

Bound to Please...

BY MARTYN SMITH

Perfect binding on a garment is a joy to see, but many stitchers feel that it requires too much effort to get this sort of result and it's much easier to use an overlocker for neatening seams – so the humble method of binding seams is rarely ever considered.

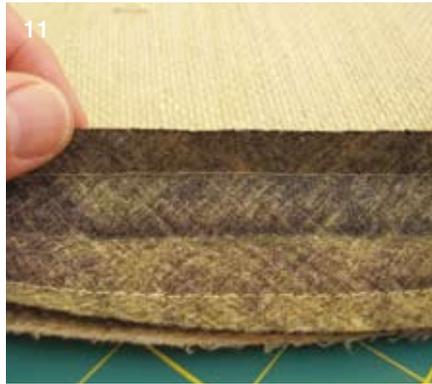
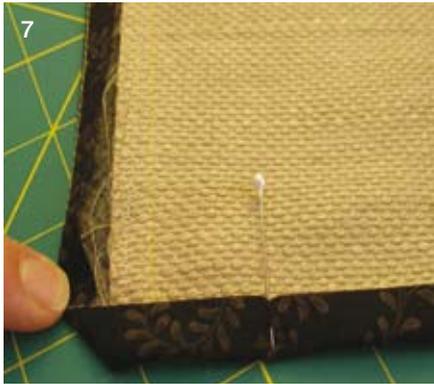
Some manufacturers in Asia still use binding as a seam finish. It can be seen inside mostly tailored garments, and this seems to be why binding a seam allowance in the fashion industry is now referred to as a 'Hong Kong finish'! An unlined jacket looks far more impressive with bound seams as this finish gives the inside of the garment just as much prestige as the outside. If the opacity of the cloth allows, a contrast in binding colour will quietly animate the interior of any garment, but only the wearer will have the knowledge and enjoyment of this!



There are a few techniques that help when binding one fabric with another. The choice of fabric is definitely worth considering, as a fluid or floppy fabric will be even floppier when cut into thin strips for binding. Choosing a fabric that is too thick will also give problems when joining the binding strips or turning corners. Bulk is never a good friend to sewers! It is a misconception that binding 'always' has to be cut on the bias (45 degrees across the cloth) just because it's bought this way when it's pre-packaged. Depending on what area of a garment is to be bound, it is fine to cut binding strips across the warp (selvage to selvage) of the fabric as there is often a little stretch within this direction of the fabric. The ideal method of joining binding is to distribute the bulk along the binding rather than having it all lump up in one

place. [See photos 1 and 2.](#) To bind a corner without having to cut or stitch a corner mitre is easy when binding. Stitch part of the seam, stopping and then pivoting out to a 45-degree angle and running off to the corner (it is important that the pivoting be done at the exact pivot point of the corner). [See photo 3.](#) The binding is then folded back to create a 45-degree angle (which is instigated by the corner pivot stitching). [See photo 4.](#) Then fold along the next edge to stitch. [See photos 5 and 6.](#) You will notice that the edge left free has a basting line of stitching to help when folding to the underside and to prevent the binding from growing when finally being stitched into place.

It is important to ensure that all 'fold edges' of a corner are sharp and crisp so the finished points turn out sharp.



on the curve, lightly press the strip of fabric in half and lay it on the corner of whatever you are going to bind. Shape the binding with a little steam but be careful not to stretch the outer edge, as this will make the binding vary in width once finished. See photo 10. Stitch a basting stitch to the unstitched edge of the binding to help with the final stitching. See photo 11. Turn under the binding edge and stitch it in place. See photos 12 and 13.

Hint: *A little iron-on starch can be of some help if the fabric you want to use as a binding seems a little too lightweight. Alternatively, apply a very thin iron-on interfacing to the fabric before cutting out.*

The right foot for the job

Many specialist feet can give a great helping hand when attempting jobs that are not done all that often. Wide rolled-hems and binding are made easier by choosing the right foot for the job.

