

Seam Finishes

Unit: Science of Textiles and Manufacturing

Problem Area: Textile Construction Techniques

Lesson: Seam Finishes

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Demonstrate basic seam construction techniques.**
- 2 Construct common seam finishes.**

- **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

“Seam Finishes,” *sewing.org*. Accessed Aug. 4, 2012.

http://www.sewing.org/files/guidelines/11_115_seam_finishes.pdf.

“Simple Seaming Techniques,” *sewing.org*. Accessed Aug. 4, 2012.

http://www.sewing.org/files/guidelines/11_110_simple_seaming_techniques.pdf.

Soto, Anne Marie. *Simplicity’s Simply the Best Sewing Book*. Perennial, 2001.

Weber, Jeanette. *Clothing Fashion, Fabrics, & Construction*, 4th ed. Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2008.



■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- backstitching
- basic seam
- clean finish
- flat-felled seam
- French seam
- pinked seam finish
- pinking shears
- seam allowance
- seam finish
- seamline
- topstitching
- trim
- zigzag seam finish

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

When introducing seams and seam finishes, wear an unlined jacket or other garment that has finished seams on one side and unfinished seams on the other. Hopefully the unfinished seam has frayed from washing and wearing so you can demonstrate the positive effects of finishing a seam. Open the discussion about seams and their finishes with this demonstration. Place samples of a variety of seam finishes (e.g., pinked, zigzag, and flat-felled) on the bulletin board. Have students match the seams on the garments they are wearing to those on the bulletin board. This is a quick way to identify and compare seam finishes.

CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Demonstrate basic seam construction techniques.

Anticipated Problem: What are the steps to construct a basic seam?

I. Basic seam construction steps

- A. A **basic seam** is a line formed by stitching two or more layers of fabric together. The line of stitching that joins two or more layers of fabric together is often called the **seamline**. The **seam allowance** is the distance between the seamline and the cut edge of fabric. A standard seam allowance is $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch wide. However, the pattern direction sheet and/or the individual tissue pattern piece should be consulted to determine the correct seam allowance for each seam of the garment. When constructing a seam for a knit fabric, it is a rule of thumb to stretch the fabric slightly as the seam is sewn. From the needle to the outside edge of the presser foot is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, which helps in estimating the seam allowance. Share the steps (with your students) for constructing a basic seam.
1. Place the right sides of fabric together, making the cut edges even and matching any notches or symbols.
 2. Start stitching at the cut side of the seam line, and follow the pattern directions for seam width.
 3. Back stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to anchor the stitching at the beginning of the seam. **Back-stitching** is inserting a few “reverse stitches” (causing the sewing machine to go backwards) to create a type of knot, or lock, to prevent the stitching from pulling out.
 4. Complete the seam by stitching to the end of the piece and by backstitching to secure it.
 5. Press the completed seam open and flat on the wrong side of the fabric.
- B. A **seam finish** is an edge applied to the seam’s raw edges to prevent fraying and to maintain the integrity and stability of the seam through normal wear and laundering. Seam finishes make the garment neat and clean. In addition, seam finishes add longevity to the garment. The type of seam finish chosen depends on the fabric, garment type, strength required, whether or not the garment will be lined, and the general visual appearance desired. Seam finishes give a garment a professional appearance.

Teaching Strategy: Use a Flip camera connected to your computer to demonstrate the steps to make a basic seam. Have each student create a sample of a basic seam as part of a “Sample Book Project” prepared in class. Use VM–A to illustrate parts of the basic seam.

Objective 2: Construct common seam finishes.

Anticipated Problem: What are common seam finishes?

