

Basic Hand-sewing stitches



Whilst the majority of your dressmaking will be sewn on a machine, there will be times that you'll need to thread a needle and do some hand sewing. The choice of a hand-sewn hem for example over a machine stitched one, allows you to add some luxurious finishes to your clothes. Factory made garments have little hand finishing, but you can always hand sew your hems if that takes your fancy. Buttons and poppers for example are best sewn on by hand, so it's good to learn a couple of stitches.

Sewing on a button-

Thread a needle with some thread, top-stitch thread is great for sewing buttons as it's a little thicker and stronger than sew all thread. Knot the end.

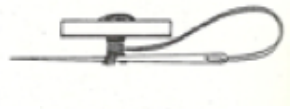
- Mark the position of your button on the garment and pass the needle up from the wrong side of the fabric through the centre of the mark.
- Do a small stitch on the spot, a 'back stitch' which will anchor the knot and the button.

Slip the button onto the needle, and then pass the needle through the next hole and into the fabric where you backstitched. Allow the button to lay on it's side as you repeat sewing the loops from the garment through the button. These thread loops will form the shank below the button, and the length is determined by what sort of garment you're making. Longer shanks are needed on a jacket, little for a shirt.



Once 3-4 loops are stitched, wrap the thread under the button, this strengthens the shank, and neatens off your stitching.

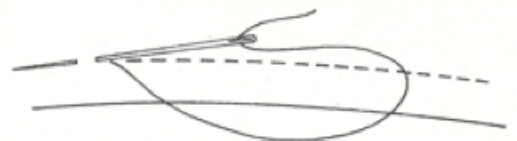
- Pass the needle through the wrong side, and back stitch a couple of times over the knot. Snip your thread.



Running stitch- This is the most basic of all stitches, and the most useful!

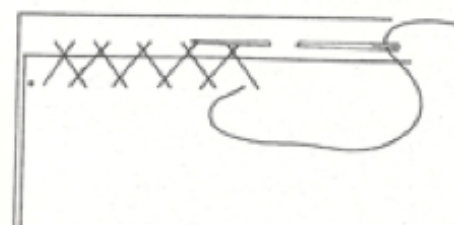
You can use a running stitch to quickly repair a burst seam, to gather up fabric, or to tack something in position. It can also be used as a decorative stitch for applique on small craft items like covering buttons

- Start by anchoring a knot on the wrong side of the fabric.
- Slide your needle in and out of the fabric, creating a series of stitches that are even lengths, with an even distance between them.
- If you're using a running stitch as tacking, your stitches can be quite long, up to 1 cm as you're likely to remove them. As a general guide, a running stitch should be about 6 mm



Herringbone stitch- Sometimes called a catch stitch, this is one of the most versatile stitches for hand sewing a hem. It works really well on thick bulky fabrics like wool or heavy drill, and it creates a flat edge, so it's suitable for trouser legs where your foot may catch in the edge. It's a stitch that's worked from left to right, and is best suited to single turned hems.

- Neaten the raw edge of your hem.
- Press up the desired hem allowance.
- Using a regular sewing machine thread, anchor your knotted end behind the hem allowance.



Making a diagonal stitch to the right, catch one thread of fabric from the garment above the hem. Then making a second diagonal stitch catch a deeper thread of fabric from the hem allowance.

- Repeat this all the around the hem. Finish off with a couple of back stitches.

Slip stitch- this stitch is great for sewing double turned hems on luxury fabrics like silk. The stitches are almost invisible from either side, and as there are no raw edges visible it's a wonderful hemming technique for delicate fabrics like silks.

- Anchor your knot inside the fold of the hem.



Pick up a small thread of the garment fabric, then Pass the needle back into the folded edge of the hem, and slide 1 cm along the fold.

- Repeat the stitches until the hem is complete. All that should be visible from the wrong side are a series of V shaped stitches, and from the right side there should be just a discreet prick visible.

Fell or vertical stitch- this is a variation of the slipstitch, and is the best stitch for attaching linings inside a garment.

- Anchor your knot inside the folded edge of the hem/lining.



Pick up a tiny stitch in the garment fabric, and pass the needle diagonally back into the fold of the lining about 3 mm from the edge.

- Repeat along the hemline.
- You'll end up with a series of vertical stitches along the folded edge of the lining/hem