

# Quick Reference Guide to Dictionary of Sewing Terms

## Terms Provided by Various Books and Online References.

### A

Anchoring Stitches- Machine stitches sewn with zero stitch length to keep from pulling out, or the end of seam when you stitch backwards for a few stitches to anchor the stitch.

Apex – Highest point on a rounded bulge.

Armhole- Armhole – Curved inset in the body of the garment when one sews the sleeve cap.

Arrowhead Stitch/Arrow- Triangular stitch used as decoration when stitched loosely or to reinforce strain areas of a garment when stitched tightly.

Asymmetrical bias garment- A bias cut garment that is not a mirror image of itself from side to side.

Awl- Hand held tool for punching holes in fabric.

### B

Back Tack- Stitching in reverse to secure a line of stitching.

Bar Tack- Short thread reinforcement.

Basting Stitch or Baste - A long and quick stitch used to hold fabric in place temporarily.

Batting- Filling inside quilt or garment.

Bias - Line diagonal to fabric grain. True bias is a cut in a 45 degree angle from edge of fabric.

Bias Binding- Also called bias tape, a bias cut strip used to bind or cover edges.

Bias Draping- Hanging bias cut fabric over a dress form to design a garment and make a pattern.

Bias Seams- Seams cut and sewn on the bias.

Bias Tape- Ribbons of fabric cut 45 degrees to the straight grain.

Bias Bound- Bias strips of fabric used to cover a seam edge or enclose raw edges.

Blanket Stitch- A stitch used to finish a fabric edge, such as around a buttonhole or blanket.

Blind Hem Stitch – An “invisible” stitch not meant to be seen on the right side of the fabric.

Block- Optional as a quilting term for the individual unit of a quilt or, to block out a garment that is wet and shape as it dries. Block is also a term for a master pattern.

Bodice - Upper body portion of a garment that runs from shoulders to waist.

Bodkin- Long, flat rod used to thread elastic through casing.

Boning- Narrow strips used to stiffen a garment, usually made of plastic, metal, or bone.

Bottom Weight Fabric - Fabrics that are appropriate for trousers/slacks or where strength related to wear is needed. Heavier weight fabrics.

Box Pleat- The two pleats face each other on one side and away from each other on the opposite side, unlike accordion pleats which all face the same direction.

Buckram- A heavy, coarse cotton fabric used for stiffening garments and hats.

Butting- placing two fabrics together so they touch but do not overlap.

## C

Casing- Folded and stitched tunnel of fabric that holds elastic, cording, or boning.

Catch Stitch- A hemstitch used to join an edge to the inside of a garment. It is formed with cross-shaped stitches on either side of an edge.

Chain Stitch- A stitch formed by making connected loops that form a chain.

Chalk Trace- Pin through pattern markings, remove pattern leaving pins in place, and chalk mark the fabric using pins as a guide.

Clean Finish- Term used to describe the way a raw edge is finished.

Clip curve- Method to make a rounded corner lay flat and not bunch when complete.

Collar Stand- A band between the shirt and the collar on a shirt or blouse.

Couching- Hand- or machine-sewn stitches that invisibly overcast a thread, yarn, or trim to attach it to fabric.

Couture- Apparel or Accessories from designer collections; characterized by custom fitting and hand sewing.

Crewel Yarn- A two-ply, loosely twisted, fine-worsted yarn used in heavy embroidery.

Cross grain Edge- The edge perpendicular to the selvage.

Crimping- Easing fabric into the seam line.

Cut On Facing- A facing extending from and attached to the same piece of fabric it's facing.

Cutting line- On patterns, the outermost dark line.

## D

Darn- Repairing a hole in a garment, especially socks, with stitches running back and forth over the hole. Darning tools, such as a (wooden egg) help to keep the fabric taut while darning.

Darning Foot - A presser foot with a circular opening that doesn't clamp down over the fabric and is used with dropped feed dogs for free-motion stitching or mending.

Dart- V-shaped additions to a pattern that create fullness and clean fit in a garment.

Dolman Sleeve- A sleeve style where the sleeve is cut in one piece with the bodice.

Double Needle- Two machine needles attached to a single shaft that sew two parallel rows of stitches at once with two spools of thread and one bobbin (Twin Needle).

Double Fold Hem- A hem folded once for the hem allowance and a second time to enclose the raw edge.

Double Layer Layout- A pattern layout intended for two layers of fabric, usually including a fold for cutting half pattern pieces.

Drape- The fluid way a fabric hangs in a garment.

## E

Ease- Sewing a length of fabric into a small space without gathers or puckers.

Edge Stitching- Stitch 1/8 inch from the seamed or folded edge.

## F

Faced Waist- A waistline finish without a band.

Facing- Used to finish exposed edges as a partial lining for center front, neckline, or armhole edges.

