

A front zipper is a perfect place to apply this hidden technique. Vogue 1313 was adapted by omitting all topstitching and adding a button-tab closure at the neckline.

Fabric: wool crepe, EmmaOneSock.com.



An Unexposed Zipper

This couture technique makes a regular zipper appear stitchless

BY CLAIRE SHAEFFER

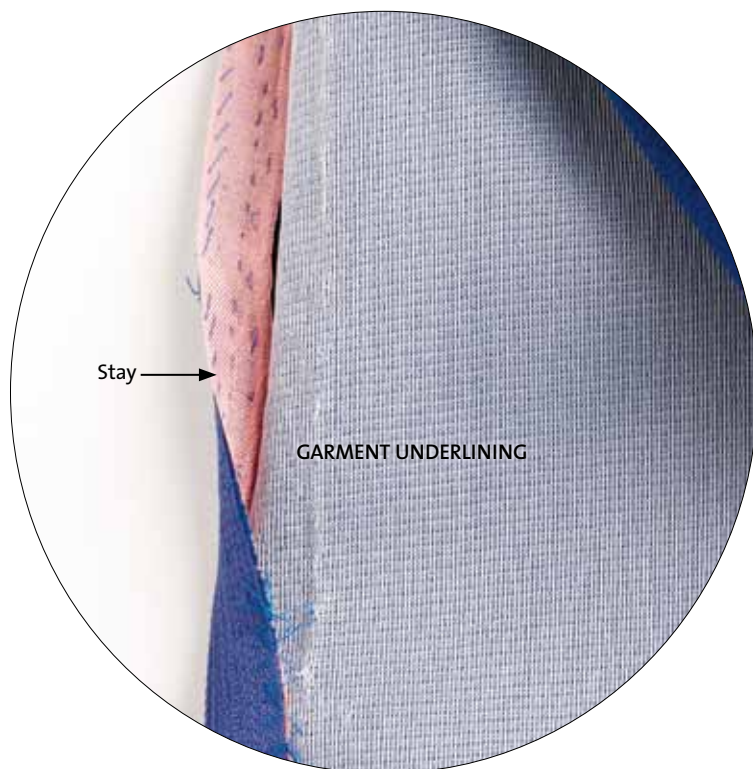
Hand sewing a standard zipper in such a way that it becomes invisible was a common practice in the 1960s. It is a variation of the slot (centered) zipper, but you are more likely to equate the results with the invisible zippers so popular today. Although it has no stitches on the outside to secure it, you can depend on this method to install a reliable closure wherever a zipper is needed.

To use this technique, the garment requires an underlining or backing. The zipper itself is sewn to the seam allowances, and the seam allowances are then anchored to the backing. I'll show you how this is accomplished on the following pages.

Claire Shaeffer shares her extensive sewing knowledge in workshops, articles, books, and DVDs, even while she explores the world's wonders on her many travels.

web extra

Look inside a Dior dress from 1966 for these details and more at ThreadsMagazine.com.

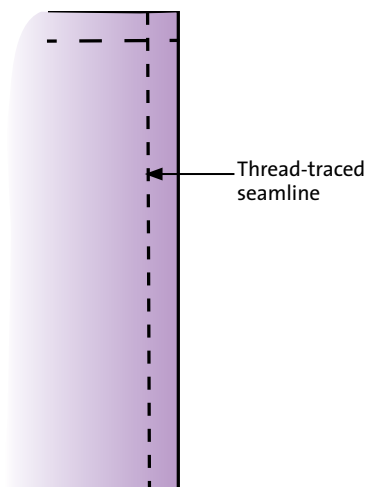


The stitches hide on the stay between the zipper and the dress.

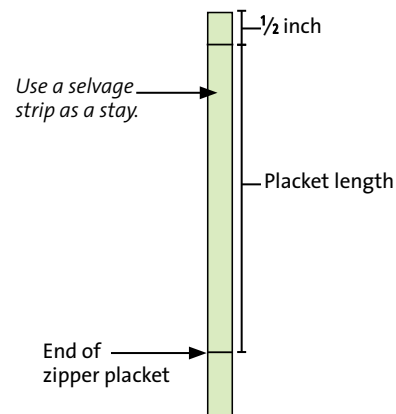
Prepare the seam

The garment pieces on both sides of the zipper are first underlined or backed with a fabric layer.

