

Serge Ahead

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The secret is out—using a serger to hem fabrics gives professional and elegant results every time. Even the most difficult fabrics can be turned into projects that look like they were made by a pro.

SERGERS ELIMINATE EXTRA STEPS in both decorative and construction techniques, as well as create a finished edge.

The advantage of a serger is that it trims, seams and overcasts in one operation. This ensures a professional look in a fraction of the time and with very little effort.

Serger finishes have often been used solely on the inside of a garment for overcasting seams and construction. However, a serger seam can also be used to quickly and easily hem garments and home-décor items while creating a decorative edge.

Fancy Hems

Decorative-edge hems are unique and easy to create. They can be stitched with an array of threads from fine to heavyweight. The visible portion of the stitch is formed by the loopers. The needle thread secures the decorative loops at the inner edge. Finer specialty threads, such as embroidery metallics and rayon, can be used in the needles and the loopers.

The key to using any specialty thread is experimentation. Test a variety of stitch lengths, widths and tension settings on a fabric sample before serging on your project.

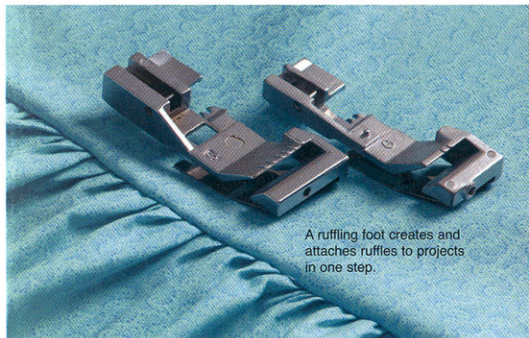
Depending on your serger's capabilities, decorative hems can be very wide—from a 7- or 8-thread combination, such as the 7-thread reverse wave stitch (1); moderate in width, such as the 4- or 5-thread combination; or very narrow, such as a 3-thread rolled hem.

The most commonly used stitches for decorative hems are the 3-thread wide stitch and the rolled hem.



1.

Seven-thread reverse wave stitch



A ruffling foot creates and attaches ruffles to projects in one step.

tip: Some serger models offer optional feet that have holes or channels to help guide monofilament fishing line. Check your machine's manual or contact your dealer for information about optional serger accessories.

For a 3-thread decorative hem, place the specialty thread in the upper looper for an edge that shows only on the fabric right side. Thread the lower looper and needle with all-purpose cone thread that coordinates with the decorative thread (2).

For a reversible decorative-edge hem, place decorative thread in both the upper and lower loopers. Test the stitch length and width until you achieve the desired look.

For a narrow rolled hem, place the decorative thread in the upper looper. The upper looper thread is most visible. As the stitch forms, the upper looper thread wraps around the fabric edge (3).

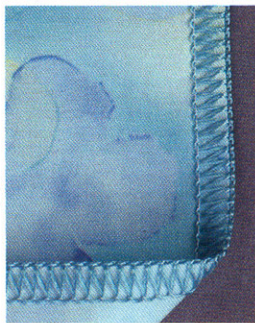
Lightweight threads produce smaller, narrower stitches. Heavier decorative threads, such as Pearl Crown rayon, produce a thicker, more dramatic effect.

Fishing-Line Ruffles

Ruffles on ready-to-wear garments are sometimes created with fishing line in the hemline to add body (4). The technique incorporates heavyweight fishing line (monofilament) inside the rolled hem. While it may sound tricky, the technique is actually quite simple.

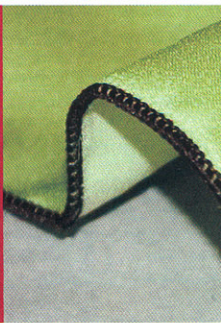
Set the serger for a 3-thread rolled hem. Cut ruffle strips on the bias. Select the fishing line according to the fabric weight and desired look. The heavier the fishing line, the more wavy and stiff the edge will be. Place the fishing line to the right of the needle (between the needle and the knife) extending 4" of fishing line behind the foot.

Place the fabric under the presser foot, allowing 1/4" to extend beyond the edge of the needle plate. Begin serging gently at an even speed while guiding the fabric and fishing line and trimming the fabric 1/4" as you serge.



2.

Experiment with different threads for a unique look.





An elastic foot not only allows you to serge elastic, it also has guide holes to provide control for projects using fishing line.

When serging is complete, cut the threads and leave a 12" to 18" tail of fishing line.

Gently stretch the hem to incorporate the additional fishing line on both ends. Apply seam sealant to the seam ends, or secure by incorporating them into another seam.

Differential-Feed Gathers

Most sergers have a feature called differential feed. Sergers equipped with differential feed have two feed dogs. When the differential feed is set at normal, the front feed dog pulls the fabric at the same rate as the back feed dog.

When the differential feed is set at a higher number, such as 1.3 to 2, the front feed dog pulls more fabric than the back. This occurs because the front feed dog moves a greater distance than the back feed dog, resulting in gathered fabric.

When the differential feed is set at 2, the front feed dog moves twice as far as the back feed dog. The front feed dog is feeding twice as much fabric as the back feed dog is feeding out.

To gather a ruffle, set the differential feed to a higher number; serge.

To maximize the gathering, lengthen the stitch as you would for a basting stitch on a sewing machine. Some serger models offer optional feet that enhance the process and allow you to gather and attach a ruffle to a flat base fabric in one step.

Kelly Laws is Marketing Project Manager for Baby Lock USA. The samples for this project were stitched on a Baby Lock Evolve serger. For more information on Babylock sergers and sewing machines, visit www.babylock.com.

3.

Use a narrow rolled hem to finish edges on lightweight or fashion fabrics.



4.

Fishing line adds extra body and stability to ruffles.



Basic **Serger** Tips

- Take the time to become familiar with your serger before starting a project.
- Test decorative thread combinations on scrap fabric to make sure you're achieving the desired effect.
- Always use good-quality thread. Poor-quality thread results in poor stitch quality and appearance.
- Don't serge over pins—they'll damage the knife blade. Remove pins as they reach the presser foot.
- Remove any accumulated lint from the serger after each project.
- If your serger has tension dials, keep a small notepad handy to record your settings prior to rethreading.
- Follow the manual's instructions for proper threading and tension adjustments.
- Use different colored threads in the needles and loopers to stitch out samples of various tension adjustments. When adjusting tension dials, adjust one at a time and then test the stitch. You'll be able to see the changes for each thread as each dial is adjusted.
- Heavier decorative threads create more drag. Using these threads may require loosening the tension settings on some models.
- Replace serger needles frequently.
- Never push the fabric through the machine. Let the feed dogs do the work as you guide the fabric.
- For best results, serge at an even speed.

This swing jacket was made using the Baby Lock Eclipse and the Swing Fever Jacket Pattern #2001 by CNT Pattern Co. We altered the pattern back by shortening and straightening the hemline. The edge was finished using decorative serger thread and a 3-thread wide stitch.