

Hemming Jeans

14.101

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Finding a great-fitting pair of jeans is no easy task, but that euphoria can be quickly dampened if the jeans puddle on the floor. With these hemming techniques and the right tools, you can recreate the look of the original hem and make the jeans any length you like.

Notion Commotion

When stitching denim, it's important to use the right thread and sewing-machine needle for the fabric thickness. Jeans thread is cotton-covered polyester that's extra thick and durable. Its gold color mimics the original thread found on most jean topstitching. When threading the machine with the jeans thread, use regular all-purpose thread in the bobbin to blend with the denim color. Another option for topstitching is denim thread, a multi-color blue mix that blends with most jean fabrics.

Jeans needles are made specifically for denim. They have an extra-sharp tip for penetrating the thick fabric and an extra-large eye to accommodate thicker threads. Sizes range from 80/12 to 110/18 depending on the denim weight.

On Your Mark

Try on the jeans with the shoes you'll wear with them most often. Have a friend place pins at the new lower hem edge. Turn up the hem and double-check the length in a mirror before removing the jeans.

Use a chalk marker and ruler to draw a line across each jean leg at the pin marks. Mark the upper layer of each leg and remove the pins.

Draw a line 1 1/4" below the first mark. Pin each jean leg together through both layers and cut along the lower mark (1).

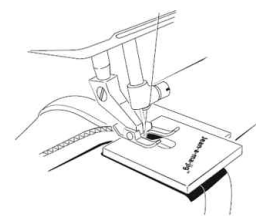
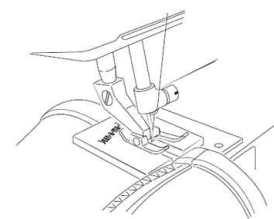


(1) Cutting off the excess on the mark

Heat an iron to the cotton/steam setting. Press the cut edge of each leg under 1/2"; fold and press under another 3/4".

Using the free-arm function on the machine, slide the folded hem edge underneath the needle and presser foot with the right side of the leg facing you. Set the machine for a 3.5 mm stitch length. Topstitch around the hem 1/2" from the fold. Stitch slowly to avoid breaking the thread or needle. If necessary, turn the hand wheel manually to ease the stitching over the fabric bulk at the leg seams.

Tip: A Jean-a-ma-jig can ease the difficulty of stitching through thick layers at the seams as it helps ease the presser foot onto the added thickness and transition beyond it. Look for it at the notions counter.



Illustrations courtesy of Dritz

Keep That Edge!

If you like the look of the worn or frayed hem edge on your jeans, shorten them by creating cuffs. Measure and mark the new hemline, then fold the excess jean length to the outside of the leg if the amount isn't too large to look right.

Stitch the cuff edge directly beside the original hem, using a zipper foot to get close to the hem edge (2).



(2) *Stitching cuff*

Single-layer Hems

Mark 3/4" below the finished hem line. Trim the excess as described above, and finish the cut edge with pinking shears, serging or zigzagging (see the Simple Hems Guideline 11.130 for more information on these techniques).

Fold the finished edge to the inside of the leg along the new hemline marking and press. Topstitch 1/2" from the fold on the outside of each jeans leg.

Taking Shape

The methods described above work well for straight-leg or boot-cut jeans, but what if the jeans legs are flared?

To hem a flared leg, finish the hem edge with seam tape. Cut off the excess pant leg 1/4" below the finished hemline mark and press to the leg wrong side.

Place the seam tape around each cut hem edge right side leaving just enough tape so the ends overlap. Pin in place through the hem allowance only.

Select a 3.5 mm stitch length and stitch the tape edge to the pant leg overlapping the ends.

Fold the tape and hem allowance to the inside and use a steam iron to press and shape the hem flat.

From the right side, topstitch around each leg hem 1/2" from the fold.

No-Sew Option


Using fusible web tape is a quick no-sew hemming option for any shape of jean leg.

Choose a 1/2"- to 3/4"-wide tape and follow the product directions for the proper iron setting.

Cut off the jeans 1" below the new hemline marking as described above. There's no need to finish the cut edge as the fusible web will prevent any fraying, though you can serge or zigzag if you prefer a finished edge.

Fold the cut edge of each jean leg 1" to the inside and press. Open up the fold enough to slide a strip of fusible web tape inside (3).

Fuse the hem in place and allow to cool before moving.

Topstitch from the right side if desired. 



(3) *Inserting fusible hem tape*