JANOME SEWING GUIDE

The ultimate guide to essential sewing tools and techniques

10 EASY SEWING GUIDES

INSERTING ZIPS

Familiarise yourself with this essential sewing technique

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BUTTONHOLES

Learn how to add one-step buttonholes to garments

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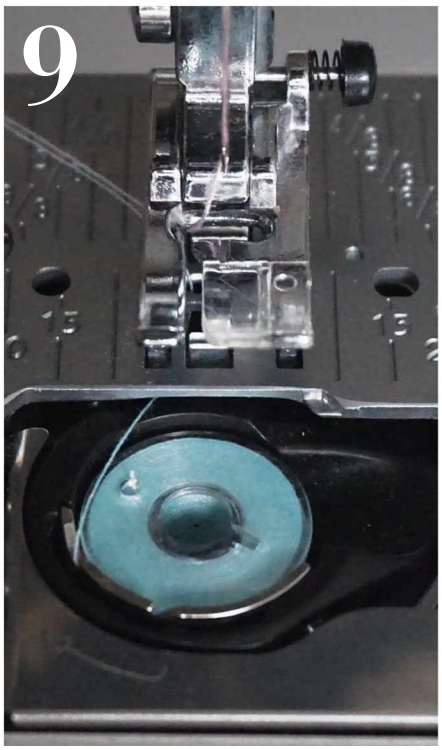
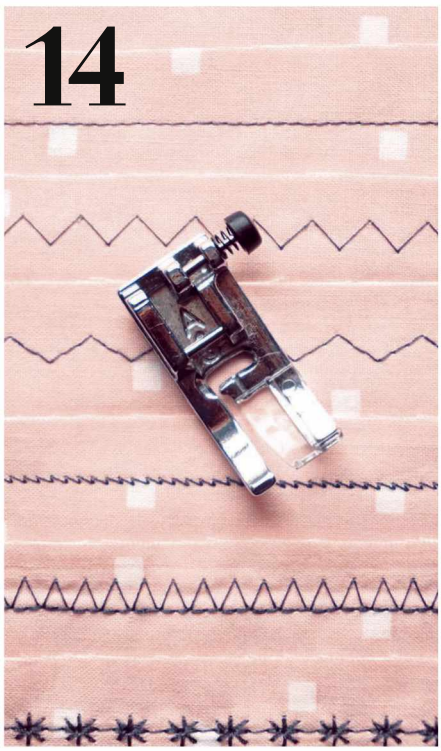
A SHARED PASSION

With the season of sewing in full swing, we're delighted to bring you this keepsake book, made in collaboration with our pals and sponsors at *Janome*. Whether you're a beginner or a pro, you'll find this handy book is destined to become your first point of reference! From working out which machine foot to use for zip insertion, to choosing the right needle for the job, we've got it covered. We've included step-by-step guides to some essential dressmaking skills too – from buttonholes and zips, to seams and hemming. Together, *Simply Sewing* and *Janome* are here to support you on the next leg of your sewing journey. Enjoy!

Charlie

Charlie Moorby, Editor





Simply Sewing
FRESH IDEAS WITH FABRIC

MEET THE TEAM

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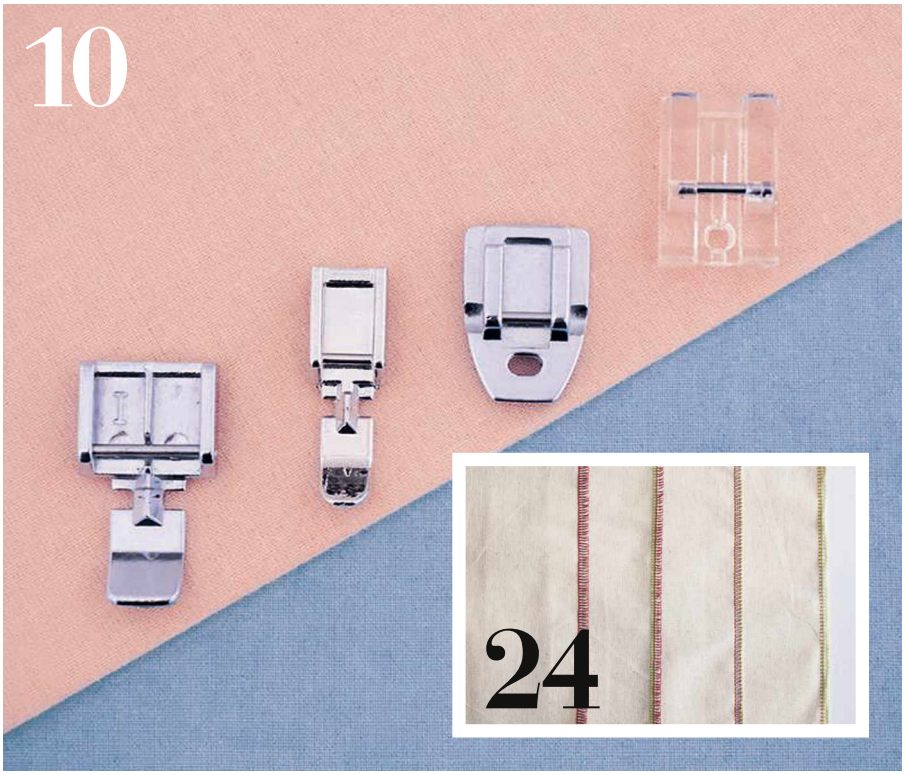


YOUR MACHINE

Familiarise yourself with the basic functions of your sewing machine with this handy at-a-glance guide.

PRESSER FOOT PRESSURE DIAL
Adjust the dial when working with particularly fine or heavyweight fabrics.
1-3 for fine fabrics
3-6 for medium fabrics
5-6 for heavy fabrics.

THREAD FEED
Your spool of thread sits at the top of the machine. The thread goes through a series of guides before it reaches the needle. These are usually numbered on the machine to make this easier (your manual will show you in detail how to thread your machine).

BACKSTITCHING
This button allows you to stitch in reverse. Sew a few stitches at the start and end of your seam to secure the stitching.

TENSION DIAL
Use this dial to adjust the tension, depending on your fabric. The higher the number, the tighter the top thread tension will be. Results will depend on fabric type, number of layers and type of stitch.

NEEDLE
Most machines come with a needle already in place (and a replacement), but your manual will show you how to swap it for a different one. When sewing speciality fabrics (for example, jersey or denim) you should change to a speciality needle to ensure the best results.

PRESSER FOOT
This attachment holds the fabric in place as you sew. A lever moves it up to position the fabric, and back down when sewing. The basic presser foot is the one you'll use most, though there are also speciality feet, such as for buttonholes or blind hems.

BOBBIN
This plastic or metal spool sits in a unit underneath the sewing area. Check your machine's manual for how to load the bobbin. And make sure you only use bobbins designed for your specific machine.

LUXURY FEATURES

If you are thinking of upgrading your machine, these are some of my favourite extra features.

Thread cutter
This small button is an absolute game changer and huge time saver. Use it to cut your threads after sewing each seam instead of cutting it manually.

Needle threader
If you struggle to see to thread the needle, then a machine that comes with a needle threader is a really useful extra to have on your machine.

LCD display
Having a computerised machine allows for more accuracy with stitch selection and quite often will highlight if anything has gone wrong.

BOBBIN WINDER
Sewing machines use both a top thread and bobbin thread to create stitches. Follow the manual to wind your bobbin correctly.

HAND WHEEL
Use the hand wheel to move the needle up and down manually. This is essential for controlling the stitching line in tight spots and corners. To avoid your thread getting caught or tangled, be sure to always turn the wheel towards you. When winding bobbins, you may need to disengage the needle action by pulling out the hand wheel (consult your manual for how to do this on your individual machine).

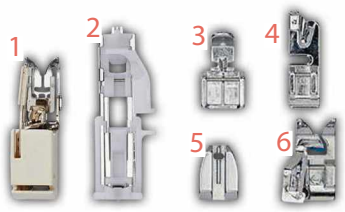
STITCH WIDTH
This allows you to change the stitch width. You can use this to widen or narrow a zigzag stitch or move the needle position over.

STITCH LENGTH
This allows you to change the stitch length. For standard seams, aim for a setting of 2.4 or 2.6. Use a longer stitch length for tacking or gathering.

STITCH SELECTOR
The method used to change the type of stitch varies between machines. For most projects, you'll just need to use the basic straight stitch and zigzag stitch.

MUST-HAVE FEET
With these six feet in your collection, you can tackle most sewing projects.

1 Walking foot
2 Buttonhole foot
3 Zip foot
4 Rolled hem foot
5 Invisible zip foot
6 Knit foot



MACHINE NEEDLES

Fitting your machine with the right needle is a must for smooth stitching, so follow our guide to selecting the best needle type for the task.

Those new to machine sewing may have only ever used the universal needle, but it isn't always the right one for every project. Sewing with the appropriate needle for thread, fabric and stitch type can help prevent stitching problems and broken needles. Janome have specific needles for all your sewing needs, which you can see in more detail in their downloadable accessories' booklet at **www.janome.co.uk/feet-and-acc-catalogue.**

SIZING IT UP

Needles are labelled with two numbers – the larger number is the European metric size, and the smaller number is the American size. The lower the number, the finer the needle.

NEEDLE TYPES

Needles differ by the shape of the point, eye and shaft thickness. Here, we take you through 12 of the common needle types you'll need for a variety of projects.

THE ANATOMY OF A NEEDLE

Shank This is locked into place with the needle clamp screw. It is flat on the back and rounded on the front.

Groove The slit on the front of the needle above the eye that protects the thread as the needle stitches.

Point The tip that pierces the fabric. The length and sharpness varies depending on the needle type.

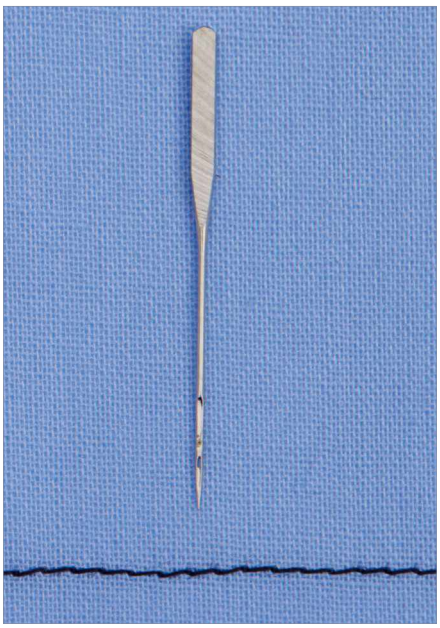
Shaft The part of the needle below the shank. The diameter of the shaft determines the needle size.

Scarf The small indentation on the back of the needle. A long scarf helps to avoid any skipped stitches.

Eye The hole that the thread goes through from front to back. The shape changes depending on the type of needle.

NEEDLE SIZE GUIDE

EUROPEAN SIZE	AMERICAN SIZE	FABRIC
60	8	Silks
70	10	Lightweight fabrics
75	11	Medium weight fabrics
80	12	Medium weight fabrics
90	14	Medium weight fabrics
100	16	Heavy weight fabrics
110	18	Upholstery fabrics/denim
120	20	Heavy canvas

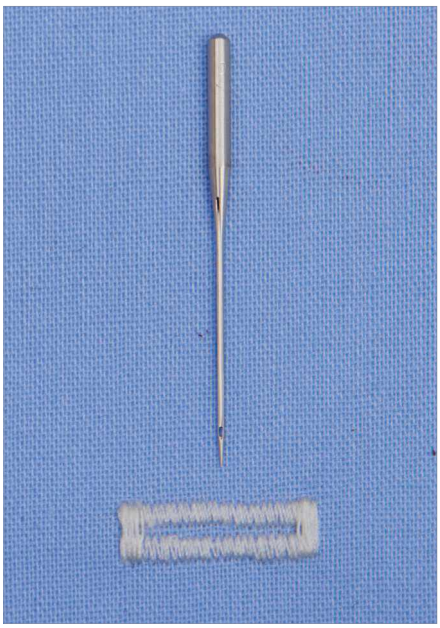


UNIVERSAL

This needle has a slightly rounded point for stitching knits, but can also be used for woven fabrics. The finer points are ideal for lightweight fabrics, but choose a larger point for heavier weights. You can use polyester, cotton or silk threads. Keep a stock of sizes to hand.

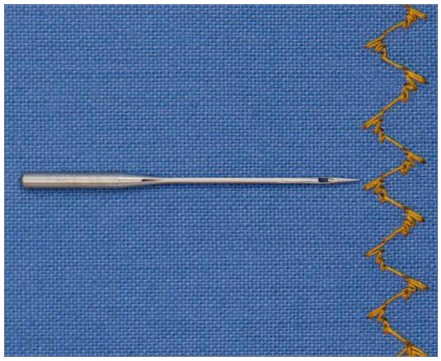
BALLPOINT

This one has a more rounded point than the universal needle, so is only to be used for knit fabrics. The needle slides between the fabric threads rather than piercing them, so you won't get snags, ladders or holes. Good for jersey fabric and fleece, as well as heavy knits.



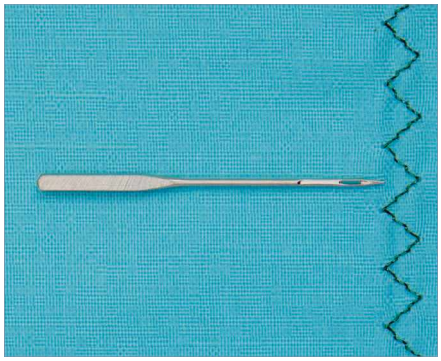
SHARPS

The sharp point and narrow strengthened shaft will pierce several layers of fabric. Ideal for straight stitching, particularly topstitching, on very fine and delicate fabrics. The sharp point makes it perfect for stitching neat buttonholes where the stitches are worked close together.



