

The Ultimate Guide to Different Types of Seams

Are you looking for a comprehensive guide to the different types of seams? You've come to the right place!

In this blog post, we are providing an overview of various types of seams and discuss their uses in clothing construction. We are also discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each type of seam, so you can make the best decision for your garment. So read on to learn more about the many types of seams and how they can help you create the perfect garment.

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Types of Seams

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What is Seam?

Seams are the result of joining two or more pieces of fabric together through stitching or fusing. The basic function of a seam is to hold pieces of fabric together. To perform its function correctly the seam should have properties or characteristics closely allied to those of the fabric being sewn.

To get a perfect end product you will need to provide paramount importance to

- The careful selection of the most appropriate seam
- A suitable stitch type
- The correct thread and machine settings for the fabric

In addition to holding a garment together, seams can be used as a design element.

Seams are placed in unusual locations or topstitched with contrasting thread to add interest to a garment. Whereas puckered, crooked, or uneven seams spoil the fit as well as the look of the garment. Most seams are constructed on the inside or the wrong side of the garment, but some seams are constructed from the right side of the garment.

What is a seam line?

A “seam line” is a designated line along which the seam is to be joined i.e. the stitching line of the two fabrics.

What is a seam allowance?

A “seam allowance” is the distance from the fabric edge to the stitching line.

Seam allowance is planned according to the width needed for the type of seam, seam finish, or garment design. There are only a few fundamental seams. But by using different finishing techniques you can use seams to adapt to materials of different weights and textures, to the different locations and designs of the garment.

The type of seam selected depends on

- The type of fabric i.e. the firmness, weight & texture of the fabric
- The use of the garment
- Placement or position of the seam on the garment
- Care of garment

What is a Seam Finish?

Most plain seams require a seam finish to prevent raveling. A seam finish is a way of treating or enclosing the raw edges of seam allowance so they are more durable and do not ravel.

Some types of seams, such as the flat fell seam add strength or shape to the garment. Others

such as French or bound seams, improve the appearance and longevity of the garment.

A basic seam is nothing but the plain seam where the seam line is at equidistance from the seam edge throughout the seam. It is classified into few types of seams depending on the seam line i.e. straight, curved or cornered.

Plain Seam

A plain seam is a type of seam where the stitching line is always exactly at the same distance from seam edge till the entire length of the seam. Of all the seams, a plain seam is the most basic and easiest to use. Its seam allowances are usually pressed open, although on lightweight fabric they can be trimmed and neaten together. To ensure absolutely straight seam, it is advisable to practice stitching while keeping the fabric edge aligned with seam guideline on the throat plate of needle (If you look at the throat plate of your sewing machine, you will notice guidelines. Each line is labelled with a measurement).

It is basically used on fabrics that will not ravel. For example, light to medium weight cottons, linens or fine wools.

<https://youtu.be/whLFkUHjxOg>

A Straight Seam

A straight seam is a type of Plain Seam where the seam allowance is always the same throughout the seam line. If the seam edge is straight then the seam line always become straight. So it is termed as straight seam. A plain straight stitch is used in a straight stream, however a tiny zigzag or special machine stitch may also be used. It is useful for side seams in blouses, kameez and frocks etc.

How to sew a straight seam?

1. Lay two layers of material together, right side facing right side.
2. Machine stitch at edge leaving an allowance of 1". Start with backstitch and end with backstitch.
3. Press opens the seam, to avoid bulkiness and to make it smooth and flat.

A Curved Seam

This is the plain seam that we do on a curved edge fabric. It is also a type of plain seam where the seam allowance is always constant. A curved seam requires careful guiding as it passes under the needles so that the entire seam line will be in the even distance from the edge. The separate seam guide will help greatly. To get better control, use a shorter stitch length (15 per stitch) and slower machine speed.

How to sew a curved seam?

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1. Stitch a line of reinforcement stitching (Reverse stitch) just on seamline of the curve.
2. Clip into seam allowance all the way to the stitching line at intervals along the curve.
3. Cut wedge-shaped notches in the Seam Allowance by making small folds in the Seam Allowance and cutting at a slight angle. Be careful not to cut into the stitching line.
4. Press open the seam allowance over the curve, using tip of the iron only. Do not press into the body of the garment. If not press to contour, seam lines become distorted and look pulled out of the shape.

