

Interfacing & Stabilisers



Disclaimer

The first thing I should probably mention before I start, (a disclaimer of sorts); there are a lot of different types and brands of interfacings and stabilisers. So this is a fairly large topic to handle and I am by no means an expert in this subject. But I do have some experience and knowledge that you might find interesting. I'll mainly be focusing on the interfacings and stabilisers used in bag making, although most have multiple uses. I'm going to try my best to cover some of the more important things I've learned here.



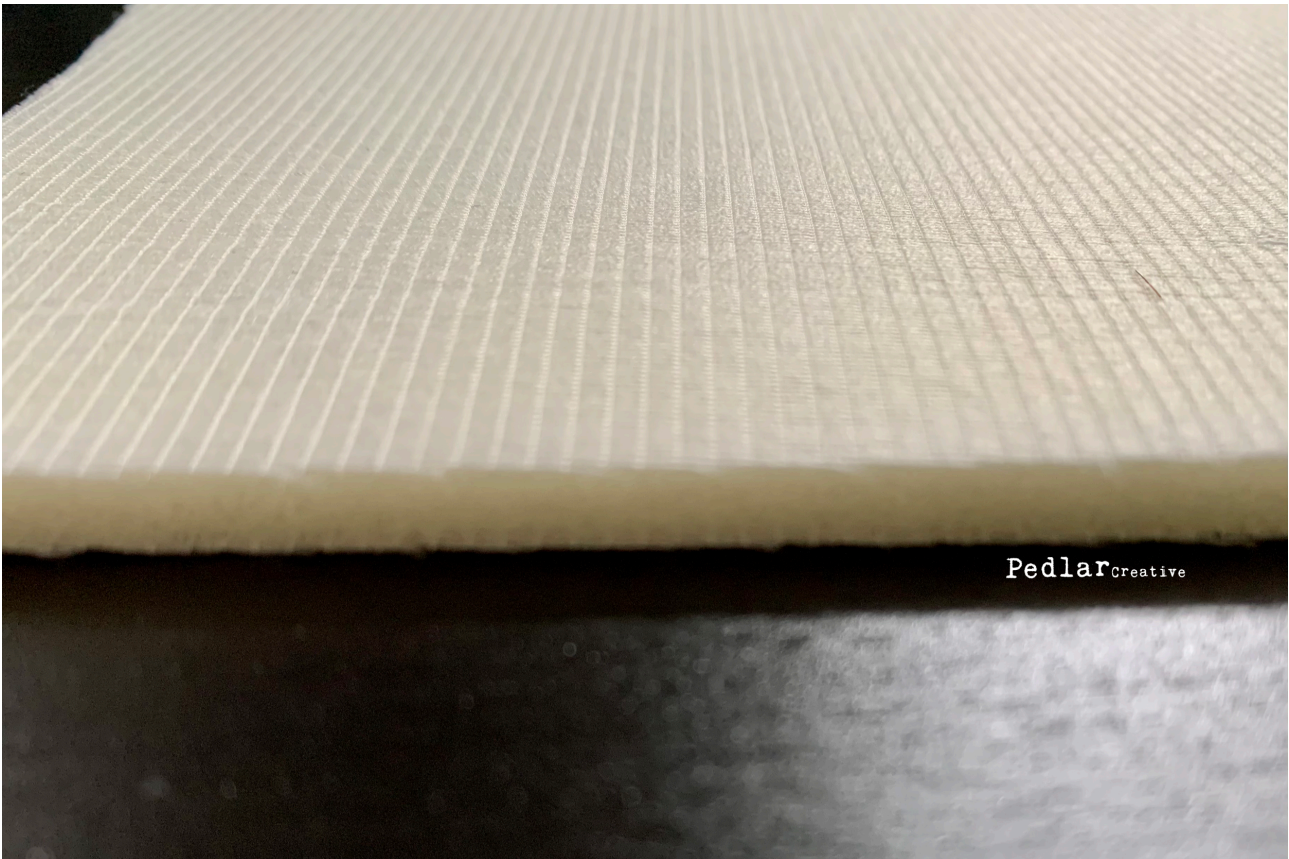
Interfacings v Stabilisers

Interfacings and Stabilisers are two different types of product that are commonly used in the sewing world. It might often seem like a they are very similar products but in fact they differ in the way they are manufactured and function. It's also important to remember that these terms mainly apply to the disciplines of embroidery, quilting and clothes making.



Stabilisers

A Stabiliser is a product designed to be used as temporary backing for your project. It holds your fabric in place and makes them as 'stable' as possible during the stitching process. Once the stitching is done, and the fabric no longer requires extra support, it can be cut or torn away. Because stabilisers are designed to give fabric more shape and form they are often used in bag making. But unlike other disciplines, stabiliser's are used on a permanent basis. After all you want your bag to keep it's shape and form after it's made.



Stabilisers have many different weights to them but you will only find one type of stabiliser - non-woven. This means that they are manufactured to be rigid in all directions. Stabiliser's also come in a range of sew-in and fusible.



