

Are you  
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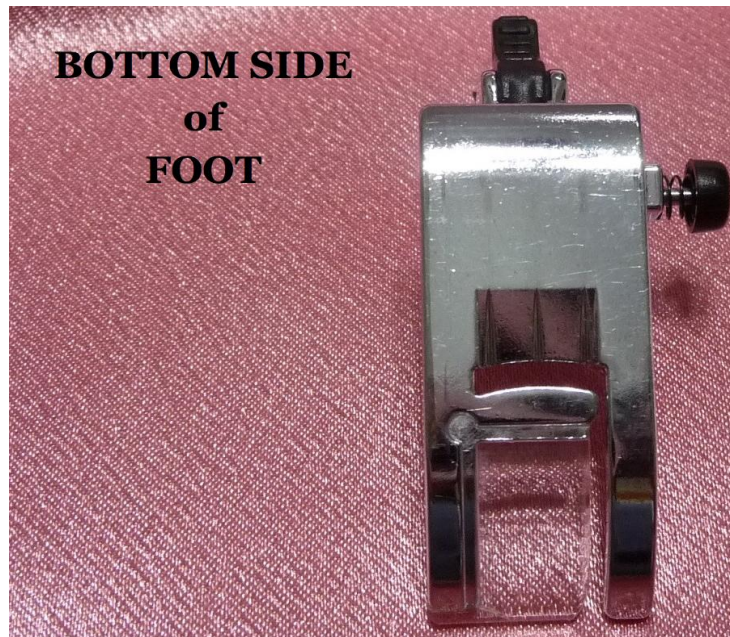


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## **Tip Sheet for Sewing Narrow Hems with a Standard Presser Foot**

In this tip sheet you'll find tried and true tricks for sewing a narrow hem without the use of a specialty foot. This method is best for very light, light, or medium weight fabrics. The foot you see pictured below is a typical standard sewing foot. Specifically, it is the elongated version of a "J" foot found on several Brother model machines, including the Brother XV8500D. Observe the fact that this foot is very flat on the bottom, making it well suited for sewing straight stitches. This "flat foot" keeps the fabric firm against the feed dogs as the fabric advances under the needle. There is a very slight indentation on the foot, allowing zig zag stitches to easily flow under the foot as well. The techniques presented here work for any machine. Find the standard foot for your particular model and you'll be good to go!

In this tip sheet you'll also find me using a favorite machine feature, the ability to move the needle from center to far left or far right when any straight stitch is selected. This is an option I find myself using almost every time I sew! By touching the Stitch Width key on a computerized machine, and then selecting plus or minus I can move the needle in small increments and customize the position where the straight stitch forms on the fabric. This feature is great for sewing standard seams, topstitching, sewing so-called "scant" seams, edge stitching on zippers, and more! In this tip sheet you'll see that the ability to adjust the position of the needle is a great way to sew this narrow hem in the easiest manner possible. If you have a mechanical machine and cannot move your needle position, simply adjust the position of your guide to sew 2mm closer to the raw edge of the fabric.



### **Machine Set Up:**

- Place the standard straight/zig zag presser foot on the machine.
- Thread top and bobbin with thread to match fabric. If your fabric is lightweight it is a good idea to use a lightweight thread. My favorite lightweight, high quality, all-purpose thread is [Mettler® Metrosene Plus](#) or [Coats Dual Duty XP® Fine](#) thread. Be sure to use a fine needle for fine fabrics.