A Cornered Seam

When a fabric edge forms an angle i.e. where two straight seam line meets each other with an angle, we call it a cornered seam. A cornered seam needs reinforcement (reverse stitching) at the angle to strengthen it. This is done by using small stitches (15 to 20 per inch) for 1" on either side of the corner. It is important to pivot with accuracy when cornered seams are enclosed. For example, cornered seam is used in a collar. The corners should be blunted for better result when collar is turned.

How to sew a Cornered Seam?

1. To join an inward corner with an outward corner or straight edge, first reinforce the inward angle stitching just inside the seamline 1" on either side of corner.
2. Insert a pin diagonally across the point where stitching forms the angle clip exactly to this point, being careful not to cut past the stitches.
3. Spread the clipped section to fit the other edge; pin in position then with clipped side up, stitch on the seamline pivoting at the corner.

<https://youtu.be/C3pr2QFMsiw>

Depending on how the raw edges are kept, open or closed, seams can be classified in two categories. Open Seams and Closed Seams.

Open Seams

Open seams are an essential part of the sewing process. They refer to the small gap between two layers of fabric that have been sewn together. A seam allowance is the specific amount of fabric that is left between the two layers that are being sewn together. When the seam allowance is pressed open, it will lay flat, creating a smooth and even seam.

Pressing open seam allowances is an important step in creating professional-looking garments and accessories. It prevents the bulk that is created when the seam allowance is left unpressed, which can create an unsightly, uneven line. In addition, pressing open seam allowances helps to strengthen the seam and keep it from coming apart.

When pressing open seam allowances, it is important to use the correct temperature setting on your iron. Too much heat could damage the fabric, while not enough heat may not fully press the seam flat. It is also important to use a pressing cloth to protect the fabric from getting

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scorched or damaged.

Open seams are an integral part of the sewing process, and pressing open the seam allowances is an important step in creating quality garments and accessories.

In the open seam, each side of the seam allowance can be neatened by doing zigzag stitch, pining, serger or bias.

Closed Seams

Closed seams are a type of stitching used to finish the edges of a seam allowance. This type of seam can be achieved in a few different ways, depending on the type of fabric and the desired look.

One way to create a closed seam is by using an overlocker. An overlocker is a type of sewing machine that has multiple threads to create a stitch that overlaps over the edges of the seam allowance. This type of seam is great for fabrics that are prone to fraying, as the stitch helps to keep the fabric together and reduce fraying.

Another way to create a closed seam is by using a serger. A serger is a specialized type of sewing machine that has multiple threads and blades to trim and finish the edges of the seam allowance. This type of seam is great for fabrics that are lightweight and prone to fraying, as the stitch helps to keep the fabric together and reduce fraying.

Another way to create a closed seam is by using a zigzag stitch. A zigzag stitch is a type of stitch created on a regular sewing machine that overlaps the edges of the seam allowance.

Following are different types of closed seams. There could be many more according to the creativity of the sewer.

- Zig-Zag
- Overcast
- French
- Bound Welt
- Lapped
- Run and Fell

Seam Finishes

A seam finish is any technique used to make a seam edge look neater and or prevent it from raveling out. Though not essential for the completion of the garment, it can add value to the garment by increasing its beauty by decorative stitches and increasing its longevity by increasing strength. Finished seams add a professional touch to the garment.

Three considerations determine the seam finish decision.

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1. The type & weight of fabric.
2. The amount & kind of wear & care the garment will receive. If a garment is worn often then tossed into washer, the seams need a durable finish. On the other hand, if the style is a passing fad, or will be worn infrequently, you may select not to finish the seam edges.
3. Whether the seams can be seen from outside. An unlined jacket warrants the more elaborate bias binding finish. A lined garment requires no finishing at all, unless the fabric has a tendency to ravel a great deal. Plain straight seams are finished after they have been pressed open.

Plain, curved or cornered seams are seams finished right after stitching, next clipped or notched, then pressed open.

Depending on seam finishes we can classify seams in different types.

- i. Stitched & pinked seam
- ii. Turned & stitched seam
- iii. Hong-Kong seam

Stitched and Pinked Seam

A pinked seam is a type of seam finish that is created by cutting jagged edges along the fabric edge with pinking shears (A special type of scissor). This is a popular seam finishing technique used in both home sewing and production environments. A line of machine stitching is made $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the raw cut edge before pinking. It is done to prevent the pinked edge from raveling, to prevent the seam from curling & on fabrics which ravel slightly. It is a quick and easy finish suitable for firmly woven fabrics.

