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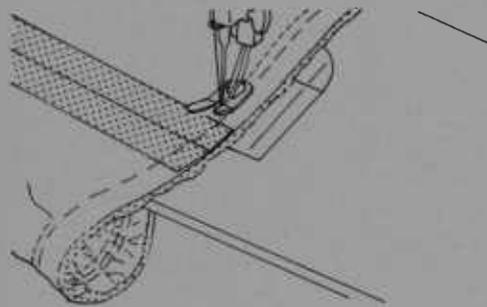
Ease and Gathers

Easing and gathering are methods of controlling fullness in order to join two edges of uneven length. Easing controls a slight to moderate amount of fullness while gathering controls a larger amount.

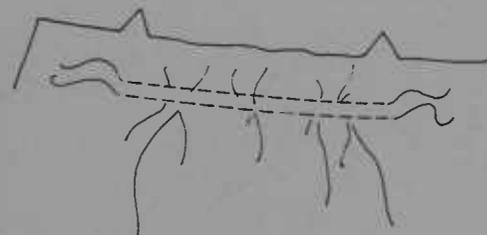
Easing



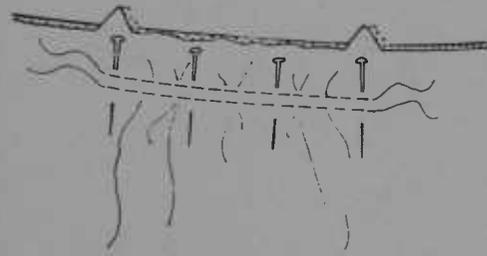
The purpose of easing is subtle shaping. Garment areas that may use easing include back shoulder seam, set-in sleeve cap, waistbands, and hems. The eased area should be smooth and unpuckered after pressing. Permanent press finished fabrics, non-woven fabrics, woven fabrics with close yarns, and some stable knit fabrics are more difficult to ease.



The pattern symbols for ease are usually dots, circles, or notches that indicate the beginning and ending of the area to be eased. To control a small amount of ease, pin the beginning and ending of the area to be eased. Bend the area slightly away from you to smooth out the ease. Distribute the fullness evenly and place pin perpendicular to the edge to hold it in place. Stitch with the eased side down (shorter side up) so that the feed dogs of the machine assist in working in the excess fullness.



The first step in controlling a moderate amount of ease is to make a row of stitching next to the seam line. The size of the stitch should be slightly larger than that used for seams but not as large as a basting stitch. If staystitching has been done it may be used as the ease stitching. If more control is needed, make a second row of stitching in the seam allowance $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) from the seam line.

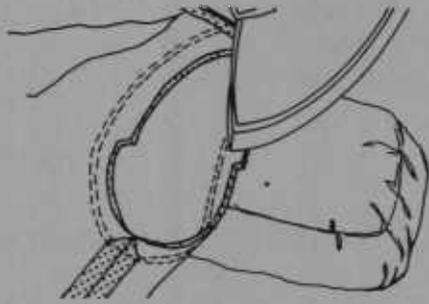


To join the moderately eased seam, pin seam at the ends of the eased area as needed. Pull on one end of the easing thread (pull only the top or only the bobbin thread) until the edges match. Distribute the fullness smoothly and evenly. Pin to hold fullness securely. Decide whether to baste, to machine stitch with eased side down, or to machine stitch with eased side up so that you can see and adjust the ease. Your decision may be based on the amount of ease and whether the feed dogs can stroke in the controlled ease, or whether you feel more secure in watching and adjusting the ease. Whether you stitch with the eased side up or down, remove pins as you come to them.

Begin pressing an eased seam by using the edge of the iron—stroking lightly from the stitching outward on the seam allowance. Then using the point of the iron, press from the stitching inward over the garment. Press seam open or continue sewing as needed.

