

# Hems in a hurry

Finish your garments quickly and with precision

**H**ems are one of the last details added to projects. And although they finish a garment, many times they are given short shrift in order to get to the fun part—wearing the garment. After spending so much time and consideration cutting and sewing, why spoil all of your hard work with the wrong hem for the job? Making a neat hem doesn't necessarily mean spending more time with a hand needle and thread. There are effective machine and handsewn hem finishes that will leave you time to show off your stylish efforts.

When in doubt, refer to this brief summary of hem finishes. The samples here demonstrate how hems look and behave and will help make your sewing more efficient. Finishing with the right hem will give you great garments and save you time in the sewing room.

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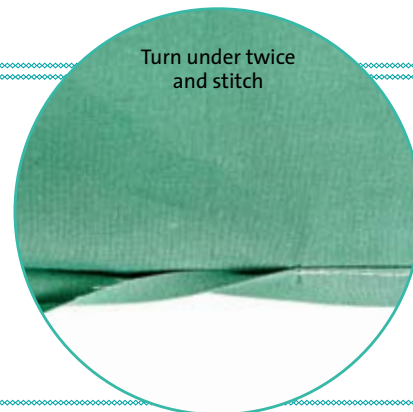
*Sharon Blair and her wonderful instructors teach sewing, patternmaking and draping and many other classes at Portland Fashion Institute. For more, visit [www.portlandfashioninstitute.com](http://www.portlandfashioninstitute.com)*

# Finish by machine

For straight or slightly curved hems on woven fabrics, use the machine-sewn hems shown here. You can stitch them quickly on your sewing machine with a little help from accurate pressing.

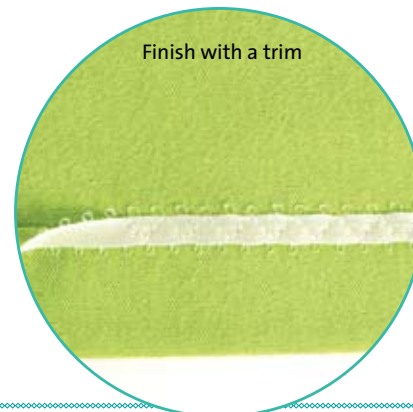
## Double turn and topstitch

This hem is a good technique for most casual garments. For this finish, allow for a double turn of cloth. A typical hem allowance for shirts is 1/2 inch while a hem allowance for jeans is 1 1/4 inches. Press up the full hem allowance, and then tuck under the raw edge; this creates a straighter hem. For shirts, spray the hem with starch and let it dry before you press it. Topstitch the hem close to the inside folded edge.



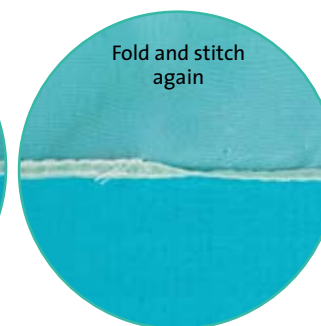
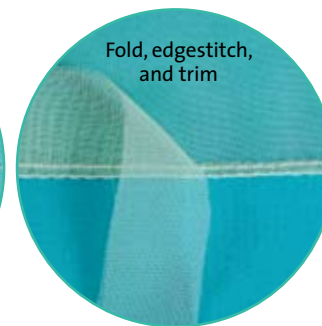
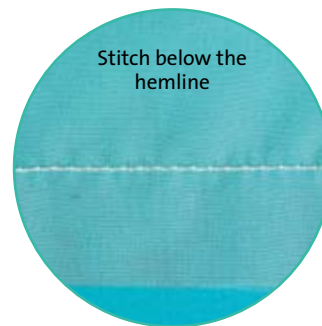
## Embellished

This treatment creates an adorned hem that also finishes the raw edge. Press a 1-inch hem allowance to the right side. Cover the edge with lace or ribbon that's at least 1/4 inch wide—we used a picot-edged trim. Use a three-step zigzag (aka "elastic stitch") to topstitch the trim in place.



