

# Casings and Crotch Seams

Level  
2 & 3

## Oregon 4-H Clothing Construction Fact Sheets: Basic Skills—Levels 2 and 3

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### Casing

A casing is a fabric tunnel, typically around the waistline, made to enclose a drawstring or elastic. Waistline casings are easy to construct and can be easily adjusted to changes in waist measurement. The casing should be constructed at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) wider than the elastic, ribbon, or drawstring it is to enclose. This allows free movement within the fabric tunnel.

There are two types of casings: fold-down and applied. **Fold-down casings** are usually formed at the top of pants, skirts, or shorts, or at the bottom of shirt (figure 1). **Applied casings** are applied on top of a particular area of a garment and are often used for jackets, shirts, dresses, and robes (figure 2).



Figure 1. Fold-down casing.

Figure 2. Applied casing in place of waistline seam.

### Making a fold-down casing

A fold-down casing is formed by turning a portion of the fabric at the garment edge to the inside and stitching it in place.

Turn the garment edge under  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) and press. If desired, you can first stitch  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) from the raw edge to provide a guideline for turning and pressing. While looking at the wrong side of the fabric, fold down the width of the fabric needed for the casing. Pin in place (figure 3).

Machine-stitch the lower edge (the part that was folded under) of the casing in place (figure 4). This creates the tunnel, which will be the casing. It is important to leave a small opening on this lower edge to be able to insert the elastic or cording.

Another option for making a casing is to serge the raw edge instead of turning it under and stitching. It is important to still allow the correct width for your casing as you stitch the bottom edge, making sure the serged edge is below the stitching.

A great way to add a sharper, polished look to the casing is to also stitch very close ( $\frac{1}{16}$  inch [1.5 mm]) to the upper edge of the casing (figure 5).

Insert the ribbon, cord, or elastic into the fabric tunnel. If you are using elastic, select a brand that is “non-roll.” You can use the bodkin tool or the looper tool to help pull the elastic, cording, or ribbon through the casing.

When making a casing, it is also possible to make two or more tunnels. You can divide the existing casing into two or more tunnels by stitching a row (or multiple rows) of stitches down the middle of the casing.

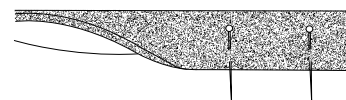


Figure 3. Fold-down casing—turn garment edge under, press, fold down, and pin.

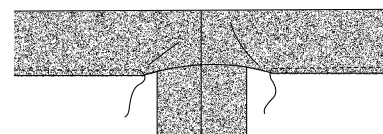


Figure 4. Fold-down casing—machine-stitch lower edge of casing in place.

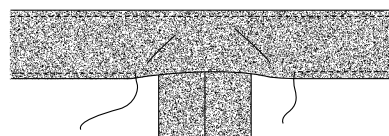


Figure 5. Fold-down casing—stitch upper edge of casing for a sharper look.



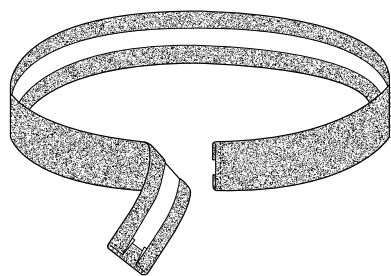


Figure 6. Applied casing—fold and press, and edgestitch ends.

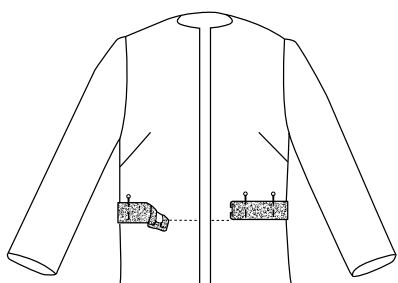


Figure 7. Applied casing (one-piece)—pin casing to garment.

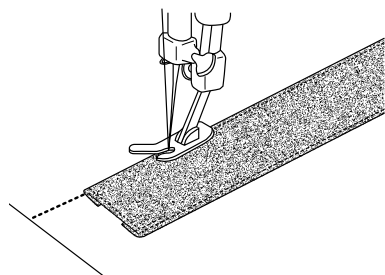


Figure 8. Applied casing (one-piece)—edgestitch casing to garment.

## Making an applied casing

An applied casing is formed by stitching a separate strip of fabric to the area to be drawn up. If sewn outside the garment, the casing may be made of either the garment fabric or a contrasting trim. If sewn inside the garment, the casing is usually made of a lightweight lining fabric or a ready-made bias tape to reduce unnecessary bulk.

First determine the width of the finished casing. Remember: The casing should be constructed at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) wider than the elastic, ribbon, or drawstring it will enclose. In addition, add another  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (1.3 cm) of width to allow  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch seam allowances on both edges of the casing. To determine the length of the casing, measure the circumference (length around) of the garment where the casing will be applied, and add another  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch (1.3 cm) for finishing ends.

