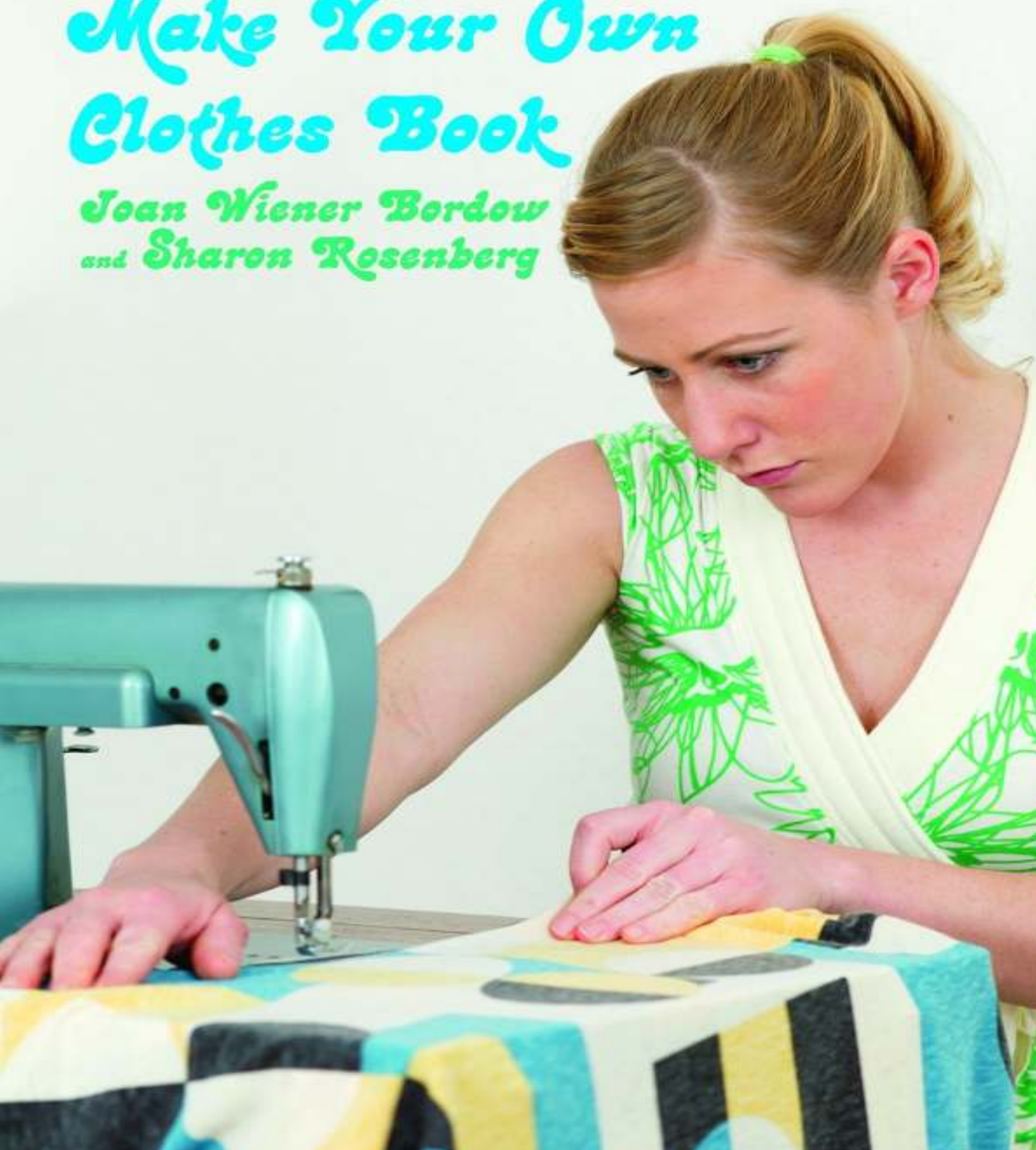


The
Illustrated Hassle-Free
Make Your Own
Clothes Book

Joan Wiener Bordow
and Sharon Rosenberg



Illustrated Hassle-Free Make Your Own Clothes Book

Joan Wiener Bordow

Sharon Rosenberg

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Daisy

Dandelion

Alissa

Jason

Jerry

Lily

Lola

and Landmark Education

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INTRODUCTION

In 1970, when the original *Illustrated, Hassle-Free Make Your Own Clothes Book* was published, we really did wear the clothes we described in the book—soft velour pants, iridescent, jewel tone velvets, *Little House on the Prairie* dresses. And vests and caps and ponchos, with peyote art colors.

We were sick of the khakis and three-piece suits, Bermuda shorts, Ivy League gear, and draught shirtwaist dresses that turned up in *Life*, *Time*, and *Seventeen Magazine*. Those duds didn't represent us or our dreams and aspirations. We wanted to look like Beau Brummell and pirates and Native Americans. We longed to be fairy princesses, Aragorn and Arwen, Gandalf and Galadriel.

