

Hand Sewing: The Basic Stitches



Follow along with me to learn some basic hand stitches! Practice these stitches on your own, or make a small hand stitching sampler with the instructions below.

Materials:

Size 10 Sharp sewing needle
All-purpose sewing thread
100% cotton muslin fabric
Iron and ironing board
Fabric shears
Thread snips
Stitch Sampler template ([download here](#))
12" ruler or straight edge
Pencil or fabric marker

How to make a sampler:

Use the Stitch Sampler template with a piece of cotton muslin 8 1/2" x 11". Grab a 12" ruler or straight edge and a pencil or fabric marker.



Place the 8 1/2" x 11" piece of muslin over the template; use the ruler and marking tool to trace lines #1, #2, and #3 onto the fabric as stitching guides.



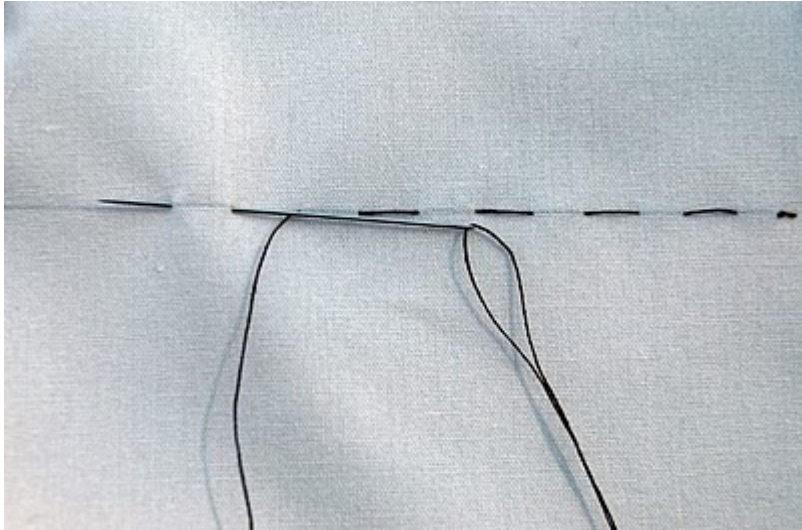
Follow along with the template and stitch the samples as numbered below: stitch #1 goes on the line traced from the template for #1, stitch #2 goes on the line indicated for #2, and so on. After you have completed stitch #4, press each end of the fabric over following the instructions on the template to get ready for the hem stitches. Your finished stitch template will look similar to this (I'm holding it sideways):



The Basic Stitches:

1. Basting stitch

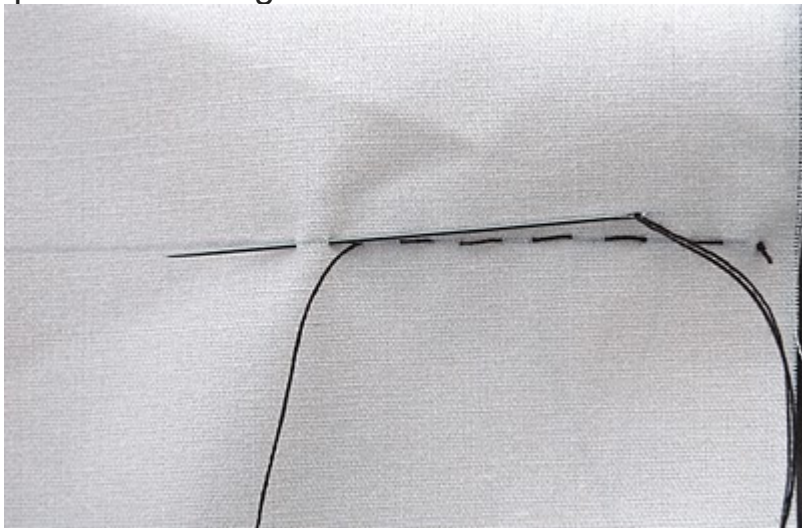
The basting stitch is usually sewn with a single thread, and is used to hold pieces of fabric together temporarily until final sewing by hand or machine. Basting stitches can also be used to trace pattern markings onto fabric with thread, such as marking pocket placement or a hemline.



