

# More Serger-less Seam Finishes

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<http://www.burdastyle.com/techniques/more-serger-less-seam-finishes>

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If you're a beginning sewist, you probably don't yet own a serger. That's a very special sewing machine that trims, stitches, and overcasts the raw edges of your seams. Notice the seams of clothing you've bought in a store. The raw edges are encased in a fancy, zig-zag-like stitch called an overlock stitch. Your conventional sewing machine probably can't replicate this same action, so you'll have to try the next best thing: finishing them with either a pinked and straight stitch finish, topstitched finish, or zig-zagged edge finish.

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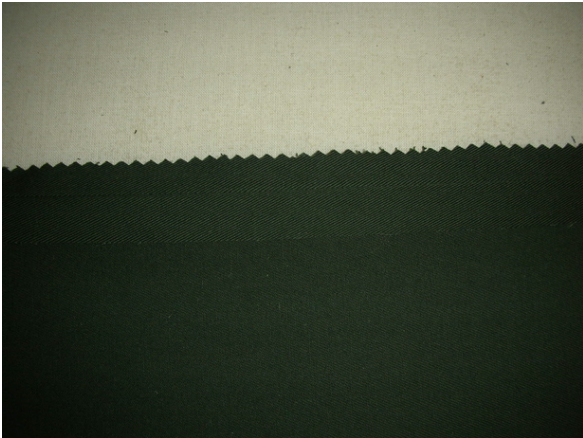
## Step 1 — Pinking Shears



These very special shears have jagged blades that make a crinkle cut and therefore, minimize raveling. Using pinking shears on your seams used to be about the only quick way available to the home sewer to add a seam finish, although a few factory-sewn garments in my vintage clothes collection do have pinked seams, believe it or not. If you decide to add pinking shears to your toolkit, buy the very best you can find. A cheap pair causes frustration more than anything else. Here's a pair: <http://store.atlantathread.com/mapish.html> For many years I had no idea why they were called "pinking" shears, until a Threads Magazine piece mentioned that the crinkled edge they make resembles the edges of the petals of flowers known as "pinks" (in the carnation family). And now it's up on Wikipedia, so it's gotta be true.

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## Step 2 — The Pinked Edge



A pinked edge. But using it alone is probably not totally sufficient toward your goal of a nicely finished seam. It's still a little too flimsy to have much of an impact.

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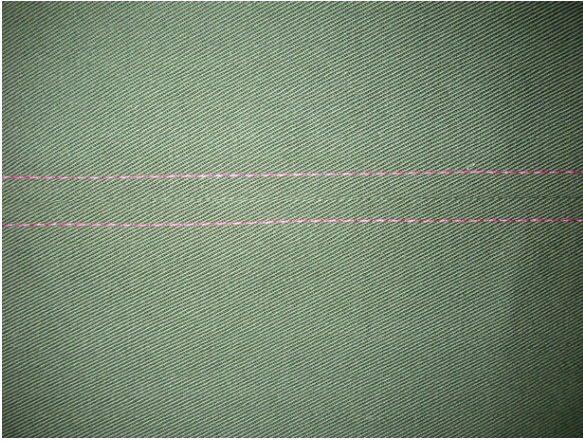
## Step 3 — The Pinked and Straight-Stitched Seam Finish



After you've sewn your seam and pressed it open, run a line of stitches down the single layer of one seam allowance, and then do the other one. To finish, pink the raw edges. Not fancy, but it works.

