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SERIES



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## Gathering Techniques

Basic Gathering ▪ Gathering Over a Single Cord  
Gathering Over a Double Cord ▪ Speed Gathering  
Gathering with the Ruffler ▪ Serger/Overlocker Gathering

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# Gathering

Used to add volume in a sewn project, gathering is a basic sewing technique that shortens the length of a piece of fabric by forming soft folds or pleats to create fullness. These folds are made by pulling a thread to “draw up” the fabric. A few places where gathering is used are when making ruffles, creating volume in a skirt or dress, or setting puffed sleeves.

This beginner technique can be sewn using several methods and all are easy to master:

- Basic Gathering
- Gathering Over a Single Cord
- Gathering Over a Double Cord
- Speed Gathering
- Gathering with the Ruffler
- Serger/Overlocker Gathering



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## Fullness Factor

There are no hard and fast rules for the amount of fabric needed to gather. Variables include the type of project, the location of the gathers and the weight and hand of the selected fabric. Garments are designed and created with a pre-determined amount of fullness. The pattern pieces are drafted to reflect this and are made to fit together in a specific way. When working without a pattern or adding ruffles to a project, you decide how full to make the gathers.

## Fabric Weight

Soft, lightweight fabrics usually require more fullness for a rich, beautiful look. A ratio of three or four to one is common for sheer, lightweight fabrics. Starting with twice the fabric length is considered adequate for most medium weight fabrics and one and a half to one works for heavier fabric.

## Finished Gathers

The gathered samples shown here all started with a strip of fabric 18” long. Each one was gathered to a different fullness, resulting in corresponding ratios of the cut piece of fabric to the finished gathered edge. Always do a test sample to determine the amount of fabric needed to achieve the desired fullness.

*1.5 to 1 = 12.5” finished*



*2 to 1 = 9” finished*



*3 to 1 = 6” finished*





# Basic Gathering

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## Application:

For light to medium weight fabrics; works well for ruffles because it is easy to adjust the gathers to fit a specific edge.

## Supplies and Settings:

- Reverse Pattern foot #1/1C/1D
  - Straight stitch; Stitch Length 6 mm (maximum)
  - Center needle position
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## Step 1

Attach Reverse Pattern foot #1/1C/1D to the machine.

## Step 2

Sew one line of stitching  $\frac{3}{8}$ " away from the fabric edge, backstitching at the beginning and leaving 4-5" of thread tails at the end without backstitching.



## Step 3

Sew a second line of stitching  $\frac{5}{8}$ " away from the fabric edge, again backstitching at the beginning and leaving 4-5" of thread tails at the end without backstitching.



## Step 4

Starting at the thread tail end, pull the two needle threads on the right side of the fabric to gather the fabric; adjust the gathers evenly across the fabric.

## Tips

- Loosen the needle tension slightly before stitching to make the needle thread easier to pull.
- Align the fabric edge with the  $\frac{3}{8}$ " and the  $\frac{5}{8}$ " markings on the stitch plate for precise sewing.



*Click for Video!*

# Gathering Over a Single Cord

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## Application:

Good for medium weight fabrics, this method of gathering offers a sturdy cord to pull for forming adjustable gathers in the fabric.

## Supplies and Settings:

- Clear Embroidery Foot #39/39C or BERNINA Embroidery Foot #6
- Narrow cord cut the length of the edge to be gathered plus 8–10"
- Zigzag Stitch; Stitch Width 2.5 mm, Stitch Length 2.5 mm
- Center needle position

## Step 1

Attach either Clear Embroidery foot #39/39C or Embroidery foot #6 to the machine.

## Step 2

Thread the cord through the hole in the center of the presser foot.

## Step 3

Lower the presser foot and sew, leaving 4-5" of cord extending beyond the fabric edges at the beginning and end. The stitch will sew over the cord but the needle should never stitch into the cord.

## Step 4

After stitching, pull the cord, adjusting the gathers as needed, and taking care not to pull the cord out of the fabric.

## Tips

- Use gimp cord, topstitching thread, perle cotton or crochet thread for this technique.
- Pull the cord from each end to the middle to make it easier to manage the cord and gather the fabric.
- After the cord is pulled to make the fabric the desired length, tie a knot in each end of the cord and adjust the gathers so they are distributed evenly across the edge.



*Click for Video!*



# Gathering Over a Double Cord

## Application:

Use this method for gathering medium to heavyweight fabrics such as denim or corduroy. A cord looped at one end is stitched using the gathering or bridging stitch and does not come out as the ends are pulled to gather the fabric. The fabric is adjustable after the cords are pulled to form gathers.

## Supplies and Settings:

- BERNINA Buttonhole Foot #3/3C
- Narrow cord cut twice the length of the edge to be gathered plus 8–10"
- Gathering Stitch; Stitch Width 5.5 - 6.5 mm, Stitch Length 2-3 mm
- Center needle position

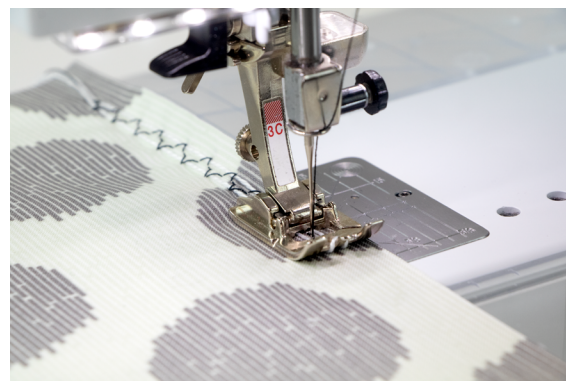
## Step 1

Loop the cord around the center toe and under the presser foot. The easiest way to do this is to place the fabric under the foot and lower the needle but not the foot; fold the cord in half and loop it around the middle toe of the presser foot, placing a cord in each groove on the bottom of the foot. Pull the cords to the back of the presser foot.



