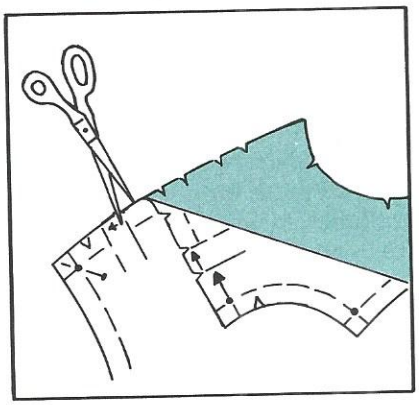
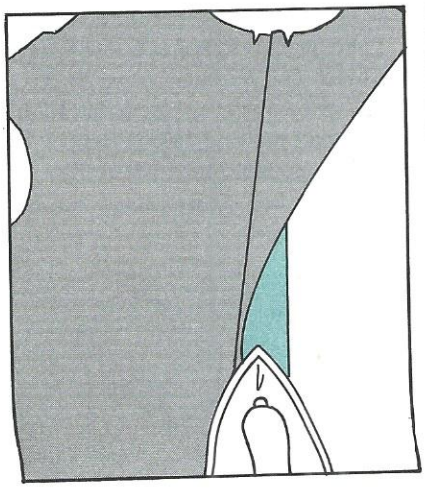
clip (⅛" or 3mm deep) in the seam allowance at the marking point.



Press Marking is used in conjunction with snip marking to mark foldlines for details such as extended facings, folded casings, pleats and tucks.

- Make a tiny clip in the seam allowance at each end of the foldline. If pleats or tucks do not extend the length of the pattern piece, use one of the methods described earlier to mark the end of the foldline.
- Unpin and remove the pattern tissue so you can press mark each fabric layer separately.
- Fold the fabric wrong sides together, using the clip marks as guides, and press the fold.



CONVENTIONAL MACHINE STITCHING

Whether your conventional sewing machine is a basic straight stitch variety, or a space-age computerized model, or something in between, it's the most valuable and useful piece of sewing equipment you own.

Because features and capabilities vary among models and manufacturers, the best advice anyone can give you is to study the manual that comes with your sewing machine. Among other things, you'll learn important information about how to keep the machine in good working order, including:

- how to keep it clean and lint-free;
- whether or not it requires oiling and lubricating—and how often this should be done;
- recommended types and sizes of needles;
- instructions for adjusting tension, pressure and stitch length—in short, all the things that contribute to good quality stitching.

If you've misplaced the manual, write to the manufacturer and ask for a new one. Be sure to include the model number of your machine. You'll find it printed on a small metal plate attached to the machine. On a free-arm machine, the plate is located on the back of the machine; on a flatbed machine, it's located on the front. If you don't understand how to operate some of the attachments or special features, stop in at a local dealer and ask about a few lessons. It will be time well spent!

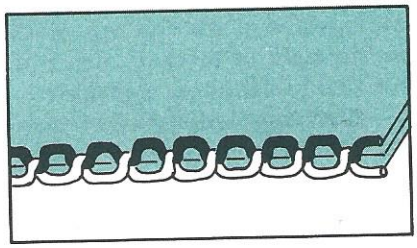
THE PERFECT STITCH

If you follow the recommendations in the manual and keep your sewing machine in good working order, you can expect it to reward you with good quality stitching. Then you'll be able to make the simple adjustments that fine-tune the stitch quality to match your fabric.

Before you sew even one seam on your garment, test-stitch on scraps of your fashion fabric.

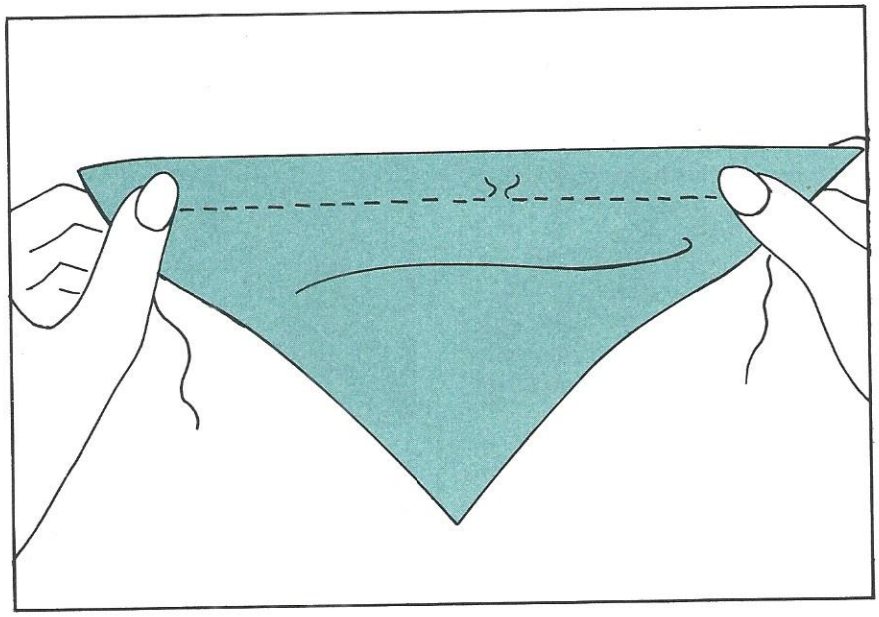
Thread Tension

Tension refers to the amount of drag or tautness exerted on both the needle thread and the bobbin thread as they move through the sewing machine. When the tension is correctly set, the stitches should be perfectly balanced: the two threads interlock in the center of the fabric so that the stitches look the same on both sides of the fabric.



If the tension is not balanced, your manual will tell you how to correct it by adjusting the dial or button that controls the needle tension. Most tension problems can be solved by adjusting the needle tension to match the bobbin tension. Although some machines have a screw on the bobbin case that controls the bobbin tension, most manufacturers do not recommend adjusting this screw. If a bobbin adjustment is required, you'll be better off leaving that to a skilled repairperson.

To test for balanced tension, take a scrap of the fashion fabric and fold it along the bias. Put a row of stitching about ½" (1.3cm) from the fold. Then, pull the fabric until a thread breaks.



■ If both the bobbin and the needle thread break, then the tension is fine.

■ If only the bobbin thread breaks, that means that the bobbin tension is tighter than the needle tension. Solution: Tighten the needle tension to match the bobbin.

■ If only the needle thread breaks, that means that the needle tension is tighter than the bobbin tension. Solution: Loosen the needle tension to match the bobbin.

Presser Foot Pressure

Pressure refers to the force the presser foot exerts on the fabric as it moves between the presser foot and the feed dog. The amount of pressure needed can be affected by the fabric's weight, bulk, texture or finishes. If the pressure is correctly set for the fabric, both layers will move through the machine at the same rate.

On most machines, the amount of pressure is regulated by a knob or a dial. Check your manual to be sure. Your manual will also suggest suitable settings for various fabrics and sewing situations.

Stitch Length

Depending on the make and model of your machine, you will be able to adjust the stitch length by pushing a button or moving a lever or a dial. These will all have numbers that correspond to various stitch lengths. On some machines, these numbers represent the number of stitches per inch; on other machines, they indicate, in millimeters, the length of each individual stitch. Consult your manual for information.

TIP *If you have trouble remembering which number is for the shortest stitch and which is for the longest, write it down on a small piece of masking tape and tape it to the machine. With a little bit of sewing experience, this information will be automatic and you'll be able to throw the tape away.*

TIP *Don't confuse tension problems with stitch length problems.*

■ *If the fabric puckers, use a shorter stitch length.*

■ *If the fabric "waves" out of shape, the stitches are too dense for the fabric. To correct, lengthen the stitch.*

The following is a guide to the most commonly used stitch lengths:

■ REGULATION—10 to 15 stitches per inch (per 2.5cm) or 2mm to 2½mm long is the length used for most general sewing, including stitching seams.

■ BASTING—the longest stitch on your machine, usually 6 to 8 stitches per inch (per 2.5cm) or 3mm to 4mm long. Since this is temporary stitching, the longer stitch is easier to remove.

■ REINFORCING—the shortest stitch length, usually 18 to 20 stitches per inch (per 2.5cm) or 1mm to 1½mm long.

