

Understanding everything about sewing zippers

There are different types of zippers and different ways to install a zipper. A quick intro.



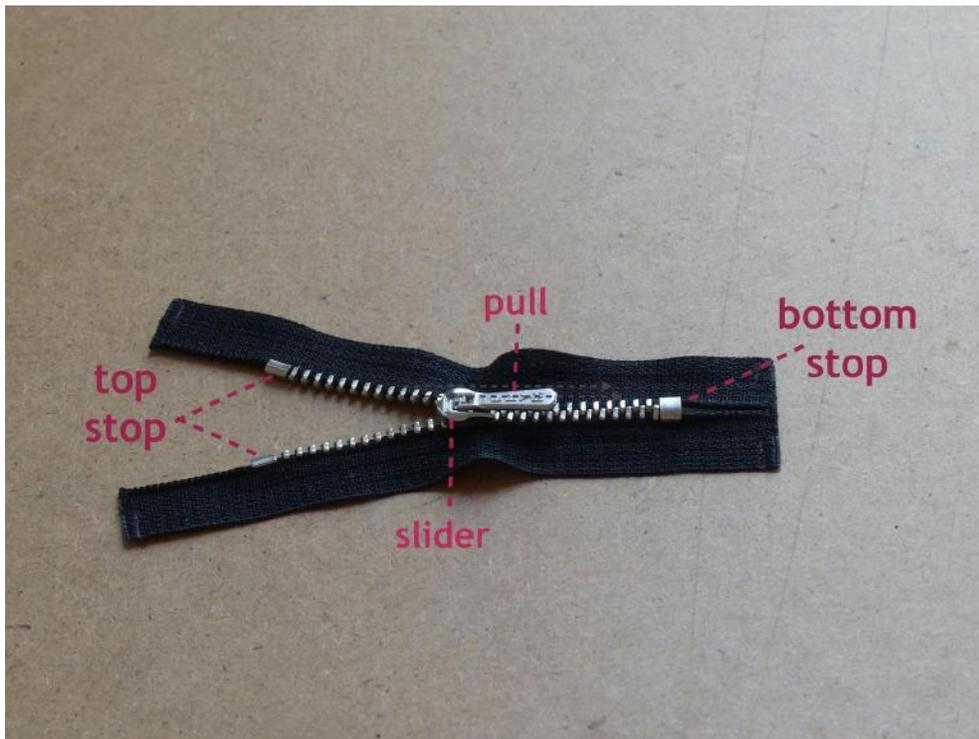
Adding a zipper to a sewing project can be intimidating. I was planning to do a post on how to sew an invisible zipper with the invisible zipper foot but, as I was researching and gathering information for this post - and I like to be thorough - my introduction kept on growing and soon became a whole article.

There is a lot to explain and discover about zippers. I promise you, the invisible zipper post will be one of my next posts. Today, you'll get some information about zippers, zipper feet, and ways to install zippers in different projects. With this intro you'll be more confident when

choosing your zipper, using the right tool, and choosing the look of the zipper on your project. In addition, you will be able to find good tutorials about the different techniques more easily because you'll know how to use the zipper terminology.

I've learned a lot while researching for this article. I have never sewn a lapped and a centered zipper, ever, really! I hope you - like me - will also learn something from this post.

PARTS



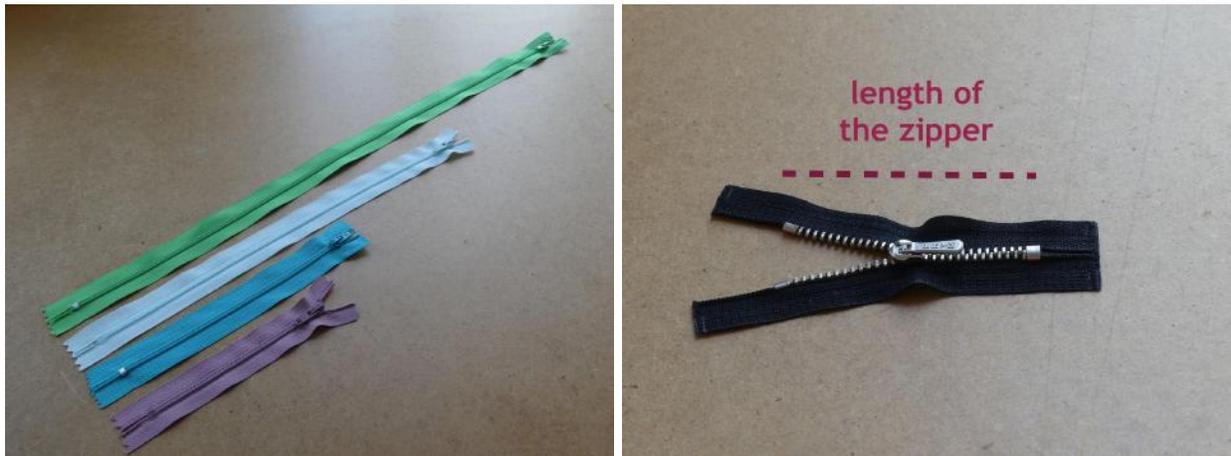
ZIPPER TYPES



First the material, weight, and colors.

First, it is important to choose the best zipper for your project, depending on what you are making. A metal (brass, nickel) zipper is better for jeans, a plastic one for a lightweight sweater. You'll need a stronger zipper for a winter coat than for a little girl's summer dress. Zippers are made in a wide variety of colors, and you can choose from many different zipper pull styles.