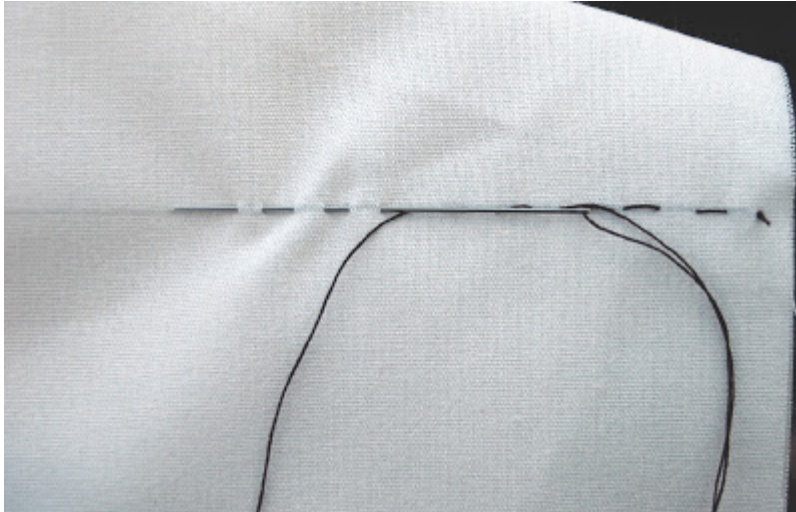
Tie a knot in the thread end, and take the needle in and out of the fabric to create stitches up to 3/8" apart from each other. The trick is not to leave the thread too loose or pull the thread too tight as you are sewing, the fabric should not buckle or pucker, but should lay flat. Secure the thread at the end of the row of stitches.

2. Running stitch

The running stitch is a small stitch, usually sewn with a single thread for securing two pieces of fabric together in a plain seam. You can use the running stitch sewn with double thread knotted securely at the end to pull fabric into gathers.



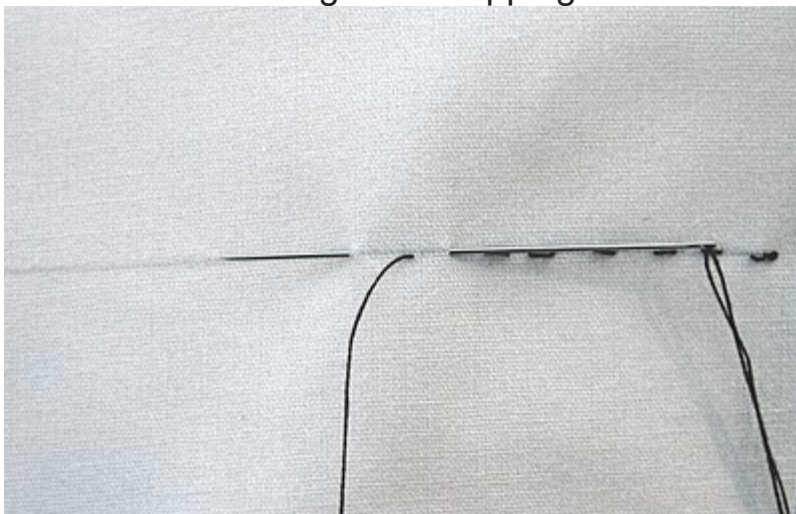
Take several running stitches with your needle at once before pulling the thread through to make stitching go faster!



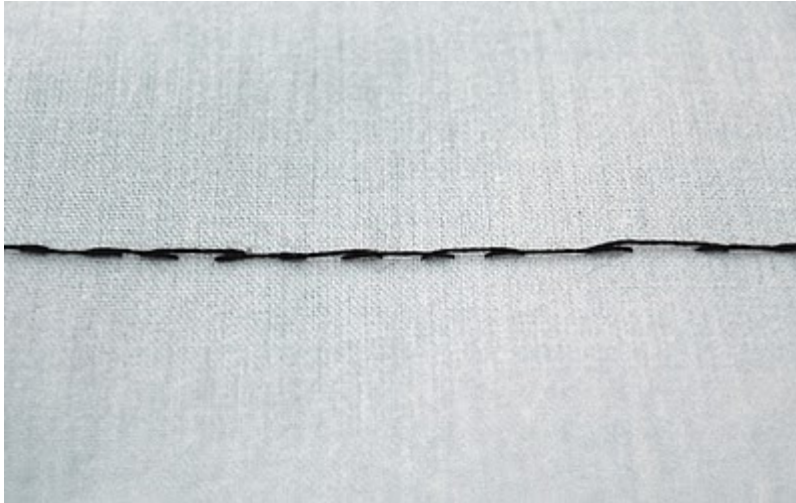
The fabric should not buckle or pucker, but should lay flat. Secure the thread at the end of the row of stitches.

