

## Driving Aprons



The driving apron is an important part of the carriage driving ensemble. Historically, it was used to keep the driver's and passenger's clothing clean while in the carriage going over dusty and muddy roads. Therefore, it is worn over the clothing, including coats. The apron is actually an accessory of the vehicle. It doesn't have to be the same color as the upholstery, but it should coordinate with it. Most of our vehicles have black somewhere with tan seats, so this dark charcoal apron with tan trim (shown) goes well.



I have some sewing ability, so I make our driving aprons instead of purchasing them. Here are some tips for making your own apron.

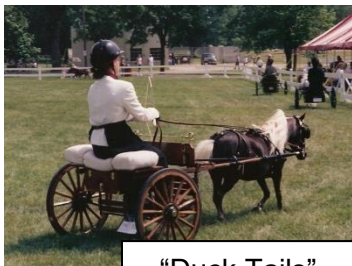
My favorite fabric is a wool blend. We have some pure wool aprons and they are much heavier. They drape nicely, but in the heat of summer, I don't want any more fabric on me than necessary. The wool blend drapes nicely, too, and releases dirt easily.



My husband wasn't watching that my apron was over the wheel while he drove my horse. This lovely spot resulted. ☹️



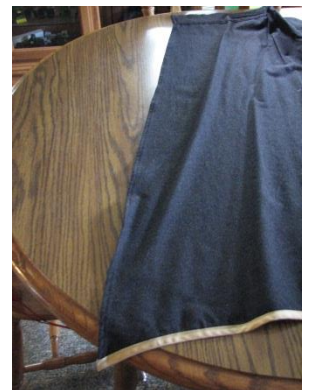
After I let it dry, I brushed that spot away! 😊



"Duck Tails"

The shape and length of the apron is optional. I like my apron to be long enough to be at the crease of my foot when standing. Some people like aprons at the crease of their foot when sitting. Some like shorter aprons, but below the knee when sitting is the minimum length. I also like my apron to wrap all the way around me, so I don't have the coat "duck tails" sticking out the back.

Therefore, my aprons are cut in a rectangle and overlap. "Bell" shaped aprons are good for those who don't use a wrapped apron, as it has more fabric to cover the sides.



The line of a "bell" shaped apron.

I like to put waistbands on my aprons. They lay across the body nicely without bunching. The waistband is double width and folded in half lengthwise with the good side out. First, I sew the “prickly” Velcro only on one half of the waistband, and then I fold it and use fusible interfacing. I sew the “fuzzy” Velcro on over the whole waistband, as that stitching will be on the inside of the apron. Then I top stitch the folded waistband on the rest of the fabric, putting the body of the fabric in between the folded pieces of waistband fabric. I also top stitch the folded material at the top to create a nice line. See here:



The “good” side of the apron with the “fuzzy” Velcro.



The underside of the same piece of Velcro.



The “prickly” Velcro on the “underside”. This piece is sewn only in the inside because I want the waistband to be “clean” on the outside where it will be seen.



In order for the apron to lie nicely across the stomach, some makers put darts in the front. This apron (left) was purchased by a friend of mine.

The trim on an apron is optional as well, but it does help tie the apron to the vehicle and gives it a “finished” look.



Some seamstresses trim aprons all the way around. The corners are nicely rounded.



I used bias tape only on the bottom of the apron. Since it wraps around, I didn’t want the line of the bias tape on my backside. 😊



A monogram is another nice finishing touch, but it shouldn’t overpower the turnout. It should be on the right (the driver sits in the right seat) or the middle of the apron.



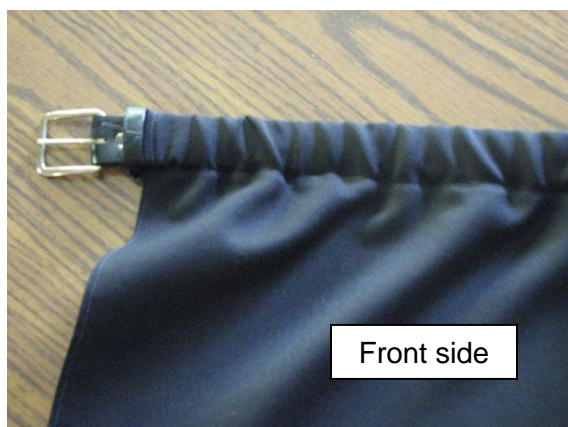


Aprons don't have to be as "complicated" as the ones above. Here is how our family (my mom, sister, and I) made our first aprons. We showed in these aprons for years. We used stretch gabardine because it was machine washable, didn't wrinkle easily, and it was what we had in the house! ☺



First, we measured the length of the fabric. After we cut the fabric, we sewed the raw edge under and seamed it up all the way around so it didn't unravel. Then, we took a dress belt (be sure to match the metal of the buckle to the metal on the rest of your turnout, i.e. gold with brass), and made a casing in the fabric just a bit wider than the belt. Finally, we slipped the belt through the casing, and buckled it in the back. The belt can come out to wash the fabric.

There are a few advantages of this style of apron. It is easy to make. It can fit multiple people. Although you tuck the sides of the apron under, you don't have to sit on the apron itself. Once it is buckled on, it probably won't come off on its own (like Velcro could). The disadvantages of this style are that it doesn't lie flat on your front, and you are going to have duck tails. However, it is a great "starter" apron that works in a pinch.



I put bias tape trim around this buckled apron.