
Hand Sew A Shirt with Cal Patch

Chapter 1 - Hand Sew A Shirt

Overview

(bright music) - It might seem like a wild idea to start sewing clothes by hand, but you'd be surprised how much time it could save you to not have to pull out your sewing machine. You'll find hand sewing to be just as meditative and relaxing. I'm Cal Patch, a clothing designer, teacher, and author, and I'm gonna show you how to hand sew a shirt. We'll learn a variety of stitches, four types of seam construction, and four edge finishes, including my favorite, the French seam, the really rugged, flat felled seam, the bias tape facing, a super fun rolled hem, and a special hidden hem that I invented. Adding hand stitching to your repertoire makes your sewing projects as portable and relaxing as knitting or crochet.

Materials

- Let me show you what you'll need to hand stitch a shirt. You'll need a pattern. I'm using the pattern I drafted from my Boxy Tee class, which you could do. We also have a list of available patterns in the pdf. And what you're looking for is a very simple shirt, kind of a boxy tee style. There are many of them out there. That the only pattern pieces are a front and a back and you'll basically just have four seams to sew. Then you'll need some fabric. Kind of a light to medium weight woven fabric would be a good choice. Something like cotton or linen. This is a blend of cotton and linen that I'm going to use and you'll need the yardage required on your pattern for the size you plan to make. You'll also need a needle. You might just get a few sizes of sewing needles to see what works for you or if you already know what size you like that'll be a good choice. I like to have a needle book to keep my needles in. And you're going to need some thread. There's lots of options. Really any thread you would use for machine sewing will be fine but some possibilities are, you might want a heavier thread. I often like to use more decorative threads like pearl cotton or embroidery threads. This is a naturally dyed embroidery thread. If you wanna get into more artisanal threads or some good old button craft thread could be a good idea. This is a nice heavy organic thread that I really like. I am going to be using fine crochet cotton 'cause I happen to have it on hand. It's very similar to the pearl cotton so that's another good option. These are some top stitching threads. I do like to work with kind of thicker, heavier threads, mostly for decorative reasons, but really anything goes. And these are just some antique threads that I use for basting because they're a little too weak to use for real sewing, but they're so cute so I like to use them for something. You could use any color thread you like. Probably you'll want matching thread, but I'll be using contrast so that you can see it. And also I've kind of grown on the idea of being able to see all my stitches all the time. You'll need some kind of marking tool. So usually I like a pencil that's either chalk or wax, but plain old tailor's chalk is fine too. A little ruler can be helpful. We might be drawing some lines to follow for stitching. You'll need a pair of scissors. If you use reading glasses to see things up close you you're probably gonna want to have them handy. Pins in a pin cushion. And then you'll need some bias tape to finish the neckline. It could be store bought bias tape. I've made my own to match my shirt fabric. It can be matching or contrast. And I'd just like to point out that if you're in a nice indie fabric store, you might keep an eye out for some cute bias tape that's already made because the store bought stuff is not really a very nice fabric. It's like a poly cotton blend. Keep your eye open. You might see some great interesting bias tapes at your favorite shop. There are a few other materials

you might find helpful and fun and you might not know about them. Beeswax is handy for coating your thread and I'll talk about how to use it. A needle grabber can also be a really great thing to have if your needle sometimes gets stuck and it's hard to pull out because it's slippery. Thimble is a very helpful tool. People often find them awkward to use but if you've ever wanted to try to get over the hump of using a thimble, this class would be a great opportunity for that. You might need to try a few different kinds. This one is made of silicone. This is a little mini leather one and this is a leather one that I made myself which is the one I like to use. You could want to have a needle threader. There's this kind with the little wire, which works great but often breaks easily. This one is a little more sturdy but sometimes the hooks don't fit through the eyes. You may wanna have on hand a fat quarter of fabric or just some scraps from cutting out your shirt because you can use it to make a little seam sampler like I have here. If you want to practice some of the seams on a separate piece before trying it out on your shirt, or if you wanna just try some other variations of seams. And then for the needle, I like to just point out to people if they don't know, you can print out these needle size charts that are life size. So if you have a needle you like, you can hold it up to the chart and figure out what size and type of needle it is so that you can order more. I've gone years without really knowing or understanding anything about needle sizing and I was really glad to find out this existed 'cause I often just have my favorite needles, but I don't know what they are. And this is a great needle pack I found recently made by Dritz that has all the different kinds of needles and the sizes inside so that you can really try out an assortment of different types because it's nice to have a big eye, especially if you're using the heavier threads like I like to use, and you might prefer a smaller needle, I might prefer a bigger one, but having a range of possibilities, I think, is always a good idea. Lastly, a great reference book is this "Hand Sewing Clothing" by Louisa Owen Sonstroem. She has this beautiful little book that she illustrated and it talks about all the stitches and techniques and all kinds of great stuff. She does things a little differently than I do but it's always nice to have a few different perspectives and I'd recommend it as a reference.

Seams and stitches

French seam w/ running stitch & backstitch

- This very simple shirt has four seams and four different edges, each of which will be an opportunity to learn and practice a new technique. Think of it as a sampler, but it actually is a shirt. You'll need to have your shirt pieces already cut out, just a front and a back. And we're going to get started with one of our shoulder seams. So this first seam is my favorite seam, also known as the French seam. And it starts out in a little bit of a different way than everything else will. If you already do machine sewing, you might be familiar with this, but the French seam begins with the wrong sides together, which is how I have my pieces laid out. But don't let that confuse you. Most seams have the right sides together to begin, but it's intentional that I'm placing my wrong sides together. Some fabric has no right and wrong side. If this didn't have a print on it, it would be the same both sides, because the fabric itself is double-sided, but the print makes it clear. So I'm pinning together this shoulder seam. Now I'm going to baste them together. In hand stitching, it's often a really useful thing to use basting, because the pins are going to get in your way and the thread will tend to get caught up on them. I don't have a knot on this thread for the basting, 'cause I'm going to be removing it, but I'm just going to start out close to the edge. Here's the direction of my seam, and I'll be sewing the basting about maybe 1/2 an inch in from the edge. And I'm not using a knot, I'm just

