

Another Hemming Technique: Easing In Fullness From The Hem Allowance

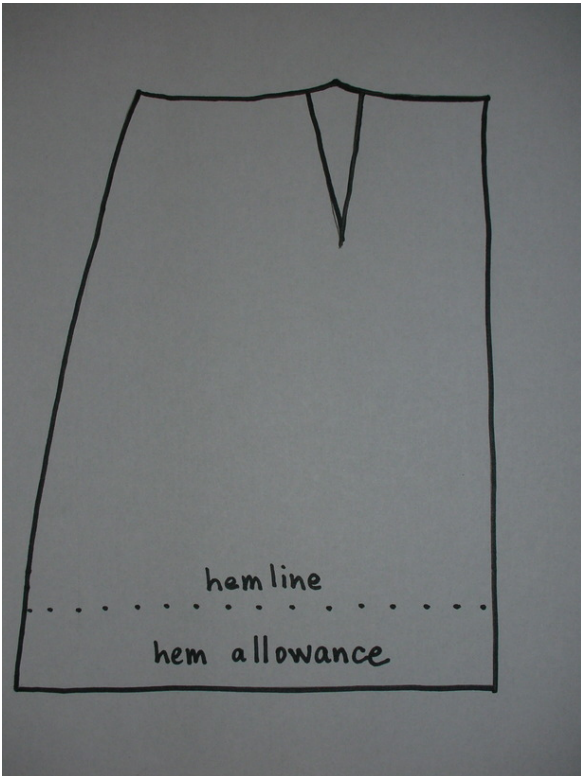
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<http://www.burdastyle.com/techniques/another-hemming-technique>



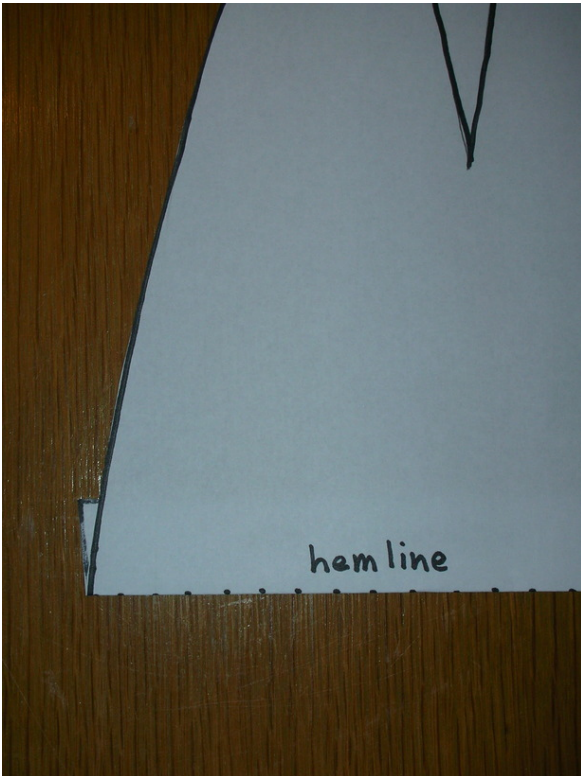
Hemming a straight skirt, or pair of straight legged pants, doesn't usually pose much of a problem, right? You mark the hem and turn up the hem allowance, and stitch either by hand or machine. But when you're turning up the hem of a flared skirt (or bootcut pants), it's sometimes a little trickier. Sooner or later, you find out you've got more fabric in the hem allowance than you have room for. What to do? Here's one way to handle it.

Step 1 — A Flared Skirt



In this step and the next, I'm using a half-scale skirt sloper to illustrate. Here's a typical-looking skirt that has a flared hem. In other words, it's not straight. I've marked a hemline, and the hem allowance. Do you see what's going to happen when I turn up the hem?

Step 2 — Too Much Fabric In The Hem Allowance



Because of the flare, I've got some "extra" fabric in the hem allowance that I'll have to ease in. It's not much, granted, but I still have to deal with it somehow.