Fade Out Pen- A fabric pen with ink that disappears 12 to 24 hours after marking.

Feather Stitch- Hand stitch used to smoothly join two layers of fabric-usually not always a seam or a decorative hand stitch.

Fell stitch- Stitches works from the right side to pull a seam together invisibly. Stitches travel in fold fabric.

Finger Press- A method of temporarily flattening a seam using the heat from your fingers.

Flat Felled Seam- A seam where all raw edges are encased by fabric and sewn flat.

Float Stitch- Loosely tack fabric with stitches that are not pulled tight.

French Curve- A drafting tool that enables you to draw smooth curves.

French darts- Darts positioned on the garment front starting from near or at the waist and ending near the bust point.

French Seam- A finished seam in which the seam allowance is incased by the seam.

Fusible- Fabric that has heat-sensitive adhesive on one side that enables it to bind to another fabric.

Fusible Basting tape- A temporary adhesive tape that permanently fuses.

Fusible Interfacing Tape- Available in a variety of narrow widths, this tape heat fuses to fabric to stabilize a seam or edge.

## G

Garment Quadrant- A section of the garment. Most single pattern pieces go 1/4 of the way around the body, such as a front bodice.

Gather- A method to make a long piece of fabric fit with a shorter piece, or to ease a seam to allow the insertion of rounded pattern pieces.

Give- the elasticity in a thread or garment.

Godet- A triangular fabric piece set into a skirt hem to add fullness.

Gore- Vertical garment sections, usually on a skirt.

Grading- The process of converting a pattern from one size to another

Grain- The orientation of the threads in woven fabric: lengthwise and crosswise. The lengthwise grain is parallel to the selvage and is the warp; cross-grain threads cross the grain and are perpendicular to the selvage.

Grain Line- The long arrow symbol printed on a pattern indicating to the maker the direction to lay the pattern on the fabric. It is always placed along the lengthwise grain.

Grosgrain Ribbon- Characterized by woven ridges, grosgrain ribbon is very stable and comes in many widths.

## H

Ham- A hard, stuffed form in the shape of a ham, used to shape darts and curves during pressing.

Hand- The way a fabric feels in the hand, e.g. smooth, soft, crisp.

Hand Overcast- A hand stitch that wraps around an edge like a spiral.

Hem- A method of turning or rolling fabric under for a clean finish.

Hem Allowance- Hem allowance is the distance between the cutting line and the hemline.

Hemline- The lowest edge of the garment once the hem is sewn.

Hip Curve- A curved ruler.

Hong Kong Finish- A bias-bound edge seam finish.

Hook and Loop tape- A two part fastening device that can be sewn or glued in place.

Horsehair Braid- A netlike ribbon woven on the bias with synthetic threads. It is stretchy and takes curves easily. Often used to add support to a hem.

## I

Inseam- The inside seam on a pant or shorts leg.

Interfacing- Fabric inserted between layers of garment, by sewing or iron-on adhesive, for stability and to form cuffs, collars, and waistbands.

Invisible stitch- Made at 1/16-inch or 1/8-inch intervals through the side fold of the turn-under allowance. This technique hides the stitch in the fold along the edge.

Invisible zippers- A zipper designed to disappear into a seam when sewn in.

## J

**Jean Jumper-** a small piece of plastic used with all thick fabrics that allows the presser foot to jump the seam.

**Jewel neckline-** A neckline style that fits close to the base of the neck.

**Jeweler's knot-** A knot tied on a strand and then pulled down on a pin or needle to the base of the thread.

## L

**Ladder Stitch-** Used to join two folded edges of fabric. Stitches are made at right angles to the fabric, creating a ladder-like formation between the fabrics, which are tightened and rendered invisible. Excellent for closing folded seams (i.e., pillows, or other stuffed items).

**Lapel-** The joining of a coat or shirt with the collar of the garment; varieties include notched and clover-leaf.

**Lapped seams-** Seams lapped one of the over the other wrong side to right side, with seam lines meeting in the center.

**Lettuce Edge-** A serged edge which is stretched at it is sewn, creating a ruffled edge on the garment.

**Lining-** Fabric (usually silky) that covers the construction details on the inside of the garment.

**Looper stitches-** These are stitches formed by the looper section of a serger or overlock.

## M

**Machine tension-** Controlled by disks to apply drag to the machine thread.

**Match Point-** A point marked on one pattern piece for the purpose of matching a similar point marked on a second pattern piece.

**Mend-** a broad term referring to repairing tears, holes, or splits in a garment.

**Milliner's Needle-** originally used by hat makers, this is a long, thin needle that does not get wider toward the eye.

**Miter-** When two strips cross at right angles the line formed by connecting the inside and outside corners.

Mitered Bindings- When bindings meet at a 90 degree angle and a 45 degree seam divides them causing a diagonal seam.

