

Fact Sheet: Making Jeans

How to sew the perfect pair of Jeans by Bree Ledingham



This fact sheet contains all the information you need when sewing your own pair of Jeans on a BERNINA sewing machine. Making your own Jeans may seem like a daunting task, but BERNINA makes it easy.

Happy stitching ☺

Needles

Jeans needles are the best for handling thicker fabrics as they have a sharper point. The two main sizes that you will need to look at are #80 and #90. A size #80 Jeans needle will be sufficient for most of the softer apparel denim that is popular today. It will only be necessary to go to a size #90 Jeans if you are using a thick and very ridged denim. This is more commonly used for men's work jeans.



Threads

For the constructions of your Jeans it is really important to use a high quality all purpose sewing thread. I recommend Mettler Metrosene, but any high quality polyester thread will be sufficient.

The question of what thread to use for topstitching can be a little more complicated. Jeans that are purchased will have used a thicker topstitch thread. Topstitching thread is available in Australia, however the colour range is very limited.

Topstitching thread should only be used as an upper thread and not in the bobbin. To use topstitching thread you will need to change to a larger eyed needle such as a Topstitch or Metallic Needle. Lengthen your stitch to around 3-3.5mm. You may also need to increase the upper thread tension to around 6.

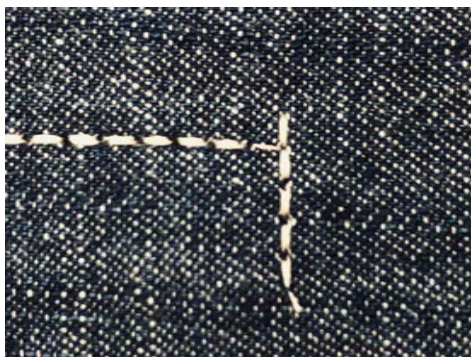


If you are unable to find a topstitching thread in a colour you like, a good alternative is a normal sewing thread and stitching with triple straight stitch. Triple straight stitch goes over each stitch three times and give the appearance of a thicker thread. Triple straight stitch can be found in the utility stitch menu, check your manual for the exact location and number.

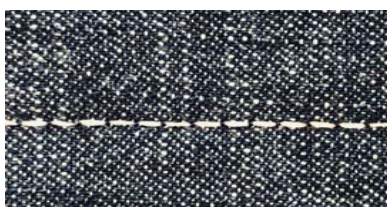


There is however one thing that you need to be aware of when using a triple straight stitch. As the fabric moves forwards, backwards and then forward again, it is important to count this motion when turning corners.

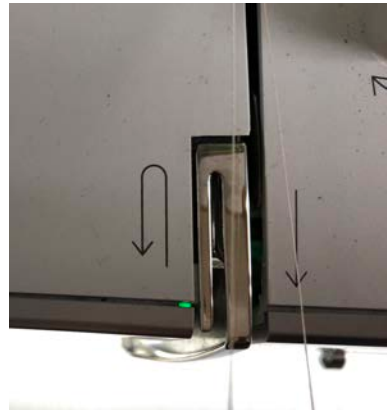
For example, if you turn the fabric on the first forward stitch, the machine will then stitch backwards before it comes forwards again. This will leave you with an extra tail to your corner.



A third option is to use two threads through the eye of the needle. This gives a thicker appearance, but is easier to control than a triple straight stitch.



If you are going to use two threads through the eye of the needle, it is important to thread the machine correctly. Firstly ensure that the two threads are split at the tension unit, so one lays to the left, and the other to the right.



Also it is a good idea to leave one of the threads out of the last thread guide on top of the needle.



This simple step helps stop the threads from twisting around one another.

Topstitching

There are two main feet that will give you the best appearance when topstitching your Jeans. The first is #10 the Edge Stitch Foot.



Foot #10 has a guide that runs through the middle that acts as a barrier for your fabric. To use the foot, place the edge or seam of your fabric right onto the guide. Move your needle position to the left or right your desired amount and stitch.



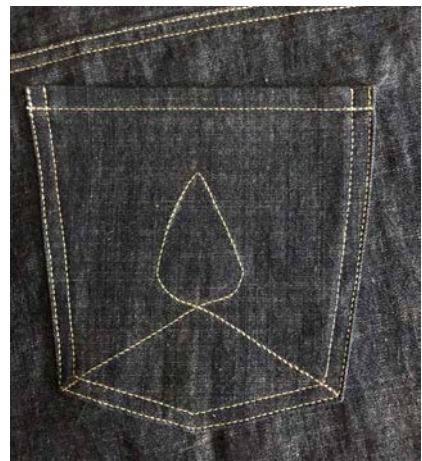
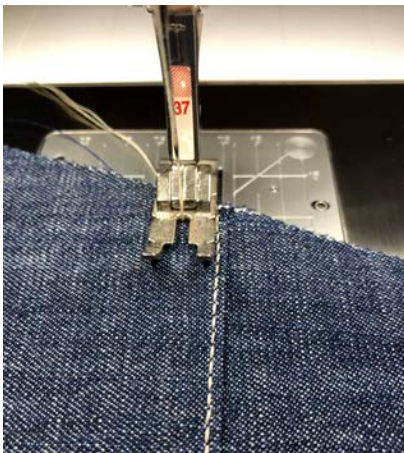
One of the major advantages in using foot #37 is the markings on the side. The markings on the side of the foot are a ¼ inch apart and can be used as guides when turning corners.



