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### Keys to Buymanship: Bonded Fabrics

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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—keys to buymanship—

# BONDED FABRICS

Cooperative Extension Service

South Dakota State University

United State Department of Agriculture



# BONDED FABRICS

FS 476

By Elizabeth K. Easton, extension clothing specialist

Bonding is a method of joining two already constructed fabrics back to back with an adhesive. It may be regarded as a finishing process because it unites two separate fabrics with such permanency that they become one. Originally, bonded fabrics combined a woven face fabric with a knit backing fabric, but today all kinds of combinations are available. The consumer may choose woven-woven combinations as well as woven-knit, knit-knit, and lace-knit bonds.

## HOW THEY ARE MADE

Two basic methods are used to produce bonded fabrics. In the *adhesive* process special solutions are applied to the back of the face fabric. The lining fabric is pressed to the back of it as the two fabrics pass between large rollers. The fabric is then dried with heat. This method is likely to produce a fabric that will withstand washing.

The other process uses *polyurethane foam* as the bonding material. The foam layer is exposed briefly on both sides to a high temperature flame which melts a thin layer and makes it sticky. The foam layer is then pressed between the two fabrics. Unless carefully examined, the foam layer will not be apparent because it is only 15/1000 of an inch in thickness. The foam gives more body to the fabric but reduces its drapability.

The bonding process has opened doors to the creation of a whole new category of fabrics. Open or light weight fabrics can be given body, bulk and drape; knits can be made to combine the desirable features of both knitted and woven fabrics. Bonded fabrics have gone into a great number of garments and their usefulness is expanding to such things as car seat covers, draperies, tents and awnings and industrial fabrics.

## ADVANTAGES

1. Gives stability to light-weight open constructions, making them suitable for otherwise impractical end products.
2. Gives smooth, skinside comfort.
3. Resists wrinkles and retains pleats.
4. Helps control shape and smoothness of fit.
5. Allows traditionally dress weight fabrics to be used for coats and suits.
6. Gives warmth without weight.
7. Sews easily.
8. Eliminates need for separate lining in some garments.
9. Eliminates need for seam finishes because it does not fray.

## DISADVANTAGES

1. Does not lend itself to patterns with complicated fashion detail and intricate seaming.
2. Creates bulky seams
3. Difficult to press.
4. Tends to discolor after repeated laundering or dry cleaning.

## PROBLEMS

With such potential for performance the production of bonded fabrics has been attractive to the fabric mills. But, many firms have been too willing to produce without considering the consequences of a poor product. Fabrics that were not created for joining now have been bonded. Leftovers that could not be sold on their own merit have been taken off the shelf and bonded to another fabric of equal or less quality. The result has been such problems as:

delamination  
shrinkage  
puckering, bubbling, peeling  
off-grain face fabric  
adhesive strike through  
stiffening

The performance of bonded fabrics depends on the characteristics of both fabrics. For example, bonding a washable fabric to an unwashable fabric will not result in a washable bonded fabric. The same is true for colorfastness, shape retention, and other durability factors. None of these dissatisfactions or imperfections need occur if industry cooperates to eliminate them. The responsibility lies largely with the fabric maker.

Backing fabrics, particularly the acetate tricot that will not shrink can be produced, and textile mills can produce face fabrics expressly for bonding. The bonder can join two suitable fabrics efficiently and wisely with adhesives that will be durable.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

A group of firms in the textile industry have come to realize that fashion without performance does not satisfy the consumer. They have voluntarily committed themselves to bonding test standards generally aimed at producing bonded fabrics which will:

1. withstand a reasonable number of washings or drycleanings—(3 to 5)
2. not crack, peel, pucker or bubble
3. retain drape and breathability
4. not absorb odors
5. resist discoloration



6. not stiffen
7. have no strike-through staining from adhesive
8. not shrink beyond accepted minimums (3-5 percent for wovens; 4-5 percent for knits)

A licensing program has been developed with which several major producers comply. Licensed trade names tell the consumer that she can rely on her purchases to meet the above mentioned standards. Some, listed alphabetically, are *Celabond*, *Certifab Plus*, *Cobond*, *Coin*, *Twin-Set*.

Even though many bonded fabrics are washable the consumer must rely on the hangtag information. **Read the label for care instructions!** Before buying consider:

1. Fiber content of face and backing fabrics
2. Care required
3. Shrinkage to be expected
4. If yardage, check crosswise grain for straightness

If you purchase a bonded fabric bearing a licensed trademark, be sure to save the label and your dated sales slip. Follow the care instructions given and if dissatisfaction occurs, send the fabric or the garment with sales slip and label to the manufacturer who made the guarantee. Reliable firms want their product to give good service.

#### SEWING

1. Select a simple pattern with few seams and little detail.
2. Place pattern on right side for cutting so grainline

can be seen. (May be helpful to cut single thickness.)

3. Mark with tailor's tacks or chalk.
4. Use a fine needle.
5. Use medium pressure.
6. Machine stitch 12-14 stitches per inch with thread suited to face fabric.
7. Stay stitching of bonded fabrics is unnecessary except possibly when both fabrics are knit. Waistline and shoulder seams may also need staying with straight woven tape or seam tape to prevent stretching during wear.
8. Reduce bulky edges by:
  - a. using light weight fabrics in a suitable color for facings.
  - b. selecting a pattern with a cut-on front facing.
  - c. understitching facings and collars etc.
  - d. grading enclosed seams.
  - e. slashing and pressing open darts.
9. Top stitch or flat fell seams for smooth, flat appearance.
10. Underlinings not generally, required, but firm, light-weight interfacings at neckline and openings is desirable.
11. A lining may or may not be required, depending on the garment. Jackets and coats will be lined unless seams are flat felled or plain seams are pressed open and bound. Fabrics may be separated and the seam allowance of backing fabric only, may be hand finished as a fell seam on the wrong side.
12. Press with a pressing cloth and at a temperature suited to face fabrics.

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