Choosing the length. There are many, many options. Zipper lengths range from 3 inches to 100 inches. The sizes are measured from the top stopper to the bottom stopper, so don't measure the length of the cloth tape the zipper is attached to. You can also buy zippers on a roll and cut to the exact size you need. If you're not sure about the length, it is better to buy a zipper that is too long rather than too short. You can always shorten a regular zipper. However, for open-end zippers this is harder.



About the separating style. There are open-end (or separating) and close-end zippers. If you're making a coat or a jacket, your zipper needs one end with a box and pin mechanism to separate the zipper and easily reassemble it. If you're making a bag, or installing a zipper in pants or the back of a dress, the zipper only opens at the top.



Visible or invisible? If you don't want your zipper to show, you have to buy an invisible zipper.

An invisible zipper is a zipper with very fine teeth. It's sewn into a garment in such a way that it makes the zipper invisible, hidden in a seam. Invisible zippers are available in fewer sizes and colors.



There are many different techniques to install a zipper

How you install a zipper can depend on your project, function, or a particular aesthetic. Here are 7 common ways to install a zipper.

<p>CENTERED</p>	
<p>A finishing with an even amount of fabric on each side of the zipper. Although the zipper is not exposed, you don't use an invisible zipper for this technique. Typically a centered zipper is called a centered zipper because it's on the center back or centered front seam.</p> <p>Used for skirts, blouses, and dresses in a center-back seam but can also be used on a side seam.</p>	 <p>Picture from: cutoutandkeep.net</p>

LAPPED

The “lap” in a lapped zipper refers to the fold of fabric on the left side that covers the zipper. This fold of fabric is sometimes referred to as a placket.

You see this most often on garments, especially along a front, back, or side seam.



Picture from: Colette Media

INSERTED OR SIDE PLACKET

This is similar to a centered zipper, but here the top and bottom of the zipper are sewn across. Your stitching forms a rectangle. The zipper's opening allows just enough room to get the dress on. For home décor, you might use this technique on a pillow back.

You may also have seen this on special occasion garments within a fitted side seam.



Picture from Shequiltsalot

SEPARATING

Separating zippers open at the bottom, allowing both sides of the zipper to come apart as in a jacket zipper. Installing a separating zipper takes some specific tricks. The teeth of a separating zipper need to be fully exposed so it can function properly. Used for coats, jackets, hoodies, bombers...



EXPOSED

In an exposed zipper installation all the teeth and part of the tape to either side of the teeth are exposed.

This is a common technique in sportswear, accessories and a lot of home decor projects.



CONCEALED

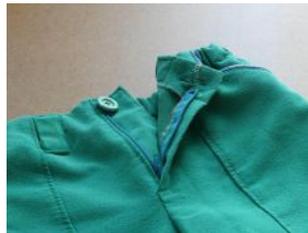
Contrary to the exposed zipper, the zipper is hidden in the seam. You can only achieve this look with an invisible zipper.

Used on dresses and blouses.



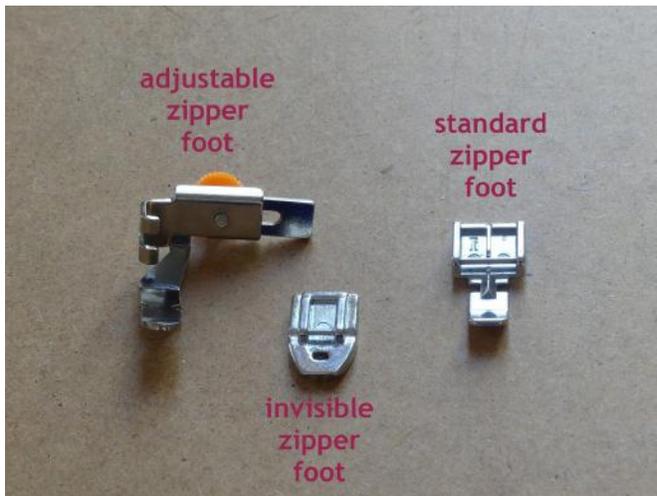
FLY FRONT

It's pretty obvious that the zipper sewn into the fly front opening of a pair of jeans, trousers or pants is a very specific process. It's sewn underneath, leaving only the curved topstitching on the outside visible.



ZIPPER FEET

Installing a zipper requires a zipper foot. Most machines come with a zipper foot to sew a conventional zipper. There are 2 other feet that you can use: an Invisible zipper foot, and an adjustable zipper foot.



All 3 feet allow you to sew really close to the teeth of the zipper.

Standard zipper foot

- Has a little notch on both sides for your needle
- You can use it left or right handed to sew either side of your zipper tape
- Best used for regular zippers

- Because you have to move your needle to the left or the right, the pressure from the presser foot is always off-center. The fabric might not feed through so well, and the foot doesn't always sit flat.



Adjustable zipper foot

- This is a versatile foot
- Has many applications and can be used to sew different types of zippers
- The foot itself can be positioned left or right, and you can adjust the positioning of the needle to exactly where you want it to be to allow for very close stitching.
- You can also use the adjustable zipper foot with an invisible zipper – simply flatten the zipper teeth as you sew just in front of the presser foot to sew as close as possible to the zipper teeth. If you don't have an invisible zipper foot, this one can work instead.
- This foot is also good for top-stitching and sewing in areas where the regular foot might be too wide.



Invisible zipper foot

- Only for invisible zippers, but it does what it was made for.
- Sews invisible zippers with ease, again using a left or right hand channel, and creates a beautifully close stitching line which will make your zippers truly invisible from the outside.
- Centers the pressure from the presser foot and uses a central needle position so feeding through goes smoothly and accurately too.



If you have any questions or suggestions, don't hesitate to send me an email:
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And enjoy your sewing adventures!

An

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