

Date 5-17-93
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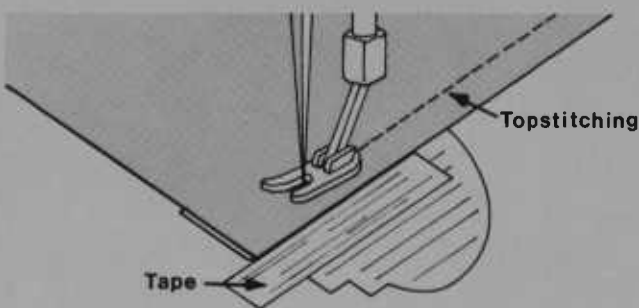
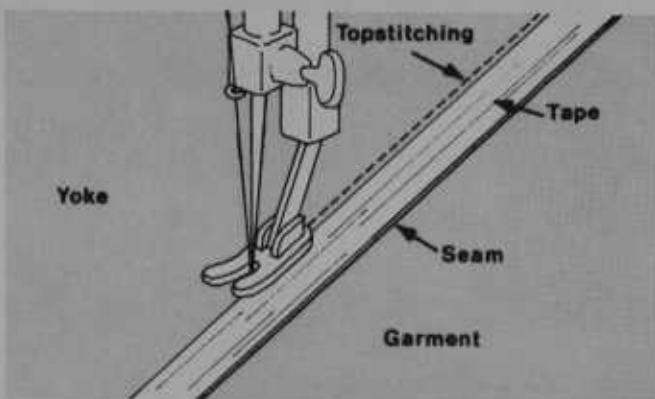
Topstitched Seams

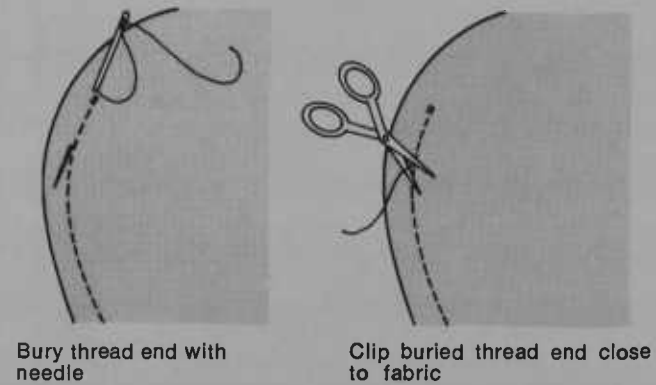
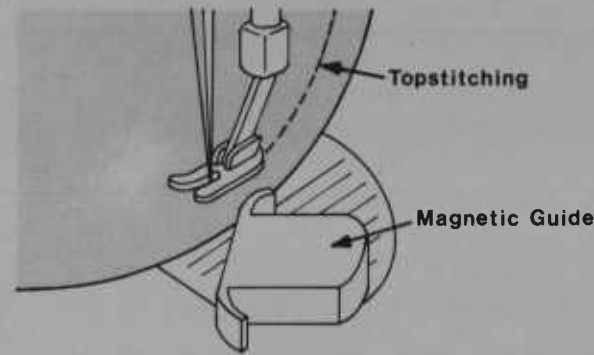
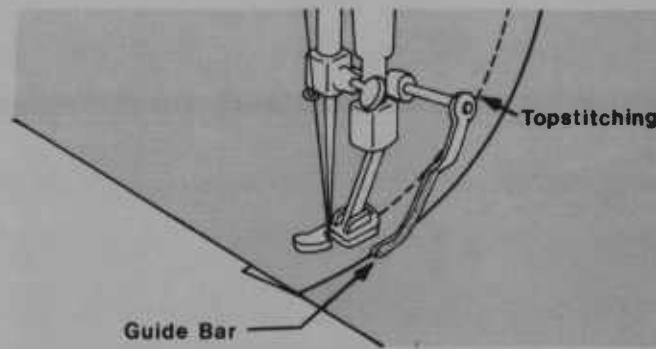
Topstitching, stitches that show on the outside of a garment close to a seam, can emphasize construction details and add interest to plain fabrics. Before investing your time and energy, be sure that topstitching will fit the garment style and the fabric. Topstitching also may add to the durability of the garment.

Types of topstitched seams include topstitched, double topstitched, welt, lapped; tucked, lapped leather, and slot seams. Before starting a garment, sew a sample of the seam including the layers of garment fabric, interfacing, curves, or bias to make sure the technique is effective.

Topstitching varies from normal stitching in several ways. Since it is meant to be seen, heavier thread called topstitching or buttonhole twist is frequently used. Also, you may use double or single strands of regular thread. One way of increasing the visibility of topstitching is to slightly tighten the top tension on your sewing machine so that the stitch forms closer to the top of the fabric. Adjust the tension in relation to the number of fabric layers, the bulkiness of the fabric, and the use of heavier threads or regular thread on top and in the bobbin.