going to make a tiny stitch or two in place right at the beginning to give it a little anchor, but not so permanent as a knot. Okay, and then for basting, I'm just doing a nice big running stitch. So running stitch is just where the needle goes in and out and in and out. And you can really do it as big as I'm doing, maybe 3/4 inch, maybe even an inch. And you can actually run all these stitches on the needle at once, because this is such a short seam. So I really want to make the point that basting is very quick, and it's going to save you lots of time and frustration, which is what you would experience if you say, "Basting's too much trouble. I'm just going to use pins." I definitely do that a lot. I just use the pins, 'cause I feel like I don't need to baste it. But I'm always glad when I do the bastings. See right there, that's what happens. The thread gets caught on your pins. So we can take those pins out, and again, at the end, I'll do the same thing I did at the beginning, which is just make a tiny stitch or two in place just to give it a little bit of an anchor and then I can cut that off. Okay, seam is basted. Now I can go to my real stitching of the seam. So I've got another needle threaded with my real thread. I do want to show you the knot that I like to use. I overlap the end of my thread with the needle pointing opposite directions. Pinch them together, and then wrap the thread two or three times around the point of the needle. Pinch where I just wrapped it, and then keep pushing the needle through. I like this knot, because it is a little bit thicker than a typical single knot, and so it definitely won't pull through your fabric. My needle's threaded and I'm excited to start stitching, but it's a good idea to mark my stitching line, so that I have something to follow. So I'm just going to mark a 1/4 inch. So the French seam is made up of two different seams that add up to the total seam allowance. Also a good note is to make sure you're aware of what your seam allowance is for your pattern. If you drafted it yourself, it's probably 5/8 inch seam allowance, and that's what most patterns have. But some patterns do have different amounts. So you want to know, and seam one of the French seam is going to have a 1/4 inch, and then with the second seam, it will add up to your total seam allowance of 5/8. I'll be stitching on this red line, and I don't want to start right at the very edge of the seam because that's where the knot is going to sit wherever I begin. And the edge is not a very secure place for your knot, and you want your knot to be secure. I've come up with a little technique that comes from machine stitching, and that's to start about a 1/2 inch into the seam, and do a backward stitch. I like to call it a lock stitch. So I'm just going to do a little running stitch from a 1/2 inch in out toward the edge. This way, my knot will be set into the garment and not in a vulnerable place right at the edge. Often at the very end here, I just wrap around the two layers, and come back to where I started. And from there, I can just continue working running stitch all the way along. So it's just that very simple in and out, kind of the classic most basic stitch there is. And I do like to weave in my little tails as I make these first couple stitches just so that I don't have to come back and weave them in later. And I like to keep the size of these stitches about an 1/8 of an inch or maybe a little less. You don't want them to get too big. The basting is big. The actual real stitching should be pretty small. And you'll quickly start to see that you can kind of manipulate the fabric up and down. So it's more of a fabric movement really than a needle movement. That way, you can actually run a bunch of stitches onto the needle at once before you pull through, which saves a lot of time. And I don't always draw that line, but it's a very helpful thing to have a line to follow. You can try with and without. And you'll definitely get into a groove as you start going. And I think you will find it very relaxing and meditative and fun. Very peaceful. I know I do for sure. And we're almost across. Really doesn't take as long as people might think it does to hand sew. And I'm going to do the same thing at this end as I did at the beginning, which is that little lock stitch. I also should mention I'm only working with one strand of thread. The second one got caught there just then. I don't work with doubled thread. I find it tends to get tangled and cause trouble if the thread is

doubled. So one strand of it is good. That's why I like to use heavier, sturdier threads. So I'm wrapping over the edge here and working my way back about a 1/2 inch. I like to kind of do alternate back stitch filling in the gaps, but it's really not necessary. It's just something I find kind of pleasing to do. So I'm about a 1/2 inch in, and this is where I can tie my knot. To tie the knot, I'll either just slip the needle under the previous stitch if it's right there close by, or I can also pick up a thread or two of the fabric, just a very tiny stitch. Pull until I have a small loop. And then coming around from the opposite side as where the thread started, I loop the needle through, and pull it snug. And I usually like to do that at least twice just for maximum security, 'cause I really like my clothes to hold up over time, and they're going to get washed a lot and worn, and I like to just prepare. You know, have my seams nice and sturdy, so that they'll last as long as possible. So now that I've tied the two knots, I like to just weave in my tail. Currently it's not the tail yet, 'cause I haven't cut my thread, but I weave in a little bit of thread with a few more stitches, just a few more running stitches right along the seam line. And then I'll cut my thread, so that the tail is buried and secure. And then I can cut it off. And that's the first half of our first seam. I can remove that basting, and this is why I don't tie knots in the basting, 'cause then you can just theoretically pull it out. See even those tiny stitches that aren't knots are really very secure. It's kind of surprising. And then we're going to flip the whole shirt, so that the seam is on the inside and the right sides are together. I want to give it a little finger press to help it fold right on the seam line. You could iron it, but often one of the things I love about hand stitching is I can do it anywhere. So you know, if you're on a plane or a train, you might not have an iron handy. So finger pressing is definitely a big part of my process to hand stitching. Even if I'm just on the couch, I often don't want to get up and find the iron. I'm folding it right on that seam line. And again, I will put a few pins, and do a super quick baste just to hold these pieces together for the next seam, which is part of the complete French seam. So I've basted next to where I'll be sewing. I generally just try to baste in the vicinity, but not right on the stitch line. I should probably mark the stitch line again, so that I know where to stitch. First seam was at a 1/4 inch from the edge. This time if my total seam allowance is 5/8, that means I have 3/8 of an inch left. And that's what I'm marking here to give me a guide. Again, optional, but probably a good idea at least in the beginning. Okay. For part two of the French seam, I'm going to begin the same way with that little lock stitch. And for that, I always just do the running stitch. So I've started about a 1/2 inch in and I'm working out toward the edge, but I am going to show you a different stitch for the actual seam itself. Okay, I'm back to the knot with my little lock stitch, and here's where I'll begin the back stitch. Before I start stitching, I just want to say there are a few different types of seam constructions as well as different stitches we can use. So the construction of this first seam is the French seam. That's the general technique we're using. Within that, we could do a variety of stitches, and I'll be showing you several different stitches, you know, throughout our journey of this shirt. But the back stitch that I'm about to show you is a great choice for this seam, because this one we're doing now is actually the structural seam of the garment. The first one we did was really just the edge finishing seam, and this French seam is a little bit backwards to all the other ones, because we do the edge finishing first and then now it's the real seam. Usually it's the reverse. Okay, so that back stitch means if this is the direction of my motion, I start out going backwards. So I put the needle in one step back, and I come out two steps ahead, and then I pull my needle. And maybe I'll just not worry about my tail for the moment since it might get in the way of seeing the stitch. So one step back, and this time, the one step back should line right up, and be even in the same exact spot as the end of the previous stitch. So one step back, two steps forward. You can see the thread is in the middle of the needle in and the needle out. Oh, and I forgot to take