How to sew a Pinked Seam ?

1. Take two layers of fabric, right side facing right side; stitch on wrong side, leaving a distance of 1" from edge. Press open the seam allowance. (straight plain seam)
2. Using a short stitch place a line of a stitching $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the edge of the seam allowance. On the one side of seam allowance. Repeat the same on the other end of seam allowance.
3. Then pink the outer edge of the seam allowance away from the seam you have just applied.
4. Press opens the seam.

Turned and Stitched Seams

Do you want to give your garments a neat and tailored finish? Turned and stitched seams are the perfect choice! This seam finish involves turning the raw edge of the Seam Allowance under, stitching it, and concealing it. It's perfect for light to medium weight fabrics, such as cotton, linen, and viscose.

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Turned and stitched seams create a neat and professional look, making them ideal for blouses, shirts, and skirts, as well as other garments. This type of seam finish is also quick and easy to do, meaning you can take a simple garment and give it an elevated look in no time.

When creating a turned and stitched seam, sometimes it is important to trim the seam allowance before turning it under. This ensures that there is no bulk when the seam is sewn. Additionally, be sure to use a small stitch length when stitching the seam, which will ensure the seam is secure and won't come undone.

With turned and stitched seams, you can bring a professional and elevated look to any garment. It's a quick and easy way to finish seams and to create a tailored look.

It is done to prevent the seam edge from fraying.

- On straight edge seams.
- On garments where SEAM ALLOWANCE will not show on the face of the garment.
- On plain weave fabrics.
- On unlined coat, jacket or vests.

How to sew Turned and Stitched Seams ?

1. Take two layers of fabric, right side facing right side, stitch from wrong side at a distance of 1" from the edge. Press open the allowance. (straight plain seam)
2. Turn under the edge of the seam allowance $\frac{1}{4}$ " stitch along the edge of the fold. Repeat the same step on the other edge of seam allowance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbOu9RkBZrQ>

Hong Kong Seam

The Hong Kong Seam is a couture finish that adds an extra touch of flair to any hem edge. This seam finish is produced by taking the raw edge of the seam allowance and covering it with a folded ribbon tape or bias binding. While this seam finish takes a little extra time and requires superior workmanship, the results are worth it.

The Hong Kong Seam adds a beautiful, high-end look to any garment. It is often used on formalwear and wedding gowns, as the finish is perfect for creating a polished, couture look. The ribbon tape or bias binding used to cover the raw edge of the seam allowance creates a unique visual detail, making the garment look even more upscale.

In addition to its attractive appearance, the Hong Kong Seam is also incredibly durable. The folded ribbon tape or bias binding used for this seam finish helps protect the raw edge of the seam allowance from fraying and unraveling, even after multiple washings. This makes the Hong Kong Seam an ideal choice for garments that are intended to last for many years.

For those who want to add a high-end, couture finish to their garments, the Hong Kong Seam is

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an excellent choice.

This is done on heavy fabrics that ravel easily. This type of seam used in the following

- On the seams of unlined coats, jackets and vests.
- When the inside or WRONG SIDE of clothing may show.
- To reduce the abrasion of seam edge.
- To cover the raw edge of fabric that may chafe the skin.
- To protect the raw edge of easily frayed fabrics.
- On fabrics that are too thick to be turned under and edge stitched.

It is also taken as an alternative to bias bound finish.

How to sew a Hong Kong Seam ?

1. Right side facing right side. Stitch at a distance of 1" from the edge on wrong side. Press open the allowance.
2. Cut 1 or 1 1/2" wide bias strip from a light weight material. With right sides together stitch bias strip to seam allowance 1/4" from edge.
3. Turn bias over edge to the underside and press. From the right side. Stitch in the crevice of the first stitching (stitch in ditch) trim unfinished edge of bias.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfcXIRGtTsM>

Self Enclosed Seams

Seams are an integral part of any garment, and the choices of seam types can have a huge effect on the finished look of the clothing. One type of seam that can be especially useful for certain fabrics and garments is the self-enclosed seam.

Self-enclosed seams are those in which all seam allowances are contained within the finished seam, thus avoiding the necessity of a separate seam finish. This type of seam can be incredibly useful for sheer fabrics, unlined jackets, and garments that will receive rugged wear or much laundering. By having the seam allowances tucked away in the seam, this can help prevent undue wear and tear on the fabric, as well as creating a neat, professional finish.

