

# Fasteners Made Easy

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Fasteners add function and details to any garment. The most common fasteners are snaps, self gripping devices, and hooks and eyes. The fastener used will depend on the garment fabric, the type of garment, the position and type of opening, the amount of stress the fastener will experience, and the effect you want to create. For example, a delicate fabric may call for covered snaps while rugged active wear needs a heavy-duty snap fastener.

When selecting a fastener for your garment, consider the following:

- Choose a fastener that will fit the garment and placket situation. If it is a high-stress area, like a waistband, hook and eyes may be a better choice than snaps.
- Fasteners must be attached to the garment correctly for proper hang.
- Choose a fastener color to blend with the fabric of the garment. For most fasteners, you want them to blend in rather than stand out.
- To close and fasten most garments, one edge of the opening laps over the other. On women's garments, the right side laps over the left; men's lap left over right. Most fasteners have two parts—one part is sewn to the overlap, the other to the underlap.
- Choose a fastener that will launder well. Some fasteners, like wooden buttons, look great, but will not hold up to weekly washings.

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## HOOKS AND EYES

Hooks and eyes are hidden fasteners. They can be used to hold edges together or overlapped. Hooks and eyes are available in several sizes and colors to match different fabrics. Hooks come with either loops or straight eyes (Figure 1). Most must be sewn in place, but no-sew hooks and eyes are also available. The no-sew versions must be clamped in place. Always follow the instructions in the package. The smaller hooks and eyes must be used on lightweight fabrics. Heavier fabric should be used with larger hooks and eyes.

Hooks and eyes are placed 1/8 inch from the edge of the fabric. The hooks are placed on the overlap and the straight eye should be placed on the underlap. Loop eyes should be used for edges that just meet. Generally, only one set of hooks and eyes will be used; however, if the opening is wide, use two sets (Figure 2).

Each of the pieces should be stitched in placed using a buttonhole stitch or overhand whip stitch. Stitches should be very close together and stitched around the ring of the hook and eye. As you stitch, be careful not to show your work on the right side of the garment. Additional stitches will be needed to secure the top of the hook and loop eye. To secure the top of the hook, add three wrapped stitches to the “bill” of the hook. To secure the loop eye, add some wrap stitches on either side of the U-shape to prevent any swinging or movement (Figure 3).

Whether it is for decoration or as a substitute for a metal eye, a thread eye can be used on a garment. Thread eyes are not as strong as a metal eye, but they can be less conspicuous; they are therefore recommended for use 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 or buttonhole stitch and the thread chain.

The blanket or buttonhole stitch begins with a double strain of all-purpose thread. Hide the thread between the fabric layers. Take a stitch, approximately 1/4 inch long, across the thread eye position. If you are making a straight eye, pull the thread tight. If you are making a round eye, pull the thread to make a slight loop. Repeat this step until you have created a “bridge” of thread. Starting at one end of the “bridge,” do a buttonhole stitch over the thread “bridge.” Pull the thread tight after each stitch (Figure 4).

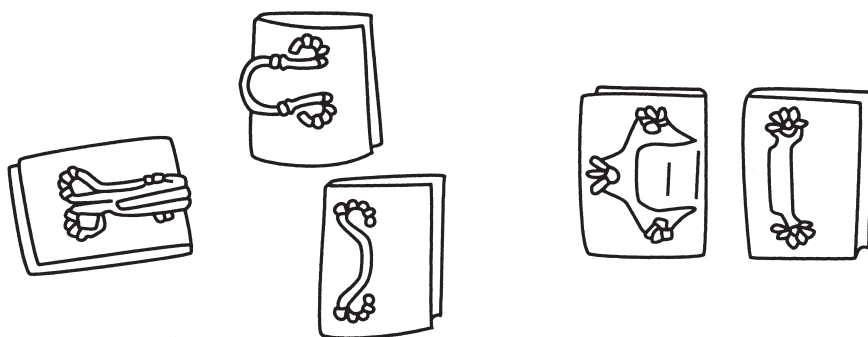
To make a thread chain or a crocheted chain, use a double thread with a knot. Align the garment edges and mark with pins where the chain should begin and end. Bring the thread up through one of the markings. Take a tiny stitch to secure the thread. Leave a loop large enough for your fingers to slip through. Slip your thumb and first finger through the loop. Pull the thread through the loop to make a second loop. Tighten the first loop as you pull. Repeat these steps until the chain is the right length. Run the needle through the last loop to lock the chain. Tack the finished loop securely to the other mark. There should be some slack in the loop (Figure 5).