out my pins, but the thread's getting caught, but it's not even caught on a pin, but it would when we got there. Okay, needle in right at the end of the previous stitch. Needle out two steps ahead. Now this stitch, you have to do them one at a time. You can't start to run a bunch of them on the needle like you can with the running stitch. It's kind of like a forced meditation. You don't want to be in a hurry when you're doing back stitch, but it has a lot of great advantages. It's very strong, because it has a built-in stretch, because of that loop de loop action that's happening of one step back, two steps forward. And it looks like a machine stitch from the front. Again, with this stitch compared to the running stitch, I like to keep the size about the same, something like an 1/8 of an inch is good. I think that's my preferred size for most stitches, about an 1/8 of an inch. I'm close to the end of my seam, but I've run out of thread, which is something that's going to happen. All you need to do if it happens to you is tie a little knot and finish off just like I showed you before. So loop the needle through a stitch or a tiny bit of fabric, and pull it through the loop. Tighten up, maybe weave a little bit of that in. You can also just stick it into the tunnel of the French seam now that this seam allowance is kind of a tunnel of fabric. If you just weave the tail in there, it'll be nice and safe. You can cut off that part. And then to join on or to continue the seam with a new thread, I like to just overlap it maybe a 1/2 inch or so. So rather than starting right here where I ended off, I would start a little ways back, maybe just do a couple running stitches will be fine, to get back into position, and then continue to the end. Now if that happens to you, you might think, "Next time, I'm going to put six yards of thread on my needle, so that I never run out of thread again." Or if you hate threading the needles too, that can inspire that same thought. But let me tell you, you don't really want too much thread on your needle either, because it will cause way more trouble than it saves. So I usually like to use about an arm's length of thread, and I usually say that's because you can only pull as long as your arm. You don't want to be like pulling up the nets of thread. You just want to be able to quickly pull your stitches through. So that's a good lesson to learn. And when I get to the last 1/2 inch, I'll just do that same little lock stitch, which I always do in running stitch even when I'm using a different stitch for my seam. Okay, so from here, I can just running stitch right to the edge, or you know, an 1/8 of an inch or so is close enough to the edge, and then run back about a 1/2 an inch. And that's where I like to tie the knot. Twice. Maybe I'm just overly cautious, but I really like to build that longevity right into my clothes from the start. And then again, I can just hide that tail right inside the tunnel, which is the best place to keep it from fraying and unraveling. Okay, that is our French seam. Back stitch from the back always looks a little sketchy, scratchy, but that's okay. From the front side, it looks almost like a machine stitch. You know, it's a little wonky, it's got a little character. That's the nature of hand stitching. I think it's beautiful. All of our raw edges are now finished and hidden inside that tunnel of seam allowance, which is the point of the French seam. So that's why we do it. It'll make your garments last a lot longer. You definitely always want to do some kind of seam finish. And from the right side, it just looks like a seam, but it's a beautiful hand stitched French seam. I do have these little extra tails from where I added the thread after I ran out. So to deal with that, since they're too short to thread in a normal way, I'm putting the needle into the tunnel right next to the knot. This is a good opportunity to use that handy dandy needle threader, since I can't get it in. So you just stick the wire through the eye of the needle, and then this wire loop is a lot easier to put the thread into, and then you pull it back through and that worked perfectly. Now if I pull the needle, it's going to take that little tail right into the tunnel and it disappears. Okay, I have one more to do that with, and I will do that and pull out this basting, and seam number one is complete.

Mock French seam w/ combination stitch & whip stitch

- Our next seam is the mock French, or as I like to call it, the faux French seam. I want to show you how to use the beeswax to wax your thread because it's nice to work with a waxed thread for hand sewing in case your thread gets tangled and it can make it a little smoother to slip through the fabric. So you just grab your thread and hold it against the wax and pull it through a couple times, just to give a little bit of a coating of wax. Usually twice is enough. You may not need it, but it can be a nice thing to know about. It's also helpful for the threading of the needle because it makes the thread a little bit stiffer. Oh, that was lucky. Went right in. Tie my little knot. I can feel that wax on the thread, makes it nice and stiff. For the mock French, we're gonna be working the other shoulder seam and this one begins with the right sides together, which is much more typical in sewing that we put our right sides together to start. And I'm going to pin that seam and then do my really quick baste. I'm gonna really try to show you this time how, just how quick it can be to do the basting because I really wanna make that point that it's a helpful thing to do. Tiny stitch and then just big, quick running stitches close to my seam line, but not right on it. It probably takes the same amount of time as the pinning. So much less likely to catch your stitches as you work. Cut that off, get rid of those pins. And my seam allowance is 5/8 of an inch, which is where I basted just next to that, but that's where I'm going to be stitching. And I'll begin with that little lock stitch I like to do starting a 1/2 inch in, working back toward me with a couple small running stitches. And then going back to the knot with the running stitch. And for this seam, I am going to show you a new stitch, which is actually a combination of the two we've learned so far. We've learned the running stitch and the back stitch. Those are two great stitches to use. They both have their pros and cons, which are that the running stitch is nice and fast. Let me do a couple of those to get started. But it's not the strongest stitch because really it's only as strong as the thread because you're basically just laying the thread flat along the seam, so if there's any tension or pressure on the seam, it might just break your thread and your seam could totally break. So the back stitch is a lot stronger because that looping action, like I talked about, builds in kind of a coiled spring effect. That means the seam has a little stretch built into it, but it's so slow to work, so what I'm going to do is an occasional back stitch. I'll run a few running stitches onto the needle. I think I probably do about five or six. And then when I take the needle out to put it back in again, I do that one back stitch at that point. So every fifth or sixth stitch is a back stitch, which just builds a little bit of stretch and therefore strength into the seam, but it's still pretty quick. I find it's kind of a best of both worlds situation. And I just call this the combination stitch 'cause I haven't thought of a catchier name, though it has occurred to me that maybe I could call it the walking stitch. It's not as fast as the running stitch, but still travels at a good pace. And I just need to always remember that every time I put the needle back in, to do that little back stitch. Some threads, the wax can make it a little too sticky. This is kind of a thick thread already. It may not have needed the wax, but on a thinner thread it can be a very good thing. I noticed that I crossed over my basting, that's okay. The reason not to put your basting right on the stitch line is just that sometimes the threads can get caught up and tangled and it makes the basting hard to remove, but everything will be fine. And I noticed I didn't draw a line and that's probably why I might have veered off course a little, so good reminder to draw a stitch line before you begin. So I'll just do that little lock stitch. Don't wanna put that knot right at the edge. And weave in a few running stitches and then cut the thread. So that's step one of the mock French and I should just note that really what I've done here is what's called a plain seam. This is just a seam. It doesn't have to become a mock French. It could become any of the three seams that I'm about to show you. The French seam is an anomaly because you do it in the reverse order, but the remaining

