

sewing basics

Hemming

Double hem – this is the easiest method. Turn hem allowance up and then fold raw edge under again, so raw edge meets first fold. Press then machine stitch.

Blind hemming by machine – this is used to hem invisibly. It is very easy when using a blind hem foot on a sewing machine.

Basically it is a row of straight stitches that are sewn in the hem allowance and an occasional zigzag stitch that catches the folded fabric. Fold the fabric hem allowance up, tucking under the raw edge as for double hem (unless the fabric is quite thick. Then it is preferable to neaten the raw edge by overcasting/zigzag stitching instead and only folding hem allowance up the once). Then turn folded hem allowance back on itself and position under the blind hem foot so that the guide is against the fold and just a little of the hem allowance is to the right. The straight stitching will then go in the hem allowance and the occasional zigzag stitch just catches the folded fabric. There may be a slightly visible ladder stitch on the right side if the thread is not a perfect match.



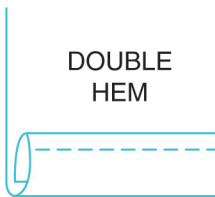
A blind hem is easy when you use a blind hem foot

Blind hemming by hand – ensures perfectly invisible hemming from right side – take needle through just one/two fibres from main garment and more from hem allowance.

Troubleshooting

1. Pattern comes up too big/small – measure yourself carefully first. Remember most pattern companies make patterns for a B cup! Most British ladies are larger so patterns need to be adjusted to allow for larger size. If bigger than D, then buy pattern bust size according to your high chest measurement, then adjust tissue for fuller bust, rather than having to adjust shoulders, neck, back etc. (See BUSTED by Gill Arnold, November 2005 for how-to steps)
2. Seams twist and bubble – stitch all seams in the same direction. Press each seam before stitching over it. Make sure the fabric is cut on straight of grain as indicated by pattern piece and pattern layout.
3. Stitching breaks, or is uneven – check the machine is threaded properly. Rethread, making sure it goes through the tension discs. Put a thread retainer on the spool to hold the reel in place – if it bounces up and down, the thread comes off unevenly causing missed stitches, or it can wrap tightly around the spool pin causing the thread to snap.
4. Needle keeps breaking – again check threading is correct. If thread gets caught on spool pin or in tension discs it may pull tight and break needle. Check that the needle is not bent and catching on presser foot.
5. Fabric snags, holes in fabric, broken stitches – any of these problems can be caused by blunt needles. Make sure you use a new needle for every new garment. Also make sure the needle is the right type (ball point or stretch for knit fabrics, universal or

DOUBLE HEM



sharp for wovens), and the right size – lower numbered needles for finer fabrics (10-12/70-80) and higher numbers for heavier weight fabric (14-16/90-100).

6. Stitching at all is difficult – try cleaning out the bobbin area. Fluff collects very quickly, particularly when sewing pile fabrics. Use the little stiff brush provided in the tools to defluff. Also defluff the tension discs by slipping a piece of interfacing down between the discs. Check oiling – if your machine needs to be oiled, do so regularly (remember to sew on a fabric scrap afterwards to take up any excess oil). Even self-lubricating machines need servicing regularly.
7. Fabric gets pulled down into the feed dogs – this can happen at the start of a seam, particularly on lightweight fabrics. To prevent it hold both bobbin and needle threads tight when you begin stitching and start at least 15 mm (5/8") from the fabric end. If it still happens, put a little piece of tearaway stabilizer or even tissue paper behind the fabric at the start of the seam. Tear away once stitched.
8. Threads tangle and knot at start of seam – this 'bird nesting' is because the thread ends get tangled within the first few stitches. Again to prevent it doing so, bring the bobbin thread up (by turning balance wheel on right of machine to lower and raise needle once) and then hold both threads at the back of the work as you start to stitch.
9. Seams pucker – this can be caused by a stitch length that is too small or too large for the fabric. Try different stitch lengths on a scrap of the same fabric. 2-2.5 length is ideal for lightweight, 2.5-3 for medium weight and 3-4 mm for heavyweight.

Seven top tips

1. Take accurate measurements and buy the pattern size that suits YOU regardless of what size it says.
2. Use an EASY pattern and follow the fabric recommendations. Read the instructions for the view you are making through before starting. Gather together the pattern pieces you will need and mark the pattern layout you are following. Replace unused pieces in the envelope so they don't get mixed up. Pin pattern pieces to fabric following the layout, then check it carefully before cutting.
3. Buy fabric, thread, zip, buttons, interfacings etc at the same time so that you have everything to hand.
4. Use a new and right type of needle for every new project. Blunt or incorrect size/type of needle can cause many problems.
5. Press all seams as you stitch and before stitching over them again. Failure to do so can result in bumpy, lumpy seams that can't be flattened.
6. Fit as you go – keep trying the garment on as soon as you can and remember to wear the right underwear – it's amazing what a bra does to the fit of a top!
7. Use the right presser foot for the sewing technique.

Further Resources

www.isew.co.uk – includes lots of sewing tips, techniques, how-to's and sewing projects plus a Sewing Dictionary of sewing terms and an extensive Suppliers Directory with links to sewing suppliers throughout the UK. DVDs: *The Sew Easy* range by Wendy Gardiner includes *Dressmaking – a visual guide taking you through from choosing patterns to making garments including fabric choice, interfacings, haberdashery and loads of techniques*; *Soft Furnishings – including measuring and making curtains, blinds, cushions and throws* and, *A Guide to Sewing Machines – choosing and using sewing machines from basic entry level models to all singing and dancing computerized models*. Contact Traplet Publications on tel: 01684 588500 or visit www.traplet.com. Books: *Sewing Basics* by Wendy Gardiner, published by Apple Press – also includes some easy projects to get you started *Encyclopedia of Sewing Techniques* also by Wendy Gardiner, published by Search Press – lots of techniques, hints and tips on sewing from basics to more complex. Available from bookshops or Amazon.co.uk. ■