II. Common seam finishes

- A. A **flat-felled seam** is a strong seam produced by overlapping one seam allowance with the other and then topstitching onto the outside or top of a garment with two parallel rows of stitches. **Topstitching** is a row of stitching close to the seam or edge of a garment on the outside or top; it is used to add strength and detailing. Flat-felled seams are frequently used on sportswear, reversible garments, and blue jeans. Share (with your students) the steps to produce a flat-felled seam.
1. With wrong sides (or right sides, depending on where you want the fell to be) of the fabric together, stitch a basic seam. Press the seam open. Then press the seam to one side.
 2. **Trim** (cut away some of the seam allowance, according to the directions given in the pattern, to eliminate bulk) the under seam allowance to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.
 3. Turn under the raw edge of the top seam allowance, and pin or baste it into place over the trimmed edge of the other seam allowance.
 4. With the seam allowance lying flat, topstitch close to the fold stitching through all layers of the fabric.
- B. A **French seam** is a completely enclosed seam allowance produced by sewing the seam first on the right side of the fabric and then on the wrong side. It is usually used for lightweight and sheer fabrics. Share the steps to produce a French seam:
1. With the wrong sides of the fabric together, stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ inch from the seamline. Press the seam allowances to one side.
 2. Trim the seam allowances to a scant $\frac{1}{8}$ inch.
 3. Turn right sides together. Fold and press on the stitching line.
 4. Finally, stitch on the seamline to enclose the raw edges.
- C. A **clean finish** is a seam turned under $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the raw edge of the fabric and then stitched close to the folded edge. It is a neat finish for the seam allowance. Also, it is great for unlined garments, as long as the fabric is light to medium weight. In addition, it is a good choice for fabrics that tend to ravel easily. Share the steps to produce a clean finish:
1. Stitch a basic seam.
 2. Press the seam allowance open and flat.
 3. Turn under the raw edge of each seam allowance edge at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Turn under $\frac{1}{4}$ inch if the fabric tends to ravel.
 4. Stitch close to the folded edge on each side of the seam allowance using a straight stitch.
- D. A **zigzag seam finish** (overedge) is a series of short, sharply angled stitches applied close to the raw edge of the seam allowance as a seam finish to prevent

fraying and raveling. The zigzag stitch is usually applied to the seam allowance edges with a sewing machine and is suitable for most fabrics. It is important to use a smaller width stitch on lightweight fabrics and a larger width stitch for heavyweight fabrics. Share the steps to produce a zigzag finish:

1. Set the sewing machine to a medium-width zigzag stitch and test the stitch on a scrap piece of the fabric to get the correct width for the fabric used. Then reset the stitch width based on the test.
 2. Apply the zigzag stitch to the edges of the seam allowance, only pushing the rest of the fabric to the side. Sew the stitch to the right side of the raw edges and ensure that the stitch barely travels off the edge of the seam allowance. This encloses fabric threads that could fray or ravel.
- E. A **pinked seam finish** is a finish produced with special shears. It is a quick method for finishing a seam allowance but should only be used on fabric that does not ravel easily. **Pinking shears** (scissors with a sharp saw tooth edge) are used to create a pinked seam allowance. Share the steps to produce a pinked seam finish:
1. Sew a basic seam, and press it open and flat.
 2. Working with one side of the seam allowance at a time, straight stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the raw edge of the seam allowance.
 3. Then trim close to the stitching on each side with pinking shears to create a zigzag pattern.
- F. Other seam finishes
1. Bound
 2. Piped
 3. Welt
 4. Corded
 5. Slot
 6. Mock French
 7. Double- and triple-stitched
 8. Lapped

Teaching Strategy: Using a Flip camera connected to your computer to demonstrate the steps for each of the seam finishes. Then have students create a sample of each common seam finish as part of a “Sample Book Project” prepared in class. Use VM–B through VM–E to illustrate four common seam finishes.

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may be used in the Review/Summary.

- **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.
- **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: Matching

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. e
5. f
6. d

Part Two: Multiple Choice

1. b
2. c
3. d
4. c
5. b
6. a

Part Three: True/False

1. F
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. T

Seam Finishes

► Part One: Matching

Instructions: Match the term with the correct definition.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| a. topstitching | d. zigzag seam finish |
| b. French seam | e. flat-felled seam |
| c. clean finish | f. seam finish |

- _____ 1. A seam turned under $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the raw edge of the fabric and then stitched close to the folded edge
- _____ 2. A row of stitching close to the seam or edge of a garment on the outside or top; used to add strength and detailing
- _____ 3. A completely enclosed seam allowance produced by sewing the seam first on the right side of the fabric and then on the wrong side
- _____ 4. A strong seam produced by overlapping one seam allowance with the other and then topstitching onto the outside or top of the garment with two parallel rows of stitches
- _____ 5. An edge applied to the seam's raw edges to prevent fraying and to maintain the integrity and stability of the seam through normal wear and laundering
- _____ 6. A series of short, sharply angled stitches applied close to the raw edge of the seam allowance as a seam finish to prevent fraying and raveling

