

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SEWING TERMS

## A Dictionary Of Essential Sewing Terms And Definitions

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***ANCHORING STITCHES*** - THESE ARE MACHINE STITCHES THAT ARE SEWN WITH ZERO STITCH LENGTH, TO KEEP FROM PULLING OUT. THIS TERM CAN ALSO BE USED TO REFER TO WHEN YOU STITCH BACKWARDS FOR A COUPLE OF STITCHES, TO ANCHOR IT.

***APPLIQUE*** - THIS COMES FROM THE FRENCH WORD “APPLIQUER,” WHICH MEANS TO APPLY OR PUT ON. IN SEWING, APPLIQUE IS THE PROCESS OF APPLYING ONE KIND OF FABRIC ON TOP OF ANOTHER LAYER OF FABRIC. THIS IS FIXED BY SEWING OR BY ANOTHER FUSING MEANS. IT CAN ALSO REFER TO A SURFACE EMBELLISHMENT.

***ARMSCYE*** - THE OPENING IN A BODICE TO WHICH THE SLEEVE IS ATTACHED; ALSO KNOWN AS AN ARMHOLE.

## B

***BACKSTITCHING*** - STICHING BACK AND FORTH OVER THE SAME LINE TO SECURE A STITCH AT A STARTING OR ENDING POINT.

***BALLPOINT NEEDLES*** - SEWING MACHINE NEEDLES THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO BE USED WHEN SEWING KNIT FABRICS. THE ROUNDED TIP PREVENTS PIERCING, THAT WOULD DAMAGE THE KNIT.

***BASTE*** - TEMPORARY LONG RUNNING STITCHES, MADE BY EITHER HAND OR MACHINE, THAT HOLDS THE FABRIC TOGETHER BEFORE PERMANENT STITCHES ARE APPLIED.

***BIAS*** - A CUT ACROSS THE FABRIC 45 DEGREES TO THE LENGTHWISE AND CROSSWISE THREADS, WHICH ALLOWS THE FABRIC TO STRETCH

***BINDING*** - A NARROW STRIP OF FABRIC USED TO FINISH RAW EDGES, SUCH AS AROUND A QUILT OR BLANKET.

***BIRDNESTING*** - WHEN A SEWING MACHINE PRODUCES A TANGLED MASS OF THREAD UNDERNEATH THE FABRIC BEING SEWN.

***BLANKET STITCH*** - A HAND STITCH USED FOR FINISHING A FABRIC EDGE.

***BOBBIN*** - A SMALL SPOOL THAT HOLDS THE BOTTOM THREAD IN PLACE FOR SEWING.

***BUMBLEBUNCHING*** - SEE BIRDNESTING

***BUTTONHOLE*** - A STITCHED HOLE THAT IS CREATED TO ACCOMMODATE A BUTTON



**CASING** – A FOLDED OVER EDGE OF A GARMENT, WHICH IS USUALLY AT THE WAIST. IT IS USED TO ENCLOSE A WAY OF ADJUSTING THE FIT – FOR EXAMPLE A DRAWSTRING.

**CORD** – A TWISTED FIBER, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ROPE AND STRING.

**CROCHET** – A METHOD USING YARN AND A HOOKED NEEDLE TO MAKE A GARMENT, FABRIC OR LACE.

**CROSSGRAIN** – THE LINE OF FABRIC PERPENDICULAR TO THE SELVAGE EDGE OF THE FABRIC.

**CROSS STITCH** – A NEEDLEWORK STITCH THAT USES 2 STITCHES THAT CROSS OVER TO CREATE A CROSS SHAPE.

**CUTTING MAT** – A SELF-HEALING BOARD USED FOR CUTTING FABRIC ON. THAT IS OFTEN MARKED WITH MEASURING GRIDS.

## D

**DARTS** – TRIANGULAR FOLD OR TUCKS IN THE FABRIC, USED TO CREATE SHAPE OR FORM.

**DARN (OR DARNING)** – USUALLY REFERS TO THE REPAIR OF A SMALL HOLE, MOST OFTEN IN KNITWEAR, USING A NEEDLE AND THREAD. IT IS OFTEN DONE BY HAND, USING A DARNING STITCH. IT CAN ALSO REFER TO ANY NUMBER OF NEEDLEWORK TECHNIQUES THAT ARE WORKED USING DARNING STITCHES.

**DOUBLE NEEDLE** – 2 MACHINE NEEDLES ATTACHED TO A SINGLE SHAFT, THAT SEWS 2 PARALLEL ROWS OF STITCHES AT ONCE WITH 2 SPOOLS OF THREAD AND A SINGLE BOBBIN.

