

Smock Around and Find Out



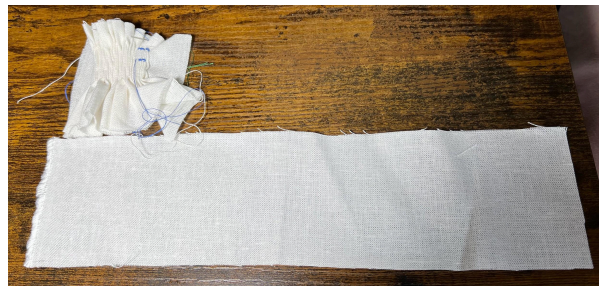
Many paintings from the 14th and 15th centuries show men and women wearing garments with smocking around the neckline and/or cuffs. There is a garment with a smoked cuff from Kloster Alpirsbach, Germany that has “...simple smocking with the stitching visible on the inside only. This is also the case on pleated fragments of late 15th century shirts and smocks found at Lengberg Castle in Austria” (Malcolm-Davies 55-56). Smocks, or garments with smocking, were usually made in natural shades, but some parts of England were known for their vibrant smocked fabrics (Holland 4). “Smocks were passed down... and worn and reworn until they were threadbare and could be patched no more... [F]ew of these early working-class garments have survived. The earliest surviving decorated smock is from Mayfield in Sussex, dated 1779” (Holland 4).

Materials

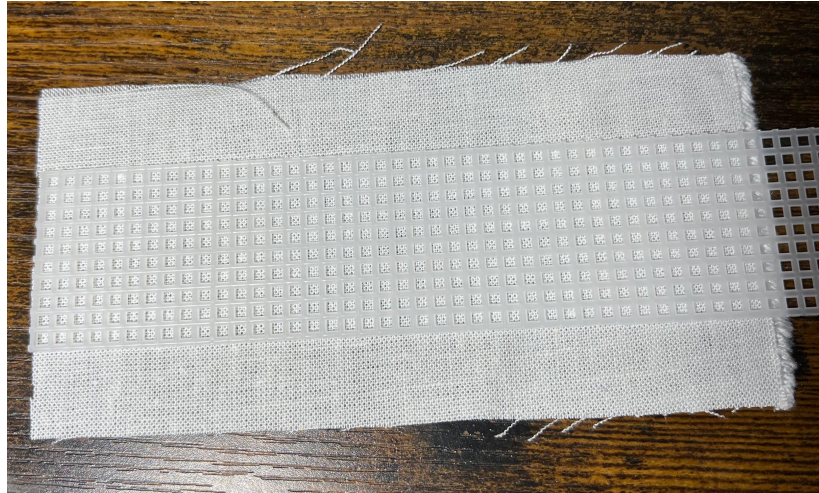
- Fabric (I recommend linen, wool, or silk)
- Scissors/snippers
- Thread
- Multiple needles
- Plastic canvas (for ease)
- Heat pen (It erases with heat and no need to wash the piece)

Procedure for Honeycomb Smocking

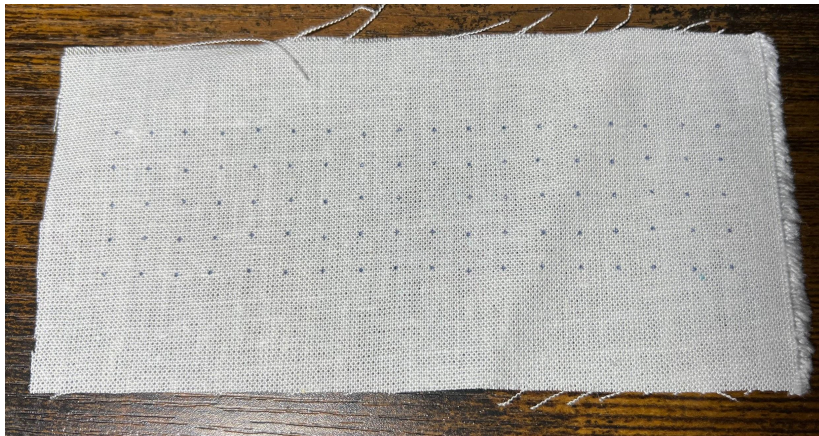
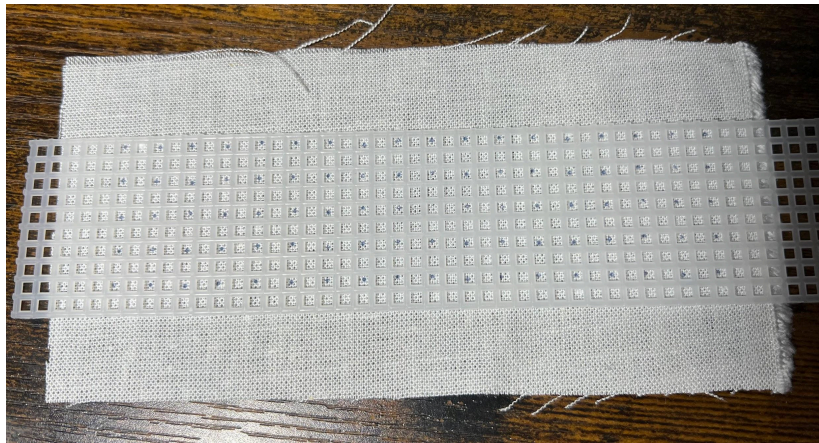
1. Decide how wide **vertically** you want the finished smocked piece to be. Keep in mind that you will lose approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the **horizontal** width of the garment in the smocking process!