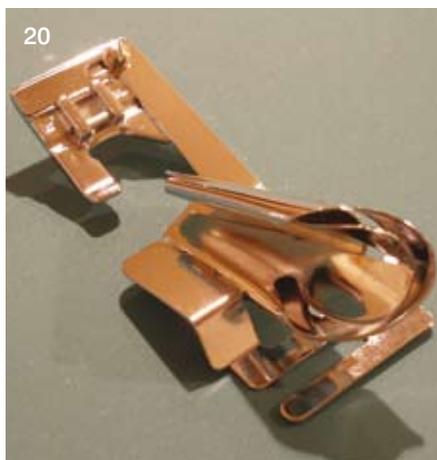
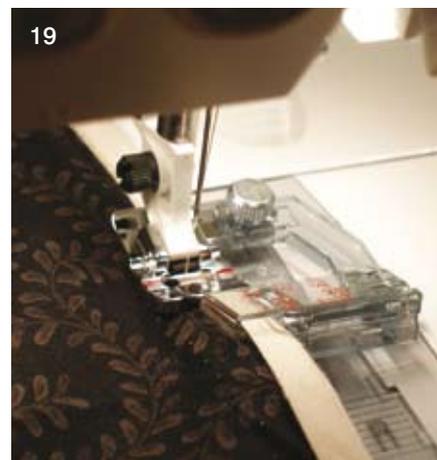
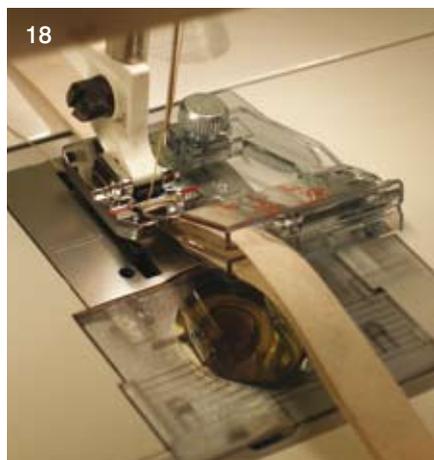
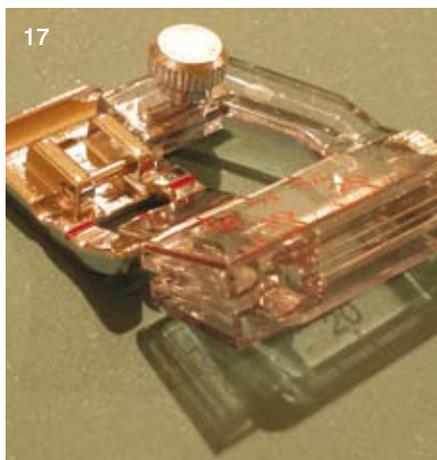
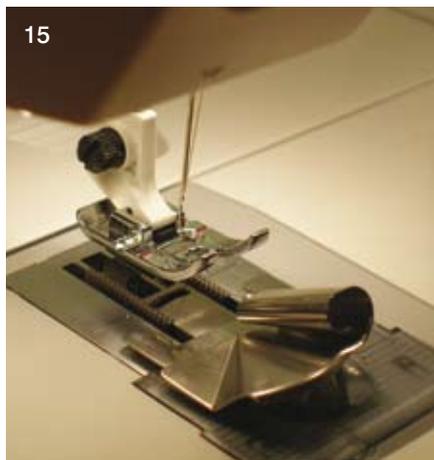
A hemmer attachment works in conjunction with an ordinary straight-stitching foot. See photo 14. The rolling attachment clips onto the needle plate, see photo 15, then the work feeds into this attachment rolled and stitched into place evenly. See photo 16. Great for medium to heavy fabrics and there is no need to help the fabric roll inside this foot as the stitcher just simply guides it through! This particular guide is a 10mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in) roller.

The Adjustable Bias Binder is a wonderful tool that can be used with pre-folded bias tape from 6mm – 20mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in – $\frac{3}{4}$ in). See photo 17. Simply adjust the screw on the right side of the bracket to set the width of the chosen bias tape and then feed the tape into position. See photo 18. Place the edge to be bound into the groove on the left side of the bracket and then stitch. See photo 19. The screw on the top of the foot at the back can also be used to adjust the feeding of the tape and the positioning of the stitching. This foot makes binding using readymade binding an absolute breeze!

The Bias Binder folds the bias tape as it is being stitched to an edge. See photo 20.

See photos 7 and 8. It is just like origami but with fabric! Remove any basting thread once the final stitching is complete, and with a little practice, the stitching on the top of the binding and on the underside will be in exactly the same place. See photo 9.

Curved bindings are better done with binding strips cut on the bias as it is much easier to work with, however it's not impossible to do using strips on the straight of grain although there is more chance of the edge being tight or wanting to curl out. To help the binding sit well



Cut the end of the bias tape at an angle and insert it into the funnel guide of the foot. See photo 21. Work the tape through the folding slots and out the end of the foot. See photo 22. Then attach the foot to the machine. It is virtually impossible to do the threading of the foot while it is attached to the machine, as it is very awkward. As with the other feet already shown, place the edge of whatever is going to be bound inside the binding

slot on the left and start stitching. It may be necessary to adjust the needle position or the screw at the rear of this foot for perfect stitching.

As with all feet, some trial and error time is necessary to get a feeling of mastery before attempting to use any foot. It is important to ensure any joins in the bias tape used with these sorts of feet are pressed well and don't have any over-hanging seam allowances or thread

ends. Fabric snagging when feeding these feet can cause twisting problems. Experimentation often leads to inventing new uses for these sorts of feet. The way they are shown being used in accessory brochures or operating manuals can be misleading as to their actual capability in doing other tasks.

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