**DRAPE** – THE FLUID WAY THAT THE FABRIC HANGS IN A GARMENT.

**DRESSMAKER** – SOMEONE WHO MAKES CUSTOM APPAREL FOR WOMEN.

## E

**EASE** – THE ALLOWANCE OF SPACE IN A PATTERN FOR FIT, COMFORT AND STYLE, OVER EXACT BODY MEASUREMENTS.

**EDGE STITCH** – STRAIGHT STITCHING VERY CLOSE TO THE EDGE OF A SEAM, TRIM OR OUTER EDGE.

**EMBELLISHMENT** – A DECORATIVE ITEM ADDED TO IMPROVE THE LOOK OF A GARMENT OR OTHER PROJECT. EMBELLISHMENTS CAN INCLUDE BUTTONS, BEADS, JEWELS, ORNAMENTAL STITCHING ETC.

**EMBROIDERY** – AN ANCIENT VARIETY OF DECORATIVE NEEDLEWORK. DESIGNS AND IMAGES ARE CREATED BY STITCHING STRANDS OF ONE MATERIAL ONTO ANOTHER.



***FACE*** - THE FRONT OF A PIECE OF FABRIC (THE RIGHT SIDE).

***FAT QUARTER*** - A LITTLE UNDER A FOOT OF FABRIC MEASURING 18 X 22 INCHES. USED FOR PATCHWORK AND OTHER CRAFT PROJECTS.

***FEATHER STITCH*** - HAND STITCH USED TO SMOOTHLY JOIN 2 LAYERS OF FABRIC. CAN ALSO BE A FORM OF DECORATIVE HAND STITCH.

***FEED-DOGS*** - SMALL JAGGED FEET THAT SIT UNDER THE PRESSER FOOT OF A SEWING MACHINE. BY LIFTING AND LOWERING THEM, YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO USE THE MACHINE FOR FREE HAND EMBROIDERY.

***FROGGING*** - THE ART OF UNPICKING STITCHES.

## G

***GATHERING*** - A TECHNIQUE THAT INVOLVES SEWING A ROW OF STITCHES AND THEN PULLING THE THREAD TO CREATE A GATHERED OR RUFFLED LOOK

***GRAIN*** - DESCRIBES THE DIRECTION OF THE WARP AND THE WEFT IN A WOVEN FABRIC.

## H

***HEM*** - THE FINISHED EDGE OF A GARMENT, FOLDED AND STITCHED TO PREVENT FRAYING

***HOOKS AND EYES*** - SMALL AND STURDY FASTENERS USED AT THE POINTS OF A GARMENT OPENING.

## I

***INTERFACING*** - A LAYER OF FABRIC THAT IS SEWN OR IRONED ONTO THE BACK OF FABRIC TO PROVIDE STRUCTURE, STABILITY, OR SHAPE.

## J

***JEWELLER'S KNOT*** - A SIMPLE KNOT TIED ON A STRAND OF THREAD AND THEN PULLED DOWN ON A PIN OR NEEDLE TO THE BASE OF THE THREAD.



**LADDER STITCH** - THIS IS A STITCH USED TO CLOSE LARGE OPENINGS, OR, ALTERNATIVELY, TO JOIN 2 PATTERN PIECES SEAMLESSLY. STITCHES ARE MADE AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THE FABRIC, CREATING A LADDER-LIKE FORMATION.

**LAPPED SEAMS** - SEAMS LAPPED ONE OVER THE OTHER - WRONG SIDE TO RIGHT RIGHT - WITH SEAMLINES MEETING IN THE MIDDLE.

**LINING** - A PIECE OF MATERIAL USED TO FINISH THE INSIDE OF A GARMENT. LININGS CAN HIDE THE SEAM AND MAKE THE GARMENTS EASIER AND MORE COMFORTABLE TO WEAR.

**LONG STITCH** - A STITCH FOR TAPESTRY OR EMBROIDERY WHICH CAN COVER 1 - 12 THREADS IN A SINGLE STITCH.

## M

**MATCH POINT** - A POINT MARKED ON ONE PATTERN PIECE SO IT CAN BE MATCHED TO A SIMILAR POINT ON ANOTHER PATTERN PIECE.

## N

**NAP** - A FABRIC TEXTURE THAT RUNS IN A PARTICULAR DIRECTION, AND REQUIRES ALL OTHER PATTERN PIECES TO BE CUT FACING THE SAME ORIENTATION.