Multi Size- A commercial pattern printed with several sizes on each pattern piece.

Muslin- 1. Unbleached cotton fabric. 2. Term used by designers to describe a test garment that checks fit and style.

## N

Nap- A fabric texture that runs in a particular direction and requires all pattern pieces be cut facing the same direction.

Narrow Hem- A 1/8 - 1/4 inch hem used on items needing a very small hem.

Notch- Indicated on patterns as a small, dark diamond, this is a short cut in the seam allowance to allow for bend in the fabric at curves or corners.

Notion- A general term for any item other than fabric or the machine used in sewing.

## O

Ombre- Closely related tones of color that graduate from light to dark.

On Grain- The same as grain, straight-of-grain, or warp threads. It is a line parallel to the selvage on fabric.

Outline- The outline of a pattern is usually the cutting line, unless it is marked as a fold line.

Overcast Stitch- A hand stitch that wraps around an edge like a spiral.

## P

Pattern Drafting- Drawing a paper pattern by positioning lines, points, and curves in a prescribed manner.

Peplum- An extension of a bodice below the waistline. It can be flared, pleated, cut separately from the garment, or one piece.

Pick Stitch- A variation on the backstitch where you backtrack only slightly and only a bead of thread is visible on the right side of the garment

Pin Fit- Taking in seams, darts, or tucks by temporarily pinning in the seams to the right size.

Pin Tuck- A narrow, stitched fold of fabric. Usually seen in multiples.

Pin Tuck foot- A ridged foot that causes the fabric to peak up in a small tuck when sewn with a twin needle.

Piping- A narrow piece of bias-cut fabric folded over a cord and inserted into the seam between the edge and facing of a garment as a decorative trim

Pique- A textured-weave cotton

Placket- The overlapping fabric that covers an opening in a garment and supports or hides the closures. Usually a faced strip of fabric that houses either the buttons or buttonholes on a closure.

Pocket Patch- Any pocket that is sewn on the face of a garment.

Point Presser- A small tool used to get inside a tight corner or small space for ease of pressing.

Point Turner- A tool used to turn a sewn corner to the right side with a sharp, crisp point.

Pre-Shrink- Wash fabric before cutting or sewing.

Presser Foot- Holds fabric to the feed dogs on a sewing machine.

Pressing Template- Shaped, heat resistant plastic, metal, or even a manila folder, used to create a smooth, crisp line or edge when pressing.

Prick Stitch- Backstitch.

Princess Seam- A vertical seam on blouses, dresses, jackets, or coats, usually positioned between a side seam and the center front and back, and passing over the bust apex.

Pinking Shears- Scissors with V shaped or zig zag teeth on the blades. Used to prevent raveling.

Pivot- Leaving the sewing machine needle in the fabric, raising the presser foot, and turning the fabric on a 45 degree angle, lowering the presser foot, and continuing to sew. This helps with turning corners.

R

Railroading- Using fabric without a nap or directional design horizontally rather than vertically

Raw edge- Unfinished, cut edge of fabric.

Rise- The distance between the waist band and the crotch seam on pants.

Rolled Hem- The edge of fabric is rolled and stitched for a very narrow hem. Can be sewn by hand, regular sewing machine, or serger.

Roving- Unspun clean fiber.

Reinforced Seam- To sew right next to a seam to reinforce it, especially in crotch seams.

Right Side- The design side of the fabric.

Rotary Cutter- A cutting tool, much like a pizza cutter, for cutting straight strips of fabric or pattern cutting.

Roving- Unspun clean fiber.

Ruching- Gathering. Sometimes whole garment sections are gathered into a seam(s) or can also be ribbons of fabric gathered and used as trim.

Running stitch- Hand-sewn stitch that weaves in and out of the fabric, resulting in a dashed line.

Running Stitch- A simple stitch made by running the thread over and under the fabric for basting or as a marker for more decorative stitches.

## S

Satin Stitch- a tight zig zag stitch with very small stitch lengths (just above 0).

Scallops- A series of curves or shell-like segments forming an ornamental edge.

Seam- Result of two pieces of fabric stitched together. Seam line is the line that you sew along. Seam allowance is the distance between the cutting line and the seam line. This allowance is usually hidden inside the garment once it is sewn. In home sewing, the measurement is conventionally 5/8 inch, but may be as small as 1/4 inch or as wide as 1 inch. Seam finish- Any technique that finishes the raw edges of a seam.

Seam roll- A cylindrical-shaped pressing tool used to press open long seams or to slide inside a sleeve for creaseless pressing.

Seam tape- A stable lightweight ribbon-like tape used to stabilize seams and finish hems.

Self Facing- Facing cut from the same fabric as the garment.

Selvage- Tightly woven factory edge of fabric that runs parallel to the lengthwise grain.

Set In Sleeve- A sleeve sewn into an armhole or armhole.