► Part Two: Multiple Choice

Instructions: Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. The seam allowance is the distance between the seamline and the _____.
a. stitching line
b. cut edge of fabric
c. pattern
d. salvage
2. Pinking shears have _____ that creates a zigzag type cut as a seam finish.
a. curved edge
b. straight edge
c. a saw tooth edge
d. square edge

3. A seam frequently used on sportswear, reversible garments, and blue jeans is ____.
- a. zigzag
 - b. pinked
 - c. clean
 - d. flat-felled
4. A standard seam allowance is ____.
- a. $\frac{3}{8}$ inch
 - b. $\frac{1}{2}$ inch
 - c. $\frac{5}{8}$ inch
 - d. $\frac{3}{4}$ inch
5. A basic seam is a line of stitching that joins ____ together.
- a. two cuffs
 - b. two or more layers of fabric
 - c. two flat-felled seams
 - d. two zigzag stitches
6. From the needle to the outside edge of the presser foot is approximately ____.
- a. $\frac{1}{4}$ inch
 - b. $\frac{1}{2}$ inch
 - c. $\frac{5}{8}$ inch
 - d. $\frac{1}{8}$ inch

► **Part Three: True/False**

Instructions: Write *T* for true or *F* for false.

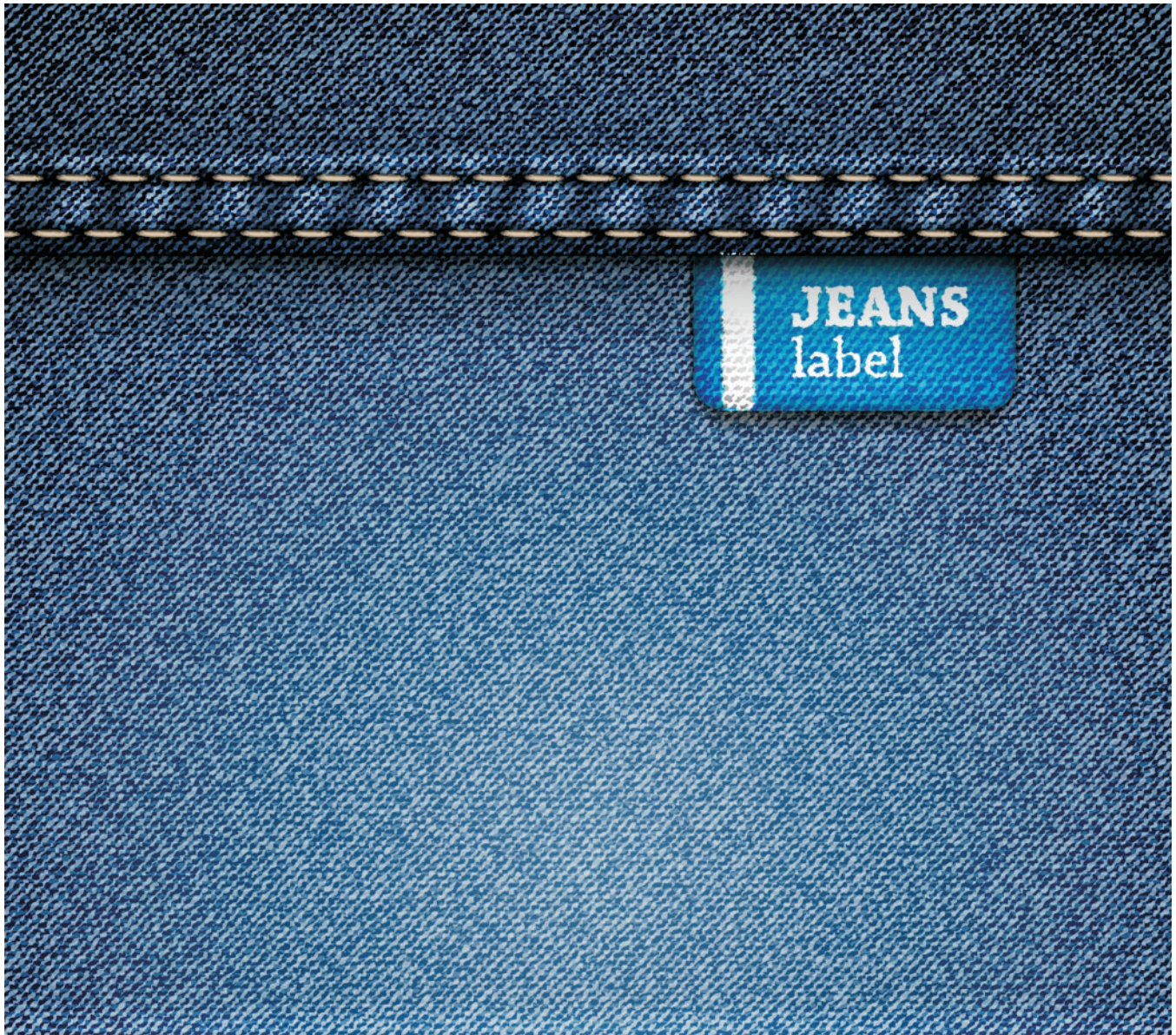
- ____ 1. One seam finish works for most fabric types.
- ____ 2. Backstitching is inserting a few “reverse stitches” to create a type of knot, or lock, to prevent the stitching from pulling out.
- ____ 3. A common seam width is $\frac{5}{8}$ inch.
- ____ 4. The clean finish seam leaves the inside of your garment looking frayed.
- ____ 5. Pinking shears have a straight edge blade.
- ____ 6. Before finishing a seam, you need to create a seam allowance.

