

SINGER®

The New sewing essentials

Updated and Revised Edition



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how to use this book



Like any other art or craft, sewing begins with basic techniques. This book gives you the essential information that every sewer needs to know for sewing clothes with a conventional sewing machine.

To prepare *Sewing Essentials*, the editors interviewed sewing experts, sewing teachers, students, beginning and experienced sewers, industry seamstresses, designers, and professional dressmakers from all over the country. We asked them what they considered to be the most important principles and techniques for successful sewing.

Updated Basics

The people we interviewed all agreed that certain essential techniques have to be learned and perfected before a sewer advances to the next level of expertise. They also agreed that it is important to keep pace with changing methods and new technology to make the most efficient use of one's sewing time. They emphasized using the newest time-saving tools and techniques without compromising on quality.

The first major consideration is sewing equipment. New tools and sewing aids have made sewing faster and easier than ever. Modern sewing machines have automatic capabilities for zigzag stitching, stretch stitches, button-holes—even computer technology to program the stitches. Sewing machines can eliminate the time-consuming hand sewing that used to be necessary in garment construction. You can sew a garment entirely by machine, and you can save even more time by using sewing aids like fabric glue, basting tape, and fusible interfacing.

Much of this book is devoted to getting your sewing project off to a good start. The planning and decisions you make before you actually start sewing are just as important as the care you take in constructing the garment. Taking accurate measurements, choosing the right fabric for the pattern, buying the appropriate interfacing and notions—all of these steps affect the quality and fit of the finished product. Read through the tips and suggestions in the Getting Started section before you go to the fabric store. After you get home,

take the time to prepare your fabric and follow the other procedures shown in the Layout, Cutting, and Marking section.

A New Approach to Fundamental Techniques

The remainder of the book features the basic techniques you will use for nearly everything you sew. These are divided into five major sections: stitches, seams, shaping methods, outer edges, and closures. Each is given an overview as well as a step-by-step description of how to achieve the best results. As you practice these fundamental techniques, they become part of your sewing repertoire, ready to be applied on future sewing projects.

This is not a “project” book. It does not take you through the construction of a garment. Your pattern does that. This is a reference book featuring new tips and methods, special techniques for certain fabrics, and more detailed explanations of pattern instructions. The book gives you the opportunity to choose the best technique for your purposes. It emphasizes the details that make the difference between a professional-looking garment and one that looks homemade. Fashion details come and go, but the fundamentals of sewing can be applied to any design.

Step-by-Step Guidance

The photos add depth and dimension to the instructions, giving you a close-up look at each step. In some cases, the stitches are shown in heavier thread or a contrasting color to make them more visible. Some marking lines have also been exaggerated to show a particularly crucial matching point. These illustrative techniques should not be duplicated in your own sewing.

If you’re just learning to sew or getting back to sewing, you may want to practice your skills on an easy project before starting an entire garment. Try sewing simple placemats and napkins to practice a seam or edge finish, a new hemming technique, or the application of fusible interfacing. When you’re ready to sew a garment, choose one of the simpler styles that are easy to fit, with fewer seams and details.

For the new sewer, the experienced sewer, or the sewer who has become a little rusty, this book is designed to help and inspire. Use it as your step-by-step guide to the satisfaction and fun of successful sewing.

equipment



the sewing machine

A sewing machine is your most important piece of sewing equipment, so select one with care. A sturdy, well-built machine will give you many years of sewing enjoyment.

If you are buying a new machine, there are a variety of models available to fit any budget or sewing need. Types range from a basic zigzag with one or two built-in stitches, to the electronic machine that uses advanced computer technology to control and select the stitching.

Available features include built-in buttonholer, color-coded stitch selection, instant reverse, snap-on presser foot, free arm for stitching small round areas (such as pants legs), built-in bobbin winder, automatic tension and pressure adjustment, and automatic stitch length adjustment. Each feature usually adds to the cost of the machine, so look for a machine to match your sewing projects. Buy a machine that satisfies your sewing needs, but don't pay for features you will rarely use.



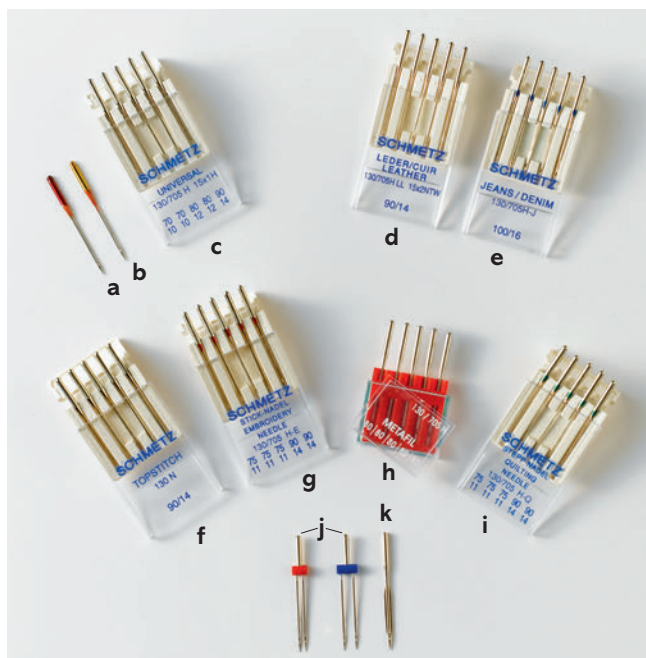
Also consider the amount and difficulty of the sewing you do, and the number of people you sew for. Talk to fabric store personnel and friends who sew. Ask for demonstrations and try out and compare several models. Look for quality workmanship and ease of operation as well as stitching options.

