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Do I need an Overlocker to start sewing?

An overlocker is a machine that sews and trims the edge of a fabric panel to prevent the cloth from fraying. The Overlockers stitches are a combination of three or four thread chain and sometimes five. The thread chain is stitched on the edge of the fabric as the knife cuts away any fraying threads to leave a very neat and non fraying edge. Most sewing machines nowadays have a overlock stitch function built in, but as it only has a top thread and a bottom thread the result is no way as good as a proper overlock machine. If you are new to sewing you do not need to go out and buy an overlocker straight away, give your hobby a few months and see how you get on. If you become more skilled in sewing and want to try more elaborate projects, then maybe its time to add an overlocker to your collection. The overlocker will never replace the sewing machine, however it is the perfect companion.

Overlocker facts.

An overlocker will sew a combination of 3, 4 and 5 thread chains where as a sewing machine will not.

An overlocker will cut the fabric at the same time, a sewing machine will not.

An overlocker has up to three separate needles where as a sewing machine has one.

An overlocker will sew quicker than a sewing machine.

An overlocker will use the same needles as a sewing machine.

An overlocker has a small fabric gathering tray attachment built in.

An overlocker has a various number of feet and attachments like a sewing machine.

An overlocker uses the same thread as a sewing machine.

An overlocker has a built in thread stand to manage the threads and prevents them from tangling.

An overlocker has two sets of feed dogs called a differential feed, this prevents puckering.

The stitches of an overlocker machine.

The chain stitch: uses one needle and one looper to create a single line of stitches. This stitch is occasionally used alone as a replacement for the straight stitch on a conventional sewing machine. Use it only for woven's as it is not flexible enough for knits. With the blade disengaged the chain stitch can be used to create interesting, decorative top-stitching. Most often however, it is used in conjunction with two thread or three thread stitch, particularly where extra stretch or security is desired. Five thread Overlockers can create the chain stitch and the three thread overlock stitch simultaneously.

The three thread stitch: uses one needle and two loopers. All three threads interlock at the fabric edge. The three thread stitch can be used by itself to join and overcast a seam or as a edge finished for a seam stitched on a conventional machine. It can also be used to create a mock flatlock seam, a blind hem and a narrow hem> In addition the three thread stitch is the most popular choice for decorative work.

The four thread stitches: There are three types of four thread overlock stitches. The four thread safety stitch is a combination chain stitch and two thread overlock stitch. It uses two needles and two loopers, one needle and one looper create a two thread safety chain stitch and the remaining needle and looper create a two thread overlock stitch. This stitch is suitable for stable or woven fabrics. Because the chain isn't a flexible, stretchable stitch, this stitch is not recommended for knits. The chain will pop when the fabric is stretched.

The four-thread overlock stitch and the four-thread mock safety stitch use two needles and two loopers. The looper threads interlock with the needle threads at the left and with one another at the fabric edges. Although these functions were designed specifically with knits in mind, they can also be used on woven's. The extra row of straight stitching that runs down the middle of the overlock stitch configuration adds stability.

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