

## What's the difference between lining, underlining and interlining?

When you get into dressmaking more complex garments, a raft of new baffling terms pops up. This can make it suddenly seem a lot more complex. For example, linings, under-linings and interlinings are all layers inside a garment that serve quite different purposes. These terms however can be confusing to anyone new to dressmaking, so here's a breakdown of where and how to use them.

### **Lining-**

This term is probably the most commonly used and understood one when you're new to dressmaking, since we're used to wearing lined clothes. Lining is a silky or lightweight layer on the inside of the garment that hides all the internal structure of the garment, making the inside look as good as the outside. Other than adding an aesthetically pleasing layer to a garment, linings prolong the life of garments, reducing the wear and tear of the more expensive outer layer. In traditional tailoring, linings are designed to be replaced when worn out or stained. Replacing a lining is the most common task requested by alterations experts.

Another function of a lining is that it can help garments slide more easily over the body. On the inside of jackets for example, a silky lining layer makes putting the jacket on and off over clothes effortless. A lining is also often used when the outer layer of the garment might be uncomfortable next to the skin, like for example a rough tweed cloth.

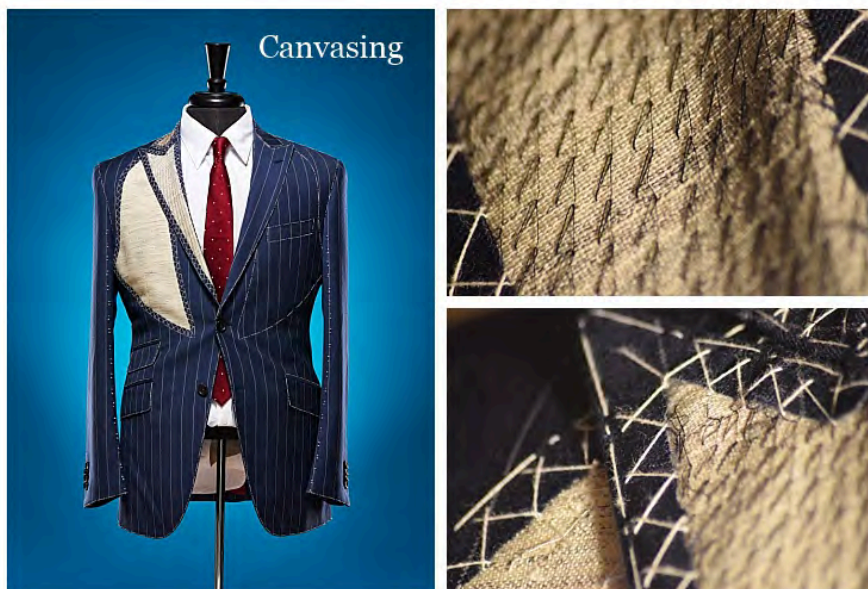
Like fabric, there's an amazing selection of linings on the market. It's essential to choose one that balances with your fabric. My personal preference for silky linings is one made from "cupro" a breathable anti-static lining. This is available in numerous weights and fabric weaves. For example you can find a twill lining cloth made from cupro. The twill refers to the weave or cloth type. My go to place to start looking for silky linings is [the lining company](#).



When making lightweight summer dresses, tops or skirts however, you may opt for a lining that is closer in weight and fibre than a traditional silky lining. If working with a cotton lawn or voile for example, choosing muslin, or an inexpensive cotton fabric that is the same weight or lighter than the outer layer, provides a more comfortable layer when worn in the heat.

## Interlinings-

These are the extra layers inside clothes that you are probably unaware of until you make your own clothes. An interlining is an additional layer that's added to the wrong side of your main fabric, either by stitching or by fusing onto the outer layer. The main purpose of interlining is to provide structure and support to the garment you're making. Most interlining layers are in fact interfacings, which can make it seem tricky to understand the differences. Essentially all interfacings fall under the category of an interlining. Using interlinings can dramatically extend the life of a garment- for example a well-structured coat will survive years of being put on and off provided the correct interlinings were used. In tailoring, the chest area of a jacket may have up to 3 or 4 layers of interlining between the outer fabric and the lining. These might be interfacing applied all over the wrong side of the outer fabric to stabilise, a shaped piece of canvas to give it a smooth rounded appearance and a layer of domette or ice wool to fill in the hollow between the shoulder and the chest area, again created a smooth look when worn.



Interlinings come in all weights; fibres and qualities. They are often used in specific areas of the garment like collars, cuffs and the edges of garments. I might use a hair canvas on the chest area or collar of a jacket, but this would be too heavy for a shirt.

Choose your interlinings for the purpose they were designed for. [The English couture company](#) has a great selection, with useful descriptions as their purpose. Try ordering swatches to test with your forthcoming projects.

Interlinings fall into 2 categories- fusible or iron on, and non-fusible or sew in.

## **Underlining-**

This is another internal layer like interlining, but with a couple of different functions. Generally an under-lining layer is applied across an entire piece of the garment rather than to just a specific area like inter-lining. Using an under-lining can also change the appearance of the outer fabric, giving it more drape, or making it appear firmer.

Underlining can be used to line a garment that is sheer or has holes in it, for example lace fabric is often 'flat mounted' onto lining and then constructed as a single layer. This both strengthens the lace making it easier to construct, whilst simultaneously lining it. This can be used to great effect with a different coloured underlining, and is often used to create a "nude effect" with skin toned underlining fabrics



In bridal and couture sewing underlining is used to support the outer fabrics without changing their drape. I have often used organdie as a mount for silk dupion in bridalwear and silk organza or muslin can be used for similar effect. In stage costuming, inferior fabrics like satin linings can be made to appear more like superior satins when mounted onto calico.

Velvet is another high end fabric that will often be mounted to give the fabric more body, and ensure that it maintains that shape for longer. Adding an interlining can make tricky fabrics like silk charmeuse easier to sew as they are less slippery.

If using an underlining in this way, pre-shrinking the underlining is essential to ensure the inner layer doesn't shrink at a different rate to the outer layer. The advantage of using an underlining like organza inside a silk gown, is that all the hand sewn areas like hems etc, can be applied to the underlining only, giving a beautiful invisible finish. In couture seam allowances are often hand stitched to the underlining, keeping them from rolling about inside the garment when worn. Charles Worth credited as the inventor of "Couture" used underling to great effect in his gowns, which still retain their original shape over a hundred years later.



Another reason to underline is to add a layer for warmth, for example a flannel or wool layer inside a jacket will make it extra warm, much like batting inside a quilting project. It's possible to add quilted interlinings when you want to ensure the garment is really warm.