THE BASIC SEAM

The basic seam has at least three parts: the raw edge (cut edge), the seamline, and the seam allowance. What would you estimate is the width of the seam allowance in this picture?



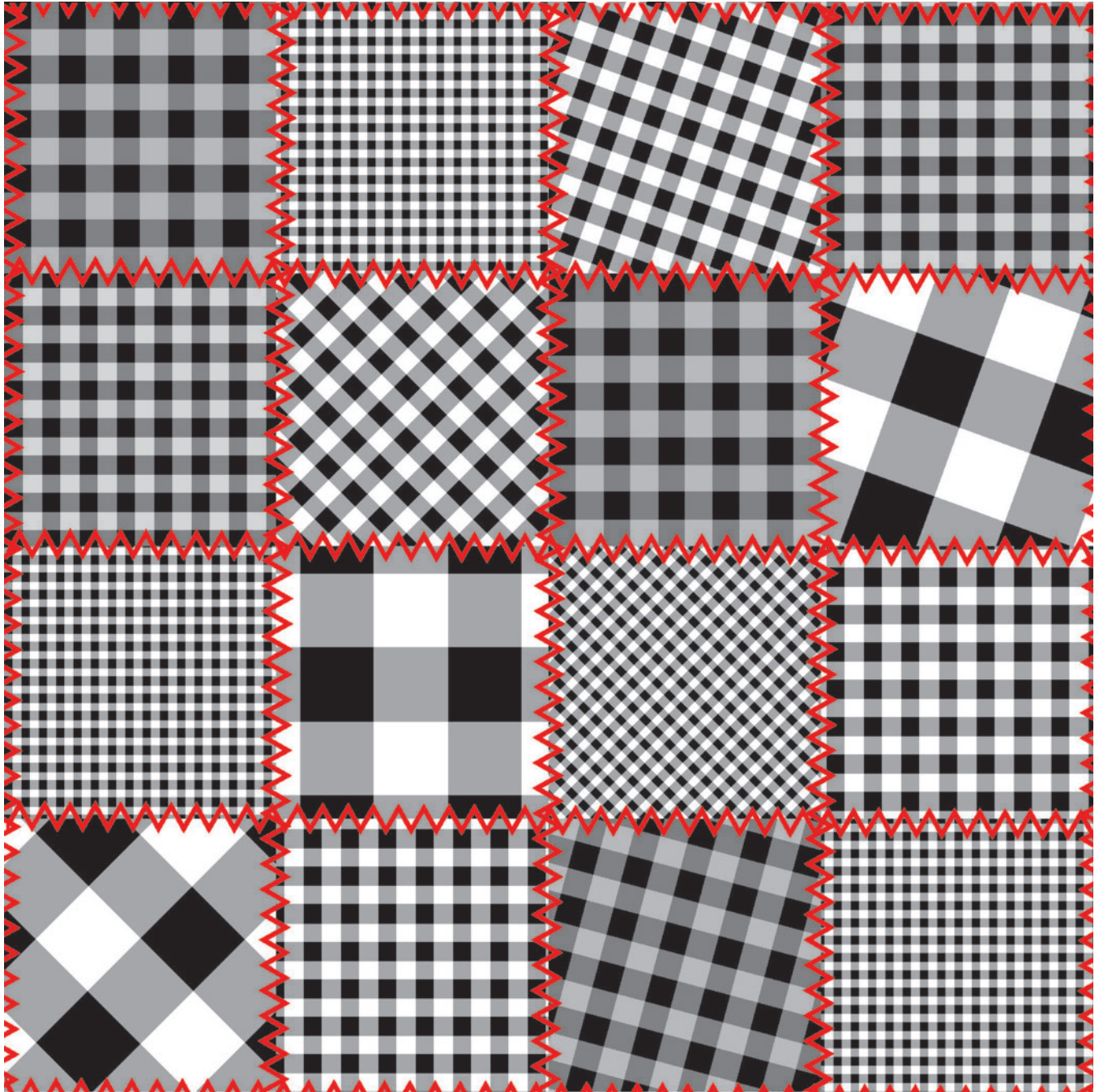
FLAT-FELLED SEAM ON BLUE JEANS



FRENCH SEAM FINISH ON A PILLOWCASE CUFF



ZIGZAG TOPSTICH APPLICATION



PINKED SEAM FINISH APPLIED WITH PINKING SHEARS



Sewing Seams and Seam Finishes

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to sew a standard seam and to create examples of seam finishes.

Objectives

1. Create a sample of a basic seam with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam allowance.
2. Create samples of two seam finishes for your Sample Book.
3. Complete the worksheet.

Materials

- ◆ sewing machine with thread and bobbin
- ◆ six 5-inch × 5-inch squares of woven fabric
- ◆ shears
- ◆ ruler
- ◆ writing utensil
- ◆ stapler

Procedure

1. Complete the lab sheet independently. Collect fabric squares or collect fabric and cut your own fabric squares.
2. Next, complete the following statements about basic seams.
 - a. A standard seam allowance is _____ of an inch wide.
 - b. From the needle to the outside edge of the presser foot is approximately _____ of an inch.



7. Construct a pinked and a zigzag seam finish.

- a. Using two 5-inch × 5-inch squares of fabric, stitch the right sides together with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam. Press the seam open and flat. On one seam allowance, use a pinked finish. On the other seam example, use a zigzag finish. Staple the sample in the space provided.

- b. Explain the steps to construct each of these finishes in the space provided.

(1) Pinked finish:

(2) Zigzag finish:

8. Always press a seam _____ before finishing it.
9. Participate in a class discussion, and share your seam finish techniques.
10. Turn in your completed lab sheet to your instructor.

Sewing Seams and Seam Finishes