We made our own clothes then because anything we wanted to wear couldn't be bought in a store. The extra perk, of course, was the statement it made.

My first daughter, Shanti Daisy Doe—a sleeping babe in arms on the book's original cover—thirty-eight now, and the mother of my nine-year-old grandchild, Lily Blue. My other girls, Dandelion and Alissa, were yet to be conceived when we wrote the first book. Most of the people who helped create the designs in this book have left San Francisco; many of the couples are divorced, and some of the individuals are gone for good, including our Sharon Rosenberg, whose creative brilliance spawned this book and the others that followed.

My children and their friends remind me of us, nearly forty years ago. They are brilliant, spirited, entrepreneurial, and they question authority. Like then, the times are momentous. Instead of nuclear conflagration, we face environmental devastation. Again, we are embroiled in an insane war in which we are sending our children to fight and die for the interests of rich, old men.

We can all use some fun, ease, and play. The ideas and instructions in *The Illustrated, Hassle-Free Make Your Own Clothes Book* may be as relevant today as they were years ago. That's for you to decide.

In any event, I am delighted that this book is being re-issued. I am grateful to my publisher for thinking it worthy of bringing back around.

Have fun and happy sewing!

Love,

Joan Bordick

Sharon Rosenberg wrote this book to share her knowledge of making clothes in a fun and fearless way.

Her philosophy was that with a small amount of guidance, you could dress the entire family with style—and for a fraction of the cost compared to store-bought clothing. This book reprint is posthumously dedicated to her daughter, Elana Rosenblatt.

Elana Rosenblatt

Tools

Here are some supplies for the well-stocked sewing kit. The first group are the things you need to begin, the second group those you'll acquire as you go along. When you start a project, buy the things that you need: thread, zipper, snaps or buttons. You're bound to have leftovers and will soon gather a lovely collection of odds and ends for future use.

Things to Start With:

- Brown Paper or Paper Bags for making patterns
- Needles—assorted sizes
- Seam Ripper
- Scissors
- Straight Pins—large box, medium size
- Tailor's Chalk
- Tape Measure

Things You'll Acquire:

- Beeswax
- Buttons
- Elastic
- Embroidery Needles—assorted sizes
- Embroidery Threads
- Hooks & Eyes
- Leather Needles—assorted sizes
- Safety Pins—assorted sizes
- Seam Binding
- Snaps—assorted sizes
- Thread—large spool black
large spool white
assorted colors
- Zippers

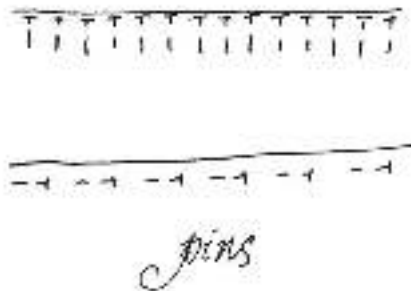
Sewing Machines

If you have a sewing machine—great!—but not having one shouldn't keep you from sewing. In many places, electricity isn't available and it's better not to depend on machines.

Hand sewing is sturdier than machine sewing. It's also a lot more relaxing. What machines can do is shorten sewing time considerably. If you do have access to a machine, don't be afraid to use it. They're extremely simple to operate and can be used for all seam sewing. Hems, however, should always be done by hand.

If you don't know how to use a machine, have someone show you how. This is always better than relying on a diagram.

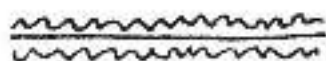
When using a machine, be careful not to sew in a straight line directly over pins. This can damage the machine. Rather place pins facing the machine's needle, pulling them out before the needle reaches them—or, place pins perpendicular to the needle and sew over them that way.



Guide to Illustrations



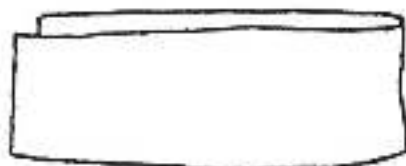
Dotted line means draw or pin and sew, depending on the context.



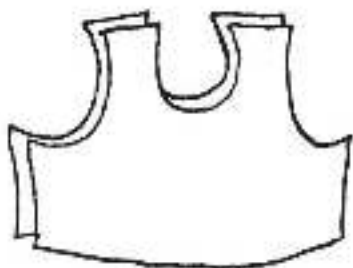
Indicates seam on wrong side (inside) of garment, or ragged edges, depending on context.



Indicates gather.



Indicates doubled-over fabric — sides should be aligned exactly (drawings are never exactly aligned in order to show depth).

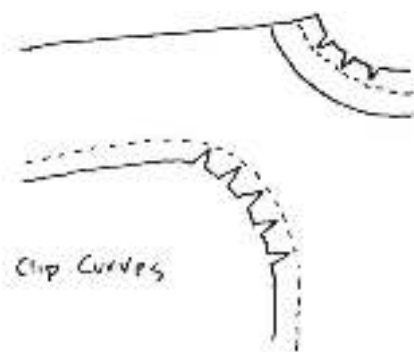


Indicates hemmed edge.