When creating a self-enclosed seam, proper trimming and pressing are important steps if the resulting seams are to be sharp and flat rather than lumpy and uneven. If the seam allowances are not trimmed properly and the seam is not pressed correctly, the result may be a lumpy seam that will not lie flat, which can ruin the finished look of the garment. Precise stitching is essential, too.

Following are the types of seams under this category.

- i. The French seam
- ii. Fat felled seam

iii. Mock French seam

French Seam

The French Seam is a seam construction technique used to produce a neat and secure finish. It is created by folding the fabric inward, so the raw edges are hidden within a cage-like seam. This technique is ideal for thin, sheer fabrics such as voile, organdy, and georgette as it will prevent the fabric from fraying. The finished seam consists of four layers of fabric, which may make it bulky, so it is best used for dainty garments and lingerie.

The French Seam is a great technique to add a professional touch to any fabric project. It is a great way to ensure that your projects look polished and clean, and that the raw edges are not exposed. For those looking for a secure and neat finish, the French Seam is the perfect choice.

- Where the seam finish will show through garments made of sheer fabrics e.g. chiffon, organza, georgette, and organdy.
- On children's & infants wear, underwear and outerwear.
- On straight seams When a seam is to appear as a plain seam on the face of the garment and a clear finish is desired on the inside.

It is not used in couture industry but is suitable for garments that require frequent washing e.g. night wear. This seam is also known as "lote pote silaye" and "gum silaye" in Hindi.

How to sew French Seam?

1. Lay two layers of material together, wrong side facing wrong side. The first stitch is 1/8" or 1/4" outside the fitting line, depending on the desired finished width of the seam. Trim the edge so that it is less than desired finished width of the seam. It looks best when finished width is 1/4" or less.
2. Press the seam in one direction. Turn the fabric so that right side is facing right side. Fold on the line of stitching. Machine stitch on the seam line. Since the raw edges are enclosed, this seam requires no special finish.

FLAT FELL SEAM Place two layers of fabric with wrong side facing wrong side stitch from right side leaving an allowance of 1" press open the seam. Trim inner seam allowance to 1/4". Press under the edge of the outer seam allowance which is trimmed to 1/2". After pressing or folding outer seam allowance on inner one stitch this folded edge to the garment.

FLAT FELLED SEAM A flat felled seam is the results of enclosing both seam allowance by machining opposing folded edges beneath a row of machine stitches through all piles. The flat-felled seam is very sturdy and so often used for garment that are made to take hard wear e.g. sports clothing and children's wear. Since it is formed on the right side, it is also decorative and care must be taken to keep the widths uniform within a seam and from one seam to another. Be careful to press like seams in the same direction (e.g. both shoulder seams to the front) Other examples are men's shirts, boy's trousers & women's tailored garment & unlined garments. Flat felled seams may be produced in all in on operation with a felling foot attachment on an

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industrial machine. In non-industrial production, seam may be made in two or more steps.

STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION 1. Place two layers of fabric with the wrong side facing wrong side. Stitch from right side leaving an allowance of 1". Press open the seam. (straight plain seam) 2. Trim the inner seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Press under the edge of the outer seam allowance which is trimmed to $\frac{1}{2}$ ". 3. After pressing or folding outer seam allowance on inner one, stitch this folded edge to the garment. **MOCK FRENCH SEAM** A plain seam made to resemble a French seam by the face-to-face enclosing of the folded seam edges. The mock French seam which is also known as False French or Imitation French seam can be used in place of the French seam, especially on curves of armholes and princess line garments, where a French seam is difficult to execute on transparent fabrics that ravel easily and where a strong finish is required. Basically used for fabrics where two turnings are difficult to make, as in matching plaids.

STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION 1. Take two layers of fabric, right side facing right side, stitch at a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the edge on wrong side. 2. Turn in the seam edges $\frac{1}{4}$ " and press, matching folds along the edge. Stitch these folded edges together. Press seam to one side.