■ EASING or GATHERING—8 to 10 stitches per inch (per 2.5cm) or 2½mm to 3mm long.

STITCHING TECHNIQUES

The guidelines for good stitching are so easy to follow that they soon become automatic.

1. *Get a good start.*

This technique guarantees that your beginning stitches will be smooth and the thread won't get jammed up in the throat plate hole!

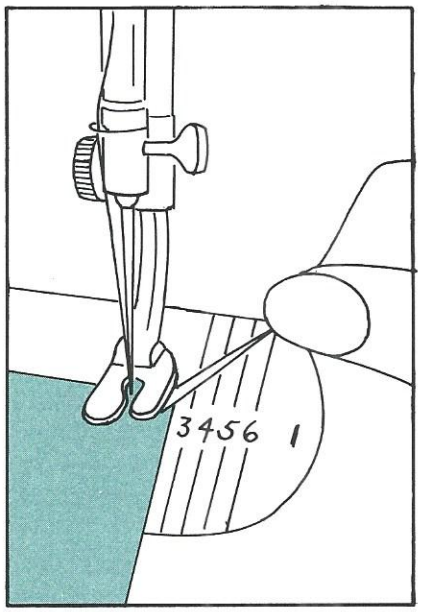
■ Grasp the needle and bobbin threads with one hand and pull them under, then behind or to the side of, the presser foot, as shown on the next page.

■ Place the fabric under the presser foot so that the right edge

is aligned with the desired marking on the throat plate. The bulk of the fabric should be to the left of the presser foot.

■ Turn the wheel to lower the needle into the fabric near the beginning of the seamline.

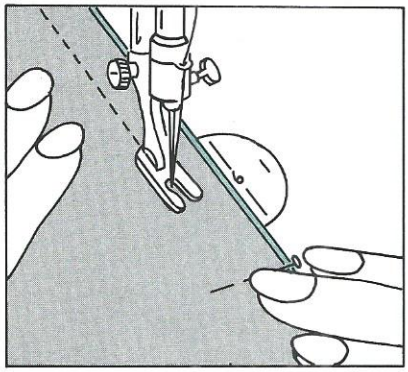
■ While still holding the thread tails, lower the presser foot and begin stitching with a slow, even speed. Continue to hold onto the thread tails until you have stitched for about 1″ (2.5cm).



■ Release the thread tails and continue stitching.

2. *Guide the fabric.*

Rest one hand on the fabric in front of the presser foot and the other hand behind the presser foot. Use both hands to gently guide the fabric through the machine as you stitch. At the same time, keep your eye on the cut edge of the fabric, rather than on the needle. This helps you keep the stitching straight.

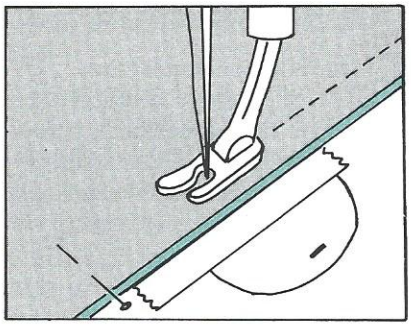


3. *Keep it accurate.*

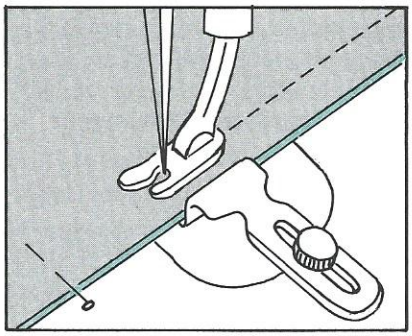
The easiest way to maintain accurate stitching is to align the right edge of the fabric with one of the following stitching guides:

■ The lines permanently etched on the throat plate of many sewing machines. These are placed at ⅛″ (3mm) intervals.

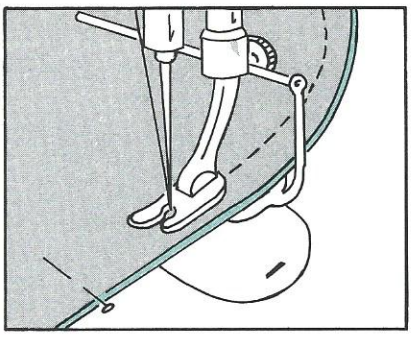
■ A piece of tape placed on the throat plate the desired distance from the needle hole.



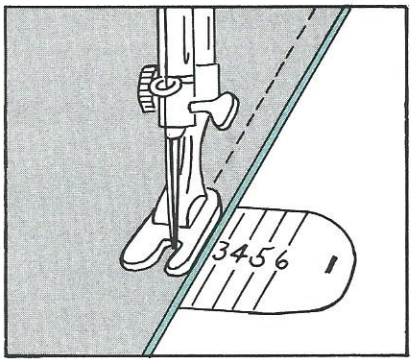
■ A screw-on or magnetic seam guide placed the desired distance from the needle hole. Place it parallel to the presser foot for straight edges or at an angle for curves.



■ A quilting foot attachment. This is particularly useful for curved edges and edges up to 2″ (5cm) away from the needle.



■ The toe of the presser foot. This is particularly useful when stitching close to an edge or ¼″ (6mm) away from it.



4. *Prevent slipping and shifting.*

If you're working with more than one layer of fabric, you'll want to pin or baste them together to keep them from slipping as you sew.

Match seam edges, markings and notches, then baste together

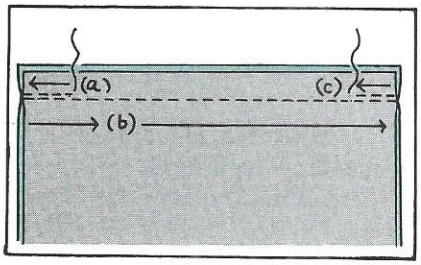
TIP *If your fabric is still being swallowed up into the throat plate opening at the beginning of each seam, try using a smaller size needle. If the problem still remains, use a scrap of nonwoven, tear-away backing material, such as Stitch-n-Tear™ or Trace Erase™, as a "seam starter."*

TIP *If the seamline or stitching line will ultimately be intersected by another row of stitching, there's no need to secure the ends. The second row of stitching will "lock" the first row in place.*

using one of the techniques described on pages 94–95. As you become more proficient, you may find that simple, straight seams will require only one or two pins unless the fabric is very slippery.

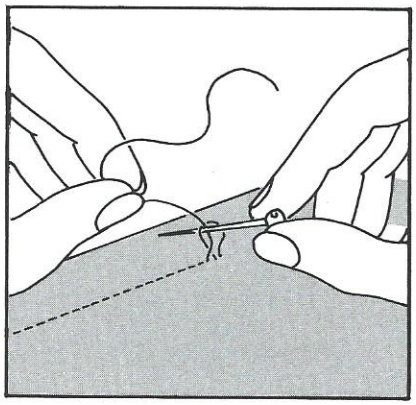
5. *Secure the thread ends.*
To prevent the stitching from coming undone at the beginning and end of the seam, use one of these techniques:

■ Backstitch. Insert the needle a little bit in from the start of the seam, set the machine to stitch in reverse and backstitch (a). Set the machine to stitch forward and complete the seam (b). Slow down near the end of the seam and backstitch again (c).

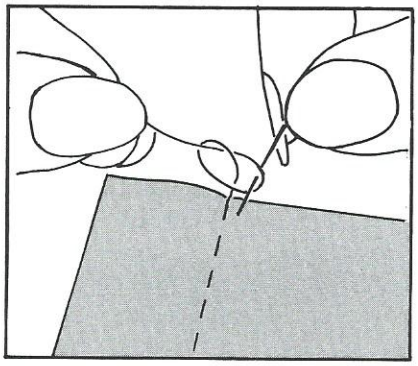


■ Tie the threads. This technique is useful if the line of stitching ends before you reach the edge of the fabric, such as on a patch pocket, or if your machine doesn't stitch in reverse. Leave at least 4" (10cm) long thread tails at the beginning and end of the stitching.

Before tying the threads, it may be necessary to bring both tails of thread to the same side of the fabric. To do this, tug gently on one thread until the loop of the other thread appears, then insert a pin through the loop and draw it up. (See above.)



