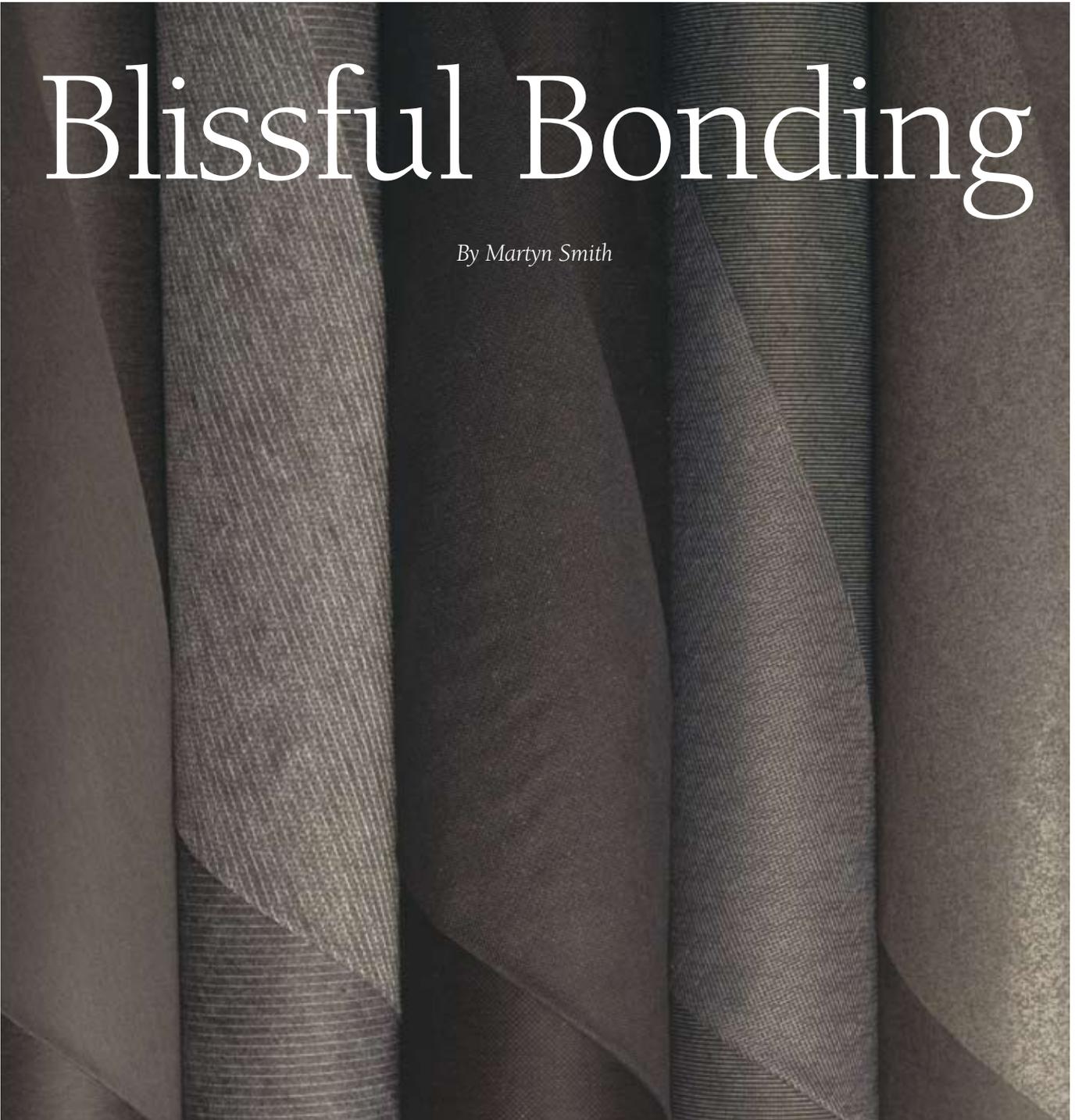


# Blissful Bonding

*By Martyn Smith*



“It’s what’s on the inside of the garment that makes the outside of the garment worth seeing!”

