

Complex Seams for Woven Fabrics

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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.

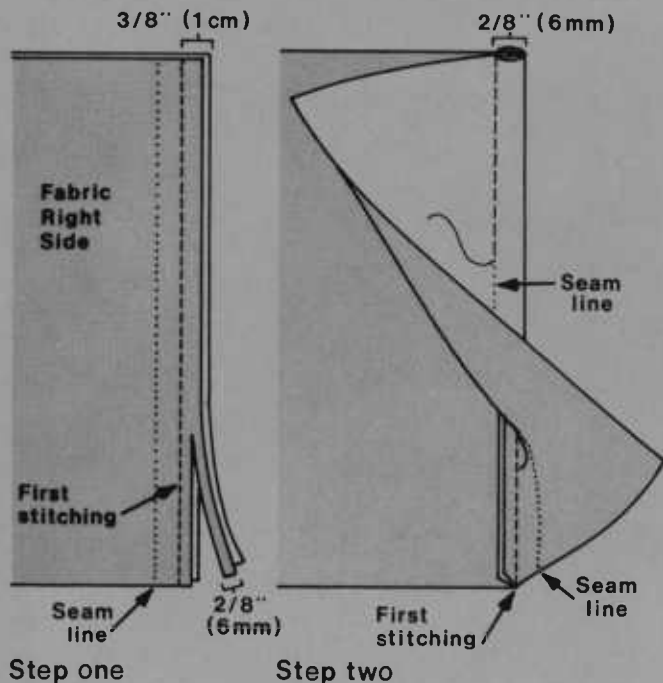
A complex seam may include trimming and pressing steps. Some complex seams replace a seam finish. Complex seams described in this publication include French seams, mock French, self-bound, flat-felled, mock flat-felled, and seams for reversible double cloth fabric.

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.

Flat-felled and mock flat-felled may be used with light to heavyweight 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, lie 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.

French seam



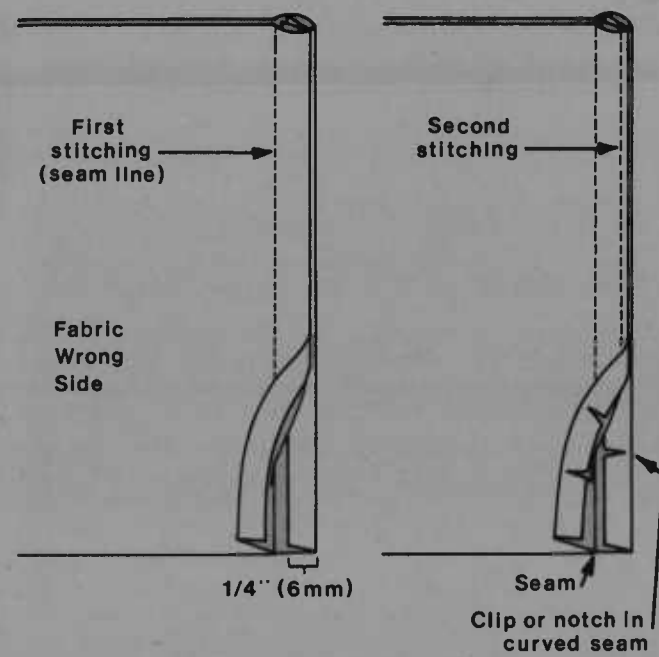
The French seam is most applicable on lightweight and sheer fabrics except when the seam is very curved, such as the armhole of a set-in sleeve. Since the French seam may be confusing, sew a sample before attempting the garment.

First sew 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 seam flat as it was sewn, then press open the seam. Finally, fold the right sides of the fabric together and press again with the stitched seam exactly on the folded edge. Stitch on the seamline 2/8 inch (6 mm) from the folded edge.

Note that sewing the first seamline at 3/8 inch (1 cm) and the second at 2/8 inch (6 mm) results in the standard seam allowance of 5/8 inch (1.5 to 1.6 cm). Press the seam flat so it lies in one direction.

