

A busk adds interest and detail to a corset, but they were not always fastening. Originally they were just a piece of shaped wood or metal, added to give rigidity to the front of the corset. A fastening busk consists of two steel stays or bones. One side has the studs and the other has eyes which fit over the studs to close it. It is generally placed in the centre front and if it is not laced tightly, allows the wearer to put on or remove the corset without unfastening the laces.

HOW TO INSTALL A BUSK

For modern use, a busk can be used alone or combined with other methods of closure such as lacing, hook and eyes, or straps and buckles etc. Here is one method for setting a busk that works well.

Your pattern must have a centre front seam with ½” seam allowance. It should also have at least two layers of fabric for the centre front sections in order to “sandwich” the busk between them. The loop half of the busk is placed on the right-hand side and the pegs on the left side.

1. Place the centre front pieces of fabric, right sides together as if preparing to sew the front seam.
2. Mark the right hand side (as shown in figure 1) to allow for the loops to go through the slots you will have made in the seam.
3. Sew between these openings, back stitching to strengthen, at each stopping point. The slots should fit snugly when you slide the busk into position.
4. Turn the fabrics the right way and slot the busk hooks through the gaps, keeping it as close to the seam as possible.
5. Sew through both layers of fabric as close to the busk as possible to secure the busk and keep it firm. Take care that you don't hit the metal busk and break the needle.
6. For the left side of the corset, lay the loops over the left front, lining it up with the right-hand side and mark where the pegs should be.
7. Use an awl to separate the threads enough for the pegs to go through, only punching a small hole if necessary.
8. The busk should be sandwiched between the two layers of fabric now.

Taking care not to hit the busk with the needle, sew closely down the side of the busk as you did for the right-hand side, to secure it firmly in place.

To strengthen the busk, a flat ½” stay or bone can be slotted down behind the busk. A longer one will add length to the busk if preferred.

How to put on a corset with front opening busk, by yourself.

If done correctly, it is not too difficult with a little practice.

1. Slacken the laces at the back without letting them come free of the grommets/eyelets. It needs to fit round you easily.
2. Fasten up the busk. Don't try skipping step one as this may damage the busk.
3. Begin tightening the laces. This will be easier as you have more practice and the method of lacing you have used will determine how quickly you can do this. The “rabbits ears” at the waist is useful as this method creates two places to tighten and loosen your corset. The bottom, and the waist.
4. As your corset gets snug, tie the laces and adjust your breasts as you don't want to flatten them. If someone else is helping to tighten the laces, then you can lift your arms above your head before starting to tighten as this will naturally lift your breasts into a better position. Further readjustment may still be necessary to make you comfortable.