



Premium

Denim Details

Use quality fabric, and sew
a classic fly zipper

BY JACQUE GOLDSMITH

*Blue jeans are casual, cool, and even chic.
Make them in quality denim, with all the
classic features, for years of stylish wear.*

*Pattern: author's design. Fabric: 100-percent cotton denim,
author's stash.*

Originally the fabric for the common workman, lowly denim has made its way to high fashion and premium prices. When you shop for jeans or other denim garments, you'll find a wide range of price points. There's a difference between a \$35 pair of jeans and a \$200 pair, and it comes from the fabric—which should last for years and get softer and more comfortable with wear—and the construction techniques used to make them.

Factors that make expensive denim worth the price include the fabric's yarn, the dye, and the weaving technique. I'll share the details that set high-quality denim fabric above the rest. Once you know how to choose the best denim fabric for your sewing, you'll want to re-create the well-sewn, sturdy features of premium jeans, including a proper fly zipper. I have detailed instructions to make that process easy.

If you have worked to perfect the fit of a jeans pattern, now you can use it to replicate the costliest designer or boutique jeans on the market. Your custom jeans will look better and last longer than store-bought versions and give you the satisfaction of saying, "I made them myself."

Teacher, author, and snoop shopper extraordinaire Jacque Goldsmith has made a point of studying the secrets of high-priced designer jeans.



Learn to sew a fly zipper with a facing and shield on p. 39.

From fiber to fabric

To select denim that will look and perform the way you want, consider several factors, from fiber content to overall weight and hand. No one denim is right for every project, so evaluate how a particular fabric's characteristics will work with your planned garment.

DENIM YARNS

Denim can be found in blends with polyester, rayon, and spandex, but I prefer 100-percent cotton denim, as the fabric molds to your body and the color evolves over time. Blended fabric is less durable and tends to stretch with wear. If you prefer skin-tight, legging style jeans, explore the stretch options. The way yarns are spun affects a denim fabric's look and wear:

Z-twist

Most yarns used for denim are spun with a Z-twist. The plies slant from lower left to upper right.

Open-end cotton

This type of yarn consists of a core bundle of lightly twisted fibers around which another fiber is twisted. The result is a coarser, fuzzier yarn than ring-spun yarn (see next description), which holds more dye and results in a dark-colored yarn.

Ring-spun yarn

Ring-spun yarn is made of parallel fibers that are twisted together and sent through a series of rings to force the fibers to align smoothly and to blend. The yarn is stronger, crisper, and more durable than open-end cotton, and it has a slubbed texture.

DYE FACTS

Denim's warp yarns, parallel to the selvage, are dyed with indigo dye, either natural or synthetic. The dye tends to rub off the fabric with wear. When the fabric is wet, the dye floats off the yarns, contributing to denim's characteristic fading.

The weft yarns, perpendicular to the selvage, are bleached white. After the denim fabric is woven, it can be overdyed any color. If the wrong side is not mostly white, the yardage has been overdyed.

WEAVE VARIATIONS

Nearly all denim is woven in a 3/1 twill pattern, in which each cross-grain thread travels over three straight-grain threads and under one. This produces a dense fabric with steep diagonal lines. The yarn twist and twill direction can change the denim's character, making it softer or crisper, more or less prone to twisting, and inclined toward specific wear patterns.

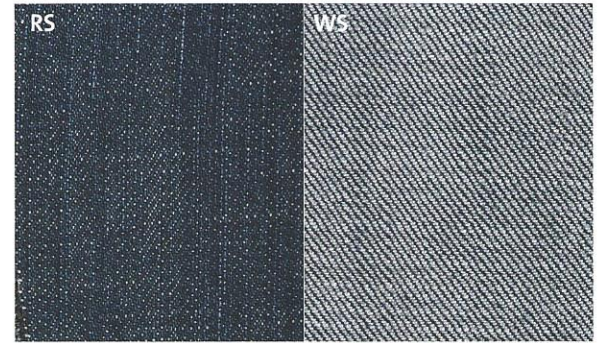
Right-hand twill

A 3/1 twill weave that uses open-end yarns, with the twill's diagonal line rising from the left upward to the right. This is the most common weave.