2. Identify how tight you want the smocking to be and how many rows of the plastic canvas you will be using. The closer the dots, the tighter the smocking.



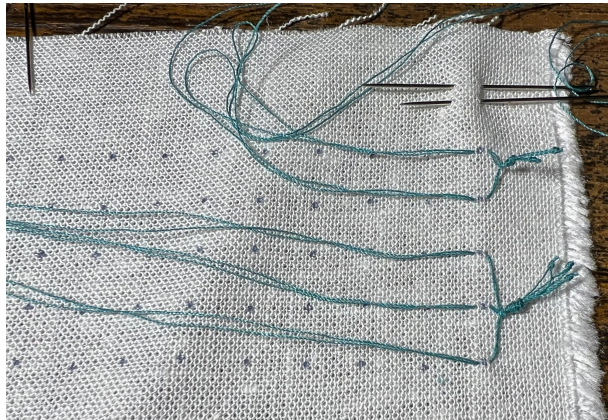
3. Take your heat pen and make the smocking dots.



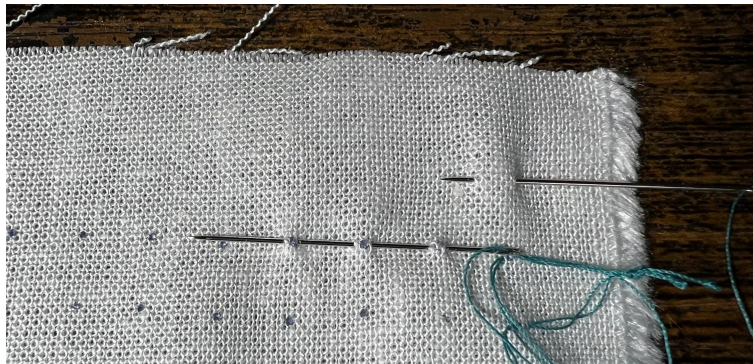
4. Thread one needle for each row of dots with a bright color and tie a knot in the end. This thread will be pulled out at the end and thrown away, so the color does not matter.



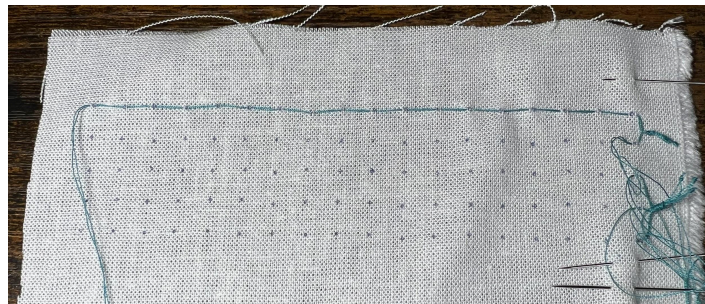
5. Tie two thread ends together (or three if you have an odd number of rows). Stick your needle under the first dot and out the other side. Stick the second needle under the dot below in the same manner. Pull the threads so the knot is in the center of the dots.

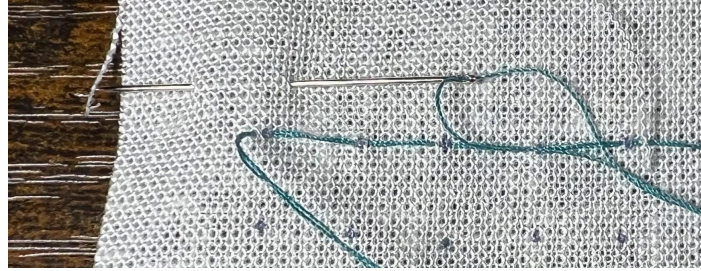


6. Working one row at a time, go under each dot. You can go under multiple dots at a time to save time if they are close enough together or if your needle is long enough.

