



Life Skills in a Minute: Sewing on a Button

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Sewing on a button is one of those things that comes in handy when you are trying to put on a shirt and all the sudden the button comes loose putting you behind in leaving or having to completely change clothes. Even though sewing a button back on is quite the simple task, many people refuse to try it just because it seems too daunting. They throw away or donate the clothes, buttons missing and all.

You almost always have extra buttons hidden when you buy a garment. They might be sewn on to a tag inside the shirt or even in plastic alongside the price tag. Once you lose a button and you figure out another to replace it, here is some information and steps to help you keep all the clothes you love in shape to wear again:



Two Main Types of Buttons

There are flat buttons and shank buttons used on most garments. The choice of button depends on the use of the garment and the purpose of the button on the garment. Heavier fabric requires the use of heavier and larger buttons; lighter fabric needs lighter and smaller buttons. Buttons may blend with the fabric of a garment or they can call attention to an area. It all depends on your preference and purpose for the buttons.

Flat buttons are just that, flat. Some flat buttons have two holes, and some have four. Four-hole buttons are meant for use when they would get more wear and tear. Meanwhile, two-hole buttons are for applications with a lighter use. As a result, to sew on a four-hole button, it takes much more thread which would make its attachment much more strenuous. These can be sewn by hand or by machine (if you happen to have a sewing machine available to you for sewing but that is a whole other skill).

Shank buttons have what is referred to as a shank. A shank is a spacing of either thread or button material that allows spacing for the fabric that will be buttoned together. Hence, the purpose of a button shank is to raise the button above and through the hole so that it sits above the buttonhole. Shank buttons are decorative on top and on the underneath, there is a shank or post with a hole in it for thread. These can only be sewn by hand onto garments.



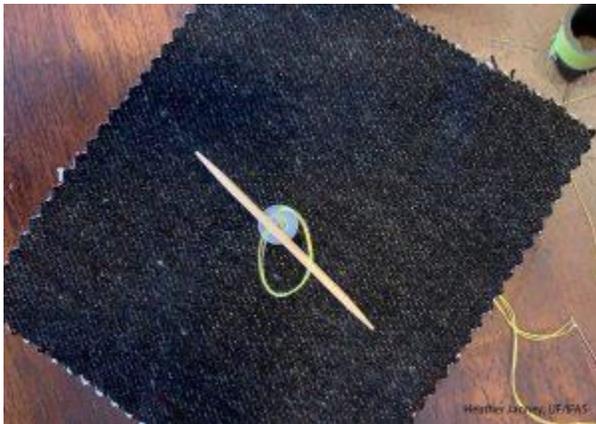


Preparation

Make sure you have everything you need. This includes thread, a needle, a button, and scissors. Optional things you might need are a needle threader and a thimble. First, you'll need to prepare your needle. Cut approximately 16 inches of thread and thread it double through your needle and knot the end. Maybe, you could use a single thread, but it is normally not strong enough for button sewing unless you have a thick thread. If you are having trouble getting the thread through the eye of the needle, use a needle threader to help. These small silver devices normally come with a packet of needles and can be really useful.



How to Hand Sew a Button – Flat Two-Hole



If you are replacing a button, you should see clearly where to sew it. On the wrong side of the fabric (the inside of your garment), put your needle down into the fabric and come up to the right side of the fabric. Thread the needle through one side of the button. Make sure the button is centered on the mark and put the needle back down through the opposite hole and into the fabric. To create a shank, place a toothpick or a needle under the thread where you are going from hole to hole of the button. Stitch through the holes a few more times. Finally, to finish it off, bring the needle up to the top but not through the buttonhole. Wrap the thread around the stitches a few times tightly. Pass the needle to the inside of the garment and knot it off.

How to Hand Sew a Button – Flat Four-Hole

Similarly, this process requires threading the needle and starting on the backside of the fabric. In contrast, you will thread the needle through one hole of the button and diagonally through another hole of the button and back to the inside of the fabric. Repeat this going through the opposite set of holes creating an "X" on top of the button. Stitch through the holes a few more times in a cross pattern. As a result, most four-hole buttons are sewn with the cross pattern, but you could also sew it going across or down, so you have 2 bars. This is just a personal preference. If you have a strong thread and enough stitches, it will hold just as well. Don't forget the use of a toothpick or needle to create the thread shank for your button. Knot the thread off in the same manner as the two-hole button.





How to Sew a Button by Hand – With a Shank



Finally, sewing a button with a shank starts out the same way but instead of passing the needle through a buttonhole, you will be passing it through the shank (or hole in the post) underneath. Thread your needle with double thread and take note of or mark the position of the button. Bring the thread from the underside of the fabric to the top. Place the thread through the button shank and put the needle back down into the fabric. Bring the needle to the top and stitch through the shank a few more times. Bring the needle down to the inside of the fabric and knot it off a couple of times.

Above all, sewing on a button is relatively easy when you use patience. It can be difficult to get the needle through the fabric or to even place the button back where it came from. With practice at this skill, you'll be able to keep all your clothes in working order. And, to top it off, you'll be able to quickly fix a missing button in the future. Now it's just time to invest in a sewing kit.