

Introduction

It's *All About* *the* **Details**

I.1 Study the Details



1.1 Study the Details

The design details on a garment emphasize the lines and shapes of the garment while showcasing its individual creativity. Details create the garment and they must be thought through carefully. Consider proportion and placement of the details and don't over design (sometimes less really is more), or if you do then go all the way and make it work. Tell a story, design with a reason, a purpose and an inspiration.

My goal in writing this book is to give you a guide to different details, how to execute them and to get you to think “outside of the book.” Detailed instructions and photos of some of the details are spelled out for you. Build upon these design elements, combine them, change them, and make them unique.

I would recommend that you make samples of different details and form a reference library for yourself. Label what type of fabric, interfacing and thread you used and save them. This will help you make decisions for future designs.

Take time to study garments by turning them inside out and see how they are made. I can't emphasize enough how important the details are. Practice these techniques until you get them perfect before attempting to apply them to your final garment.

I have picked a couple of garments that I find interesting and relevant to this book regarding the details that make up the garment. It is important to study details that make up a garment.

The garment in the top photo represents how important details are when designing a garment. Take a look at how many different details are in this garment. Dropped shoulders are highlighted with an Epaulette that appears to hold the oversized sleeve to the garment. This is what I mean by design with a purpose. Take a close look and imagine that the Epaulette was not there. Does it look as powerful without them? After all they are basically two straps sewn between a sleeve and a dropped shoulder. I strongly believe those Epaulettes are necessary to maintain the integrity of the garment. A detail with a purpose, to make us feel the statement the designer is trying to portray. Exposed zippers with a contrasting trim add a vertical line to the garment. Look at the placement and proportions of the pockets, they are well thought out. The color is a bold move. This is not a color for everyone, but imagine it in black or brown. It may not make the same impression, at least not on the runway.

The bottom photo is an example of a garment that some people may say is “simple.” Garments that appear simple typically are not simple to make. This look is clean, elegant and perfectly executed. The lines are clean and understated. Study the details and you will see there are two types of pockets, side pockets and flap welt pockets. A notched collar, hidden placket and beautifully finished armholes that have a slight padding to add support and stability to the garment. Other details are not seen such as hemming, seam finishes, type of closures and linings. All of these items must be considered and thought through carefully in the design process. Again, study the details!



(catwalker/Shutterstock)

Detail importance



(catwalker/Shutterstock)

A “simple” garment

Chapter 1

Hand Sewing Techniques

1.1 Hand Stitching Techniques

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1.2 Pinning Techniques

1.3 Hand Sewing Stitches

1.3a Tailor Tacks for Thread Tracing

1.3b Hand Basting Stitches

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1.3d Slip Basting Stitches

1.3e Permanent Stitches

1.1 Hand Stitching Techniques

There are numerous hand stitches that are used in garment construction. Hand stitching is tedious and a time consuming process; however, the results are well worth the effort. Challenge yourself and make a hand sewn garment, you will be surprised how amazingly beautiful the results are. Make plenty of samples and catalogue them for future reference.

1.1a Hand Stitches

A few of my favorite tips:

- Don't use long strands of thread—it knots and slows you down. I suggest using a thread less than 24”.
- Iron your thread. This sizes the thread and helps prevent knotting and twisting.
- Wax your thread if you don't have access to an iron, this too helps prevent knotting and twisting.
- Wind your thread onto a bobbin first and work from the bobbin. This also helps eliminate the thread from twisting and knotting.
- High quality thread is also vital in the success of your hand sewing. I recommend a good quality polyester or silk thread for permanent stitching and a high quality basting thread. Remember you get what you pay for so don't sacrifice the quality of your thread. Not only are your stitches more secure, but you will work much faster and with less stress.
- When Pad Stitching use silk thread—it is more resilient when going through hair canvas and tends to not knot up as often as other thread.
- I prefer gold eye needles; however, I would suggest investing in several different lengths and sizes as the stitch and the fabric can affect the type of needle to use. Try a #10 milliner's needle, it's a bit longer than a traditional hand sewing needle.
- Use scotch tape or a low tack tape to use a stitching guide (always test first on a scrap of fabric to make sure it doesn't leave a mark or residue on the fabric).
- When using a stitch such as a **blanket stitch** or topstitching, run a machine stitch on a #3 exactly on the line where you want to line up your stitch. Use light weight tearable interfacing before stitching. Remove the stitches and interfacing. This leaves holes in the fabric which can serve as guidelines for your hand stitching. You can also leave the stitches in until after you do your hand stitching if it is hard for you to see the stitches.
- Anchor the thread around the pins when hand sewing so it does not pull out of the garment while you are sewing. This is done by simply winding the thread around the pin bottom and then the top. (See Figure 1-1.)