## SNAPS

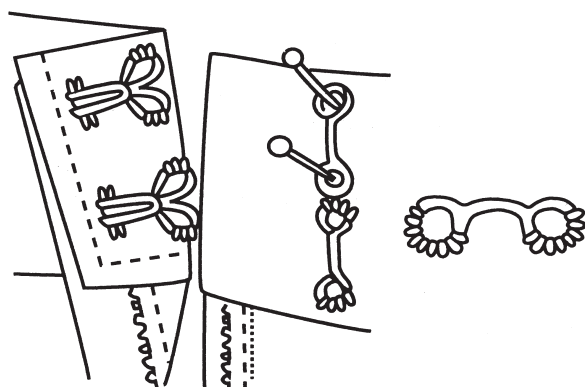
Snap are a fastener that should be used where there is little strain on the item area. Their primary function is to hold something in place, and therefore they can be used in place of buttons and buttonholes or self-gripping devices. Snaps, are generally made of metal, and come in a variety of sizes for lightweight, medium-weight, and heavy weight fabrics. Snaps are generally purchased in grey metal, black metals, or clear nylon. The color of the snap should blend well with the garment fabric.

Snap come in several sew-in and no-sew styles. The sew-in styles are generally in two parts—the ball and the socket (Figure 6). The ball part of the snap is positioned on the overlap side of the placket and the socket on the underlap. The snap pieces are stitched 1/8 inch from the edge of the fabric. Begin by making several tacking stitches through each hold, then run the thread under the snap to the next hole. The stitches should not show on the outside of the garment. To make the opposite side of the placket, rub chalk on the ball and close the placket, the chalk will mark the place for the socket. The socket will be stitched onto the garment in the same way as the ball (Figure 7).

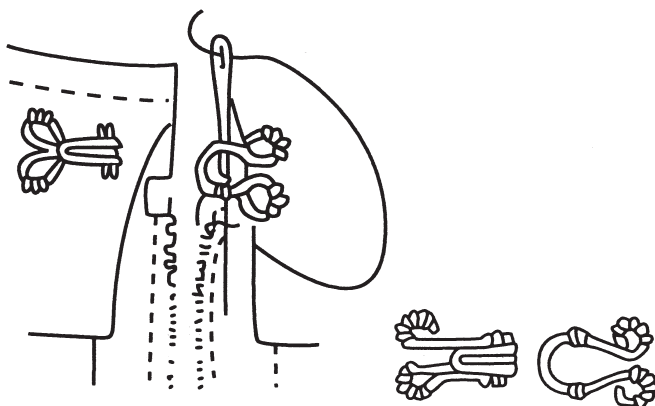
Snap tape can be machine stitched onto a garment. In this application, several snaps are fixed in a long row the length of the tape. The tape can be premeasured and cut to fit the garment. This application is used in baby garments.



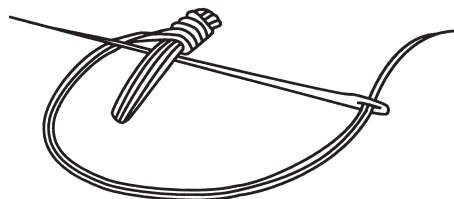
*Figure 1. Examples of different hook and eye fasteners.*



