

## Hooks & Eyes, Snaps, and Tape Fasteners

Most of the garments in our wardrobes have one or more kinds of fasteners for easy-on, easy-off dressing. Fasteners are used to hold two pieces of a garment together – some pieces lap one over the other, while others meet. Fasteners include snaps, hooks and eyes, self-gripping devices, buttons and buttonholes, and zippers. This publication will focus on hooks and eyes, snaps, and tape fasteners. For information about buttons and buttonholes, see *CT-MMB.189: Buttons and Buttonholes*; and for zippers, *CT-MMB.188: Zippers*.



The appropriate fastener to use is determined by the:

- type of garment,
- garment design,
- position and type of opening,
- amount of stress the fastener will have, and
- the effect you want to create.

### STANDARDS

Well-selected fasteners will be:

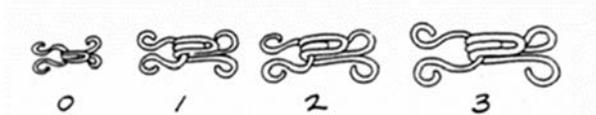
- appropriate to the specific garment and/or garment placket situation; and
- in the color range (black for dark fabrics; nickel, covered, or transparent for light fabrics) of the fabric to which it is applied.

Well-constructed/applied fasteners should be:

- neat in appearance with no loose or unsightly threads;
- appropriate for the garment design and fabric being used;
- applied to an area that has been reinforced with interfacing;
- sewn in place with a double strand of all-purpose dual-duty sewing thread or single strand for heavy-duty thread;
- secured so stitches do not show on the right side of the garment/fabric;
- appropriately placed so the garment edges are held together smoothly and evenly;
- applied with appropriate hand stitch (buttonhole or whip) to secure fastener to the garment; and
- secured tightly to the fabric surface.

### HOOKS AND EYES

Hooks and eyes are the fasteners used for areas of stress such as waistlines and neck openings. They come in a variety of sizes from very small to very large.



Regular hooks and eyes come in four sizes:

0. Zero is the smallest and three the largest.
1. Small hooks and eyes should be used on lightweight fabrics.
2. Large ones are used primarily for skirts and pants. Bulky, heavy fabrics need a larger hook and eye than do lightweight, sheer fabrics.
3. Sport hooks and eyes are designed for use on waistbands and jacket closings that may receive excessive strain.

Only one fastener is used unless the area is wide. Most hooks and eyes are nickel or black enamel coated metal. In some special fabric centers, it is possible to find a package in a variety of colors. These are enamel coated metal. Some coat hooks are silk covered and come in three colors – black, beige, and white. Regular hooks and eyes include the hook and two types of metal eyes: (1) straight and (2) round (loop).

### Placement & Application

Where there is minimum stress, such as a neckline, thread eyes are used in place of metal ones. The type of eye to use will depend on the type of opening and the garment. Some general guidelines follow.

Hooks and eyes are considered finishing touches and one of the last steps in making a garment.

To sew on:

- Anchor the thread at the top where the hook or eye is to be located by taking two tiny stitches (Figure 1).
- Bring the thread up through the ring to be sewn.
- Use an overhand whip or buttonhole stitch with stitches very close together and stitch around the ring, being sure the stitches do not show on the right side (Figure 2).
- Slip needle between the fabric layers to the other ring.

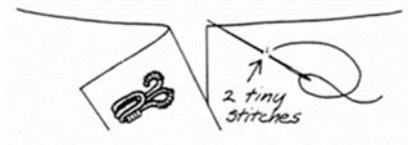


Figure 1

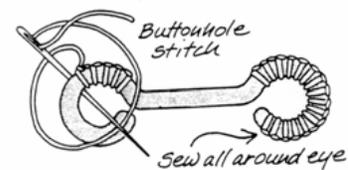


Figure 2

The **hook** portion of the fastener is positioned on the edge of the garment section (Figures 3 and 4).

To apply:

- 1) Position the top edge of the hook at the edge of the overlap/garment section.
- 2) Secure the hook in the two rings using an overhand whip or buttonhole stitch.
- 3) Secure the "end of the bill" of the hook to the edge of the area with three wrapped stitches (inserting the needle into the fabric layers and out on the other side of the hook, wrap the hook with the thread, and insert the needle back into the fabric; repeat).