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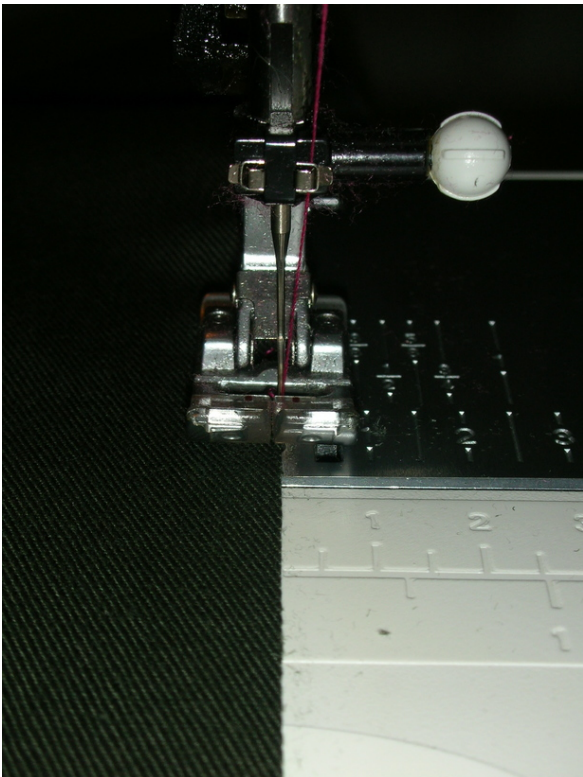
## Step 4 — Topstitching Seam Allowances



Here's another idea: After you've sewn your seam and pressed it open, topstitch the seam allowances. This works best if you sew with the right side of the fabric up. And don't try to set any speed records while you sew. I used contrasting thread so the stitches would show up in photography, but you could just as easily use thread that matches your fashion fabric. After you're done, use a small, sharp pair of scissors to trim off the seam allowances close to your topstitching.

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### Step 5 — The Zig-Zagged Edge



So far, the seam finishes I've described use your machine's straight stitch and involve more than one step. Another way to approach your seam finishes is to use your machine's zig-zag stitch, sewing along *\*very\** close to the raw edges of your seam allowances.

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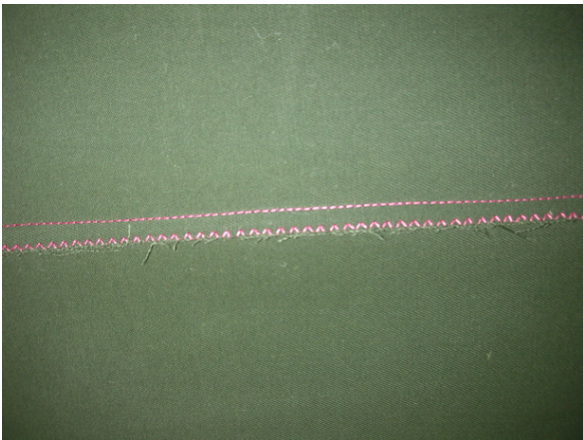
## Step 6 — The Finished Seam



When you use your zig-zag stitch this way, it mimics the action of a serger, "overcasting" the raw edges with thread. Set your stitch width fairly narrow (2.0) and fairly short (2.0), but always experiment on a scrap of your fashion fabric and see which results please you the most. I've found that this technique works best after you sew your garment seams â' not before. Why? Sometimes, the edges become distorted when you zig-zag them. Nothing another good pressing won't take care of, but I prefer not to handle my cut pieces of fabric too much before I sew them.

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## Step 7 — Another Zig-Zagged Seam



There's nothing that says every seam you sew must be pressed open. Sleeve seams aren't pressed open, and neither are seams that join a skirt to a bodice or waistband. They're always pressed to one side. Leave the seam pressed flat, and trim off 3/8". Then run a zig-zag stitch close to the raw edges.

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## Step 8 — The Zig-Zagged Seam on Knits



So far, all the finishes I've demoed have been on woven fabrics. Examples of woven fabrics include sheets, Oxford cloth, and denim. These fabrics are formed on a loom, with tiny yarns that crisscross each other. But the same seam finish works really beautifully on this skirt I'm sewing from a knit. Knit fabrics are formed from yarn loops that are interlocked with each other. Examples of knits include T-shirt and bathing suit fabrics. Knits don't ravel, as woven fabrics do, but their cut edges curl. So after you've sewn your seam on a knit garment, trim the seam allowance and zig-zag the raw edges flat.

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