

The 10-Stitch Hand Sewing Reference

Print it. Pin it above your sewing kit. Every core stitch on two pages.

Ten stitches cover almost every repair and finish a beginner needs: mending a seam, saving a hem, closing a lining, or finishing a raw edge. Keep this card by your kit and work down the list in order. Each one is built on the one before it.

BEFORE YOU STITCH

Thread the needle and tie a small knot at the tail. Keep thread 18 to 24 inches long, since longer thread tangles and knots.

Work right to left if right handed, left to right if left handed.

Test every new stitch on a scrap of the same fabric before the real project.

Start with the running stitch and move down as each one feels steady.

THE 10 ESSENTIAL STITCHES

1 Running Stitch

Use it for: gathering, basting, and quick seams.

1. Bring the needle up from the underside until the knot catches.
2. Push down a short, even distance ahead, then up again.
3. Load two or three stitches on the needle, then pull through. Keep lengths equal.

2 Basting Stitch

Use it for: holding fabric in place temporarily.

1. Sew a long running stitch, about a quarter to half inch each.
2. Do not lock either end. Use a contrasting thread color.
3. Pull the stitches out once the permanent seam is done.

3 Backstitch

Use it for: strong seams that take strain.

1. Bring the needle up from the underside.
2. Take one stitch backward, into the end of the last stitch.
3. Come up one stitch length ahead, then repeat back into the last stitch.

4 Whip Stitch

Use it for: joining two edges or holding a hem.

1. Bring the needle up through both layers, knot hidden between them.
2. Carry the thread diagonally over the edge.
3. Insert through the back layer and out the front. Repeat evenly, then secure.

5 Overcast Stitch

Use it for: stopping a raw edge from fraying.

1. Bring the needle up just below the raw edge.
2. Wrap the thread over the edge and come up again a short space along.
3. Keep spacing even so the edge is covered, not bunched.

6 Catch Stitch

Use it for: hems that need give, on knits and lined garments.

1. Start at the left. Bring the needle up through the hem.
2. Take a tiny diagonal stitch up into the garment, catching a thread or two.
3. Cross down into the hem. Alternate to form an X pattern.

7 Slip Stitch (Ladder Stitch)

Use it for: invisible closures, linings, and stuffed projects.

1. Press both folds. Hide the knot inside one fold.
2. Pick up a few threads of the opposite fold, directly across.
3. Slip back into the first fold and travel along inside it. Pull gently to close.

8 Blind Hem Stitch

Use it for: nearly invisible hems on light fabric.

1. Hide the knot inside the hem fold.
2. Pick up one or two threads of the garment fabric.
3. Take the next stitch inside the fold. Keep tension loose so it does not pucker.

9 Blanket Stitch

Use it for: decorative edges and fray protection on felt or fleece.

1. Bring the needle up a short distance from the edge.
2. Loop the thread under the needle as you stitch over the edge.
3. Pull so the loop sits along the edge, forming an L. Repeat evenly.

10 Securing Stitch

Use it for: locking the thread so work does not unravel.

1. Make a tiny backstitch and leave a small loop.
2. Pass the needle through the loop and pull.
3. Repeat once or twice to form a knot, then trim.

WHICH STITCH, WHEN

Temporary hold	Basting stitch
Strong seam	Backstitch
Quick seam or gathering	Running stitch
Joining two edges	Whip stitch
Stop fraying (plain)	Overcast stitch
Hem with give	Catch stitch
Invisible closure	Slip stitch
Invisible hem	Blind hem stitch
Decorative edge	Blanket stitch
Lock the thread	Securing stitch

IF YOUR STITCHES LOOK MESSY

Uneven lengths: draw a light chalk guideline and aim the needle at it.
Puckering: loosen your tension so the fabric lies flat.
Tangling: shorten the thread and run it through beeswax.
Knots on the back: re-thread and check the thread is not twisting.
Always unpick with a seam ripper rather than yanking. No stitch needs to be perfect to hold.

Keep practicing on scrap until the rhythm feels even. For step-by-step photos of every stitch, visit [Sewing.com](https://www.sewing.com).

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