TOP STITCHING SEAMS Seams are topstitched from the right side with usually one or more seam allowances caught into the stitching. Topstitching is an excellent way to emphasize a construction detail, to hold seam allowances flat or to add interest to plain fabric. There are two main considerations when top stitching. The first is that normal stitching guides will not, as a rule, be visible, so new ones have to be established. A row of hand basting or tape applied just next to the topstitching line can help. The presser foot is also a handy gauge. The other consideration with topstitching is how to keep the under layers flat and secure even basting will hold pressed open seam allowances. Diagonal basting will hold those that are enclosed or pressed to one side. Grading and reducing seam bulk will contribute to smooth topside. A long stitch is best when topstitching used buttonhole twist or single or double strands of regular thread. Adjust needle and tension accordingly. 1) Double top stitched seam 2) Mock flat seam

DOUBLE TOP STITCHED SEAM A seam which has been pressed open and stitched parallel to and on both sides of the seam line, through garment and seam plies. This is an excellent seam to emphasize a construction detail as decorative stitching to hold seam allowance flat and to add interest to plain fabric and also to strengthen seams.

STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION 1. Take two layers of fabric, right side facing right side, stitch at a distance of 1" from the edge on wrong side. (straight plain seam) 2. Press plain seam open. Top stitch at equal distance from each side of seamline, ($\frac{1}{4}$ " away from seam line on both sides) catching seam allowances into stitching. **MOCK FLAT SEAM** This is a seam where seam allowance is about $\frac{1}{2}$ " and the finished seam is $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Stitch right side to right side flatten both allowances to one side and stitch on right side on the edge and one at a distance of $\frac{1}{4}$ " (on the side where your allowance is i.e. at wrong side) **STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION** 1. Take two layers of fabric size 9" X $5\frac{1}{2}$ " (for sample) with right side facing right side. Stitch at an allowance of $\frac{1}{2}$ ". 2. Turn the seam and stitch from right side one near edge and one at a distance of $\frac{1}{4}$ ". There should be backstitch in the beginning and at end. The allowance of both the sides will be turned on one side on which you will apply seam.

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SEAM WITH FULLNESS When two seams to be joined are uneven in length, the longer edge must be drawn in to fit the shorter. This is done, depending on the degree of adjustment, by easing or gathering: easing for slight to moderate fullness; gathering for a larger amount it is important to recognise the difference between the two seams when finished. An eased seam has subtle shaping but is smooth and unpuckered. It may or may not call for control stitching. This section includes the following seams. 1. Eased seam 2. Gathering seam

EASED SEAM An eased seam entails the drawing in or easing of a longer section of a seam line on one ply to fit a corresponding but shorter section of a seam line in the second ply. This seam is used to replace small darts in necklines elbows, buntlines and waistlines, on the back sleeve seam at the elbow, on outward curved seam of the side front panel in princess line garment, on waistlines of skirts and bodice to distribute fullness and control fit and to match back shoulder to front.

STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION 1. Machine is run on the bigger side of the fabric piece without any thread in the needle. At the same time finger is kept behind (intact to) presser foot so that bigger material gets (kind of) gathers. 2. This piece is place on shorter piece, stretched to the required length and stitch in place. [Note: - This method or seam is possible only when bigger piece is ½" to 1" bigger otherwise other method has to be used to control ease]

GATHERED SEAM A gathered seam requires control stitching and retains more fullness. Gathering is the process of drawing fullness into a much smaller area by means of two rows of machine basting. This seam is possible when one fabric piece is much more bigger than the other one gather start with two stitching lines on a long piece of fabric the stitching lines are then pulled at each end 42 to draw up the fabric. Finally, the gathered piece is sewn to a shorter length of fabric. The stitch length for gathering is longer than for ordinary sewing. Use a stitch length of 6 to 8 stitches per inch for medium weight fabrics. For soft or sheer fabrics, use 8 to 10 stitches per inch. A long stitch makes it easier to draw up the fabric but a shorter stitch gives more control when adjusting gathers. Before you stitch loosen the upper thread tension. The bobbin stitching is pulled to draw up the gathers and a looser tension makes this easier. If the fabric is heavy or stiff, use heavy-duty thread in the bobbin. A contrasting color in the bobbin also helps distinguish it from upper thread.

STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION 1. Take the bigger fabric piece and from the right side stitch (8 to 10 per inch) one basting line just next the seam. 2. Stitch another line (on the same single piece of fabric) ¼" away in the seam allowance. 3. Pin seam edges together at matching points, such as notches. Draw up bobbin threads, distributing fullness evenly and wind drawn threads around a pin to secure gathers. Pin baste and stitch seam with gathered side up.