seams all happen where you do the actual seam first and then the finishing second, so you could actually do all of your plain seams and then decide how you're going to finish them after, but I've already decided I'm doing the mock French here. The next step of it is to finger press again, just to kind of flatten everything out and get the two seam allowances opened up because we're going to take them and fold them in toward the center, and then put them back together. And I'll put a pin to hold it. And I'll keep doing that. I also need to take out my basting, which I often forget to do. There's three pins holding that in place. Let's get rid of this basting thread. Now, I could baste this step. I think I'm going to skip it just to save time. I may regret it. So you do you. The pins will tend to get in the way a little bit, but I just wanna get to the next step. So it's always a choice you're making whether to do the basting or not. I think I've shown you that it is a useful thing and it doesn't actually take very long, but I think I can get away without it. I still need a knot. And all my edges are tucked in. You can see that it looks basically like a French seam at this point, it's just that we're going to see our second row of stitching because it wasn't done from the opposite side, which is what we did for the French. I'll come up inside the tunnel and bring the needle out so that the knot is already tucked up inside there. And I don't really need to do my back stitching, or my lock stitching here because this is just a seam finisher, it's not a structural or what I sometimes call a load-bearing seam, it's just to finish the edges so I'm going to use another stitch called the whip stitch for this one and that is where you just take the needle around behind the seam and push it through and just keep repeating. Let's get that tail out of our way. It was caught on the pin. So just super simple, coming from back to front each time, which causes the thread to wrap over the edge and it kind of just seals everything into the seam. It's very quick, very satisfying. And I guess for this one, I do it a little bigger than I've been saying. I was saying about an 1/8 of an inch is a good size for most of my stitches, but this one can be a little bit more like a 1/4 inch apart. And you'll definitely get into a rhythm. See, that's what happens. That's why the pins are annoying, but not too terrible in this case. Approaching the end of the seam, and I don't need to do the lock stitch since this is just a seam finish, not a structural seam. I can just tie the knot. Probably don't even need that second knot. I can just tuck that needle into the tunnel and bury the tail and cut it off. So there's my little combination stitch mock French seam. Looks exactly like the first one, the French seam. If you're wondering why you would use the mock French versus the French, my main reason for using it is that I forgot to plan in advance and put my wrong sides together to do a French seam, and if that's the case, you can always just make it into an almost French seam by using the mock French.

Flat-felled seam w/ reverse backstitch

- We've done two seams so far, the French and the mock French. At this point, you could totally finish the shirt with just those seams. I'm going to show you two more so that you have a nice variety of options. The flat felled seam is a really nice strong seam, because the two parts of it are going to carry the weight equally. I've already sewn the first part of the seam. You could always sew all your seams as a plain seam and then decide after that how you're going to finish them. But I'll do a little finger pressing just to open up my seam allowance. And to begin this one, I need to trim down one of these seam allowances to half its size. There's going to be an extra line of stitching on the right side to one side of the seam about a quarter inch away. If you care which side the stitching is on, like front or back, whichever side you want, your stitching is where you're going to trim. I'm gonna put my stitching toward the back of the shirt, which means I'll be trimming down the back seam allowance. And probably a good idea to mark and draw yourself a line to cut on. I'm just gonna go for it. But I've done this a few times before. I would suggest you give yourself a guideline

