

Home Economics

Textiles, Clothing and Fashion



Topic: Construction Processes: Seams and Seam Finishes

Group Level: Form Four/Form Five Revision

Instructions:

1. Read the information provided on seam and seam finishes.
2. Review what you have learned by completing the worksheet.
3. Use the answer key to assess your performance.

SEAMS AND SEAM FINISHES

SEAMS

Seam is a term which refers to the stitching line where two fabrics or layers of fabric are stitched together. The primary function of seams are to secure components together, provide strength and durability and extend the life of the apparel.

- ❖ The stitching line along the seam is called the seam line.
- ❖ The seam allowance (SA) is the space between the fabric edge and the seam line.
- ❖ Seams are the basic building block of a garment and form the structure of the garment and help to create the garment.
- ❖ They can also be used as a decorative feature and should be carefully done for a beautifully finished garment.
- ❖ The machine should be adjusted correctly to the fabric for stitch length, tension and pressure. Thread should be properly matched to fabric.

The choice of a seam depends on:

- ❖ The fabric being used: "What kind of fabric is it?" is a top consideration. If it is a sheer or lightweight fabric the seam you select will be very different from what it will, if the fabric is heavy weight.
- ❖ The garment being made: Is it a dress or pants? For example a jeans will need a sturdier seam than a camisole top.
- ❖ The position of the seam: Such as centre back, side, shoulder or princess line.
- ❖ The shape of the seam: a curved seam will be differently treated from a straight seam. If it is an exposed seam as in a pants, it will be different from an enclosed seam as in a yoke or collar.

GENERAL RULES FOR WORKING SEAMS

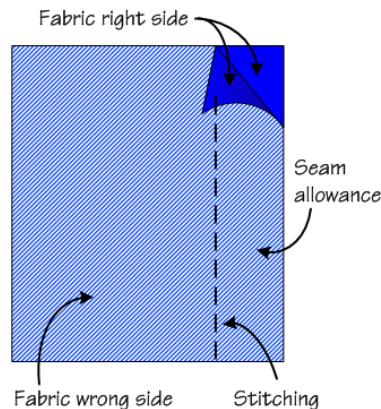
1. Threads used must be suitable for the material
2. The width of the seam depends on the texture of the material. The finer the material the narrower the seam should be.
3. All seams of the same type on a garment must be of similar widths.

TYPES OF SEAMS

There are many types of seams used in clothing/garment construction. However, we will focus on Plain/Open Seams and Enclosed Seams.

1).Plain/Open Seam: is one where the seam allowance, the piece of fabric between the edge of the fabric and the stitches, is visible. Plain/Open Seams are either straight, curved or cornered.

- ❖ A straight seam is the one that occurs most often. In a well-made straight seam the stitching is exactly the same distance from the seam edge the entire length of the seam.



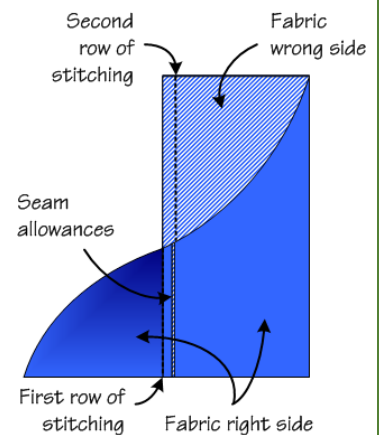
- ❖ A curved seam requires careful guiding as it passes under the needle so that the entire seamline will be the same even distance from the edge.
- ❖ A cornered seam needs reinforcement at the angle to strengthen it. This is done by using small stitches on either side of the corner.

2).Enclosed Seam: all the seam allowance are contained within the finished seam, making it invisible and thus avoiding the need of a separate seam finish. Examples are French seam and\double stitched or machine felled seam.

- ❖ French seam is best suited for sheer fabrics and looks best if the finished seam width is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. It does not add bulk and the raw edges are not seen from the outside. The French seam is stitched twice, once from the right side and once from the wrong side.

Steps to make a French seam:

1. Stitch $\frac{3}{8}$ inch from the edge with wrong sides of fabric together.
2. Trim seam allowance to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Press seam open.
3. Fold right sides together, with stitched line exactly on edge of fold and press again.
4. Stitch on the seamline, which is now $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the fold. Press seam to one side.



- ❖ Double stitched or machine felled seam is very sturdy and provides adequate strength to the seam line. It is mostly used on jeans, kid's clothes, sportswear and pyjamas. Since it is formed on the right side, it is also decorative and care must be taken to ensure straight and even stitches.



Steps to make a double stitched seam:

1. Stitch on the seamline with wrong sides of fabric together.
2. Press seam open, then to one side.
3. Trim the inner seam allowance to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.
4. Press under the edge of outer seam allowance.
5. Stitch this folded edge to the garment. Press finished seam.

SEAM FINISHES

A seam finish is any treatment used to make a seam edge look neater and prevent it from ravelling/fraying.