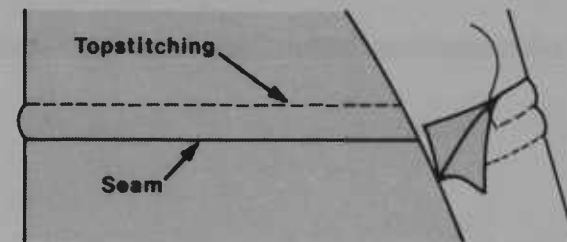
Topstitched seams should be very even and straight. Press the area to be topstitched flat and smooth so that the machine moves the fabric evenly. If the fabric is bulky or unstable, use even or diagonal basting to prevent the underlayers from slipping or folding. To ensure that the topstitching is straight, use a stitching guide such as hand basting, a transparent tape, a quilting foot with guide-bar, magnetic guide, or the regular presser foot. If using tape, be sure to stitch next to the tape, not through it.





If topstitching begins or ends where a knot would show, insert the thread through a hand-sewing needle and tunnel it through the fabric back along the topstitching line. Bring the needle to the surface of the fabric and cut the thread ends close to the fabric.

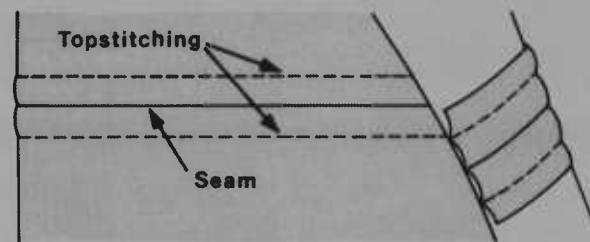
Topstitched seam



Sew a plain seam with the right sides of the fabric together. Press both seam allowances to one side. Follow the directions on the pattern instruction guide or press the seam allowance so that the finished seam will have a smooth look. Determine the location of the topstitching from the pattern or by trying a sample to see what looks best.

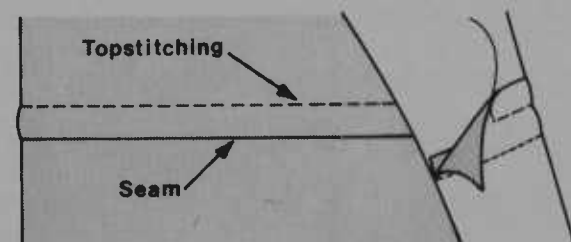
Topstitch the desired width from the seam through all thicknesses. Topstitch with the right side of the fabric up following a guide for even and straight stitching. Topstitch from the same direction as the seam was sewn to avoid puckering. For bulky fabrics with little tendency to ravel, grade the outer seam allowance layer to the topstitching line.

Double and multiple topstitched seam



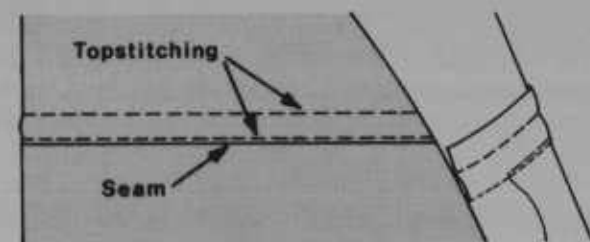
Stitch a plain seam. Press open the seam allowances. Topstitch the desired width from the seam through the seam allowance on each side of the seam. Topstitch on the right side of the fabric, following a guide for even and straight stitching. Sew both topstitching lines in the same direction as the seam was sewn.

Welt seam



This seam is similar to the topstitched seam, but has a padded appearance. Stitch a plain seam. Press open the seam allowance, then press both seam allowances to one side. Trim the inner seam allowance to 1/4 inch (6 mm). Topstitch through the garment and outer seam allowance enclosing the inner seam allowance.

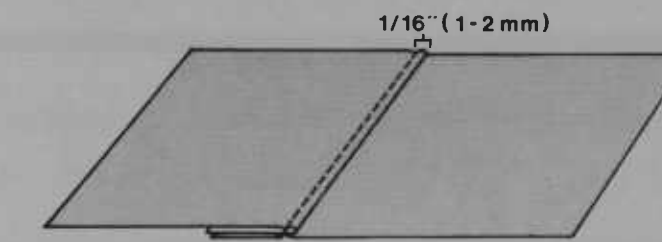
Double welt seam



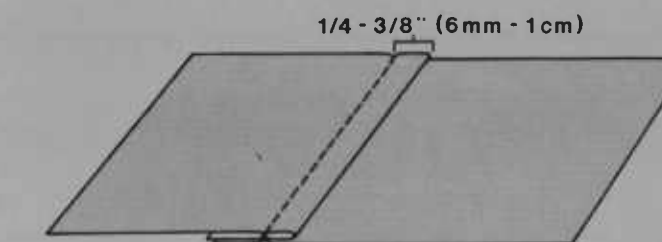
This seam is similar in appearance to the flat-felled seam. Since one raw edge remains on the wrong side, it is not durable for fabrics that ravel or for garments that will be frequently worn and washed.