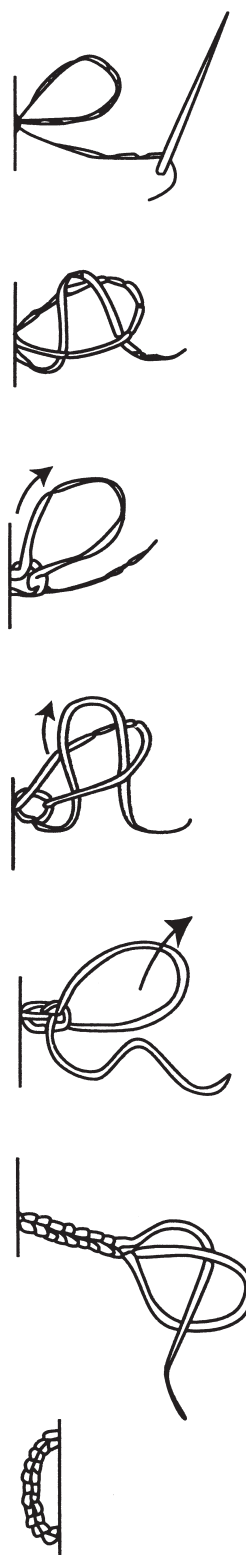
*Figure 2. Use two sets of hooks and eyes for larger openings.*



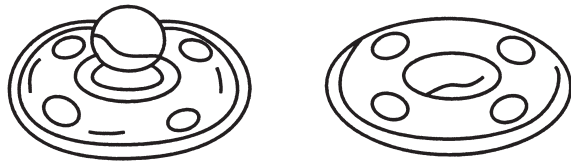
*Figure 3. Secure the loop eye with wrap stitches on either side of the U-shape.*



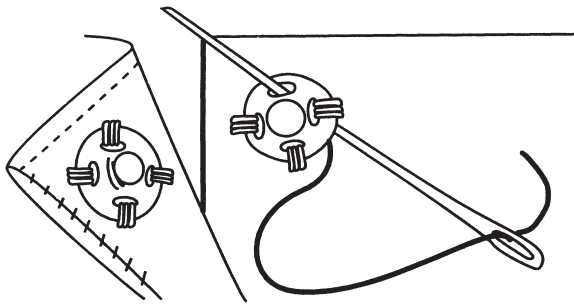
*Figure 4. Use buttonhole stitches over the thread "bridge" when making thread eyes.*



*Figure 5. Steps for making a thread or crocheted chain.*



**Figure 6.** Sew-in snaps have a ball and a socket.



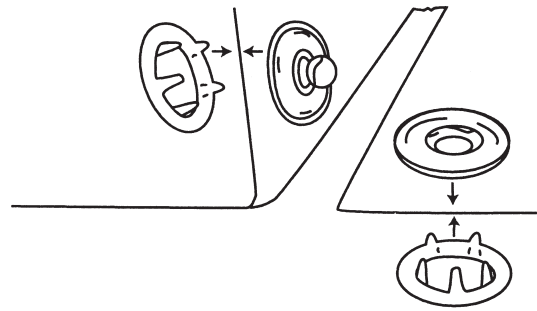
**Figure 7.** Sewing a snap to a garment.

No-sew snaps generally come in four parts. The inner and outer parts pierce the fabric to make one snap piece (Figure 8). These type of snaps damage the fabric where the snap is placed, so you don't want to make any mistakes when applying them. These snaps are also visible on the outside of your garment.

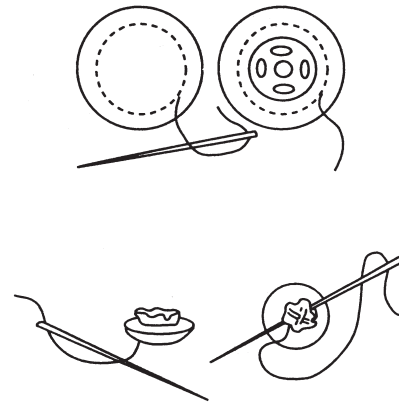
Post snaps use a center post to pierce the fabric and join the pieces together. These type of snaps are stronger than a pronged snap and are used in heavyweight or thick fabrics.