Three factors determine the method of finishing the seam:

1. The type and weight of fabric. Does it fray excessively, a little or not at all?
2. The amount and kind of wear and care the garment will receive.
3. Whether or not seams will be seen. A lined garment requires no finishing, unless the fabric frays a lot.

METHODS OF NEATENING SEAM ALLOWANCES.

1).Turning and stitching/Edge-stitching: straight stitch along the folded edge of the seam allowance. This is a neat finish for lightweight to medium weight fabric.

2).Hand overcasting: an overcast stitch is used along the raw edges of the seam allowance. This method is used when a machine is impractical or a hand finish is preferred.

3).Zig-zagging: zig-zag stitching along the raw edge of the seam allowance. This is one of the quickest and most effective ways to finish a fabric that frays.

4).Pinking: trimming the seam allowance with a pinking shears (serrated scissors) creates a zigzag edge. Pinking is attractive and best suited for crisp, firm fabrics.

5) Serging: a serger also called an overlock machine, trims the excess seam allowance and overcast the edge of the fabric in one operation, resulting in professional quality stitching. This finish can be done on all fabrics.

Worksheet

MULTIPLE CHOICE – Questions 1 -9

DIRECTIONS: Each question or incomplete statement is followed by four (4) suggested answers or completions. Choose the one that BEST answers the question or complete the statement

1. Which of the following statement is NOT true about seams?
 - A. Seams are the basic building block of a garment.
 - B. Seams can be used as a decorative feature.
 - C. Seams help to create the garment.
 - D. Seams can only be made with lightweight fabric.
2. The space between the fabric edge and the stitching line is called the seam
 - A. finish
 - B. allowance
 - C. guide
 - D. line
3. The two major categories of seams are
 - A. exposed and closed
 - B. neatened and un-neatened
 - C. open and enclosed
 - D. edge-stitched and pinked
4. All of the following are points to consider when choosing seams EXCEPT
 - A. Position on garment
 - B. Type of fabric
 - C. Length of seam
 - D. Shape of seam
5. Which of the following seam is stitched on the right side of the fabric only?
 - A. Double stitched
 - B. Straight stitched
 - C. French
 - D. Cornered
6. Which of the following seam is best for sheer fabric?
 - A. Curved
 - B. Double stitched
 - C. French
 - D. Turned and stitched

7. The double stitched seam is mostly used on the following garments.

- A. Jeans, sportswear, kid's clothes
- B. Camisole, kids clothes, shorts
- C. Pyjamas, t shirt, jeans
- D. Men's shirt, sportswear, neck ties

8. Which of the following is NOT a seam finish?

- A. Pinking
- B. Edge-stitching
- C. Zig-zagging
- D. Trimming

9. Which set of seam finish can be done without using a sewing machine?

- A. Pinked and Edge-stitched
- B. Hand overcast and Zig-Zagged
- C. Pinked and Hand overcast
- D. Zig-Zagged and Edge-stitched

(9 marks)

10. What is the difference between plain seams and enclosed seam?

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(2 marks)

11. Define the term 'seam finish'.

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(2 marks)

12. List three methods of neatening seam allowances.

i)..... ii)..... iii).....

(3 marks)

13. List any four steps in making a french seam.

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(4 marks)

Total (20 marks)

Answer Key

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>D</i> | 6. <i>C</i> |
| 2. <i>B</i> | 7. <i>A</i> |
| 3. <i>C</i> | 8. <i>D</i> |
| 4. <i>C</i> | 9. <i>C</i> |
| 5. <i>A</i> | |

(1 mark each = 9marks)

10. What is the difference between plain seams and enclosed seam?

The seam allowances in plain seams are visible and requires a seam finish. All the seam allowances in enclosed seams are contained in the finished seam, and there is no need for a seam finish.

(2 marks)

11. Define the term 'seam finish'.

A seam finish is any treatment used to make a seam edge look neater and prevent it from ravelling/fraying.

(2 marks)

12. List three methods of neatening seam allowances.

- i. *Edgestitching*
- ii. *Zig zagging*
- iii. *Pinking*
- iv. *Overcasting*
- v. *Serging*

(Any three methods)
(3 marks)

13. List the steps for making a french seam.

1. Stitch $\frac{3}{8}$ inch from the edge with wrong sides of fabric together.
2. Trim seam allowance to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Press seam open.
3. Fold right sides together, with stitched line exactly on edge of fold and press again.
4. Stitch on the seamline, which is now $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the fold. Press seam to one side.

(4 marks)

Total 20 marks

References

Readers Digest Association, (October 1, 1978). Readers Digest Complete Guide to Sewing. Publisher David & Charles.

<https://sewguide.com/all-about-seam-finishes/>

IMAGES:

Capped sleeve dresses

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/2485/3750/products/dressmaking-vintage-tea-tulip_500x.jpg?v=1590055639

Plain open seam – Public Domain License

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/05/Parts_of_a_plain_seam.png

Double stitched seam - Public Domain License

<https://www.photos-public-domain.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/seam-on-denim-blue-jeans.jpg>

French seam - Public Domain License

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8c/French_seam.png