3. **Back stitch**

The back stitch is usually sewn with a single thread and creates a strong, secure seam. The front of the stitch should lie in a neat row, and the back will look like longer overlapping stitches.



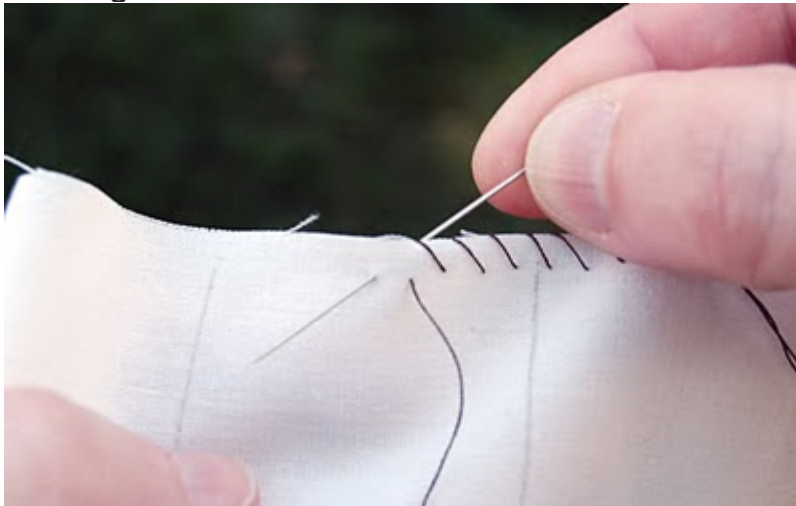
The back of the Back Stitch, showing overlapping of the stitches.



Use a single thread knotted at the end. Begin by taking one stitch in and out of the fabric. Set the needle back into the fabric one small stitch BEHIND where the needle came out for the last stitch, and bring the needle out one stitch AHEAD of the last stitch. The stitching should appear even, and should not pull or pucker the fabric but should lay flat. Secure the thread at the end of the row of stitches.

4. **Overcast stitch**

The overcast stitch uses a single layer of thread and can be used to finish the raw edges of a seam.



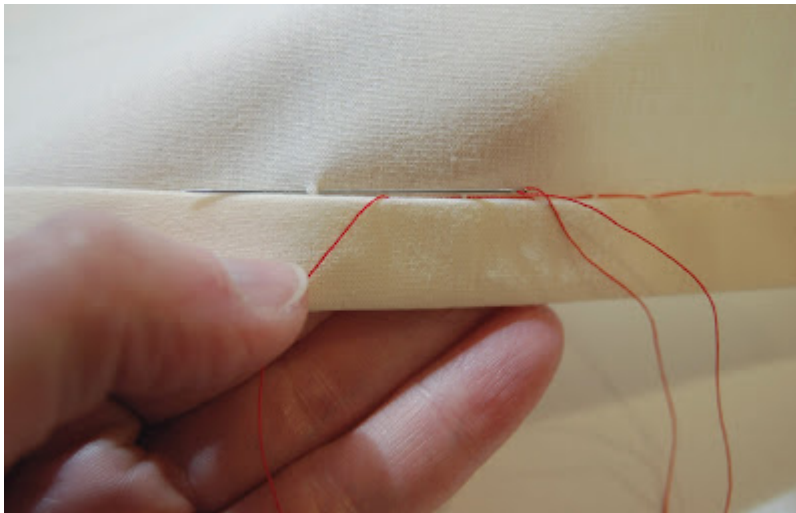
Use a single thread knotted at the end. Begin stitching from the back of the fabric, bringing the needle through to the front, and then over the fabric to stitch through the back to the front again. Don't pull the stitches too tight, the stitching should appear even and should lay flat. Secure the thread at the end of the row of stitches.