Blanket stitch Used to cover hooks, thread chains, and thread bars

Figure 1-1

Anchoring the Thread around the Pins

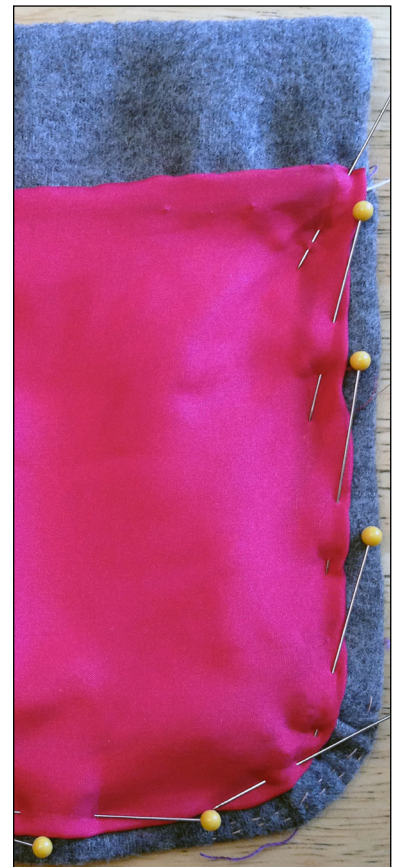


Source: Echezabal

1.2 Pinning Techniques

Pinning is an often overlooked technical aspect of sewing that when done correctly will really give you a positive result.

- Proper pinning gives superior results. It may sound like a subject not worth talking about but if you follow these brief instructions you will be happy with the results.
- There are typically two types of pins you will use. Silk pins and what are known as quilting pins—long pins with a ball on the head of the pin. Use silk pins for very fine fabrics. I prefer to drape with the quilting pins as they are much easier to handle when putting them in and out of the dress form.
- Always pin in the seam allowance. This will prevent the pins from making small holes in the garment as well as it allows you to baste the seams without the pins getting in the way.
- Think of your pins as temporary stitches. Place your pins perpendicular to the seam. Space them apart evenly approximately every two inches. (This will vary based on the fabric so use your own judgment) This process is more precise than placing pins parallel to the seam. It provides more control and accuracy so when you are ready to baste your stitches the fabric won't move on you.
- When pinning in a zipper place them perpendicular using only a small portion of the pin close to the zipper coil. (See Figure 1-2.)

*Pinning*

(Echezabal)