Step 3 — Turning Up The Hem Allowance



I've turned up my hem allowance to a depth of 1.5" inches. My skirt has a fairly generous flare, and I've got extra ease in the hem allowance. Oh, sure, I could flatten this little dart of fabric down with my iron and call it a day, but I am taking the time to do a nicer finish.

Step 4 — Run An Ease Line In The Hem Allowance



To gather the extra fabric into the hem, and make it fit nicely and neatly, I'm going to run an ease line. That's when you sew a line of long stitches (4.0 setting), and then pull up the threads to help "shrink" the fabric. Notice I'm using the added step of firmly holding the fabric **BEHIND** the presser foot, as the feed dogs grab it and pull it through the machine. (Sometimes I find that my finger works just fine for this maneuver, but my little sewing tweezers are great, too.) Once I get a lot of bunching of the fabric behind the presser foot and I can't hold it firmly anymore, I stop sewing, release the fabric from behind the presser foot, and start the process of sewing again. This action creates miniscule pleats that help dramatically with gathering and easing. (Try it on a sleeve cap sometime â' you'll be amazed.)

Step 5 — The Machine-Eased Hem Allowance



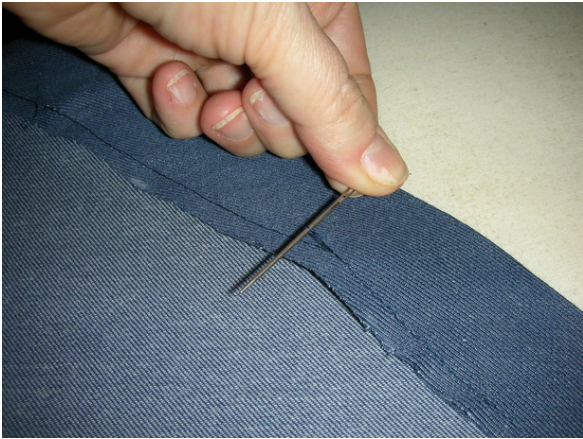
See what I mean?

Step 6 — Some Of It's Still Not Behaving!



Some areas of my hem are easing wonderfully, and other bits aren't. It's better than it was, but I'll still have trouble if I don't do something else.

Step 7 — Draw Up The Ease Line



Using a large, blunt needle, I grab one of those ease stitches and gently pull it, gathering in that little bit of fullness.

Step 8 — Apply Hem Tape



Next, I want to apply hem tape. The tape covers the raw edge of my hem allowance, making my work appear neater and more "professional." I put this on by machine, and I didn't go to the trouble of pinning the tape in place first. I just put my work under the needle, lowered the presser foot, and carefully fed it into the machine. By the way, I haven't looked for hem tape in a long time and I don't know if it's sold much anymore. My hem tape is from my stash and the copyright on the package said 1974. If you can't find this product, use seam binding instead.

Step 9 — Ready For Stitching



I'm ready to stitch now. I'm doing this hem by hand, both because I want it to look invisible, and because I find I have more control when I hand stitch a hem like this. I can continue to ease in any little bits of unwanted fullness.

Step 10 — Catch The Hem Tape



I'm using what I guess you'd call a catch stitch for my hem. My needle is inserted in the OPPOSITE direction of my stitch. In other words, my needle is pointing "down," but I'm running my stitches "up." This makes for a really strong stitch.

Step 11 — Catch A Thread Of The Garment



Here's what it looks like when I catch one or two tiny threads of the garment fabric.

Step 12 — Press the Hem



Now I press my hem. (It just won't look right if you don't press!!) I press from the wrong side of the garment, using heat and steam to meld everything together.

Step 13 — Nice On The Inside



Doesn't this look nice?

Step 14 — Nice On The Outside



Of course, what really counts is how it looks on the "public" side of the garment. Taking a little time to ease your hem nicely gives you results you can be proud of.

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