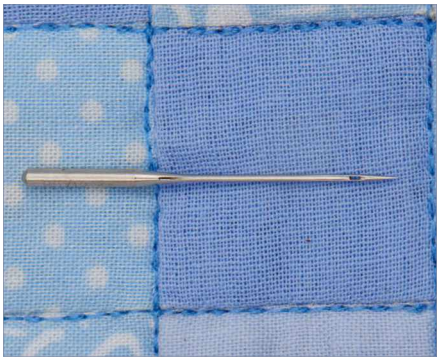
EMBROIDERY

This needle has a large eye and a scarf designed to protect the thread whilst stitching dense patterns at high speed. This helps to stop the thread breaking during stitching. This type be used for machine embroidery on any fabric, and is ideal to use with rayon threads.



METALLIC

This has a larger eye than the machine embroidery needle, so is designed to be used with heavier threads. It has a large groove and a special scarf that protects the thread to stop it shedding and breaking. It's used for stitching with metallic thread on any fabric.

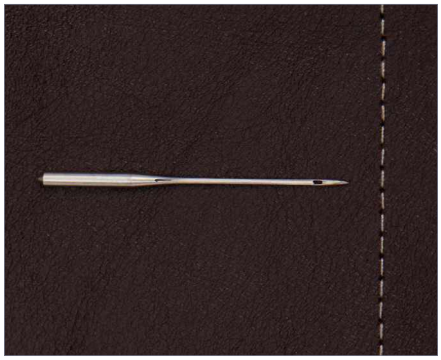


QUILTING

This has a sharp and tapered point with a longer shaft, so it can pierce multiple layers whilst keeping straight stitches. It is designed for stitching though several layers of fabric and seams without the needle deflecting so is ideal for patchwork and machine quilting.

JEANS

This has a strong shank, so it won't break easily, and a very sharp point. It's perfect for stitching several layers of fabric as well as densely woven fabrics like denim, canvas, workwear and heavy twill or linen. Use synthetic or cotton threads or a heavier topstitching thread.

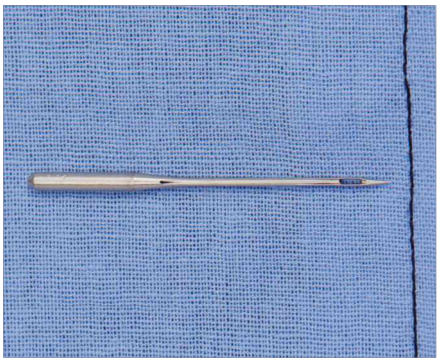


LEATHER

With a wedge-shaped cutting point, this needle is used to work strong seams on non-woven fabrics such as leather, suede and vinyl. It is not to be used with woven or knit fabrics such as synthetic suedes and PU imitation leathers as it may tear the fabric and not seam properly.

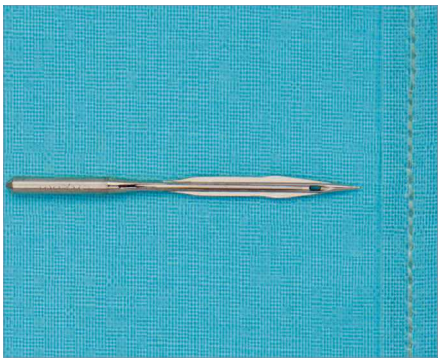
STRETCH

Stretch needles have a deep scarf, which allows the bobbin thread to get close to the eye and therefore prevents skipped stitches on fine knit fabrics. It's designed for two-way stretch knits such as silk jersey and spandex, and is also ideal for synthetic suede and sewing elastic.



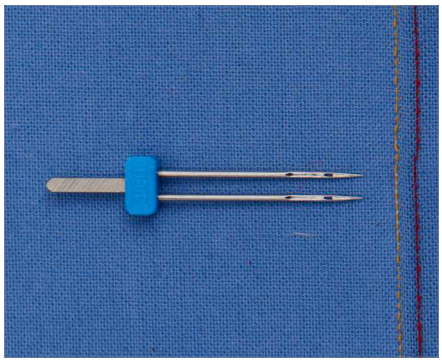
TOPSTITCH

This has an extra-sharp point and an extra-large eye and groove so thicker topstitching thread can be used. This needle is perfect for working straight stitching with thicker threads on any fabric and the stitches will be even and regular. Use a contrasting or matching thread colour.



HEMSTITCH

The wing blade on the side of this needle cuts a narrow hole in your fabric. It's perfect for stitching hems and other decorative stitches on closely woven fabrics, such as pure linen. Often used for heirloom stitching on tablecloths and napkins or for sheets and pillowcases.



TWIN AND TRIPLE

These have two or three needles, which extend from a single shank. Twin needles are available in a variety of different needle types, but the triple only as a universal. The size of the needle is measured from tip to tip. They are used for sewing parallel rows such as pintucks and hems.

MACHINE THREADS

Approach your next project with confidence using our handy guide to sewing threads.

Alongside your sewing machine and your fabric, thread is one of the most essential parts of any project. It can be tempting to overlook thread and use a bad quality one or a spool that you've had in your stash for years, but using the correct thread for your project is important, as is using good-quality thread. Many of us will select thread simply by searching for a colour to match our fabric, but understanding the different types of thread and their compositions is crucial to achieve a smooth stitch.

CHOOSING YOUR THREAD

Although an all-purpose polyester thread will work well on most material, the general rule is to use the same type of thread as the fabric. So, for example, if you're sewing with 100% cotton material, use 100% cotton thread and match the thread weight to your fabric. Sometimes your sewing pattern or instructions will give you advice on which type of thread you should use. If you can't find an exact colour match, choose a thread one or two shades darker than the fabric, as light thread will stand out more. If you do a lot of work that requires perfectly matched colours, some thread companies sell shade charts which can help. You also need to consider the fabric stretch and thickness.

THREAD QUALITY

One of the most important things when it comes to purchasing thread is selecting a spool that is good quality. Poor quality thread that you can buy in packs can be appealing as they are often cheap however, these threads can snap easily when threaded through your machine and cause birds nests to form under your work.

READING A SPOOL

The end of the thread spool lists the fibre content, the manufacturer and colour number (invaluable if you need to buy more thread later on), and often its weight and the number of plies (strands) that are twisted together. This is usually listed with two numbers – the higher the first number, the finer the thread will be.

TYPES OF THREAD

There are several types of thread, which can be spilt into categories depending on what fibre they're made from. Within these there are different strengths (number of plies) and thicknesses (weights).

COTTON THREADS

Cotton thread has very little stretch and is great for delicate projects, but not for stretchy fabrics. Most cotton thread is mercerised, which means it's less likely to run in the wash.

POLYESTER/NYLON THREADS

These are strong threads that have some stretch. Gütermann 100% polyester thread is an all-purpose thread that comes in a vast choice of colours and is widely available. You can use it for machine sewing as well as hand stitching, and it will work with most fabrics.

JEANS THREAD

This Gütermann denim thread is designed to match the colour of blue denim and is a polyester cotton blend. It can be used to darn jeans by hand and is also a great one to add to your collection if you regularly turn up jeans or work with denim fabrics.

OVERLOCKING CONES

These large cones can contain 2,000–5,000 metres of thread on a cone. They are designed for working on overlockers and industrial machines as they will need replacing less frequently than the smaller spools designed for domestic machines.

METALLIC THREAD

This Gütermann thread is made from metal (surprise!). These glitzy threads require a metallic needle as metallic needles have a larger eye which won't be worn away by the metal in the thread. Sew slowly as these threads are very delicate and can break very easily.

SHIRRING ELASTIC

Shirring elastic is used to create multiple lines of elasticated stitching that draw in an area, usually across the bust, waist or back of a garment. The elastic needs to be wound onto your bobbin by hand to prevent it from stretching too much.

CLEAR THREAD

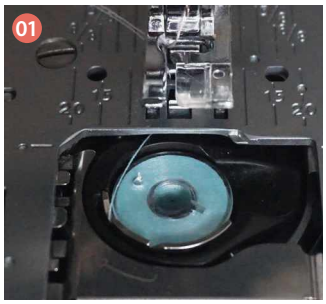
Clear/invisible threads are 100% nylon and blend invisibly with your fabric and other threads. These threads are available in clear and black. The clear thread is best used with lighter fabrics, while the black is best used with darker fabrics to blend in better.

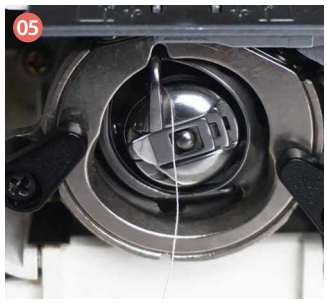
MADEIRA

Madeira are a well-loved and quality thread brand. They supply threads for the Janome Training School and come very highly recommended! Why not try their sustainable SENSA GREEN thread? **shop.madeira.co.uk/thread/sustainable_threads.**

BOBBINS

The humble bobbin is an essential part of your machine. Learn the ins and outs with our guide.





The very first domestic sewing machines for consumers were introduced in the 1860s and since then the industry has boomed for the home sewist. Despite the high price tags on some models, the core of all sewing machines is the same. A top thread and a bobbin thread entwine to form a strong stitch that connects two layers of fabric. Threading the machine is the first thing you will need to learn and winding and inserting the bobbin is the part that can slow a lot of beginner sewists down.

WINDING A BOBBIN

Step one Place an empty bobbin on the winder – refer to your manual if you can't locate yours.

Step two Place your chosen thread colour on the spool, pass it through the tension disc (there will usually be a diagram on your machine showing you the thread path for bobbin winding, if not refer to your manual). Wind the thread around the bobbin a few times in a clockwise direction and then pass the thread tail up through the hole on top of the bobbin. You don't want the thread tail to be very long or it will get caught when the bobbin is winding – trim off all but approximately 5mm (¼in) of thread.

Step three Push the bobbin winder over to the right.

Step four Put your foot down on the sewing machine pedal and the bobbin will start to wind. If your bobbin doesn't move it will be because it hasn't been properly engaged. Push the bobbin winder to the right until it is securely in place.

Step five Once the bobbin is fully wound it will come to a stop. If you know that you only need a small amount of thread on the bobbin then you can just half wind the bobbin to save your thread.

Step six Pull the bobbin winder back to its regular position on the left, then snip the thread joining it to the spool and remove the bobbin.

Step seven Thread the top thread of the machine as usual, following the thread path.

DROP-IN BOBBINS

Step one Remove the plastic cover from the bobbin compartment.

Step two Place your wound bobbin in the bobbin compartment with the thread in an anti-clockwise position.

Step three Pull the thread tail through the guide in the casing to secure (this is often indicated by an arrow on the casing or on the plastic cover). Leave a thread tail that's approximately 10cm (4in) long.

Step four Thread the top thread following the thread path marked on your machine.

Step five Hold onto the tail end of the top thread and turn the hand wheel towards you to lower the needle, continue turning the wheel towards you to raise the needle back up again. Lowering and raising the needle will cause the top thread to catch the lower bobbin thread and bring it up to the surface, it will often appear as a loop that you can then pull through with your fingers or a pair of tweezers. 01

Step six Replace the plastic cover.

FRONT-LOADING BOBBINS

Step one Open the bobbin compartment. Usually this is a drop down plastic or metal flap at the front of your machine. If you can't locate the opening refer to your manual. 02

Step two Remove the bobbin case from the machine by opening the metal latch on the front of the case.

Step three With the thread tail in a clockwise direction and the bobbin face down on your surface, place the bobbin in the case. 03

Step four Pull the thread back on itself and through the slot in the top of the case. You should hear a faint click as the thread drops into the slit under the tension spring. Gently pull on the thread to ensure there is tension being applied to it. If the thread unravels really easily it probably isn't in the case properly. 04

Step five Pull out the latch then load the bobbin case into the machine. You will notice that when you pull the latch out the bobbin won't fall out of the case. The hole in the centre of the case sits on the pin in the machine, and the bobbin case 'ear' (the bit at the top that sticks out) also slots into a notch in the outer ring of the machine casing. Push until the bobbin clicks into place. 05

Step six Hold the end of the top thread and with your right hand turn the hand wheel towards you to lower and raise the needle. The top thread will catch the bobbin thread and bring it to the surface. It will appear as a loop that you can then pull through with your fingers or tweezers. 06

EASY SET BOBBIN CASE AND COVER

Many Janome machines have a specially designed bobbin case and cover, so there's no need to pull long thread tails up when you first thread the machine. Slip the bobbin thread in the cover plate guide; the built-in cutting blades trim the tail to the correct length for a super-clean start to your stitching. After the initial threading, the auto thread cutter takes care of trimming and re-setting the tails each time!