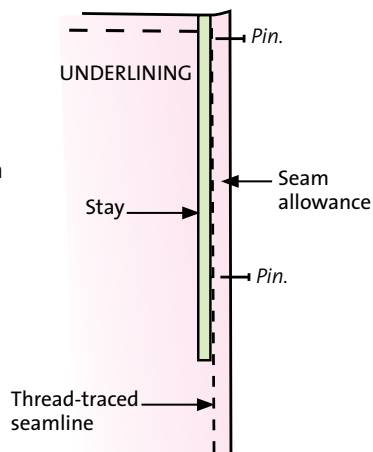
- 1 Thread-trace the seamlines along the opening.** The thread tracings mark eventual foldlines at the zipper's edge.



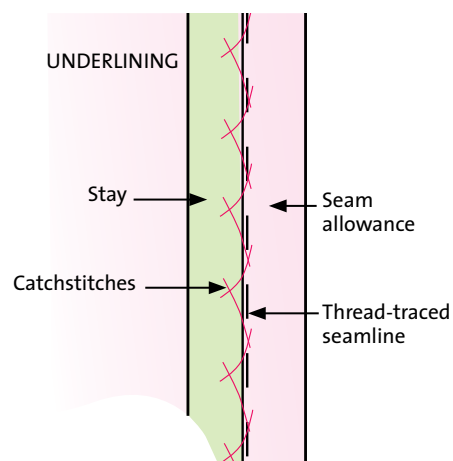
- 2 Stabilize the opening.** Make a stay for each side of the zipper from the selvage edge of a lightweight lining fabric, silk organza, or seam binding. Moisten the stay material, and press it to remove all of the stretch. On the pattern, measure the opening length from the seamline at the top to the end of the zipper placket. Mark this length on the stay beginning 1/2 inch from one end.



- 3 Position the stays.** With the wrong side up, place the stay with the selvage on the thread-traced seamline. Pin the marked points on the stay to the opening. Though the zipper placket is often on the straight grain, it's not unusual for the fabric to have stretch. Some fabrics stretch a lot because of the weave or fiber content.



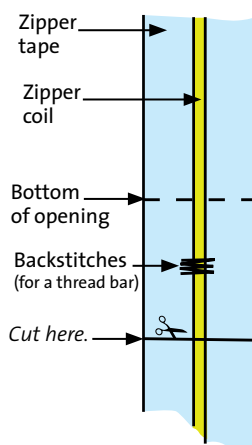
- 4 Sew the stay permanently at the thread-traced seamline, using catchstitches.** Anchor only the stay's edge to the underlining, so the stay is "hinged" along the seamline. No stitching should show on the garment's right side.



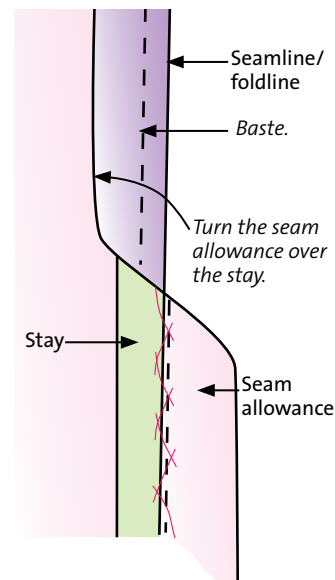
HOW TO SHORTEN THE ZIPPER

In couture, it's not unusual for zippers to be shortened in the workroom. Designers buy the longest zippers so they can have a variety of colors and sizes available. When the zipper is used, it is shortened to the desired length.

Press the zipper to remove any folds. Then measure and mark the zipper length—1 inch longer than the zipper opening—on the zipper tape. Use several backstitches to make a thread bar at the marked point. Cut off the zipper about 1 inch below the thread bar. Overcast the cut edge to prevent raveling.