To tie the threads, hold the threads in the left hand and form a loop. With the right hand, bring the tails through the loop. Then insert a pin into the loop so that the tip of the pin is at the end of the line of stitching. Pull the



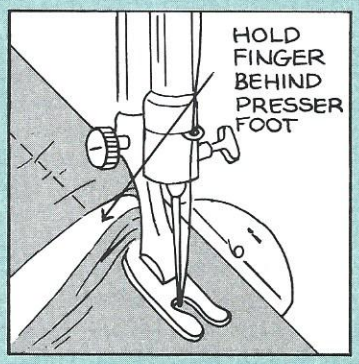
thread ends until the loop forms a knot at the tip of the pin. Remove the pin and clip the thread tails.

GLOSSARY OF STITCHING TERMS

Easestitching

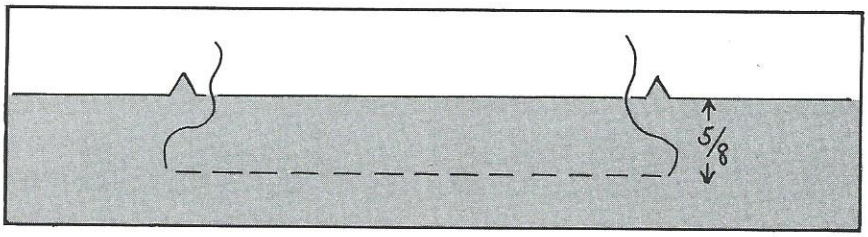
This technique is used when you are joining a longer garment edge to a slightly shorter one. Although the technique is similar to one used for gathering, there shouldn't be any folds or gathers visible on the outside of the garment once the seam is stitched.

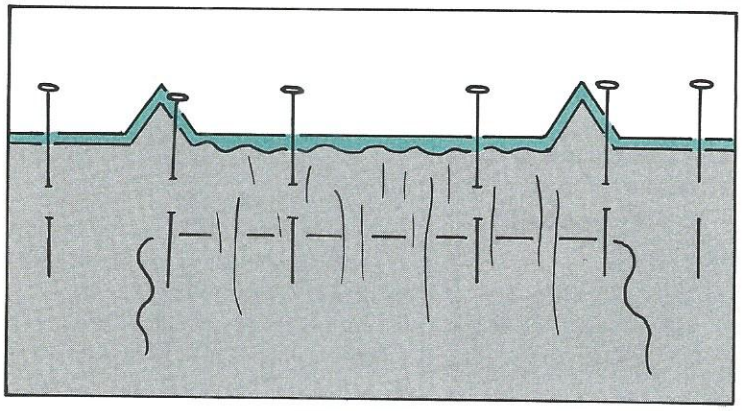
TIP *If only a small amount of easing is required, try EASE-PLUS STITCHING—a quick method that crowds the fabric, distributing the fullness. Using a regulation stitch length, stitch between the ease markings. As you do this, press your index finger against the back of the presser foot crowding the fabric. Stitch for several inches (centimeters), letting the fabric pile up between your finger and the presser foot. Release the fabric and repeat.*



■ Loosen the needle tension slightly and adjust the machine to sew with a longer (3mm or 8 to 10 stitches per inch) stitch.

■ Stitch just next to the seamline, within the seam allowance, as shown below. Stitch slightly beyond the markings on your pat-



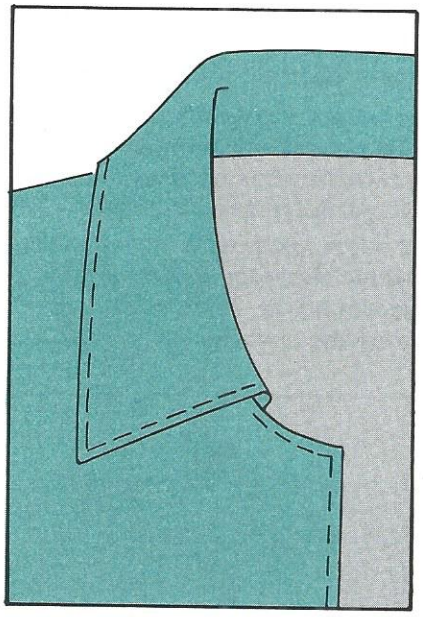


tern tissue that indicate the area to be eased.

■ Pin the eased section to the adjoining section, matching notches and markings. Draw the fabric up along the bobbin thread and distribute the fullness evenly. Stitch with the eased section up.

Edgestitching

This extra row of regulation-length stitches appears on the outside of a garment. It's placed approximately ⅛" (3mm) or less away from a seamline or a foldline, or close to a finished edge. Although it is similar to topstitching (on opposite page), edgestitching is less noticeable because it is closer to the edge and it is always done in matching thread.

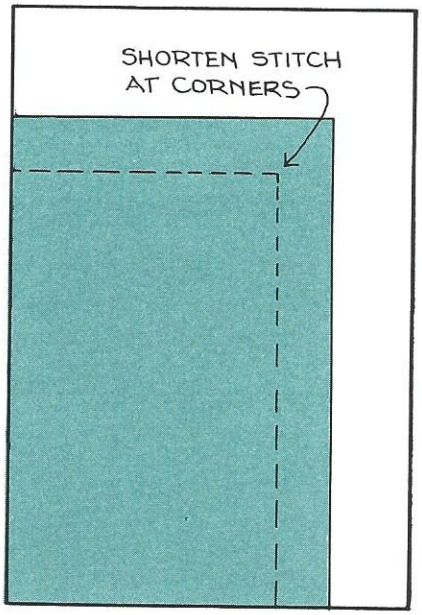


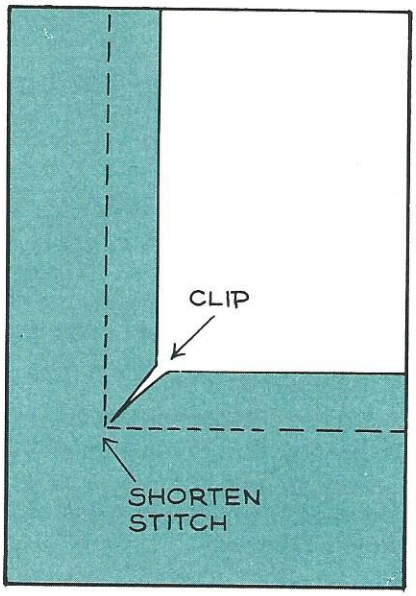
Reinforcement Stitching

This technique strengthens the stitching in areas that will be closely trimmed, such as corners, or along deep curves that will be clipped or notched at frequent intervals. The basic premise is simple—just sew with a shorter stitch length.

At inside and outside corners, reduce the stitch length for about 1" (2.5cm) on either side of the corner.

When joining an inside corner to an outside corner, first reinforce the inside corner with small stitches, then clip just to the stitching.



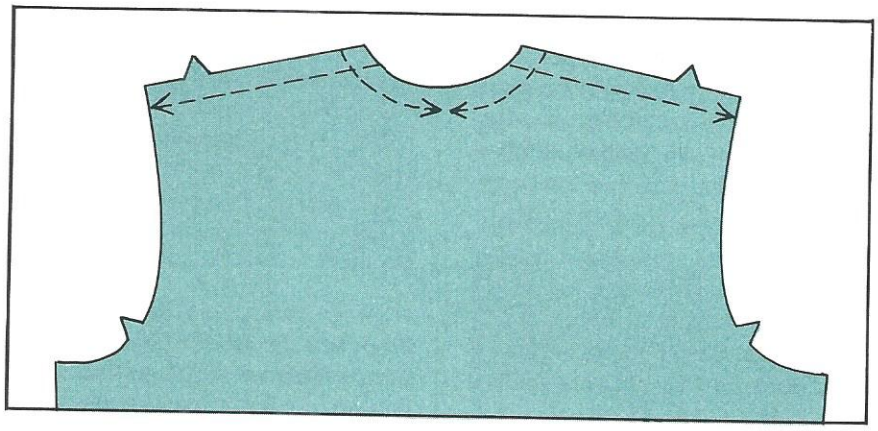


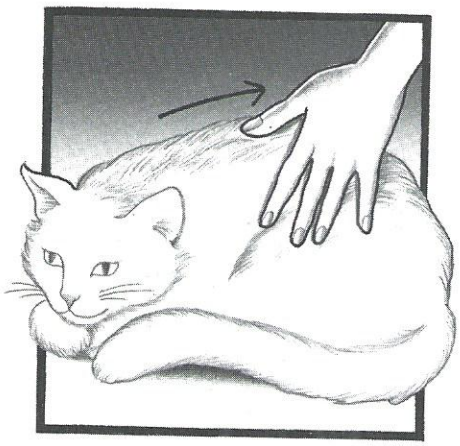
Staystitching

This line of regulation-length stitching prevents curved or bias edges, such as necklines, shoulders and waistlines, from stretching out of shape as they are handled. If your garment section requires it, staystitching should be the very first type of stitching you do.