KNOW YOUR ZIP FEET

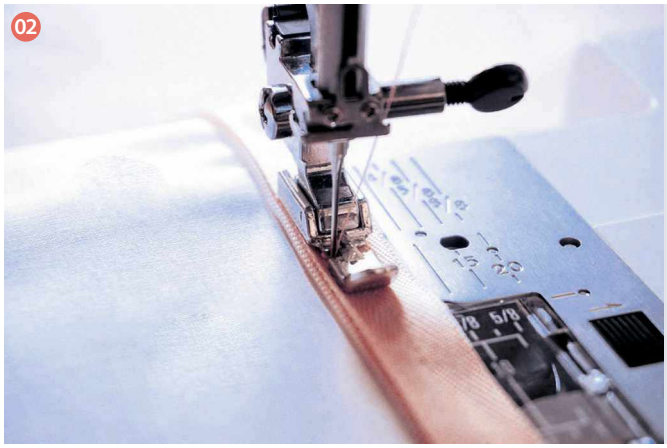
Inserting a zip is an essential skill to learn in dressmaking. Read on to learn the best presser feet to use for the job.

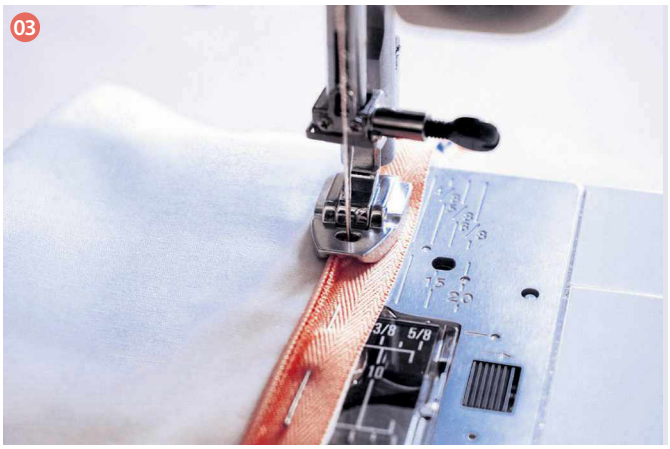
When you're struggling to master a seam or a fabric isn't playing ball, a specialist presser foot could be the solution. In this guide, we're looking at the different types of presser feet for inserting zips. Zips are often the most feared closure for beginner dressmakers, but using a specialist zip foot can save you a lot of stress! Here, we talk you through four different types of zip feet and how to use them.

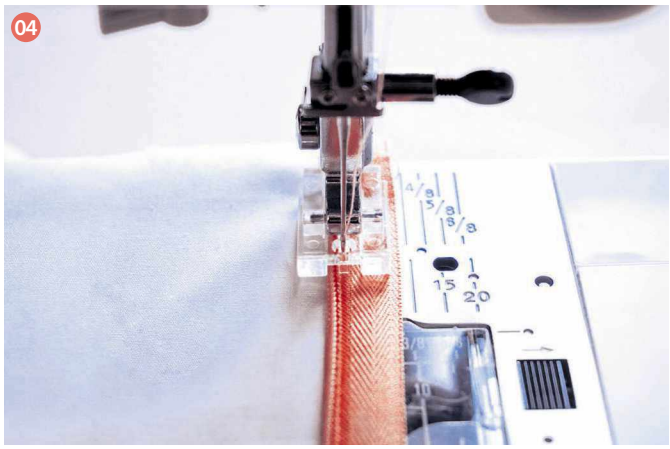
TOP TIPS

Chosen the right presser foot? Follow these tips for stress-free zip insertion.

1. Always check which type of presser foot you need for your specific machine. Our machine takes clip-on feet which are common with modern electric and computerised machines. Some machines will have feet that need to be screwed into place and others will have a brand-specific foot type.
2. Once you have attached your chosen presser foot, carefully turn the hand wheel towards you to check that the needle will not hit the foot when you begin to sew. Needle position can be adjusted on some machines, if you are unable to change the needle position you will need to use an alternative presser foot.
3. To raise and lower the needle make sure you always turn the hand wheel towards you.
4. Thread tails are the enemy of zips! Always trim any thread tails before closing a zip. If thread gets caught in the zip teeth it can damage them.
5. Use a cool iron and a pressing cloth when pressing over zips to avoid melting the plastic.







ZIP FOOT

The zip foot is used to stitch dress/skirt zips in place. The foot is designed to allow you to get nice and close to the zip teeth. The foot can also be used to insert piping or to sew seams that are bulkier on one side than the other. The foot has a double bar so it can be attached to either side of the presser foot holder depending on which side of the zip you are sewing. Notice that in the image the needle position has been adjusted to get closer to the zip teeth. 01

NARROW ZIP FOOT

The narrow zip foot is similar in function to the zip foot. However, instead of switching its position on the presser foot holder this foot simply requires you to change the position of the needle depending on which side of the zip you are sewing. Therefore, a machine with the capability to change the needle position is essential to use this foot. The back of the narrow zip foot is, as you may have guessed, narrower than the regular zip foot. This allows you to get nice and close to edge you are stitching against for a closer fit. This foot can be used to sew piping cord into binding, or to neatly topstitch close to the edge of your work. In the image the needle position has not been altered to sew with the narrow zip foot meaning that the foot allows for greater precision than the standard width zip foot. 02

INVISIBLE ZIP FOOT

The invisible zip foot is used to sew invisible zips into place, this foot has two grooves underneath (either side of the needle hole) for the zip teeth to pass through. The hole for the needle will sit just to the left or right of the zip teeth, allowing you to stitch as close as possible to the zip teeth for a neat finish when the zip is closed. 03

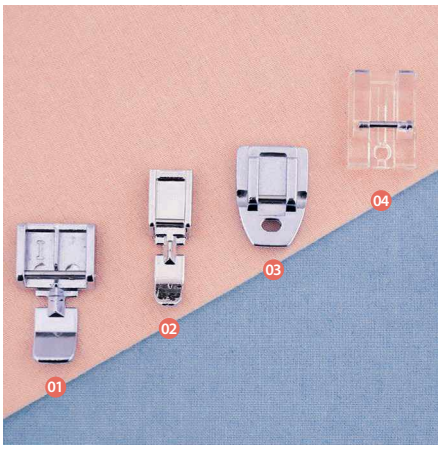
CLEAR INVISIBLE ZIP FOOT

This foot serves exactly the same purpose as the invisible zip foot, except, as the name suggests, it's clear. This allows you to see what is happening under the foot as you sew, so if the zip teeth have slipped out of the groove you will know before the section emerges from the back of the foot. This is a handy foot to have and is our preferred invisible zip foot, however if you have a metal invisible zip foot there really is no need to buy an extra foot that performs the same task, it's just an optional extra you might find useful if, like us, you frequently insert zips. 04

WHICH ZIP FOOT SHOULD I BUY?

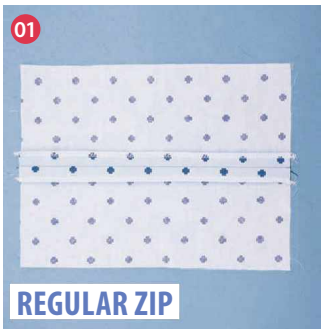
While these four zip feet all perform similar tasks it will be useful to have a zip foot and an invisible zip foot in your sewing box. Which type of feet you choose is up to you. Personally, the narrow zip foot and the clear invisible zip foot would be my first choice of each. Most machines come with the regular zip foot and this is a great foot to practise with. If you find that getting a little closer to the zip teeth would improve the look of your project (which it often does) then a narrow zip foot could be for you.

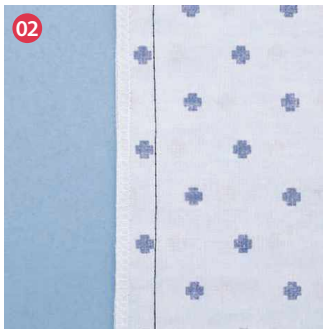
The two invisible zip feet shown here are essentially the exact same tool, one is made from metal and the other clear plastic. For ease I would opt for clear plastic as it never hurts to be able to see underneath the presser foot. However, if you have a metal invisible zip foot see how you get on with some test seams – with practice you should be able to feel when the zip teeth have slipped out from the groove on the underside of the foot.

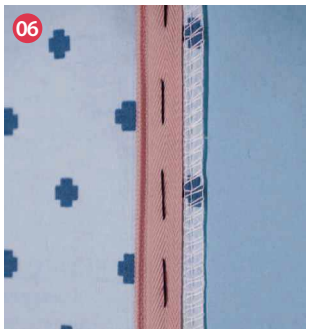


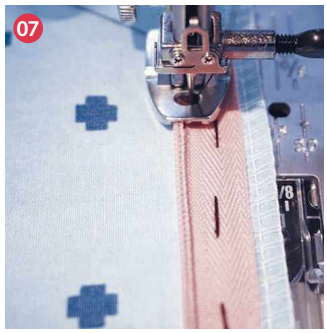
INSERTING ZIPS

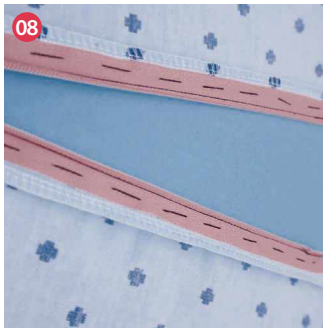
Zips can be one of the most daunting stages. Fear not, we've got you covered!











Adding a zip closure is a key element of dressmaking. It may seem like a difficult step for beginners, but if you follow the process step-by-step you'll have sew a super-neat zip inserted in no time! Here's how to insert both regular and invisible zips.

INSERTING A REGULAR ZIP

Step one Finish the raw edges of the fabric pieces where the zip will be inserted using your preferred method. 01

Step two Stitch the seam from the hem up to the point where the zip will end. Backstitch at the start and end to secure the stitches.

Step three Machine tack the rest of the seam with the longest stitch length on your machine. 02

Step four Press the seam open.

Step five With the wrong side (WS) of the seam facing up, place the closed zip right side (RS) down on the seam with the teeth centred on the seam. Pin the zip tape to both the seam allowance and the outer fabric along both sides.

Step six Tack the zip in place by hand to secure it when sewing and remove the pins. 03

Step seven Topstitch the zip in place from the RS. It may help to draw out your stitching line with chalk marker and ruler first. 04

Step eight Remove your tacking stitches and then press carefully using a pressing cloth. Set the iron to a low heat to avoid melting the zip teeth.

INSERTING AN INVISIBLE ZIP

PREPARING THE SEAM

Step one With the RS together, tack the centre back seam with a long machine stitch. Press the seam open.

Step two With the fabric wrong side (WS) up, place the closed zip centrally on top RS down. The teeth should lie centred exactly on top of the seam with the zip slider in the position you want it to be in when finished.

Step three Tack the zip into place, being careful to tack it on the seam allowance only. 05

Step four Undo the original machine tacking. Your zip is now positioned in the correct place and both sides will align when stitched in place.

Step five Undo the zip then roll the teeth over and press from the WS so they lie flat. Use a warm, dry iron so the zip teeth don't melt. 06

Step six Open out the fabric so it is RS up. The zip will be RS down on top with the seam allowance folded out flat.

STITCHING THE ZIP IN PLACE

Step one Swap to an invisible zip foot. At the top of the zip on the RS of the fabric seam, slot the teeth of the zip into the left groove of the invisible foot. The needle will go into the zip tape/fabric just to the right of the zip teeth. 07

Step two Backstitch to start, then stitch all the way down the zip, making sure the teeth stay under the groove on the foot. Stitch until the end of your tacking stitches so there is a little of the untacked zip beyond. Backstitch to secure.

Step three Repeat to stitch the other side. The zip teeth should lie under the right groove of the invisible zip foot this time. The needle will go into the zip tape and fabric to the left of the teeth. 08

STITCHING THE SEAM BELOW

Step one Close the zip. Swap to an ordinary zip foot. Pin the fabric RS facing, from the bottom of the zip to the end of the seam.

Step two Holding the unstitched part of the zip out of the way, begin stitching the seam 2cm from the bottom of the stitching worked to insert the zip. You won't be able to stitch right on top as the zip teeth will be in the way. However, stitch as close as you can without catching the zip tape or teeth with the needle.

Step three Continue stitching the seam to the hem.

Step four Handstitch the bottom ends of the zip tape to the seam allowance to neaten.

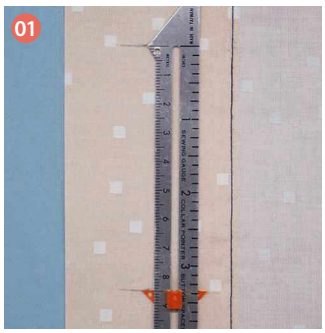
Step five On the RS, press using a cool iron and pressing cloth.

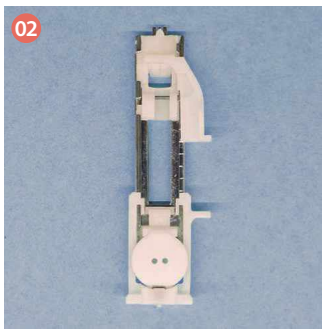
Scan to watch invisible zip video how-to

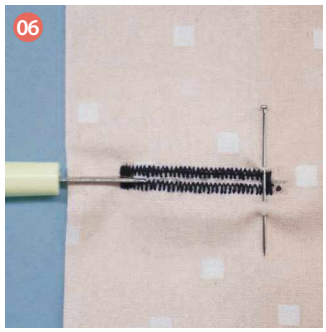
BUTTONHOLES

Add a quick and easy closure to your me-made garments with one-step buttonholes.

Many beginner sewists shy away from buttonholes, but they are really very simple to sew once you get the hang of them. The key, as with any technique, is practice! As buttonholes are often the last step in finishing a garment, it is important to test out the stitch several times before you add them to your project. Here are some essential tips and techniques to get neat, professional-looking buttonholes on a variety of different garments.