1. Each student will work independently to complete this assignment. It can be the first part of a portfolio or a Sample Book for student reference. Additions may be made as sewing skills increase. The Sample Book can be assembled during lab time under your supervision. If possible, provide scrap fabric for the student's 5-inch × 5-inch squares. Woven fabric is the easiest for the students to work on.
2.
 - a. $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch
 - b. $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch
 - c. pattern direction sheet and/or the individual tissue pattern piece
 - d. right
6.
 - a. A seam finish is an edge applied to the seam's raw edges to prevent fraying and to maintain the integrity and stability of the seam through normal wear and laundering.
 - b. Seam finishes make the garment neat and clean and add to the longevity of the garment. The type of seam finish chosen depends on the fabric, garment type, strength required, whether or not the garment will be lined, and the general visual appearance desired. Seam finishes give a garment a professional appearance.
- 7b. (1) Pinked finish:
 - (a) Sew a basic seam, and press it open and flat.
 - (b) Working with one side of the seam allowance at a time, straight stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the raw edge of the seam allowance.
 - (c) Then trim close to the stitching on each side with pinking shears to create a zigzag pattern.
- (2) Zigzag finish:
 - (a) Set the sewing machine to the desired width zigzag stitch, and test the stitch on a scrap piece of the fabric to get the correct width for the fabric used. Then reset the stitch width based on the test.
 - (b) Apply the zigzag stitch to the edges of the seam allowance, pushing the rest of the fabric to the side. Sew the stitch to the right side of the raw edges, and ensure that the stitch barely travels off the edge of the seam allowance. This encloses fabric threads that could fray or ravel.
8. open and flat