Terms and Helpful Hints

Casing: This refers to folding over and sewing down the fabric in such a way as to form a tube through which you can string elastic or a ribbon tie—for waistbands on elastic top pants, string gathered necklines or elastic gathered cuffs at wrist or ankle.

Clip Curves: Material sewn on a curve tends to bunch up when worn. Therefore, it's necessary to clip curves at armholes, necklines, crotches, etc. This allows the material to lie flat. Always start your clipping at the ragged edge, cutting up to, but not over, the seam.

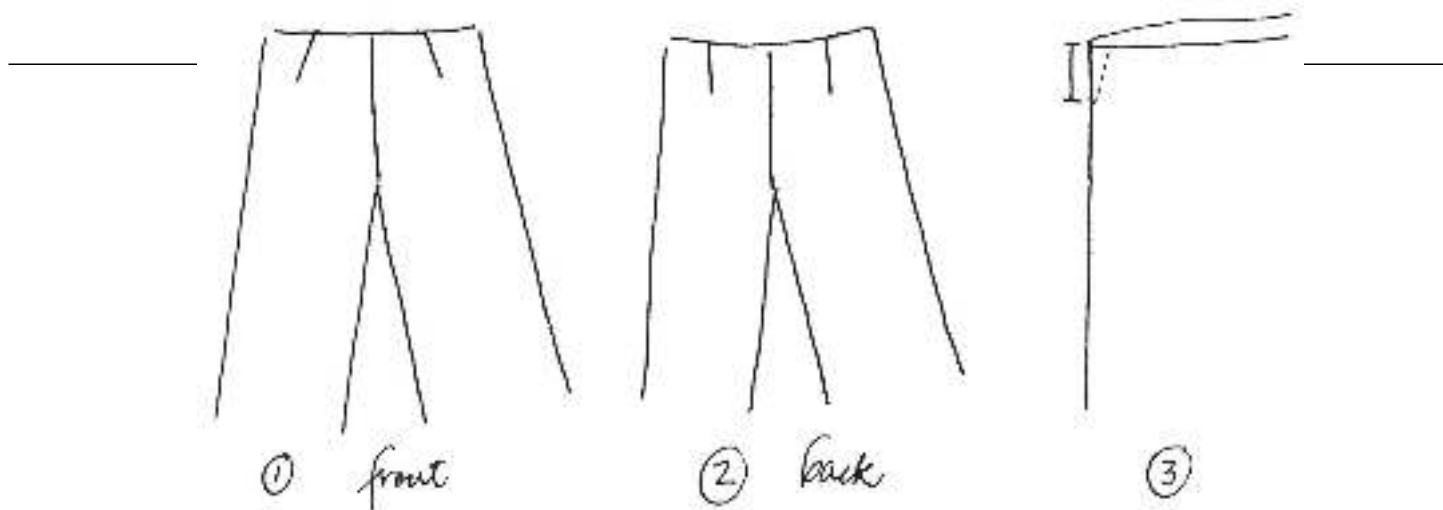


Darts: We don't use darts on tops because we don't use bras—they give your clothes a funny shape. If you want to make darts, you can figure out easily enough how to add them to the tops. On some pants and skirts, though, darts are useful to make waistbands fit better. You don't have to have them, but here's how in case you want to:

1. On the front, you'll want a small dart about 2" or 3" long, going from the waistband out at an angle toward the point of the hip, if you're slim, or straight down toward your belly if that's nice and round.
2. Same in back: make a dart 3" to 4" long going from the waist straight down to the part that sticks out the most. This makes things go in where you go in and go out where you go out.

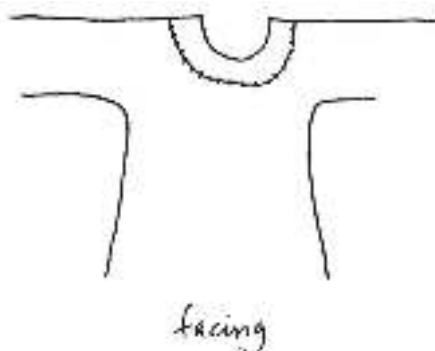
Hold the front piece up to you and mark in tailor's chalk where you want the dart to be. Measure carefully to make sure both darts are an equal distance from the center. Do the same with the back pieces.

3. Fold along the line, right side to right side and sew on a diagonal line, starting at top edge about 1/2" from fold, down to the bottom of your measured dart. Press flat.