ANATOMY OF A BUTTONHOLE

Buttonholes are made from four lines of zigzag stitching which create a box. The zigzag stitches have a long width and narrow length meaning that they sit close together. Computerised machines may have a one-step automatic buttonhole stitch to allow you to sew a single buttonhole in one go. Mechanical machines often have a four-step buttonhole feature which requires a dial to be moved to create the long and short sides separately. Older machines without specialist buttonhole stitches may require you to manually work the buttonhole using a zigzag stitch. This involves using two width/length variations; always remember to practice on a scrap of fabric, (interfaced if your garment will be) before working the buttonhole on your final garment to avoid mistakes!

MARKING THE BUTTONHOLES

Seam gauges can be used to measure the distance between buttonholes. We marked our first buttonhole 2cm from the neckline and the other two buttonholes 8.5cm apart.

Step one Use an erasable fabric marker to mark out the centre position of the buttonhole. 01

Step two Mark the buttonhole length on the fabric, too. This is calculated by measuring the top of the button and the sides and adding 3mm extra. Alternatively insert the button into the buttonhole foot and sew a test buttonhole, then measure the length of this stitch. This is also a good way to select your desired stitch width.

ONE-STEP BUTTONHOLES

If your machine has a one-step buttonhole stitch and a specialist foot you can sew buttonholes that are automatically the correct size. Refer to your machine manual for any specific buttonhole settings.

Step one Check you have enough thread in the bobbin and top thread and then attach the buttonhole foot to your machine. Place your button in the back of the foot. 02

Step two Select the straight buttonhole stitch.

Step three Test the stitch on a scrap of fabric first. Following the marked position of the buttonhole, align the needle over the start of your marking and ensure the foot is at the correct angle to prevent a wonky stitch. 03

Step four Lower the presser foot and start sewing. The machine will sew the buttonhole by itself.

Step five The machine will stop when the buttonhole is complete. Raise the presser foot and trim the threads. Repeat to stitch the remaining buttonholes. 04

FOUR STEP BUTTONHOLES

Four step buttonholes, as the name suggests, are sewn in four stages and require the dial on your machine to be turned for each part of the stitch. This stitch is very common on mechanical machines (without a screen).

BUTTONHOLE CUTTER

A buttonhole cutter is a sharp, chisel-like blade that will cut a straight line without fear of cutting into stitches. Use the tool with a cutting mat. 05

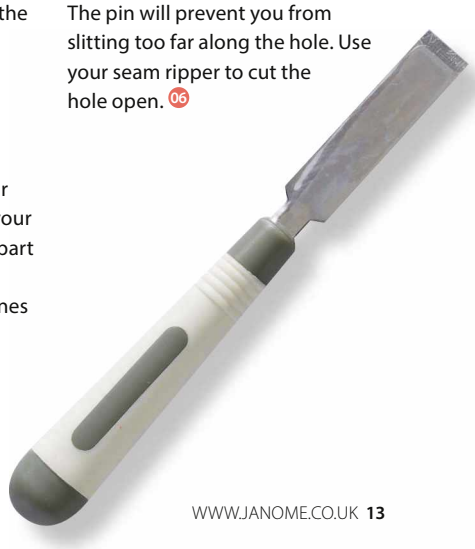
Step one Place the tip of the cutter in the buttonhole centre, making sure no threads are caught under the blade.

Step two Press down firmly to cut the fabric.

SEAM RIPPER

If you don't have a buttonhole cutter a seam ripper can be used to open up the buttonhole.

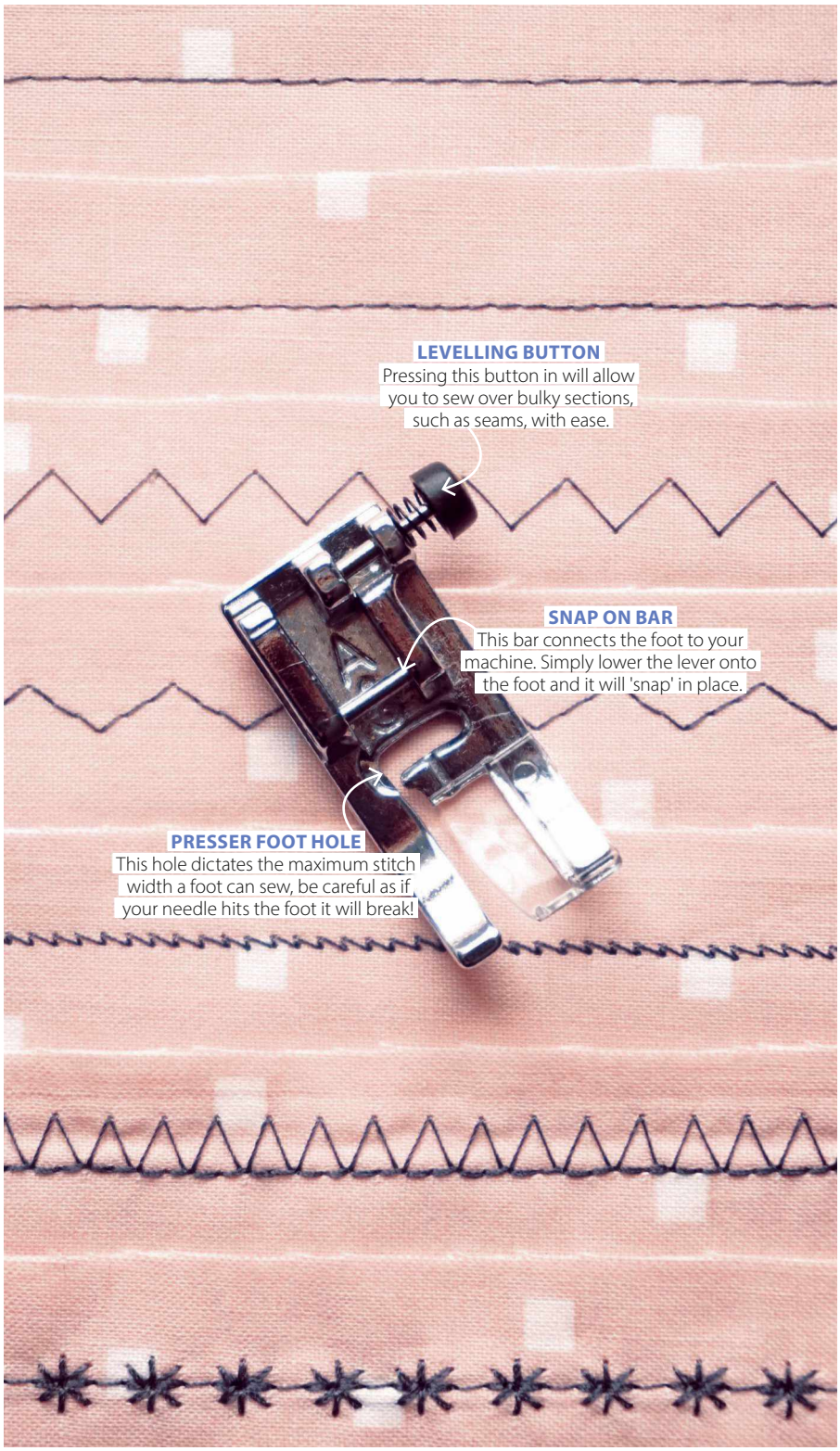
Step one Place a pin at the end of the buttonhole inside the stitching. The pin will prevent you from slitting too far along the hole. Use your seam ripper to cut the hole open. 06



THE STANDARD FOOT

The standard presser foot will be the first you stitch with and your most used, so it's time to get the lowdown on this essential tool.

Starting out on your sewing journey will inevitably lead to your first sewing machine. The machine comes with a range of accessories which will help you conquer most projects, and additional accessories won't be essential in the beginning until you've got the hang of the machine and mastered the basics. The foot that will come attached to your machine will be the standard presser foot. This foot is designed to be a jack of all trades; it can perform a chunk of the basic stitches and will be the foot that you get the most use out of by far.



WHAT STITCHES CAN THE FOOT SEW?

The standard foot can be used to sew a range of the most frequently used stitches including straight stitch, zigzag stitch, and three-step zigzag stitch. It can also be used for satin stitch (very close zigzag stitches that create a smooth filled stitch line), overcasting stitches (great for finishing raw edges if you don't have an overlocker), and some basic decorative stitches which are great for homeware projects.

WHAT IS THE LITTLE BLACK BUTTON FOR?

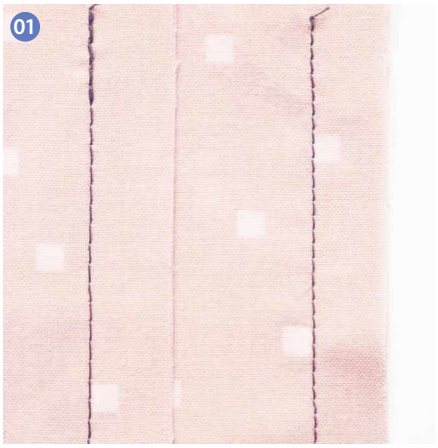
The black button at the back of the foot is a handy addition that allows you to sew over bulky seams. When you reach a bulky section, stop and lower your needle into the fabric, raise your presser foot and press the black button. Lower the presser foot and the foot will stay flat as you continue to sew over the bulky section, the button will release when you pass the bulky section. Magic!

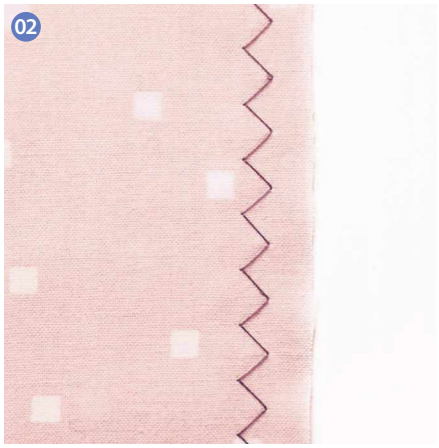
WHICH FABRIC IS THIS FOOT IDEAL FOR?

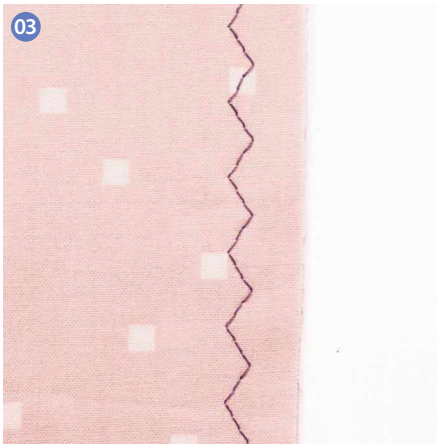
The standard presser foot is best suited to light- to medium-weight woven fabrics. If you are sewing with heavier-weight fabrics, a walking foot will help to guide the layers through evenly. The standard foot can sew stretch fabrics if you are using the correct stitch (zigzag or lightning stitch for example), but you may find that the seam has a 'wavy' finish. If this is the case then it's simply because your foot isn't gripping the fabric as it goes through the machine. A walking foot will grip both layers so would be the ideal alternative in this case.

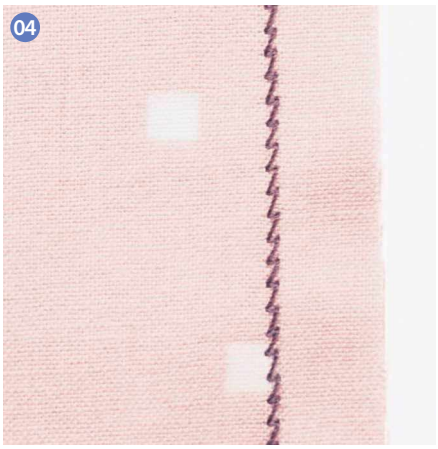
STANDARD FOOT STITCHES

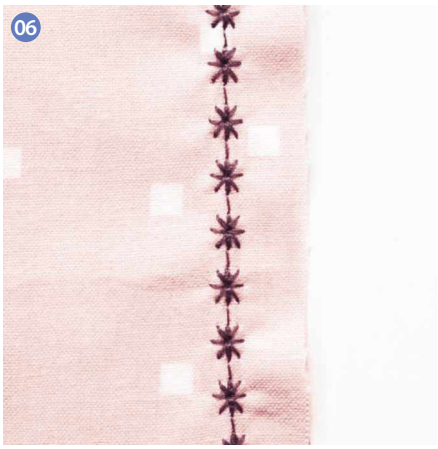
If you're just getting started, experiment with the capabilities of the standard presser foot











before moving on to some of the more specialist presser feet available to buy.

STRAIGHT STITCH, BACKSTITCH , LOCK STITCH

Straight stitch is the stitch you will use the most. It's a simple line of stitches that you can alter the length of and it is the foundation for all dressmaking and homeware projects. A good starting length is 2.5mm; this is small enough that your seam won't rip out, but not so small that it will be hard to unpick if necessary.

Backstitch (shown on left of image 1) is simply using the button or lever on your machine to work a few stitches backwards. Once you have sewn approximately 1cm forward, press the button/lever to sew backwards over your stitches, securing them in place.

