

Weighted Hems

12.360

Page 1



SEW-lutions Guidelines

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Designer Coco Chanel was famous for her bouclé cardigan jackets with braid trim—the basis of the perfect "suit" when paired with a straight skirt, and a simple blouse made from fabric that often matched the jacket lining. One of her signature details was a weighted jacket hem, made with a small gilded chain.

The chain's purpose is to simply add a bit of weight so the jacket hangs close to the body and sits properly when worn. It serves as a counterbalance if your jacket has large, potentially heavy buttons that can cause the jacket to pull forward on the shoulders. The slight weight helps any wrinkles to hang out if the fabric is prone to them (like linen).

In addition to jackets, weighted hems can also be found on coats and straight skirts made by high-end designers, and knowledgeable sewers.

Chaining Up

Look for chain at a tailoring supply store or online. Avoid the temptation to go to your local home improvement store, as this chain often has no protective finishing and may damage or darken the adjacent fabric. The chain weight and size should be compatible with the fabric weight; a too-heavy chain may stretch the garment out of shape. So, take an interfaced fabric swatch (to simulate the hem treatment) with you when purchasing the chain. Be sure the links are tightly closed for easier stitching and look for sizes from 1/8" to 3/8", depending on the fabric. Some stores carry chain in pre-cut lengths, others sell it by the yard.

You will need wire cutters to cut excess chain length, or you can simply open a link with a small screwdriver or needle-nose pliers and remove the extra.

Thread Smart

Use dental floss, nylon upholstery thread or beading thread to stitch the chain in place. A double thread makes the most secure

attachment. If you use regular sewing thread, strengthen it with beeswax before using. Metal often cuts right through the thread with any movement, so the stronger threads work best.

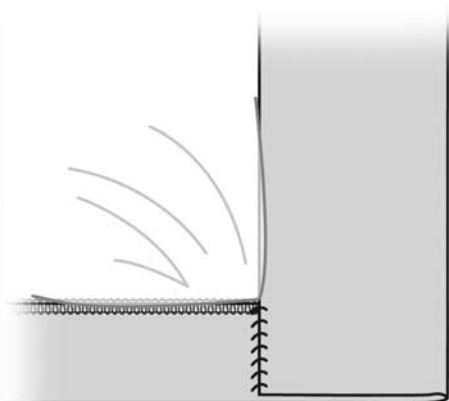
A Word of Caution: Remember to tell your drycleaner about the hemline chain, so they don't press over it leaving a potentially permanent mark on the garment outside.

Loop de Loop

Stitch the garment and lining hems in place before attaching the chain. The chain is usually set at the upper hem edge, tucked under the lining ease pleat and goes from facing to facing in jackets and coats. In skirts, it goes between the vent or kick pleat facings around the skirt hem to the other side.

Attach the chain to the hem using a backstitch to catch the upper and lower portion of each link; knot the thread every fourth link or so for security. Another option is to attach the chain only at the upper link edges, allowing more flexibility; either method is acceptable.

Some sewers prefer to place the chain closer to the hem edge, but tucking it up under the lining helps protect adjacent garments and/or hosiery from abrasion. Tuck the chain ends under the facings to avoid any sharp edges (1).



1

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