**NEEDLEWORK** - A TERM FOR THE HANDICRAFT OF DECORATIVE SEWING.

**NOTIONS** - ALL OF THE ACCESSORIES USED IN SEWING PROJECTS. SUCH AS BUTTONS, ZIPPERS, OR SNAPS

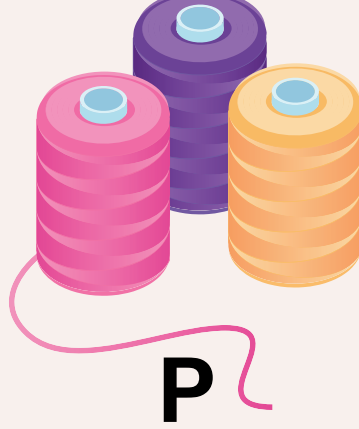
## O

**OVERLAY** - THIS REFERS TO THE TOP LAYER OF FABRIC, WHEN THERE IS A DIFFERENT ONE UNDERNEATH.

**OVERLOCKER** - ALSO KNOWN AS A SERGER, THIS IS A SPECIALIST SEWING MACHINE THAT TRIMS AND NEATENS THE EDGE OF FABRIC.

## P

**PATCHWORK** - A FORM OF NEEDLEWORK THAT INVOLVES SEWING TOGETHER SMALL PIECES OF FABRIC TO CREATE A PATCHWORK LIKE EFFECT. THIS IS VERY POPULAR FOR QUILTING. CAN BE DONE BY HAND OR BY MACHINE.



**PATTERN** – A TEMPLATE OR GUIDE USED TO CREATE A SPECIFIC DESIGN OR GARMENT.

**PINNING** – USING STRAIGHT PINS TO HOLD FABRIC IN PLACE BEFORE STITCHING.

**PINTUCK** – A NARROW, STITCHED FOLD OF FABRIC. THIS STYLE IS USUALLY SEEN IN MULTIPLES AND CREATES A STYLISH AND SMART FINISH.

**PLEAT** – A TYPE OF FOLD IN THE FABRIC CREATED BY DOUBLING THE MATERIAL BACK ON ITSELF AND SECURING IT IN PLACE. WHEN IRONED, THEY CREATE A SHARP CREASE.

**PRESSER FOOT** – THE PART OF THE SEWING MACHINE THAT PRESSES AGAINST THE FABRIC TO KEEP IT STABLE DURING SEWING.

**PRINCESS SEAM** – A VERTICAL SEAM LINE WHICH GIVES SHAPE TO A GARMENT IN PLACE OF DARTS. USUALLY FOUND ON BODICES, DRESSES, JACKETS, AND BLOUSES.

## Q

**QUILTING** – THE ART OF MAKING A QUILT – A DECORATIVE PIECE OF BEDDING OR WALL HANGING MADE FROM SMALL PIECES OF FABRIC SEWN TOGETHER IN BATTED LAYERS.

## R

**RAW EDGE** – THE EDGE OF THE PIECE OF FABRIC AFTER IT IS CUT BUT BEFORE IT IS HEMMED. IF LEFT RAW, THE FABRIC MIGHT FRAY.

**RIGHT SIDE** – THE FRONT, OR FACE OF THE FABRIC. THIS IS THE SIDE OF THE FABRIC DESIGNED TO BE ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE GARMENT.

**RUCHING** – ALSO KNOWN AS GATHERING. SECTIONS CAN BE GATHERED INTO SEAMS.

**RUNNING STITCH** – A HAND-SEWN STITCH THAT WEAVES IN AND OUT OF THE MATERIAL. THIS CREATES A DASHED LINE EFFECT.

## S

**SEAM** – THE LINE WHERE 2 PIECES OF FABRIC ARE HELD TOGETHER BY THE THREAD.



**SEAM ALLOWANCE** - THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE CUT EDGE OF THE FABRIC AND THE LINE OF STITCHING. IT'S THE STRIP OF EXCESS FABRIC THAT ALLOWS FOR SEAM CONSTRUCTION.

**SEAM RIPPER** - A SMALL TOOL USED FOR UNPICKING STITCHES.

**SELVEDGE** - THE WOVEN EDGE OF THE FABRIC THAT RUNS PARALLEL TO THE LENGTHWISE GRAIN - ALSO CALLED "SELVAGE." THEY ARE THE FINISHED EDGES THAT DO NOT FRAY.

**SERGER** - A TYPE OF SEWING MACHINE THAT WRAPS THREAD AROUND THE EDGE OF THE FABRIC TO PREVENT FRAYING WHILE TRIMMING THE FABRIC EDGE.