Interfacing

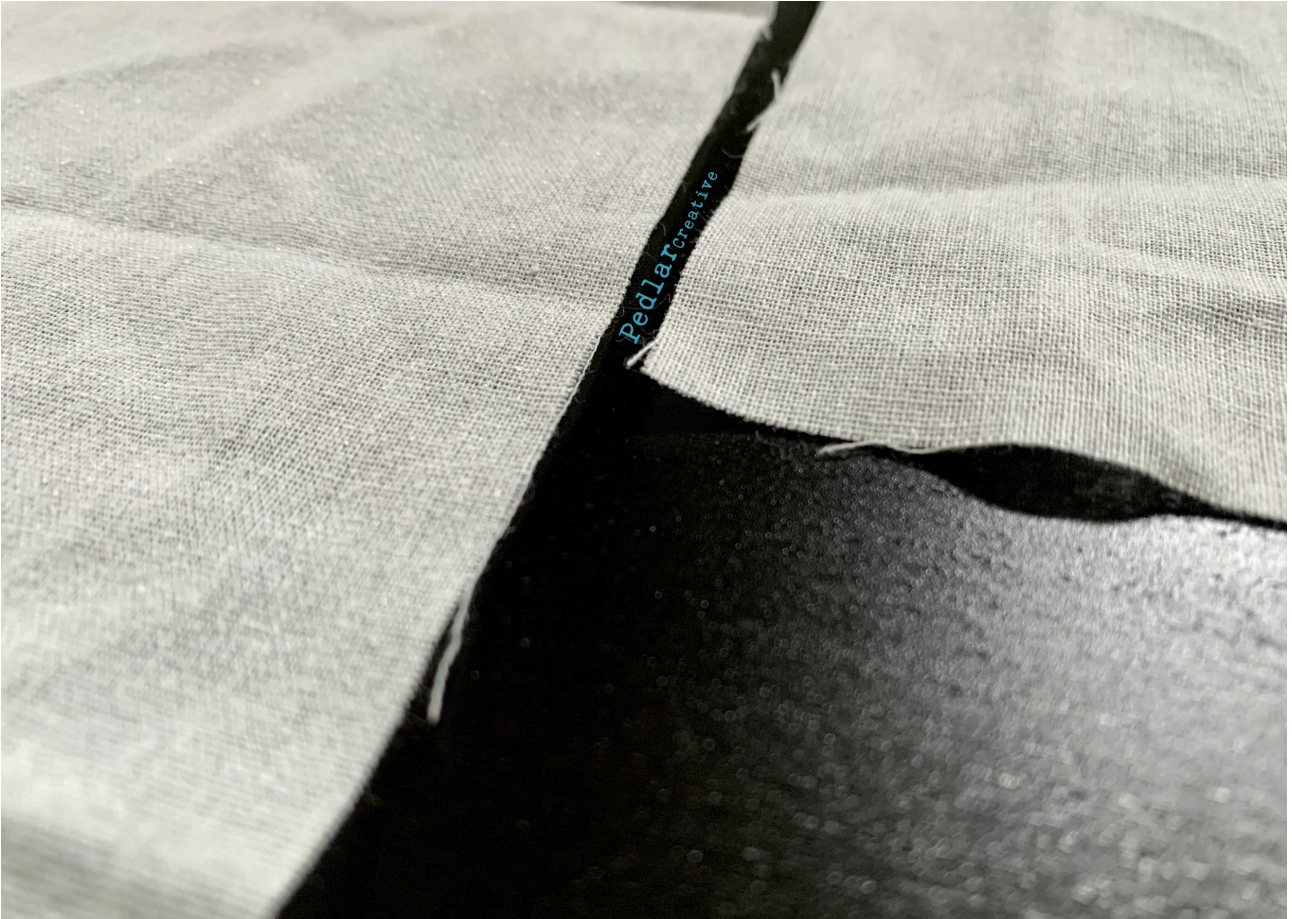
Unlike Stabilisers, Interfacings are designed to be used as a permanent feature in the finished product. Regardless of whether they are of a sew-in or fusible type. They are all designed to offer support for the fabric throughout the entire life of the item. It's highly likely you will have come across interfacings at some point with your sewing. They are used to give shape to collars and waistbands in clothing, as well as being used in every bag pattern I've ever come across (which is a lot).



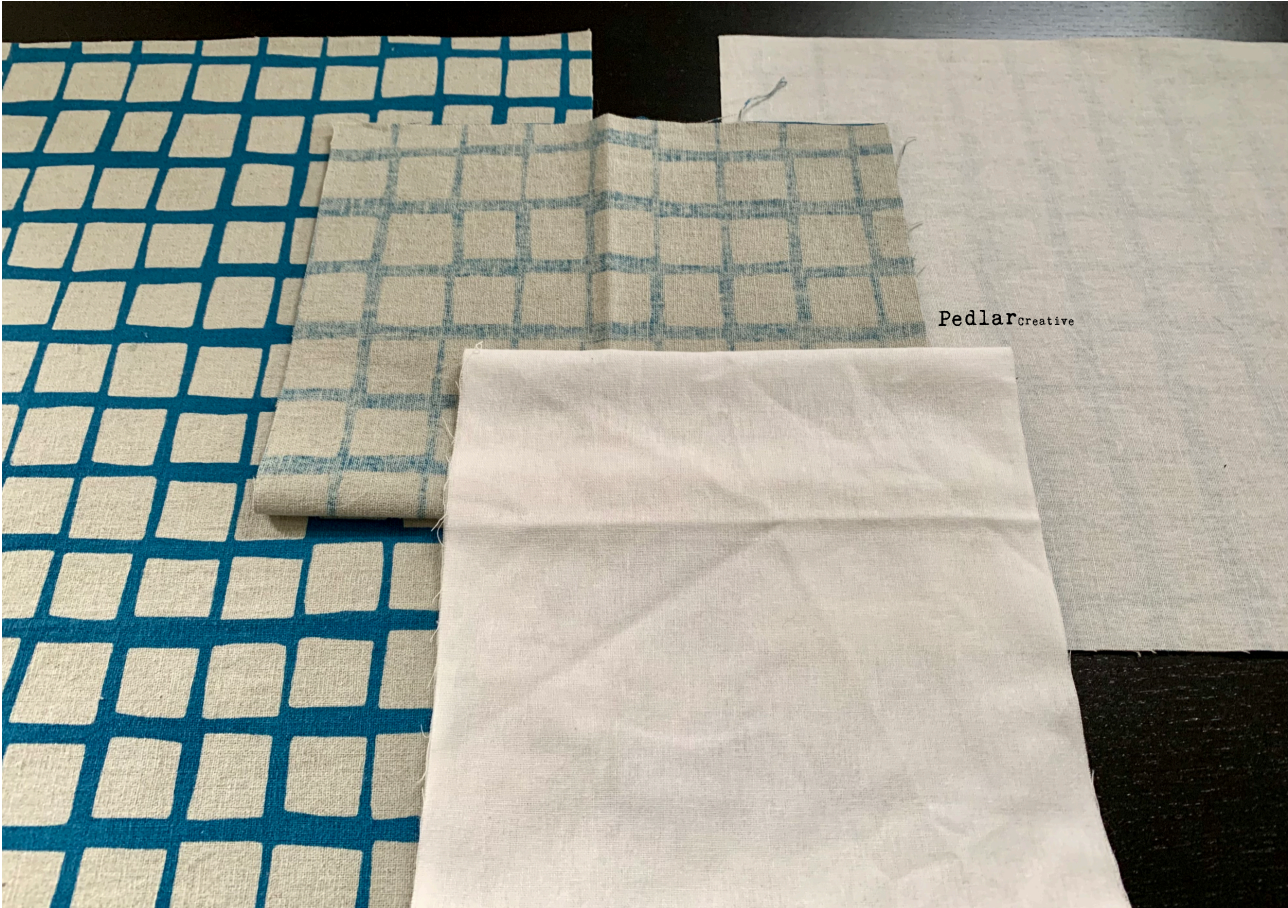
Interfacings (like stabilisers) come in a range of different weights. But you can also get two different types of interfacing; woven and non-woven.