To staystitch, stitch with a regulation-length stitch ½" (1.3cm) from the cut edge of the fabric. On deep curves, shorten the stitch length so the staystitching doubles as reinforcement stitching. (See opposite page, at top.)

To keep the edge of the fabric from stretching as you staystitch, stitch in the same direction as the fabric grain. As a guideline, you may find arrows printed on the instruction sheet illustrations or along the seamline on the pattern tissue. If there are no arrows to direct you, you can determine which way to stitch by "stroking the cat." Run your finger along the cut edge of the fabric. The



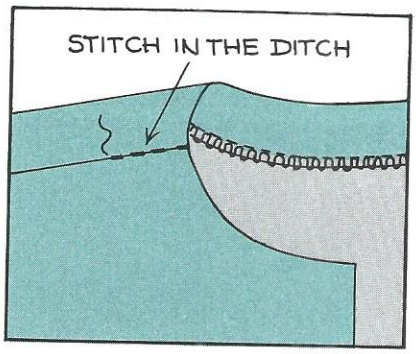


yarns will curl smoothly in one direction, just the way a cat's fur does. Stitch in that direction.

Stitch-in-the-Ditch

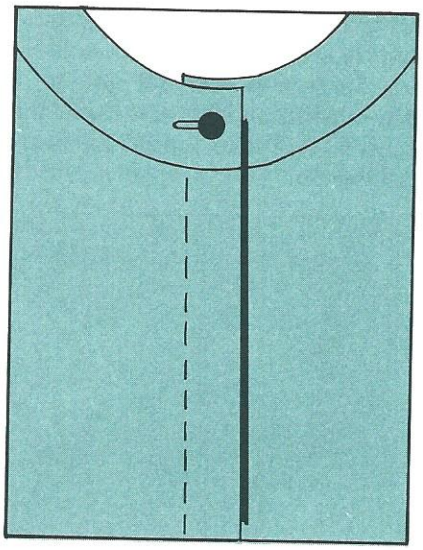
This technique is a quick way to hold layers of fabric in place at the seams. It's an effective way to secure neckline, armhole or waistband facings, as well as fold-up cuffs.

On the outside of the garment, stitch in the groove formed by the seam. Be sure to catch all the underneath layers in your stitching.



Topstitching

This is an extra row of stitching on the outside of the garment along or near a finished edge. Although topstitching is usually added as decoration, it can also be functional. For example, it can be used to attach a patch pocket or to help keep seam allowances flat on hard-to-press fabrics.



■ Use a matching or contrasting color thread, depending on how noticeable you want the stitching to be.

■ Stitch with a slightly longer stitch (3mm or 8 to 10 stitches per inch).

■ To keep your stitching straight, use one of the stitching guides as described on page 90.

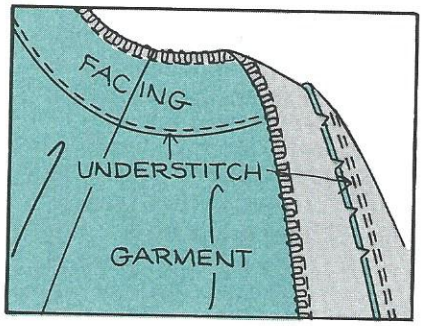
■ Before topstitching on your garment, test-stitch using the same number of layers (fashion fabric, interfacing, facing, lining, seam allowances, etc.) as your garment has. To make each stitch more pronounced, you may want to slightly loosen the needle thread tension. You may also need to adjust the presser foot pressure to accommodate the extra layers

Understitching

This row of stitching prevents an inside layer of fabric, usually a facing, from rolling to the outside of the garment.

Understitching is done after the seam allowances are trimmed, graded and clipped or notched. (See Sewing with Your Scissors, page 100.) Then:

■ Press the seam allowances toward the facing.

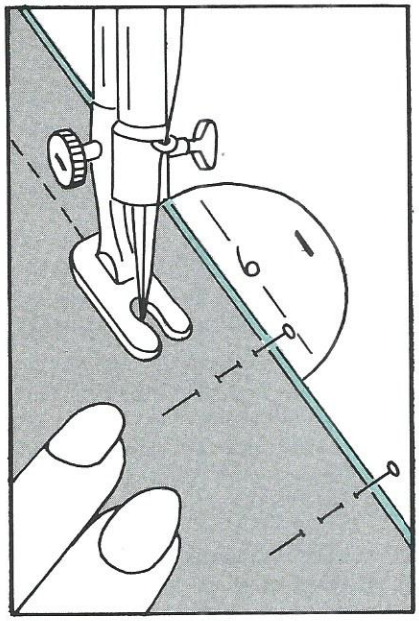


■ On the right side of the garment, stitch ⅛" (3mm) from the seamline, through the facing and seam allowances only.

BASTING

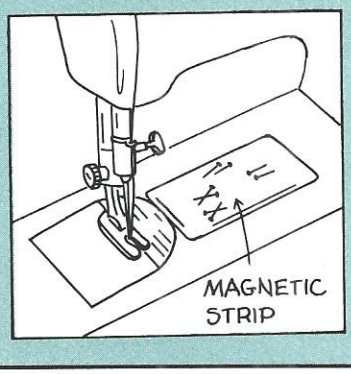
Basting refers to any of several methods that can be used to temporarily join layers of fabric until they're permanently stitched on the machine.

Pin basting is the most common method. Place pins perpendicular to the seamline, 1"–3" (2.5cm–7.5cm) apart. Insert the pins so you take small bites of fabric right at the seamline. The heads should be to the right of the presser foot so they can be efficiently removed as you stitch.

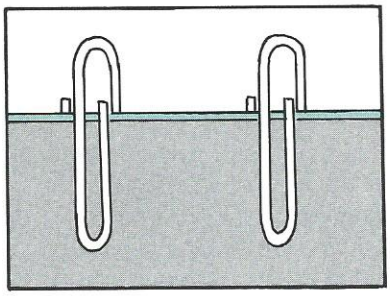


If your machine has a hinged presser foot, it IS possible to sew right over the pins but ONLY if your manual describes this feature. Otherwise, don't experiment. The sad result will be a damaged sewing machine needle that can cause all sorts of stitching problems.

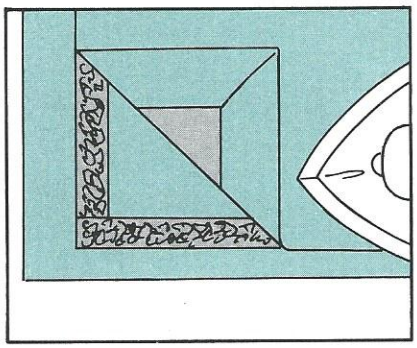
TIP *Fasten a strip of magnetic tape to the bed of your sewing machine or keep a magnetic pincushion (see page 80) close by. Use it to catch the pins as you remove them.*



Paper clips are a quick substitute for pins on bulky, hard-to-pin fabrics, such as fake fur. They're also useful for fabrics where pins would leave permanent holes, such as leather and vinyl. Never, never try to stitch over a paper clip!



Fuse basting is a fast way to hold fabric layers in place for hand finishing or topstitching. Cut a strip of fusible web the desired length. Sandwich it between the two fabric layers and fuse, holding the iron in place for only a few seconds. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for heat and steam.