Ring/ring twill

Also called dual-ring, double ring, or ring x ring denim, has a 3/1 twill weave with ring-spun yarn used in the warp and weft. The slubbed ring-spun yarns create a crosshatch effect.



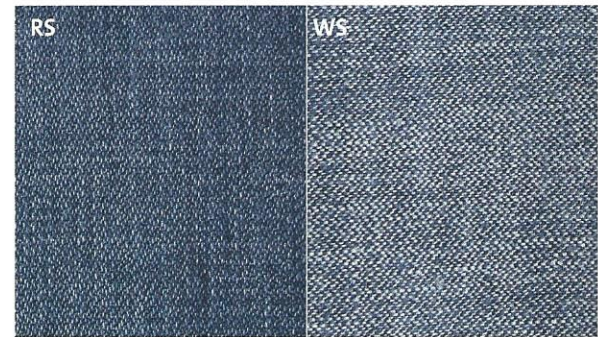
Left-hand twill

A 3/1 twill weave that uses open-end yarns, with the diagonal line descending from the left down to the right, gives a less prominent twill line when combined with Z-twist yarn. This is a less common weave.



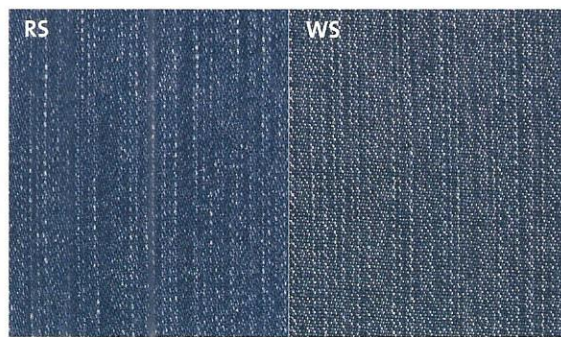
Broken twill

This weave alternates the twill direction to avoid potential leg twisting from a standard 3/1 twill weave. The wrong side of the fabric has a distinctive herringbone or zigzag pattern.



Ring-spun twill

A 3/1 twill weave that uses ring-spun yarn in the warp and open-end yarn in the weft. The ring-spun yarn is more prominent and results in a vertical stripe effect.



WEIGHT OPTIONS

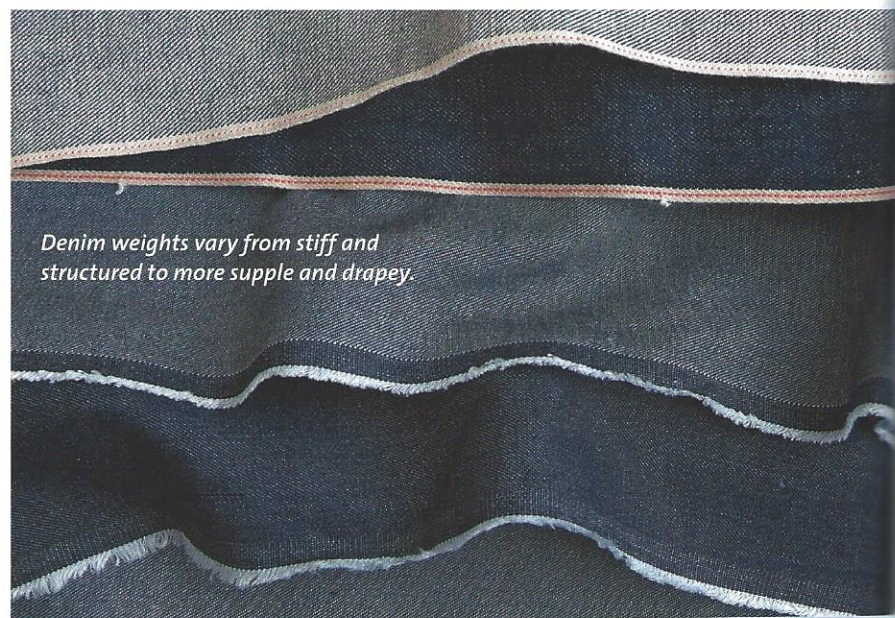
Denim fabrics come in different weights according to the size of the yarns used to weave the fabric. They refer to how many ounces a square yard of fabric weighs. These are some common weights.