Mock French



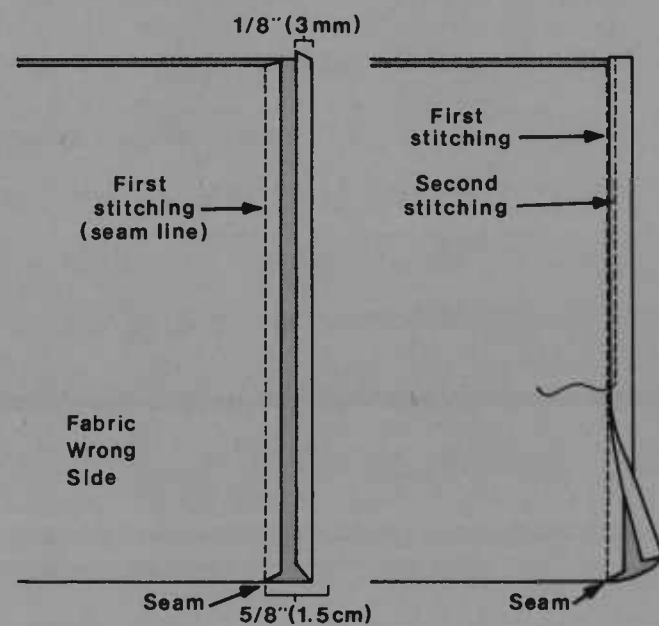
Step one

Step two

The completed mock French seam (false French seam) has a similar appearance to a French seam. The mock French seam, however, 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 (1.2 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.

Self-bound



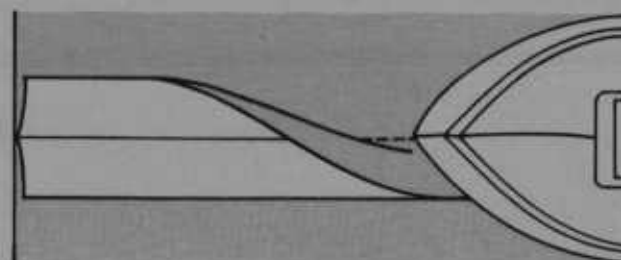
Step one

Step two

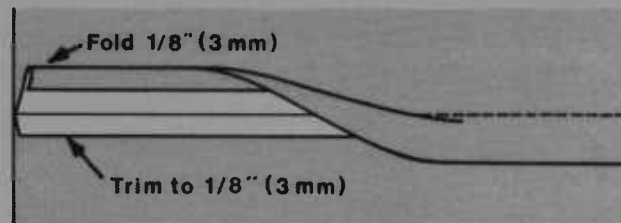
The self-bound seam is an alternative to either the French or the mock French. It is better with fabrics that do not easily ravel. It is used for seams with gathers or multiple layers such as pockets.

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.

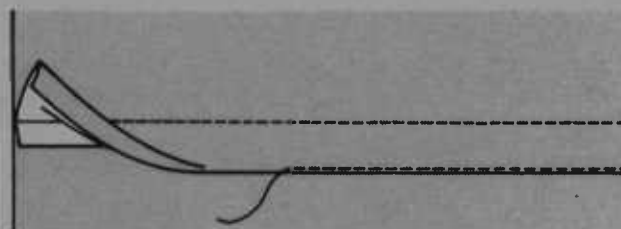
Flat-felled



Step one



Step two



Step three

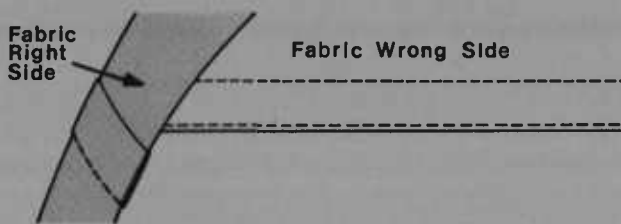
The flat-felled seam is strong and durable for fabrics that tend to ravel and are laundered often. It is frequently used on sports clothes, children's clothes, shirts, and pajamas. It may be used on reversible fabrics such as double cloth and double wovens.

With the wrong sides of the fabric together, stitch on the seamline at 5/8 inch (1.5 cm). Press open the seam, then press both seam allowances in the direction you want the seam to be folded and stitched. Check that the seams on the left and right sides of the garment turn the same direction.

