

Straight Stitch

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Page 1



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Common to all sewing machines, except toy chainstitch models, the straight stitch is the basic stitch used for sewing garments, home dec and craft projects. Formed by the interlocking needle and bobbin threads, this versatile stitch can have many faces, depending on its use.

Length

On most machines the straight stitch length can be adjusted from zero (stitching in one place without moving the fabric) to up to 6mm long.

When sewing seams, use a straight stitch 2mm to 2.5mm long, depending on the fabric. A shorter stitch length is used on lightweight fabrics that tend to pucker.

A length of 6mm is used for gathering and for basting. Some machines offer an even longer straight stitch variation specifically for basting.

A length of zero, where the needle actually stitches up and down in the same place, is used to anchor a seam at the beginning and end of the stitching line.

In Reverse

A straight stitch can be sewn in reverse to anchor the beginning and end of a seam instead of stitching in place. To use the stitch in this manner, begin stitching the seam and sew for about 1/4", then push the reverse control and sew backward for 1/4" but not off the fabric edge. Release the reverse control and continue forward with the seam. Repeat the process at the end of the seamline (1).

Versatility

A straight stitch can be used for many things other than sewing a seam together. Among the options are topstitching, edgestitching, appliqué, decorative stitching, bobbinwork, gathering and basting.

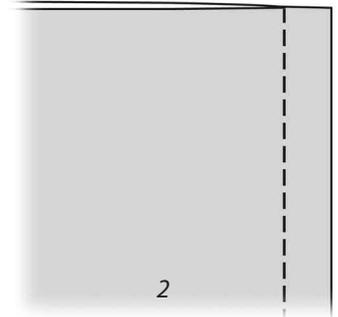
Common straight stitch uses:

Basting is temporary stitching to hold something in place until construction stitching is done.

Gathering is drawing in fullness to fit another portion of the project—like on a skirt or ruffle.

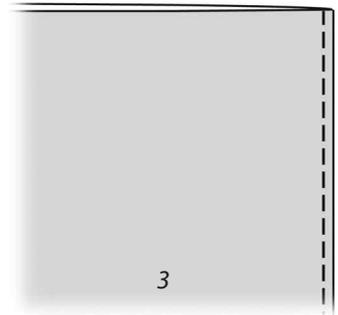
Topstitching

When a straight stitch is sewn on the right side of the project, either decoratively or to hold something in place, it is called topstitching. This may be done parallel to a seam, along an edge or within the interior, and multiple rows may be used together. Often the presser foot width is used as a guide to position topstitching (2).



Edgestitching

A variation of topstitching, edgestitching is done very close to the edge. Generally to hold something like a facing or seamline in place, this stitching can also be paired with other lines of topstitching further away from the same edge (3).



Appliqué

Appliqué is securing one piece of fabric to another for decorative purposes. A straight stitch may be used on a finished appliqué edge or sewn in from an edge intended to be left raw.

Decorative Stitching

Using heavier than normal thread through the needle with regular-weight thread in the bobbin produces a decorative straight stitch. The thread may be made from any fiber that will stitch correctly and options include cotton, polyester, nylon, metallics and acrylics.

Bobbinwork

Interesting effects can be produced by embellishing a project wrong side up using a straight stitch. Many novelty threads can be used in the bobbin but not through the needle due to size and fragility.

Stitching upside down showcases the bobbin thread on the right side of the work. Some tension adjustments may be necessary to perfect the look of the stitch. Sometimes tension is purposely not balanced for a decorative effect allowing the bobbin thread to "float" on the right side.

Gathering

Drawing up fabric to fit another piece is easily accomplished using multiple rows of straight stitching, anchoring one end and pulling the bobbin threads together to make the gathers. Rows can be placed on either side of the seam allowance to make the most even gathers. Permanent straight stitching sewn over the gathering rows anchors them in place.

Basting

Used to temporarily hold fabric pieces together, long straight stitches are key to easy removal later if need be. Garments are often basted together for fitting. Basting is done on the seamline and can be stitched over with permanent stitching, or if adjustments are made, the basting stitches may be removed.

Needle Positioning

Many sewing machines offer options for needle positioning when using straight stitch--some have three options (left, right and center), while others offer multiple positioning.

The needle position adjustment allows for very close stitching that may be inaccessible without the position options. For example, alter needle positioning for stitching next to zipper teeth or a raised edge, while maintaining maximum contact with the machine feed dogs to ensure even stitch length.

Straight Stitch Foot

Many machines include a straight stitch foot; others offer it as an option. This special foot has a single round hole for the needle and helps to hold the fabric against the feed dogs more securely than an all-purpose foot with a wider opening (4). This is especially helpful on lightweight fabrics which may tend to be pushed down into the needle hole. 🐾



4