How to Make a Narrow Hem with a Neat Corner

Finishing the corners when you're making a narrow hem can be a challenge. Making a perfect 90° fold at each corner is one option, and often will work just fine. However, it can be tough to keep your raw edges tucked in, and bulky or slippery fabrics can cause you fits. Instead, our go-to finish option is the folded diagonal point corner: easy, tidy, and pretty from both sides.
Below are the steps a ¼” double-turn hem. This sample is a simple napkin project, but you can use the technique anytime you need a narrow hemmed corner. We love it for single-layer apron skirt corners, placemats, even lightweight blankets.

Along all edges, fold back the raw edge ¼” and press well. We’re using the Clover Hot Hemmer, which is always handy for pressing small hems.

Fold back another ¼” all around, concealing the raw edge between the folds. Press well. For both folds, you need to press firmly enough to set visible crease lines.
Unfold both ¼” turns so your fabric lays flat, wrong side up. You should be able to see the crease lines of both turns.

Fold in the corner at a 45˚ angle so the point of the corner lines up with the intersection of the inner set of crease lines. Press.
Fold in the corner a second time, at \( \frac{1}{4} \)" and again at a 45° angle. The outer edges of this second fold should line up with your first set of crease lines. Press.

Cotton fabrics usually stay in place with just pressing, but you can pin the corner point folds for extra security or when working with slippery or bulky fabrics.
Re-fold the sides along the first set of ¼” crease lines and press well.

Refold along your second set of ¼” crease lines and press. If you’ve been careful with your measurements and pressing, this second re-fold will create a diagonal line where your two finished edged meet, making a neat split corner.
Repeat at each corner and pin in place all around.

Edgestitch all around, staying close to the inner fold and making sure your stitching crosses over the split corner to help the point stays closed. It can help to use a Quarter Inch Seam foot to keep a precise seam allowance all around.
Make a sharp pivot at each corner, which means you will stitch into the exact corner, stop with your needle in the down position, raise the presser foot and turn the fabric 90° so it is positioned correctly to stitch the next side.

You can also back-tack at each corner point for extra security. This is a good practice for those slippery and bulky fabrics we keep mentioning.
Creating a ½” hems with a clipped point

A standard ½” hem is created in exactly the same manner, but starts with two ½” folds rather than the ¼” folds shown above. With this wider hem, we often suggest cutting off the point of the first corner fold to reduce bulk. To do this, fold in the point of the corner as above and press.

Unfold and cut off the point, trimming right along the crease line.
Fold in again at a 45° angle – just as you did above, you simply have a cut edge rather than a folded edge.

Fold in the sides along the two original ½” crease lines to create the diagonal point.
Edgestitch to finish.

This technique is best for narrow hems. For other situations, a Simple Hem is an excellent option, or a Hem with True Mitered Corners, or for super-duper tiny hems on lightweight fabrics, a Rolled Hem is a sleek finish.

Sewing Tips & Tricks

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