Figure 1-2

Pinning a Zipper



Source: Echezabal

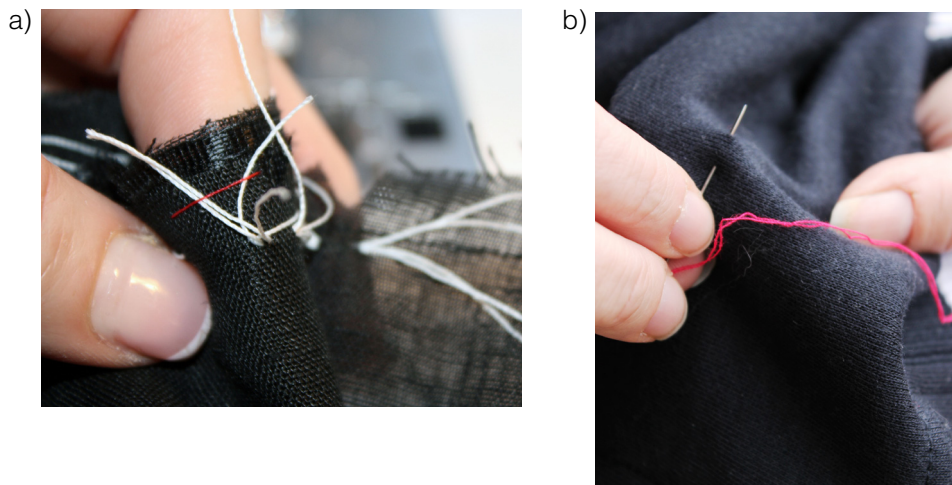
1.3 Hand Sewing Stitches

1.3a *Tailor Tacks for Thread Tracing*

Tailor tacks are used for **thread tracing** seams and markings within the pattern (see Figure 1-3a). This is done by using an unknotted double thread and tracing the seams through the pattern paper and the fabric using a $\frac{1}{2}$ " loose stitch. Every third stitch gently pull up the thread creating a small loop with your needle and continue on stitching. When all the seams are traced gently pull up the pattern with one hand while snipping the threads between the pattern paper and the fabric. This results in multiple tailor tacks around all of the seam allowance.

Consider using this method to thread trace darts (as an alternative to using standard tailor tacks mentioned) and other markings.

Thread Tracing A form of marking important marks on the garment, such as center front, using a loose basting or running stitch; use different color threads to color code the markings

Figure 1-3**Tailor Tacks**

Source: Echezabal

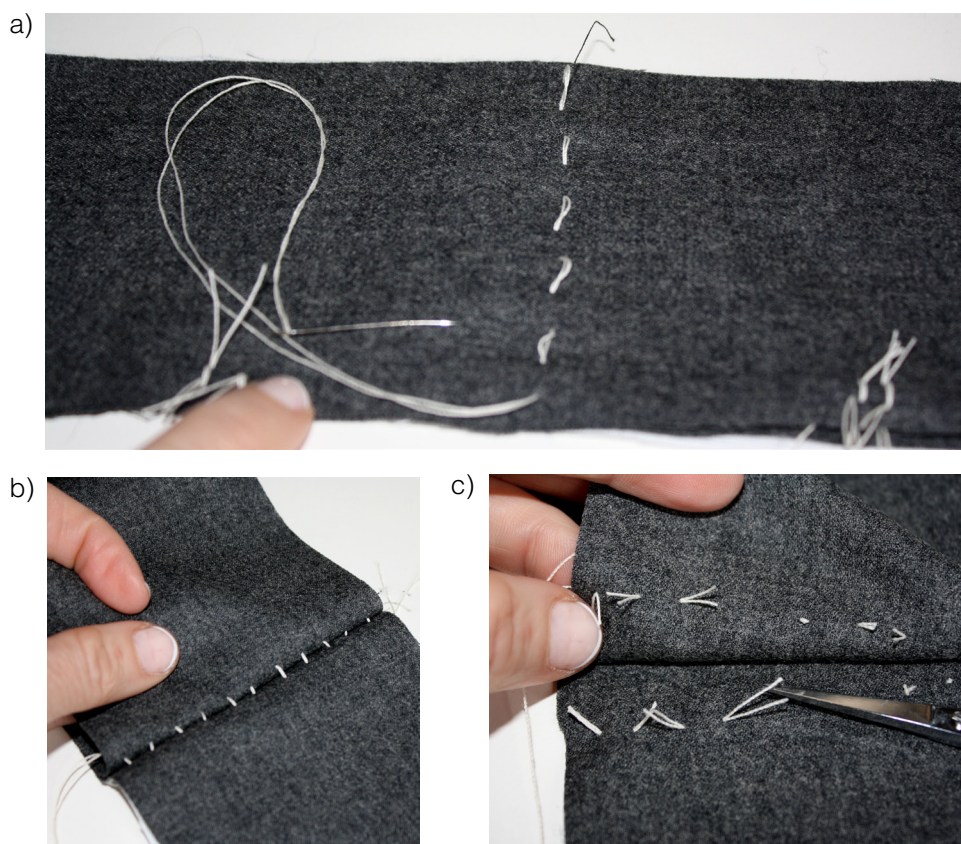
Tailor Tacks—Single

To make the **Single Tailor Tack** use an unknotted double strand of thread (see Figure 1-3b). With the pattern still attached to the fabric, make a stitch through the pattern and the fabric layers leaving a 2" strand of thread and go back down right next to the stitch through the other side. Gently spread the fabric apart and cut the other end leaving that end 2" as well. As you pull the fabrics apart clip in the middle.