probably. Just trimming it to about half of the total width. And this little curved part of the seam is going to be a little bit challenging. And even for trimming, it's a little bit challenging, and sometimes I find it helps to trim it just a little bit extra narrow right through there. Okay. And then I'm going to wrap the longer seam allowance that I didn't cut over the shorter one. Maybe give it a little finger press, and then flip it to the back or to the direction that I cut, and place a pin. And it's a good idea when you're doing this, to just keep checking that your two sides of the seam are pulled nice and taut. You could easily lay this down and pin it and sew it, and then find that you have a big pleat on the right side if you're not pulling it apart as you work. So be careful of that. I've seen it happen many times, and I don't want it to happen to you. It can be helpful to also put a hand underneath and feel that it's all nice and flat. And here's that little awkward curve area. I'll just keep folding. Okay. That should be enough pins. Now, again, I could baste this. I probably should, but I'm just gonna go for it. But you might want to baste. Now we have several stitches to choose from, and I think the running stitch would work well here. Backstitch might work, but actually if I think about how the seam I'm about to do is going to show, the stitch is gonna show on the right side, the back of backstitching doesn't look so nice, so I probably wouldn't opt for that one. But I do love the strength of backstitch, and this is my strongest, sturdiest seam. So I might think of that as a bit of a dilemma. And I think the answer is that I could use a stitch called the reverse backstitch, and that's what I am going to show you. It basically is the backstitch, but we're doing it from the opposite side. So I'm going to come up inside my tunnel to tuck the knot in there. And I don't really need to do my lock stitch, since this is my second seam, I can start a little bit in, maybe a quarter to a half inch from the edge. And to do this reverse backstitch, I'm going to put the needle in two steps forward and bring it out one step back or halfway back. And then repeat. Two steps forward, one step back. And the one step back is lining up exactly with the end of the previous stitch, or it's in the same spot. Let's get rid of that pin. Two steps forward, one step back. And if you've done embroidery, you might recognize this actually as the stem stitch, or sometimes called the outline stitch. But in this case, we're using it for the backside. And I'll show that to you in a moment when I've done a few more. From this side that I'm looking at, it looks a little thready and not super neat. I'm trying to be neat. It's pretty neat, but it's kind of, you know, there's a lot of overlapping happening. But if I flip over, I've got those nice, neat little backstitches, almost like a machine stitch, but with a lot more character because I'm doing it by hand. And actually this is a good time for me to show you that needle grabber tool, which is a very helpful thing. I'm working through four layers of fabric with each stitch, and that can be a little hard to pull the needle through. So this is the kind of situation where I might use this little grabber to help me pull that needle through if I'm having a hard time, because this is a little harder to pull through with all these layers. It's also reminding me that my thimble will help save my finger. So I wear it on my middle finger. It's like wearing a little coat of armor on my finger, so that I can push the needle through. To really, it's for the pushing right there without poking the back end of the needle into my finger. 'Cause the back end is pretty sharp too. It's not as sharp as the sharp end, but it's still after many, many times pushing with that finger, your finger will get sore. And that's what the thimble helps. You do get used to it, it just feels very awkward at first. But now I'm actually at the point where it feels awkward not to use my thimble, especially when I'm working in thicker fabrics or many layers. And do keep making sure everything's tucked in, not rolling out. I'm approaching the top of the seam, which is where that little curve is, and this is the most awkward part. So I'm gonna lose the thimble just to simplify what's happening, and try to get it to lay as flat as I can. And I'm just gonna keep working. It's not a very common scenario to have such a tight curve as this in a seam of a garment, but these boxy tops do tend to

have this little curve right at the armpit. So we just need to work through it. Keeping it a little bit narrower, keeping the total seam a little bit narrower through this section will help it. Go around the curve more smoothly. And personally, I don't really feel like it's that big a deal if I do end up with a wrinkle or two in my armpits, I feel like a shirt is gonna get wrinkly in that spot because it's just what happens. But I do see a lot of people who seem very concerned about it. So it is possible to make it pretty smooth. Also keep in mind that we're trying to flatten it out in order to sew it, but in reality, it's going to be a three-dimensional thing, and it will smooth out to some degree when it actually takes that shape that it's designed to be in. And a lot of people ask me if it would be a good idea to clip the seam allowance around this curve, which is often what we do on curves. But, because this is the armpit which is a high movement and high stress area of a garment, I'm sure I'm not the only one who's had a hole in a shirt, in an armpit before because it is a high action spot. So clipping would weaken the seam, and therefore I don't recommend it. And some types of seams work better around curves than others, but I think the flat felled actually does work better than maybe the French seam. But you might have to try a few options and see what works best for you around curves, and also different fabrics are gonna work better than others with different types of seams. So there's always a lot of variables. I'm trying to give you lots of tools to choose from, and then you'll have to play around with different combinations to see what works; every project is different. And as you can see, I'm almost to the top, and it's laying pretty flat. And all is well with the world. No big wrinkles, like it might look like things are wrinkly out at the sides, but if you just flatten out any section, it's all good. I can tie a knot. This is a high stress point, so I would... ..I don't mean like I am stressed, I just mean this area, it's gonna get a lot of action. So I definitely would do the double knot, and weave in my thread tail into the tunnel. And here's, how it looks from the backside or wrong side, you can see two lines of stitching, and I've got the one tucked under edge. And then from the right side it's a seam with a row of stitching next to it. So it's kind of a double-sided seam, because both sides actually look really good. And there's no flapping seam allowance on either side. So if you were making a reversible garment, this could be a good one to use.

Clean finish

- Our fourth and final seam is the clean finish. I've got the first part of the seam already sewn, and I'm gonna give it a little finger pressing to open it up, flatten out that seam. We have another one of those little curves to deal with, but we can handle it. All right. For this one, I'm just going to take each seam allowance one at a time and fold the raw edge under itself to tuck it away behind the seam. And pin. This seam is also going to have stitching that shows from the right side, and I could use that reverse backstitch again, but I think I'll just keep it simple this time and use our good old friend, the running stitch, because it looks equally nice on both sides. The backstitch and the reverse backstitch both have kinda one good side and one little bit too thready side. These running stitches are not a load-bearing seam, they're just the edge finishers, so it'll work just fine. Okay, let's get the thimble back on. I'll come up in the tunnel to bury that knot, and I'm a little ways in. I don't need to do the lock stitching since this isn't structural. I can just go right into my running stitch. Let's get rid of that pin. And cruise right along. It is always nice after doing some of those slower stitches to come back to running stitch. And this is a good seam for bulkier fabrics because it's the flattest and thinnest. I've only got three layers of fabric here. In the previous one, I think I had four. And in the French and mock French, in the spot where they're laying down behind the fabric, you actually have five if you include the shirt and the four layers of seam allowance. But here, you've just got shirt and two layers of seam allowance. Keep stitching just like this to the top of the seam, and then you'll do

the other side exactly the same way. Here I am near the top of the second side seam. It's another curvy armpit. I think in the running stitch, it's not quite as awkward as the reverse backstitch. Folding the seam allowance just a little bit more narrow helps it bends smoothly around the curve. Just keep working the fabric to distribute that extra fullness evenly along the curve. And that's a little too close to the edge for my taste to do a knot, so I'm just gonna do a little bit of lock stitch. Maybe one or two stitches. That'll be fine there. Do the double knot. And bury the tail. Okey dokey, looking good. We've got the two sides of the seam flattened out and stitched down to the garment. And from the right side, it's a lovely seam with two nice lines of stitching on both sides, and it feels nice and flat. All of our seams are finished. The shirt is looking super cute. Let's move on to finishing those edges.