Trim the under seam allowance to 1/8 inch (3 mm). Turn under 1/4 inch (6 mm) of the top seam allowance. Press and secure the folded edge with pins or basting. Keep the seam even in width and the same width from one seam to another.

Topstitch the folded edge enclosing the cut edges.

Mock flat-felled

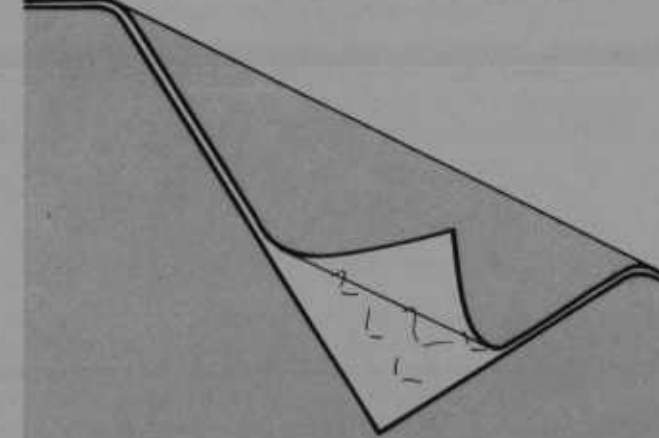


The mock flat-felled seam (false flat-felled seam) is created by sewing the flat-felled seam in reverse.

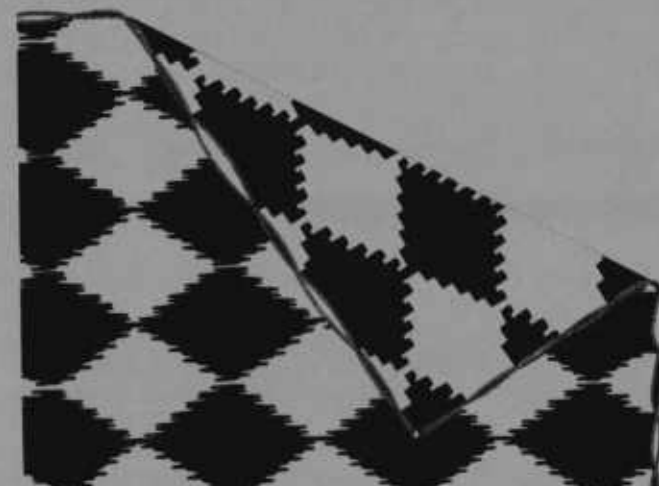
Begin by stitching the right sides of the fabric together to form the seam. Then follow the same procedures as for the flat-felled seam.

Finish by topstitching the folded edge into place from the wrong side of the garment.

Seams for reversible double cloth fabrics



Double cloth—layers can be separated

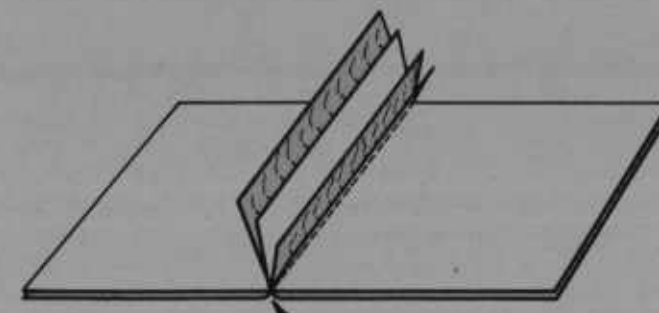


Double woven—layers cannot be separated

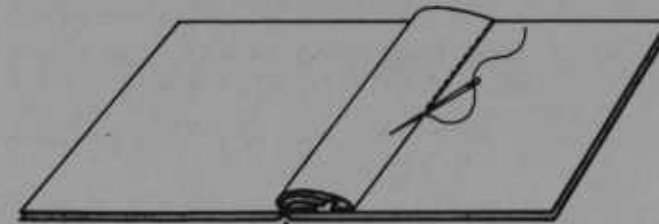
Double cloth fabrics are made with two sets of lengthwise and crosswise yarns which may be joined together with a fifth set of yarns. These joining yarns may be cut so that the two layers of double cloth can be separated.