Shank- The back of a button through which the thread passes to attach the button to the garment.

Shoulder Point- The point of the shoulder seam where the arm and shoulder connect.

Shoulder Slope- The sloped angle between the side base of the neck and the point on the shoulder where the set-in sleeve begins.

Single Layer Layout- The pattern layout for one layer of fabric. Often used for asymmetrical garments or because pattern pieces are unusual shapes or sizes.

Sizing- A starch-like fabric finish.

Slash and Spread- Cutting a pattern and spreading it open along the cutline to add fullness to a section of the pattern.

Slashed Pocket- A pocket cut through the face of a garment and faced.

Sleeve Board- Small ironing board that fits inside a sleeve.

Sleeve Cap- The area of the sleeve above the biceps line.

Slipstitch- used to join two folded edges or one folded edge to a flat surface, for an almost invisible stitch.

Sloper- Master pattern for a perfect fitting snug fitting basic garment. Used to design garments and fit commercial patterns.

Stabilizer- A fabric under layer used to hold the shape of the fashion fabric or support its strength.

Stay- tape added to a garment to keep it's shape

Stay Stitch- Stitching placed on or just outside the seam line, used to stabilize the fabric and keep it from stretching.

Stitch Length- Length of a stitch determined by the movement of the feed dogs.

Stitch-In-The-Ditch- Stitching inside the "valley" or "groove" of a seam.

Straight Grain Tape- Tape cut with the grain and used to stabilize bias and cross-grain seams and edges.

Straight Stitch- The most basic machine stitch produces a single row of straight, even stitches.

## T

Tailor Tacks- Transfer markings from your pattern to your fabric by hand basting stitches to duplicate pattern markings.

Tambour needle- A thin, sharp pointed hook used for applying strung beads or sequins from the wrong side, or sewing decorative chain stitches from the right side.

Tapestry needle- A needle with a blunt tip and large oval-shaped eye made for decorative stitching with bulky threads or yarns

Termination Point- The point where two seam lines end.

Topstitch- Decorative row of stitches sewn on the right side of a garment.

Tricot- A nylon knit fabric often used in lingerie.

Tuck- A stitched fold of fabric either decorative or used to shape a garment.

Tulle- A fine netting commonly used for veils or gowns.

Twill Tape- A non-stretching tape used to stabilize seams or edges.

## U

Underlap- The lower fabric of two overlapped pieces of fabric.

Underlay- A layer of fabric underneath another layer of fabric.

Underline- A second layer of fabric is cut from the pattern and positioned under the fashion fabric. The two layers are then sewn as one.

Underlining- a layer of lightweight fabric sewn into a garment to reinforce seams, add weight or firmness, hide construction details, and provide a layer for inner stitching.

Understitch- When the seam allowances are stitched to the facing along an edge.

Universal needle- a sewing machine needle with a slightly rounded tip used for woven or knitted fabrics.

## V

View- Pictorial directions and/or examples on the directions of a pattern.

## W

Wadding – batting.

Waist Stay- A stable ribbon sewn inside a dress at the waist, used to support the dress.

Walking Foot- A presser foot that steps across the fabric instead of sliding to facilitate even feed.

Warp- Lengthwise thread in woven fabric that runs parallel to selvage.

Wash Away Stabilizer- Provides support to a fabric, then dissolves in water.

Weft- The crosswise threads in a woven fabric--traveling from selvage to selvage.

Welt- Covering the raw edges of a pocket or other opening by placing fabric (right sides together) over the opening, stitching, turning the top fabric in, and top stitching in place.

Whipstitch- simple running stitch that holds two pieces of fabric together

Whiskers- Tiny, frayed threads from raw seam edges.

Wing needle- needle with wing-shaped sides to create holes in tightly woven fabric

Woolly Nylon Thread- A lofty yarn-like thread that stretches to a fine straight thread when under tension. Polyester versions withstand greater heat.

Wrong side- Usually the inside of a garment or the backside of fabric.

XYZ

Yardage- Term used to describe any cut length of fabric. In the U.S., fabric is measured and cut in yards (36-inch intervals). A length of fabric in an undefined amount.

Yoke- A panel either across the shoulders or at the waistline/

Zig Zag- stitch going sideways one way and then the other, preventing raveling.

Zipper Coil- The nylon filament that spirals to form teeth in a zipper.

Zipper Foot- A presser foot that enables sewing with the needle on either side--perfect for sewing close to zipper teeth.

Zipper Guard- A double layer of fabric sewn behind zipper teeth as a barrier between the teeth and the skin.

Zipper Teeth- Can be metal, plastic, or nylon coils each "tooth" contains the locking mechanism that holds the zipper together.

**Read more at <http://www.favecrafts.com/Sewing-Tips/Sewing-Dictionary#Uzb3fbJpiJbA3ruP.99>**