Woven and Non-woven

You might have come across the terms woven and non-woven before. It refers to the two types of interfacings that are available.



A woven interfacing looks and feels like a fabric. It will give some stretch and flex in one direction, whilst offering support in another. This is why it is often used in the creation of clothing and garments. The end result usually allows for some natural flow and movement from the fabric it's attached to.



A non-woven interfacing consists of agglutinated and compressed fibres. It doesn't have any stretch to it in either direction and tends to be used a lot in home decor and bags. Something that needs to hold its shape or requires extra body. A non-woven interfacing looks and behaves similar to a sheet of paper.

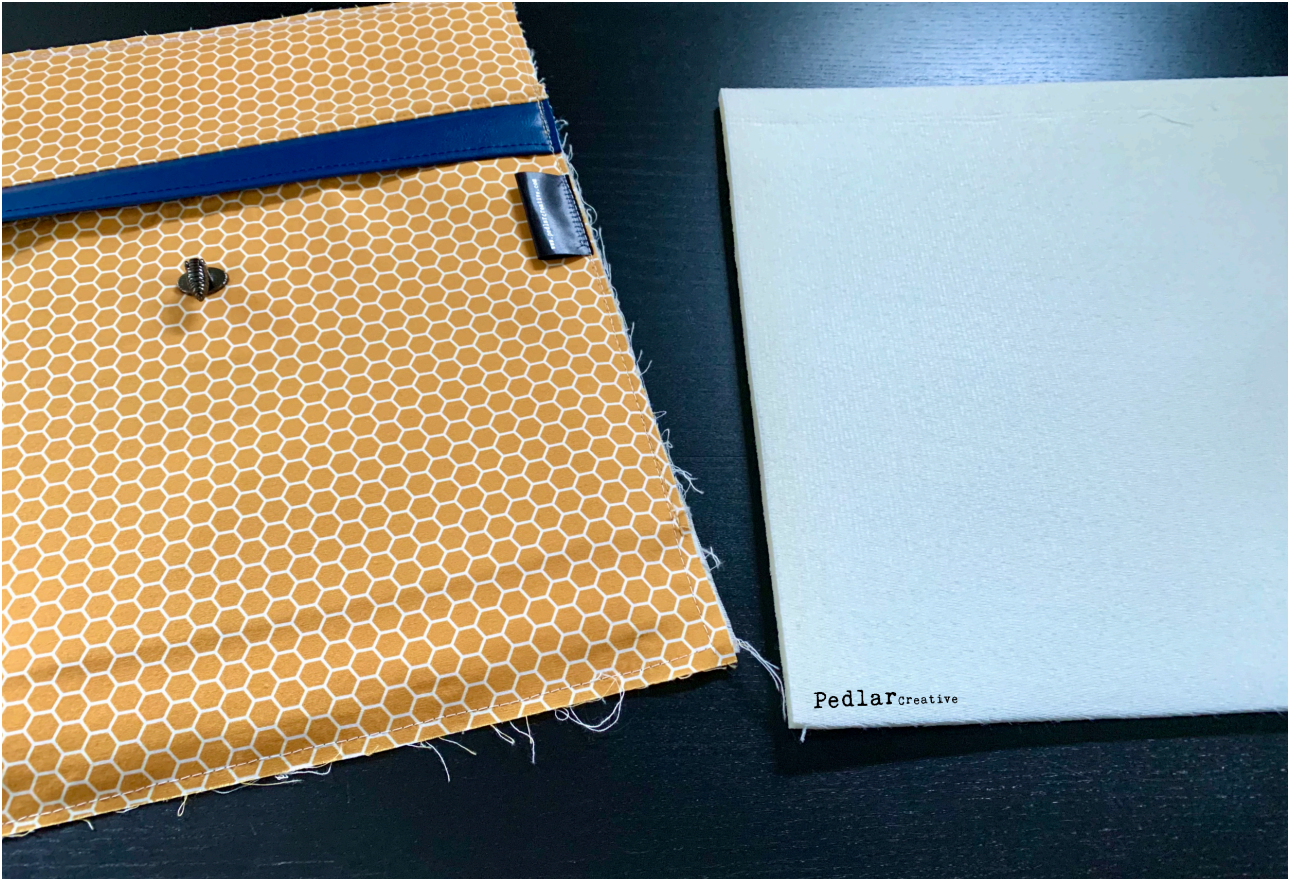


Sew-in or fusible?