Prong snaps use knife-like points to pierce the fabric and join with the inner pieces. The prongs do minimal damage to the fabric, and work well on lightweight fabrics. The snap's cap can add embellishment to the garment using gem-like stones or coordinating colored ring caps.

Specialty snaps can be used for a variety of garments, accessories, and home interior projects. Magnetic snaps have strong magnets inside to draw the two snap pieces together. This four-part snap works like a prong snap, but is generally hidden in the facing or lining. The snap tape



**Figure 8.** No-sew snaps pierce the garment fabric to hold them in place.



**Figure 9.** Covered snaps are used to prevent the snap from showing.

or gripper tape is a fabric tape of prong-type snaps. The snaps are pre-set into the fabric tape, and the tape is stitched into place on each side of the garment opening. The socket side of the tape is stitched to the underlap and the ball side is stitched to the overlap. You will find this type of snap in infant clothing and some sportswear.

A covered snap is used when there is the possibility that the snap may show, such as on a jacket or coat (Figure 9). To cover a snap:

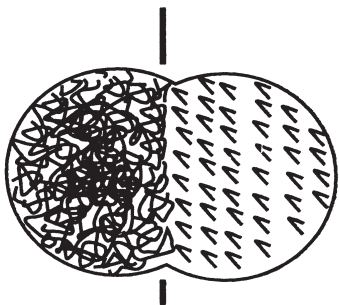
- Cut two circles of matching fabric or lining. The circles should be twice the diameter of the snap.
- Run a gathering stitch along the outside edge of one circle. Place the socket of the snap face down in the center of the circle. Draw up the thread and tack it securely to the underside of the snap. Cover the ball of the snap in the same way.
- Sew the snap in place on the garment. Opening and closing the snap will open the center hole.

## HOOK AND LOOP FASTENERS

This variety of fastener is closed by pressure and opened by pulling it apart. Because they grip with strength but peel apart easily they are ideal for children and individuals with poor or limited finger and/or hand mobility, such as people with arthritis. Outwear garments with hook and loop fasteners are easily removed while wearing gloves. Hook and loop fasteners can be sewn on by hand or by machine. These fasteners are made of tiny, firm polyester hooks on one piece and soft nylon loops on the other (Figure 10). The size of the fastener indicates its holding strength. Hook and loop fasteners are packaged in several shapes and come in fashion colors. These fasteners should always be closed when not in use to prevent damage to nearby fabric.

1. To conceal stitches, sew fasteners to the facing before joining the facing to the garment. Sew the hook piece on the side of the placket to the underlap side of the placket—away from the skin. The loop is stitched to the wrong side of the placket overlap.
2. Secure fasteners in place with pins or a glue stick before stitching.
3. Sew fasteners directly to the facing using 12 to 15 machine stitches per inch, or sew by hand.
4. If you apply fasteners after the garment is complete, hide the stitching on the outside with buttons or trim.

Hook and loop tape can 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 since it may gum your needle and cause skipped stitches when machine sewing.



**Figure 10.** Hook and loop fasteners have tiny, firm polyester hooks on one piece and soft nylon loops on the other.

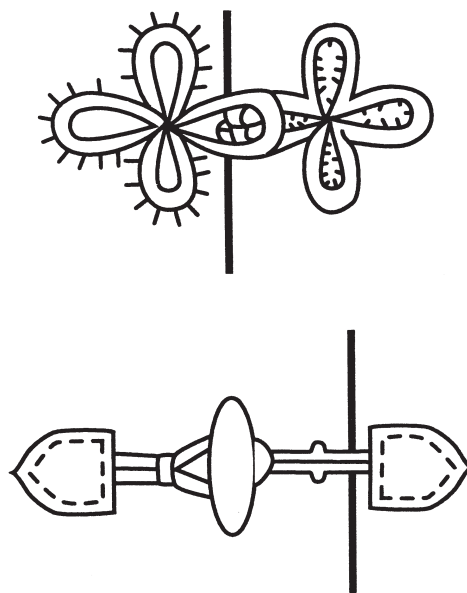
## DECORATIVE FASTENERS

There are many popular decorative fasteners available for garments. Such fasteners can be used instead of traditional fasteners and buttons. Most can be purchased or handmade. These fasteners add decorative function to any garment, from a jacket to a pair of jeans or dress. Although you may want the fastener to “stick out,” it should blend well with the fabric color and not overpower the overall look of the garment.

