

# Basic stitches

## Length and width

Stitch length controls the speed of the feed dog and is measured in millimetres from 0 to 4 (sometimes up to 6 for high-end machines). Higher numbers mean the feed dog moves faster in relation to the needle and the stitches are longer. The default setting is 2.5 mm. Stitch width controls how far away from the centre the needle can swing. A straight stitch has a width of 0 mm, while a zigzag can be as narrow as 1 mm or as wide as 4 mm.

## Straight stitch

You will use this for 99 percent of all your sewing. It is the basic construction stitch to connect one fabric to another. Use a 2.5-mm length for basic sewing, 4 mm or longer for basting, 3 mm for topstitching, and 1.5 to 2 mm for stress points such as corners and purse straps. Straight stitches do not stretch so do not use them for stretch knits.

## Zigzag

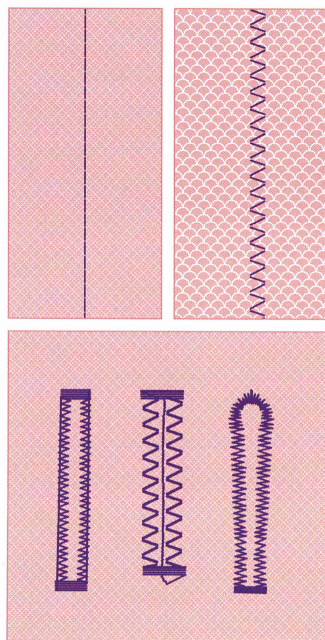
The zigzag can be used as a decorative topstitch, to finish seam allowances to prevent fabric edges from fraying, to sew on appliqués, stitch monograms and for sewing stretch knits. Use a 2.5-mm length and 3.5-mm width for basic sewing, 0.5-mm length and 4 to 5 mm width for satin-stitching appliqués and embroidery, and a 2.5-mm length and 0.5-mm width for stretch sewing.

## Buttonhole

A buttonhole is a box made of tiny zigzag stitches. You can stitch a buttonhole using the zigzag stitch, but it is easier to have a buttonhole stitch. Mechanical machines do a four-step buttonhole while computerised machines do an automatic or one-step buttonhole. Regular buttonholes are standard and can be used on all types of fabric and for all types of buttons. Keyhole buttonholes have a rounded end that opens wider for ball-type buttons. Knit buttonholes have a more defined zigzag stitch to allow for more stretch.

SEE ALSO ➤

**page 170:** Buttonholes



Top left: Straight stitch

Top right: Zigzag stitch

Bottom: Standard buttonhole, knit buttonhole, keyhole buttonhole

## TIP

Note that mechanical machines can do only regular buttonholes.