

Making cloth covered buttons

Cloth covered buttons were very common on coats, waistcoats, and breeches. They are the most inexpensive and easy to construct using the left over cloth from your shell to cover button blanks. Historically button blanks were either wood or bone; modern reconstructions may also use plastic as the button blank will be completely covered. DO NOT use modern two part button covers; they do not look like 18th century covered buttons, break and pull apart too easily.

Sources for button blanks – Craft stores (AC Moore and Michael’s carry flat wooden which are approximately 1/8” thick and come in a variety of diameters (1 inch, 1 1/2”, etc.) For smaller buttons, you can also use flat simple buttons from JoAnne’s Fabrics, Walmart, etc. as blanks.



Cut circles a little less than twice the size of the button blank. The fabric does not have to completely meet in the back; once sewn on extra fabric interferes with the button lying flat. The cloth circles do not have to be perfect or neat, the back is not seen.



Starting with a couple back stitches, do a gather stitch around the fabric. Place your blank inside & pull tight.



Sew across the back several times securing the fabric around the button. Leave a thread “tail” of several inches to attach the button to the garment.



To attach the button - Keep the stitches in the garment centralized. This will allow the buttonhole to sit flat once it is buttoned.



Make 5 to 7 passes through the garment fabric and button.



Once the button is securely attached, wrap the excess thread around the stitches about 5-7 times & do a back stitch over the wraps. This will form a bit of a shank.