Tailor Tacks—Running

Running tailor tacks are used for seam or line marking (see Figure 1-4a). This is done by running medium to large size ($\frac{3}{8}$ "– $\frac{5}{8}$ ") loose stitches with double thread (do not knot) along the stitching line. Every few stitches pull the thread gently forming a small loop. This ensures that the stitches will not be too tight (see Figure 1-4b). After the stitch lines are marked carefully remove the paper and begin clipping the threads between the paper and the fabric (see Figure 1-4c). You should have a $\frac{1}{2}$ " or so strands of thread along the stitching lines. This is an excellent method to line up stitching lines.

Tailor Tacks—Single Used to transfer important markings from the pattern, such as darts; a great alternative to chalk markings

Figure 1-4**Running Tailor Tack**

Source: Echezabal

1.3b *Hand Basting Stitches*

Hand basting stitches are temporary stitches used to hold a garment together before sewing or for marking and fittings (see Figure 1-5). I recommend a small **running stitch** for the basting stitch. Thread a needle with a single unknotted thread and working from right to left, weave the needle in and out of the fabric making 4 or 5 stitches about $\frac{1}{4}$ "– $\frac{3}{8}$ " long and pull the thread through.

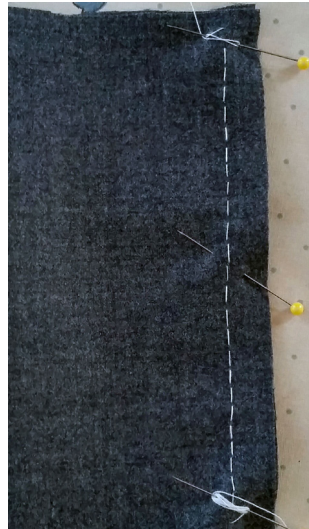
Use double rows of basting to prevent the fabric from shifting when sewing. Try to alternate the spacing between the stitches in the two rows for added security.

When basting before a fitting, use $\frac{1}{2}$ " basting stitches and do not knot the thread.

Hand Basting

Stitches Temporary stitches used to hold a garment together before sewing or for marking and fittings

Running Stitches Short, quick stitches usually less than $\frac{1}{4}$ " long

Figure 1-5**Hand Basting Stitches**

Source: Echezabal

1.3c *Hand Basting Running Stitches*

A small version of the basting stitch that is used when a tighter basting stitch is needed such as for a fitting. It is recommended to use the running stitches when basting in an armhole. This is done using $\frac{1}{8}$ ".

1.3d *Slip Basting Stitches*

A temporary version of the slip stitch (see Figure 1-9) that is effectively used to precisely match prints, stripes and plaids. I recommend this stitch method when doing fittings from the right side as it is quite accurate and easy to remove.

1. With the right side of the garment facing up, fold under one edge of the fabric and place over the other side of the garment directly on the **seam line** matching up the pattern and pin baste in place.
2. Sew from the right to the left using $\frac{1}{4}$ " stitches and just catching a small stitch on the opposing side. These stitches should be taut but not too tight.

This stitch will allow you to sew on the machine with the right sides together while holding the stitch from the outside.



Hand basting running stitches

(Shutterstock)

1.3e *Permanent Stitches*

The following are examples of permanent stitches.

Seam line Refers to the stitching line that joins the fabric together (the line denoted by the seam allowance measurement)



(Echezabal)

Backstitch

Backstitch

The **backstitch** is the strongest permanent stitch that is used to join seams that need strength and elasticity such as when setting sleeves. I recommend this stitch as an alternative to knotting your thread when hand sewing. If you are using it instead of a knot, make two or three backstitches over each other and continue sewing. Follow **Pick stitch** directions when sewing seams.

This stitch is done in place of knotting the thread at the start and end of a basting or other hand stitch. Bring the threaded needle up from the underside and stitch back about $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Bring the needle back up and repeat this two or three times and then continue stitching.

Blanket Stitch

The blanket stitch is considered a decorative stitch that is used to finish the raw edges of fabrics but don't be fooled by the name. It is not just for blankets. Think of it as a fancy hand overcast stitch. Use double thread or a topstitching thread when applying this stitch. This stitch can be made using various stitch lengths and widths depending on the type of fabric you are using and the effect you want.

