

CONSERVATION NETTING

Conservation netting is done to temporarily stabilize areas of weakness, to secure damage with a minimum of intervention, and to prolong the display and/or study life of a textile.

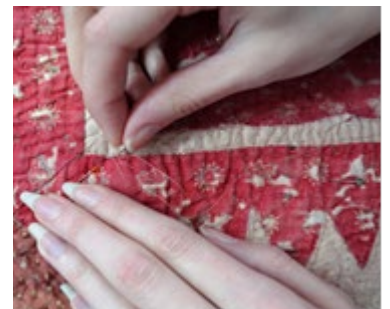
- Nylon net has several advantages over other sheer overlay fabrics such as silk crepe-line, polyester sheers, and even cotton and silk net. It is often less visible than these alternatives. Net edges do not fray when cut. It is also commercially available in numerous colors and costs \$1.99 per yard, compared to \$50–\$60 per yard.
- Before you begin, purchase a selection of net and thread colors. A straight or curved needle, pins, and good scissors are necessary. Make sure the workspace is clean, large enough for the project, and well lit. To avoid unnecessary handling of the textile, leave it flat on the table and stitch from the top.

Netting Quilts and Other Flat Textiles

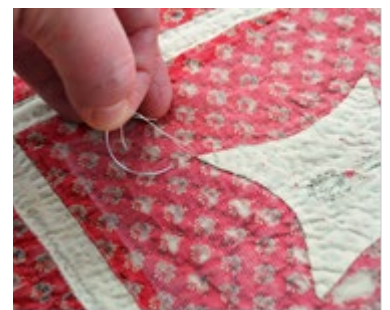
- Cut a piece of net larger than the area. If you cut the net to shape before sewing, it may turn out to be too small by the time you finish. Pin the net so that it lies flat and is not too tight. Thread the needle with a single thread and knot the thread leaving a 2-inch tail to tie off to later. Take the first stitch, preferably in a corner. Pull the thread gently to avoid pulling the knot through.
- Stitch in the “ditch” placing the stitches $\frac{1}{4}$ inch apart. Take small back stitches—they only need to travel from one cell of the net to the next. Sew around the area you are netting until you arrive at the starting place. Finish by knotting to the tails, placing the knot flush to the fabric.
- Trim the tails to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, thread them to the needle and bury them between the quilt layers. If you are adding on a new thread, tie the two ends together and then bury them once finished. If you are not netting in a circle, take an extra stitch at the beginning and end and then bury the tails.
- The net may need internal stitching to help it do its job. Follow another seam, or a pattern in the design, for best results. You can also stitch in any losses or holes to avoid the textile entirely.
- Trim the net leaving $\frac{1}{8}$ inch maximum. You only need to leave one row of net cells beyond where you sewed. Check the stitches to see if you missed the net or cut too close. Fix any mistakes. If the net is not sewn down everywhere, you either cut the net too close or you took a stitch without traveling to the next cell of the net. Go over the areas that you missed. If the net is not lying flat, it may have shifted while you were stitching. Back the stitches out and re-pin. If the stitches are very visible, try making them smaller or choose another thread color.



Net is larger than you need



Stitching in the ditch



Burying the thread tails



Trim the net carefully

Netting Historic Clothing

Historic clothing has additional applications for conservation netting. Hems, collars, waist bands, ribbons, and clothing fasteners are often damaged and require a flexible, invisible stabilization treatment. Shattered linings can be netted to protect the deteriorated fabric.

- For cuffs, hems and waist bands, wrap the net around and pin it so the net is tight. The net can be longer on the inside than on the visible side.
- Stitch along a seam or a design line that is straight and stable. If there is no seam, place your stitches equidistant from the edge (this may require a ruler).
- Make the first stitch from the inside out, leaving a knot with a 2-inch tail on the inside. Stitch by passing the needle from front to back taking back stitches. Make sure the longer floats are on the back or the inside of the textile.
- If you are stitching around a cuff or collar, finish by tying the thread off to the tail you left and then bury the tails. If you are using more than one piece of net, overlap them by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.
- Historic clothing requires a great deal of handling in order to access the interior surfaces. Always be sure to work with clean hands and handle the item with care to avoid additional damage. Cover the work table with a sheet or tissue so that you can move the table cover around as opposed to moving the item.
- When netting over hooks and eyes or other fasteners, complete the netting and then cut a small hole for each fastener. You may also need to add a new thread loop if the original one has broken.
- Ribbons, ruffles and other trims frequently require netting for additional stabilization. It is sometimes beneficial to separate ribbons from clothing for safer stabilization. A large piece of net can be taped to a dark board and the ribbon pinned to the net. After stitching, the excess net can be trimmed and the ribbon reattached to the garment.



Net wrapped around a cuff



Stitches inside of a hem



Net protecting a closure



Netted silk ribbon

Temporary Netting

Temporary netting is used to support a weak area during a short-term procedure such as wet-and dry-cleaning, exhibition, or moving. It offers extra strength and also serves as a visual reminder of fragility.

Because it is meant to be removed, temporary netting can be done with a very visible color of net and thread. Stitches can be large and spaced apart. The area of weakness itself is often avoided; the technique relies on the strength of surrounding areas and of the net to provide support.



Sleeve with temporary net