

Blocking a Cocktail/Small Hat

The lining, buckram and fashion fabric will be blocked together. If your fashion fabric and/or your lining are sheer you will need to add an interlining. Since this hat will be small it is not necessary to pull and stretch the fabric as you do with other types of blocking. Wash your hands frequently as the buckram becomes sticky when moist. Always remember to stick the pushpins below what will be the bottom edge of your hat.

Cover your headblock with plastic wrap (Saran®). Drape the lining (10-12" square) over the headblock, grain line running from center front to center back. Secure the lining with pushpins. Apply steam and smooth over the headblock, twist the corners and gently pull. Once the lining is smooth, reposition pushpins.

Next cover the lining on the headblock with a piece of buckram (10-12" square) and align grain line with center front and back. Secure the buckram with blocking cord or elastic and pushpins, apply steam to the buckram. Shape and smooth the buckram by pulling gently on the corners. Continue steaming and smoothing until there are no wrinkles above the cord or elastic and the buckram conforms to the headblock. Secure with pushpins.

Once the buckram is smooth, drape the fashion fabric (10-12" square) over the buckram, aligning grain with center front and back. Secure the fabric with cord or elastic and pushpins. Apply steam and begin smoothing the fabric by pulling and twisting the corners. (Remember this is a small hat so don't pull too hard and stretch the fabric out of shape.) Secure the fabric with pushpins and apply steam. The sizing on the buckram will act as an adhesive as it becomes moist. Set the headblock aside and let it dry completely.

You are the designer of the final hat. While the hat is still on the headblock, use chalk, a piece of string, narrow ribbon, or twill tape (marking tape) to determine the shape of your hat. Once you have decided on a shape, secure your marking tape with pins or draw a line at the edge of your marking tape. Mark the center front and back and baste around your marking tape or line through all three layers. Cut the shape using a craft knife or heavy duty scissors below the basting line.

Attach millinery wire to the edge with a wire or buttonhole stitch overlapping the ends a couple of inches. Cover the wired edge with French elastic or bias tape. Cut a bias strip two inches wide of the fashion fabric. It should be as long as the circumference of the hat plus 3-5 inches for overlap. Interline this bias stripe with a flexible interfacing and baste along the center. Fold the strip in half and line up the folded edge with the wired edge of the hat; stitch ½" away from the edge, all around the hat. Flip the strip over the wire toward the bottom and inside of the hat. Secure the overlap of the strip and stitch the edge to the wire binding on the inside. Trim any excess material before stitching. Finish the interior with a swirled sweatband or lace trim.

Trim your hat with a bow, veil, fabric rosette, silk flowers, pearls, rhinestones, feathers...
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