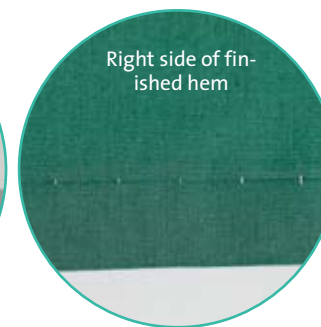
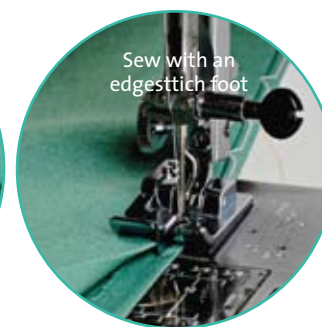
## Chiffon

This is best as an alternative to the rolled hem on transparent fabrics. Parallel to the raw edge, run a straight stitch 1/8 inch below the hemline. Fold the hem under on the stitchline, and edgestitch. Use appliqué scissors to trim close to the edgestitching. Fold the edge under again. With the wrong side up, stitch on top of the first stitching. Overlap the beginning stitches with the ending stitches. Do not backstitch.



## Blind hem

Press the hem allowance up, and then press the raw edge under by 1/4 inch. Fold the garment back, exposing the folded hem edge an even 1/8 inch. Most blind-hem feet have a plastic gauge that can cause uneven stitches, so I prefer to use an edgestitch foot instead. The edgestitch foot's metal skate-like blade guides the fabric along the fold smoothly and helps produce an even stitch. Set the machine to a 3.5mm wide, 2.5mm long blindstitch, and sew as shown.



# Hem with a serger

Use these hems on wovens or knits when you want the hem stitching to be part of the design of the garment.

## Narrow edge

Also called an "overedge," the narrow edge is mainly used for woven fabrics and is particularly attractive on wools. To sew it, set up your machine for two-thread serging, and stitch. If your serger doesn't have a two-thread option, use a three-thread narrow edge stitch and run Pearl Crown rayon in the upper looper.



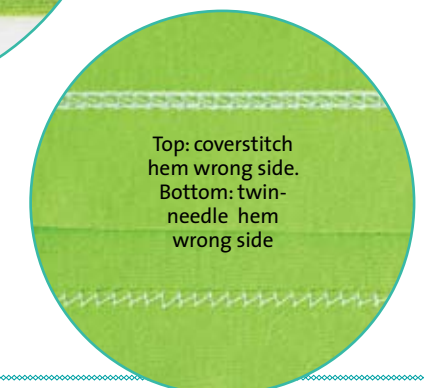
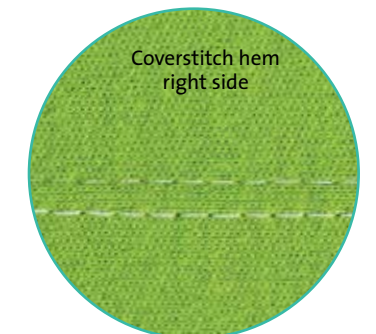
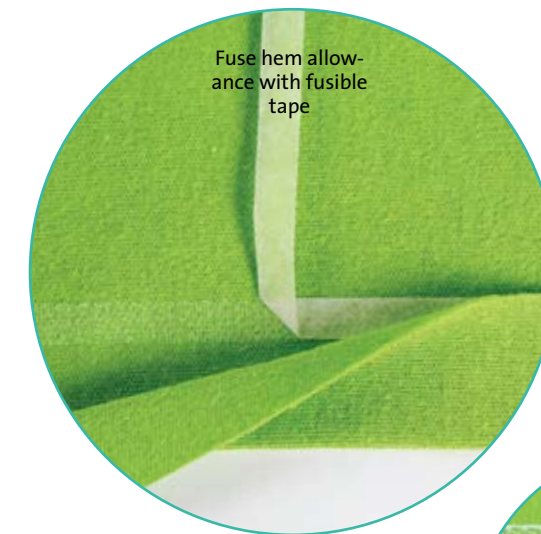
## Rolled hem

When rolling a soft, transparent fabric such as chiffon, set the machine for the widest cutting width possible, disengage the knife, and guide the fabric's raw edge to the inside edge of the presser foot. On knits, adjust the differential feed as needed: Use higher settings to keep the edge flat. Use lower settings and slightly stretch the fabric as you stitch to make a lettuce edge.