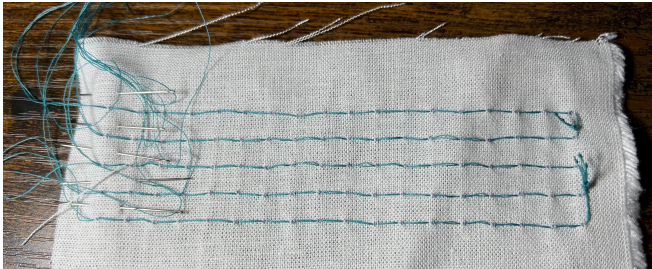


7. When you get to the end of each row, insert your needle into the fabric to store it. Then move onto the next row. Repeat Step #6 until all rows have been completed.

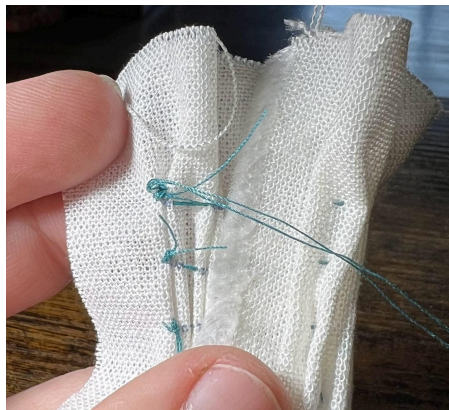




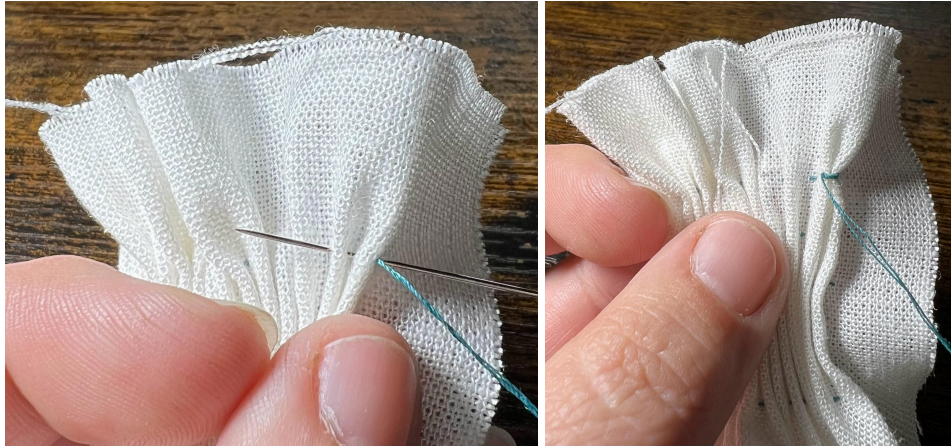
8. Without stabbing yourself, put all the needles in one hand and push the fabric so it pleats. Tie off each row so the pleats stay together.



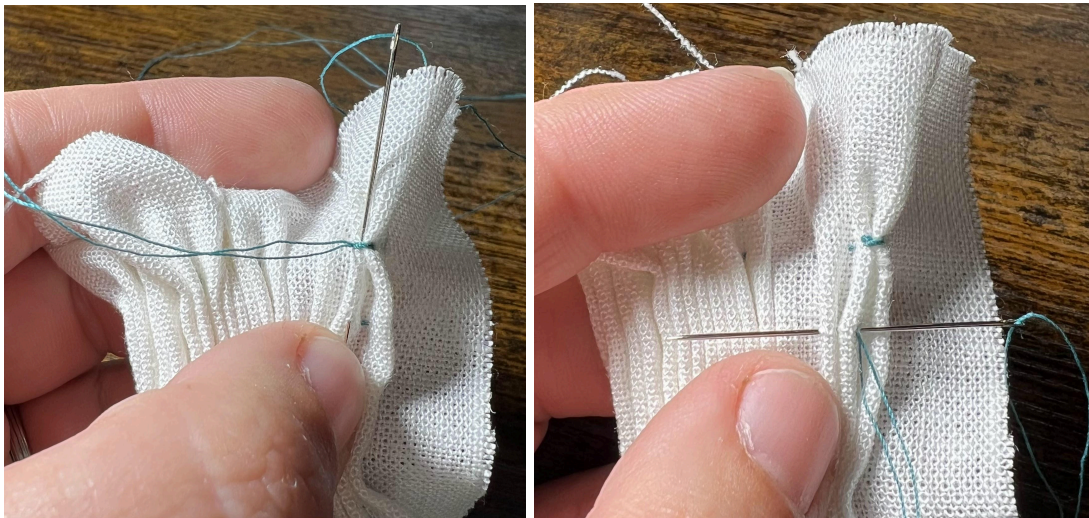
9. Choose the thread color you would like to use for the smocking. You can opt to have a contrasting color that stands out or match the fabric color for a more subtle design. Thread one needle.
10. Start on the backside of the piece. Tie a knot next to the first dot on the left side. Insert needle into the fabric so it comes out the "right" side of the first pleat and pull the needle through.