Edge finishes

Bias-tape facing & slip stitch

- We have four different edges that we need to finish. I'm going to show you four different ways to finish them. The first one is the neckline. And since it's such a tight curve I'm going to use a bias tape facing. I've got some bias tape here that I made and single fold bias tape. I'll just start pinning it on and see how much I need before I cut it off so that I don't cut it too short. I'm working on the right side of the garment and I like to start at one of the shoulder seams. I'm opening up one of these edges and I'll put the first pin right there at that seam. And I've got a little bit of extra tape just floating free because I'm going to seam the two ends of the tape together in a little bit. So be sure you have a little bit of extra before the seam. From there, you can keep pinning your way around and you do wanna be aware of how much seam allowance you have at the neck. Since I made this pattern, I know that I always add a quarter inch of seam allowance at the neckline. I like to keep it pretty narrow because since it's such a tight curve, you'll just end up trimming off a lot of your seam allowance if you have much more than a quarter inch. But if you're using a pattern that you didn't draft you might want to check because it's possible you have 5/8-inch seam allowance or something like that at the neck. And then you wouldn't be placing this right at the edge. You would need to place it lower down so that the seam line which is this fold, is on the seam line. But part of why I like to just use a quarter inch is that I almost always do my necklines with bias tape finishes, and they work perfectly with a quarter inch of seam allowance. As you're pinning this on, you want to keep an eye on your tension and you wanna be kind of curving the tape around the neckline and making sure it lays flat. You don't wanna pull it too tight and you don't want it loose and bubbling up. So I often smooth my fingers around the curve as I pin to make sure it's flat and it is bending around the curve. When you get to the other shoulder seam with which somehow coincidentally is where I have a seam in my bias tape, but that doesn't matter. What I just wanna think about is that this seam allowance of the shoulder seam is going to get fixed in place one way or the other. I like to send it to the back, so I'm making sure that it's flipped to the back and I like to put a pin through it to keep it where I want it. And then I'm back to the beginning and I need to leave a little tail at the end of the tape as well. I usually put my last pin right next to that first pin right at the shoulder seam. Oh, and I should also check on that seam allowance in the back, make sure it's flipped to the back and I can catch it in that pin. So these two pins are right up next to each other and they're each in one side of the tape but they're not actually joining anything. They're just making the tape kind of bump into itself. And now I can cut this off leaving a half inch or a little more, something like

a half inch to an inch of extra tape that will get seamed together. Okay, that means I'm ready to start stitching got my needle threaded. Thimble on, and I can think about what seam to use here. I've got running stitch, backstitch and I think I'll use the combination stitch because it has the best of both. It'll have a little bit of stretch built in because of those occasional backstitches and it's good to have a little stretch in a neckline so you don't pop a seam when you're putting it on or off. So here's that little backstitch again and I'm just sewing right in that fold which is a quarter inch from the edge. It's a good idea to just keep an eye on your tension as you're working around this neckline making sure you're not pulling too tight and gathering it up or too loose or stretching out this curved edge. So you wanna be gentle with it and get a good balanced tension which kind of comes with experience. Just feeling it out. What feels like it's not too tight, but not too loose. I've worked my way around the neckline and I'm almost back at the shoulder seam where I started. I'll just try to sew right up to that pin which is my stopping point. And it's thick right here 'cause the seam allowance is behind. Okay, I can take out both of these pins and make a knot to finish this neckline seam. Probably one knot is sufficient here and I don't need to cut it. I'm about to sew this little seam across the two tapes and I can just go right into that from the seam I just sewed. Why cut it and then have two tails? When I can just keep going. I'll just turn this, just pinning the two tapes together and I wanna be sure to only sew into the two pieces of bias tape, not catch any shirt. I can feel with my fingernail where the shirt begins and make sure I'm just in the tape. And I think a running stitch will be fine here for this little tiny seam. And I'm just trying to go straight across perpendicular to the bias tape. I open up this second fold on both layers. Don't worry if they're a little uneven like mine are because I'll show you how to deal with that and maybe just come back a couple stitches so that my knot won't be right at the edge. Tie a knot And again, I think one knot is fine. There won't be ever a lot of stress on this little seam. It's just joining the two sides of the tape. I don't even need to weave in this tail because all of this is going to be tucked inside the bias tape facing. But what I do want to do is trim this extra tape down to about a quarter inch. And I'll also trim off these corners so that when I fold everything back up the way the bias tape likes to be folded it will be a little less bulky. Take the thimble off I'll open this little seam up and press it flat. Now, when I refold the tape across the seam it automatically evens itself out even though they were a little uneven there. So that's all good. And I can flip this bias tape up and over to the inside the wrong side of the neck. And whenever I'm doing a bias tape facing I like to roll it just a little bit extra so that this seam which is the edge of the neckline is rolled just slightly to the inside of the shirt. You can see how the brown edge is flipped a little bit to the inside. That way from the outside or the right side I'm not gonna get a little hint of the bias tape showing, which you might think, that would be kind of cute if that happened like a little piping or something like that. The trouble is it probably wouldn't be perfectly even all the way around. So in my opinion, it's safer to just tuck it out of the way and have a clean edge where it's hidden. Pin that first shoulder seam, then hop over and pin the next shoulder seam and keep splitting up or dividing the sections. So after the two seams I might do center front because these are curves. This neckline edge is a curve and whenever you're working around a curve, if you start at one spot and just work your way around, you'll end up unevenly distributing the different amounts of fullness. Okay, so now I can go in between each section and kind of smooth it all out with my fingers get it all nice and smoothly pinned. Okay, that looks like enough pins around the edge of our neckline. Where's the front? That's the back. And it's probably a good idea to turn it inside out so we have better access. Okay, that way I get a better view of everything happening. And we're going to do a new stitch which is the slip stitch, which is a great invisible stitch from the outside, actually from the inside and the outside. I like to start again at the