### For Frogs and Toggles

Frogs or toggles can be used on all kinds of outerwear (Figure 11). You usually see them on oriental-style jackets and on capes, velvet jackets, or quilted vests. Toggles can be used on all kinds of outerwear. Ties make an easy closure for all types of clothing. You can use ribbon or matching fabric. To add these to your garment:

1. Complete the garment before sewing on the fastener.
2. Lap or match the garment edges according to pattern directions.
3. Pin the ball of the frog or toggle in place on the left side of the garment. Pin the loop on the right side. Be sure the garment closes properly when it is fastened.
4. Hand-tack frogs neatly in place. Toggles may be stitched by hand or machine.



**Figure 11.** Examples of a frog (top) and a toggle (bottom).



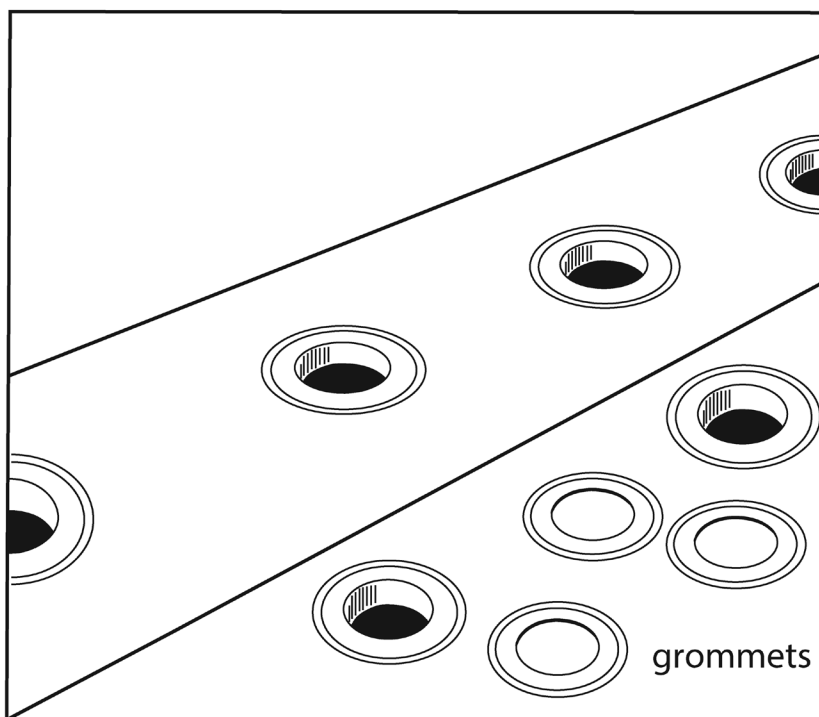
## Grommets/Eyelets

Grommets and eyelets are reinforced holes within a garment for lacing. The larger holes, known as grommets, are made by cutting a slit in the fabric, then attaching metal or plastic rings on both sides of the slit (Figure 12). Some grommets require a setting tool or press to apply.