Interfacings and stabilisers can come in two different forms: as fusible or sew-in. Fusible ones will come with a shiny or slightly grainy looking side - which is the side that fuses to the wrong side of your fabric. Sew-in ones require you to baste it to your fabric within the seam-allowance. There are pros and cons to each one and I find that a lot of it comes down to personal preference. There are ones that I prefer to get as fusible and others that I prefer to use sew-in. And then of course there is also a difference between suppliers, brands and availability. You may only have sew-in versions available in a particular brand. Or maybe only fusible.



My personal preferences are; fusible for a light woven interfacing, fusible fleece and fusible Peltex 71F (Firm/heavy) stabiliser. I also like to use foam to give my bags shape but I prefer the sew-in version over the fusible. I've found in the past that the fusible foam makes creasing lines on the fabric it's fused to.



Another fusible stabiliser I have come across that gives a really nice shape and body to a fabric is Decovil light and Decovil 1 (heavy). They both have a feel that's very similar to leather and I've always found them very easy to apply and work with. The only downside for me is a lack of availability. I've only managed to find a few suppliers in Australia and they sell out of stock quite quickly.



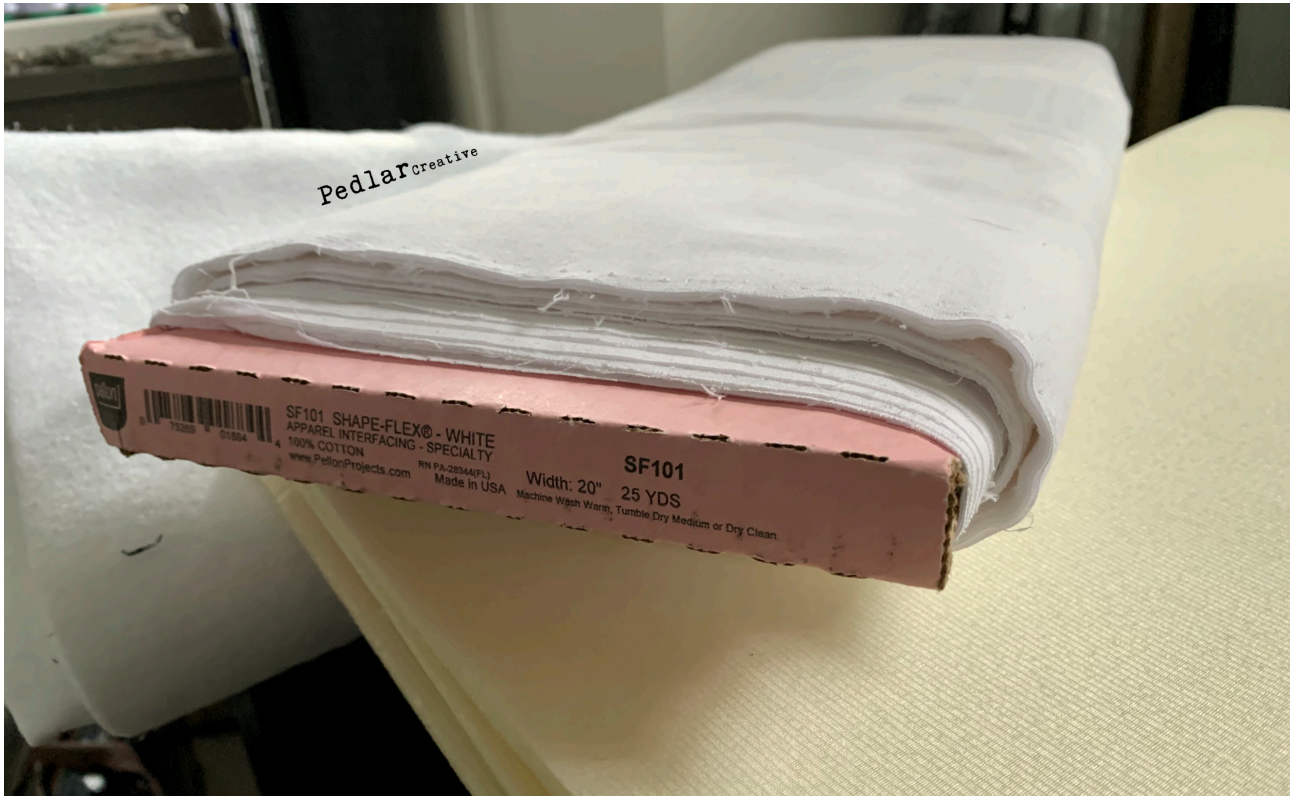
Important things to remember

Most interfacing and stabilisers will come with instructions on how to care for and use each type. Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.