**Straight eye (metal)** is used when edges overlap (Figure 3).

To apply:

- 1) Mark the placement of the eye so the edges are in correct alignment.
- 2) Secure around both eyes.

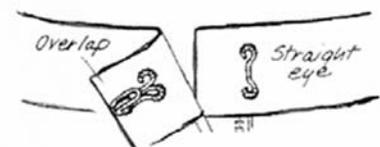


Figure 3

**Round eye (metal)** is used when edges meet (Figure 4).

To apply:

- 1) Mark the placement of the eye so the round portion overlaps the edge of the garment *slightly*. (Figure 4)
- 2) Secure the eye with the overhand whip or buttonhole stitch completely around the holes.
- 3) Secure the eye to the fabric on either side of the U-shape so that it is firmly attached and will not swing or move. (Figure 4)

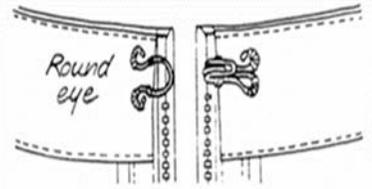


Figure 4

**Skirt hooks and eyes** are used where there is strain or pull, such as a waistline or on a belt (Figure 5).

To apply:

- 1) Place the hook slightly back from the edge of the fabric (no more than 1/8-inch). Mark the placement of the eye so the edges are in correct alignment (a straight line).
- 2) The side of the metal eye should be secured with several stitches for greater security.
- 3) The hook should be secured with several stitches, so it is flat against the band.
- 4) The buttonhole stitch (using a double thread) is more secure than an overhand or whipstitch.

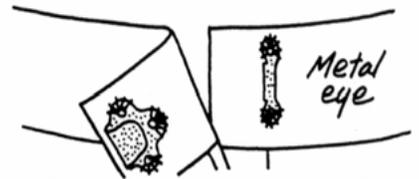


Figure 5

## COUTURE TECHNIQUES

### *Making Thread Eyes*

The **thread eye** is basically a substitute for the metal eye. It is not as strong as the metal eye, but is less conspicuous; therefore, it is recommended to be used in areas that do not have a lot of pull or strain such as a neckline opening above a zipper. There are two different methods of making thread eyes: *blanket/buttonhole stitch* and *thread chain*.

#### *Method A - Blanket/Buttonhole Stitch*

Begin with a double strand of all-purpose thread or a single strand of buttonhole twist or heavy-duty thread. Hide thread between the fabric layers. Take a stitch; approximately 1/4-inch long across the thread eye position (Figure 6). If you are making a straight eye, pull thread tight.

If you are making a round eye pull thread so there is a slight loop or slack. Repeat until you have a "bridge" of approximately four to six threads. Starting at one end of the bridge, do a buttonhole stitch over the thread bridge. Pull threads tight after each stitch. Be sure stitches form a solid cover over the thread bridge. Securely fasten your thread to the fabric at the end. For additional information, refer to CT-MMB.002: *Hand Stitches* for more information.

#### *Method B - Chain Stitch*

Using a single strand of buttonhole twist or double strand of all-purpose thread, anchor the thread. Make one stitch at the location where the loop is to start (Figure 7).



Figure 7

Drop the needle and grasp the thread. With your fingers, reach through the loop. (Figure 8) Pull snugly and repeat until the chain is the desired length.

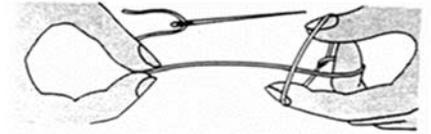


Figure 8

With last chain loop enlarged, insert needle into the garment and take a small stitch to make either a straight or round thread eye. Now pull the thread back through the loop and pull tight (Figure 9). Fasten thread securely and inconspicuously.



Figure 9

### Covering a Hook

When a hook is in a place where the end may show, such as a fitted waistline without a belt, the hook should be covered with matching thread to make it inconspicuous.

Only large hooks are covered, making them easier to handle.

Begin by sewing the hook to the garment in the usual manner. After fastening the end of the bill, start wrapping the thread around the top portion of the hook. (Figure 10) A buttonhole stitch can be used to secure the wrap. Stitch as near to the end as possible, holding onto the stitches with your finger. Make a few buttonhole stitches at the end of the hook with a small needle.



