

Sewing Glossary: How To Gather Fabric Tutorial

Description



Gathering is the process of drawing fullness into a much smaller area to create soft, even folds. Just like with darts, tucks, pintucks, elastics, and pleats, gathering is a way of controlling fullness in a garment. It is most often used at waistline, yokes, sleeves, cuffs or when adding ruffles.

This basic sewing technique is used in all sorts of home decor projects and garments, from full dresses and skirts to tops and pants. That is why it is essential to know how to gather fabric to get professional results!

In this tutorial, we are going to show you how to gather fabric using the most common technique â?? two rows of basting! You can do this on any sewing machine because all you need is a straight stitch!

Materials & Tools



Fabric of your choice. In this tutorial we are using our IL019 INSIGNIA BLUE Softened Medium Weight Linen.

Contrasting sewing thread for basting stitches, matching sewing thread for sewing.

Scissors, pins, ruler, seam ripper, sewing machine.

Tip: You can even use two different colored threads: one for the bobbin and one for the needle. Itâ??ll make it easier for you to see which thread is your bobbin thread when you will be pulling your gathers.

Difficulty

Beginner

Sewing Time

30 min

Pattern

Pattern of your choice that requires gathering.

Gathering Ratio

Sewing perfect gathers is possible when you understand how much fabric and gathering is required. The amount of fabric you will be gathering is built into a pattern or decided by you. This amount is referred to as the gathering ratio and depends on the type of project, the location of the gathers and the weight of the selected fabric.

Lightweight or sheer fabrics usually require more fullness, with the common ratio of 3:1 or 4:1. Medium to heavy-weight fabrics are usually gathered to one half or one-third of the original width (ideal ratios are from 1,5:1 to 3:1). What it means is that you will want the length of your panel that requires gathering to be two or three times the length of the panel that you will be attaching it to.

You can experiment with these ratios and find the one that works best with you project. Just keep in mind that the greater the ratio, the fuller the finished

garment will be and vice versa.

Steps

Gathering is done after construction seams have been assembled, stitched, finished and pressed.

1. To start, set your machine to the longest straight stitch.

Note: Suitable stitch length for gathering vary from 4 to 6 mm, shorter for sheer or light fabrics and longer for heavier fabrics. The shorter the stitch length, the more control you have over the gathers but it can sometimes be harder to draw. We recommend using high quality all purpose or extra-strength thread that wonâ??t break when pulled.

2. Place the presser foot about 1/8â?• (3 mm) from the edge of the fabric and stitch your first row of basting stitches. Do not backstitch at the beginning of the seam (as you normally would) and make sure you have two long tails of thread. Your line should be parallel to the edge of your fabric.

Sew from the right side. The bobbin thread is always easier to pull and since youâ??ll be attaching panels right sides together, having the bobbin gathering thread on the wrong side will give you more flexibility to easily adjust your gathers if needed.

If seams intersect gathered area, begin and end gathering stitches at seamlines.



Note: Here at the Thread our standard seam allowance is 3/8â?• (1 cm). So thatâ??s the amount that weâ??ll assume for this demonstration. However, if your pattern has a different seam allowance, you can adapt the spacing of your basting stitches accordingly.

3. Run a second row of stitching 1/8â?• (3 mm) away from the first staying within the indicated seam allowance. Do not backstitch and leave long tails of thread.



4. Not that you have your two basting lines, you are ready to gather fabric. Draw up bobbin thread, distributing fullness evenly. Start on one end, holding both bobbin thread tails and slide the fabric towards the center. Repeat for the other side until the fabric is gathered to match the length of the joining fabric.



Tip: For more precise distribution of fullness, you can measure each fabric piece and divide into equal halves. Then pin the pieces together at the midpoints and distribute the fullness evenly.

5. Tie knots to secure gathers.

6. Pin and stitch seam gathered side up at your standard seam allowance and regular stitch length.





7. Remove basting stitches with a seam ripper then finish the seam using your preferred method (serge or zigzag).



8. Press the seam as it should go in the finished garment. Press the gathers by working the point of the iron. Try not to press across the gathers too much as it will flatten them.



Et voila! Happy gathering!

Have a browse through our selection of linen and see which of our fabrics inspire you to use your new skill!

CATEGORY

1. SEWING ESSENTIALS
2. TUTORIALS

Category

1. SEWING ESSENTIALS
2. TUTORIALS

Date Created
November 20, 2018
Author
rima-khusainova