In some fabrics, especially wool, steam-pressing will entirely shrink out the ease. Work over a pressing ham or a sleeve board, so the area is molded as intended. With a steam iron, hold the iron over the eased area, and allow the steam to penetrate the fabric, then lower the iron and apply light pressure until ease has disappeared. With a dry iron, use a dampened press cloth and lightly touch the press cloth and fabric with the iron.

Other fabrics are handled in the same way, but will not readily shrink, although unfinished natural fibers may do so to a slight extent. It is important to begin by pressing the seam only, using the point of the iron. Putting the iron down flat may make creases out of the slight indication of gathers.



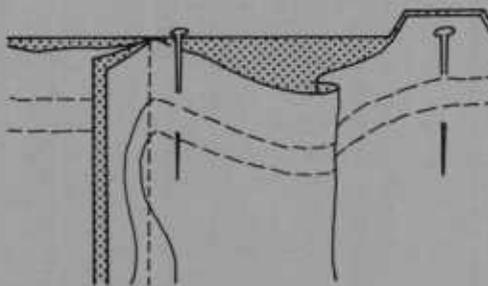
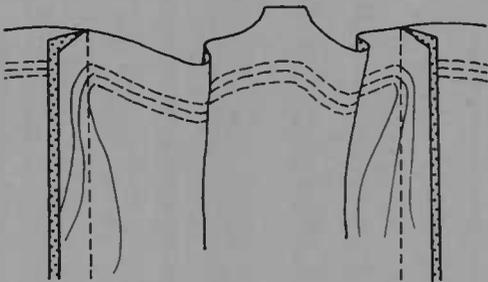
Gathering

The purpose of gathering is to supply fullness as part of the design of a garment. Garment areas which may use gathering are waistlines, cuffs, yokes, and ruffles. Gathers should be evenly distributed without gaps or folds. Gathering may be done by hand, but it is more even if done by machine.

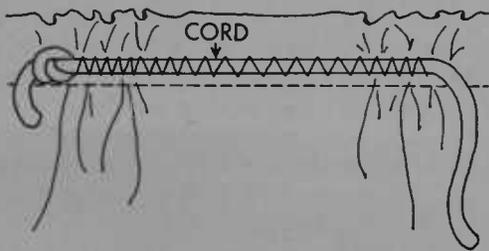
The pattern symbol for gathering is the labeled seam line. Dots or circles frequently indicate the beginning and ending of the area to be gathered. These symbols should be transferred from the pattern to the fabric. Usually gathers reduce fabric one-third to one-half its original width. Plan $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 times the finished length if you are not using a pattern.

Before beginning gathering—stitch, finish, and press open any seams that will be crossed by the gathering. Adjust the sewing machine upper tension to slightly looser than normal. An unbalanced tension makes pulling the bobbin thread easier. Test stitch lengths suitable for your fabric. Stitch lengths may vary from 6 stitches per inch (3-4 mm long) for thick, heavy materials, to 12 stitches per inch (2-2.5 mm long) for sheer, light fabrics. Use the shortest stitch length suitable for your fabric to give the most control of the gathers.

Stitch two parallel rows of gathering in the seam allowance. Locate the first line just inside the seam line and the second line $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) from the first in the seam allowance. If your fabric does not show needle holes after stitching has been removed, the gathers can be better controlled by locating three rows of gathering $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm), $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.3 cm), and $\frac{3}{4}$ " (1.9 cm) from the cut edge. The seam is sewn between the two lines, then the $\frac{3}{4}$ " (1.9 cm) line of stitching is removed. Stitch the rows of gathering from the right side.



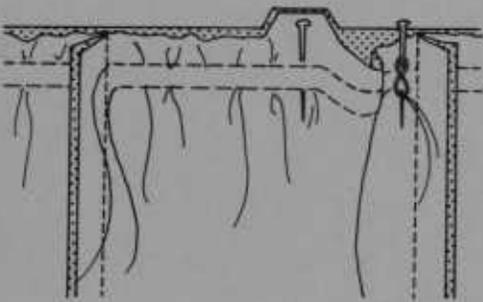
If the fabric is heavy, stitch under the seam allowance, stop short of the seam, and start again on the other side of the seam leaving long thread ends to pull.