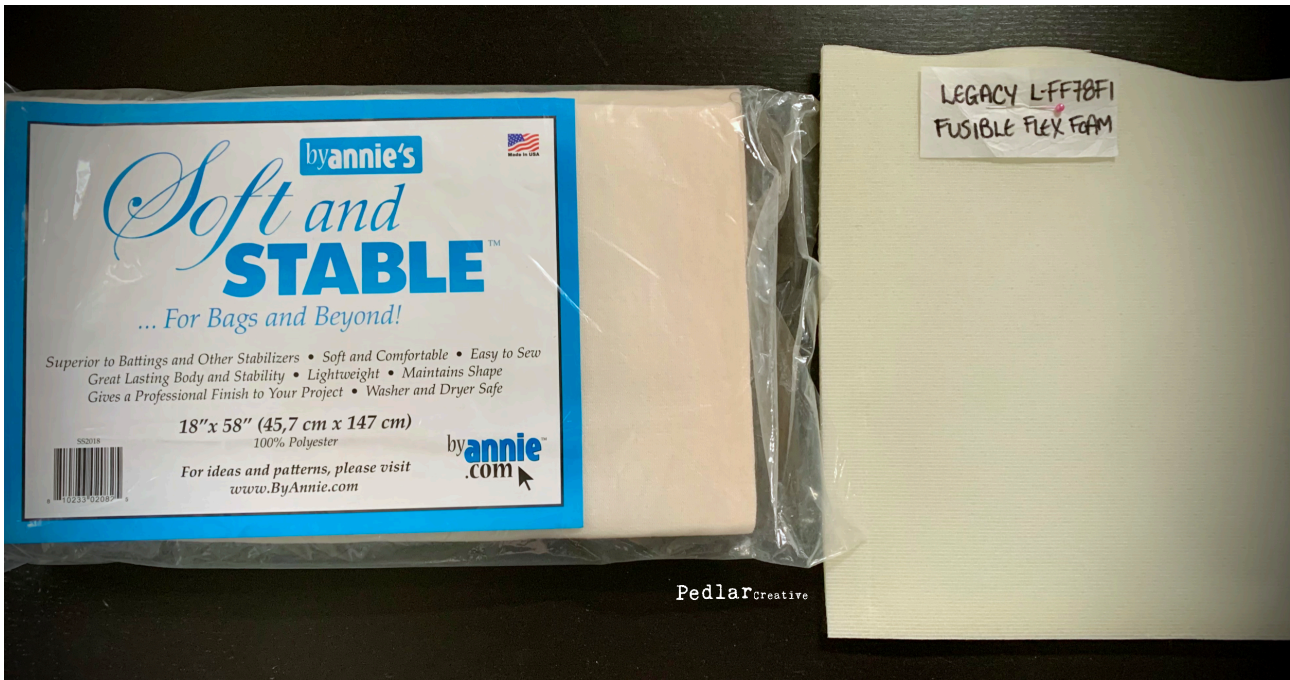
Most patterns will tell you what types of interfacings and stabilisers to use, particularly if you want the same results as the designer. But that doesn't mean you need to use exactly what they have used. You may substitute it for something similar or not. Depends on you. In sewing there is always room for modifications or substitutions.

Take note of the width of the interfacing/stabilisers because some of them are only 20" in width which is half of the size of most fabrics. That means you may need twice as much interfacing as fabric.

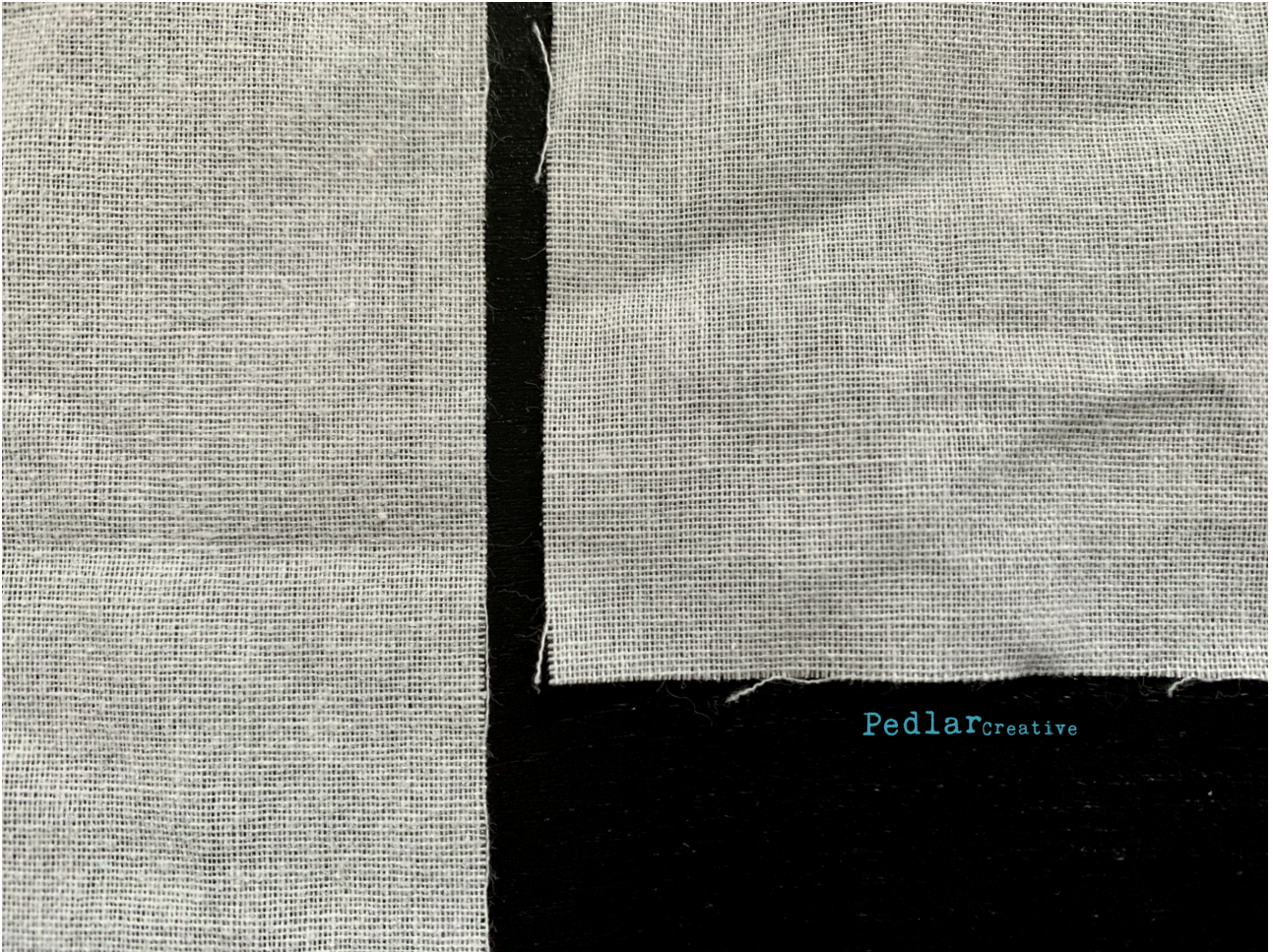


Note For Aussies: The brand Legacy is exactly the same as Pellon. They had to change their name for selling in Australia. The products still have the same number code but with an L added to the front. Eg Pellon SF101 =Legacy L-SF101