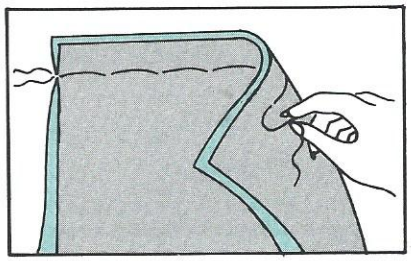
Machine basting is most often used to temporarily sew a garment together in order to check the fit.

■ Pin-baste the fabric layers together, matching the markings.

TIP *If you're doing a lot of machine basting, use different color threads in the bobbin and the needle. Later on, it will be easy to know which thread to clip and which one to pull.*

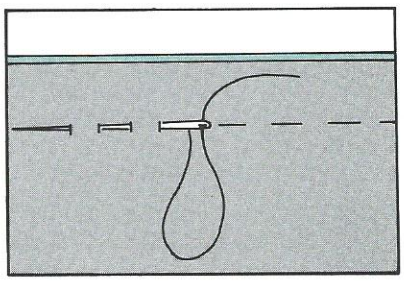
■ Loosen the needle thread tension, adjust the stitch setting to the longest length, and stitch. Don't bother to secure the stitching at the ends of the seams.

To remove the basting easily, clip the needle thread every inch (2.5cm) or so, then pull out the bobbin thread.



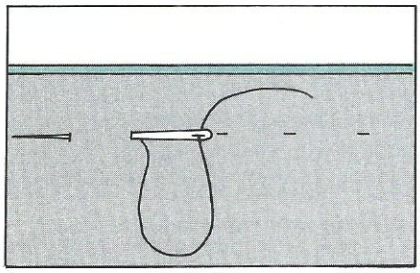
Hand basting is a very secure method of basting. It is frequently used in detail areas where pin basting would not be accurate enough or secure enough and machine basting would be difficult to do. It can also be used on sheer or very slippery fabrics.

For the firmest holding power, weave the needle in and out of the fabric so that the stitches and the spaces between them are all the same size—approximately ¼" (6mm) long.

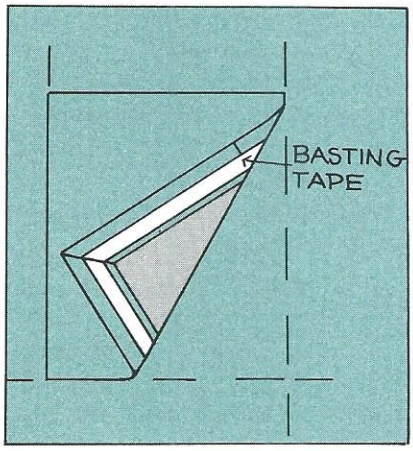


TIP *Machine basting and hand basting are also ways to transfer markings to the right side of the fabric. See page 87 for more information.*

For areas that don't need to be as secure, make the stitches ¼" (6mm) long and the spaces between them ½" to ¾" (1.3cm to 2cm) long.

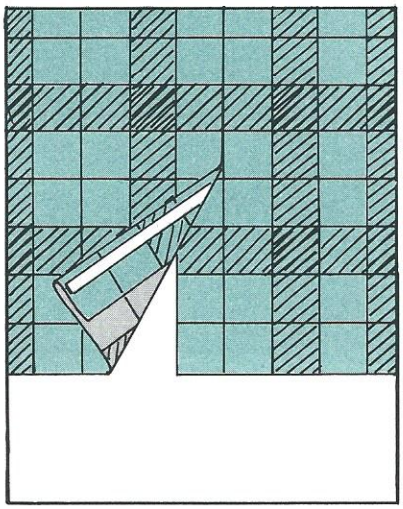


Double-faced basting tape is a valuable aid when you need to be sure that stripes or plaids match at the seamline, or for positioning detail areas such as zippers and pockets.



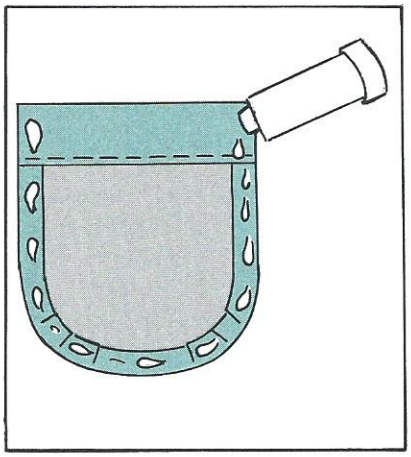
To match a stripe or plaid along a seamline:

- Press one seam allowance under at the seamline.
- Position the basting tape so that the sticky side is against the right side of the seam allowance, about ⅛" (3mm) from the fold.
- Remove the protective covering from the tape. Lap the pressed seam allowance over the unpressed one, matching both the seamline and the fabric design.



- Turn the garment sections to the wrong side, open out the folded seam allowance and stitch along the creaseline. DO NOT stitch through the tape as it will gum up your needle.

Glue stick can be used instead of basting tape. Unlike basting tape, you can stitch right through the glue without harming your needle. Just be sure you've allowed a few minutes for the glue to dry thoroughly before stitching.



SEAMS AND SEAM FINISHES

Seams are the backbone of your sewing. Happily, there's nothing to learn about seams that's difficult to grasp. Once you know the techniques, you're on your way to wonderful sewing results.

A seam is basically a line of stitching that joins two or more layers of fabric. Seams are stitched on the seamline. The seam allowance is the distance between the seamline and the cut edge. Unless your pattern instructions tell you otherwise, the standard seam allowance is ⅝" (1.5cm) wide.

SEAM TECHNIQUES

Some seams require special handling. Here are some terms and techniques you should be familiar with.

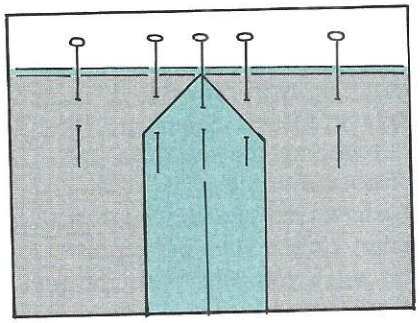
Directional Stitching

This means to stitch the way the arrows on the pattern point, in the direction of the fabric grain. Directional stitching helps keep fabrics, especially knits and napped fabrics, from stretching out of shape or curling. ALWAYS use directional stitching when you staystitch. For more information, see Staystitching, page 92.

Many sewing books will tell you to use directional stitching throughout your garment. In theory, this is a great idea. In fact, it isn't always practical when stitching seams. With some techniques and situations, you may not be able to clearly see what you're doing or you may end up with too much fabric in the smaller working space that's to the right of the machine needle. So . . . use directional stitching wherever it's practical.

Intersecting Seams

When one seam or dart will be crossed by another—for example, side seams crossed by a waist seam or the inside corners of a waistband—diagonally trim the ends of the first seam allowance or dart to reduce bulk.



Trimming and Grading

Enclosed seams, those that end up sandwiched in between two layers of fabric, must be trimmed and graded to reduce bulk or thickness. Enclosed seams are frequently found at the outer edges of collars and cuffs, as well as along any faced edges. See Sewing with Your Scissors, page 100, for more about trimming and grading techniques.

Gathered or Eased Seams

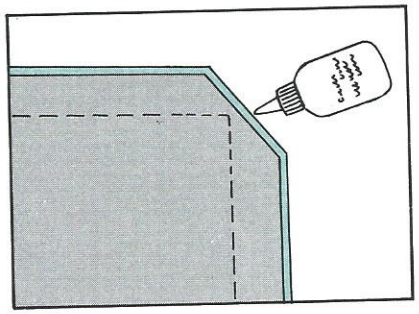
ALWAYS stitch with the gathered side up. (This is a good example of where directional stitching may not be possible!) Guide the fabric with your hands to prevent unwanted tucks or puckers from forming.

Bias Seams

To join two bias edges—such as the side seam of a bias-cut skirt—hold the fabric in front and in back of the presser foot and stretch it gently as you stitch. Although this allows the seam to "give" as you stitch, it will also relax into a smooth seam when you are finished.

Corners

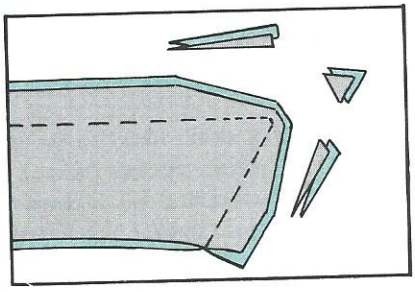
To strengthen seams at corners, shorten the stitch length for about 1" (2.5cm) on either side of the corner. This reinforcement stitching helps prevent the corner from fraying after it is trimmed and turned right side out.