The Hem Stitches

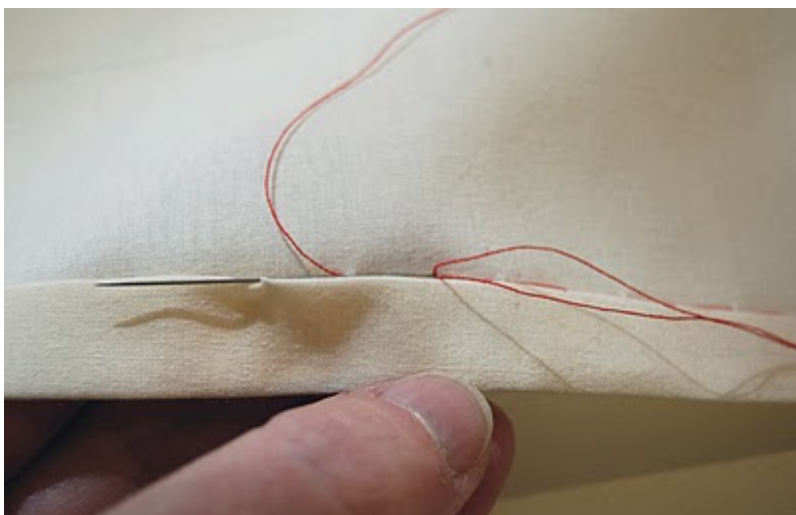
A quick word about hemming stitches. I learned to sew these stitches as the others, from right to left. Some people prefer to sew hem stitches in the opposite direction (from left to right instead of right to left) so that the threads “cross over” each other. I've found Sewing Instructors and reference books showing either way. So, both ways will work, it's all a matter of preference!

5. Hem stitch

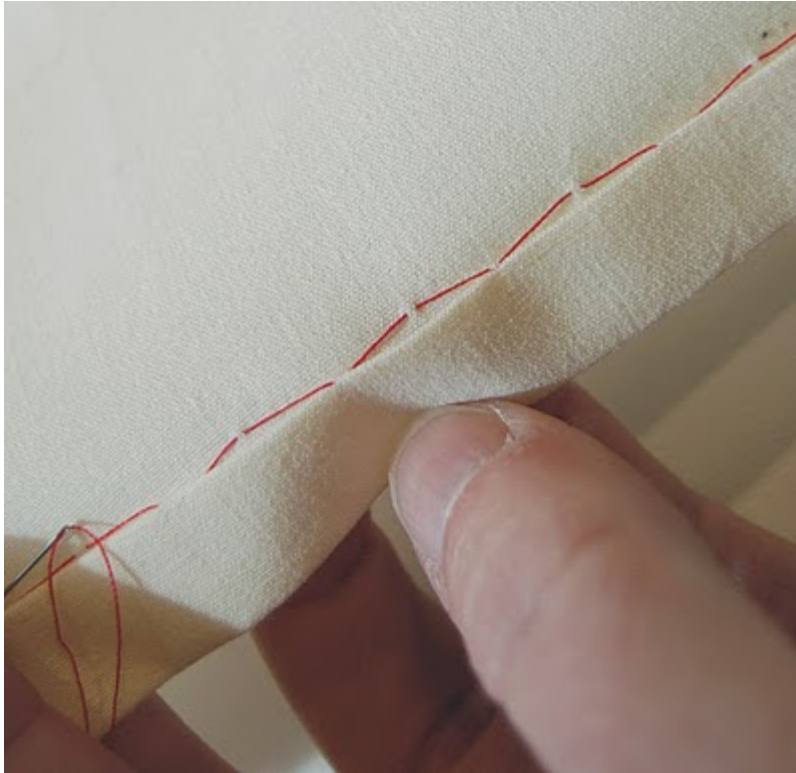
The hem stitch uses a single layer of thread and is a quick and easy way to stitch a hem.



