

## **Hand Sewing**

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### **Choosing materials**

#### ***Fabric***

If you are going to put the time into hand sewing an article, you may as well start out with good, period-correct materials. Linens, wools and silks are usually best, but cottons can be appropriate for some times and places.

#### ***Thread and Needles***

If you can, work with linen or silk threads. They are both strong and relatively readily available, if not as simple to find as poly-cotton. For silk, check the Gutterman thread display at your local fabric store. If you are new to hand sewing, choose a needle that is thin and sharp and a length to match your personal preference. If you are more experienced, working with a reproduction needle (bone, metal, thorn, or wood) can be a fun challenge. Running the thread over a cake of beeswax will make the thread smoother, stronger, and less apt to tangles. However, do not wax the thread if you will dye the piece after sewing.

### **Stitches**

***Running Stitch***- the needle pulls the thread back and forth through the fabric in a straight line.

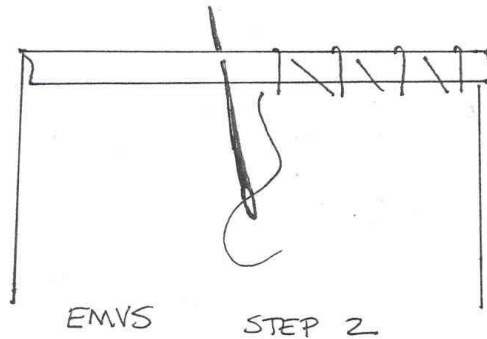
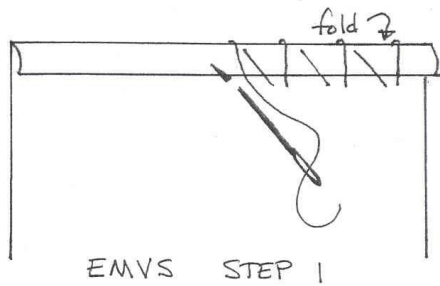
***Whip Stitch*** - you put the needle through the fabric and pull it out the back, always pushing the needle through from the same side, making the thread goes over the edge of the fabric in a spiral, like the wire on a spiral notebook.

***French Seam*** - Two rows of running stitches – first with the wrong sides together, then with the right sides together, so that the cut edges are all concealed in the finished seam

***Hem Stitch*** – something like the whip stitch, but joining a folded edge of the fabric to the main body of the fabric with tiny near-invisible stitches.

***Herringbone Stitch, Interlocked Loop Stitch, other Decorative Stitches*** – there are many stitches that are used as seam decorations or other embellishments but that are best learned from looking at diagrams and practicing. See some of the referenced books, web pages, or YouTube for details on those stitches.

***Eithni's Magic Veil Stitch*** - looks just like a normal rolled hem when finished. Fold over the edge of the fabric just a little bit. Take a small stitch on the fold. Then right below your first stitch, take another tiny stitch. Next move over a tiny bit (1/4 inch maximum) and repeat. Your stitches should look like a row of Z's with tiny stitches and lots of thread showing. Stop after you have sewn about six stitches. Carefully pull on the thread, and the hem will roll itself, just like magic! The finished hem will only show the tiny little stitches. The long stitches all get rolled into the middle of the seam!



**Sources for more information:**

Archeological Sewing and Surviving Garments (Heather Rose Jones) – stitches

<http://www.heatherrosejones.com/archaeologicalsewing/index.html>

<http://www.heatherrosejones.com/survivinggarments/index.html>

The Elizabethan Costume Page (Drea Leed) – stitches and construction methods

<http://www.elizabethancostume.net/#construction>

Sewing Stitches Used in Medieval Clothing (J. L. Carlson) – stitches on extant garments

<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/cloth/stitches.htm>

Wm. Booth, Draper – linen thread and other supplies <http://www.wmboothdraper.com/>

Coatsworth, Elizabeth; Gale Owen-Crocker. Medieval Textiles of the British isles

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