11. Insert your needle horizontally into the first and second pleats on the “right” side where your basting line is. Go around 2 - 3 times through the same two holes.



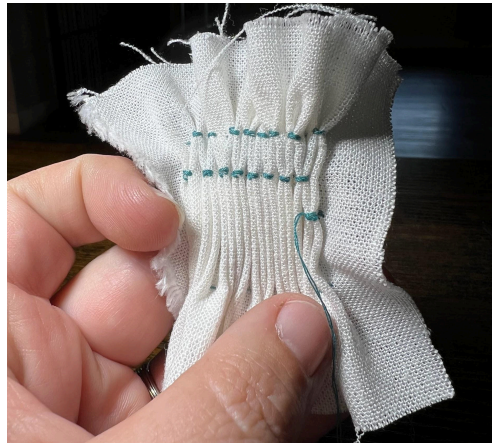
12. Then insert the needle down the backside of the second pleat to where the next dot/basting line is. Poke your needle up through the “right” side of the fabric. Insert your needle horizontally into the second and third pleats where your basting line is. Go around 2 - 3 times.



13. Then insert the needle up the backside of the third pleat to where the next dot/basting line is. Poke your needle up through the “right” side of the fabric. Insert your needle horizontally into the third and fourth pleats where your basting line is. Go around 2 - 3 times.

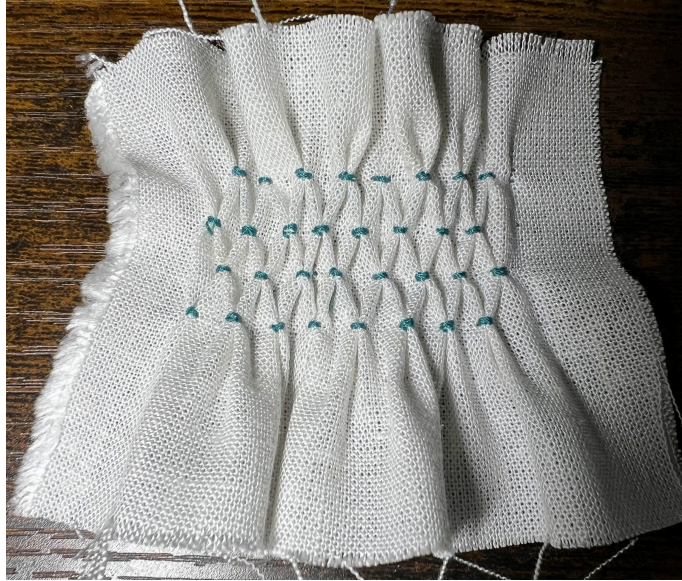


14. Repeat this zig zag pattern until you get to the end of the row. You will be zig zagging between the first and second rows. Tie off on the backside.
15. Move down to the third and fourth rows, repeating steps #10 - 14. Repeat as needed to finish all of the dots.



16. Now you are done! You can line the backside and then cut out the running stitches or cut them off first. If you want the piece to be a specific width, I recommend lining it first to the set width and then cutting out the running stitches. The smocking will stretch when you remove the running stitches holding it together.





Videos

- "Discover Historical Honeycomb Smocking" - Thimble and Plume:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4UQdClzaYA>
- "Learn Smocking! Pleatwork Embroidery for the Historical Costumer Part 1" - Thimble and Plume:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96zTFoGFmzE>

Bibliography

Holland, Allyne S. *Treasury of smocking designs*. Courier Corporation, 2012.

Malcolm-Davies, Jane, and Ninya Mikhaila. "The Typical Tudor: Reconstructing Everyday 16th Century Dress," Lightwater, United Kingdom: Fat Goose Press, 2022.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03612112.2023.2206744>.