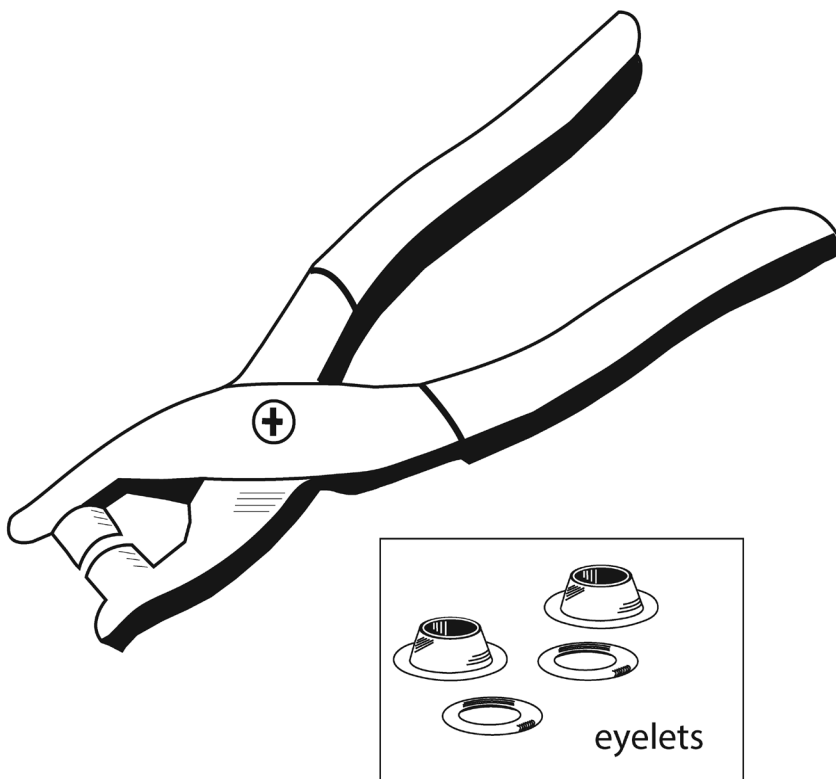
Eyelets can be made using a decorative stitch on some sewing machines. Otherwise a metal or plastic eyelet can be added to a garment using a plier-type tool (Figure 13).

### For Self-fabric Ties:

1. Cut two strips of fabric for each tie. They should be four times the desired width. Add 1 1/4 inches to the desired length.
2. Fold the raw edges of the long sides to the middle of the strip. Turn one short end under 3/8 inch. Then fold the strip in half lengthwise. Stitch the three folded sides, about 1/8 inch from the edge.
3. Lap the garment so the center front lines meet. Mark the positions for each tie. The marks should be 1 inch from the center front line.
4. Pin the raw edge of each tie to the garment with 3/8 inch extending over the mark (Figure 14a).
5. Stitch on the mark. Trim the raw edge to 3/8 inch.
6. Press the tie toward the center front line. Stitch through all layers 1/4 inch from the turned edge (Figure 14b). Backstitch to secure stitches.



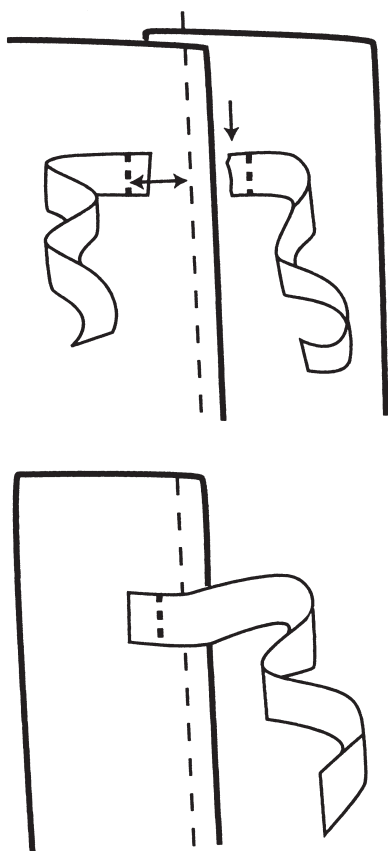
**Figure 12.** Grommets are large holes cut in the fabric that are then filled with metal or plastic rings.



**Figure 13.** A special press tool can be used to add metal or plastic eyelets.

### For Ribbon Ties:

Follow steps 3 through 6 for self-fabric ties above. After stitching, notch the raw edges or cut them diagonally to prevent raveling.



**Figures 14a (top) and 14b (bottom).** To make self-fabric ties, pin the raw edge of each tie to the garment with  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch extending over the mark (top), then stitch through all layers  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the turned edge (bottom).

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