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Dress And Skirt Hems

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The hem is the final finish on the dress made at home and often the only alteration on a ready made one.

PREPARE HEM

Marking. After the dress has hung for a day or two mark the desired length with pins or chalk around the entire skirt.

Turning and trimming. With dress turned wrong side out and placed on a table, turn hem on marked line, using pins placed at right angles to the fold of hem.

Baste turned hem near edge of fold - remove pins.

Check and mark width. Use a gauge to mark desired width of hem with pins or chalk. Trim away extra material.

Standard width for hems - 2" to 2 1/2".

Width for full gathered or straight skirts - sheer material - 3" to 7".

Width for circular skirts, long evening dresses - 1/8".

ADJUST FULLNESS

Gathers. Fullness in a hem may be taken up by making a row of long machine stitches about 1/4" from the top edge. Draw up the lower thread so hem lies flat on dress. Adjust fullness evenly, keeping the grain of the material straight. Press flat, or in wool fabrics remove fullness by shrinking.

Shrinking. After fullness is adjusted slip a piece of heavy paper between hem and dress. Cover with a damp press cloth. Press lightly with hot iron to force steam through and shrink out fullness.

Darts. Another method to control fullness is the use of tiny, short darts in the hem edge. Pin darts through hem edge only, placing them where fullness naturally falls. Slip a piece of heavy paper between hem and dress, and press darts flat before finishing top of hem. After darts are made, recheck width of hem and trim if necessary.
Seams and pleats extending into hems. Any seams that extend into the hem should be pressed open even though pressed together above the hem. Pleat seams may be clipped at top of hem.

FINISHING THE HEM

Plain hem finish. Turn and crease a 1/4" fold at top of hem. Baste in place and finish with suitable stitch. Used on thin fabrics where there is little fullness.

Edge turned and stitched. Turn in raw edge 1/4" and stitch by machine about 1/16" from fold, or just far enough back so a needle can be slipped along throughfold. Vertical hemming or slip stitch may be used with these finishes. Used often on wash dresses and light weight fabrics.

Seam tape stitched over edge. Pin and baste silk or rayon seam tape 1/4" back from raw edge and over darts or gathers used to control fullness. Ease tape slightly. It should be smooth but do not hold the hem tighter than the dress. Turn under end of tape to make a neat overlap. Stitch to hem by machine close to lower edge of tape. Other edge of tape is caught to fabric by hand stitches. Used on medium to heavy fabrics.

Raw edge. The raw edge may be left as it is, may be pined, or may have a row of machine stitching near the edge. The catch stitch or running hemming stitch is used to hold hem to garment. For heavy wools and thick fabrics that do not fray.

HEMMING STITCHES

The stitches shown here are suitable for dress hems because they show less on the right side than other hemming stitches.

Vertical hemming. Fasten thread in hem then take a stitch in garment close to fold of hem and parallel with it. Needle points straight along hem and is inserted in hem about 1/2" forward. Pull needle and thread through and take next stitch in garment. Long stitches are partially concealed under the fold.

Slip stitch. Fasten thread in fold of hem, take a tiny stitch in garment parallel to hem and right beside where thread comes out of fold. Insert the needle in fold of hem directly opposite end of this stitch. Slip needle along in fold for 1/4" to 1/2". Pull needle through - then make the tiny stitch right beside it. Repeat. The long stitches are hidden in fold.
Lock or cross stitch. Start the hemming by taking a tiny stitch on underside of fold of hem. This stitch looks like a small running stitch. Directly across from this stitch take a tiny stitch in the garment. Then put the needle into the fold of the hem just back of where the needle left the fold. Slip the needle along inside the fold 1/4" to 1/2", then bring out of edge of fold and repeat. This method makes tiny cross stitches at the top of hem about 1/2" apart. Long stitches are hidden in the fold.

Catch stitch. Work from left to right. Take a small stitch in the garment fabric close to hem edge and parallel to it. Then take a parallel stitch in hem about 1/2" ahead. The thread is held to one side, resulting in a zigzag effect. Most used on heavy fabrics where raw edge finish is used.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEED AND QUALITY IN HEMMING

Use fine, short needle.

Hold garment with lower edge of hem up - bulk of garment toward you and resting on table.

Work from right to left (except catch stitch)

To begin, fasten thread with or without knot under edge to be fastened down. Take tiny back stitch to hold it.

Finish by making 2 small back stitches on fold or under edge of hem.

Do not pull thread tight or hem may have a puckered appearance.
MACHINE STITCHED HEM

A quick and easy method of making a hem on children's clothes, aprons, dirndl skirts or other straight hems on cotton fabrics.

1. Turn hem desired width
   Turn in raw edge of hem 1/4 to 1/2"
   Press with a sharp crease

2. Fold hem back against right side of garment with hem extending about 1/16" beyond the fold.

3. Set the machine to make 10-12 stitches to the inch.
   Place the material with folded hem underneath on the machine. Stitch on the extending edge for 5 or 6 stitches then swing the material to the right and make one stitch in the fold of the garment, then pull the material back and make another 5 or 6 stitches in the hem, then another in the fold. Continue until completed.

HEMS AT CORNERS

Where lengthwise hem meets a crosswise hem at a corner. The final finish of the lengthwise hem is made after the crosswise hem has been finished. When the crosswise hem is completed press the lengthwise hem or facing over it. Tack the lengthwise hem loosely across the other and also at the lower end about 1/8" back from the lower fold of the crosswise hem. Used on coats, jackets, coat style dresses, smocks, wrap around skirts.

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