13³/₄-ounce and above: These heavyweight denims are used for workwear. Heavy denim is stiff and takes time and wear to break in.

12-ounce: the most common weight for jeans.

10-ounce: a lightweight denim suitable for shorts or skirts.

8-ounce: a fine, supple denim appropriate for shirts, dresses, and fuller skirts.

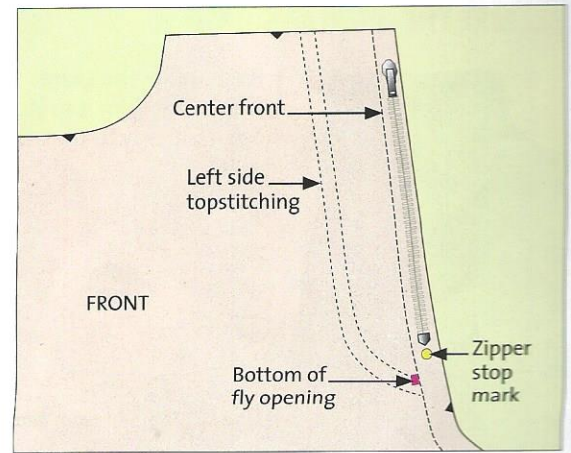


Ready-to-wear fly construction

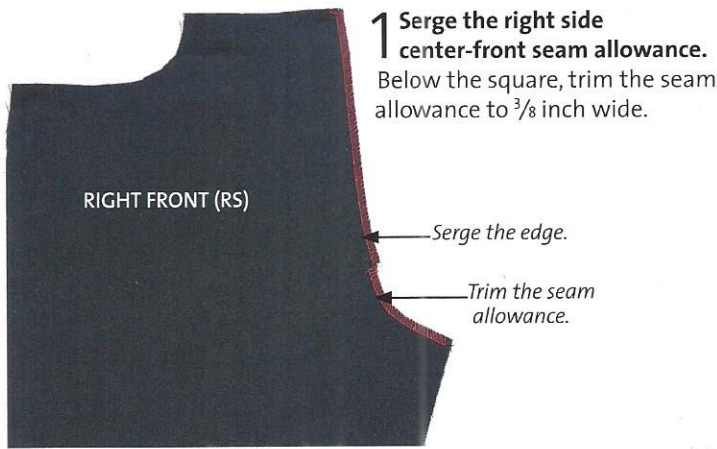
Premium denim jeans have a separate fly facing and fly shield. These directions are for a pattern with $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch-wide seam allowances, with a flat-felled crotch seam. They yield a fly that laps left over right; reverse them if you prefer the fly to open the opposite way.

ADD KEY STITCHING LANDMARKS

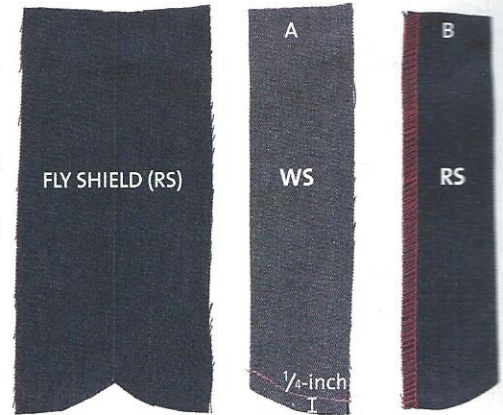
I mark the patterns with a circle and square to indicate stitching landmarks. Place a circle where you want the zipper stop to end, at least 1 inch above the crotch curve. Shorten the zipper to fit the opening length, if needed. Copy the circle mark to the jeans front, the fly facing, and the fly shield pattern pieces. Mark a square $\frac{1}{2}$ inch below the fly opening circle. Transfer this mark to the jeans front piece.



PREPARE THE UNDERLAP SIDE



2 Make the fly shield. Fold the shield in half vertically with right sides together, and sew the bottom edge with $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-wide seam allowance (A). Turn the shield right side out. Serge the long edges together (B).