TIP *If your fabric frays a lot, seal the corner with a dot of liquid seam sealant after you've trimmed it.*

For outward corners, trim diagonally.

For sharp outward corners, for example, on a collar point, take one or two diagonal stitches across it instead of stitching right up to the point. Trim across the point first, then trim diagonally on either side.



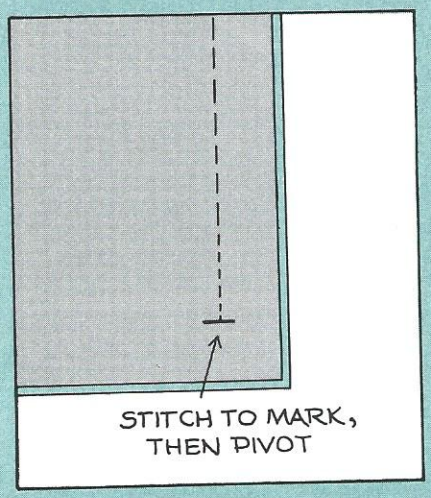
For inward corners, clip almost to the stitching.

To join an inward corner to an outward corner—for example, on a yoke—do the following:

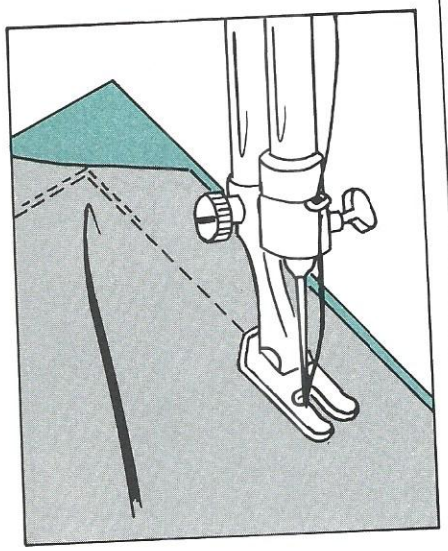
- Reinforce the inward corner with small stitches and clip just to the stitching.
- Pin the two sections together, matching seamlines and markings, with the clipped section on top.
- Stitch to the corner. Leave the needle in the fabric, raise the

TIP *The trick to perfect corners is knowing just where to pivot the fabric. The easiest way to do this is to make a mark, using chalk or a disappearing marking pencil, at the point the two seamlines intersect.*

- *Stop the machine when you come within a few stitches of this mark. Then, use the hand wheel to form the next few stitches until the needle is exactly at the mark.*
- *With the needle still in the fabric, raise the presser foot. Pivot the fabric to bring it into the correct position for stitching the seam on the second side of the corner, lower the presser foot and continue stitching.*



presser foot and pivot the fabric so that the clipped edge spreads apart and the cut edges of the fabric match.



■ Lower the presser foot and continue stitching.

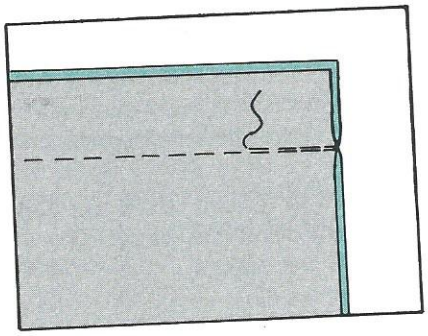
TYPES OF SEAMS

Although the plain seam is the one that you'll use most often, there are other choices. You might want a specific decorative look or you might be using a fabric that requires some special handling. The plain seam usually requires a seam finish. However, many of the other seams highlighted here incorporate the seam finish into the seam technique.

Remember: your pattern instructions will probably utilize a plain seam but you have the option of changing that. Consult Fabrics, pages 39–43, for some suggestions. Be sure to make a sample seam in some scraps of your fabric before you begin.

Plain Seam

■ With right sides together, stitch along the seamline, which is usually 5/8" (1.5cm) from the cut edge, with a regulation-length stitch. For knits, stretch the fabric slightly as you sew.



■ Press the seam flat, then open, and finish the seam allowances with the appropriate finish.

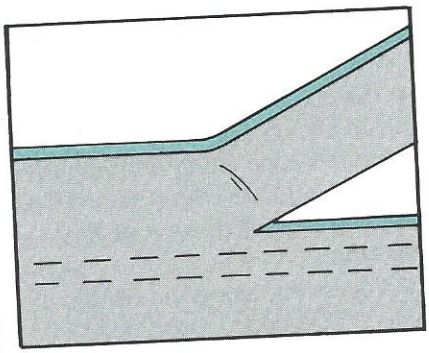
Double-stitched Seam

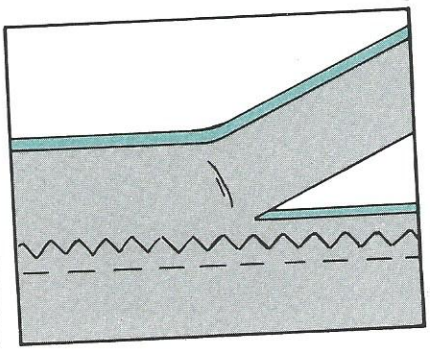
This is a combination seam and edge finish that creates a narrow seam especially good for sheers and knits. To prevent the fabric from raveling, it's stitched twice.

■ Stitch a plain seam.

■ Stitch again, 1/8" (3mm) away, within the seam allowance, using a straight or zigzag stitch.

■ Trim close to the second row of stitching.





TIP *If you're using a machine zigzag, overcast, or overlock stitch to finish your plain seams, plan ahead. Finish all the seam allowances at one time, before stitching the seams.*

■ Press the seam flat to set the stitches, then to one side.

Stretch Knit Seams

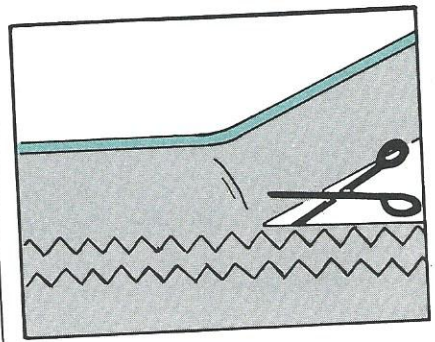
Stretch knits need seams that are supple enough to "give" with the fabric. You can sew them with straight stitches, zigzag stitches, one of the stretch stitches built in to many conventional machines, or on your overlock machine.

Here are some variations, utilizing the straight stitch and the zigzag stitch:

■ Stitch a plain seam, stretching the fabric slightly as you sew.

■ For extra strength, stitch a double-stitched seam.

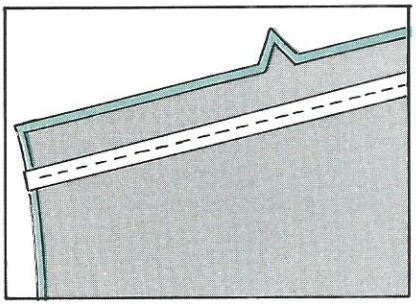
■ For even greater strength, straight-stitch along the seamline or use a narrow, medium-length zigzag stitch. Then zigzag 1/4" (6mm) away, within the seam allowance, and trim close to the last stitching.



If your machine has a built-in stretch stitch, consult your owner's manual for instructions. Usually, the seam allowance must be trimmed before stitching.

Stabilizing Knit Seams

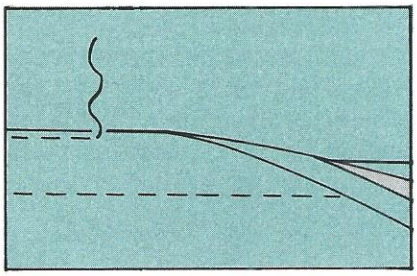
Seams at the neckline, shoulders and waistlines should NOT stretch or the knit garment will lose its shape. Stabilize them by stitching seam binding or twill tape into the seams.



Flat-felled Seam

The flat-felled seam is frequently used on sportswear, menswear and reversible garments.