Elastic: Whenever you use elastic for a waistband or cuff, you can prevent it from curling and twisting if you tack it into place at the sides, front and back of your garment. After the elastic is inserted in the casing, make sure it isn't curled, adjust the gathers evenly, then tack by sewing through the elastic and the front and back of the casing, using a small stitch the way you would sew on a button—*it won't show in the folds of the fabric.*

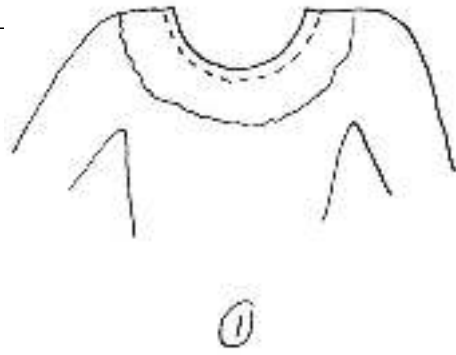
Facings: Don't be scared by the word "facing." It is merely an easy way to get a smooth turned edge at garment openings like necks and armholes. The facing is a 2" or 3" piece of fabric that follows the shape of the opening. Instructions will be given with each pattern where a facing is necessary.



1. Sew the facing into place.

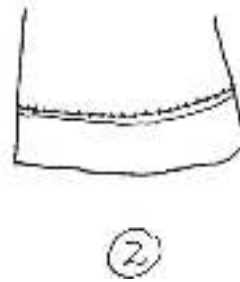
2. Press it out flat, away from the garment. Sew another seam $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the first seam, taking in the seam selvage and the facing. Trim selvage. This will help it stay flat and keep it from turning to the outside.

If your fabric is stretchy and pliable, facings aren't absolutely necessary—the ragged edges can be turned under neatly and sewn down. Also, whenever a facing is indicated, you can sometimes use ribbon or lace if you don't have enough extra fabric.



Hem Binding: Ribbon or lace can be used whenever you want to give a smooth, unragged look to hems. It's especially good on heavy fabric where it's hard to turn the ragged edges under.

1. Sew the ribbon to the right side of your fabric so that the ribbon extends just a little beyond the ragged edge.
2. Then turn up your hem to the right length, pin and hem stitch.



Ironing (Pressing): It's good to keep an iron hot and handy while sewing so you can press seams open and flat as you go. You'll frequently find yourself sewing over seams and pressing makes the whole process much simpler.

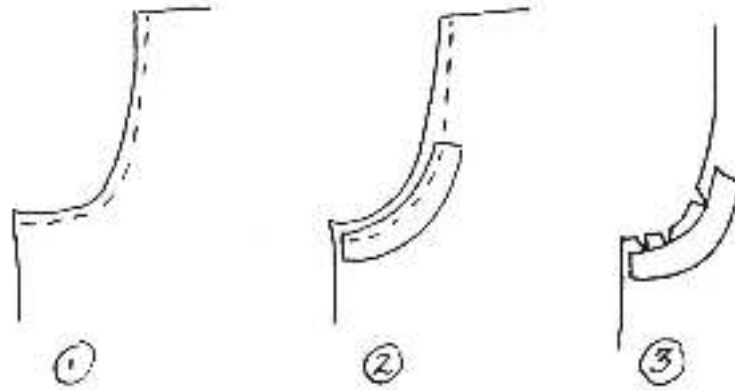


Reinforcing Seams: Wherever there will be strain on a seam —at the crotch or underarm areas, for example—it is helpful to reinforce this by sewing a piece of ribbon or seam binding over the seam.

1. Sew the seam as usual.

2. Pin a piece of ribbon or seam binding over the seam where you want it to be reinforced. Sew over the seam again. Remove the pins and . . .

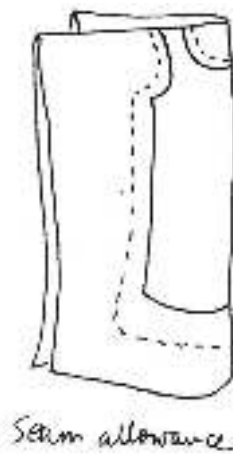
3. Clip the curve if necessary, without clipping the ribbon.



Right Side of Material: This refers to that side of the material which will show when you wear it. It also refers to the opposite of wrong side, not the opposite of left side.



Seam and Hem Allowance: Always remember when cutting out your garment to leave $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ " all the way around for seams, facings etc. and 3" or more for hems at the bottom of pants, tops, dresses, sleeves, etc. If you cut out your garment without a seam and hem allowance, better have a shorter, thinner friend handy to give it to when completed.

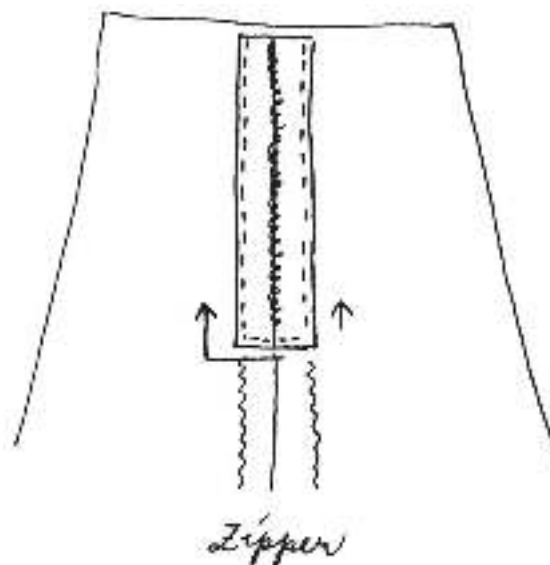


Selvage: This is the seam and hem allowance after you sew a seam. It's that little bit extra on the inside of your garment—if it's too wide, it will be bulky so trim it down—if it's too narrow, your seam may start to pull apart. It should be $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide on most seams and trimmed down after sewing $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{8}$ " under facings.