Figure 10

### Hiding a Hook

For a couturier finish, use this method to hide a hook:

- Mark the facing where the hook and eye is to meet.
- Make a small opening by using the blunt end of a needle and forcing the fabric yarns apart, or if the fabric cannot be separated, cut a very tiny slit (Figure 11).
- Insert the hook one loop at a time into the opening. Gradually turn the hook until both have been worked into the opening.
- Position the hook – leaving only the end of the bill exposed (Figure 12).
- Using tiny invisible stitches, sew the loops to the facing, and fasten the end of the bill.
- If you had to clip the fabric, be sure to invisibly hand stitch the clip to prevent it from ripping or raveling.



Figure 11

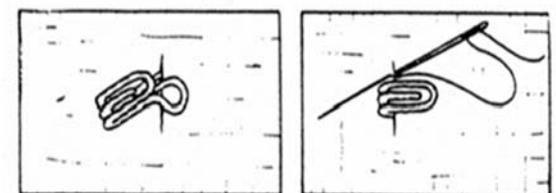


Figure 12

### SNAPS

Snaps are used where there is little strain on the item area. Their primary function is to hold something in place. Snaps may also be used to complete a closing that uses buttons and buttonholes or hooks and eyes. Snaps come in several sizes (5/0 is the smallest and 4 is the largest). They are usually made of black enamel,

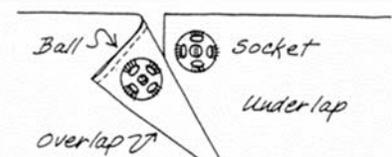


Figure 13

nickel, or clear nylon. There are silk-covered snaps available for use on coats.

Some general guidelines are:

- Use small sizes for lightweight fabrics; use large sizes for heavyweight fabrics.
- Use silk or fabric-covered snaps on coats and jackets for a more expensive and tailored look.
- The ball part of the snap is positioned on the overlap side of the placket, and the socket to the underlap. Pull hand sewing thread through beeswax to help eliminate thread tangles.
- Sew the ball portion on first. Lightly rub the ball part with soap or chalk, and press it to the opposite side of the fabric to mark the exact socket location (Figure 14).

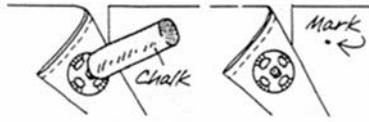


Figure 14

- The buttonhole stitch (using a double thread) is a more secure stitch than the overhand stitch. However, either can be used (Figures 15 and 16).

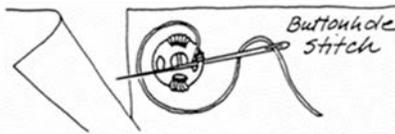


Figure 15

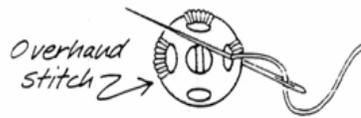


Figure 16

- Fill the opening of the snap with stitches for greater security.
- Stitches should not show on the right side (Figure 17).



Figure 17

### *Applying snaps*

Remember that snaps are used where there is little strain.

- Anchor thread where the snap is to be placed by taking two tiny stitches.
- Bring the thread up through one of the holes in the snap.
- Use the overhand or buttonhole stitch, placing stitches close together and filling up the space.
- Slip needle between the fabric layers to each of the other holes and fill each space.
- When you have filled all the spaces in the snap, securely anchor thread.

### *Hanging Snap*

A hanging snap is used *only* on abutting garment edges. Like other snaps, hooks, and eyes, these are also invisible from the outside of the garment. They are used where there is little strain, such as at the top of a neckline zipper.

To apply:

- Stitch ball portion of the snap on one edge of garment about 1/8-inch from the edge (Figure 18).
- Attach the socket by stitching through only one hole attaching it to the other edge of the garment, letting the snap extend out from the edge of the garment (Figure 18).
- Fasten thread securely.

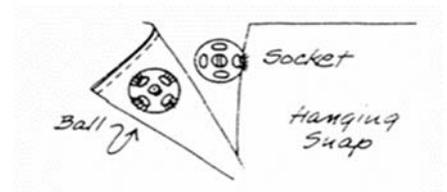


Figure 18

### Covered Snaps

A covered snap is used when there is the possibility that the snap may show, such as on a jacket or coat. They add "extra" elegance to a garment.