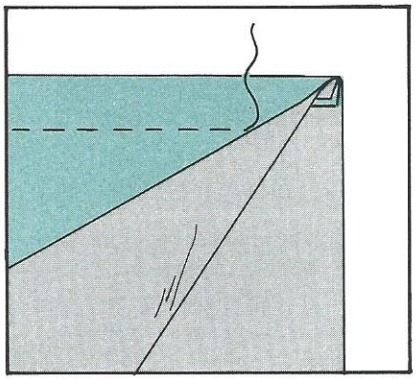
- With WRONG sides of the fabric together, stitch a plain seam and press the seam allowances to one side.
- Trim the underneath seam allowance to ⅛″ (3mm).
- Turn under ¼″ (6mm) of the top seam allowance and baste it in place over the trimmed edge. (For quick sewing, use pins or glue stick.)
- Edgestitch close to the fold.



French Seam

This seam adds a couture look to the inside of garments made from sheers and lightweight silks. The finished seam, which should be very narrow, completely encloses the raw edges of the seam allowances.

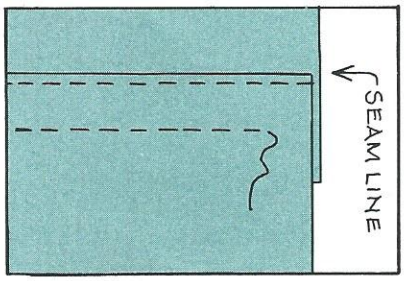
- With the WRONG sides together, stitch a ⅜″ (1cm) seam.
- Trim the seam allowances to a scant ⅛″ (3mm), then press them open.
- Fold the fabric right sides together along the stitching line; press.
- Stitch ¼″ (6mm) from the fold. Press the seam allowances flat, then to one side.



Lapped Seam

This type of seam is frequently used on nonwoven fabrics, such as synthetic suede and leather, as well as real suede and leather, because their edges do not fray.

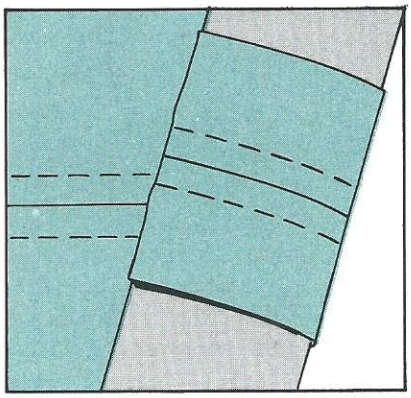
- Trim away the seam allowance on the upper (overlap) section.
- Lap the edge over the underneath section, placing the trimmed edge along the seamline; hold it in place with double-faced basting tape, glue stick or fuse basting.
- Edgestitch along the trimmed edge. Topstitch on the overlap, ¼″ (6mm) away from the first stitching.



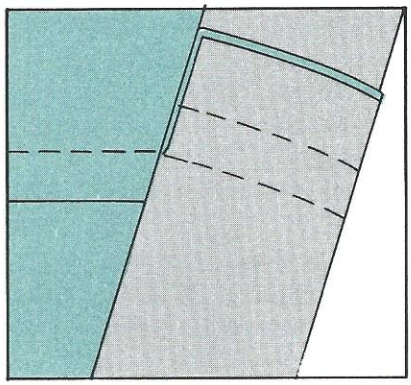
Topstitched Seam

This treatment accents the seamlines. It also helps keep the seam allowances flat—a great benefit when you're working with crease-resistant fabrics.

- Stitch a plain seam and press it open.
- Working on the outside of the garment, topstitch on both sides of the seam, ⅛″–¼″ (3mm–6mm) from the seamline.



As an alternative, stitch a plain seam, press the seam allowances to one side and topstitch ⅛″–¼″ (3mm–6mm) from the seam, through all layers.



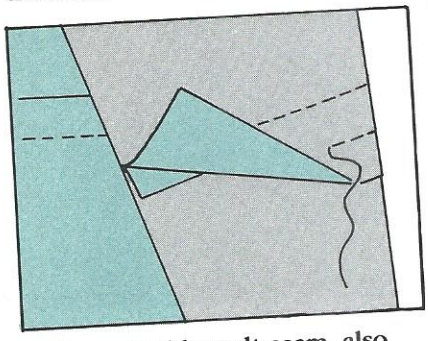
Welt Seam

This type of seam is a good way to reduce bulk and hold seam allowances flat on heavyweight fabrics. From the outside, it looks like a topstitched seam; the double-welt version looks like a flat-felled seam.

■ Stitch a plain seam and press the seam allowances to one side.

■ Trim the underneath seam allowance to a scant ¼" (6mm).

■ On the outside, topstitch ¼" (6mm) from the seam, catching the untrimmed seam allowance.



■ For a double-welt seam, also edgestitch close to the seamline.

SEAM FINISHES

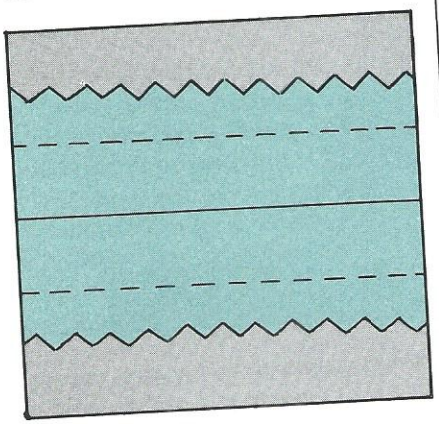
To prevent raveling and add durability, plain seams usually require some type of seam finish. If the garment is going to be lined, or if the fabric is very tightly woven, no seam finish is required.

Here are some easy-to-do seam finishes. They can also be used as an edge finish on facings and hems.

Stitch and Pink

This is the quickest method for finishing fabrics that do not ravel easily.

■ Stitch ¼" (6mm) from each seam allowance edge.

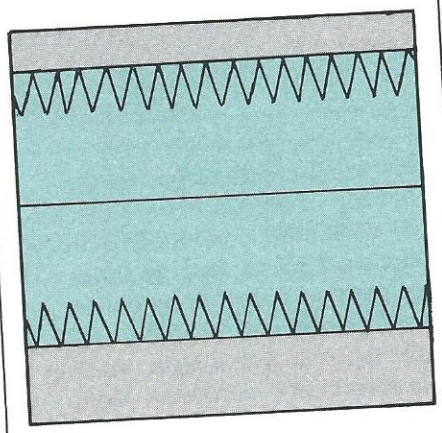


■ Trim close to the stitching with pinking shears.

Zigzag

This is a good choice for most fabrics, including heavyweight ones that ravel. Experiment with the stitch width, using a smaller stitch width for lightweight fabrics and a larger one for heavyweights.

■ Zigzag over, or as close as possible to, each raw edge.

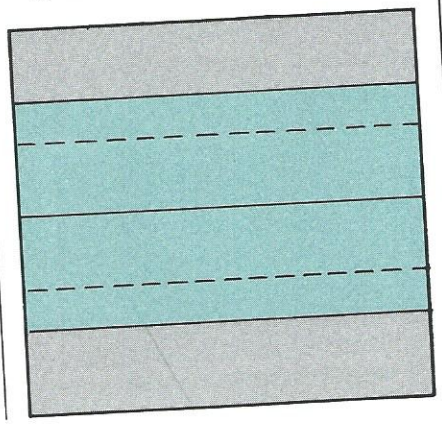


■ If your machine has an overcast stitch, you can use it in place of the zigzag stitch.

Straight-stitch

Use this finish on knits that curl, including swimwear fabrics, jersey and stretch terry. To minimize curling, finish the seams *before* stitching them.

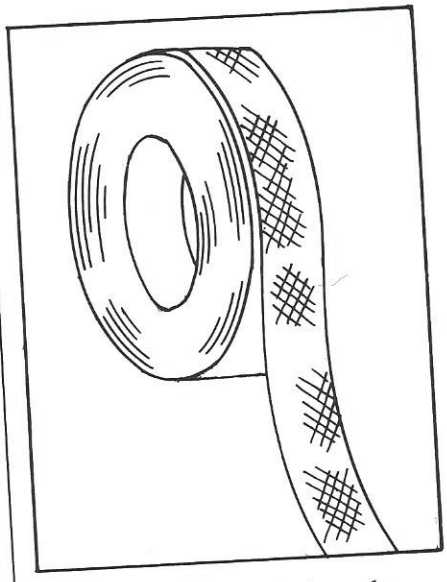
■ Stitch ¼" (6mm) from the raw edges.



