



Pintucking

17.222

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Twin needles are perfect for many different types of embellishing and utilitarian uses (see *Guideline 11.227 Twin-needle Sewing for more information*). One of the most common uses of this handy notion is to make pintucks—those tiny raised ridges featured on heirloom garments, or as accents on contemporary clothing and home decorating projects.

Pintucks are often used in combination with laces and trims on heirloom garments, and they can also be used as accents on garment sections, such as collars or yokes.



Photo courtesy of
Husqvarna Viking

Fabric Options

The best pintucks are made on lightweight fabrics, such as batiste or lawn, though with some thread tension adjustments they can be equally as stunning on denim or satin. Very heavy or pile fabrics generally don't tuck well, though twin-needle stitching can still be used for accent.

Tools of the Trade



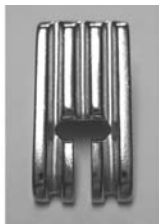
Pintucks are created using a combination of a double needle (1) and a grooved pintucking foot.

The twin needles are available in various spacings (from 1.6 to 8.0mm apart) and the smaller the space, the tinier the tuck.

Pintucking feet (2) are available for most sewing machine brands, and they often come in a choice of groove configurations — 3, 5, 7 or 9 indentations across the underside of the foot; the higher the number, the smaller the grooves (3).



2



3

Needle and presser foot photos above
courtesy of Nancy's Notions

As the tucks are formed, the foot can be used as a spacing guide—the previously stitched tuck rides in a groove, allowing consistent spacing for subsequent tucks without further marking.

If you don't have the special foot, you can still make pintucks—simply substitute a foot with an indentation on the underside, like a buttonhole foot, and mark the pintuck positioning lines.

Thread Tricks

After inserting the double needle, thread the machine with two spools of thread, following any directions in your owner's manual for separating them at key places like tension disks and/or thread guides.

If you don't have two spool pins or two spools of the same color thread, wind a bobbin and place it under the spool on a single spool pin. Feed the threads in opposite directions so that one comes off the front of the spool and the other comes off the back side to help avoid tangling.

The secret to successful pintucking is adjusting the thread tension to create a raised line of fabric between the double needle stitch rows. If the tension is too loose, there will be two perfectly parallel lines of stitching but no raised tuck.

Almost any kind of thread can be used for pintucking—from lightweight heirloom cottons, metallics and variegated varieties

to heavy jean topstitching thread. Select the appropriate size and type of twin needle to match the fabric and thread weight.

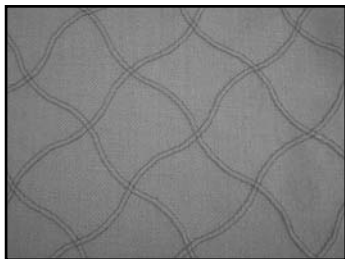
It's important to test-sew on a scrap of your project fabric and adjust the tension for optimum tucking before starting your project.

Artistic Options

Using very lightweight white fabric for tucking, you can create a shadowed look by using a dark colored bobbin thread. Because one bobbin services both needles, the resulting zigzag will create a shadow effect. This technique is often used in heirloom sewing.

Another creative option—thread the needles with different color threads, but do be sure the threads are the same weight.

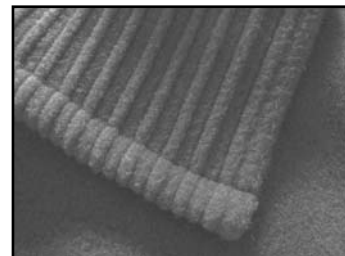
Who says pintucks have to be simply parallel rows of tiny ridges? Go wild and stitch them in curves, circles, grids (4) or a combination of other patterns. If the tucks don't begin and end in a seamline, be sure to leave the thread ends long enough for securing on the underside.



4

Some machines offer an attachment to feed a small cord into the tuck as it's being stitched. The cord is encased with the underside zigzag stitching. If your brand doesn't offer this option, simply tape a small section of soda straw in front of the presser foot, and guide the cord through it as you're stitching the tucks.

Step outside the traditional fabric selection, and use pintucking techniques on things like fleece. Sewing close parallel rows of tucks can create the look of ribbing (5).



5

For the smoothest pintucking results, hold the fabric tautly in front of and behind the presser foot as you stitch. On the other hand, if you want to use pintucking to texturize the fabric, simply let the machine stitch the tucks without holding the fabric. There may be some puckering, but if you're looking for overall texture, that's the point.

It's best not to press pintucks after stitching, so they maintain their dimension. If the surrounding fabric needs a press, hover the iron above the surface and use light steam. 🖱️