

Sewing With Sheers

Editor: Jeanie Nance

Wednesday, 28 September 2011 9:00



Ah, sheer fabrics. There's nothing like them for that light, airy look when you want simplicity with elegance. But many sewers avoid using them because you can't sew with them quite as easily as you can regular fabric. We have small series of beautiful Hostess Aprons, all of which have sheer fabric accents. Our first apron, [Cocktails At Eight](#) features rich taffeta and frothy organza. We also have a [Halloween Hostess Apron](#) that is ghoulishly gauzy. And, the third in the trio is [a beautiful brunch apron](#) in full organza with waistband and pocket fabric accents. Yes, it takes some care and patience, but there's really no reason to fear the sheer. You just need to follow some simple precautions and basic rules to get sheers to do what you want them to. Then you'll be able open up new creative possibilities with these wonderful fabrics.



The trouble with sheers

'Sheer' just means these are fabrics you can see through. For example: voile, batiste, georgette, organza, organdy, and chiffon.



Some of these are slippery while others are more coarse. But they're all rather unforgiving of stitching mistakes.

Because they're sheer, all your interior work will show. And unfortunately, they're too delicate for you to use a seam ripper.

The overall rule for sheers is "**Test it first on a scrap!**" From ironing to cutting to stitching - make sure it's going to work before you try it on your final project.

Choosing a project

Pick a project with a simple design. First, because you won't be able to hide your stitching. And second, because sheers look best when they're highlighting a basic shape.

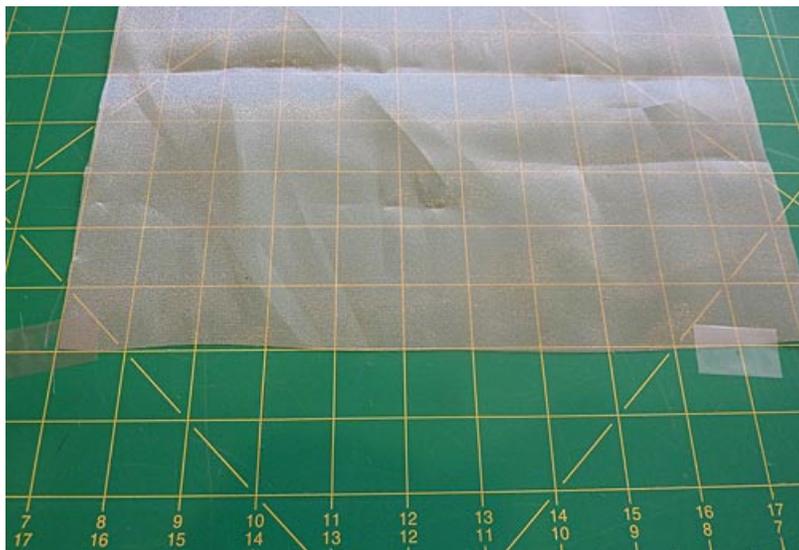
Prewash

You only need to do this if the item you're making is going to be washed at some point. Sheer fabric can shrink or shift when washed, pulling or puckering the seams.

Laying out for measuring

Sheer fabrics are wonderful because of the way they move. But this means they also like to slip around while you're measuring and cutting them. (Like trying to give a squirmy kid a haircut.)

So, once you've laid your fabric out, you need to hold the edges down somehow. You can use pushpins, tape or sewing weights, depending on which kind of cutting surface you're using. (BTW, pushpins, tape and weights do NOT work for kids' haircuts.)



One method that works well while measuring is to pin your sheer fabric to a sheet. Use fine point pins and be careful not to pull the fabric off grain.

Marking

You don't want your marking method to damage your fabric and end up as a permanent part of your project. So test it on a scrap first. A marking pencil, pen, or chalk should work.

Cutting

It's best to cut sheers as a single layer. After you've laid your fabric on a cutting board, with weights, pushpins or tape around the edges, a sharp rotary cutter works best to get a smooth, straight cut. You can also use serrated scissors. Both of these will keep your fabric from moving while you cut.