**STAYSTITCH** - STITCHING PLACED ON OR JUST OUTSIDE THE SEAMLINE. IT IS USED TO STABILIZE THE FABRIC AND PREVENT IT FROM STRETCHING OUT OF SHAPE.

**STITCH LENGTH** - THE DISTANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL STITCHES WHEN SEWING.

**STRAIGHT STITCH** - A SIMPLE, STRAIGHT STITCHED LINE.

## T

**TACKING** - BASTING OR TEMPORARY STITCHING PERFORMED TO HOLD FABRIC LAYERS IN PLACE BEFORE FINAL STITCHING.

**TAILOR'S CHALK** - A PIECE OF CHALK USED TO MARK FABRIC.

**TAMBOUR NEEDLE** - A POINTED HOOK THAT IS VERY THIN AND SHARP. IT IS USED TO APPLY BEADS OR SEQUINS, OR EVEN CHAIN STITCHES.

**TENSION** - THE AMOUNT OF PRESSURE ON THE THREAD AS IT IS FED THROUGH THE SEWING MACHINE; TOO MUCH TENSION CAN CAUSE PUCKERING OR BREAKING OF THE THREAD.

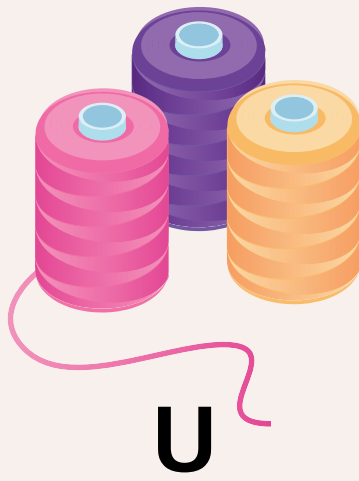
**TERMINATION POINT** - THE PLACE WHERE 2 SEAMLINES END.

**THIMBLE** - A PROTECTIVE IMPLEMENT WORN ON THE FINGER OR THUMB WHEN SEWING.

**TOP STITCH** - A DECORATIVE STITCH DONE ON THE OUTSIDE OF A GARMENT OR ITEM, USUALLY PARALLEL TO A SEAM OR EDGE.

**TRIM** - THE PROCESS OF CUTTING EXCESS FABRIC OR THREAD FROM A GARMENT OR PIECE OF FABRIC.  
ALTERNATIVE MEANING : A DECORATIVE WAY TO EMBELLISH AN OUTFIT.

**TUCK** - A STITCHED FOLD OF FABRIC THAT CAN BE USED FOR DECORATIVE PURPOSES OR TO ADD SHAPE TO A GARMENT.



## U

**UNDERLAY** – THE LAYER OF FABRIC UNDERNEATH ANOTHER LAYER OF FABRIC.

**UNDERSTITCHING** – STITCHING ON THE UNDERSIDE OF FABRIC TO KEEP THE SEAM FROM ROLLING OUT

## V

**VERTICAL BOBBIN** – WHEN THE BOBBIN MOVES BACK AND FORTH TO PICK UP THE THREAD.

## W

**WADDING** – A FIBROUS MATERIAL USED FOR FILLING ITEMS SUCH AS QUILTS. IT CAN ALSO BE KNOWN AS BATTING OR FILLER.

**WALKING FOOT** – A PRESSER FOOT THAT STEPS ACROSS THE FABRIC, AS OPPOSED TO SLIDING.

**WARP** – THE LENGTHWISE THREAD IN WOVEN FABRIC.

**WEFT** – THE CROSSWISE THREADS IN WOVEN FABRIC.

**WRONG SIDE** – THE INSIDE OR BACK OF THE FABRIC. THE SIDE THAT ISN'T ON SHOW.

## Y

**YARN** – A CONTINUOUS LENGTH OF INTERLOCKED FIBERS. IT CAN BE MADE FROM NATURAL OR SYNTHETIC FIBERS.

**YARDAGE** – A TERM FOR AN UNDEFINED LENGTH OF FABRIC.

**YOKE** – A PANEL ACROSS THE SHOULDERS OR THE WAISTLINE.

## Z

**ZIGZAG STITCH** – A STITCH THAT GOES BACK AND FORTH IN A ZIGZAG PATTERN, OFTEN USED TO FINISH RAW EDGES OR FOR STRETCH FABRICS.

**ZIPPER FOOT** – A SEWING MACHINE ATTACHMENT DESIGNED FOR INSTALLING ZIPPERS.