LEsson – 18: SEWING FEDERAL STANDARDS FOR SEAM

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18.0 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to have a clear idea of the following
➢ Designation and identification of seams.
➢ International standards
➢ Classifications of seams and their description
➢ Features and application of each seam class

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this lesson is to teach you the different kinds of seams that are used in the making of fashionable clothes. Every good dressmaker knows and uses these various seams to achieve smart finishing touches and neat edges. By the time you have completed this lesson, you will be able to make each one of these seams without any trouble whatever. We have taken particular pains to simplify them as much as possible and to make them all easy to follow.

The seam, you know, is the corner-stone of all good dress construction—just as the outline sketch is the base upon which all good art work is built. Without the right kind of seams the dress will not hang correctly, it will not appear smart or well-finished. Without the right kind of seams, the blouse will not withstand many washings and re-washings, and it will soon lose the smartness of its style. A dress may be beautiful when you finish it, but without the right seams in the right places, its beauty will be short lived.
18.2 SEAM

The choice of seam type is determined by aesthetic standards, strength, durability, comfort in wear, convenience in assembly in relation to the machinery available, and cost. BS 3870: Part 2: 1991, referred to above, allows for eight different classes of seam, including some where only one piece of fabric is involved.

The British Standard divides stitched seams into eight classes according to the minimum number of parts that make up the seam. These parts can be the main fabrics of the garment or some additional item such as a lace, braid or elastic.

To indicate how the various seam types are formed, several styles of diagram fig 18.1 can be used. The one which most clearly relates to garment parts as sewn shows a perspective view of a section of the seam, and, when the various stitch types are being discussed, it is useful to show a section of the reverse side of the stitch.

Once familiarity with seam types has been established, it is often sufficient to draw the diagrams in a shorthand version which shows a cross-section through the fabric represented by lines, with short lines at right angles showing the point of needle penetration of the stitch.

Six seam classes were included in the 1965 British Standard and at that stage they were given names which usefully describe their constructions. Two more classes were added with the publication of the 1983 edition, but without the descriptive names, and the total of eight continues in the 1991 edition.

18.2.1 CLASS 1 (SUPERIMPOSED SEAM)

This class is the commonest construction of seam and it has the following types.

- Superimposed seam
- French seam
- Piped seam

The simplest seam type fig 18.2 within the class is formed by superimposing the edge of one piece of material on another. A variety of stitch types can be used on this type of seam, both for joining the fabrics and for neatening the edges or for achieving both simultaneously.
The diagrams normally show the final version and it should be clear from the positions of
the needles and the folding of the fabric if it was constructed in one step or several. An example
if this is the type of superimposed seam known as a French seam fig 18.3 which is done in two
stages.

An example of a superimposed seam with an additional component would be one that
contained an inserted piping fig 18.4, and even here more than one construction is possible.

18.2.2 CLASS 2 (LAPPED SEAM)

This class is has the following types.

- Lapped seam
- Lap felled seam
- Welted seam

In practice, this simple seam (lapped seam fig 18.5) is not common in clothing because it
causes problems with raw edges and at least one of the edges must be neatened in a decorative
manner. Sail fabrics are very finely woven and fray very little,
much more common on long seams on garments such as jeans and shirts is the so-called
lap-felled seam fig 18.6, sewn with two rows of stitches on a twin needle machine equipped with
a folding device. This provides a very strong seam in garments that will take a lot of wear though
there is a possibility that the thread on the surface may suffer abrasion in areas such as inside leg
seams.

The type of raised, topstitched seam often used down skirt panels is also technically a
lapped seam although at the beginning of its construction it appears to be a superimposed seam.
It is often referred to as a welted fig 18.7 or a raised and welted seam.

18.2.3 CLASS 3(BOUND SEAM)

In this class, the seam consists of an edge of material which is bound by another fig 18.8,
with the possibility of other components inserted into the binding.

The simplest version of this class is again unusual as it cannot be constructed with self-
fabric binding because of the problem of raw edges. It can, however, be made with a binding
which has been constructed to a specific width. A folding device turns the edges under and wraps
the strip over the edge of the main fabric. Bias cut strip would normally be used, useless the
fabric had an element of stretch fig 18.9. A bound seam is often used as a decorative edge and the
binding may continue off the edge if the ferment to provide tie ends.

18.2.4 CLASS 4(FLAT SEAMS)
In this class, seams are referred to as flat seams fig 18.10 because the fabric edges do not overlap. They may be butted together without a gap and joined across by a stitch which has two needles sewing into each fabric and covering threads passing back and forth between these needles on both side of the fabric. Knitted fabrics are most commonly used because the advantage of this seam is that it provides a join that is free from bulk in garments worn close to the skin such as knitted underwear.

**18.2.5 CLASS 5(DECORATIVE STITCHING)**

![Decorative Stitching](image)

Fig 18.11

This is the first of the two classes of steam which, in the old British Standard, were not regarded as seams at all and were given the name ‘stitching’. The main use of the seam is for decorative sewing on garments where single or multiple rows of stitches are sewn through one or more layer of fabric (fig 18.11). These several layers can be folds of the same fabric. The simplest seam in the class has decorative stitching across a garment panel. One row would have little effect but multi needle stitching is common. Other possibilities, given the right folding device, are pin tucks, often sewn in multiples, and channel seams.

**18.2.6 CLASS 6 (EDGE NEATENING)**

This is the other seam class that was called a stitching. Seam types in this class include those where fabric edges are neatened by means of stitches (as opposed to binding with another or the same fabric) as well as folded hems and edges. The simplest is the fabric edge inside a garment which has been neatened with an over edge stitch.

![Edge Neatening](image)

Fig 18.12

In fig 18.12 is typical of dress or a pair of trousers in a woven fabric which has been neated might be omitted. A folding device is used in the construction of the hem of shirt or a skirt lining.

![Edge Neatening](image)

Fig 18.13
In fig 18.13 shown a method of folding and this is sometimes used on the buttonhole front of shirt.

**18.2.7 CLASS 7**

![Image of seam](image)

**Fig 18.14**

Seams in this class relate to the addition of separate items to the edge of a garment part. They are similar to the lapped seam except that the added component has a definite edge on both sides. Examples fig 18.14 would be a band of lace attached to the lower edge of a slip as in figure, elastic braid on the edge of a bra and inserted elastic on the leg of a swimsuit.

An example where the additional item is self-fabric plus interlining is another version of the buttonhole band on a shirt.

**18.2.8 CLASS 8**

The final seam (fig 18.15) class in the British Standard is another where only one piece of material need be involved in construction the seam. The commonest seam type in this class is the belt loop as used on jeans, raincoats.

![Image of seam](image)

**Fig 18.15**

The use of the belt loop of the stitch type mentioned before which has two needles and a bottom covering thread ensures that the raw edges are covered over on the underside while showing two rows of plain stitching on the top.

**18.3 LET US SUM UP**

Seam and stitch are interrelated one. Both are give an equal contribution of fabric seam strength. The method of placing the fabric and the types of fold gives the different classes of seams. In this lesson we discussed the classification based on the British standard.

**18.4 LESSON END ACTIVITIES**

The students may do the following activities based on this lesson

- Practice and if possible prepare the samples for all the different seams
18.5 POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

Here the students are asked to discuss about the following points

- Different classes of seams based on its federal standards

18.6 REFERENCES:

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- The complete book of sewing, by Dorling Kindersley, Dorling Kindersley L.t.d...
- Readers Digest Sewing Guide, The Readers Digest Association