Complete the steps for the welt seam. In addition to the first row of topstitching, topstitch through the garment and both seam allowances close to the seam on the right side of the fabric.

Lapped and tucked seams

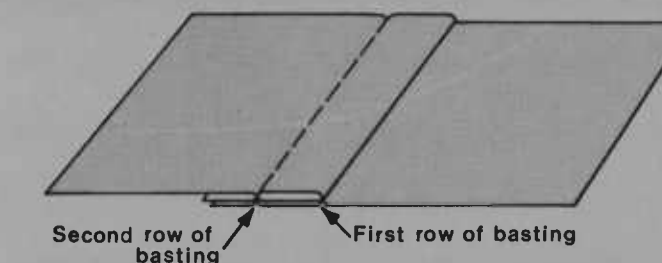


Lapped seam

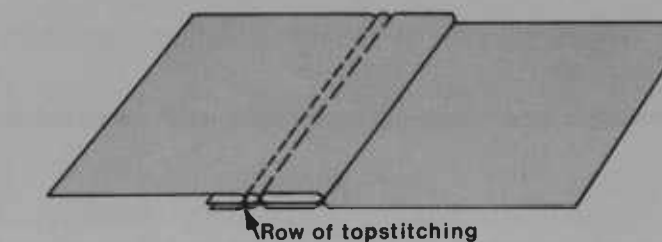


Tucked seam

Tucked seam—method one



Step one

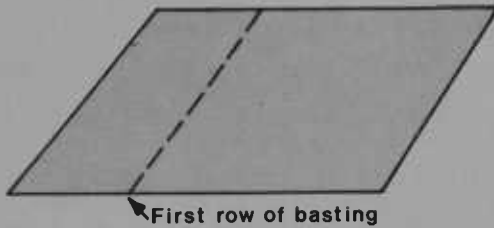


Step two

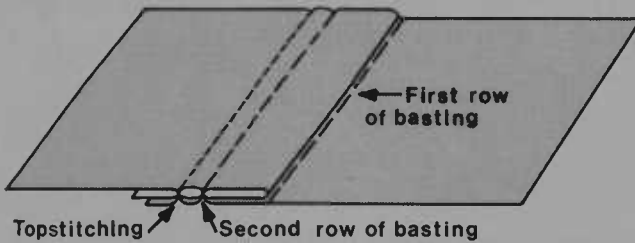
Lapped and tucked seams use topstitching to form the seam rather than adding to the seam. Lapped and tucked seams can be made by two methods. The difference between lapped and tucked seams is the width of the fabric fold held by the topstitching. Lapped seams are topstitched close to the fold while tucked seams have a wider space between the fold and the topstitching.

Method 1. Hand or machine baste the right sides of the fabric together along the seamline. Press both seam allowances to the side that will form the lapped or tucked seam. Check the seam so there are no tucks or creases formed during the pressing. Baste or secure the seam allowances to one side so they won't slip during the topstitching. Stitch through the garment and both seam allowances next to the basted seam. For a lapped seam, the stitching should be very close to the fold, about 1/16 inch (1 to 2 mm). For a tucked seam the stitching may be from 1/4 to 3/8 inch (6 mm to 1 cm). Be sure that the stitching is even and does not vary in width. Remove the basting of the seamline and the basting used to secure the seam allowances.