Zippers: If you are using a zipper anywhere besides fly front pants, here is an easy way to do it. If you want a flap covering the coils of the zipper, use the instructions under fly front pants. There are instructions inside the package the zipper comes in for one way of putting in a zipper. Here's another

1. Sew up your seam, using a basting stitch for where the zipper will lie. Press open.
2. Place your zipper face down on this seam (on the inside of the garment) lining up the coils of the zipper with the seam line. Starting at the bottom, on the inside, sew up one side, checking constantly to see that the coils are still lying true on the seam line.
3. Stitch across the bottom and then up the other side. Using your seam ripper, open up the basting stitches.

You can also put the zipper in by hand. Use the same method of basting the seam. Pin the zipper face down as before. Turn to the outside of the garment and using a tiny back-stitch, sew the zipper into place. Remove the basting and press.



Helpful Hints:

Beeswax: This is a really handy, inexpensive thing to have around. It's a circle of beeswax in a small plastic container. When you are sewing by hand, after you thread the needle, pull the thread across the beeswax to coat it—you'll find your thread won't tangle anymore.

Miscellaneous: Buttons, snaps, zippers, etc., are called "notions" in most stores. When you first need to have snaps for something you are making, buy a large card full of assorted sizes; then you have them for the next time. Same with needles and hooks and eyes. Seam Binding is a ribbon which you can use to reinforce a seam, to hem with, or to bind off a seam that will ravel too much. Don't get the kind that irons on—it also falls off. They also sell lace seam binding which is pretty. You can use any kind of ribbon or lace for the same purpose, if you have some at home.

Scissors: You can start with the one you have at home, but a good tool makes your job a lot easier. And the right tool for the job makes it easier yet. First your scissors should be sharp—don't use it for anything but fabric cutting and have it sharpened when needed by a professional. The basic sewing scissors should be about 8-12 inches long—go down to the store, heft a few, and get the largest one that is comfortable for you (that's important). The longer the blade the faster your cutting job will be. Get the best one you can afford—it's worth it.

A pinking shears is a specialty tool. They are expensive and you don't absolutely have to have one. They're also nice to have. Both blades of the scissors are toothed. When you cut the fabric with them it leaves a toothed edge, one that doesn't ravel very easily, which means less work. Get one only if you really get into sewing a lot—you can do without it.

It's also nice to have a little scissors on hand. These are good for embroidery and for thread snipping while you are sewing. There is a nifty one that has a spring in it—it's only about 4" long and is easy to grab. The spring keeps the little blades apart until you press them together—it's fast and convenient. Again, it's important that the tool be comfortable in your hand and easy for you to use. Buy only one you really think you'll like and use a lot.

Seam Ripper: This is a very handy little tool for mistake correcting and remodeling. If your fabric is delicate, pick through every fourth or fifth stitch the entire length of your seam—the seam should then separate readily and you can start over again. If it's pretty tough fabric, face the ripper down the length of the seam and push—the fast way. You can also use the other end of the ripper to push out the points on sleeves and collars.

Tailor's Chalk: This is a small square of special chalk for fabric—it will brush off easily and won't stain. They come in basic colors, are cheap and handy to have around. They are sometimes sold with fancy little plastic cases to carry them in, but that isn't necessary. A plain tool is a good tool.

Tape Measure: They come in fabric, vinyl and metal. I have found that the vinyl ones last long and the numbers stay clear—the fabric ones tend to fade and get brittle and worn—the metal ones that roll up into their own container aren't too suitable for fabric and they are more expensive.

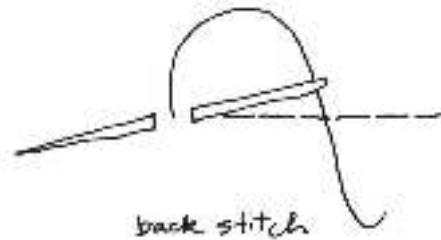
Thread: There are many varieties—different weights and materials. If you're really sewing something heavy-duty, get heavy-duty thread. Other than that, medium weight thread is good for most purposes. Silk thread is very strong—it's good for sewing light weight leather and nice for embroidery and top stitching, if you get into that. There are new threads out for stretch fabric and they seem to work—they stretch with the fabric so your seam doesn't pop open and that's nice.