**Note:** I used contrast color thread for better visibility in my examples.

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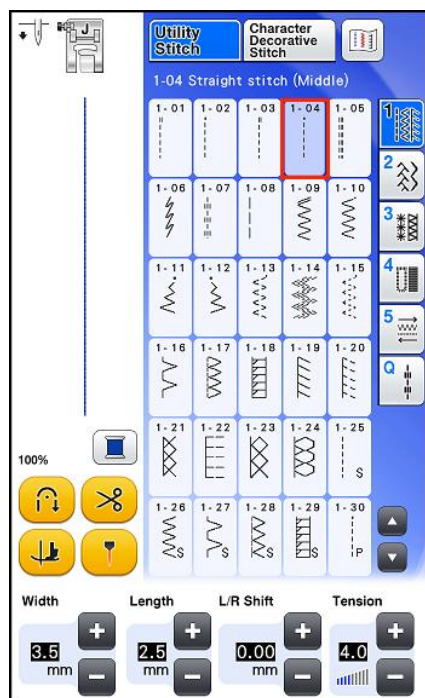


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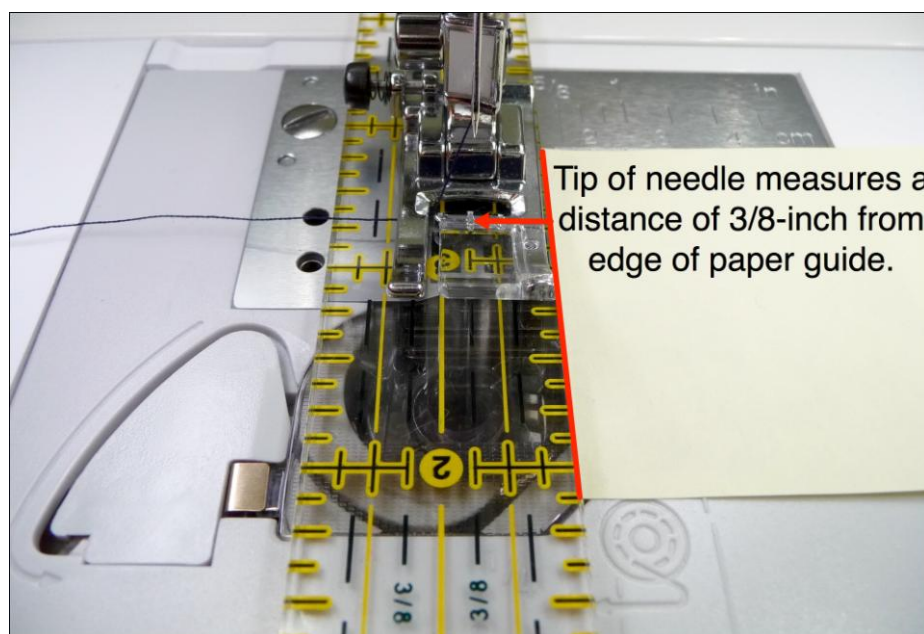
### Sewing the Hem:

**Step 1.** Determine the finished width of your hem. In **Example #1** I want a finished, double turned 3/8-inch hem. This example features a hem with a moderate flare that needs a bit of easing to lay flat and smooth. The featured fabric is synthetic crepe back satin.

**Step 2.** Thread machine and set for a center needle straight stitch.



**Step 3.** Use a ruler and measure a distance of 3/8-inch from the point of the needle to the right. Place a piece of "sticky note" type paper along the edge of the ruler to use as a measuring guide.



