Complex Seams for Woven Fabrics

Complex seams may be described as seams that involve more than one line of stitching to complete the seam. These seams are most frequently used for special effects or with different types of woven fabrics. A complex seam may include trimming and sewing of one seam to another. There are three types of complex seams: French seam, mock French, and self-bound seam. Complex seams described in this publication include French seams, mock French, self-bound, flat-felled, mock flat-felled, and seams for reversible double cloth fabric.

French, mock French, and self-bound seams are frequently used on lightweight and sheer woven fabrics. These seams finish the seam allowance, prevent raveling, and look attractive when seen through sheer fabric.

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French seams are most applicable on lightweight and sheer fabrics because the seam is very narrow, such as the armhole of a set-in sleeve. Stitch the French seam as follows, using a sample before attempting the garment.

First, press the wrong sides of the fabric together 3/8 inch (1 cm) from the cut edge so that the seam allowance opens onto the outside of the fabric. Depending on fabric weight and tendency to ravel, trim away about 2/8 inch (6 mm) so that about 1/8 inch (3 mm) remains. Next, press the seams flat. Finally, stitch the French seam exactly on the folded edge. Stitch on the seamline 2/8 inch (6 mm) from the folded fabric. Stitch the basted layers on the seamline, then trim away half the width of the seam allowance so that the finished seam will be gathered. Remove bastings and press open the seam allowance over a seam roll.

The French seam is flatter and less bulky if finished with a line of topstitching on each side of the machine-stitched and slip-stitched seam. Remove any bastings and press.

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Mock French

First stitching — (seam line)

Fabric
Wrong Side

Second stitching

Clip or notch in curved seam

Step one

Step two

Self-bound

First stitching (seam line)

1/8" (3mm)

Step one

Step two

Flat-felled

Fold

1/8" (3mm)

Step one

Topstitch the folded edge enclosing the cut edge.

Mock flat-felled

The completed mock French seam (false French seam) has a similar appearance to a French seam. The mock French seam begins with a plain seam, stitched with the right sides of the fabric together, 5/8 inch (1.5 cm) from the cut edge. Trim both seam allowances to 1/2 inch (0.5 cm). Press open the seam, then press under 1/4 inch (6 mm) of each of the seam allowances toward each other, matching the folded edges.

To make a curved area lie flat, alternate clips on the 1/4 inch (6 mm) turned on the two seam allowances. Machine or hand stitch the two folded edges together. Press the seam to one side.

Flat-felled seams for reversible double cloth fabrics

The self-bound seam is an alternative to either the French or the mock French. It is better with fabrics that do not easily ravel. It is used for seams with gathers or multiple layers such as pockets.

The self-bound seam begins with a plain seam, stitched with the right sides of the fabric together, 5/8 inch (1.5 cm) from the cut edge. Trim one seam allowance to 1/8 inch (3 mm). Turn and press under 1/8 inch (3 mm) of the other seam allowance toward the first. Turn and press a second time bringing the folded edge to the seamline so that the two cut edges are enclosed. Stitch on the first fold of the seam allowance as close as possible to the first stitching.

Flat-felled double cloth seams may be topstitched if the garment is casual or sporty in mood or if the fabric is very bulky. An alternative for dressy and lightweight double cloth fabrics is to slipstitch the fold of the flat-felled seam.
Open seam (double cloth) for reversible garments

Step one

Separate the layers from the cut edge twice the width of the seam allowance.

Step two

Baste together one matching pair of layers along the seamline. Pin or secure the other pair of layers out of the way. Be sure to baste and then stitch the layers together on all seams for any one garment.

Step three

Press first seam open, trim bastings and press. Stitch the basted layers on the seamline, then trim to 3/8" (1 cm) and the second at 2/8" (6 mm) results in the standard seam allowance of 5/8" (1.5 cm). Press the seam flat so it lies in one direction. Fold the right sides of the fabric together and press again with the seam allowance opening onto the outside of the fabric. Depending on fabric weight and tendency to ravel, trim away about 2/8" (6 mm) so that about 1/8" (3 mm) remains. Since the French seam may be confusing, sew a sample before attempting the garment.

Step four

The French seam is most applicable on lightweight and sheer fabrics except when the seam is very curved, such as the armhole of a set-in sleeve. The French seam may be categorized, see a sample before attempting the garment.

First sew the wrong sides of the fabric together 3/8" (1 cm) from the cut edge so that the seam allowance opens onto the outside of the fabric. Depending on fabric weight and tendency to ravel, trim away about 2/8" (6 mm) so that about 1/8" (3 mm) remains. Next, press the seam so that it is open and flat. Be sure to baste the right sides of the fabric together and press again with the wrong sides together and press. Stitch the right sides of the fabric together 3/8" (1 cm) from the folded edge. Stitch the wrong sides of the fabric together 3/8" (1 cm) from the cut edge. Press the seam flat so it lies in one direction.

French seam

Complex seams may be described as seams that involve more than one line of stitching to complete the seam. These seams are more frequently used for special effects or with different types of woven fabrics.

A complex seam may include trimming and sewing one or more lines of stitches to complete the seam finish. Complex seams described in this publication include French seams, mock French, flat-felled, mock flat-felled, and seams for reversible double cloth fabrics.

French, mock French, and self-bound seams are frequently used on lightweight and sheer woven fabrics. These seams finish the seam allowance, prevent raveling, and look attractive when the fabric is turned right side out. Flat-felled and mock flat-felled may be used with light to heavy-weight woven fabrics. These seams have a casual appearance and are frequently used for sportswear, children’s clothing, and men’s shirts. Flat-felled and mock flat-felled seams on double cloth and double woven fabrics make the garment reversible.

Completed complex seams should be smooth, flat, and be without puckers or ripples. Even stitch length, the right thread for the fabric, and tension control are important for achieving these seams.

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Complex seams for woven fabrics

Complex seams may be described as seams that involve more than one line of stitching to complete the seam. These seams are most frequently used for special effects or for different types of woven fabrics.

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French, mock French, and self-bound seams are frequently used on lightweight and sheer woven fabrics. These seams finish the seam allowance, prevent raveling, and look attractive when used on fine fabrics.

Flat-felled and mock flat-felled may be used with lightweight and medium weight woven fabrics. These seams have a casual appearance and are frequently used for sportswear, children’s clothing, and men’s shirts. Flat-felled and mock flat-felled seams on double cloth and double woven fabrics make the garment reversible.

Completed complex seams should be smooth, flat, and be without puckers or ripples. Even stitch length, the right thread for the fabric, and correct tension are important for sewing these seams.

The French seam is most applicable on lightweight and sheer fabrics because when the seam is very curved, such as the armhole or a set-in sleeve, the French seam may be the easiest. See the sample before attempting the garment.

First, trim the wrong side of the fabric to get 3/8 inch (1 cm) from the cut edge so that the seam allowance opens onto the outside of the fabric. Depending on fabric weight and tendency to ravel, trim away about 2/8 inch (6 mm) so that about 1/8 inch (3 mm) remains.

Next, press the seam so that it lies flat and is without puckers or ripples. Even stitch length, the right thread for the fabric, and correct tension are important for sewing these seams.

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