Lock stitch (shown on right of image 1) is similar but produces a neater finish; the machine performs several stitches on the spot at the start of your stitch line to secure the thread. This is an almost invisible way to secure your thread. 01

ZIGZAG STITCH

Zigzag stitch is, as the name suggests, a line of zigzag shapes that allow the seam to stretch. This stitch is ideal for sewing stretch fabrics and can also be used as a decorative stitch. The width and length of the zigzag stitch can be altered – the length will make the pattern longer and more stretched out vertically while the width will control how far your needle moves from side to side. If you are using the zigzag stitch to sew jersey fabrics, experiment with long length (approximately 3–4mm), narrow width (1–2mm) stitches on a scrap of fabric. This combination will mimic straight stitch while still allowing your fabric to stretch a little. 02

THREE-STEP ZIGZAG STITCH

This stitch is another great one for sewing with stretch fabrics. It is particularly useful for attaching stretch trims such as elastic. The stitch is more secure than regular zigzag stitch as each section of the zigzag pattern is made up of three individual stitches. Test the stitch on a scrap of your fabric before getting started to select the best width and height. 03

LIGHTNING STITCH

This stitch resembles a lightning bolt and is useful for sewing stretch fabrics. The nature of the stitch means that it can resemble straight stitch slightly better than zigzag stitch can. Not all sewing machines will have this stitch, but don't worry as it isn't an essential one to look out for when purchasing a machine. Zigzag stitch will perform a similar task but lightning stitch will give you a neater finish. 04

OVERCASTING STITCHES

Your machine may come with a variety of overcasting stitches. These are great for finishing raw edges neatly if you don't have an overlocker. Some of the stitches will require a special foot (your manual will tell you if this is the case) but some will be able to be worked using the standard foot. Knit stitch, a straight line with a series of diagonal lines on the right-hand side, can be used to finish stretch fabrics if you don't have an overlocker. 05

BASIC DECORATIVE STITCHES

Some of the decorative stitches on your machine can be worked with the standard stitch foot. Again, your manual will be able to advise which ones these are. There are all sorts of decorative stitches to play around with and the more advanced your machine, the more of these fancy stitches you will be likely to have. These stitches can be used to decorate garment hems using contrasting thread, or can be used on homeware and quilting projects. 06

Scan the QR code to see the machine guide on our website

GOT IT COVERED

Protect your sewing machine with this home-made cover - perfect for keeping the dust off and for adding a splash of colour to your workspace

Designer: **JESSICA ENTWISTLE** Styling: **LISA JONES** Photography: **DAVE CAUDERY**

HOW TO SEW A MACHINE COVER

YOU WILL NEED

- Fabric A: WOFx80cm – outer
- Fabric B: WOFx90cm – lining
- Wadding: 1m
- Basic sewing kit

FABRIC USED

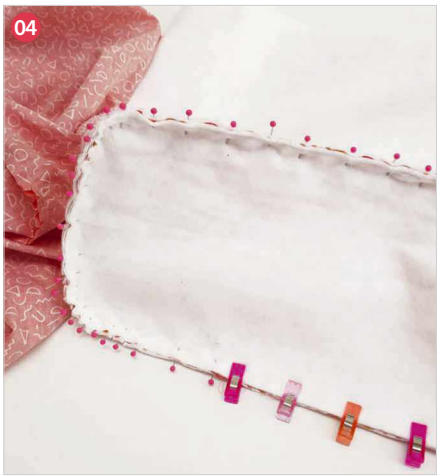
- CAPSULES Terra Kotta by AGF Studio (Art Gallery Fabrics). Stockists: artgalleryfabrics.com

NOTES

- Use a 1cm seam allowance.
- Use a walking foot if you have one.

CUTTING OUT

Step one Take accurate measurements of your sewing machine as per the following list:
Height: from bottom to top, including the spool holder/bobbin winder.
Side width: the bottom with the extension table should be the widest point, check by measuring the area across the side over the handwheel.
Machine width: from side to side.
The cover has two End Panels, one Large Pocket across its width and one Main Body.
Step one From fabric B cut:
End Panels Lining: two. Height (plus 3cm) x side width (plus 4cm). Use a mug to curve the top two edges, cut away the excess. Hold up one of the Lining End Panels against the machine to check the size. Remember it includes seam allowance and give, so it will be longer and wider than the machine. Measure 1cm in from the outer edges along the two sides and around the top. This will be the length of the Main Body.
Main Body Lining: work out the length of the main body from the end panels x the machine width (adding 4cm to the machine width for seam allowance/ease). Pin the Lining End Panels to the Main Body Lining and place the pinned cover over the machine to check fit, adjust if needed.
Pocket Lining: ours is 21cm tall x the machine width with seam allowance and ease (45cm for us).
Pocket Binding: 45x4.5cm
Cover Bottom Binding: two strips WOFx4.5cm
Step two From fabric A, cut (using the same measurements as for the lining pieces):
Outer End Panels: two
Outer Main Body: one
Pocket Outer: one
Step three From the wadding, cut:
End Panels: two
Main Body: one
Pocket: one. Stay stitch the wadding pieces to the WS of the fabric A pieces.
Step four Mark the centre at the top of the Lining and Outer End Panels and the centre along the length of the Lining and Outer Main Body.



MAKING THE MAIN BODY

Step one Our cover has a handle hole at the top. Work out where you want your handle hole to be by marking where it should be on the WS of the Main Body Lining and draw a rectangle for it.
Step two Place the Main Body Lining RS facing the Outer Main Body, aligning edges and marked points. Pin together around the handle hole.
Step three Sew all the way around the drawn handle hole rectangle, on the marked lines.
Step four Cut away the fabric from inside the rectangle first by cutting across the width and up to the four corners. 01
Step five Trim away excess fabric leaving 2mm or so outside of the sewn rectangle, then pull the lining fabric through the hole to the back. Smooth out the lining so that it lies WS facing the Main Body wadding fabric and all edges match. Press the hole, then topstitch all the way around it.

MAKING THE POCKET

Step one Stay stitch the Pocket Lining to the WS of the Pocket Outer. Place the Pocket Binding RS facing the top edge of the Pocket Outer. Sew the strip to the pocket top. Fold the binding to the WS and press. Tuck under the edge by 1cm and pin in place. Topstitch to finish the binding.
Step two Place the pocket on top of the Outer Main Body. Pin in place, making sure you push the Main Body Lining out of the way (as the lining is now joined to the Outer Main Body). Stay stitch the pocket to the Outer Main Body. Divide the pocket into sections with sewn vertical lines. You might find it handy to measure the tools and notions you wish to place in the pockets before you sew the dividing lines in place. 02

ADDING THE END PANELS

Step one Pin the End Panel Lining RS facing the Main Body Lining. You may need to clip within the seam allowance where the Main Body Lining meets the curved top edges. Sew together. 03
Step two Repeat, this time for the Outer Main Body and Outer End Panels. Trim off excess fabric/wadding and turn the cover RS out. 04

ADDING THE BINDING

Step one Pin the base of your Main Body Lining to the base of the Outer Main Body to hold and stay stitch all around.
Step two Sew the two Cover Bottom Binding strips together along the short ends. Press one short end to the WS by 1cm, then sew the binding to the outside of the cover all the way around to where the binding starts. Overlap the binding by 2cm or so then cut off the excess binding.
Step three Fold the binding over to the back and finish off as for the pocket to finish the cover.

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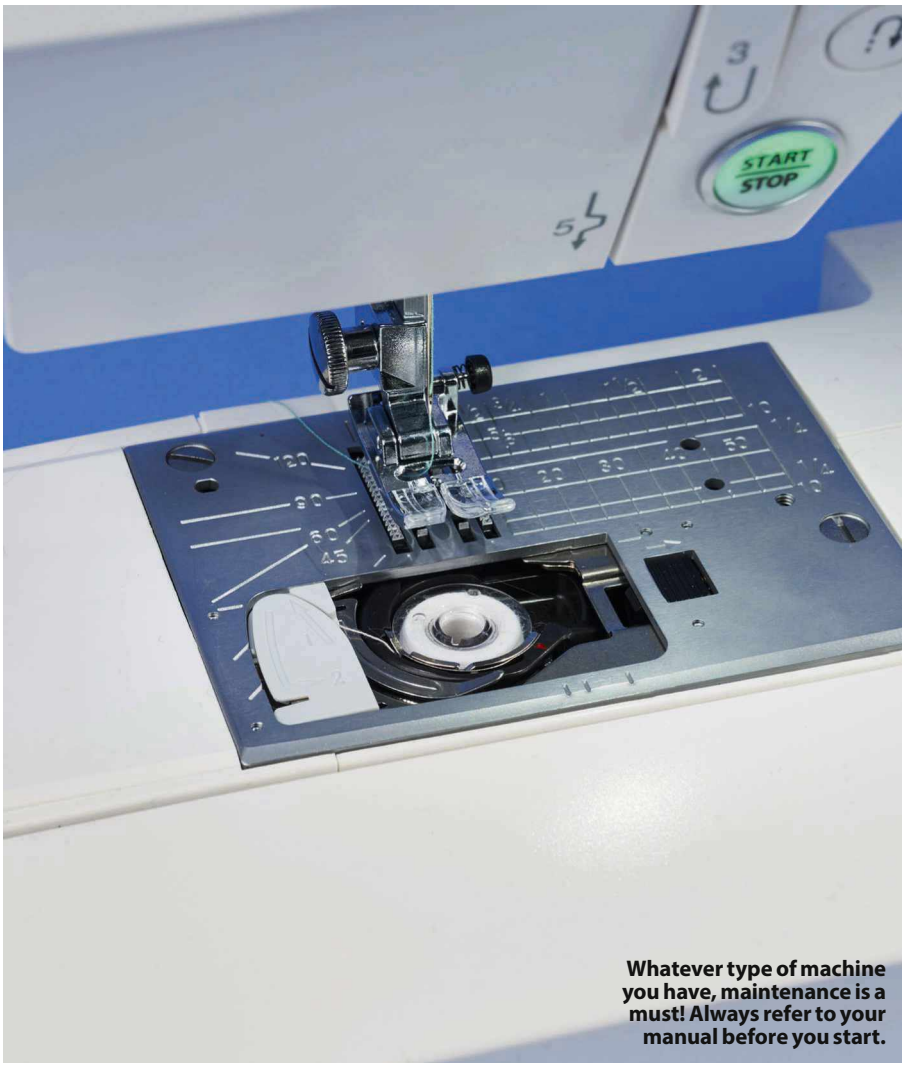
MACHINE MAINTENANCE

Give your machine some TLC and follow these troubleshooting tips for keeping it stitching smoothly.

When was the last time your machine was serviced? For some of us, it might have been a few months ago, and for others a few years – but, more commonly, it's never! We're all quilty of forgetting, but don't fear – the key to achieving the best stitching quality and prolonging the life of your machine is to ensure it is in proper working order with a professional service at least once a year. Doing a DIY service every few months won't mean you never need a professional service, but it will ensure your machine will serve you for the longest possible time. Think of it as you would your car – yearly services are essential, but that doesn't mean you don't top up the oil and care for it in between! Here we share some basic tips to keep your sewing machine running smoothly.



Whatever type of machine you have, maintenance is a must! Always refer to your manual before you start.

DOS AND DON'TS

DO Service your machine yearly. During the initial 2-year warranty period the machine should always be returned to the point of sale for any servicing or aftercare. A list of official Janome approved retailers can be found at **janome.co.uk/retailer-search**.
DO Unplug your machine before attempting any maintenance, even if it's something as simple as removing the bobbin plate.
DO Refer to your manual for guidance – if you don't have your manual, contact the manufacturer or search online for a copy.
DO Keep your machine under a cover in between projects to protect it from everyday knocks, dust and spills.

DON'T Attempt to remove any of the internal machine mechanisms or wiring.
DON'T Spray any cleaning chemicals on your machine. Simply use a microfiber cloth to wipe it over. No water should ever to come into contact with the internal parts.
DON'T Attach magnetic pincushions to your machine as the magnets can cause problems on the inside of your machine.
DON'T Force the handwheel. If it won't turn, you will most likely break the needle and possibly cause expensive damage to the machine. Instead, investigate the problem by raising the presser foot and checking the bobbin case for thread nests.

MACHINE TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem: The needle breaks.
Solution: Check that the needle has been inserted correctly and is not blunt or bent. Don't pull on the fabric as you sew; this puts pressure on the needle, causing it to break.

Problem: The thread breaks.
Solution: Check that the machine is correctly threaded. Unthread the machine completely and rethread. Check all of the above needle issues. Use high-quality thread.

Problem: There are skipped stitches.
Solution: Check all needle and thread issues above. Make sure you are using the correct needle type for your fabric.
Problem: Seams are puckered.
Solution: Check the thread tension, as explained on the following page. Check that the machine is threaded correctly. Unthread and rethread it if necessary.

Problem: Machine is not operating.
Solution: Check the power supply and that the power cord is firmly in place.

Problem: Fabric is not being fed through the feed dogs correctly.
Solution: Dust the feed dogs so that they are free of lint and oil. Check that the presser foot is in the down position.