## Coverstitch

Not all sergers can create a coverstitch, so double-check your manual. This stitch is a standard finish for knits. Press under a 1/2- to 1-inch-wide hem allowance. Stabilize and secure it with a 1/4-inch-wide strip of fusible web inside the hem. Set the serger for a coverstitch, and stitch with the right side up. Align the stitch so the raw edge is enclosed under the stitching on the wrong side. If you don't have a serger, can use a 3.0mm twin needle on your sewing machine to achieve comparable results.

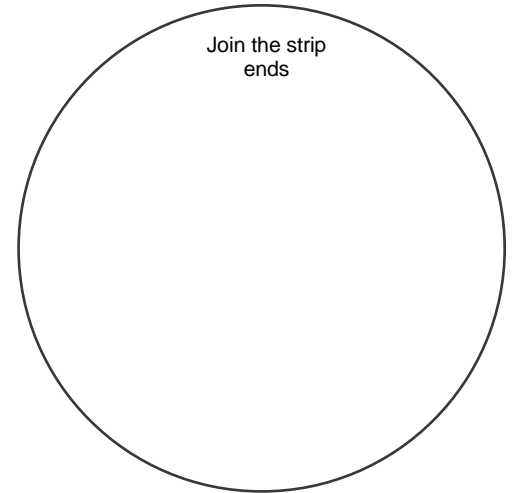
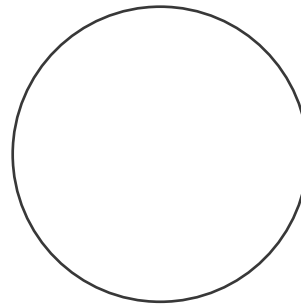
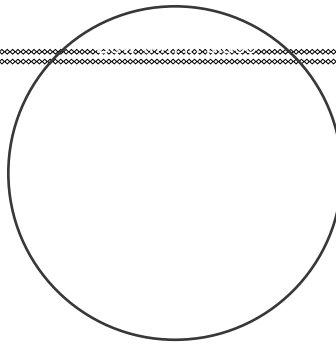


# Hem on the bias

Use these finishes on curved or bias hems that tend to pucker when turned up.

## Faced

Faced hems are best for garments made from woven fabric. Cut or buy 2-inch-wide bias strips of a thin, tightly woven fabric such as cotton broadcloth. Piece them to span the hem circumference plus 2 inches. With right sides together, machine-stitch the strip to the bottom edge of the garment. Overlap the strip past the sideseam 1/2 inch, and leave the first inch of the strip unstitched. Sew around the hem, stopping 1/2 inch before the side seam you started at. Place the right sides of the strip ends together and one end of the strip at a 90-degree angle. Stitch diagonally and trim the excess. Continue sewing the strip to the bottom edge. Press the seam allowance toward the facing. Turn the facing to the wrong side, bringing 1/8 inch of the fashion fabric with it, and press. Press the facing's free edge under 1/2 inch. Edgestitch the facing to the garment.



Join the strip ends

## Fused

This method is best used on knit garments because the fusible tape stabilizes the stretchy hem. Press the hem allowance under 1/2 inch. Insert a 1/4-inch-wide fusible web strip under the raw hem edge. Fuse the hem in place. To copy the look of ready-to-wear, finish from the right side with a zigzag stitch (1.5mm stitch length, 1.5mm stitch width), or with a twin needle.

Fuse in place

Zigzag hem  
wrong side

Twin needle right  
side

## Bound edge

Use this technique on heavy fabrics. For wovens, cut bias strips 1 3/4-inch wide by the circumference of the hem plus 2 inches. Press under one long edge 3/8 inch. Pin the strip's unpressed edge right side against the wrong side of the hem. Overlap the strip past the sideseam 1/2 inch, and leave the first inch of the strip unstitched. Stitch with a 3/8-inch-wide seam allowance and finish the tape edge ends following the faced hem instructions above. Press the seam allowance toward the strip. Fold the strip over the raw edge to the right side. Align the pressed strip edge along the stitching line, and edgestitch the bias strip. For knits, cut crossgrain strips 2 inches wide by the length of the hem. Finish the same way but use a 1/2-inch seam allowance.