TIP *Don't use pinking shears on knit fabrics. It's unnecessary work—and may cause the fabric to curl.*

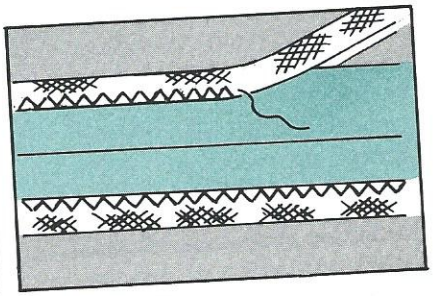
Tricot Bound

This is a custom finish that's suitable for any fabric. However, if the fabric ravels a great deal, bind the seam allowances before stitching the seams. Use a sheer, lightweight tricot seam binding, such as Seams Great® or Seams Saver™. To make sure you are applying it so the tape automatically curls around the seam allowance, hold the tricot up and tug on the ends.



■ Position the tape so it curls around the seam allowance and secure it at the start with a pin.

■ Take one or two machine stitches, remove the pin and con-

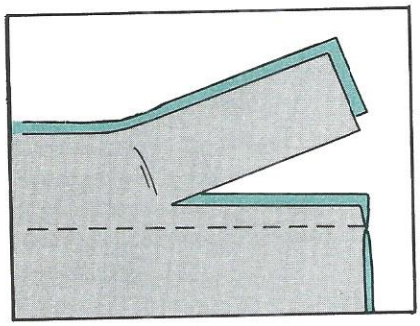


tinue to stitch, gently stretching the tape so it encases the fabric. As you stitch, you'll be sewing through both edges of tape at once. You can use a straight stitch, but for best results, particularly on fabrics that ravel, use a narrow zigzag stitch.

SEWING WITH YOUR SCISSORS

Not all good sewing techniques are centered around the sewing machine. Your scissors are an invaluable aid to professional results. Thanks to them, your garment can have crisper corners, flatter edges, and smoother curves and seams.

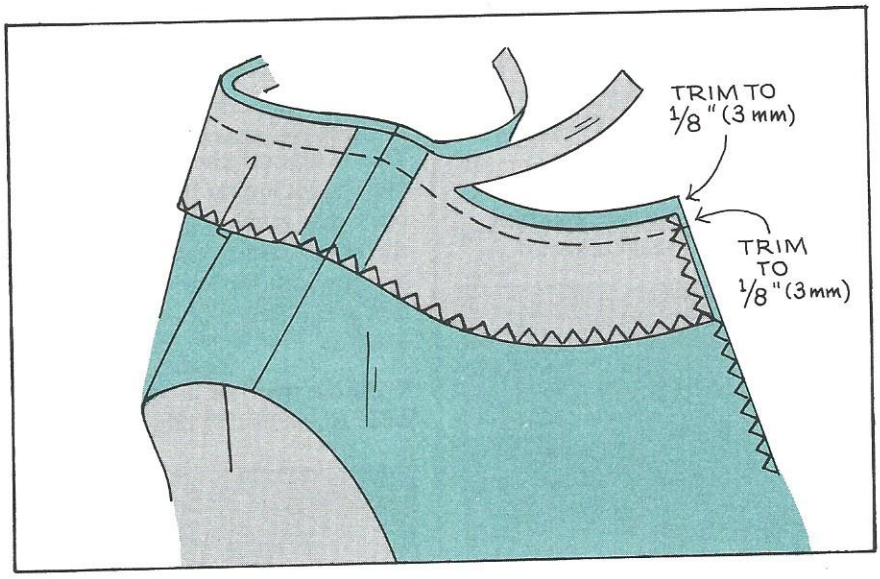
Trimming simply means to cut away some of the seam allowance. Do this:



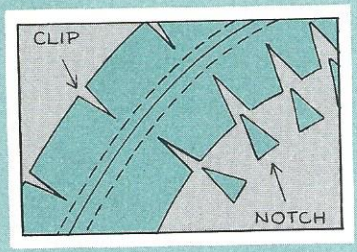
- in areas such as the underarm section of an armhole seam, where the wider seam allowance would interfere with the fit.
- when a special seam technique, such as French seams or welt seams, requires it.
- on enclosed seams as a preliminary step to grading.
- to eliminate excess fabric at the seam allowances of corners and points. That way, they will be smooth and flat once they're turned right side out.

Grading refers to the process of trimming each seam allowance to a different width so that the layers won't create ridges on the outside of the garment. This technique is most commonly used on enclosed seams, such as those sometimes found along collar, cuff, pocket and faced edges. If the fabric is lightweight, grading is usually not necessary—trimming is enough. However, if the fabric is medium to heavy weight, all enclosed seams must be trimmed AND graded. Corners require special treatment: see page 96.

To grade, trim the seam allowance that will end up closest to the inside of the garment to ⅛" (3mm); trim the seam allowance that will be closest to the outside of the garment to ¼" (6mm). The wider seam allowance acts as a cushion for the narrower one.

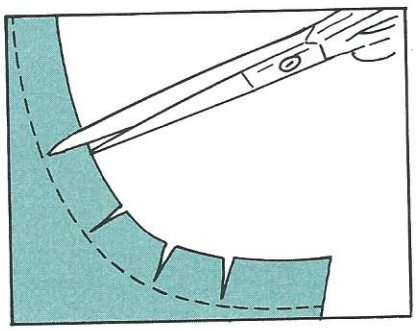


TIP *For a stronger seam, or when joining an inward curve to an outward curve, staystitch each curve a scant ⅛" (3mm) inside the seamline. Pin or baste the garment sections together and stitch the seam. Then, being careful not to cut through the staystitching, clip one seam allowance to release the fabric and notch the other to eliminate excess fullness.*



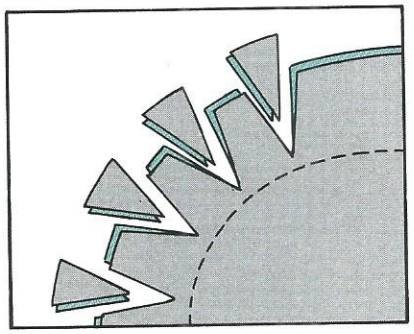
Clipping and notching are techniques used to make curved seams lie flat.

- On inside, or concave, curves, make little clips, or snips, in the seam allowance just to, but not through, the stitching.



- On outward, or convex, curves, cut wedge-shaped notches from

the seam allowance to eliminate excess fullness when the seam is pressed open.



SEWING WITH AN OVERLOCK MACHINE

Overlock . . . serger . . . merrowing machine—these are all synonymous for a sewing machine that stitches the seam, trims off the excess fabric, and overcasts the raw edges, all at the same time. Seams on the overlock come out so narrow they don't need to be trimmed and graded; shallow curves lay flat without any notching or clipping.

To get the most out of your overlock machine, you'll want to use it hand-in-hand with your conventional machine. You can't entirely replace one machine with the other . . . but together there is almost no commercial sewing technique that you can't duplicate.

Like the other general sewing information included in this chapter, what follows here are the basics you need to know about operating your overlock. Chapter 6 will show you how overlock techniques can be used in place of conventional techniques. In addition, it will show you how to combine overlock techniques with conventional techniques so you get the best of both sewing worlds.

Discover the fabulous world of OVERLOCK/SERGER sewing

- **FAST** . . . Sew a seam or finish an edge at twice the speed of the fastest conventional home sewing machine.
- **EFFICIENT** . . . stitch, trim and overcast a seam in one simple step.
- **PROFESSIONAL** . . . provides a true ready-to-wear look.
- **DECORATIVE** . . . an easy way to create special effects on seams and edges.
- **FLEXIBLE** . . . from sportswear to evening wear, perfect for knits, silks, synthetics, heavy coatings and actionwear fabrics.
- **VERSATILE** . . . the best of all sewing worlds; use the overlock serger alone or as a supplement to your conventional machine.