MAINTAINING YOUR MACHINE

CLEANING THE BOBBIN CASE

Remove the throat plate with a screwdriver – don't use the wrong screwdriver as you will strip the head of the screw and as screws in sewing machines are very specific you may struggle to find a replacement. 01

Fabrics and threads will leave lint behind, so sweep out the bobbin case and around the needle after every project. You should unscrew the bobbin plate every two or three projects and have a good sweep out inside. Use tweezers to pick up any difficult-to-reach pieces of lint, but don't blow in the machine as bits of moisture can cause issues with it, and blowing the lint may just force it further into the machine. 02

OILING YOUR MACHINE

Most sewing machines need occasional oiling, however, some modern machines do not. Check in your manual before going near your machine with oil! If it is necessary to oil your machine, the manual will tell you where to put the oil, and you should have a cloth or rag to hand to mop up any excess. Before sewing you will need to check that there is no oil left over and run a scrap of fabric through the machine to be sure. Oil will quickly ruin any project that picks up excess! 03

MACHINE NEEDLES

Bent needles can be hard to spot – if you're not sure, remove the needle from the sewing machine and lay it out on your surface to assess whether it needs replacing. Even if a needle is bent the tiniest amount it will be enough to affect the quality of stitches. If your machine is making a loud noise with each stitch, the chances are the needle is faulty. Snapped needles are usually easier to spot than a bent needle. Use a new needle for each project and always use the correct needle for your fabric – ballpoint for stretch fabrics, sharp needles for fine fabrics, and so on – as this will prevent skipped stitches. Turn to page 6 for our guide. 04

THREAD TENSION

If your tension is too tight the thread may appear as a straight line on the top side of the fabric. The fabric may also pucker as you sew. The bobbin thread is being pulled very tight which causes the puckers. 05

If your tension is too loose the thread may appear as a straight line on the under side of the fabric. The thread on the top side of the fabric may have loops or be visibly loose. 06

Move the tension dial on your machine according to your issue – the higher the number, the tighter the tension.

Machines usually come with the tools needed, but a set of small screwdrivers may also be useful.

HEAVENLY HEMS

Hemming isn't just one skill to add to your repertoire – there are so many ways to finish your garments! Here are five to try.

Hems are the crucial finishing touch for every garment and many home sewing projects, so it's important to choose, work, and finish them properly. A hem is where the edge of a piece of cloth is folded and sewn to prevent unravelling of the fabric and to adjust the length. They can be worked by machine or by hand – here, we show you how to hem using your sewing machine. We've covered the most popular hem types and shared some tips.

CHECKING THE LENGTH

Try your garment on and check you are happy with the length of the hem. It is best to make any adjustments to the length gradually and keep checking. You can always make the garment shorter, but it'll be harder to lengthen it if you accidentally cut away too much in one go!

CHOOSING A HEM

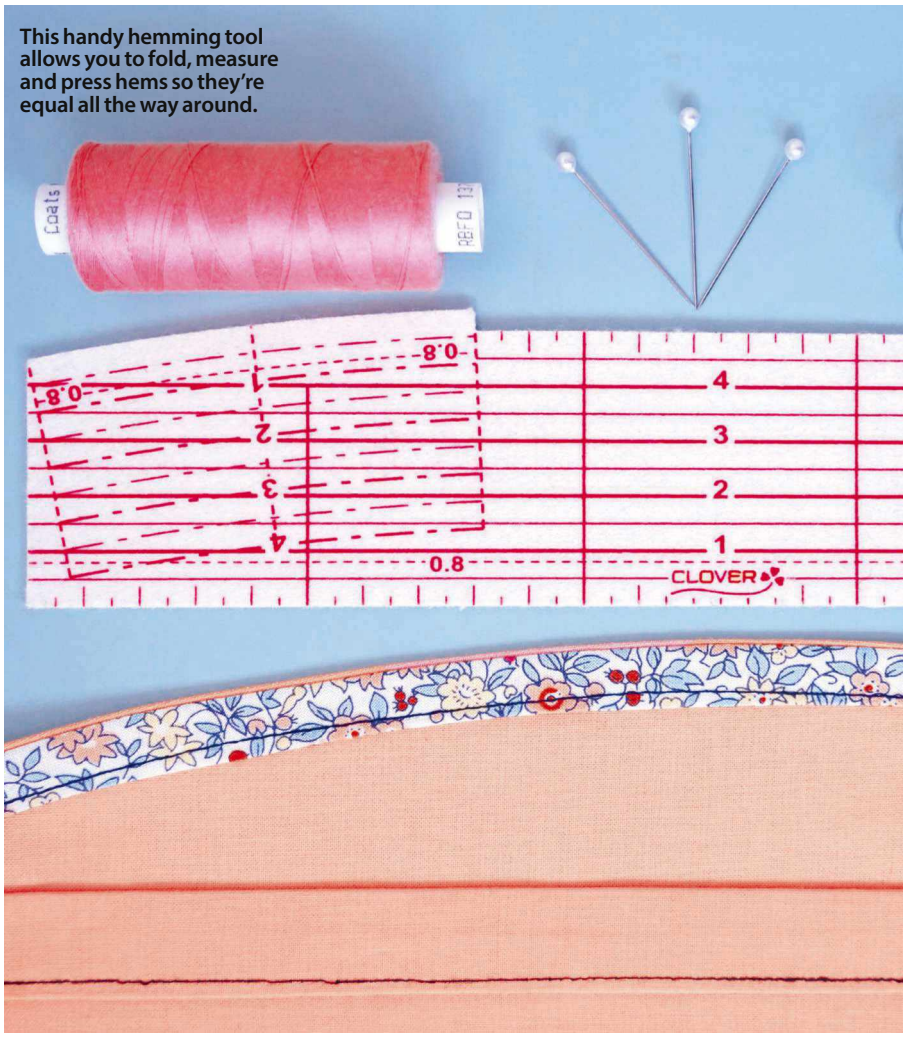
There are many types of hem and you need to consider several factors when choosing one, such as the shape and style of your garment, the weight and drape of the fabric, and how visible it may be. The width of the hem is also crucial. Generally, the fuller the fabric, the narrower the hem so minimal bulk is added. Sewing patterns often set a hem allowance – this is the width of the fabric that will be folded under to create the hem.

HEMMING WITH KNITS

If you're hemming a knit fabric, then you need to use a slightly different technique, as the fabric stretches. Use a ballpoint or stretch needle in your machine so it separates the threads in the fabric rather than pierces them. A regular zigzag stitch is ideal, but many sewing machines have a lightning stretch stitch which you can use instead, if you prefer. A single-fold hem is usually enough for knit fabrics as they won't fray.

HEMMING TOOL

This handy tool is an absolute must- have in my tool box! The heat-proof fabric allows you to press your hem over the ruler and use the markings to assess how narrow or deep you want your hem to be. There is also a curved end to allow you to press curved hems before taking them to the machine. Pressing hems is the number one way to ensure a neat finish. Roped (twisted) hems can often be eliminated if you correctly press the hem before you begin to sew. 01



This handy hemming tool allows you to fold, measure and press hems so they're equal all the way around.

SINGLE FOLD HEM

This type of hem is ideal for when you want minimal bulk, such as on a full skirt or for knit or heavier fabrics. It's also useful if you're lengthening a garment and are short of fabric.

Step one Work a machine zigzag stitch or overlock stitch along the raw edge of your fabric to neaten it and prevent it fraying.

Step two Turn the neatened edge under by the hem allowance to the wrong side (WS) and press, then machine stitch this into place just inside the raw edge. 02

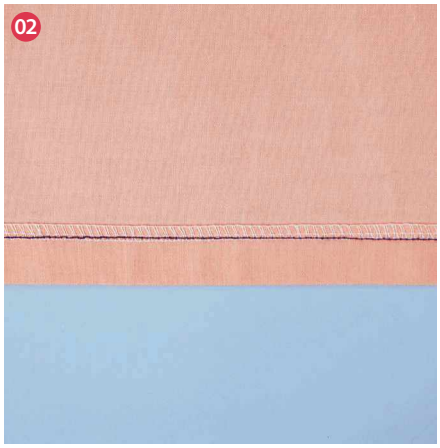
DOUBLE FOLD HEM

This is the most common hem type in dressmaking. It works best on straight fabric edges and if there isn't too much fullness or flare in the garment. If the fabric you're using has a tendency to fray, this is a good choice as the raw edges will be neatly enclosed within the folded hem. For lightweight fabrics, such as linen or cotton, use a narrow hem allowance so that it drapes well; for heavier-weight fabrics a wider hem is a better choice and will also add weight to pull the fabric down, which is ideal for hemming trouser legs.

Step one Decide your hem allowance and add 1cm to this amount. Turn the raw edge under by 1cm to the WS and press from the inside to avoid scorch marks on your fabric.

Step two Fold the hem under by your chosen hem allowance to the WS and press again.

Step three Stitch the hem into place close to the first folded-under edge to secure. 03



CURVED HEM

This technique is used when the hem is curved, such as on a circle skirt, a peplum top or a shaped sleeve. The raw edge that is folded under is longer than the actual seamline, which adds bulk to the hem. It's best worked with lightweight fabrics or those with drape.

Step one Work a line of stitching just 5mm from the raw edge around the hem.

Step two Press the raw edge over to the WS, keeping this line of stitching on the edge so you get a neat and even curve.

Step three Now turn and press the hem over again to the WS so that the raw edge is tucked under and is touching the first pressed edge. The line of stitching will sit on the very edge of this second fold and can be used as a guide to follow whilst pressing the fold over.

Step four Pin and then stitch the hem down close to the second fold. 04

ROLLED HEM

This is quite a fiddly, narrow hem, but it does give a nice neat finish. It can be worked by using a special rolled hem foot, or with an ordinary machine foot by using some extra steps. It's the ideal hem to use for lightweight fabrics such as lawn, voile and silk. It's perfect for sheer fabrics as well as it doesn't stand out and only adds minimal bulk to your hems.

Step one Decide what your hem allowance is then stitch a line 5mm inside this measurement. For example, if you want a 2cm hem allowance you'll need to stitch a line 1.5cm in from the raw edge of the fabric.

Step two Fold the fabric to the WS so that the stitched line lies just inside the folded edge, not on it.

Step three With the WS facing upwards, stitch the fabric again, aiming to position this line of stitching exactly on top of the first stitched line.

Step four Press the hem and then trim the folded-over fabric off right up to the stitched line but not through the actual stitches.

Step five Fold the fabric over once again by 5mm to enclose this raw trimmed edge – this is the actual hemline end point you wanted to achieve at the beginning.

Step six From the right side (RS) there will be no stitching showing as it's just on the WS.

Step seven Working from the WS again, stitch on top of the stitched line to hold the hem in place. You will now have one line of stitching on the RS and what will appear to be just one line of stitching on the WS. 05

BIAS FACED HEM

Bias hems are ideal for curves and also for heavier fabrics as the hem of the garment is only folded once. Use pre-made bias binding for a quick and easy finish or make your own by cutting strips diagonally on the bias. It's a great way to add a little colour inside a garment.

Step one Trim your garment so it has the same hem allowance as half the width of the bias tape – this is the distance between the raw edge of the tape and one folded edge.

Step two Take the strip of bias tape and unfold it to open out one side. Place this RS together with the hem, matching the raw edges, and pin together all the way along the hem.

Step three Leaving approximately 5cm of tape loose at the beginning (this will be used to neatly finish the binding loop at the end), stitch the tape to the fabric, working along the creased line you unfolded.

Step four Stop stitching approximately 10cm from where you started.

Step five Trim and join the short ends of the bias tape with RS together. Stitch the joined tape to the hem.

Step six Trim the seam off both the fabric and the bias tape then press the seam open between the binding and hem.

Step seven Fold the binding over to the WS of the fabric. Press again so that just a little of the fabric edge can be seen from the WS.

Step eight With the unstitched edge of the bias tape folded under, pin it to the fabric then stitch close to the folded edge of the tape to finish. 06

FINISHING SEAMS

Overlockers can seem daunting for beginner sewists, so here we take you through how to finish your seams without an overlocker.

When working with commercial sewing patterns, you will often be instructed to 'finish the raw edges' before or after sewing the seams. The stitch type you choose to finish the raw edges of a garment with will affect the appearance of a seam, the garment's overall life-span and its comfort when worn. There are many ways to finish a raw edge – pinking shears, zigzag stitching and binding are just a few – but overlocking has become a firm favourite as it provides a quick-to-sew, long-lasting and professional-looking finish. While overlockers were once the preserve of clothing factories, in the last 50 years domestic overlocking machines have become widely available and more affordable, making them appealing to home sewists. For many stitchers, however, deciding whether to purchase an overlocker in addition to a sewing machine is a tough choice. Before diving in, explore the stitches on your sewing machine, as often it will be jam-packed with clever finishing stitches.

TOP FINISHING TIPS

Finish your seams like a pro with these 'faux-verlocking' tips – no overlocker required!

1 Test the stitch before tackling your final garment, as you may need to adjust the tension and stitch width settings. Refer to your machine manual for guidance regarding the presser foot and stitch settings required.

2 Once you have found a stitch that works well for you, be sure to note down the stitch width, length, presser foot and tension settings you used. Complex stitches can be difficult to be recreate a second time!

3 Some machines have hundreds of stitches to choose from, others have just a few. No matter how many stitches your machine has, there will be at least one stitch that can be used or combined with other stitches to finish an edge.

Whichever seam-finishing method you try, make sure you use a stretch or jersey needle on stretch fabrics.

PRESSER FEET

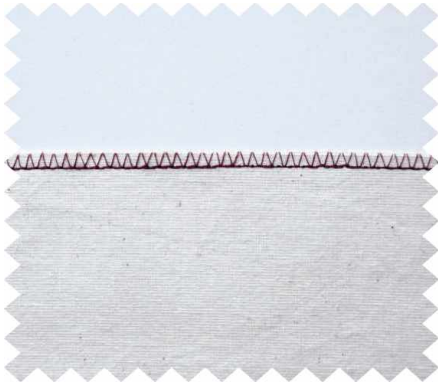
The three main presser feet required for edge finishing stitches will be the zigzag foot, the overcasting foot and the overedge foot. Some other speciality feet could be available to aid with the stitches on your machine, so check your manual for guidance. You will need to use the correct foot for each stitch as the wrong foot could risk the needle breaking or the stitch failing. It is important to also use the correct sewing machine needle for the fabric type you are working with. For example, you will need to use a stretch or jersey needle when finishing the edges of a stretch fabric or a sharps needle for fine fabrics. Always test a stitch on a scrap of fabric with the correct presser foot and needle before starting on your main project.