Interfacings and stabilisers are also categorised by weight: Light, medium and heavy weight. So these categories are often used by designers to describe the type of interfacing you should use (light, medium or heavy). That way you can substitute it for the one you have at your local sewing store - as long as it falls within the category you are looking for.



Lightweight



The most used interfacing in my sewing room is Pellon's SF101 Shape Flex. This is a fusible woven interfacing that I use in nearly every single bag project I make. Sometimes I interface every single piece of the pattern with SF101. I also use it for nearly every single item of clothing that requires some interfacing. I've also had minimal issues when it comes to adhering it to fabric. No nasty crease lines. It moves with the fabric but gives the fabric so much extra structure, particularly for cotton fabrics. A definite downside to Pellon's SF101 is that it is only available in a width of 20" which is less than half the width of most fabric. So you'll need twice as much interfacing, which can start to be expensive. But a definite positive is that it's available in both white and black.



I also use a lot of the light sew-in interfacings and stabilisers but I have to admit they are used mainly for tracing/creating patterns.

Medium Weight

I have a few interfacings and stabilisers in the medium weight category. One of the more popular ones that I use is Legacy's L-987F Fusible Fleece (Pellon). It always adheres to the fabric nicely and adds a layer of softness, body and stability to your project. It's available in both white and black, but I've never come across the black before. Plus the width size is 45" which makes it more economical.

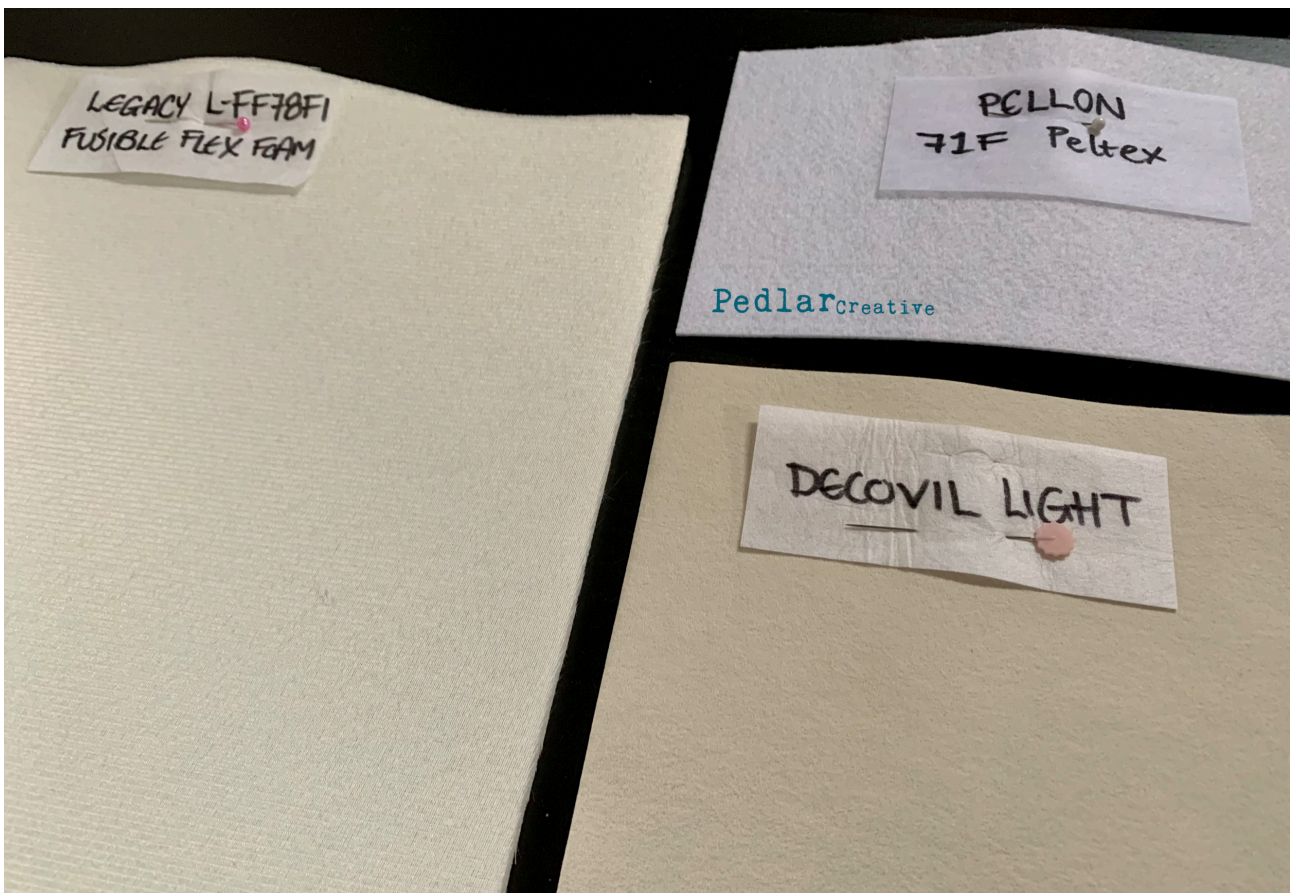


Another one that you might see a lot in patterns is Pellon's Decor-Bond 809. This is a firm, non-woven, fusible stabiliser that provides lots of crispness and support. It comes in a width of 45", which is always great. But there are a few things that I've discovered that mean I only use it in certain circumstances. I've stopped using Decor-Bond on my cotton/quilting fabrics, because it leaves creases on the fabric. But I'll still be using it with other fabrics, particularly canvas, because it works really well with canvas.



