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10 Reasons To ~~Have A Serger~~ LOVE

You can improve your sewing, achieve more professional results and finish your projects faster with the use of a serger! From inserting zippers to making spaghetti straps to finishing delicate edges, you'll love what you can do when you add a serger to your sewing room! If you've wondered if a serger is right for you or have a serger that you rarely use, keep reading!



Disclaimer: The 10 techniques in this article are listed in no particular order and are just the beginning of what you can do with a serger. There's lots more where these came from!

1. You'll Get More Done!

Not only does a serger sew faster than household sewing machines, it does three things at once: seaming, trimming, and finishing. It is often called the "microwave" of the sewing room because it is there to be a "helper" to your regular sewing machine and it does things quickly. The bonus is that the end results look more professional than ever!



**Perfect Companions
In your Sewing Room**

For more about BERNINA sergers,
go to bernina.com > Products >
BERNINA Overlocker/Serger



seaming, trimming, and
overcasting with one
pass under the needle(s)

2. Patchwork Piecing

Serger piecing works well for projects that will be machine quilted. Un-quilted projects that remain unfinished on the back benefit from this technique because the serged seams are cleanly finished and will keep the fabric from raveling with use.

TIPS for Serger Piecing

Select patchwork pattern with straight edges such as Log Cabin, 4-Patch, Irish Chain, etc.

Set the serger for a 4-thread stitch with a length of 2.5mm and a cutting width of 2mm.

Serge a test seam to check the seam width. Using the left and right needles with a 4-thread stitch formation should result in a quarter inch seam without trimming the edge. If needed, adjust the cutting width to change the stitch width.

When piecing, make sure the seam allowances are pressed to one side before serging over them.



3. Easy-to-turn Narrow Tubes

Make narrow tubes for spaghetti straps, button loops, ties, belt carriers, etc. Stitch the tube using the serger and use the serger chain to turn it!

- Set the serger for a 3 or 4 thread balanced stitch.
- Serge a chain (no fabric) that is a few inches longer than the length of the finished tube.
- Leave the thread chain attached to the machine and pull it around to the front of the machine.
- Fold the strip right sides together with the serger chain sandwiched in the middle.
- Serge the tube, taking care not to stitch into the serger chain.
- Clip the chain and remove the tube from the serger.
- To turn the tube to the right side, gently pull the chain and move the fabric up as the tube is turned to the right side.
- Apply seam sealant to the ends of the stitching and clip thread tails when the sealant is dry.



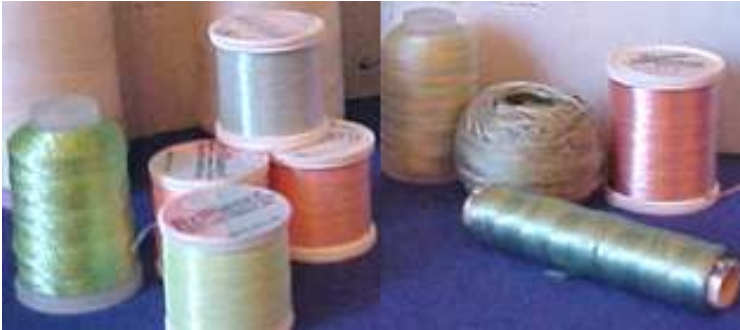
Serge with chain inside the fabric



Move the fabric along the tube to turn to the right side

4. Decorative Edges

Flat (not rolled) decorative edges are easy to stitch. The same as a balanced 3-thread overlock stitch, using decorative threads in the loopers gives a quick, professional-looking finish for all types of projects, from baby blankets to garments to purses.



Heavy decorative threads such as Pearl Crown Rayon, Designer 6, Jeans Stitch, Candlelight, and Ribbon Floss are great for decorative edges.

TIPS for Decorative Edgings

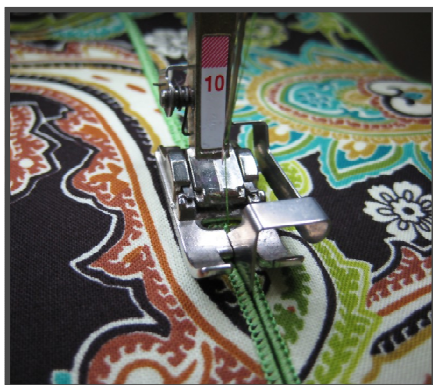
Always trim the edges of the fabric (at least a thread or two) to have a clean even edge.

Adjust the stitch length as needed (heavier threads require a longer stitch length) so that threads lay flat.

To avoid build-up of the heavy decorative thread behind the presser foot, always clear the stitch finger before starting. Hold the thread chain behind the foot as you start, putting tension on it but not pulling tightly.

5. Rolled Edges

Rolled edges offer a great finish for light and medium weight fabrics. Great for scarves, napkins, lingerie, blouses, and evening wear, a 2- or 3-thread stitch may be used. Always trim the fabric edges, even if only a few threads, to give a clean smooth edge that can rolled under to the wrong side of the fabric.



Create rolled edge seams by finishing single edges, placing them side-by-side, & stitching them together using matching or monofilament thread with a zigzag stitch.

Edgestitch Foot #10/10C/10D works great to keep the edges from overlapping.



