

Meet the narrow hemmers



I have to admit, I was a bit afraid of this blog post subject.. I don't have a lot of experience with rolled hems and I don't often work with very thin and slippery fabrics, for costumes, yes, but the finishing is not that important as in women's garment sewing. I know a rolled hem can be very challenging to make. Instructions usually read like: "turn edge under $\frac{1}{4}$ ", press, stitch near fold, trim to $\frac{1}{8}$ ", then turn under, press and stitch again". OK, right... After burning your fingertips and on top of that uneven and amateurish results, you might want to try - like me - one of these narrow hemming presser feet :-)

A narrow hemmer foot isn't the easiest foot to work with either. Getting started needs some explanation (so read on!) and once you're there and your material is not too slippery, it is totally manageable. The real challenge is going over seams, making corners, and finishing curved edges with really slippery material. But in the end, the result will still be more professional than trying to do the same without these feet. I hope this post gives you enough information to make a flying start!

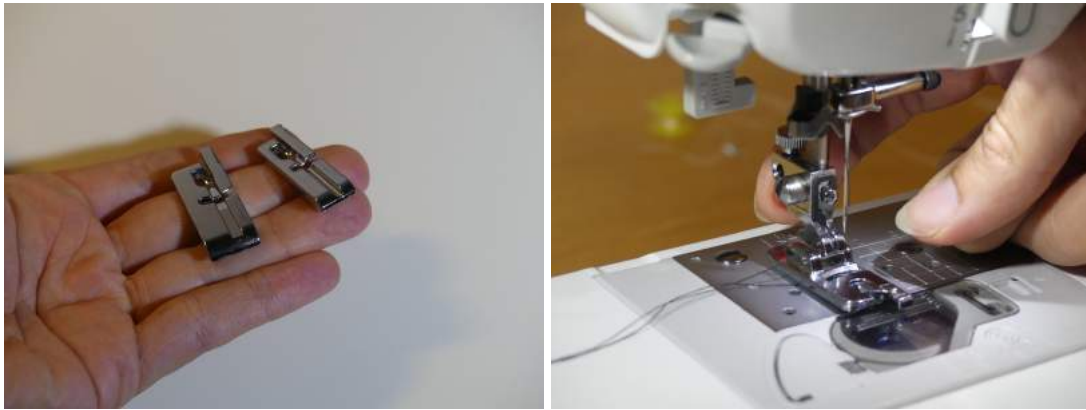
What is a narrow hem?



Narrow hems are used for lightweight and delicate fabrics. The result is a very small hem, $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{16}$ ", made up of 2 tiny folds. It's not easy to press these folds and stitch them down with a normal foot. That's where the hem foot is the tool you need. It's the fastest method once you get the grip of using the foot

A rolled hem foot or a flat hem foot, also known as hemmer feet feature a funnel on the front side where your fabric will roll up into and then the needle will sew the little hem down. They are both snap on feet and are part of our 32 pieces Ultimate Presser Foot Set (#30 & #31).

A flat hem foot is very similar to a rolled hem foot but the funnel is a little bigger and thus the hem a little wider and flatter than the rolled hem. The final hem produced by the rolled hem foot is slightly rounder, as it escapes the back of the foot through a curved groove..



Before you start

- Practice on some lightweight scraps and compare the rolled and the flat hem foot to decide on the finishing you want.
- Leave a thread tail for a better grip when you start
- Keep a pair of tweezers on hand to help you with the feeding process
- Select a small stitch length on your machine and use a needle and thread for the type of fabric you are using.

How to use the hemmer feet.

Fold the first inch of the hem over twice and pin in place, press or just hold the hem between your fingers or tweezers. Match the fold in your hem with the hem width of the foot. Both the rolled hem foot and the flat hem foot make $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide hems. Depending on the material you use the result can be a little wider. The flat hem foot and my knit fabric resulted in a 0.15" ($\frac{5}{32}$ ") wide hem

1. Turn edge under $\frac{1}{8}$ "



2. Double fold $\frac{1}{8}$ "



3. Put the fold under your presser foot



4. Presser foot in the down position



5. Lower the needle
The needle should be right at the inner fold of the fabric. Sew a couple of stitches and back stitch



6. Lift the presser foot. Keep the needle in the down position



7. Put the fabric in the curl



8. Start stitching and feeding the fabric in evenly



If you're using a very lightweight fabric that is difficult to handle, you can stabilize the first inch with a little strip of fusible interfacing or spray some hairspray on your fabric to stiffen the fabric. It won't slip that much and will feed easier as well.