1. With the thread secured at the edge of the fabric bring the needle one stitch length to the left.
2. Wrap the thread so that is behind the needle point.
3. Pulling the needle straight up so that the thread is to the right on the edge of the fabric.
4. Bring the needle back up and over one stitch length and repeat the steps as before.
5. When finishing off the blanket stitch make a couple of backstitches on the wrong side of the garment and then wind the thread in and out a few times then clip the thread.



(Echezabal)

Catch stitch

Catch Stitch

The **catch stitch** is often used when hemming as a way to hold one flat edge against another. The catch stitch is a very elastic type of stitch and is also used for tacking pleats. When completed, one side should appear as a series of x's and the opposite side will have tiny dashes. There is no specific size required to make this stitch; however, I recommend $\frac{3}{8}$ "– $\frac{1}{2}$ " for most applications.

1. Work from right to left (if you are left handed it may be easier to work from left to right) bringing up the needle into the fabric edge and securing it with a knot or backstitch.
2. Bring thread towards the right (at a 45-degree angle) holding the thread with your left thumb.
3. While still holding the thread, place your needle under the thread and make a small stitch by grabbing just a couple of threads on the garment, pull the thread to the left.

Backstitch The strongest permanent stitch, used to join seams needing strength and elasticity, such as when setting sleeves

Pick stitch A very tiny hand sewn backstitch

Catch stitch Often used when hemming as a way to hold one flat edge against another

4. Cross the thread over the stitch towards the right and make another small stitch by catching just a couple of threads.
5. You should have formed small x's at each stitch point.

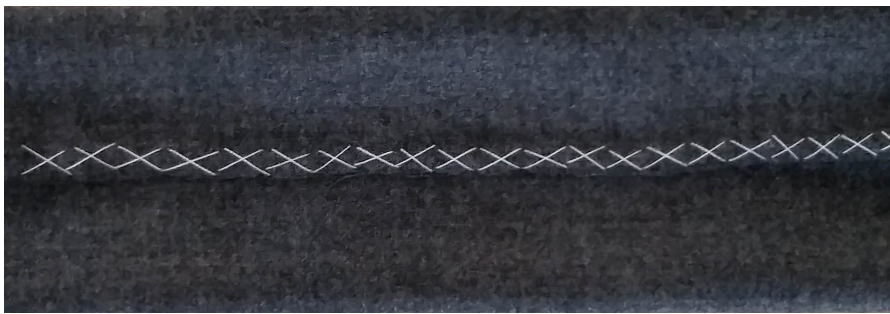
Cross-stitching

Use this stitch (see Figure 1-6) for securing a garment on corners, for sewing a hand tailored patch pocket on (from the back)—to secure pocket corners to the garment from the underside, and attaching lining. This is a tailoring stitch that is used along necklines, collars and lapels.

1. Baste two parallel lines about ¼" apart from each other.
2. Starting at one end make diagonal stitches just catching the line.
3. When you reach the end reverse the direction and make diagonal stitches over the first set. This will form X's.

Figure 1-6

Cross-stitching



Source: Echezabal

Diagonal Stitch

Sometimes used as a temporary stitch, the **diagonal stitch** is a Pad Stitch when used in tailoring to secure two or more layers of fabric and interfacing or hair canvas together. Consider using this stitch when sewing together pleats. (See Figure 1-7a.)

1. Secure your thread using small backstitches and hold the fabric vertically.
2. Pull the thread up from the back to the front and using a horizontal stitch, stitch from right to left.
3. Make the next stitch by inserting the needle ¼–½" (Any size is fine as long as it works for your garment) away from the last stitch.
4. This should form a diagonal stitch on one side and a horizontal stitch on the other.
5. For **pad stitching** continue this process until the end and then reverse it in the other direction. You should be forming small v's. (See Figure 1-7b.)