The machine's cabinetry is another factor to consider. Portable machines offer the flexibility of moving

to various work surfaces. Machines built into cabinets are designed to be the right height for sewing. They also help you stay organized by providing a convenient place to store sewing equipment.

Although sewing machines vary in capabilities and accessories, each has the same basic parts and controls. Check your manual for specific location of these parts on your machine.

Machine Essentials



Select needle size and type according to fabric type and weight and the kind of stitching you will be doing. For general construction, use sharp points (**a**) for woven and nonwoven fabrics, ballpoints (**b**) for knits. These are usually distinguished by the color of the shaft. Universal points (**c**) can be used for many fabric types, knitted and woven, and they are also available with a slip-in thread slot for sewers with poor vision. There are needles designed specifically for sewing leather (**d**) and denim (**e**). For decorative sewing, use needles designed for topstitching (**f**), embroidery (**g**), metallic threads (**h**), and quilting (**i**). Twin and triple needles (**j**), available in different sizes and widths of separation, are used for stitching two or three parallel rows at a time. Hemstitching, or wing, needles (**k**) are used for heirloom embroidery. Multiple and hemstitch needles can only be used on zigzag machines that have wide needle holes in the throat plate.



Bobbins may be built-in or removable for winding. Bobbins with a built-in case are wound in the case. Removable bobbins have a removable bobbin case with a tension adjustment screw. They may be wound on the top or side of the machine. Start with an empty bobbin so the thread will wind evenly. Do not wind it too full or the bobbin thread will break.

creating the perfect stitch

Perfect machine stitching is easy to achieve if you thread the machine properly and make the right adjustments in the stitch length, tension, and pressure. These adjustments depend on your fabric and the kind of stitch desired. Consult your machine manual for threading procedures and location of controls.

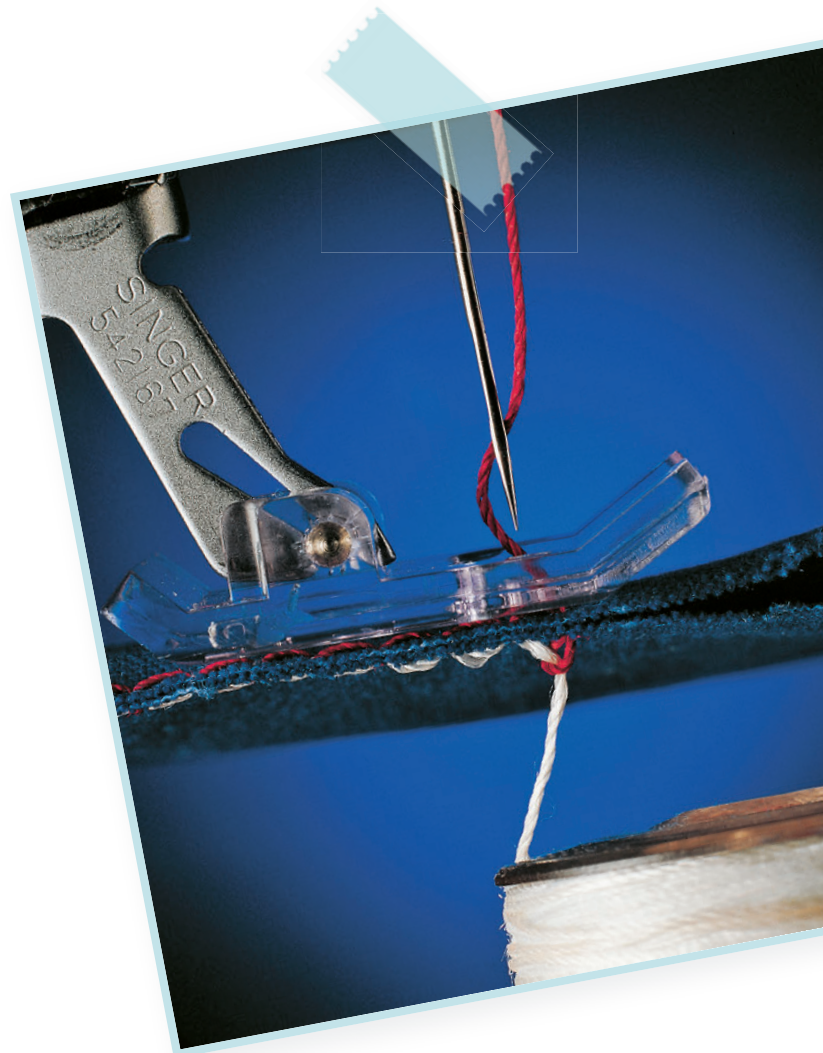
The stitch length regulator is on a stitches-per-inch (2.5 cm) scale from 0 to 20, a metric scale from 0 to 4, or a numerical scale from 0 to 9. For normal stitching, set the regulator at 10 to 12 stitches per inch, or at the number 3 for metric scale machines. On the numerical scale, higher numbers form a larger stitch; if a shorter stitch is desired, dial a lower number. An average stitch length is at number 5.