Some people first sew on a little thread tail to get a better grip. Just sew a few stitches and backstitch.

If your fabric sinks into the throat plate, you can put a tissue or a small piece of paper under the presser foot.



Sew slowly. Use both hands to guide the fabric through the funnel. The left hand will guide the fabric through. Keep a little tension, without pulling too hard. Slightly direct the fabric to the left so that it feeds easier.

Feed in a little strip of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Make sure the fold stays next to the foot and doesn't go under. The fabric that goes under results in a wider hem. Even feeding is important.



If you feed too much fabric in, the raw edge will show next to the hem.



When you feed too little, it will result in a single fold hem and the raw edge will show as well.



The dark material is a very thin stretchy knit fabric, so I used a little zigzag. In this picture the left stitching is with the rolled hem foot, the right with the flat hem foot.



SEAMS and narrow hemmer feet

Going over **seams** is tricky. If they are tiny, they might just pass through the curl and then it's easy. You can first try to make them less bulky. Just trim the corners. Unfortunately, most of the times the seam won't pass the curl. Then you are going to have to stop half an inch before the seam, put the fabric double folded flat under the foot and stitch it down like you would do with a standard foot and once you're past the seam, you just wriggle the fabric back in and continue. A third option is to end half an inch before the seam, backstitch. Skip the seam and restart beyond the seam. When you finish sewing with the hemmer foot, go back and fill in the hem at the cross seams separately with a standard foot or a walking foot.

I used the second method and finally baste the edge around the seam a bit, because the fold just wouldn't stay as I wanted it.



CIRCULAR HEMS and hemmer feet

Hemming a **circular edge** is basically the same as the hemming over seams. The feeding of curved edges is more challenging than straight edges. And at a certain point you will reach a seam. Then just trim the edges of the seam allowance and use one of the techniques I discribed above.





SQUARE CORNERS and hemmer feet

Finishing square **corners with a hemmer foot** is not easy. I've seen some neat results with the hemmer feet but I haven't gotten the results I want. More practice I suppose. I can explain you the technique. Hem the first edge, like the others, you start, hem and stop at the corner. Cut the threads. Double fold the next edge 1/8". Sew a couple of stitches, needle down, presser foot up and wriggle the fabric in the curl. Hem until the corner. If the next edge already has a hem, you stop half an inch before the corner, get the fabric out of the curl, double fold it and put it under the presser foot and stitch the hem down. There is no fabric in the funnel.



I hemmed a basic long sleeved t-shirt with the flat hem foot. The fabric is a real soft fine quality knit with a lot of stretch (= not so easy to work with :-)). I basted the seams a bit to hold the double fold in place. There is still room for improvement, but I'm getting there, I'm sure :-)



My quick tips for knit fabrics:

- Use a rotary cutter + mat and pattern weights for cutting out the pattern. You get a much nicer cut than with scissors
- Use a stretch needle (and/or double needle, or a jersey needle)
- Select a low stitch width number with a higher stitch length so you get a flat looking stitch. These stitches can stretch with the fabric.
- Use a knit foot or a walking foot
- Use your serger to finish the edges (3 threads) or use 4 threads and don't bother using your sewing machine.
- Iron on seam tape to strengthen the collar
- Use a flat hem foot to finish the bottom edge and the sleeves.

A knit foot



If you have a question, please send me an email or leave a comment.
I wish you all a very nice day and hope you keep on reading our blog!

An

Sewing aficionado and keen sewing blogger/vlogger.

An is Madam Sew's dedicated creative brain, writing and filming insightful, inspirational content for the sewing enthusiast.

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