

Three Blind Stitches

Take
a utility
stitch
and
make it
beautiful

BY SUSAN CLEVELAND, KENNETH D. KING & JUDITH NEUKAM

Almost every basic sewing machine has a blind stitch. This humble stitch, used for sewing hems, is intended to be invisible. But here, utility blossoms into embellishment in three unique ways.

First, Susan Cleveland adds a perfect touch to inset piping that looks like a precise hand stitch. Next, Judith Neukam sews a romantic

scalloped edge with pearl cotton. Finally, Kenneth King mimics a hand fell stitch on knife pleats. All three techniques require a heavy thread such as buttonhole twist or fine pearl cotton to distinctly punctuate the stitch. See how three designers use specialty thread and the garden variety blind stitch to create elegant, understated finishing touches.

Adorn an inset piping

By Susan Cleveland

Piping is always a good accent, but add a perfectly spaced stitched rib in a fine contrasting-color thread over the top, and you have a new elegance. This embellishment looks great inserted in the front of a blouse or jacket and as an accent on collars and cuffs.

1 Make fine piping from narrow, delicate cording.

Cut a bias strip from contrasting fabric that's long enough to cover your cord and wide enough to wrap around it with a ½-inch seam allowance on both sides.



Cut a bias strip.



Sew with a cording presser foot.

2 Wrap the bias strip around the cord. Stitch the piping as you typically would, and open the seam. Thread a size 16 machine needle with fine spooled pearl cotton or topstitching thread, straddle the piping with a cording presser foot, and set your stitch length and width so the straight stitches fall fairly close to the cording and the zig crosses over the piping. This stitch adds the rib over the piping for a stunning accent.

3 Insert the piping. Stack the adjoining seam edges on each side of the piping. Use a straight stitch and all-purpose thread to sew the seam. Open and press the seam to see the handsome results.



Use a straight stitch to insert the piping.

Photos: Sloan Howard

Susan Cleveland (PiecesBeWithYou.com) teaches and inspires fine quilt making.

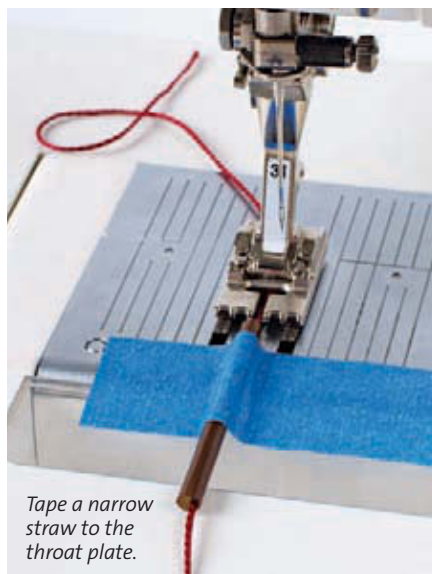
Scallop with pearl cotton

By Judith Neukam

All garments have edges. They offer a perfect opportunity to embellish, especially when they're close to the face, such as down the center front, around collars and across breast pockets. Sew this delicate scalloped edge with contrasting or matching thread and a pearl cotton that matches your thread. This embellishment is added to a finished edge—typically either folded or faced, but before the garment is assembled.

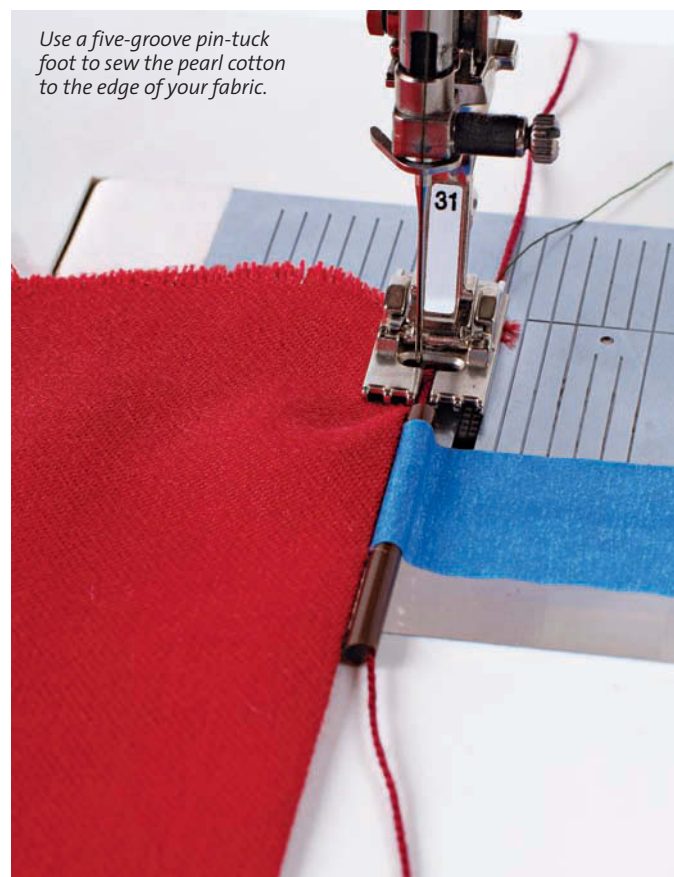
1 Set up your machine.