Interfacing is NOT a notion (as it is referred to on the back of the pattern envelope)! It is as important as the fabric itself; the wrong interfacing can kill the look of a finished garment so one should really test a couple of different types of product on the fabric before making the final choice. The fabric’s fibre content, colour (different dyes make a difference) and weight can all influence the finish obtained once the interfacing is applied. Even the most knowledgeable practitioner can be surprised by the results obtained by interfacings on some of the fabrics on the market today.



**1. Elna Press interfacing collar pieces**

A lot of the older methods of garment construction refer to 'sew in' interfacings but there is precious little time to sit down and sew as it is, let alone fiddling around basting interfacing into position so it can be caught into seam allowances. There are certain times where this method is necessary, but generally it is for specialist fabrics such as velvet, novelty fabrics and couture finishing. Everyone seems to have a different method or reason when applying interfacing to their garments but on the whole the pattern companies of today are all 'up to speed' with their suggestions on today's fantastic products.

Over the years 'iron-on' (fusible) interfacings have improved 100% and even more so in the last decade. Old-fashioned product that gives a stiff and board-like finish to a garment must be avoided at all costs. We are attracted to fabric by its texture and handle (feel), we wander around fabric shops touching everything in sight (much to many a store owner's horror), scrunching to see its crease factor and looking at price

tickets to see fibre composition rather than cost. With the right choice of today's interfacing fabrics we are still able to retain the original attractive properties of the cloth that we liked when making our purchase.

There is one common question asked by people about fusible interfacing. "Why does my interfacing come off when I wash my garments?" This is referred to as de-lamination and is more often than due to faulty application than to poor product. There are three main conditions to create a good bond between fabric and interfacing. HEAT, TIME and PRESSURE. The heat has to be set at a temperature suggested by the interfacing manufacturer and the heat must also be DRY! That means NO moisture. No moisture in the fabric, no moisture in the pressing surface, no moisture from the heat source (iron or ironing press). If moisture is present, the bond achieved will only be temporary and the resin (glue) will not set successfully into or around the fabric fibres. When the garment is subjected to water or moisture during the cleaning

process the interfacing will come away from the fabric.

The pressure from a domestic press is great for applying interfacing. It is constant and even and the surface area of the press shoe (top hot plate) is about 10 times larger than a domestic iron. If you are interfacing a collar and stand for a shirt make sure you apply the heat to both pieces (topside and underside) as this will ensure that any degree of minute shrinkage will happen to both pieces. *See Photo 1.* If a press is not available then a hand-iron will have to do. An older style iron with no steam holes (a dry iron) is best and there are even new versions of this iron still available in some brands today. Keep as much pressure as possible on the iron for the suggested time (usually 12 – 16 seconds) and make sure all the areas of the garment piece you are interfacing receive the same amount of time and pressure. You only see the parts you have missed when the garment is finished! The pressure on a table or counter top is better than an ironing board. Using a dry, folded bed sheet will



2. Interfacing Chart

ensure that the pressing surface has no moisture in it (an ironing board has all the moisture from the steam iron when doing the household laundry, which doesn't usually disappear during storage).

If you work with these three conditions, your interfacing application should improve 100%. There is no need to pre-shrink interfacings as they are mostly all stabilised and ready to use. The most common reason for shrinkage during fusing is most likely due to too much heat from the press or iron for the fashion fabric, not the interfacing. This is another reason to test different products before making the final interfacing decision. If you're getting a bubbling effect after

fusing, then the heat is too hot!