Tucked seam—method two



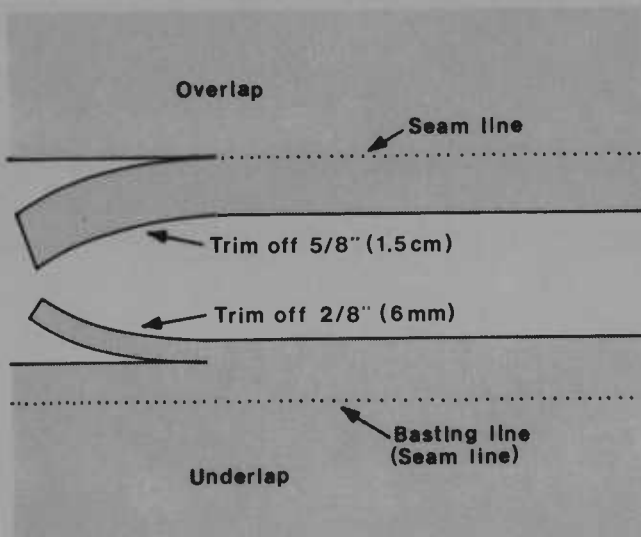
Step one



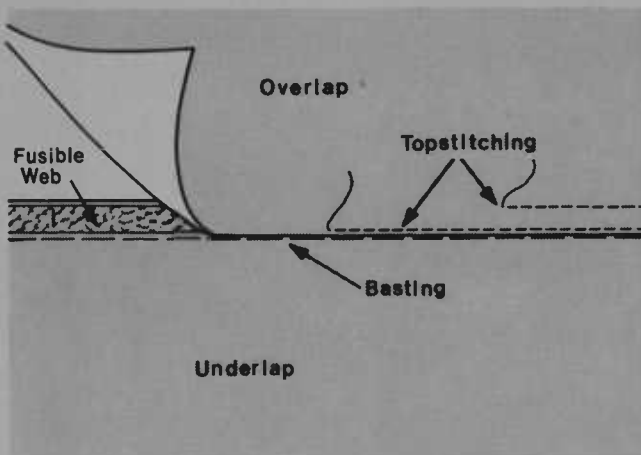
Step two

Method 2. On the underlap piece hand baste or mark the seamline (for marking use tape or washable marker meant for fabrics). Fold the overlap seam allowance to the wrong side on the seamline. Press this fold on the seamline. Baste or secure the folded edge overlap of the side into place along the marked seamline on the underlap. Stitch through the folded overlap and the underlap next to the folded edge. For a lapped seam, the stitching should be very close to the fold, about 1/16 inch (1 to 2 mm). For a tucked seam the stitching may be from 1/4 to 3/8 inch (6 mm to 1 cm). Remove the basting that held the overlap into place and the basting that marked the seam allowance on the underlap.

Lapped leather seam



Step one

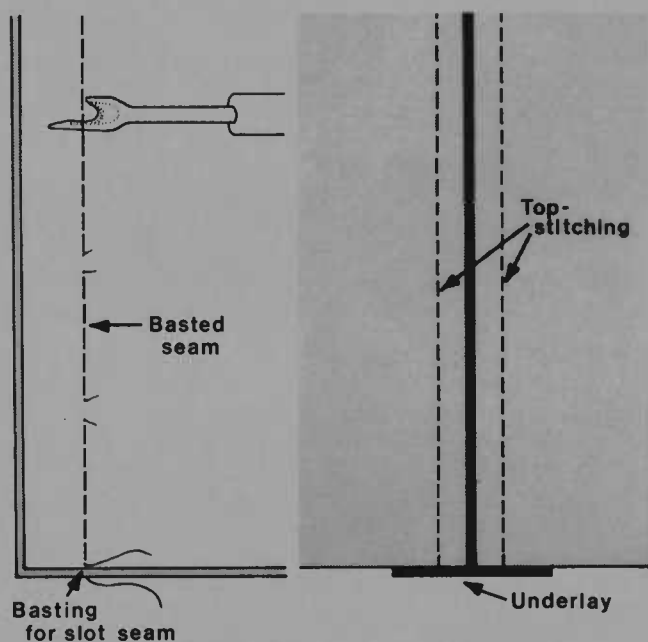


Step two

This seam gives a sporty, casual look to leather or nonwoven fabrics that look like leather. Lapped leather seams require less material than do conventional plain seams.

Trim 2/8 inch (6 mm) off the seam allowance that will form the underlap side. Trim the entire 5/8 inch (1.5 cm) seam allowance off the side that will form the overlap. Adjust the pattern *before* cutting out the garment to conserve fabric. Mark the seamline on the underlap side with tailor's chalk, washable marker, or tape that is suitable for fabric. Lay the completely trimmed overlap seam over the underlap, bringing the cut seamline edge to the marked seamline. Note: Some fabrics may need to be secured with fusible web or basting tape so your machine will not skip stitches. Topstitch 1/4 inch (6 mm) from the seamline and next to the cut edge.

Slot seam



The slot seam is one of the most decorative of the topstitched seams. It is frequently used with a contrasting fabric underlay. The topstitching may also be in the same color as the contrasting fabric. The slot seam is easiest for a straight seam such as a yoke, part of a patch pocket, or near the lower edge of a straight sleeve.

Machine baste the right sides of the garment together along the seamline. Leave long threads for removal of the basting stitches. Press open the seam. Clip the bobbin thread every fourth or fifth stitch. Cut an underlay strip a little wider than the width of the open seam allowance $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.8 cm). Position the underlay under the pressed open seam allowance. Baste or secure the underlay to the open seam allowance. Topstitch an equal distance from the seamline on each side. Remove the basting stitches that hold the seam to reveal the underlay. Remove any other basting stitches.

Selected references

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