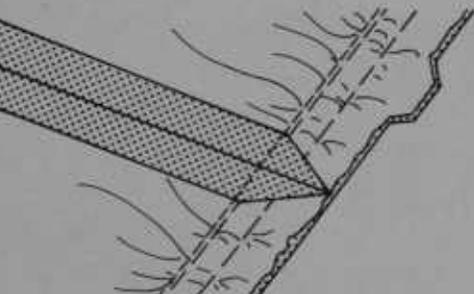
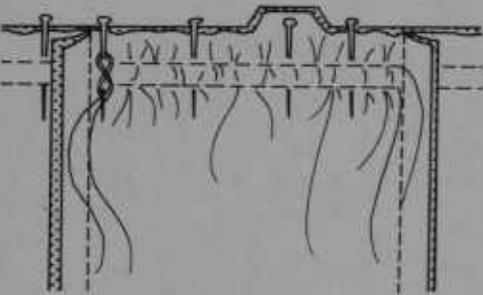
Zigzag stitching over a thin strong cord or a double length of thread is used for long gathered edges or bulky fabrics. Set the machine for medium stitch width and medium stitch length. Place the cord or doubled thread $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3 mm) above the seam line and stitch over the cord to hold it in place. Adjust stitch width if needed in order to avoid stitching through the cord.



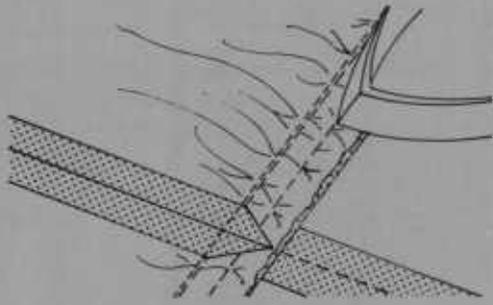
A gathering foot automatically gathers with each machine stitch. The longer the stitch, the closer the gathers will be. Determine the desired closeness and fabric needed by measuring a sample before and after gathering. Refer to your sewing machine manual for directions on operating the gathering foot.



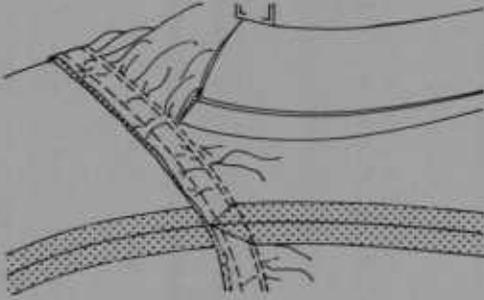
To attach a gathered edge to a straight edge, pin the right sides together at any points of matching such as notches, center lines, and seams. To evenly distribute gathers in a long area, find the center point of each section and pin, then continue to match the centers of each section of fabric. Temporarily fasten the bobbin threads at one end by winding them in a figure 8 around a pin. Pull bobbin threads at the opposite end by sliding the fabric along the threads until the edges match in length. Secure threads around a pin and repeat as needed from each end until lengths match and gathers are evenly distributed. Pin as needed to hold gathers in place.



Adjust sewing machine to balanced tension and appropriate length stitch for seams before stitching seam with gathered and straight edges. Stitch on the seamline with the gathered side up—watching that pleats are not formed. Trim any seam allowances which are crossed.



Press the seam allowance flat as it was stitched using the tip of the iron. Finish the seam edge with a zigzag or overedge stitch, or apply a woven seam binding, twill tape, or grosgrain ribbon stay if the seam will receive stress, as a waistline seam. Open the garment flat with straight edge folded back and the gathers extended. Again, press the seam allowance with the tip of the iron, being careful not to press folds in the gathered section. When you press the gathered area, work by directing the point of the iron into the gathers.



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Reader's Digest. *Complete Guide to Sewing*. The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., 1976.

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