To apply:

- Cut a circle of matching colored lightweight fabric, such as lining.
- Make a running stitch around the edge of the circle (Figure 19).
- Pull on the thread to gather slightly.
- Drop in the snap portion, being sure it is turned face down before pulling the gathers tight.
- Push covered ball half into the covered socket half. This will force the ball through the fabric.
- Pull apart and draw stitches up tight.
- Take several stitches back and forth under the snap.
- Cut off the excess fabric.
- Place the snap to the garment and stitch in place (Figure 20).
- To prevent fabric from fraying, apply liquid seam sealant around edges of ball half.



Figure 19



Figure 20

### Gripper-type snaps

Gripper-type snaps have four parts: (1) a socket, (2) a ball, (3) two pieces with prongs or a post, and (4) a cap that secures the socket and ball. They are applied with a special tool and hammer or plier tool. (Figure 21) They are a more secure closing than a regular snap, and are used to replace buttons and buttonholes, especially on children's garments and sportswear.

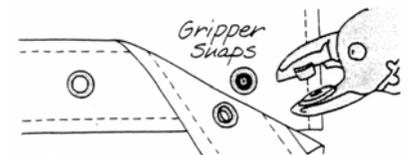


Figure 21

Gripper snaps are available in a variety of sizes and weights. Unlike sew on snaps, gripper snaps are applied to garments with the ball half on the underlap and the socket half on the overlapping portion of the placket. Be sure to interface areas where gripper snaps are applied.

## TAPE FASTENERS

*Snap-tape* – a series of metal or plastic snaps attached to a woven tape. They are machine stitched to the garment and are used where edges overlap. They are most frequently used on infant and toddler clothing, sportswear, and home decorating items.

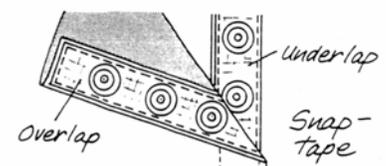


Figure 22

*Hook and eye tape* – comes with the hooks attached to one tape and round eyes on the other. Like snap tape, it is machine stitched to the garment. But because edges abut, it requires a centered application. Hook and eye tape can be used on bridal apparel, lingerie, costumes, or swimwear.

*Hook and loop tape* – this is a tape that consists of soft nylon looped nap on one side and stiff nylon hooked nap on the other. This type of fastener comes in strips or in a variety of sizes of circles or squares. Hook and loop tape is closed by pressure, making it ideal for children and individuals with poor or limited finger and/or hand coordination. (Figure 23) It is used in place of hooks and eyes, snaps, buttons and buttonholes on apparel and home furnishings. When used on outerwear, it provides a windproof closure. These fasteners should always be closed when not in use to prevent damage to nearby fabric.



Figure 23

To apply: (Figure 24)

- *Loop* side is placed on the wrong side of the placket overlap of the garment.
- *Hook* side is placed on the underlap side of the placket away from the skin.
- Position the self-gripping fastener on the garment and secure by hand or machine stitches.

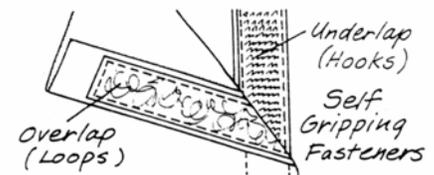


Figure 24

Hook and loop tape may be purchased with an adhesive backing which can be helpful in positioning. However, the adhesive is rarely strong enough to be used without additional securing. Be careful stitching through the adhesive as it may gum your needle and cause skipped stitches when machine sewing.

## SUMMARY

Snaps, hooks and eyes are important fasteners frequently used in conjunction with other fasteners such as buttons and buttonholes and zippers. All fasteners should be selected based on their function and the type of garment placket.

Prepared by Nadine Hackler, Professor Extension Clothing Specialist; revised December 1998.

Permission to use granted by Nadine Hackler, Emeritus Extension Professor Clothing Specialist, Institute of Food & Agriculture Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville Florida.

Adapted for use in Kentucky by Linda Heaton, Ph. D. Extension Professor Textiles & Clothing. July 2002, rev. 4/2004

Revised by Marjorie M. Baker, M.S.

Extension Associate Textiles & Clothing

December 2004

Fasteners.doc

January 2018.

Copyright © 2018 for materials developed by University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension. This publication may be reproduced in portions or its entirety for educational or nonprofit purposes only. Permitted users shall give credit to the author(s) and include this copyright notice.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.