Use a single thread knotted at the end. Begin stitching up through the folded fabric of the hem. Take the next stitch to the left, picking up a few threads of the main fabric.



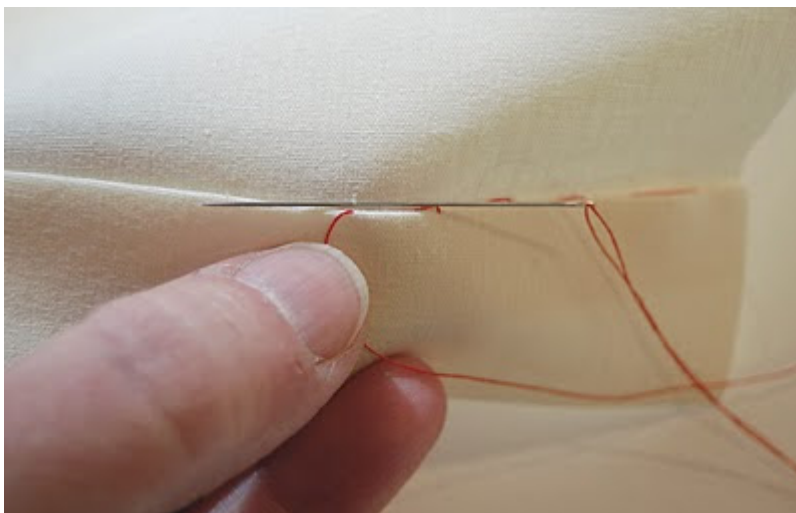
Again, take a stitch to the left through a few threads of the folded hem, and repeat. The hem should lie flat.



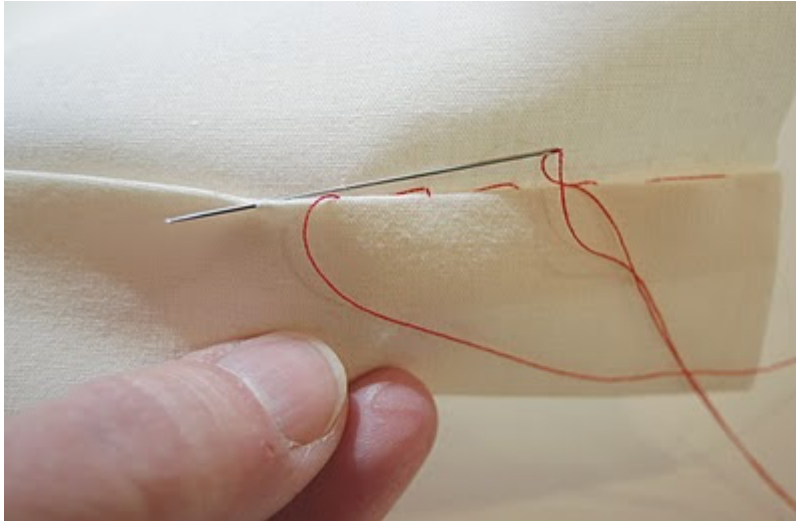
Secure the thread at the end of the row of stitches.

6. **Blind hem stitch**

Similar to the hem stitch but sewn in a way that the stitch is nearly invisible.



Use a single thread knotted at the end. Begin stitching up through the folded fabric of the hem. Take the next stitch to the left, picking up *only one or two threads* of the main fabric. Then move the needle to the left and below through the folded hem, and repeat.



Be careful not to pull the stitches too tight, the hem should lie nice and flat. Secure the thread at the end of the row of stitches.



Even though the stitches are made with red thread, it is still very hard to see the stitches from the other side of the fabric.

Once you have a handle on these few basic stitches, you can tackle any simple sewing project! Here are a few ideas:

Sew an apron - check out this great list of [free apron patterns](#) from TipNut.com!

Stitch up a pillowcase - go get a [free pattern](#) from AllPeopleQuilt.com!

Go visit WeAllSew.com's [free pattern page](#) and find something to

sew!

And please let me know if you have any great hand sewing tips or tricks to share!