ZIGZAG STITCH

Presser foot: zigzag foot or overedge foot

With the overedge foot, simply sew along the raw edge of the fabric, aligning the guide on the presser foot with the raw edge.

Alternatively, if you are using a zigzag foot you can stitch close to the edge and trim any excess if necessary.



OVERCASTING STITCH

Presser foot: overedge foot

This stitch can be used to simultaneously sew a seam and finish the raw edges. It is ideal for seams that need to be pressed flat rather than open as it sews the seam allowances together. The combination of zigzag and straight stitch prevents fraying and creates a stable seam.

DOUBLE OVEREDGE STITCH

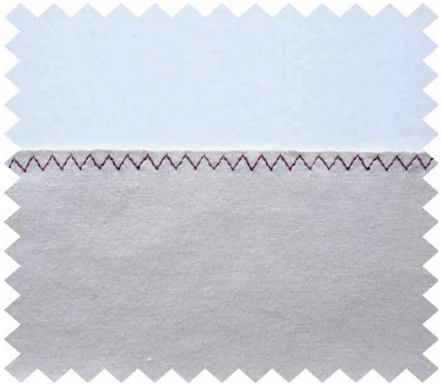
Presser foot: overedge foot

This stitch sews a double row of zigzag stitches, one on the edge of the fabric, and connects to a straight line of stitching. Like an overlocker, this stitch could be used to both sew and finish a seam in one go. This is perfect for fabrics that fray heavily.

OVERLOCK STITCH

Presser foot: overedge foot

This type of stitch gives a similar finish to an overlocker. It has a straight stitch just off of the raw edge with a criss-cross stitch connecting it to the inner straight stitch. This is another stitch perfect for fabrics likely to fray a lot as the edge stitches will prevent shedding.



3-STEP ZIGZAG

Presser foot: zigzag foot

This stitch can be used to finish the raw edges of stretch fabrics. The three diagonal stitches in each section will allow the fabric to stretch comfortably and protect the raw edges from fraying. This stitch provides more elasticity than zigzag stitch, making it great for jersey fabrics.

KNIT STITCH

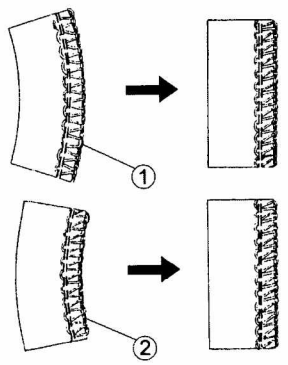
Presser foot: zigzag foot

This stitch is great for sewing knit fabrics as it is a strong stitch that provides a lot of elasticity. Stitch close to (but not on) the fabric edge, leaving an adequate seam allowance. Trim the seam allowance close to the stitches. This stitch will provide a durable, long-lasting seam finish.

YOUR OVERLOCKER

Getting the best out of your overlocker starts with knowing the names and uses of its dials, settings and fixtures.

HOW TO ADJUST THE DIFFERENTIAL FEED



- If the sewn fabric is stretched, turn the dial counterclockwise (towards 2.2)
- If the sewn fabric is gathered, turn the dial clockwise (towards 0.5).

① Stretched
② Gathered

PRESSURE ADJUSTMENT SCREW
This is used to adjust the presser foot tension. If your fabric is stretching this may be the reason why. It is usually best to save this adjustment until after you have tried everything else. Consult your manual for guidance and only adjust the screw a small amount before testing the stitch again.

TENSION DIALS
Used to change the tension of the loopers and needles.

TENSION DISCS
It is important that the thread is securely placed inside each tension disc as these control the tension of the thread.

PRESSER FOOT LEVER
As with a sewing machine, this is used to raise and lower the presser foot.

REMOVABLE SIDE COVER

UPPER BLADE
This cuts through the fabric and works best when it is sharp. It is important not to put pins through your overlocker as they will dent the blade, causing it to snag your fabric. The blade should be changed if you run over a pin to prevent cutting issues. Refer to your manual for how to do this.

TOP THREAD GUIDES AND REEL SUPPORTS

The spools sit on reel supports (cone-shaped plastic pieces). The thread is then taken up to the relevant guide in the thread holder before being threaded through the top guides and through the tension discs.

THREAD HOLDER

The thread holder is used to ensure the threads do not tangle and to correctly feed them into the tension discs. Extend thread holder to its fullest height when sewing and push down when not in use.

STITCH LENGTH

This dial is used to change the stitch length; the higher the number the longer the stitch.

THREADS

Thread your machine from right to left for best results.

Lower looper: creates the back and forth stitches on the back of your work.

Upper looper: creates the back and forth stitches on the front of your work.

Right needle: a straight stitch that secures the upper and lower stitches.

Left needle: a straight stitch that secures the upper and lower stitches.

DIFFERENTIAL FEED

Overlockers have two sets of feed dogs. When set to 1.0 the feed dogs move at the same speed, but can also be set to move at different speeds. Refer to your manual for the right setting for your fabric.

LOOPER COVER

This cover is lowered for threading the upper and lower loopers. Some overlockers may also have a storage compartment for tools.

HANDWHEEL

Used to move the needle up and down. Turn wheel towards you to raise the needles.

OVERLOCKER TENSION

Getting the tension right on your overlocker is key to achieving the best seam finish. Find out how to adjust the tension with our guide.

Overlockers are machines used to finish raw fabric edges. They have grown in popularity in the last 50 years since domestic overlockers have become widely available and affordable to the home sewist. For complete beginners to dressmaking, there are lots of stitches available on a domestic sewing machine (such as zigzag and overcast stitch) that can be brilliant for finishing raw edges and making sure garments last a long time. However, many sewists are interested in overlockers as they bring a professional level of finishing to garments in a quick and easy manner. As well as producing a series of stitches over the raw edge, overlockers also cut away the raw edge of the fabric as you sew for a neat and precise finish. You can also use an overlocker to stitch the seam and finish the raw edges all in one go – this means that the time taken to sew and finish one seam can be halved!

If you have decided to invest in an overlocker or are considering making the leap then you will most likely find that one of the biggest hurdles (aside from threading up the machine!) will be getting the tension correct.

As with a regular sewing machine, the tension will most likely need to be adjusted with each different fabric that you sew with. Having good knowledge of thread tensions is important if you want to produce neat overlocked edges in a range of fabrics.

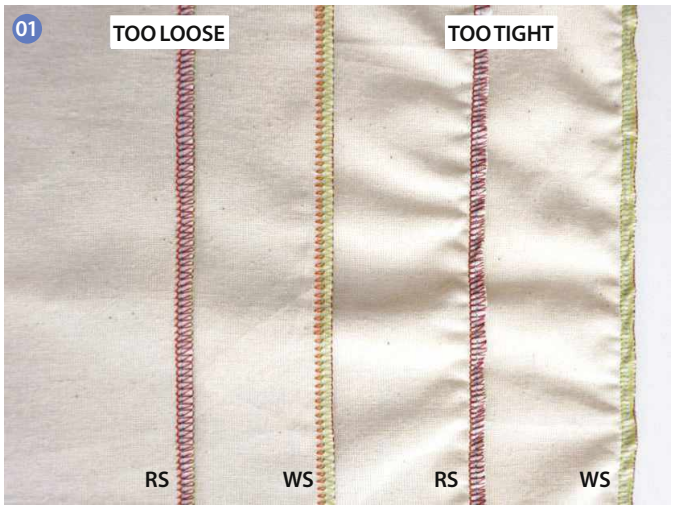
As a general rule, if the tension is too loose you will need to increase the number on the tension dial and if the tension is too tight you will need to reduce the number.

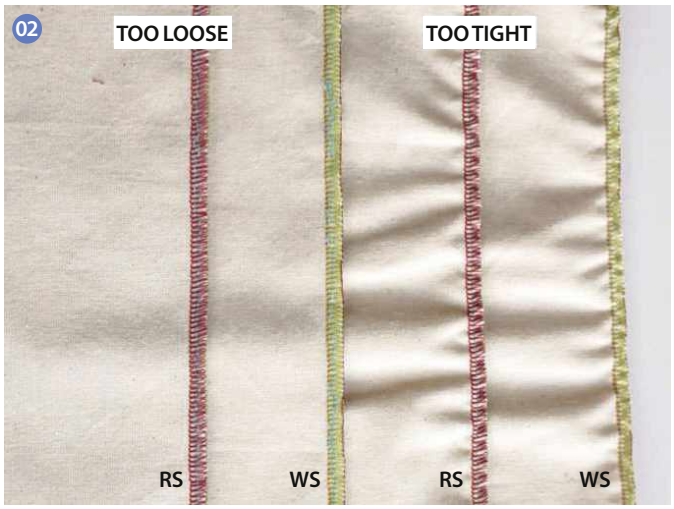
The tension on an overlocker is controlled by four dials which are outlined here – note that we are outlining issues with standard four-thread overlocking which is commonly used to finish raw edges in dressmaking projects.

TOP TIPS

Finish your seams like a pro with our Technical Editor Sarah's overlocking tips for stress-free sewing!

1. Use the correct needle for the fabric you are sewing, e.g. a ballpoint for stretch fabrics, sharps for fine fabrics and jeans needles for denim.
2. If your machine comes with a clip-on collection tray use it help to prevent scraps of fabric creating a mess!
3. Use a tapestry needle to weave the ends of the threads in.
4. Keep thread snips or small scissors handy to trim excess threads.
5. If you are using two needles in your machine always use the same size and type of needle for both the left and right needles. Using different needles will affect the stitch quality and could cause your fabric to snag.





LEFT NEEDLE

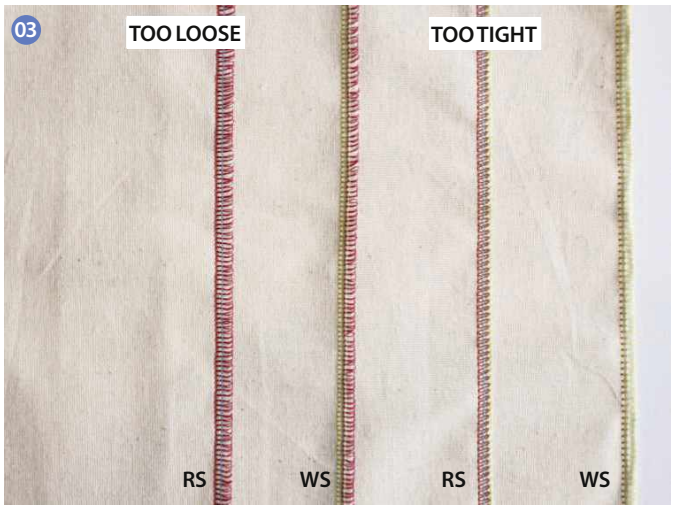
The left needle creates the leftmost straight stitch. In the example it is the orange thread. If this stitch is too loose you will notice loops of thread on the left-hand stitch line instead of nice flat stitches. If this stitch is too tight it will cause puckering in the fabric and the overlocked edge will not lay flat.

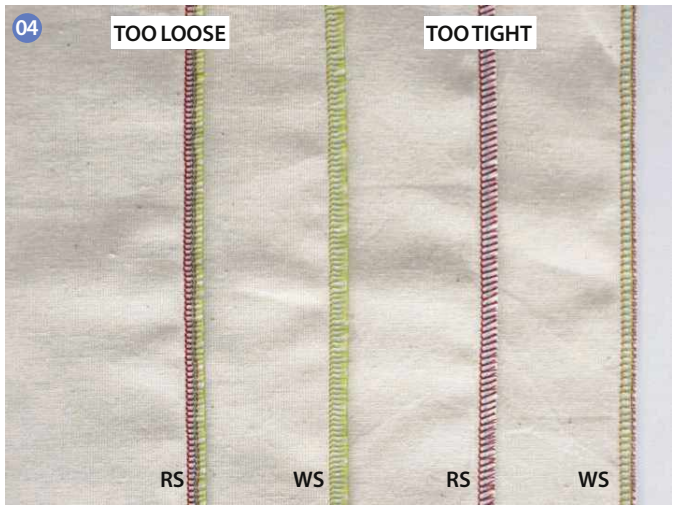
Test your stitch on a scrap of fabric and make a note of the ideal left needle tension when starting a new project. You can slowly move the dial as you sew to find the tension that is producing the best stitch. Watch the stitch that is being produced carefully to know when you have reached the optimum tension. Tension numbers will change depending on the weight and type of fabric you are working with so make a note of the fabric you are using too. 01

RIGHT NEEDLE

The right needle creates the central straight stitch. In the example it is the blue thread running centrally parallel to the left-most stitch and the raw edge. If this stitch is too loose you will notice loops of thread along the central stitch line instead of flat stitches. If this stitch is too tight it will cause puckering in the fabric and the overlocked edge will not lay flat.