A perfect stitch depends on the delicate balance of pressure on the fabric, action of the feed, and tension on the stitch formation. In the ideal stitch, both top and bobbin thread are drawn equally into the fabric, and the link is formed midway between fabric layers.

The stitch tension control determines the amount of tension on the threads as they pass through the machine. Too much tension results in too little thread fed into the stitch. This causes the fabric to pucker. Too little tension produces too much thread and a weak, loose stitch.

Adjust the pressure regulator for light pressure on heavyweight fabrics, more pressure on light fabrics. Correct pressure ensures even feeding of the fabric layers during stitching. Some machines automatically adjust tension and pressure to the fabric.

Always check tension and pressure on a scrap of fabric before starting to sew. When experimenting with pressure and tension, thread the machine with different colors for top and bobbin threads to make the stitch links easier to see.



Straight Stitch Tension and Pressure



Correct tension and pressure makes stitches that are linked midway between the fabric layers. The stitches look even in length and tension on both sides. Fabric layers are fed evenly through the feed and fabric is not marred.

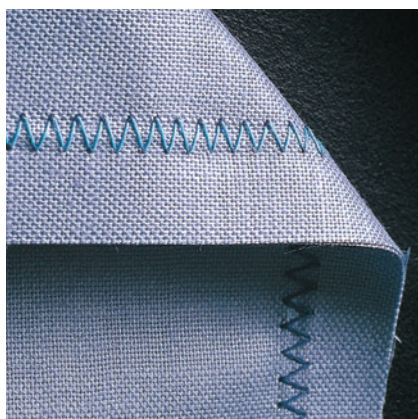


Too-tight tension results in stitch links that are near the top layer of fabric. Fabric is puckered, and stitches are easily broken. Turn tension dial to a lower number. If pressure is too heavy, the bottom layer may gather up. Fabric may shift or stretch. Stitches may be uneven in length and tension. Dial pressure regulator to a lower number.

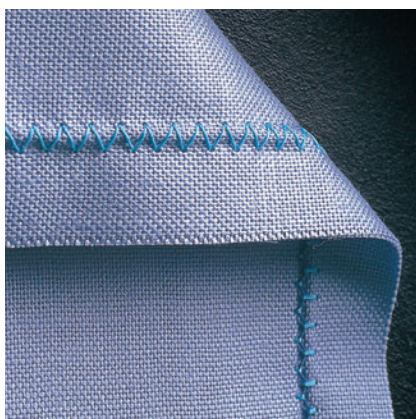


Too-loose tension results in stitch links that are toward the bottom fabric layer and a weak seam. Correct the problem by turning tension dial to a higher number. Too light pressure may cause skipped and uneven stitches, and may pull fabric into the feed. Dial pressure regulator to a higher number.

Zigzag Stitch Tension and Pressure



Correct tension and pressure in zigzag stitching produces stitches in which the interlocking link of threads falls at the corner of each stitch, midway between fabric layers. Stitches lie flat and fabric does not pucker.



Too-tight tension causes fabric to pucker. The thread link falls near the top fabric layer. To correct, decrease the tension. Incorrect pressure is not as apparent in zigzag as in straight stitching. But if the pressure is not accurate, stitches will not be even.



Too-loose tension causes the bottom layer to pucker and the thread link to fall near the bottom fabric layer. Increase tension to balance stitch. The zigzag stitch should be properly balanced in normal sewing. Loosen tension slightly for decorative stitches, and the top stitch pattern will become more rounded.

machine accessories for special tasks

Every sewing machine has accessories that allow it to perform a variety of special tasks. There are universal accessories that fit any machine, such as the zipper foot, buttonhole attachment, and various hemming feet.

Other accessories, such as a ruffler attachment, are designed to save time and effort for special types of sewing.

When adding a special accessory or foot to a machine you must know if your machine has a high shank, low shank, or slanted shank. The shank is the distance from the bottom of the presser foot to the attachment screw.

Attachments are specifically designed to fit one of these three styles.

The zigzag plate and the general-purpose foot usually come with the machine. Other accessories often included are the straight-stitch plate and foot, buttonhole foot or attachment, zipper foot, seam guide, various hemming feet, and even feed or roller foot. The machine manual explains how to attach the various accessories and achieve the best results with each.

