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Shirtmaking: Developing Skills For Fine Sewing



Synopsis

Here is the definitive resource on the fine art of making shirts. Author David Page Coffin shows how to create elegant, custom-fit garments for a woman or a man that have a great tailored look and fit perfectly. And, even more important, once you learn to make and fit a shirt -- whether you have sewn for weeks or years -- your sewing skills will be dramatically improved. David shares the construction secrets of garments from the world's finest shirtmakers. Discover how to duplicate and even improve on these garments, using simple tools and techniques any sewer can acquire.

Includes 15 pages of full-sized patterns for collars, plackets, cuffs, and pockets. In the companion video, *Shirtmaking Techniques*, Coffin demonstrates the techniques that are the hallmarks of fine shirtmaking and shows how to master rolled hems, flat-felled seams, collars, cuffs, and plackets.

"This book is great -- fresh, focused information on shirtmaking. David Coffin's approach is straightforward and logical...no sooner do you pose a question than he answers it." -- Sandra Betzina, syndicated sewing columnist, author of *Power Sewing* and *More Power Sewing*, and host of HGTV's *Sew Perfect*

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Customer Reviews

I have owned this book and the companion video for over two years now and it is a book I often have open alongside my sewing machine as I sew. David's techniques are very innovative and produce professional results. It is great to get the tricky bits of a shirt - collar and cuffs looking perfect. David also offers advice on getting a perfect fit, taking a pattern from an existing shirt, and

gives patterns for a range of collars, cuffs and plackets. I have saved hundreds of dollars making beautiful custom tailored shirts for my husband and myself using David's techniques.

And I own quite a few. This book takes you step by step through shirtmaking, for men or women. But it's not just making shirts, it's about fine sewing. There are all sorts of details in the book, seam finishes, high-end details, discussions about shirting fabrics. It's the sort of book that makes you want to be a quality seamstress. Every page gives you the sense of how much the authors know and loves this craft. Excellent how-to illustrations, and wonderful photos of finished garments. I recommend it for any level sewer.

As someone who is mostly interested in sewing clothes for myself (a man) I feel gypped by most sewing books that are 75% concerned with specific construction techniques for women's clothing. Finally a book where the variations for women are in effect relegated to sidebars. The author of this book, David Page Coffin, is the Senior Editor of Threads magazine, probably the best of the sewing magazines (not perfect, but at least not packed with quilting and baby clothes). Coffin is a former painter who taught himself how to sew and has made his own shirts for a couple of decades. The fact that he comes from a self-taught amateur background but is a sewing journalist who has interviewed custom shirtmakers and watched them at work gives this book a good balance. Coffin is something of a shirt fetishist, and he includes information on the historical development of the "classic dress shirt" as well as photographs of various vintage ready-to-wear and designer shirts and shirt collars (yes, he goes into how you can make shirts with detachable collars). At points he sounds like some sort of shirt archaeologist, for example, telling us that a particular vintage custom shirt he has in his "collection" used a pieced sleeve to save on fabric costs. Coffin describes his own methods in detail, but makes the point that there is more than one way to do things. The book is beautifully designed and illustrated (drawings by the author), and full-sized patterns for various pieces like collars, cuffs, and plackets are included. I can't emphasize how excited I was to find a book like this, and I have the video on order.

As a woman who has a terrible time finding clothes to fit, I've tried sewing some of my own, with less than satisfactory results. Even after learning to regrade commercial patterns to fit, the finished garments never looked right--they all screamed "Hi there! I'm like, totally homemade!" As basic a garment as a shirt was an exercise in frustration; after struggling to get collars and cuffs to look "right" I was about to give up entirely. In *_Shirtmaking_*, David Page Coffin addressed every single

problem I have faced, and now I can actually turn out tailored shirts that both fit me *and* look like they were made by a professional. All the questions left unanswered by the instruction sheets included with commercial patterns were addressed in this book, and along the way Coffin also answers a lot of general questions I had about sewing that are ignored in most books aimed at home sewers. Shirtmaking is clearly written, and with a bit of patience and the ability to follow directions an intermediate-level sewer can turn out a successful garment. While the specific focus of the book is sewing men's shirts, the exact same sewing techniques can be used on women's shirts and blouses, and Coffin provides plenty of illustrations and examples. Coffin covers his subject so thoroughly and precisely that he comes across as a bit fussy, but this sort of fussiness is a virtue and a godsend. There is an embarrassing number of sewing books gathering dust on my shelves, but I still refer to Shirtmaking frequently. It is *by far* the single most useful sewing book I've ever bought, and is well worth the money.

I don't usually like sewing books-they're generally repetitive and contain little new information-but this is an exception. The author gives an incredible wealth of detail on the history and technique of shirtmaking. His patternmaking, stitching, cutting, layout and construction techniques are well worth the price, and should prove beneficial to anyone who sews. It is not for beginners-it assumes the reader has mastered basic sewing skills-but any competent sewer should have no problems. I especially like that it focused primarily on men's shirts-so very, very few books even bother to mention sewing for men.

I only wish he would write a book about pants making or tailoring! This is my ultimate reference for shirt sewing! I have had it for over 6 years and I still pull it out every time I make a new shirt. I still use his placket pattern and instructions. It is beautifully illustrated and includes not only better-than-store-bought details like flat felled seams and quality interfacings, but some really interesting design ideas. Only 1 thing! source info in the back is out of date. If you are near Houston, try "High Fashion Fabric" for the best cottons.

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