For more tips on rolled edges:
Through the Needle Online #9

6. Custom Cords

Create your own cords for couching, to use as trims, ties, or tassels, or to make fun jewelry items. Using decorative threads, you can make any color, use metallics for added sparkle, and mix multiple threads for custom combinations.

For a fun project using serger cording, see Through The Needle Online Issue #1

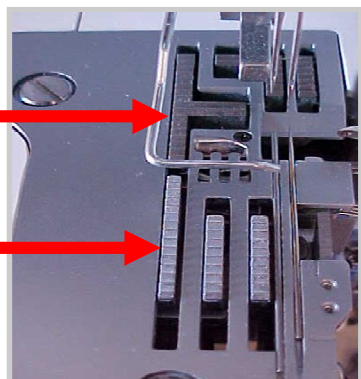


7. Perfect for Knit Fabrics

Even though sergers are great to use on almost any type of fabric, they are especially useful when sewing knits. The stitch is actually formed in a way that is similar to a knit or crochet stitch so it has lot more give to it than a regular sewing machine "lock" stitch. A 3-thread balanced stitch works well for seaming knits and offers the most stretch so it can move with the fabric but the 4-thread stitch will also work and is more secure for loosely woven knits.



To control stretching, adjust knob toward 2



Sergers with the Differential Feed feature have two sets of feed dogs that can be adjusted to keep the knit from stretching as it goes under the foot.



Differential Setting of 2

Differential Setting of Normal



8. Easy Gathering

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



1. Thread the serger with overlock thread using a contrasting color for each needle.
2. Adjust the settings of the serger for a 4-thread balanced stitch with a stitch length of 4mm.
3. Serge along one side of the ruffle strip (finish the opposite side with the desired hem).
4. Separate the needle threads (shortest threads in the stitch) from the looper threads. Pull the needle threads to adjust the gathers to the desired fullness.
5. Position the gathered edge of the ruffle along the desired flat edge and serge or sew in place.

Tip: For "automatic" gathering, adjust the differential feed setting to 2mm. The fabric will gather as you serge but the gathers will not be able to be adjusted; create a sample to determine the settings needed for the desired amount of gathering.

9. Lettuce Edging

This unique hemming technique adds a ruffled look to knit fabrics that is great for baby clothes or adding a feminine touch to t-shirts. Start with a rolled hem stitch and stretch the fabric as you sew.

Lettuce Edge How-Tos

1. Set the Differential Feed at 0.7, and make the stitch length very short (0.5-1mm).
2. As you are stitching, gently hold the fabric in front of and behind the presser foot. *Note: Don't hold so tightly that the fabric doesn't move freely.*
3. After stitching is complete, hold a steam iron above the ruffles; the steam will draw them up and give them more definition.



10. Exposed Zipper

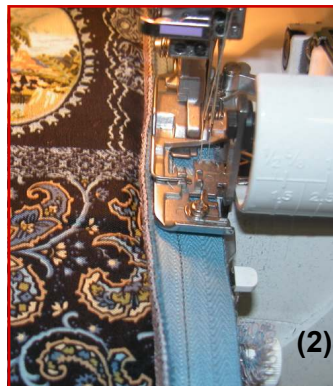
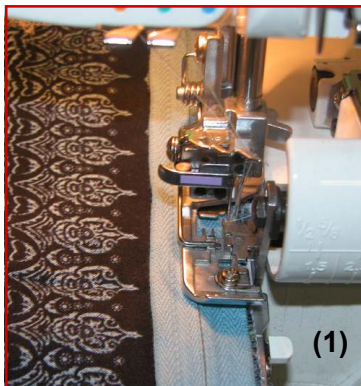
Great for bags, purses, home dec projects and casual sportswear, this zipper is the easiest one you'll ever sew...or serge. Make this simple zippered bag in any size—use it for cosmetics, as a wallet, to carry your laptop, or anything else you can dream up! The directions below are for a cosmetic size, approximately 7 x 5½”.



SUPPLIES

- Serger threaded and set for a 4-thread balanced serger stitch using regular overlock thread
- One piece of double-sided quilted fabric: 7½” x 12”.
- One 12”-14” zipper
- Seam sealant such as Fray Block

1. Unzip and place one side of the zipper along one 7½” edge of the fabric rectangle, right sides together, centered from side to side (zipper will extend beyond the side edges).
2. Place the zipper tape and fabric edge under the presser foot, with zipper coils at the left, positioned so the needles will stitch into the edge of the zipper foot. (Exact location depends on your serger.) Serge zipper tape to bag. **(1)**
3. Stitch opposite zipper tape to remaining 7½” edge of fabric, making The sides are aligned and the fabric isn't skewed. *Note: You'll be working from the closed end of the zipper this time* **(2)**
4. Fold along the middle of the rectangle so the zipper is about 1”-2” from the top; partially open the zipper.
5. Make sure that the seam allowances are folded away from the zipper, then slowly serge the closed zipper side of the bag, stitching slowly as the blades cut through the coils. **(3)**
6. Repeat for the remaining side, arranging the zipper so the teeth meet at the ends when the zipper is closed.
7. Turn bag right side out through zipper opening.



For more serger technique information, see your BERNINA dealer for the *Serger Technique Reference Book*. Organized by stitch formation (balanced, rolled edge, flatlock, etc.), this book has useful information for any brand of serger.