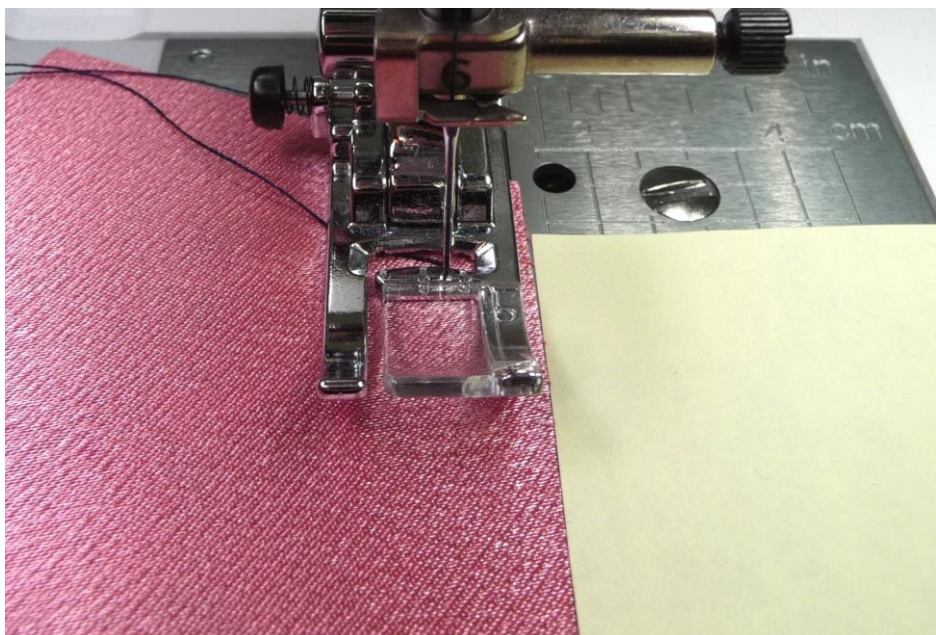
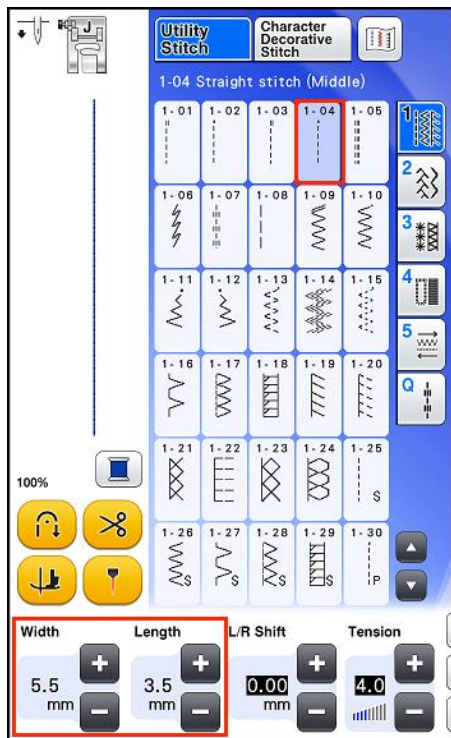


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**Step 4.** Next, move the needle position 2mm to the right. This setting will cause your line of stitching to be a "scant" 3/8-inch from the raw edge. Increase the stitch length to 3.5 for this flared hem example. Begin by lining up the raw edge of the hem along the paper guide, and then sew along the raw edge following the guide on the machine. Since you are sewing along a curved edge you will need to pivot as you go. As you progress, make sure the raw edge is aligned near the area where the stitch is forming, which is basically just to the right of the needle.



**Step 5.** Press the first fold of the hem to the wrong side, with the folded edge just past the stitching line. Pull up on the bobbin threads to ease in the fullness as necessary. (Test your iron temperature if your fabric is heat sensitive).