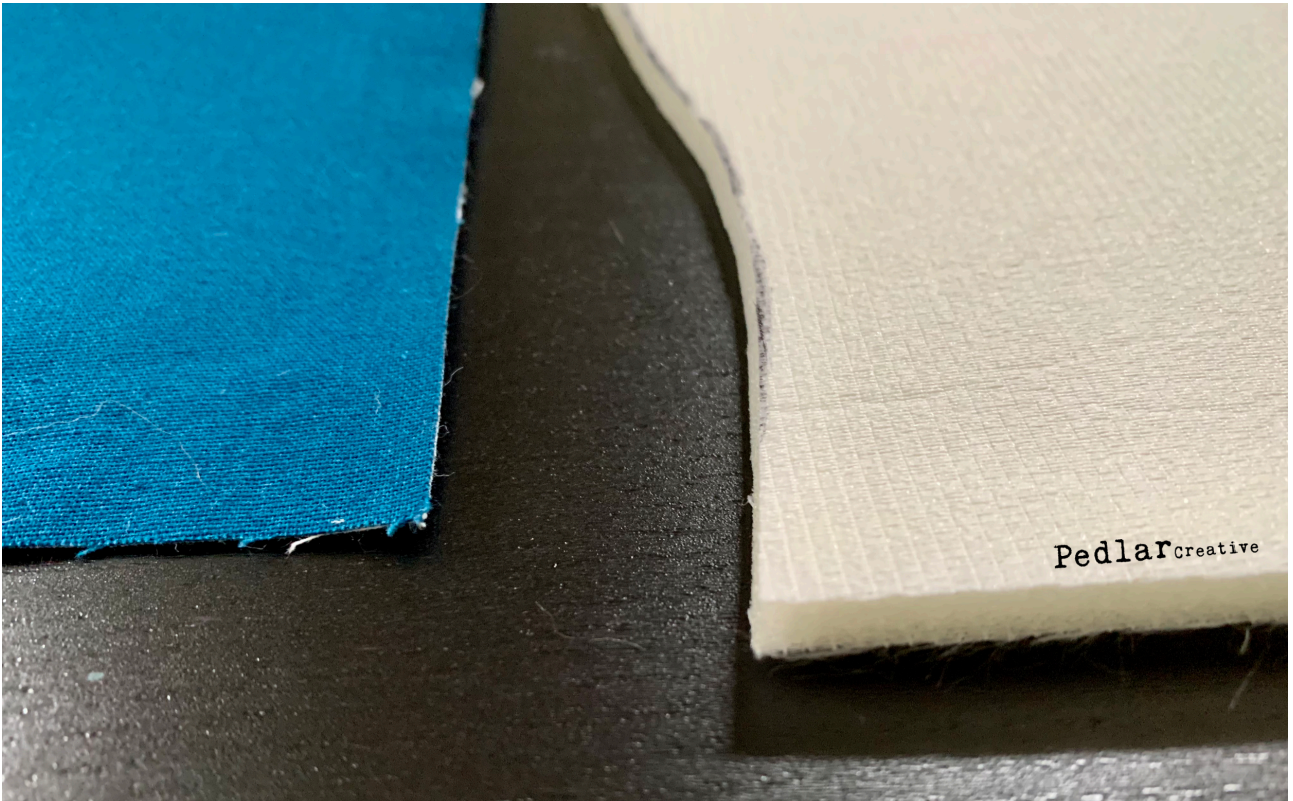
Decovil Light/Decovil 1

Decovil is a non-woven, iron-on interfacing with a flexible, leather like feel. It is tear-resistant, but also dimensionally stable and easy to shape. Furthermore it is resilient and resistant to bending. Decovil Light is a lightweight, softer and more flexible alternative to Decovil 1 (Heavy). This interfacing is made by both Pellon and Vlieseline. I've had a few issues trying to source Decovil in Australia, which is a shame because I would love to work with it more.



Heavy Weight

I have a few heavy weight stabilisers that I use on a regular basis. One of them is Pellon's Peltex 71F, which is an ultra-firm, smooth, heavyweight stabiliser. This one is fusible on one-side although you can also get a double-sided fusible and a sew-in version. I've always found this to be a good fusible stabiliser, with minimal wrinkling or distortion of the fabric.



Another very popular heavy weight stabiliser for bag patterns is Pellon's Flex Foam. This is also available in a one-sided or two-sided fusible and a sew-in. I highly recommend staying well clear of the fusible foam. I've often found it to be quite tricky to adhere to fabric and it usually results in creases and ripples. Only use the sew-in foam if you can. Because I can only get the fusible version, I fuse it to a piece of calico which I baste to my fabric within the seam allowance. That way I don't have to worry about the glue creasing my fabric. And I can cut the foam smaller to keep it out of the seam allowance.



PedlarCreative

Unique

If you haven't yet discovered the many different types of interfacing and stabiliser's that are out there it's worth some investigation. Some will do similar things to others or they might be fairly unique themselves. I thought I'd share some that I've come across that could be of interest. Such as Pellon's 875 Lamifix, which is an iron-on protective laminate. It's water repellent and protects fabrics from stains, as well as being a food safe laminate. Making it perfect for lunch pouches, baby bibs, placements etc.