Diagonal stitch (Sometimes used as a temporary stitch) Pad Stitch when used in tailoring to secure two or more layers of fabric and interfacing or hair canvas together

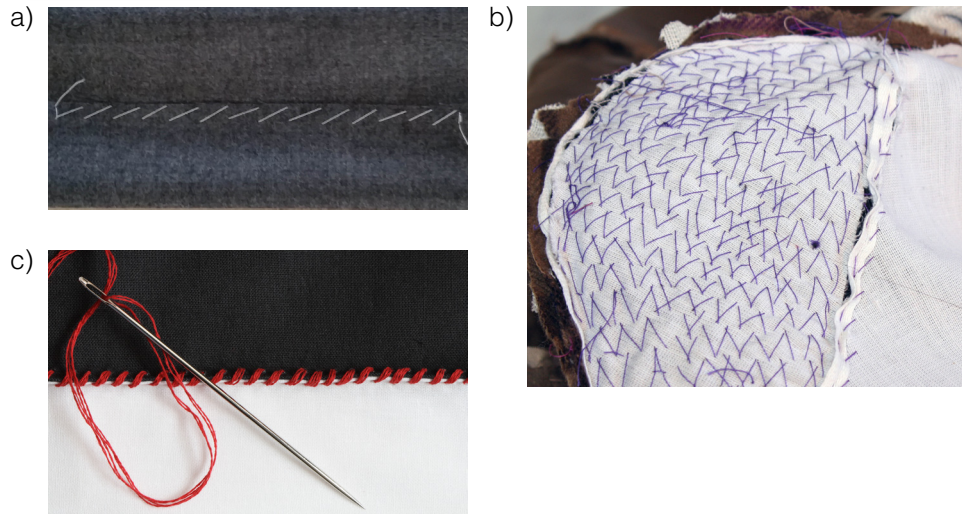
Pad Stitching A diagonal stitch used to shape and add body to areas of the garment, such as collars

6. Hold two layers of fabric together using this method. (See Figure 1-7c.)

The smaller, closer together stitches will give your garment more strength and control. Larger, farther apart stitches give a softer less controlled look so practice and make a sample of each to get your desired results.

Figure 1-7

Diagonal Stitch



Source: Echezabal

Fell Stitch

I highly recommend you master this **stitch** and experiment with its different uses. It is strong and flexible at the same time. It allows for a swinging motion in the seam or garment. When sewing a seam together it is typically sewn on the right side of the fabric; however, it is not limited to this. The Fell stitch is used when sewing a raw or folded edge against the fabric underneath it. Think about using it on flat felled seams. This stitch is commonly used when setting in under collars and attaching linings such as on a working cuff on a tailored jacket. I find this stitch also works effectively on a hand tailored zipper and on hand tailored lined pockets.

In these directions I will be discussing the technique as if I was sewing **zipper tape** to the garment on a J-Fly. Please adapt these directions to your garment, for example: applying lining to a jacket cuff.

1. Use a short needle and a single layer of thread.
2. Secure the thread and work from right to left holding the bulk of the garment under the needle.
3. Bring the needle up through the garment on the zipper tape.
4. Bring the needle directly straight across from where the needle emerged and back down into the zipper tape (through the fly facing as well).
5. Bring the needle back up $\frac{1}{8}$ " or $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the stitch and repeat the process.



(Echezabal)

Fell stitch

Fell Stitch Used when sewing a raw or folded edge against the fabric underneath it

Zipper Tape The woven or knitted fabric part of the zipper that is attached to the zipper coil

6. Pull the thread taut but not tight between each stitch.
7. The stitches on the right side should be invisible.

Using the Fell Stitch to Match Patterns, Stripes, and Plaids Figure 1-8 is an example of using a fell stitch on the right side of the fabric to assist in matching stripes or plaids, or even prints.

1. Fold down the seam allowance on the right side of the fabric on one side.
2. Place the folded edge over the other side along the seam allowance and pin baste matching the pattern. In this case matching the stripes and forming a perfect chevron.
3. Turn back the fabric, the stitch will allow the fabric to fold back without losing the placement of the stitch.
4. Stitch on the seam allowance and remove the fell stitches.

Figure 1-8

Fell Stitching on the Right Side of Fabric



Source: Echezabal

Hand Overcast Stitch

This stitch is used to clean finish an edge on a high end garment. It is achieved by sewing over the edge of the fabric in a diagonal stitch. The stitches can be $\frac{1}{8}$ " apart. The main goal is to make them close enough together to prevent the thread from unraveling. Use two or more layers of thread or a topstitching thread. I like to use a contrasting thread to show off how my handy work!