This is especially useful on pockets and waistbands.

It is critical that you do not watch the needle as you are sewing. Only watch the fabric on the guide. This will give you the perfect first row of topstitching.

For the second row, I like to use foot #37, the ¼ inch foot. I find this gives you the perfect distance from your first row of stitching. I recommend that you always keep the first row of stitching to the right of the foot. Again, make sure you do not watch the needle.



Zippers

Jeans zips can be tricky as they have metal teeth. This means that you are unable to stitch through them like their nylon counterpart.

Because of this, it is important to stitch the fly front below the metal teeth.



After that fly front stitching is complete, you can use the bar tack program to secure the fly guard. The bar tack program is a small satin stitch that has a pre-determined length. The stitch can be found in your utility stitch menu (check your manual for exact location on your machine).



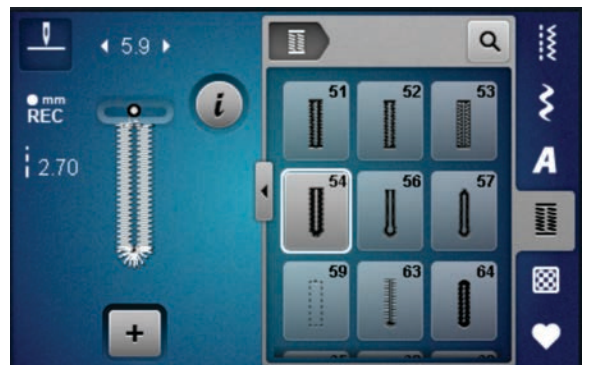
When using the bar tack program, it is important to trust the machine. Keep your foot on the foot control as it will stop itself when finished. Do not try and predict where it may end as the machine will do this for you.

Use the bar tack anywhere you feel needs some extra securing like the base and side of the fly.



Buttonholes

Traditionally Jeans used the keyhole style of buttonhole for the waistband. However in more recent times a simple rounded end buttonhole has taken over as the standard (check your manual to see what is available on your model machine).

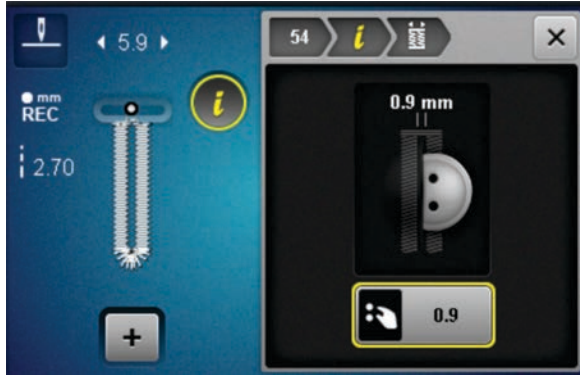


It is extremely important to test your buttonhole first. Make sure you perform the test on the same number of layers as the waistband (i.e two layers of denim and two layers of interfacing).

After you have sewn the test buttonhole, cut it open and make sure that the jeans button can slide through easily.

If the button is a tight fit, you may want to increase the length or the buttonhole slit width.

The buttonhole slit width will increase the gap between the two beads of the buttonhole. This is a good idea on thicker fabric, or for high shank buttons like those used for Jeans.



Remember to always sew another test after you have made changes to make sure the button fits. Then when you are happy, stitch the buttonhole on the waistband.

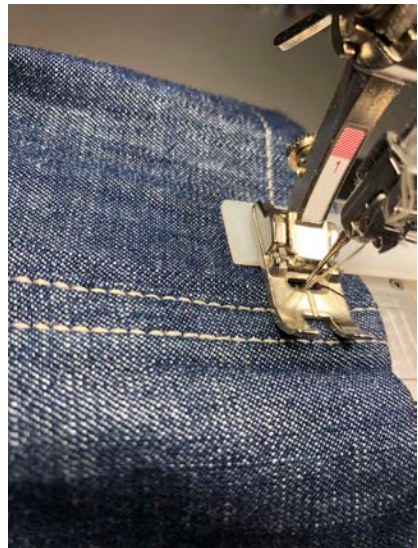


Hems

Jeans hems can often be difficult to sew, especially when at the side and inner seam. This is caused, not by the thickness of the fabric, but by the uneven seam. As the machine tries to stitch over the seam, the presser foot needs to angle up, to get over the bulk. This means that the foot is no longer making correct contact with the feed teeth and is struggling to move. That is why you often get smaller stitches or feel that you need to “help” the machine feed over the seams.

The way to stop this from happening is to use the height compensation tool. The height compensation tool comes standard with many BERNINA models and is three layers of thick white plastic.

To use the tool, start stitching your hem. As you come to the seam and the foot starts to angle up, stop with the needle in the work. Lift the presser foot and place 1,2 or all three layers of plastic under the foot at the back, so the foot now sits flat. How many layers you use will depend on how thick your denim is.



Stitch over your seam, keeping the tool at the back. As you come off the seam, move the tool to the front of the foot to level it out.



Stitch slowly, moving the tool towards you with every stitch. As soon as the back of the foot is off the seam, remove the tool.