The proper sewing machine needle

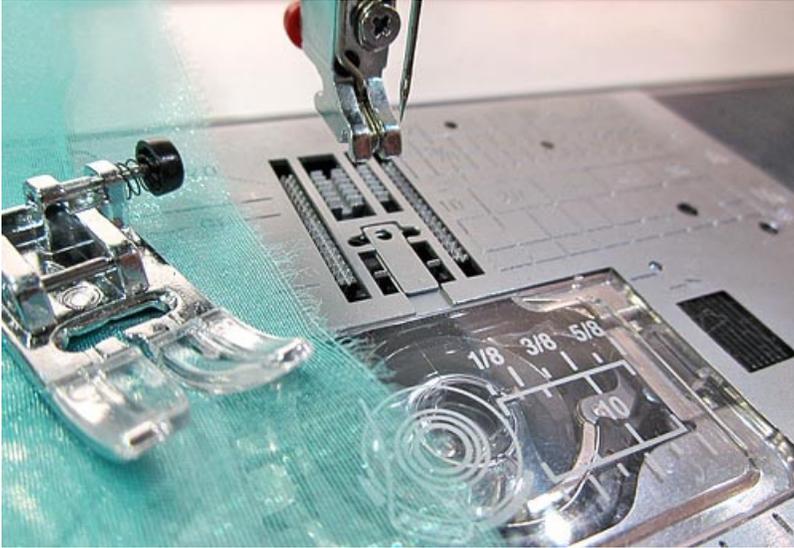
Use a size 8 to 11 (60-75) universal needle in your machine. Make sure the needle is new. For more information about picking

out the right needle for each project, check out [our tutorial on the topic](#).

Machine Settings

Choose a straight stitch and best tension setting. You may need to loosen it slightly.

If you have a straight stitch needle plate, or a machine that can convert to a straight stitch needle hole, you should use it. The smaller hole keeps the fabric flat and stable, and less likely to be sucked down into the bobbin. I took off the foot on my Janome Horizon 7700QCP so you could see how its Automatic Plate Converter closes down to create the straight stitch hole.



As you do your test stitching, if you notice the feed dogs are damaging your fabric or it's just not feeding properly, you can use a sheet of tear-away stabilizer under the seam (which you'll then easily tear away when done... that's why it has that name!).

Sewing

Don't ever backstitch on sheers. This can cause your thread to jam. Instead, try a lockstitch if your machine has one or leave your thread tails long and hand knot the ends. Otherwise, sew your seams like you normally would.

A simple trick for pretty sheer seams

As we mentioned above, our current Hostess Apron series is all about sheer, and each features beautiful see through sashes. Here's our trick for a pretty sash seam:

You sash ties are each made up of two pieces cut with one angled end.

Using a 1/2" seam allowance, stitch the two pieces right sides together along both long sides and across the angled end, pivoting at the corners. Leave the straight cut end open.



Press the seams open.

Turn each sewn tie right side out and using a long, blunt-end tool, such as a chopstick or knitting needle, push out the corners so they are nice and sharp. Press the ties flat.

Topstitch $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge along both sides and across the angled end. Organza tends to want to roll, so the topstitching will keep the edge of the ties looking nice.



Turn each tie wrong side out and trim the seam allowance close to the topstitching seam.



Run a line of Fray Check or a similar seam sealant along all the cut edges. Because organza is so sheer, trimming back the seam allowance like this gives you a nice clean look from the front.

Turn each tie right side out again and press again. Super sweet sash!



Sewing Tips & Tricks

This project and patterns (if any) may be downloaded for personal use only. No electronic or printed reproduction permitted without the prior written consent of Sew4Home LLC.

Copyright 2009-2020 Sew4Home LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <https://sew4home.com/tips-resources/sewing-tips-tricks/sewing-sheers>