Cut a narrow straw (a coffee stirrer with a hole down the middle works perfectly) about 2 inches long. You will tape it to your sewing machine after you've set the blind stitch. Set the machine so the zag goes to the right and the straight stitch is as close to the fabric edge as possible. Position the straw to align with the fabric edge. Thread the pearl cotton of your choice through the straw.



Tape a narrow straw to the throat plate.

3 The pearl cotton feeds as you sew. Settle the fabric under a five-groove pin-tuck foot, pull the pearl-cotton tail under the foot and parallel to the fabric edge, and start stitching. With the straight stitches on the fabric edge, the zag swings out to catch the pearl cotton, which feeds easily through the straw as you stitch. After sewing, adjust the scallop depth by hand as needed.



Use a five-groove pin-tuck foot to sew the pearl cotton to the edge of your fabric.

2 Experiment first. Always make a trial run or two, as shown below, to fine-tune your settings. The length of the stitch determines the length of the scallop the pearl cotton makes. The stitch width needs to be just wide enough to catch the pearl cotton. Test the tension setting to see how it pulls up the pearl cotton.



Experiment with your settings to alter the size and shape of the scallops.

Judith Neukam is senior technical editor.

Create felled tucks

By Kenneth D. King

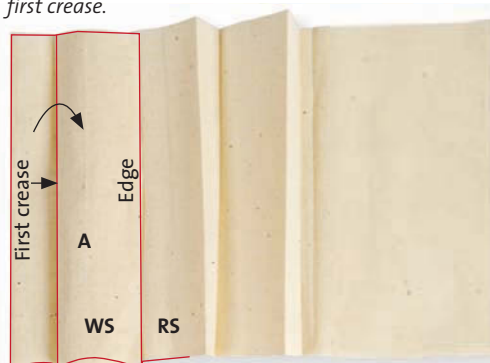
This technique mimics the hand fell stitch. It looks like small hand stitches sewn perpendicular to the folded knife-pleat edges. Use this embellishment on any tucks or pleats down the front of a blouse or around a skirt yoke.

1 Pleat your fabric.

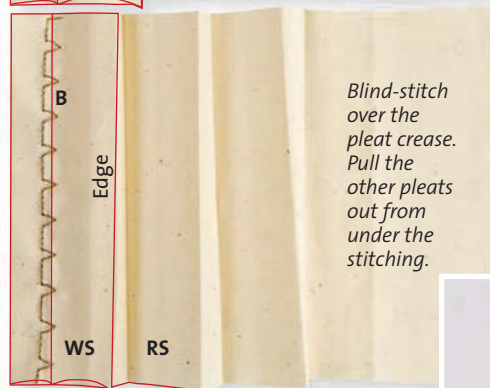
Decide how deep you want your pleats. Then fold, and press crisp edges.



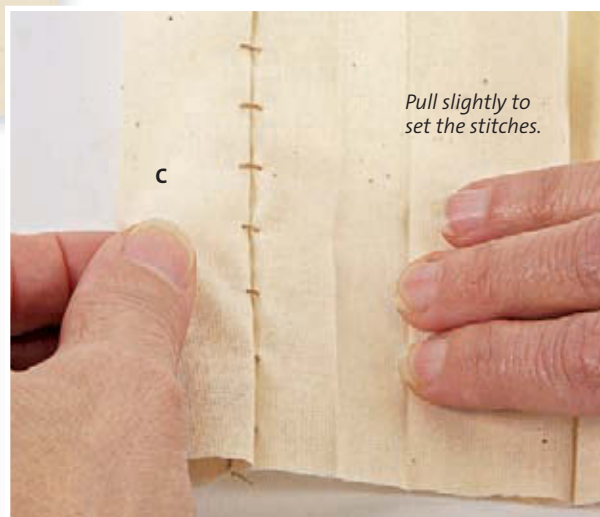
Turn the left fabric edge over the pleats to the right, exposing the wrong side of the first crease.



2 Fold the left fabric edge over the pleats to the right. This reveals the back side of the first pleat as shown at top left (A). With a regular presser foot and a blind-hem stitch, sew with the zag over the pleat fold 1mm (B), as shown below left. I set the width to 5.0mm and the stitch length to 2.0mm, but it can vary according to taste.



3 Close the pleat. Turn the fabric back towards the left (C). Give a slight pull to set the stitches. Repeat the process with each pleat.



Use a fine pearl cotton (shown above) or a silk topstitching thread for this technique.

Kenneth D. King is a contributing editor.