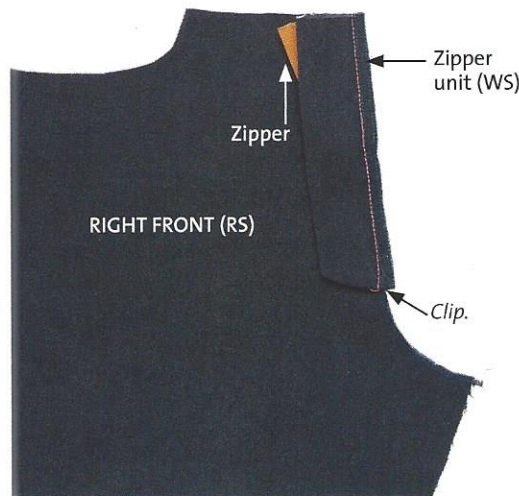


3 Construct the zipper unit. Lay the zipper, right side up, on the shield, with its right tape edge aligned to the shield's serged edge. Align the bottom stop to the circle mark. Sew along the tape to secure.



Sew the zipper tape to the fly shield.

4 Attach the zipper unit to the right front. With the shield side up, serged edges aligned and zipper inside, lay the zipper unit on the jeans' right side. Sew through all layers, with a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-wide seam allowance. Clip $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch through the seam allowances below the fly shield.

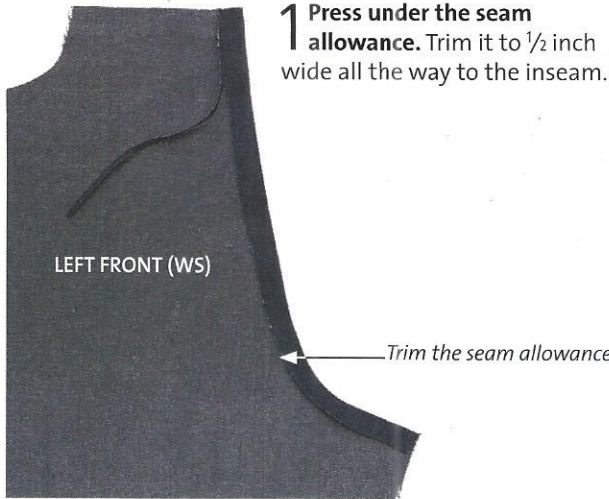


5 Complete the underlap side. Fold the shield away from the jeans front and press its seam allowance toward the front. Below the clip, press the seam allowance to the right side. Install a zipper foot and edgestitch close to the fly opening fold through all layers, continuing all the way down the front-crotch seam to the inseam.

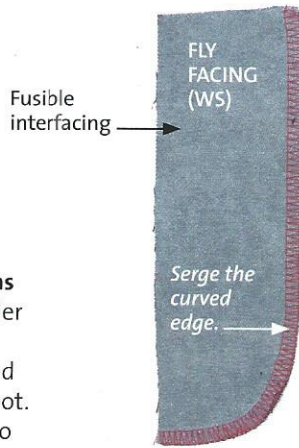


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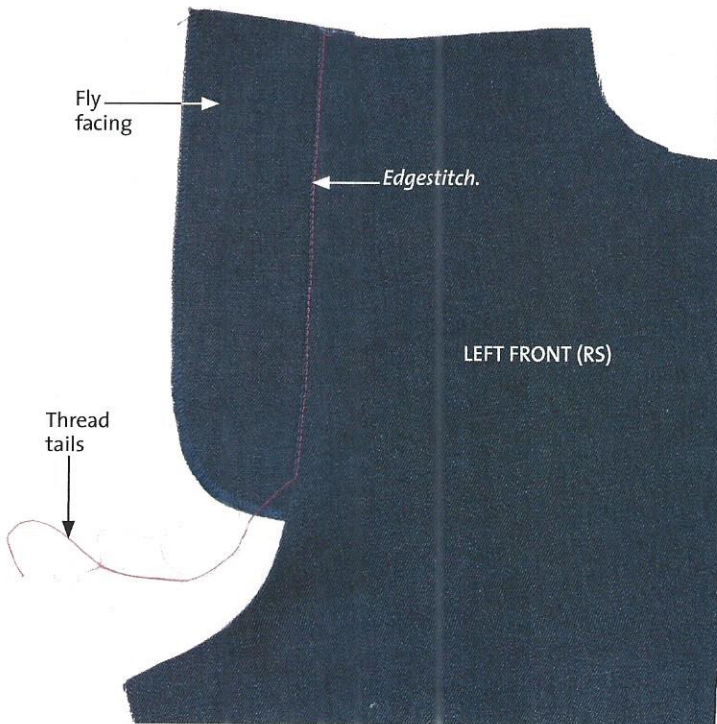
PREPARE THE OVERLAP SIDE