Hand Topstitch

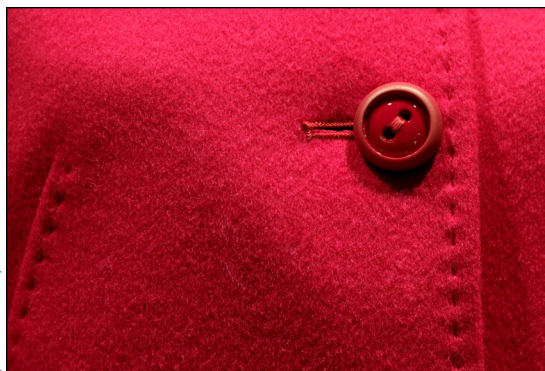
This is a lovely stitch that is used in place of machine topstitching on garments such as a luxurious cashmere coat. This stitch is done



Hand overcast stitch

(Echezabal)

(Shutterstock)



Hand topstitch

after the garment is assembled and before the lining is installed. I highly recommend you master this as it will add a lot of value to your work. Experiment using this stitch on the outside of a dart or pleat.

1. Wax and iron your thread. I recommend a heavy duty or topstitching silk thread.
2. Bring the needle up from the back and go back down in a very straight line about $\frac{1}{8}$ " or whatever size you determine works for your garment.
3. Weave the ends of the threads between the fabric to secure the threads.

(Echezeabal)



Pick stitch

Pick Stitch

Think of this stitch as a very tiny hand sewn backstitch. Main use is as a decorative stitch on the edges of collars and lapels and setting zippers. Consider your thread choices when using this stitch. If you desire the stitch to really stand out or you are setting a zipper, consider using a buttonhole twist thread, or double up on a silk thread. This method works well for understitching a facing when it is difficult to use a machine. To help make a straight line with this stitch you can use a low tack tape and place it parallel to the seam or where ever the placement line is. Just test the fabric with the tape first to make sure it doesn't mark your fabric.

1. Working from right to left, secure the thread and bring the needle up through the fabric.
2. Make a stitch behind the first stitch (about $\frac{1}{16}$ "—or smaller if you can manage) while bringing the needle up for the next stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ " (or your desired stitch length).
3. Pull the thread taut but not tight as this will cause the fabric to pucker and possibly shrink.

(Shutterstock)



Running stitches

Running Stitches

Running stitches are short quick stitches usually less than $\frac{1}{4}$ " long. These stitches are primarily used for hand sewn **staystitches**, folds, tucks and seams. For this seam I prefer a long needle.

Secure the thread with a backstitch and take several small stitches at time $\frac{1}{8}$ "– $\frac{1}{4}$ " long and pull the needle and thread through the fabric pulling the thread taut but not tight. If using this method to stitch a seam make sure the stitches are close together to make the seam more secure.

Staystitching A row of stitches done on the seam allowance where the fabric is curved, such as at the neckline, and is not removed after the garment is stitched in place

Slip Stitching Also referred to as a **Tunnel Stitch**, used to permanently join two layers from the right side, such as for a waist band or edges of a band

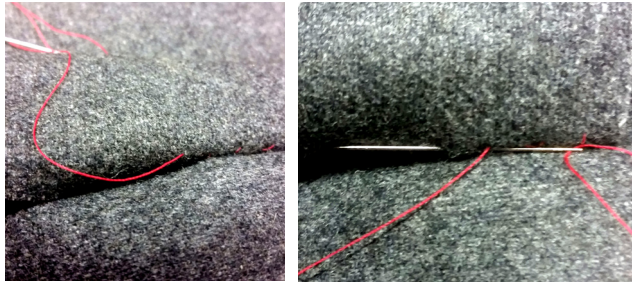
Slip Stitching

Also referred to as a **Tunnel Stitch**, **Slip Stitching** is used to permanently join two layers from the right side such as for a waist band or edges of a band (see Figure 1-9). This is a great stitch for hemming and sewing in linings because the stitches are hidden in folds.

1. Secure the thread and bring the thread from the back to the front.
2. Slip the thread into the folded edge and tunnel through for about ¼”.
3. Bring the needle out and make a stitch by catching one or two threads in the fabric below where the stitch emerged.
4. Bring the needle back up into the fold and tunnel for ¼” and repeat.