## Sewing casing to a one-piece garment

After cutting the casing, fold under and press  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) to the wrong side on all ends. Press the ends under before pressing down the sides, and edgestitch both ends (figure 6).

Pin the casing to the garment with the lower edge on the waistline marking (figure 7). The pattern instructions will tell you whether to pin the casing on the inside or outside of the garment.

Edgestitch the casing to the garment on the long sides. Backstitch at both ends of the stitch lines to strengthen (figure 8). Press the casing flat.

## Sewing casing to also serve as facing

Trim seam allowances at the garment edge to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm). Pin the casing to the garment with right sides together, starting at a vertical seam (figure 9).

Machine-stitch along the pressed crease of the casing, which is  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) from the edge, while keeping the ends of the casing turned back as shown in figure 10.

Turn the casing to the wrong side of the garment, letting the garment edge roll slightly inside. Pin in place. Edgestitch along the lower edge, overlapping stitching (figure 11). Press the casing flat.

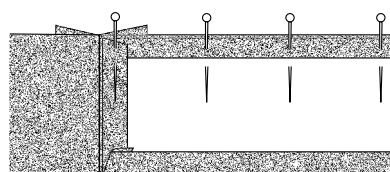


Figure 9. Applied casing (as facing)—pin casing to garment.

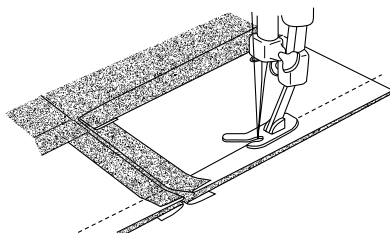


Figure 10. Applied casing (as facing)—machine-stitch along crease.

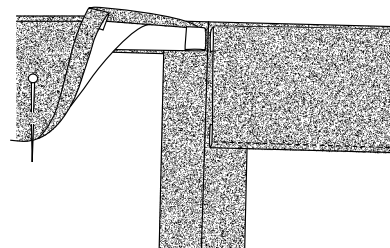


Figure 11. Applied casing (as facing)—turn casing to wrong side, pin, and edgestitch lower edge.

## Crotch seam

The crotch seam in a pair of pants or shorts requires some specific techniques to ensure the seam is comfortable and durable.

### Making the crotch seam

Sew the leg seams first. Press the seam open, and apply the appropriate seam finish.

Slip one leg inside the other, with right sides together. Start with one leg *right* side out and the other *wrong* side out. Pin at leg seams, at front and back waistline, and at notches (figure 12).

Sew the seam  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch (1.5 cm) from the cut edge, stretching the seam along the crotch curve. Reinforce the curve area between notches by sewing another line of stitching  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch (1.5 mm) inside the seamline. Finish the curve by making a third row of stitching  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) inside the first row of stitching—only in the crotch seam curve area between the notches. This will reinforce the crotch seam curve.

Trim crotch seam allowances close to the final row of stitching, between the two notches only. This helps reduce bulk and gives greater comfort (figure 13).

At the notches, clip into the seam allowances to the reinforcement stitching. Finish the seam allowance between the two notches with a zigzag stitch or other appropriate seam finish. Finish the seam allowances above the notches, and press them open (figure 14).

## References

Carter, C.J. (2000). *Blue Ribbon Sewing Techniques*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University 4-H Youth Development Program.

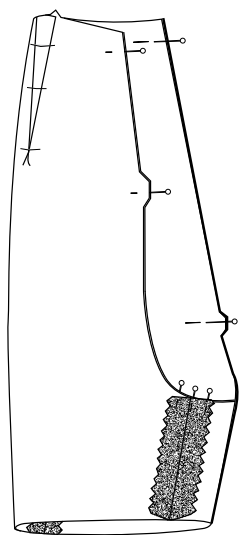


Figure 12.  
Pin crotch seam.

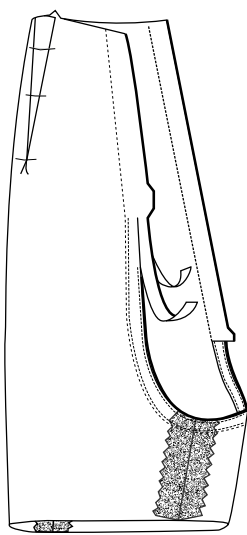


Figure 13. Sew crotch  
seam and trim curve.

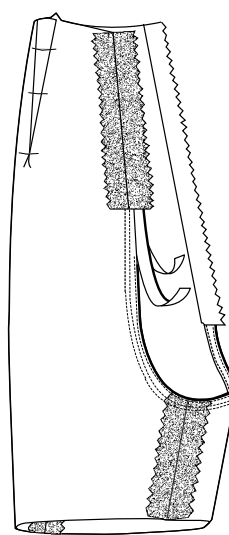


Figure 14. Finish crotch  
seam allowances and press.

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