Zippers: There are two basic kinds, nylon and metal, both of which come in light weight and heavy

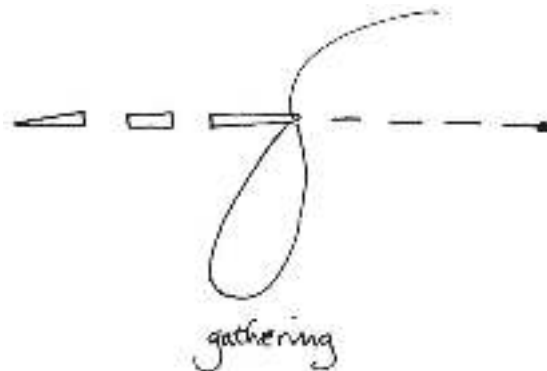
duty. The metal is stronger, of course, but it's also heavier and less flexible. The nylon zippers are really nicer for most clothing, they don't break easily and they're not cold when you lean against them—just don't put a hot iron on them.

Stitches

Back Stitch—This is the most frequently used stitch for making seams. It's best to use a double thread when back stitching. Make a stitch $\frac{1}{8}$ " in length. Insert needle into hole at end of first stitch and bring needle through $\frac{1}{8}$ " further on. Continue.



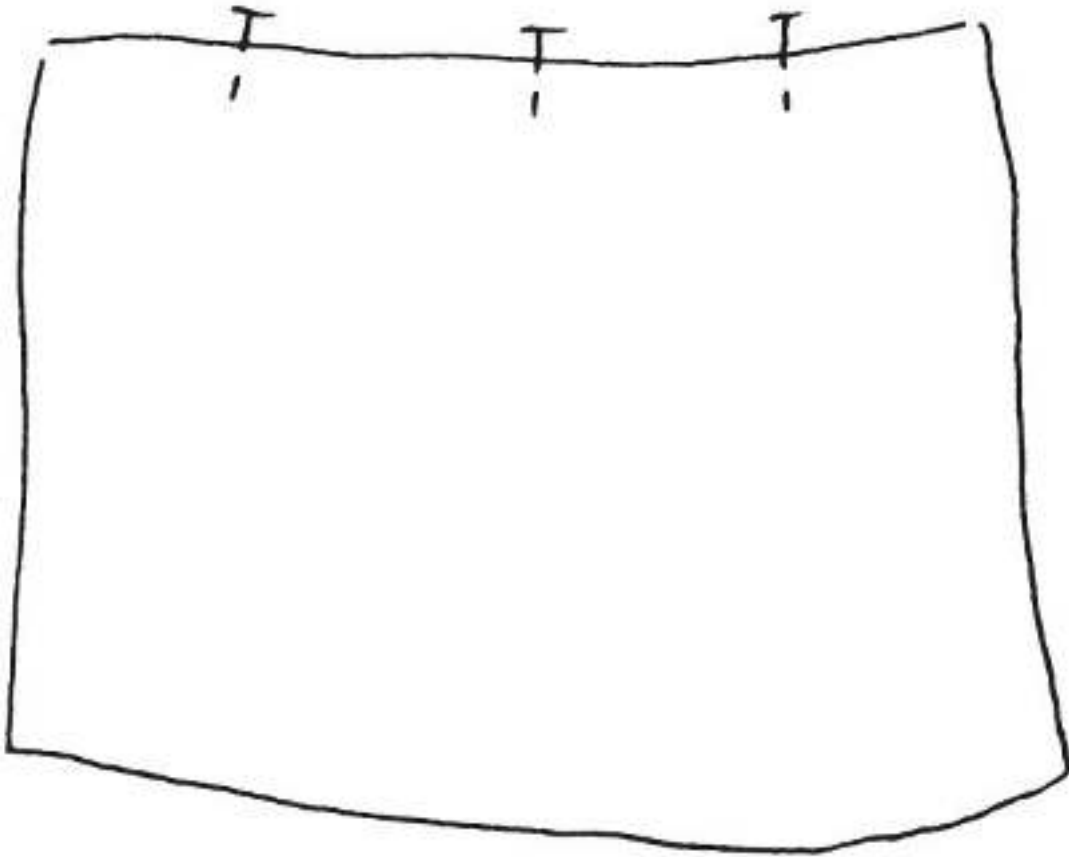
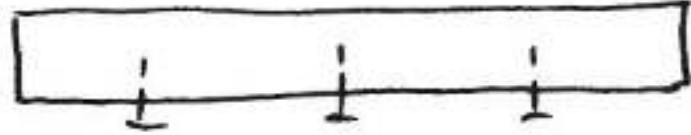
Gathering—Take several stitches onto the needle at once, by weaving the point in and out of the material. Push material along thread towards the knot, thereby bunching it up or gathering it to desired length. When gathering a very long piece of material, it's a good idea to make two rows of stitches about $\frac{1}{8}$ " apart. When material is gathered, hold the ends of your two threads together. That way if one breaks, you won't have to gather all over again. Another way to gather is with pins.



I. Fold the piece you want to gather in half and mark with pins. Keep dividing in halves until you get $\frac{1}{8}$ sections marked off. Do the same on the piece you will join the gathered part to.



