

Dictionary of Sewing Terms

A

Armhole- armhole

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

Awl-hand-held tool for poking holes in fabric or pushing out corners

B

Back-tack (back stick)- Stitching in reverse to secure a line of stitching

Bar Tack- Short thread reinforcement

Basting stitch (baste)- A long, 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.

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- quilting term for the individual unit of a quilt. Quilts are composed of many blocks.

Bolt- Roll of fabric (can also be kept on rectangular form)

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

C

Casing- Fabric channel used to hold waistband elastic or drawstrings in place

Clean-finishing- Using a zig-zag stitch to finish a seam, especially hems, for a clean finish

Clip curve- Method to make a rounded corner lay flat and not bunch when complete. Using a serger to finish seams eliminates the need for this.

Crimping- Easing fabric into the seamline

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 help to keep the fabric taut while darning.

Dart- V-shaped additions to a pattern that create extra fullness in a garment

Double Hem- When the hem is folded over twice in equal amounts

Duct Tape Double (DTD)- clever aid for creating garments to perfectly fit a particular body. A body form is created by winding duct tape around the body and then removed as a whole.

E

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

Edgestitching- Stitch 1/8 inch from the seamed or folded edge

F

Facing- A piece of fabric sewn onto the rough edge of a fabric, such as at the cuffs or collar, to create a finished look

Feed dog- The teeth under the plate of the sewing machine that help move the fabric while it is being sewn

Finger Pressing- On small pieces of garment, where iron pressing is not suitable, using your fingers to open a seam

Flat felled seam- A seam made by sewing the wrong sides of fabric together, trimming one seam allowance close to the seam, turning the other seam under, and stitching over. This is used in pajamas, jeans, and other garments to reduce the seam bulk.

G

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 piece of fabric inserted in the seamline to provide freedom of movement, such as at a sleeve opening

Grain- direction the fibers in the fabric run, parallel to the selvage

H

Ham- a sewer's tool for ironing curved areas of a garment

Hem- A portion of fabric turned up to create a finished edge. These can be changed to allow for growth, as in children's clothing.

Hong Kong Finish- bias binding enclosed within a seam

I

Inseam- the inside seam on a pair of pants

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

J

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

L

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

Lining- Often made of a smooth fabric to assist in dressing or simply for decoration, the lining is the fabric on the inside of a garment used to hide the seams and construction of the garment

M

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

Miter- A method to create smooth 90 degree angles, especially at quilt corners, with a diagonal seam from the corner point to the inside seam

N

Narrow hem- a 1/8 to 1/4 inch hem used on lingerie, napkins, and other 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

Overlock- See "serging"

Overcast/overstitch- Stitches done over a seam to prevent raveling

P

Pinking shears- special small scissors which prevent raveling with a V shape along the cutting edge

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

Preshrink- washing and drying a fabric before sewing to allow the fabric to shrink to whatever degree. If a fabric is not preshrunk before sewing, there may be uneven lines and puckering.

Presserfoot- the part of the sewing machine that folds the fabric in place while it is fed through the feed dogs

Prick stitch- Used on fabrics such as velvet where every stitch shows, this is done with a tiny backstitch on the right side and the remaining backstitching on the wrong side

R

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

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

Ruler- For sewing, the most popular ruler is 18 inches long and 2 inches wide.

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

Salvage/selvage- Woven edge of fabric with manufacturer information or other information

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

Seam Allowance- amount of extra fabric added to allow for a seam or the area between the seam stitching and the cut edge

Serger (overlocker)- A type of sewing machines that stitches the seam, cuts off excess fabric and finishes the seam allowance in one motion.

Sloper- basic pre-design fabric recording of an individual's fit

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

Stay-stitching- a stitch 1/8 inch from permanent line of stitching on a curve to keep the curve from distorting

Straight stitch- standard single, forward stitches

Stitching-in-the-ditch- Stitching in the seam (the ditch) as a form of simple machine quilting or method of understitching

T

Tacking/tack- temporary stitching to hold material until final stitching is completed

Tailor's tack- a method for marking buttonholes or darts, by drawing two threads in a needle through the fabric layers and then cutting (or snipping them), leaving tails of thread from the top AND bottom of the fabric

Top-stitching- a visible stitch done on the top of an item 1/4 inch from the edge of a seam for stabilization and/or decoration

U

Under-stitching-stitching as close to seem line as possible to keep a fabric folded under

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

V

View- each variation on a pattern package

W

Wadding- batting

Walking foot- a special foot for your sewing machine that assists in moving several layers of fabric or slippery fabric

Warp (lengthwise grain)- Threads running the length of a woven fabric

Weft (cross grain)- Thread running perpendicular to the warp, from selvedge to selvedge

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

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

Wrong side- non-design side of the fabric (some fabric has no right or wrong side)

XYZ

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

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