Figure 1-9

Slip Stitching



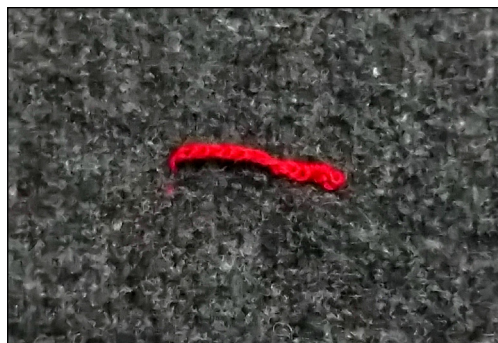
Source: Echezabal

Thread Chain/Bar or French Carrier

A **thread chain** is created with a hand crocheted chain stitch. A common use for a French carrier is to hold hems to linings. Commonly used at the top of pleats, slits and any v-shaped openings where a garment has a point of stress. In addition thread bars are commonly used a button loop or eye for hooks.

1. Use a double thread or embroidery floss and knot it. Bring the thread from the back to the front of the garment so that the needle is on the underside. Make a loop.
2. Using a crochet stitch with your fingers acting as the hook make a crochet chain to your desired length. The needle will still be attached so that you can anchor the chain back through the fabric at the end. (See Figure 1-10.)
3. Pull the threads through the loop ends and through the back of the fabric to knot it and secure it.

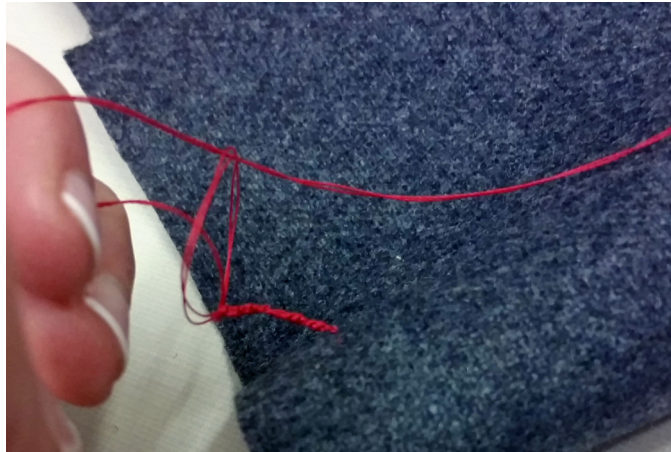
Thread Chain/Bar or French Carrier Created with a hand crocheted chain stitch



Thread chain

Figure 1-10

Crochet Chain



Source: Echezabal

Whipstitch

This **stitch** is typically used when holding two finished edges together.

- This stitch is done with the needle at a right angle and as close to the edge that you can master while picking up only one or two threads.
- Continue this method at an angle producing slanted **floats** between the stitches.
- The closer the stitches are together the stronger the stitch will be.

Whipstitch A stitch typically used when holding two finished edges together

Float When thread spans over other threads



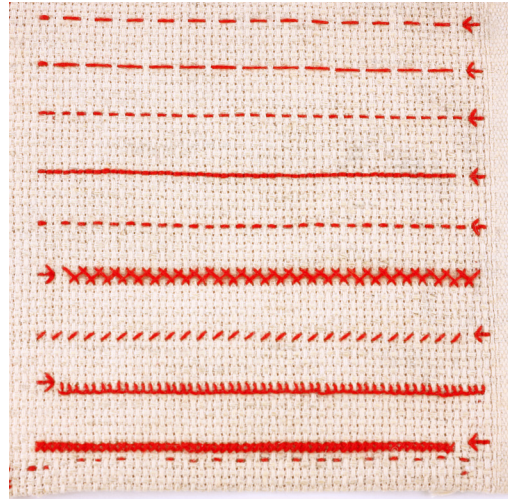
(Echezabal)

Whipstitch

Figure 1-11

Stitch Guide of the Different Stitches Discussed Above

- *Small Basting Stitch*
- *Large Basting Stitch*
- *Running Stitch*
- *Backstitch*
- *Half Backstitch*
- *Catch Stitch*
- *Diagonal Stitch*
- *Buttonhole Stitch*
- *Cross-stitch*



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KEY TERMS

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Thread Chain/Bar or French
Carrier, pg. 15
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Zipper Tape, pg. 12

ADDITIONAL KEY TERMS

Draw stitching Used in tailoring to join 2 folded edges together in areas such as a collar or lapel