Test out your right needle tension on a scrap of fabric, gently moving the dial as you sew if necessary until you get a stitch that is sitting flat on both sides of the fabric and not looping or puckering on either side. Sewing with threads that are being pulled through the tension disks too tightly can cause threads to break. Always use a high-quality thread for overlocking, as poor-quality threads are more likely to break even if the tension is correct. 02





UPPER LOOPER

The upper looper creates the back and forth looped stitch on the right side (RS) of the fabric. In the example it is the red thread. If this stitch is too loose there will be noticeable looping in the upper looper threads (red in the images) and from the wrong side (WS) of the fabric the upper looper will dominate with less of the lower looper thread (green in the images) visible.

If this stitch is too tight the lower looper thread (green in the images) will be pulled over to the RS of the fabric and the upper looper thread (red in the images) will appear narrower. Test the upper looper tension on a scrap of fabric, slowly moving the dial as you sew until the stitches are sitting flat on both sides of the fabric and not looping or puckering on either side. 03

LOWER LOOPER

The lower looper creates the back and forth looped stitch on the wrong side (WS) of the fabric. In the example it is the green thread. If this stitch is too loose the lower looper thread (green in the images) will be visible on the right side of the fabric. On the WS of the fabric the lower looper (green in the images) will be loose and will not sit flat.

If the lower looper (green in the images) tension is too tight the tightness will pull the upper looper thread (red in the images) over to the WS. Test the tension on a scrap of fabric and adjust the dial slowly as you stitch to achieve a balanced stitch. In a perfect 4-thread overlocker stitch the upper looper and lower looper threads will meet and join at the raw edge with neither one being pulled or pushed to the other side of the fabric. The stitches will also lay flat with no loose threads or puckering. 04


OVERLOCKER COVER
Protect your overlocker from dust

YOUR WORKSPACE

Brilliant ways to spruce up your sewing room using your favourite fabrics.

Setting up your sewing area is always a fun job! The space we have available for our sewing will vary greatly – some may have an entire room, while others will have a small corner or clear space on the kitchen table to set up their machine. Whatever space you have, make the most of it with accessories such as pin cushions and storage for your sewing essentials. There is nothing quite a satisfying as owning sewing accessories made in your favourite fabrics – and by you! Find these projects on page 36 of *Simply Sewing* issue 121.

BANNER
Decorate your sewing space with a cute banner

PIN CUSHION
Sew your pin cushion in matching fabric

SEWING MACHINE MAT
Keep all your sewing tools handy in this mat

SCISSOR TIDY
Tidy your scissors away in this cute holder

GLOSSARY

Taking up a new hobby can sometimes feel like learning a different language. Here's a guide to the sewing terminology you will need.

APPLIQUE
Stitching a small piece of fabric on top of another, usually for decoration. This can be done by hand often using blanket stitch or by machine using a zig zag stitch.

BACKSTITCH
Also called reverse stitch this is done at the beginning and end of a seam to prevent it from coming undone. It's also used to describe an embroidery stitch where the stitches are worked backwards so they touch each other to form a solid line of stitching.

BIAS
This is the stretchiest part on the fabric which runs diagonally to the selvedge or straight grain of the fabric.

BINDING
A method to encase the raw edges of the fabric using a narrower strip of fabric. Ready-made bias binding can be used for this or fabric strips cut on the bias.

BOBBIN
A plastic or metal cylinder which holds the bottom thread of a sewing machine. Thread is wound on the bobbin and this lower thread loops with the upper needle thread to form the stitches

BODICE
The part of a garment which reaches from the shoulder to the waist. It can be attached to the skirt piece to form a dress.

CASING
A channel usually made from an edge of fabric which is folded over and stitched down. It can be used to hold a drawstring or elastic to gather clothing such as a waistband or at the top of a bag to close it.

CLIP
Small snips made into the fabric edge. These can be used to help a seam lie flat or remove bulk from the fabric. They are ideal for rounded edges or for easing tight curves. Small snips are used for outside curves or little wedges. Notches are clipped out for inner curves.

CUTTING LINE
On a pattern, this is the line you cut along. This is either the the outer, usually solid, line or the patterned line relevant to your size.

DARTS
Stitched folds used to shape a garment by taking away fullness from a seam line. They are usually wedge or triangle-shaped and often used at the bust, waistline, hips and back. They allow the garment to fit smoothly over a rounded area of the body. Darts are marked on the fabric from the pattern then stitched from the broad end towards the point, tapering narrowly. Darts with points at both ends should be stitched in two separate sections starting in the centre each time and tapering to the point.

DRAPE
A term used to describe the way a fabric hangs under its own weight. Different fabric have different drape qualities as some are more fluid than others.

EASE
The addition of extra fabric in a pattern to allow the finished garment to fit the body well without being too tight but draping well.

EDGESTITCH
A row of stitching on the very edge of a garment, usually 2-3mm (1⁄6–1⁄8in) from the folded or seamed edge. Used to hold the fabric edge neatly in place.

EYELET
Also called grommets, these are made from metal, plastic, or rubber and inserted into a hole in the fabric. Used to reinforce the hole, and are inserted using a special tool which is often sold with the eyelets.

FACING
These stabilise and create a neat finish on the edge of the garment such as the neckline or armholes. The facing is cut separately and often stiffened using interfacing. It is then sewn right sides together with the garment edge, then turned to the inside and pressed for a neat finish.

FAT QUARTER
Used to describe a cut piece of fabric often used for patchwork. Half a yard of fabric is cut from the length of the fabric then this is cut in half again. This usually measures 18x22in (46x55cm) if cut from a standard 44in (112cm) width fabric.

FINGER PRESSING
Using your fingers and pressure to open a seam flat either for speed or for a seam that may not be suitable for pressing with an iron.

FINISHING/NEATENING RAW EDGES
This is to stop the fabric edges, particularly of a seam from fraying. It can be done by machine zig zag, using an overlocker or trimming the edge with pinking shears. It's easier to finish raw edges before you stitch the seam.

FOLD LINE
Many pattern pieces are placed on the fold of a piece of fabric to ensure you cut a symmetrical piece. Follow the cutting layout to see whether to fold the fabric right sides or wrong sides together then place the edge of the pattern pieces marked 'cut on the fold' right up to the fold of the fabric then pin and cut out.

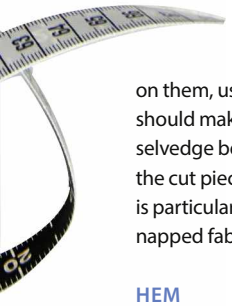
FREE MOTION
Usually used for machine embroidery or quilting this describes machine sewing worked with the feed dogs down, allowing you to move the fabric freehand for more fluid sewing.

FUSIBLE
Also referred to as iron-on and used to describe interfacing or webbing. The fusible, rougher side has the glue applied and should be placed directly onto the fabric. The heat of the iron melts the glue allowing to stick in place once cool.

FRENCH SEAM
A completely enclosed strong seam which is stitched on both sides of the fabric to enclose all of the raw edges for a neat finish.

GATHER
Gathering one piece of fabric allows it to fit a shorter piece of fabric. A line of hand or machine stitching is worked along the fabric then the stitches are pulled to gather it. Once pinned it can then be permanently stitched in place. Often used for inserting wider sleeves into armholes or for a dress skirt to fit to a bodice.

GRAIN/GRAINLINE
The direction of the fabric which runs parallel to the selvedge. Patterns have the grainlines printed



on them, usually represented as an arrow and you should make sure this arrow is parallel to the fabric selvedge before pinning in place. This makes sure the cut pieces all face the correct direction which is particularly important for patterned, textured or napped fabrics.

HEM
The finished, usually turned under and stitched lower edge of a garment. It creates a neat edge and prevents fraying. Patterns usually include extra fabric for the hem which is specified in the pattern instructions.

INTERFACING
This is usually a non-woven fabric, available in different thicknesses or weights, which is applied to fabric to stiffen it or stabilise it to prevent it from stretching out of shape. It can also be woven or knitted depending on the usage and is either iron on (fusible) or sewn in (non-fusible).

NAP
Fabrics like velvet, corduroy and fur have hairs or loops which lie in a particular direction, this is called the nap or pile. The hairs lie smooth and flat with the nap when your hand runs over them. When cutting out pattern pieces make sure the grainline arrow always runs in the direction of the nap so they all look the same as the nap is shinier in one direction.

NOTIONS
Small tools or accessories used in sewing other than the fabric and the machine such as zips, fasteners, lace and buttons.

OVERLOCKING
An overcast stitch used to prevent the fabric from fraying. Overlockers are machines that work this overlock stitch and also trim the seams allowance at the same time. Known as sergers in the US.

PATTERN/CUTTING LAYOUT
Directions in the pattern instructions which show exactly how to fold the fabric and lay the pattern pieces on it for pinning and cutting.

PIPING
A cord encased in a strip of folded over fabric which is used as a decorative edge often for cushions or upholstery. Narrow piping can be used in seams in dressmaking.

PRESS
Pressing as you stitch gives a garment a really professional finish and pressing should be done as each seam or area is completed so the next stage lies well. Use a temperature to suit the needs of the fabric you are working with. Pressing is to place the hot iron on the fabric and hold or 'press' into place. Ironing is moving the iron backwards and forwards to remove creases.

QUILTING
A method of sewing two layers of fabric by hand or machine with a layer of wadding in between. Used to hold the layers together and also for decoration.

RAW EDGE
The cut edge of fabric that is not stitched or finished in any way.

RIGHT SIDE (RS)
The side of the fabric with the design on it, also called the 'public' side. For a plain fabric, the right side is usually a little brighter or shinier. If you can't decide which is which then label it so you always use the same side as the right side.

SEAM ALLOWANCE
The fabric between the raw or cut edge of the fabric and the seam is called the seam allowance. Patterns state the seam allowance to be used which is mostly commonly 1.5cm (5⁄8in) for dressmaking but can vary. Allow use the correct seam allowance for a perfect finish. These are marked on the sewing machine to help keep the fabric straight whilst stitching.

SELVEDGE
The finished woven edge of fabric which often has the fabric name printed along one selvedge. The grain runs parallel to this and the bias diagonally. Called selvage in the US.

SLIP STITCH
Often used in hems or for closing a turning gap this is designed to be invisible from both sides. Small, neat almost invisible stitches are worked into the fold of the fabric with a fabric thread caught on the other side.

STAYSTITCHING
A line of regular machine stitching usually worked 3mm (1⁄8in) inside the seam line used to stabilise curved edges in particular, to stop them stretching out of shape. This is worked before the permanent stitching then curves can be clipped up to the staystitching if required

TACK/TACKING
A line of temporary stitching, either handstitched or stitched on a long stitch on the machine, used to hold fabric pieces together before machine sewing. These are removed once the permanent stitching is complete. Known as basting in the U.S.

TENSION
This refers to the pressure being placed on the needle and bobbin thread by the machine. The thread tension and the bobbin tension needs to be set correctly following the sewing machine manual for neat and even stitches. Higher specification machine models will set the correct tension for you.

TOILE
A test garment, often made from muslin or calico to check the fit or test a pattern before the real fabric is used. Known as a muslin in the U.S.

TOPSTITCHING
A line of stitching worked in the same way as edgestitching but usually 5mm (1.4in) from the folded or seam edge. This stitch is used to neaten the fabric edge, to hold the seam in place and as decorative finish.

UNDERSTITCHING
A line of machine stitching worked through the facing and seam allowance 3mm (1⁄8in) from the seam, to keep the facing rolling to the outside of the garment. The stitching line will not be not visible on the outside.

WRONG SIDE (WS)
The side of the fabric without the design on it. For a plain fabric, the wrong side is usually a little duller or faded.

ZIGZAG STITCHING
A sewing machine stitch, which is mainly used for neatening raw edges and also ideal for stretch fabrics as the stitch is slightly elastic. The length and width of it can be altered on the machine and is a decorative stitch which is often used in applique. A satin stitch can be worked using a stitch length of zero.

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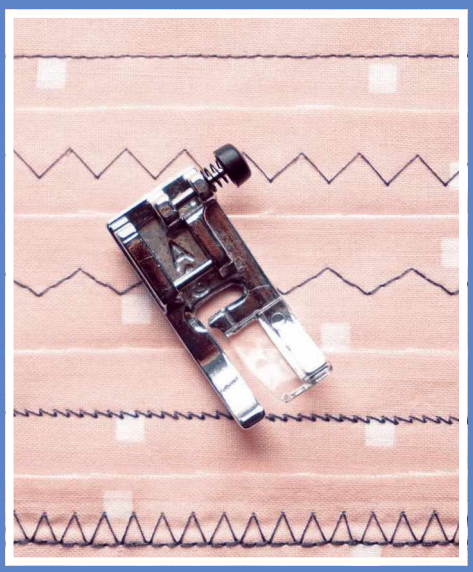

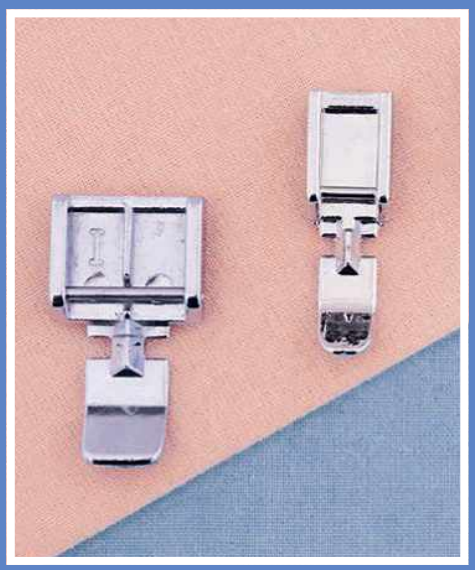

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