shoulder seam. I always like to start and stop in a least conspicuous spot. So I feel like the shoulder seam is less conspicuous than the center front or center back. And I'm bringing up my needle from under the tape coming out at the fold. And that should tuck the knot. Yeah, inside I can just push the rest of that tail under there. So the slip stitch is just taking a tiny little stitch into the fabric right next to where my thread is coming out of the bias tape. I'm just trying to pick up about two or three threads of the fabric. In this case, I'm in the seam allowance, and that's fine. I don't need to try to go through all of those layers. Just anchoring it to the top layer of seam allowance will be just fine. And now I put my needle back into the tunnel so right in the folded edge of the tape and traveling forward about a quarter inch. And then I'm back to the tiny stitch into the shirt right next to where the thread exits the bias tape back in the tape in the tunnel. Quarter inch forward back into the shirt with that tiny stitch. Tiny, tiny, just like two or three threads. So that it barely shows from the front and into the fold of the tape. That's where all the traveling happens is inside that bias tape tunnel. Tiny stitch in shirt longer stitch in the tape. Let's get that pin out of the way. And you can see that it's pretty invisible. We're just barely seeing those tiny little transition stitches between the shirt and the tape. But for the most part the thread is completely hidden inside the bias tape. And let's take a look from the front. We're just seeing some tiny little stitches on the right side, so it's almost completely invisible. If this was matching thread you definitely wouldn't see anything though. Sometimes I think it's fun to use kind of a bright contrasting color and get those tiny specs of stitches in a pop of color. And I'll just continue this all the way around. I'm coming around the bend almost back where I started. Take out this last pin. Here's my little tail from the start which I'll just tuck under with the needle. And one more stitch into the tunnel. One final stitch into the shirt and I'll finish off with a little knot in the bias tape. One knot should be fine. The bias tape won't really have any stress on it so I can just bury the rest of the thread into the the secret tunnel behind the bias tape. Okay, there's another thread to cut off. There's the inside, the wrong side looking good. And let's take a look from the right side. Looking good. So the neckline is nice and clean, turned in, and you just see those tiny little stitches around the edge. Very minimal. I love it.

Mini blind hem

- The mini blind hem uses the same slip stitch as the bias tape. This is going to be a quarter inch turned hem so I need to start by turning a quarter inch and then a quarter inch again. You might wanna mark and draw a line with a ruler if you don't feel confident about finding a quarter inch freestyle. But I am pretty good at measuring without looking or at least I like to think I am. And this is, again, one of those situations where you don't wanna work in a spiral around the circle. So I've started at the armpit. I'll next go up to the shoulder seam and you will have a little bulk from your intersecting seam. If you have a little bit at the end that's not stitched. I can see my stitching stops about a quarter inch before the end, at least for the whip stitch. This is that mock french seam. So I can trim off just a wee bit of that seam allowance to minimize the bulk. But if your stitches go all the way to the end you won't want to trim anything off. But it could be a good reminder to sometimes stop your stitching a little before the end or think ahead to how you're going to finish your edges and let that guide you. So quarter inch, quarter inch and pin. And then I'll go in the middle of that section. And that might be enough pins. I don't know, you might wanna put another set in between but I think I can go from here. I've got a threaded needle, just needs a knot. And as I mentioned, we're gonna use the slip stitch again. It's a really, a very good hemming stitch because it's so invisible. I'll bring the needle inside the folds and come out at the folded edge, the first quarter inch fold. So not the one that's out at the outside, but the inner one. And let's get that pin out of the way

so we can see better. I'll make that tiny stitch into the shirt itself just two or three threads of it, and then pop back into the fold of the hem where I can move forward about a quarter inch. Again, popping into the shirt two or three threads right next to where my thread is exiting the fold, and then back into the little tunnel of the hem for about a quarter inch. Why do you have to get stuck there every time?! And I'm using the mini hem. That's what I call it when I just do like a quarter inch for this armhole, because we don't have a lot of room on the armhole for a deeper hem. So really you could use this slip stitch on any width of hem. It's not specific to the mini quarter inch. Definitely could baste this hem first so that you don't have the pins getting in the way. And maybe it's a good idea to check once you've gone a little ways around, to see how things are looking from the front side. You're just having those tiny little stitches that are very minimal and looking good. I'll just continue working this slip stitch all the way around the arm hole and then finish it off. All right, I am just about at the end which is also the beginning. And I'll tie that little knot, probably a double knot. Again, lets make a last little tiny stitch into the shirt and then come into the hem. And I've got a nice thick, you know the rolled seam allowance from the side seam is making it really thick there which is not always great. But when I'm going to do some nice secure knot tying it's kind of a good thing to have a few layers so that you can really, like, I might take it a couple, just tiny little stitches to start securing it. And then I can do that little knot. And I know that it won't pull through the fabric or anything because it's a very multi-layer spot here. Okay, there's two knots and then I will bury my thread in the tunnel. Usually a good idea to just check that it's actually in there and it is not just sticking the needle behind. And there is a cute little mini hem. Let's look at it from the front. So that's a beautiful little finished armhole.

Rolled hem

- The rolled hem is one of my favorites because the way it works is kind of magical. We don't need to do any pinning. It's sort of a stitch-as-you-go process. I do need a knot on my thread. And I'll start at the armpit for this other armhole. I always like to start in the most discreet place. I'll start by folding down the edge just about an eighth of an inch or so, kind of as minimally as you can fold. And I'll put the needle in so that it comes right out the top of that fold, tucking that little knot inside. From there, I'm going to envision kind of a zigzag pattern. So my thread is coming out right here, top of the fold. I'm going to come down about a quarter inch so the fold is an eighth and then another eighth below that. So I'm down about a quarter inch and over to the left about a quarter inch, and I'll just make a tiny stitch at that spot. Kind of the same tiny stitch like we do in the slip stitch. And then I'm gonna zigzag back up to my fold, moving forward about a quarter inch again. So I'll do that a couple more times. Zigzagging down. Zigzagging back up. I'll do one more set, and then I'll show you the magic part. Oops, it was trying to show you already, but I'm not gonna let it happen yet. Tiny stitch. Hop back up into the fold, and I'm just popping through the fold from front to back away from me. Okay, so I've got three sets of zigzags. I'm going to now pull on my thread, and the hem kind of rolls itself. It's a little bit stubborn down at that thick armpit beginning, but as we get going, it'll hold in place a little better. So let's go back to our zigzag. I used to really not love doing rolled hems because I used to do it in a more traditional way where you had to kind of pre-roll it up with your fingers, and it was very fiddly, and it was hard to pin, so I rarely used it. But now that I have discovered this way, it's definitely one of my favorites, and I use it a lot 'cause it's such a nice little delicate hem, especially for thin fabrics. So when you give it a little extra-tight tug, it will actually kind of lock in place too and not keep rolling back up. Yeah, it's good for delicate fabrics, lighter-weight fabrics, 'cause it's going to give you just a very minimal, tiny little hem. You might see

