

in sewing notions

Possibly the latest invention for the home sewer has been the most exciting. Sergers or overlock machines are a new generation of home sewing machines which are changing the whole concept of home sewing. Copied from industrial sewing machines, they give you the capability of becoming a custom dressmaker, creating more professional garments and home decorating and craft items with less effort and time invested.

You will hear two, three and four threader used to describe the various models. All sergers use a needle to stitch a seam and loopers to overcast the seam allowance. A two threader has one needle and one upper looper. A three threader has one needle and an upper and lower looper. A four

threader gives you the opportunity to sew with two needles to give you an extra security stitch as well as the upper and lower loopers. A knife beside the throat plate trims off any excess fabric before it is overcast and you have a beautiful clean-finish 1/4 inch seam allowance.

Use a variety of thread colors and thread weights to create a truly decorative finish. You can make lapped seams, flat-locking seams, decorative edge stitching, rolled hems, ruffles, trims, belt loops and many more wonderful looks. Take a look at the variety of patterns that the major companies have designed for you to receive real pleasure from your serger. Better yet, visit your neighborhood sewing center and ask for a demon-

stration. Sales of sergers have leaped in the past two years and expectations are that the serger will represent 15 per cent of the total sewing machine market in the next year or two. Sportswear, lingerie and swimsuits can be made in half the time.

Your sewing machine was designed to do more than mend. Be creative and have fun. Look for these and other sewing aids today.

Jean is a member of the Middlesex County Women for the Support of Agriculture and chairman of its education committee. She teaches and works part-time for Stretch and Sew Fabrics in London. 'I love to sew and I enjoy sharing this information with others,' she says.

Some points on pins and needles!

Pins and needles have been with us for a long time. Here are some facts about these mainstays of the sewing box you may be interested in.

Pins are not as common as they used to be. There is a wide selection to choose from and your choice will be based on length, size and metal content. The most familiar types are ball-point, silk, dressmaker's and quilter's pins. Ball-point pins have a slightly rounded end that will slip through the fibres without damaging your fabrics. These are great for working with knits.

Silk pins are finer. Look for brass silk pins. These won't rust and mark your finer silk and silk-like fabrics. Dressmaker pins are considered a general purpose pin and they are made of a wider wire than silk pins. Quilter's pins have a finer or narrower shaft and are longer than dressmaker's pins. These work well when using bulkier fabrics too.

Look for pins with glass or plastic heads. You won't jab your finger when inserting the pin and they are easier to find when you drop them on



the floor. If your pin develops a burr or snags your fabric, throw it away, don't put it back with your good pins.

The proper choice of needles is just as important. Use finer (7-9) needles for fine fabrics such as light polyesters, lingerie fabric and silks; medium (11-14) for firmer fabrics such as suiting, corduroy and heavy cottons; and a denim needle (16) for heavy denims and jeans. Remember to use a new needle for each new sewing project.

Universal needles are good for both knits and wovens because they have a modified ball-point end. You may

find that a ball-point needle works best though on the finer knit fabrics like lingerie and swim wear fabric which are very slippery. A ball-point needle will eliminate skip stitches and puckering in your seams.

I like to use my double needles for creating a decorative finish or for hemming knits. They come in a variety of widths from 1.5mm to 4mm. When sewing with a double needle, you get a zigzag effect on the underside which gives you a neat hem finish on knits. Try using two different colors for a really creative look or use your double needle to make pin tucks on a blouse or dress.

There are also topstitching needles which have a larger hole to accommodate the thicker topstitching thread; leather needles which have tiny knives on the edges to make penetrating real leather and suede easier; winged needles have sides that are a little wider so that the needle cuts the fabrics as it passes through leaving a small opening. The winged needle is great for decorative effects on collars, cuffs or placemats and tablecloths.