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Decorative Zipper Techniques
by Sheri McKillop



Using zippers decoratively in your garments can be a fun and interesting way to change the look of a pattern. With easy-to-follow instructions you can insert zippers into a number of areas that you may not have considered.

FLY FRONT ZIPPER: These zippers are a classic addition to any pair of pants; now consider putting them in skirts or dresses. Make the pattern alterations yourself or request the fly front option when your order your pattern. Skirt 6014 is a great example of how a skirt can go from business to casual by adding a fly front zipper.

To alter your own pattern, add a seam line where you wish to have the zipper. For example, if you are adding a fly front to a skirt section that is cut on the fold you will need to add a seam allowance to that line. Draw a line parallel to your new seam line, 1 1/2" away. Continue this line 8" from the waistline. At the bottom of this line use a curved ruler, or a large spool, to curve the line into the seam line. Measure 1/2" from the bottom of this curve and 2" in from the cut edge of the fly extension. Mark a dot at this point. Now your pattern is ready. When adding the extension to a dress, make the zipper opening long enough to get the dress on over your bust and hips.

There are many methods for installing a fly front zipper. You can try ours or use your favorite. Mark the center front lines on both fronts. Trim 5/8" from the right front fly extension. Interface the left fly extension ending at the dot. On a pant pattern be sure the crotch seam is secure. It will be difficult to mend if the stitching breaks.

Choose a zipper that is longer than the opening. This will allow the top of the zipper to hang over the top edge of the garment and not interfere with your stitching. Right sides together, place the zipper on the right front fly extension matching zipper stop to marked dot. Align zipper tape edge with the raw edge of fabric. Place the zipper stop next to the dot. Stitch close to zipper tape. Fold zipper right side up. Stitch again close to the teeth through the zipper and extension.

Place the garment right side up. Press the left fly extension to the wrong side on the center front line. Lap left front over right front, matching center front markings. Baste shut. Fold left side of garment, right sides together, over right side. Stitch the left side

of the zipper to the left front extension. Do not stitch through any other layers.

Mark the topstitching line on the left front of the garment. You can use a large thread spool as a template for the bottom, curved line. Topstitch through the left front and left front fly extension only. You can add bar tacks at the bottom of the topstitching to reinforce this spot. If you wish to add a fly protector cut a strip of self-fabric 3" by 10". Fold lengthwise, wrong sides together. With zipper open, place the raw edge of the fly protector behind the right front zipper section having raw edges even. Topstitch through zipper, fly extension and fly protector. Close zipper and topstitch around bottom section of curve through all layers, including fly protector.

WELT POCKET ZIPPERS: Now that you have a fly front in your funky new summer dress, you might like to add a jacket that has zippers in the welt pockets. Many sewers are timid of welt pockets let alone trying to add a zipper but this method is easy and foolproof. Hold the pattern piece up to yourself and decide where is the most comfortable spot for a pocket. Draw a line on the pattern. On a piece of non-fusible stabilizer (not a tear away product), draw a rectangle the desired size of your finished pocket. Measure your zipper to determine how much you wish to have showing including the zipper pull and stop. Match the rectangle on the stabilizer piece to the placement line on your garment. Using a short stitch length, stitch around the rectangle. Cut down the center of the rectangle to within 1/2" of each end. Cut on an angle to each corner. Fold the sides of the stabilizer towards the middle of the rectangle. Press, being sure the stabilizer does not flip back. Use a damp press cloth, if necessary. Turn the stabilizer to the wrong side and press flat. No stabilizer should be seen from the right side. Position your zipper in the opening of the pocket. Glue baste in place. From the right side, topstitch around the pocket opening through the pocket and zipper. On the wrong side of the garment place a scrap of fabric, large enough for the pocket bag, on top of the pocket. Draw this shape on a second piece of fabric but this time draw the bottom line of the zipper in the pocket. Trim around drawn lines leaving a 1/2" seam allowance. Right sides together, stitch pocket bag to each of the two seam allowances of the pocket and zipper. Stitch pocket bags together. Flip it over and be proud of the fact you just created a welt pocket with a zipper!

EXPOSED ZIPPERS: Now let's try an exposed zipper as a front closure, or maybe an exposed zipper in places where there are no closures. For example, in a narrow-legged pant, add an ankle

zipper. In a longer jacket, like 8017, side seam zippers from the hem to the waist. This type of application can change a pattern from classic to modern. To install an exposed zipper, open the zipper. Place one side of the zipper tape, right sides together along one seam allowance. Have the raw edge of fabric even with edge of zipper tape. Stitch 1/8" from teeth. Close zipper. Seam lines across the zipper may require matching. For example, if you are installing this zipper in a bomber jacket, the seam lines of collar and lower band must match across the zipper. Mark the seam lines on the side of the zipper that is not installed first. Open zipper. Match key points to corresponding points on zipper tape. Stitch the same as the first side and your zipper will match perfectly.