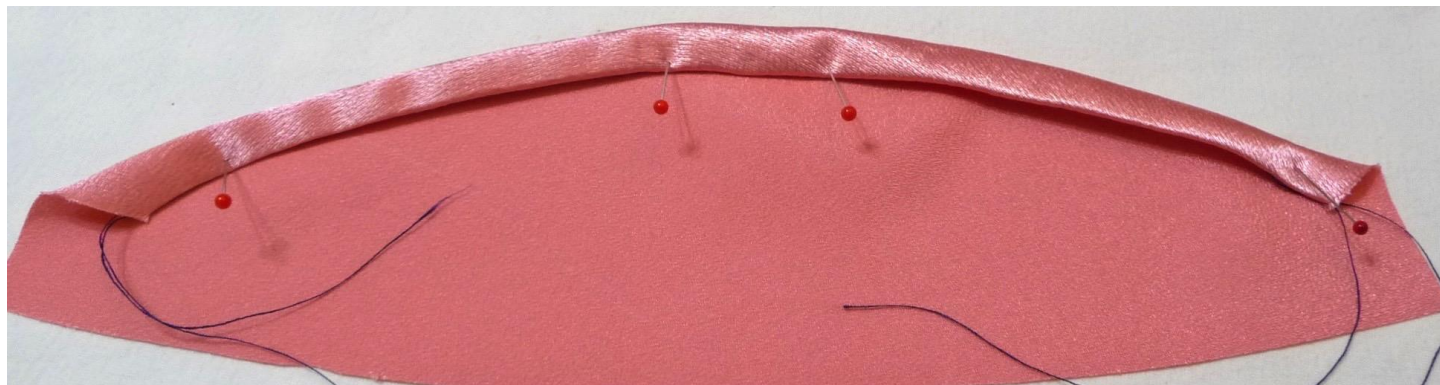


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**Step 6.** Turn, fold, and press the hem a second time. Next, return to the machine and set the stitch length so it is appropriate for hemming your fabric. Stitch the hem in place, following the existing edge guide and adjusting the position of the needle to sew close to the fold. When finished, press carefully from the right side.



Example #1  
Curved Hem



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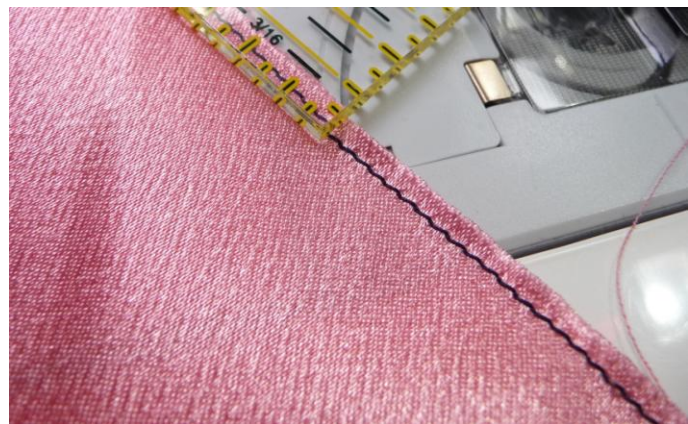
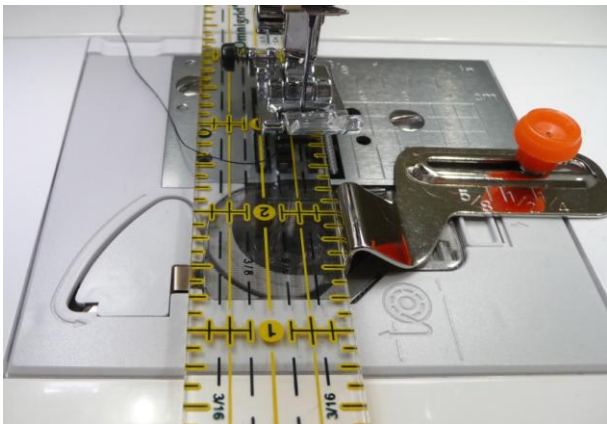


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**Voila!** A perfect finish for most any width of narrow hem! This even works with teeny tiny hems on tricky chiffon fabrics! Note that on firmly woven fabrics you may be able to skip the second pressing step and fold and stitch the hem in one fell swoop. For any narrow hem width, simply remember to set the distance from your needle to the edge of your seam guide (paper or otherwise) the exact measurement of your desired finished hem. Then, sew a line of stitching that is 2mm narrower than the width of the hem. You will do this by moving the needle or adjusting the guide. To finish, turn, fold, press, and finally stitch the final hem close to the fold.

In **Example #2** (narrow hem with straight edge), I followed the same basic steps listed above with the exception of using a seam guide in place of paper. Since the seam guide fits the machine a little further forward than the end of the presser foot it is ideal for a narrow hem with a straight edge. Take a look at the step by step photos for a very narrow (3/16-inch hem) in **Example #2** below:

Set seam guide for finished width of 3/16-inch. Move needle position and sew a "scant" 3/16-inch from the raw edge.



Turn, fold, and press the raw edge under. Stitch the hem in place, sewing close to the folded edge.