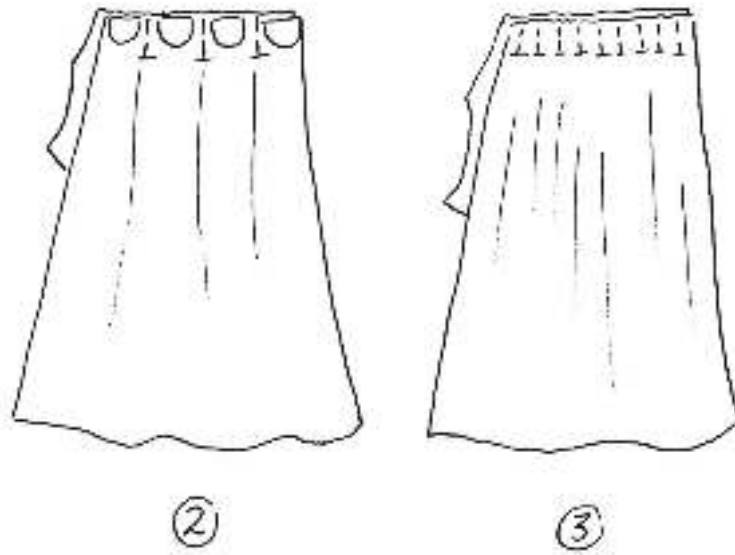
or



①

2. Pin the two pieces together, right side to right side, matching pins. You will have loops of fabric between each pin that need to be gathered up.

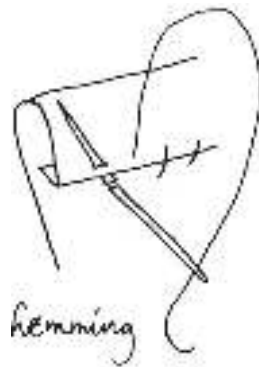
3. Push a little fabric into a gather and pin through both pieces of fabric. Do this again and again until you have the entire garment gathered and pinned, ready for sewing.



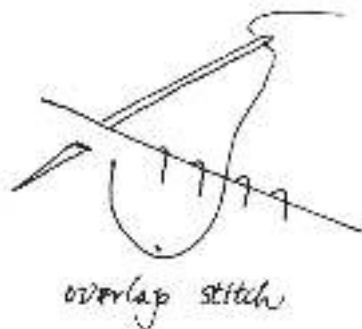
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③

Hemming Stitch—A good idea for hemming ragged edges. Make slanted stitches by placing the needle through a tiny bit of material in your garment, then under the hem edge about $\frac{1}{4}$ " away. Your stitches should barely show on the right side of the material.

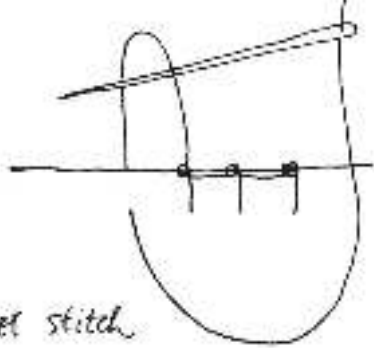


Overlap Stitch—This is used when sewing two pieces of leather together, and also in trimming. Make slanted stitches on edge of the material, $\frac{1}{4}$ " apart and $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep.

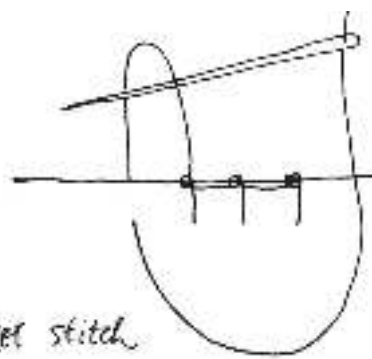


Embroidery Stitches:

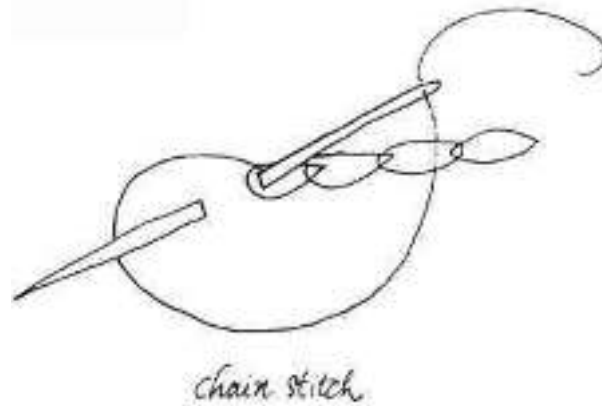
Blanket Stitch—This is used for trimming edges. Make straight stitches on the edge of your material $\frac{1}{4}$ " apart and $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep, but before pulling thread tight, weave the needle under loop, forming a knot at the edge.