This technique does not work with double woven fabrics that are made of only the two sets of lengthwise and crosswise yarns.

Flat-felled seam (double cloth)



Fabric prepared for either topstitching or slipstitching



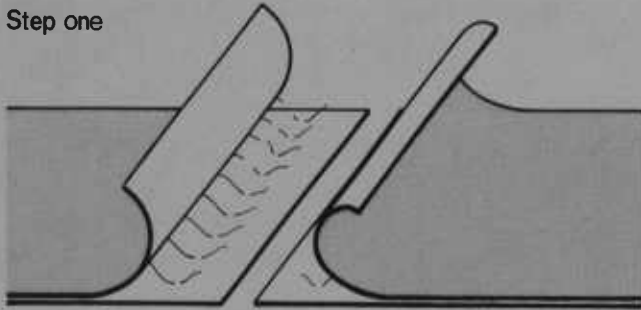
Fabric with slipstitched flat-felled seam to be reversible

Flat-felled seams work well on double cloth fabrics to make the garment reversible. Follow the instructions for flat-felled seams. When the instructions indicate trimming the underseam allowance, trim each of the underlayers of the double cloth seam allowance narrower.

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.

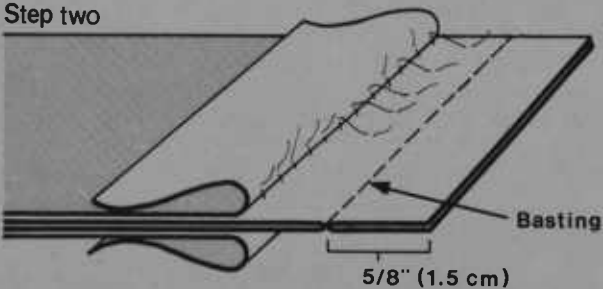
Open seam (double cloth) for reversible garments

Step one



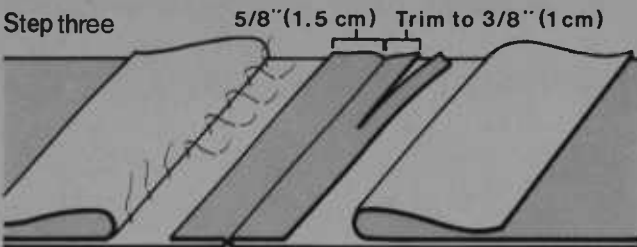
Separate layers twice the width of the seam

Step two



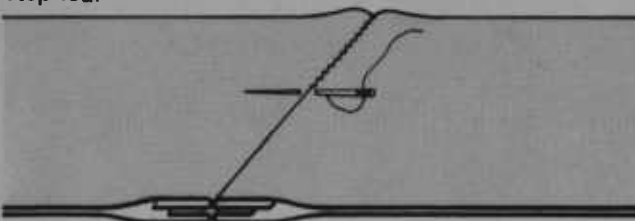
Baste, then stitch seam in first layer

Step three



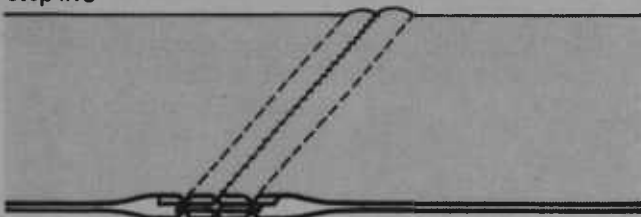
Press first seam open, trim

Step four



Slipstitch seam in second layer

Step five



Optional topstitching

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

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 stitch the same layers together on all seams for any one garment.

Stitch the basted layers on the seamline, then trim away half the width of their seam allowances so that the finished seam will be graded. Remove basting and press open the seam allowances over a seam roll.

Turn in one of the separated second layers so that its fold matches the seamline of the layer beneath. Baste it to the underneath layer. Turn in the second separated layer so that its fold lies against the first. Secure or baste it to the layer underneath. Slipstitch the two folds together to form a hand-stitched seam.

The 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 basting and press.

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Oregon State University

Selected references

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