

# The Fabulous Flatlock!

BY NANCY BEDNAR

Part of the fun of owning a serger is working with stitches that you cannot find or duplicate using your traditional sewing machine. The flatlock stitch is a great example. Consisting of a needle thread, plus one or two looper threads, a flatlock stitch has both practical and decorative stitch applications. Bulk-free, perfectly flat seams make this serger stitch the seam of choice in active wear, sportswear or lingerie construction. Team this distinctive stitch with a variety of weights and types of decorative threads, and the unique “loops” and “ladders” of the stitch shine with endless creative possibilities.

*Note: Either needle can be used in both stitch formations for a wide (left needle) or narrow (right needle) seam.*

## Tension and Stitch Length

When flatlock stitching, extremely loose needle tension is the key to a completely flat seam. Depending upon the fabric, needle tension can be set as low as 1 or 0 to achieve the desired look. Looper tension will usually be set at a normal setting of 4-5.

Flatlock stitch length can vary according to the threads chosen for your project. Remember that heavy decorative threads need more room between stitches to nestle smoothly, so the stitch length will need to be lengthened, probably 3mm or longer. Conversely, silkier, slimmer rayon threads take on a satiny, ribbon like appearance if their stitch length is shortened to 1.5mm or shorter. Experiment with fabric scraps from your project using a variety of threads, adjusting stitch length and tensions to see what appearances you can give to your fibers. You'll be surprised at how a simple change like stitch length can affect the overall seam appearance.

Directions for this simple flatlocked shawl can be found in *Creative Serging: Innovative Techniques to Get the Most From Your Serger* by Nancy Bednar and Anne van der Kley.

## Stitch Details

*Note: Consult your serger guidebook for the recommended threading paths for either form of flatlock serging.*

Serger flatlock seams can be sewn using two or three threads:



**2-THREAD FLATLOCK** uses one needle (left or right) and the lower looper thread *only*. This flatlock technique produces the flattest seaming when pulled taut.



**3-THREAD FLATLOCK** uses a needle thread along with both the upper and lower looper. This stitch makes a strong seam, due to the needle and two loop-

er threads sewn together. This seam may not pull completely flat because of the amount of thread in the stitch formation.

## Stitch Steps

Flatlock serging is a two-step process. Fabrics can be placed right sides together or wrong sides together, depending upon which side of the stitch you want to showcase (the “loops” or the “ladders”). Unlike other serger stitches, the flatlock can be serged on the edge of two pieces of fabric as a seam or along a folded edge anywhere on the surface of the fabric.

### STEP 1:

Place fabrics right or wrong sides together. Serge along the edges. When you look at the seam, the stitches will look much looser and a little different than those in a traditional overlock seam – this is correct. The needle thread and the looper thread(s) should meet on the edge of the fabric but will not be tight against it.



### STEP 2:

Separate the fabric layers and gently pull the unseamed edges of the fabrics apart, to the left and right. Magically a new stitch will appear! The loosened needle tension allows the seam to pull flat.

Loops



Ladders



This seam has two distinctly different sides: One side of the seam looks like a row of looped zigzag stitches.

The second side of the seam looks like small horizontal stitches, seemingly floating over the fabric with no visible support. This side is called the “ladder” side of the flatlocking and offers great creative possibilities.

# Flatlock Fun!

Once you have mastered the basics of flatlocking, your creative journey has just begun! Experiment with these techniques, all made possible by the simple flatlock serger stitch:

### DECORATIVE:

Blanket stitching, flatlock couching, fagoting, fringing, attaching beads and sequins, ladder weaving

### HOME DEC:

Professional drapery hems, soutache pintucks, custom braids

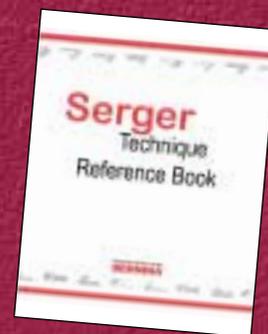
### GARMENT:

Flatlocked and fringed seams, blind hems, decorative placket zippers

For more serger inspiration and ideas, read:

*Serger Technique Reference Book*

Published by BERNINA® of America, Inc.



*Creative Serging: Innovative Techniques to Get the Most From Your Serger*

by Nancy Bednar and Anne van der Kley

Published by Sterling Publishing, Inc.