- 5 Fold under the seam allowances.** Turn the allowances along the thread-traced seamline to the wrong side and baste about 1/4 inch from the folded edges. Press the folded edges, and measure the length of each side of the opening to be sure they are the same. This is the last opportunity to press them before setting the zipper.

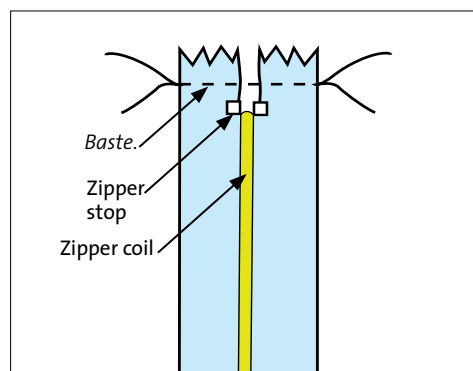


Set the zipper

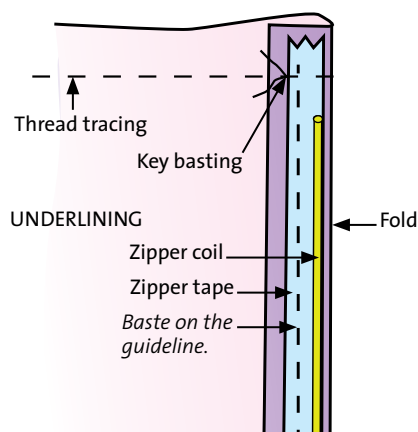
Now that the foundation for the zipper is complete, the zipper is hand-stitched to the stayed seam allowance.

1 Key the zipper. Make a registration mark at the top to follow so both sides align perfectly when the zipper installation is complete.

Begin with the zipper closed. At the top, baste across the zipper tape $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch above the zipper stop. When the zipper is to be finished with a waistband or collar, baste at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch; when finished with a facing or lining, baste at $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. I usually baste by machine, but you can do it by hand. When basting the zipper into the placket, align this basting with the seamline on the garment.



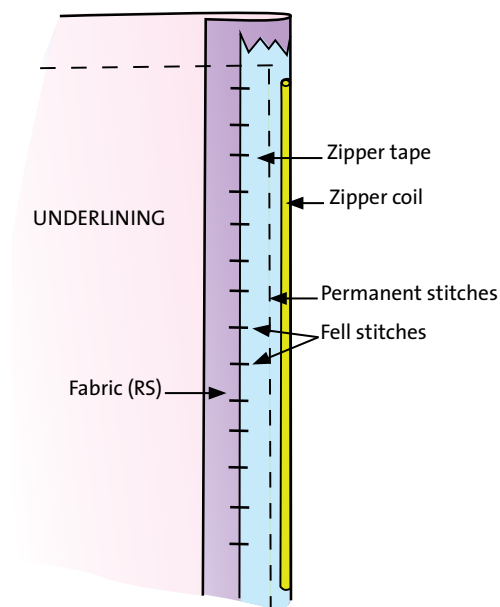
2 Baste vertically. With the garment and zipper right side down, open the zipper; align the bastings above the zipper stops with the garment seamline. Position the zipper coil just inside the folded edge, so you can see a thread or two of the fold. Pin and then hand-baste the zipper to the seam allowance only along the woven guideline. Repeat basting the other side of the zipper.



Note: When both sides are basted and the zipper is closed, there may be a ridge where the two folded edges meet. When you wear the garment, the ridge will flatten. To be sure the ridge isn't too prominent, try on the garment now.

3 Sew the zipper permanently. Use a waxed single thread, a short needle, and short running stitches to sew the zipper permanently using the woven line on the zipper tape as a guide. Again, sew the zipper tape only to the stayed seam allowances. Remove the basting.

4 Sew the zipper tape to the seam allowances. Use fell stitches to secure the tape edge.



5 Using overcast or blindstitches, sew the seam allowance to the underlining or backing. They finish the edges and secure the seam allowances at the same time.