it a lot on scarves, bandanas, things like that, but it makes a really lovely little armhole finish. You could use it as a bottom hem finish too. And let's take a look from the front. Again, it's just those tiny little stitches. You could work to make them even smaller. And it's the narrowest little hem that I know of. And kind of really fun to actually stitch. Very meditative. When you're approaching a thick area, like this intersecting shoulder seam, it can be a good idea to maybe make your stitches a little bit closer together just so they have a little more structure to them, 'cause this part's gonna fight and not wanna roll up as nicely, but it will work. Even if you need to maybe just make a few extra stitches, just tacking it down to this nice thick seam allowance you have here, you could do that. I feel like that's probably a good thing to do here just to give it a little power. Okay, and then back to the easy-peasy. At this spot also, it might be good to just make a few extra little anchoring stitches to kind of tuck everything down and hold it securely to this seam allowance before knotting it off. And that feels pretty secure, so make that knot. Make another knot. Don't want that armpit seam to be coming apart. And gonna tuck the needle into the little roll. And that is the rolled hem.

Cal's hidden hem

- Our last hem is one that I invented and I call it the hidden hem. This is the hem we'll be putting around the bottom of the shirt. And we will need to do a little pinning and preparation. I like to turn about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch first and then about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. And I'll pin it, but I need to make sure to pin it a little bit away from this folded edge so that I can flip the hem back because all the work is going to take place in this little crevice between the hem and the shirt. So I've pinned one side seam. I'll hop across and pin the other side seam. I can see here too, I did remember to stop stitching a little before, about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch before the edge, so I can trim off this seam allowance. On the other one, I didn't really have that. But I'll take it where I can get it to minimize some of the bulk. So about $\frac{3}{8}$ for the first fold, and just a little more, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, maybe $\frac{5}{8}$. I usually leave a one-inch hem allowance on my patterns. So if you do $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$, that's adding up to a whole inch, which is a good plan. You should check what you have available on your pattern, but usually at this point, it's also sort of just about the length of the shirt. You can be flexible with your hem allowance but you might wanna try your shirt on and check that you don't wanna shorten it or adjust the hem. Okay, so I'm remembering to pin a little bit away from the edge so that I can still flip it back. I'll go in the middle of this section. $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$. And I think I can just do one more pin here and get started. Okay, always need a knot. Well, I guess, except when you're basting. But when you're really sewing, you always need a knot. Alright, so here's my hem pinned up, and I'm flipping it back to expose just this little lip. I think of it as the lip of the hem. It's the top fold of the hem. I wanna get in here between the shirt and that little lip of the hem. And I'll bring the needle up inside the tunnel. And there's some very thick seam allowance right there so it's hard to push through. Probably should have my thimble on. So let me show you how it works, and then I'll talk about why I like this method. So I have this little edge here, and I'm going to poke the needle into that edge, catching a tiny bit of the fold, which is the shirt. So that's all that's gonna show on the outside. So catching the lip and taking a tiny bite into the shirt. Okay, it'll get a little easier once I'm past that side seam. Into the lip, tiny bite into the fold. And I do wanna pull this fairly snug. I'll show you why in a moment. The closer you can get these two little folds and the smaller you keep your stitches, the better for this. Okay, I'll do a couple more, and then I'll show you what's happening. You know, it's kind of a funny arrangement of the fabric and you might not really understand what is happening but it'll make sense. I came up with this method based on the way you do a machine-stitched blind hem. You do this kind of folding method. And I realized it would work well for hand stitching as well. Okay, let's just take a

look at what's happening. Let's get that thimble off. So there's my stitches. If I unflip the hem, which is how it's really going to be, you can see now that all the stitches are hidden. They're tucked behind the hem. And if we look from the front, we're just getting tiny little pick stitches. So as usual, if your thread actually matched your fabric, you know, that would be very minimal. And when you get into the groove, your stitches will probably get a little smaller and smoother. So it's a good little hem. I think this pin can come out. Let's go back to our flipped position. What I like about it is that even though this folding might seem a little bit awkward at first, it's allowing you to get into a nice rhythm of stitching. Whereas I often used to use the slip stitch for hemming, and slip stitch is a great hemming stitch. We've used it on the bias tape facing and our mini blind hem. But I find I can never really get into a smooth rhythm with it because working the point of the needle into that fold of the, either the bias tape or the folded hem, it's just always a little bit fiddly and awkward and I can never really get into a rhythm. Whereas this is almost like a whip stitch where it's just very smooth, very simple. I could be watching a movie, I could be on a bumpy train, and this hem is a lot more achievable in situations like that because it's just a little, I don't quite wanna say easier, but where you're placing the stitches is a lot more accessible. And another inspiration for coming up with this is that a lot of the traditional hem stitches that I was initially taught, they leave you with lots of exposed thread and stitches. So let's just take a look at this again. A lot of the traditional hem stitches, all of this long thread would be kind of laying on the outside here, and therefore very easy to get caught on something when you're putting the garment on or wearing it. So I really was motivated to try to hide all the stitches back in between the layers. And that's why I came up with this. I've got a long way to go here. All the way around the bottom hem. This stitch definitely goes a lot faster than the slip stitch as well, so. I will get there and you will too. I'm almost all the way around the bottom of the shirt, back to where I began. Here's that side seam so I can make a couple of little tight stitches just to make sure it's good and secure. Just going into the seam allowance, not the outside of the shirt. And then a knot. And let's do one more knot. Okay. And bury the tail in the tunnel. Look at that. Cute little hidden hem. Can you believe you've just hand stitched an entire shirt?