Interfacings come in a lot of different weights, colours, constructions and fibre blends. There are many good brands available to the store buyers so we are really at the mercy of our retailers to provide us with the best quality that they can stock. If you're not satisfied, then ask for better. What we pay per metre really governs the quality of the product as bargains never come cheap in the long run. If you buy poor quality interfacing then the garment you have spent time and money on will not look as good or last as long. Don't be put off using knit-based interfacings on your woven fabrics. These knits still have stability

in their warp grain (lengthwise) and usually stretch from selvage to selvage (crosswise). They give great body and still allow the natural drape of the fabric to come through. Being lightweight and usually constructed of polyester or polyamide fibres (very stable under heat), their only downfall is they are not always easy to cut out. Due to their lighter weight it is common to fuse an area of fabric and then cut out the pattern piece as it makes the cutting a little easier than dealing with interfacing alone and doesn't add too much extra bulk in the seam allowances (this is referred to as 'block bonding'). This is also a great method for dealing with fabrics that fray even before they get to the overlocker or sewing machine.

### Interfacings chart See Photo 2.

1. Nylon knit is best used on knit fabrics and it feels like lingerie tricot. There are also polyamide versions of this that are also suitable on knits and very versatile on light to medium-weight wovens (collars, cuffs, front and back neck facings etc.).

2. Non-woven interfacings are the most commonly used/found on the market. They are often much cheaper than all others. These interfacings are either heat or chemically-bonded, come in different weights and are easy to use.

3. Cotton woven products are not so easy to find and are mainly used in collars and cuffs of shirts to give a firm finish. The resin (glue) on the back can differ between brands and is a little fussier on the amount of pressure applied when fusing to fabric. A traditional shirt collar usually requires two layers of this product; the first layer should be cut on the bias grain and the second on the straight of grain as this makes a stronger bond and stops the grains from fighting against each other.

4. Stretch non-woven interfacing is generally used on knit fabrics and can either have a mechanical type stretch across the grain or even have little slashes lengthwise to give the product high stretch.

5. Cotton woven with PVC dot resin is what is commonly called Solidot and is probably one of the oldest interfacings still used today. The product of years ago was not pre-shrunk so it inevitably ended



up causing a lot of grief for sewers after a garment was washed. Today's product is much more stable and is mainly used in waistbands as it doesn't stretch. The glue dot on the back of this product is much smaller than its earlier counterpart and therefore 'strike-back' no longer occurs (strike-back is when the glue comes through to the right side of the fabric).

6. Non-woven with a warp thread is very commonly used throughout the commercial fashion industry. It has great strength, is very easy to apply and competitive in its retail price. This product makes great hem interfacing in tailored jackets and is also easy to cut up the stitched lines to make narrow fusing tape if pre-cut is not available.

7. Weft-inserted knit interfacing is most commonly used in jackets, coats and sometimes on waist facings or bands on women's trousers and skirts. It's not

a true knit but has the look of one and also has a slight weft stretch (selvage to selvage). There are many brands of this product, it's relatively expensive but gives a great structure to any tailored garment without the any 'board-like' stiffness. There are other polyamide products in similar vein that do exactly the same thing but have a slightly denser look to them.

8 and 9. Horse-hair canvas and linen duck are mainly used in 'bespoke' or 'hand-tailored' jackets and coats. They are 'sew in' products and used by the purists who only want natural fibres inside their garments. There are special techniques for applying both these canvases and they require pre-shrinking before use. There is nothing like a jacket with canvas inside it but the skill and time to create one often outweighs the constraints of today's busy life.

### **A few hints for success!**

- Always use white interfacing on red fabric. Grey or black will always give a shadow on the right side of the fabric. When choosing a patterned fabric, always let the lightest colour govern the choice of interfacing colour.
- If you have a large area to bond, start in the middle of the piece and work out toward the edges. This ensures that any movement of the product will be more controllable.
- Always keep a couple of metres of different interfacings on hand at all times so you don't have to rush down to the shops before closing. Buying two metres is far more efficient than buying half a yard or metre and you can save the scraps for the next project?

Doesn't everyone sew into the wee small hours of the night?