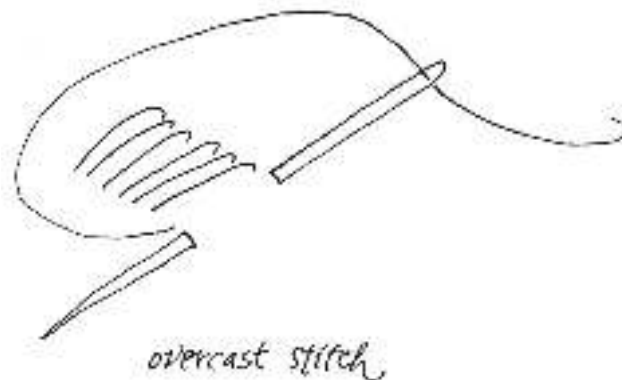
Blanket stitch



Chain Stitch—This is used in embroidery. Place needle through fabric. Push needle back into same hole, coming up $\frac{1}{8}$ " away. Before pulling needle through the material, loop thread around point of needle. Pull needle through the loop, forming the first link in your chain. Repeat, always placing needle back into hole through which you have come. Do not pull chain too tight.



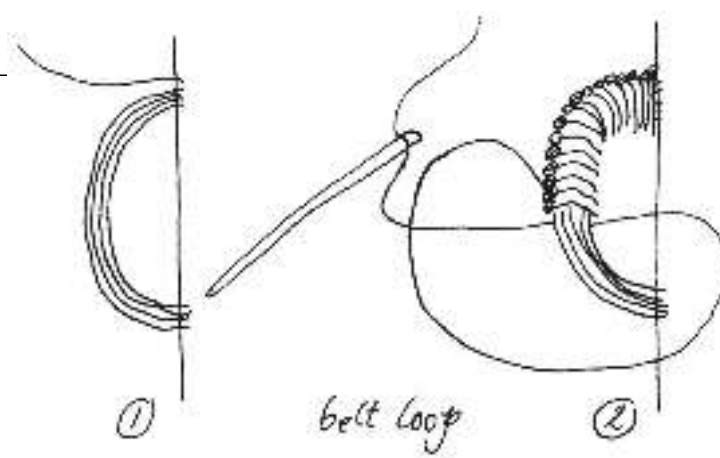
Overcast Stitch—This is used in embroidery, particularly good for filling in large areas. Make stitches one next to the other.



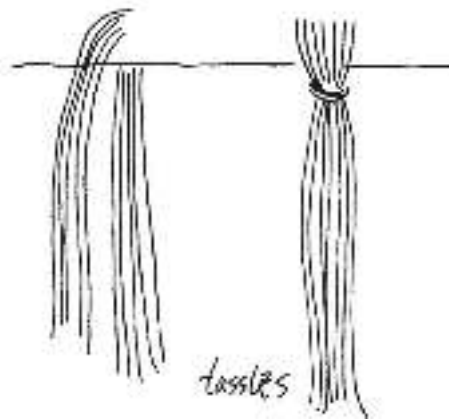
Trimming Stitches:

Belt Loop—This is used for buttonhole or belt loops. Thread your needle with a quadrupled thread.

1. Sew a loop on the right side of your material by going back and forth three or four times.
2. After the final stitch in your loop, take the remaining thread and wind it around the loop as in the Blanket Stitch (above), leaving the knots on the outside of your loop.



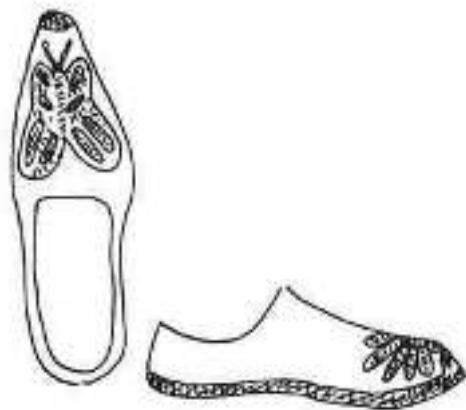
Tassels—Decide how long you want your tassel to be and cut a number of pieces of yarn twice the length. The more strands you cut, the thicker your tassel will be. Sew strands through your material right next to one another. Even them out. Tie strands together at the material with another strand of the same length.



Embroidery

Sharon was in Formentera without a pair of shoes and the sand so hot on her feet. Under the porch of Mark and Julia's house was an abandoned pair of espadrilles with a hole in the right toe. They found them but she didn't dig the hole. She sewed it up with some wool Julia gave her but thought, "That looks a little silly." Unbeknownst to her, she had used the Overcast Stitch (see p. 17). So, what she did next was sew a flower onto the shoe. This was her first attempt at embroidery. Then she sewed a butterfly on the left toe to balance out the effect. When the espadrilles wore to nothing, she put the butterfly in a plastic bag which sits in our sewing room in San Francisco.

Embroidery is so easy, you can probably do it with just an idea of what stitches are available and with a few pictures as hints. When something you love is ripped beyond repair, a big butterfly will generally save it. When you dribble spaghetti sauce on your nice white Indian shirt, a big yellow embroidered sun will make it wearable. Embroidering on your dull old sheets and pillows will help you sleep better. Embroidering on pieces of material in a smart fashion will turn them into wonderful hangings. There are about 20 million things you can use embroidery for, some of which are illustrated here.



my espadrilles



*decorate an old
t-shirt*

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