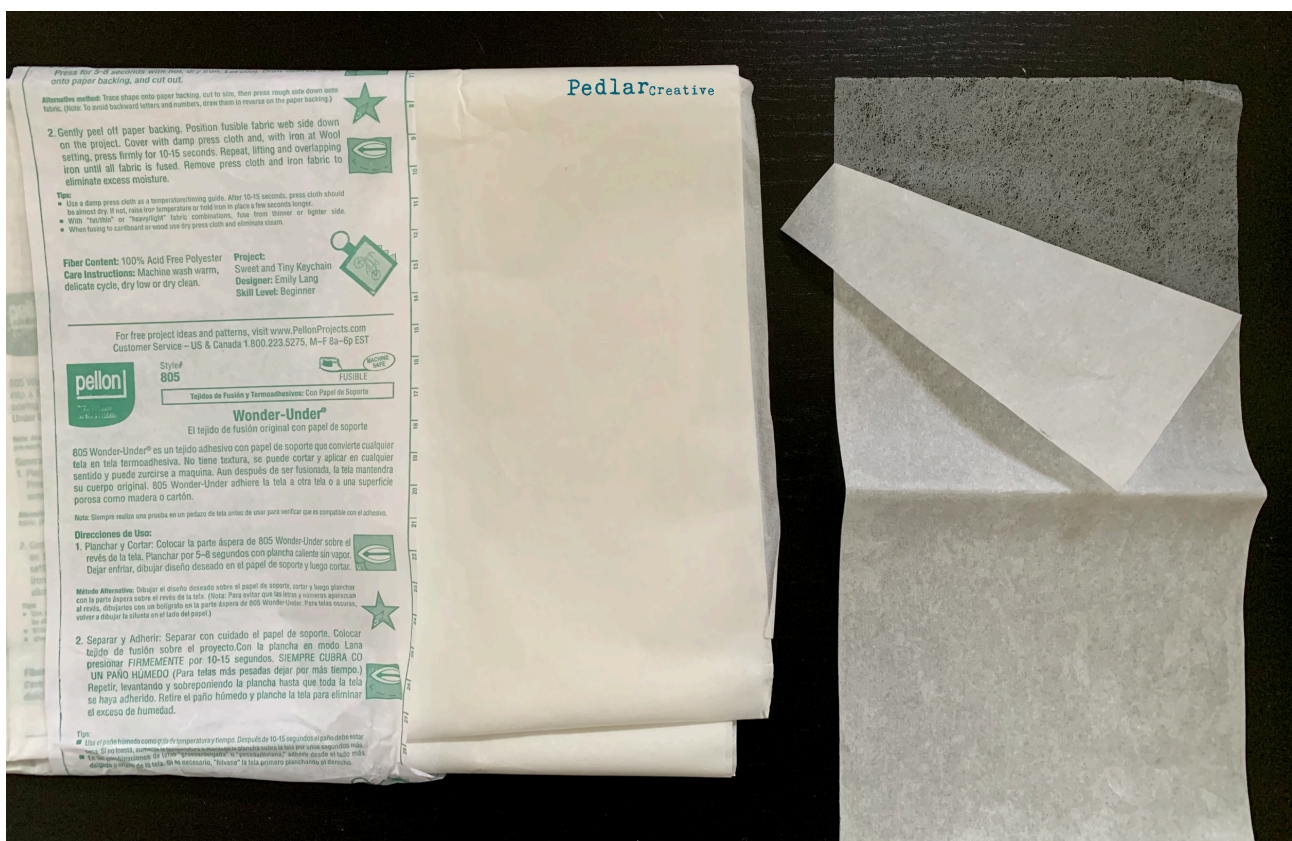


There is another one that is similar called Pellon 100 Vinyl Fuse. I purchased some of this a while ago and still haven't tried it out yet. It's a product that adds a clear protective gloss finish to the fabric. This one isn't food safe, so bare that in mind, but it would be great for making cosmetic bags.

Insulated Fleece is another one that you will probably come across, particularly if you make a lot of things for the home. Insulated Fleece is a special kind, made with an aluminised scrim binder. That helps to reflect heat or cold back to its source. A normal fleece doesn't do this. So if you want to make some oven mitts, pot holders or my [Fabric Coasters](#) this is the type of fleece you should buy. [Insul-Bright](#) is the one I use but Pellon also has [975 Insul-Fleece](#).



If you are a bagineer like myself, and particularly if you like Swoon's patterns, Pellon 805 Wonder-Under may be another interfacing you have seen mentioned. This is quite an interesting product to work with because it is so delicate. It's a fusible web, that comes with a paper backing. So you peel it away from the paper to fuse it to your fabric. Swoon often recommend it for fusing sew-in foam to your fabric. It basically turns a sew-in product to a fusible product. But this is one way to get around the problem of keeping the foam (bulk) out of your seam allowance, whilst avoiding the fusible foam.



Last word...

If you've made it this far, I really commend you! I've certainly tried to cover as many bases as possible. But as I mentioned at the beginning, it's a really large subject to cover and I'm looking at it mainly from the point of view of a bag maker.



Interfacings and stabilisers are used by all sorts of craft and sewing disciplines. So, they are not always be used in the same way, or end in the same result. A lot of the time it comes down to your own personal preference and what tools and materials you prefer to use. It might also be dependant on what you are able to source in your local area. Remember that buying local not only helps your sewing community but can also be more economical.



Pellon:
Fusible Fleece
987F

Pellon:
One-sided Fusible
Ultra Firm
Stabiliser
71F Peltex

Flex Foam
Stabiliser
Fusible

Pellon:
809 Decor-Bond

Warm Company:
Insulated
Bright Wadding

PedlarCreative

Pellon:
SF101
Shape-Flex

Pellon:
SF101
Shape-Flex

I hope you have found this information interesting and informative and please feel free to ask any questions you may have and I'll try my best to get the answer for you.