2 Prepare the fly facing. Apply a thin, fusible interfacing to the wrong side, then serge the curved edge.



3 Attach the facing to the jeans left front. Lay the facing under the left front edge, right sides together and aligning the serged edges. Install a regular zipper foot. Edgestitch from the top down to the square, leaving long thread tails. Press the facing to the wrong side.

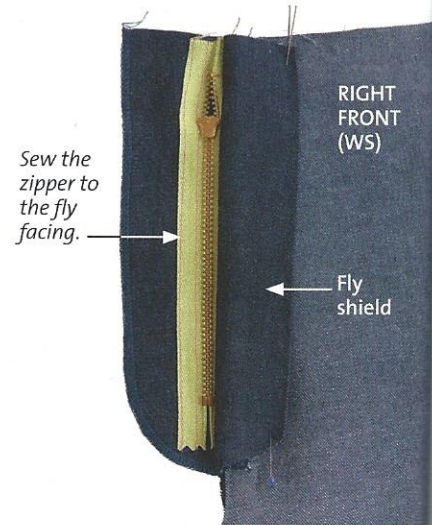


JOIN THE FRONTS

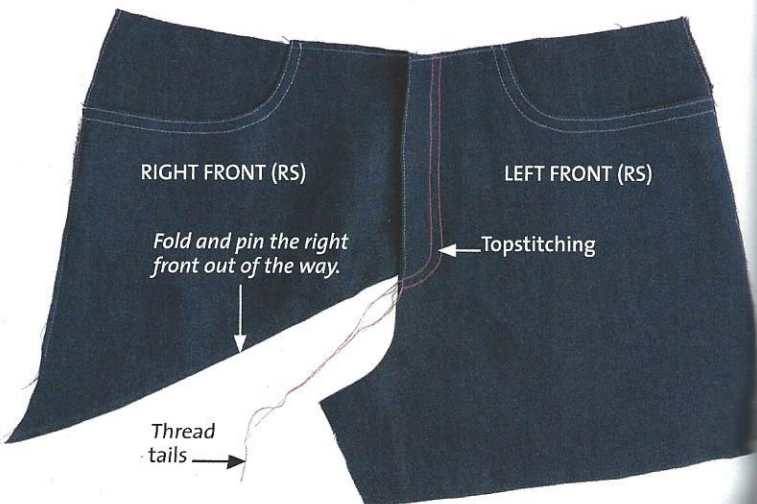
1 Pin the fronts together. Lap the left front over the right front by $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch, from the waist edge to the square. Pin to secure through step 2.



2 Sew the remaining zipper tape. Change to the zipper foot. Fold the fronts out of the way to expose the fly facing. Stitch the zipper tape to the facing only with two rows of stitching. (This stitching does not show on the jean's front.)



3 Sew the J-shaped topstitching on left front. Push the right front and fly shield away to create a clear path for stitching. Sew from the top toward the fly bottom. Sew $\frac{1}{8}$ inches from the opening edge, ending $\frac{1}{4}$ inch below the square. Place the second row $\frac{1}{4}$ inch closer to the opening than the first row. Leave long thread tails at the bottom.



4 Pull all the thread tails to the wrong side. Arrange the fly shield over the fly facing.



5 Sew the crotch seam. Overlap the left side $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch left over the right side. Starting $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the square (at the inner fly topstitching line), sew down to the inseam. Apply two rows of stitching, one at the fold, the other $\frac{1}{4}$ inch away.



6 Add bar tacks. Place one at the base of the fly opening, where the crotch seam stitching begins. Place the other at the curve of the J to keep the fly shield in place.



web extra

Find tips on making belt loops and a contoured waistband at ThreadsMagazine.com.



Traditional jeans details make an A-line skirt a wardrobe staple.

Pattern: author's design.
Fabric: 100-percent cotton denim, author's stash.