

2.3.3e Joining fabrics

Textile fabrics can be joined in a number of different ways. Here are some factors to consider when deciding on a particular method:

- The fabric – different fabrics require different approaches.
- The type of product and its purpose – some construction techniques are stronger than others.
- The construction details – the points on a product that are being joined, will it be visible?
- Economic considerations – some methods are more expensive than others.

Finishing edges

• *Hems*

Refers to the lower edges of a garment or ends of sleeves. Can be machine stitched or by hand. Some methods make use of invisible stitching for a better finish. All involve turning up the raw edge in some way.

• *Facings*

A facing is used to finish a shaped neckline or edge, or armholes. A piece of fabric mirroring the shaped edge is stitched to it and turned to the inside of the garment, concealing the raw edge.

• *Piping*

Piping is a bias-cut piece of fabric folded over a cord and inserted into a seam or used along the edge. Decorative, but also adds strength.

• *Binding*

Used to conceal raw edges or to finish a seam. Can be decorative or functional. Often used on waterproof products as it forms an additional barrier to moisture.

Joining seams

• *Plain*

Universal method of joining two fabric pieces together using standard 1.5cm seam allowance. Raw edges require further neatening.

• *French*

Conceals all raw edges, and is a neat finish particularly on sheer fabric. Can only be used on straight seams.

• *Double stitched*

Two rows of stitching are used to strengthen the seam.

• *Flat fell*

Two rows of stitching, but all raw edges are concealed. Two rows of stitching are visible on the outside, often adding a decorative feature. Can also be used on reversible products.

• *Lapped*

One edge of the fabric is lapped over the other before stitching through the layers. Used on fabric that does not fray, e.g. leather.

• *Overlocked*

Specialist machinery is used to cut and stitch over the edge of the fabric – joined and neatened in one operation.

• *Tacking*

A temporary method of joining fabrics by hand. Large even stitches hold the fabric together before being permanently joined. Stitches can easily be removed later.

• *Stay stitching*

Large stitches that stabilise curved edges to prevent distortion of the edge - critical for a good finish when it is permanently stitched.

Shaping techniques

• *Darts*

A wedged piece of fabric is pinched out of the fabric to create shape. Used for removing excess fabric from the bust area and waistlines.

• *Princess line seams*

Long vertical seams that run from the shoulder to hemline. They are shaped and follow the contours of the body. Variations exist.

• *Gathers*

Gathers control fullness and are created by pulling a thread from a line of stitching to create small tucks or pleats. Can also be decorative and used in a frill as an edging.

• *Tucks*

Folds in fabric which can be single or in multiples. A means of reducing fullness. Can be used for decorative purposes.

• *Pleats*

Pleats are similar to tucks but reduce fullness at specific points allowing the rest of the fabric to drape and add style. They can be soft or sharp but must be accurate. Pleats can be permanently held in a thermosetting fabric such as polyester.

• *Casings*

Casings are narrow channels through which elastic or cord is threaded. This allows fullness to be drawn in. Casings are used for style or for fit, allowing for ease of adjustment.

• *Elastic*

Elastic can be sewn directly onto fabric or held in a casing. Clothing can be put on or taken off more easily, but also adds to comfort and fit at certain points such as waistbands or cuffs.