## Step 2

Lower the presser foot and begin to sew. The stitch will sew from side-to-side, encasing each cord but the needle should never stitch into the cord.



## Step 3

After stitching, pull the cord ends, adjusting the gathers as needed.

## Tips

- Use gimp cord, topstitching thread, perle cotton or crochet thread for this technique.
- Use the FHS (Freehand System) to raise and lower the presser foot, making it easier to position the cord under the foot.
- After the cord is pulled to make the fabric the desired length, tie the cords together and adjust the gathers so they are distributed evenly across the edge.



The Gathering Stitch (also called the Bridging Stitch) stitches down the center, and then from side-to-side. Each time it moves to the side, it stitches over but not into the cord being held by Buttonhole Foot #3/3C.

# Speed Gathering

## Application:

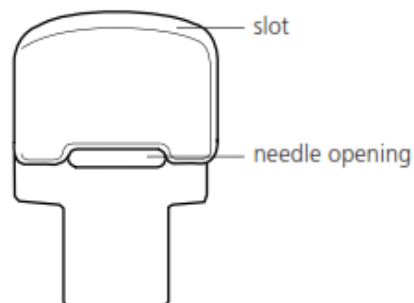
Sewn with a gathering foot, this technique is great for making yards of ruffles for projects such as for curtains, pillow edges, bed linens, and girls' clothing. Determine the fullness and amount of fabric needed before gathering as the fabric edge is not adjustable once it is gathered.

## Supplies and Settings:

- BERNINA Gathering Foot #16/16C
- Light to medium weight fabric
- Straight stitch; Stitch Width 0 mm, Stitch Length 2-5 mm
- Center needle position

## BERNINA Gathering Foot #16

This foot is designed with an uneven sole that works with the feed dog of the machine to gather fabric as it moves under the foot.



## Step 1

Attach Gathering Foot #16 or 16C to the machine.

## Step 2

Place fabric to be gathered under the presser foot, aligning the raw edge of the fabric with the right edge of the foot.

## Step 3

Sew a line of stitching; the fabric will automatically gather as you sew.

## Tips

- To increase the amount of gathering, increase the needle tension and/or adjust to a longer stitch length.
- As the foot moves the fabric to form gathers, use fingertip guiding (place fingers lightly on the edges of the fabric without inhibiting its feeding) to keep the fabric feeding straight under the foot.



The slot in the foot is used to gather a ruffle and stitch it to a flat piece of fabric all in one operation. The fabric to be gathered is fed under the foot and the flat piece of fabric is fed into the slot, keeping it from touching the feed dog.



Click for Video!



# Gathering With a Ruffler

## Application:

Useful for making ruffles with a pleated or gathered look, depending on the setting adjustments.

## Supplies and Settings:

- BERNINA Ruffler Attachment #86
- Light to medium weight fabric
- Straight stitch
- Center needle position

### Step 1

Attach Ruffler Attachment #86 to the machine, making sure the U-shaped clamp is placed over the needle bar.

### Step 2

Place the strip to be ruffled into the slot on the ruffler, positioning the fabric under the needle to start. *Note: If the fabric is placed under the ruffler, touching the feed dog, the fabric will not gather.*

### Step 3

Stitch along the edge and the fabric will pleat or gather according to the selected settings (see below).

## Tips

- For a truly pleated look, fold the pleats as stitched and press flat. For a softer look, press the ruffle without folding the pleats, putting the tip of the iron into stitched area.
- Fabric can be ruffled and stitched to a base fabric in one operation if desired. To do so, place the flat fabric under the presser foot and feed the fabric to be ruffled into the slot of the attachment.

## Ruffler Adjustments

- Vary the look of the ruffle by adjusting the settings of the ruffler: set at 1 for tight pleats (one pleat at every stitch), 6 (one pleat every 6th stitch) or 12 (one pleat every 12th stitch).
- To change the depth of the pleats, adjust the screw on the front of the ruffler: turn it clockwise for deeper pleats and counter-clockwise for more shallow pleats. Shallow pleats give more of a gathered effect and deeper ones, more of a pleated look.



# Overlocker Gathering

## Application:

Make quick work of creating ruffles with this simple gathering technique using the settings of the overlocker. This method works best on light to medium weight fabric; the lighter the fabric, the easier it will gather and the more fullness it will have.

## Supplies and Settings:

- Setup the overlock machine for a 4-thread overlock stitch and attach a gathering foot
- Adjust the machine to the following settings:
  - Needle Tensions = 7-8
  - Differential Feed = 2
  - Stitch Length = 4

## Step 1

Position the fabric right side up under the presser foot, placing it so the knife will slightly trim the edge.

## Step 2

Serge the edge of the fabric; it will gather as it is fed under the foot.

## Tips

- Fabric cut on the crosswise grain will usually gather more than fabric cut on the lengthwise grain.
- Use the Differential Feed feature to increase (higher number) or decrease (lower number) the gathers.
- Increasing the presser foot pressure to increase the gathers.
- After stitching, the fullness can be increased by pulling on the needle threads, however the fullness cannot be decreased; use a contrasting color of thread for the two needles so they will be easier to see.



## What is a Overlocker?

- Seams and finishes the fabric edge in one operation
- Also called a serger
- Perfect partner for your sewing machine
- Useful for garment construction, home dec projects, and more