

Ruched Panels

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Earlier this year I was looking for a good method to make ruched panels that also had some pleat structure. After talking with Terri Booser, an instructor at the CHF Academy and owner of Interior Stitch, she shared her method for these panels. Following is my interpretation of her instructions.

Because of the nature of these panels, it's best to use two widths of fabric since they pleat up to about 12 inches a width. This type of panel yields only four pleats per WOM, and the spacing with the seam works out perfectly with two widths and falls at the junction of a pleat and space. It's also best to plan for the panels to at least break on the floor because the ruching makes it difficult to obtain a fixed and exact length. (Note: The example in this article is one width.)

Allow an additional 18 inches of fabric length per panel for the ruching of the pleats. The 18 extra

inches will shirr to approximately 6 inches, so a break is already built into the panel length. Each fabric can shirr up at a different rate, so be sure to test your fabric. If you want your ruching to be tight, it's best to *not* put interlining in the pleats themselves. Rather, you'll need to fuse the interlining to the bottom of the header allowance. If you prefer to stitch, we recommend that you attach the interlining to the lining so that you don't have a stitching line running across the width of the panel.

To get started, cut your face fabric the finished length (FL, bottom of ring to floor) + 8 inches (hem) + 1 inch (top fold allowance) + 18 inches (ruching). This will yield a panel approximately FL + 6 inches. If you don't want that amount of break on the floor, you can either adjust the FL or the amount you add for the ruching. The formula is approximately 3x fullness for the amount in the pleat.



Step 1 Seam your face fabric widths and put a double 4-inch hem in the bottom.



Step 2 Cut your lining FL + 4 inches (hem) + 1 inch (top allowance) + 18 inches (ruching). Seam the widths and hem the bottom edge. Cut your interlining to the finished length, seam the widths and serge across the bottom.



Step 3 Lay the lining on your table right side down and lay the interlining on top of the lining right side up. Offset the hems by approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch. The interlining should be approximately 18 to 19 inches shorter than the lining.



Step 4 Attach the interlining to the lining using your preferred method. Either stitch across the entire width or adhere with fusible tape. I used fusible tape in my example.



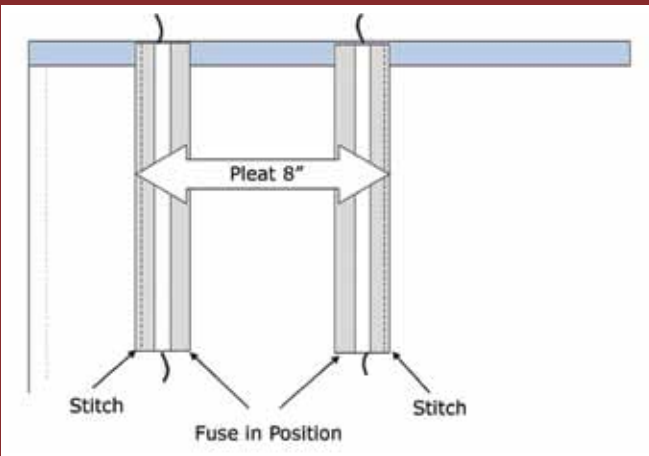
Step 5 Lay your face fabric facedown on the table with the lining face up on top of the panel and the interlining sandwiched in between. Offset the face fabric and lining hems 1 to 2 inches. Turn down the top edge of the face fabric 1 inch. Turn down the top edge of the lining enough so that it's ½ inch shorter than the folded edge of the face fabric. Cut off any extra lining beyond ½ inch. (This allows for no bulk in the pleats.)



Step 6 Fold in, press and stitch your side hems.



Step 7 Cut 18 inches of one-cord shirring tape; you'll need two per pleat. I used two-cord shirring tape here, but one-cord is preferred since it will give less bulk. Map out your pleats and spaces using a 4-inch space and an 8-inch pleat, with your pleats on the outer edges. If you've pieced your widths, you may need to adjust the pleat width to keep the seam at the junction of a pleat and space. If necessary, the amount in the pleat can vary slightly, but keep the spaces all equal.



Step 8 Line up your shirring tape on each side of the pleats, so that the outside edge of the cord's tape is within the pleat section. Adhere the inside edge of the tape to the lining using fusible or pressure-sensitive adhesive. Next, stitch the outside edge of the tape. I've found it helpful to fuse the shirring tapes in place before trying to sew. You can also glue baste or pin — just be sure to not fuse on the cord itself or where you're going to sew so your needle doesn't get sticky.



Step 9 Once you've sewn in all the shirring tapes, topstitch across the entire width of the panel, catching the top of the cord in the stitching.



Step 10 To create the pleats, fold the pleat section lining sides together, bringing the two outside edges of the shirring tape together "inside the pleat." Sew the entire 18 inches of each pleat right beside the original stitch lines.



Step 11 Pull the shirring tapes to create the ruching. Tie a knot at the bottom of each pleat to secure.



Step 12 Tack the pleats at the bottom as you would with a traditional pinch-pleated panel to control some of the "poufiness." 