

Centered Zipper Installation

Standard Zipper

This tutorial is for a standard zipper - centered application and is not to be used with invisible zippers.
The zipper in this tutorial is installed at the center back of a dress, from the neckline downward.



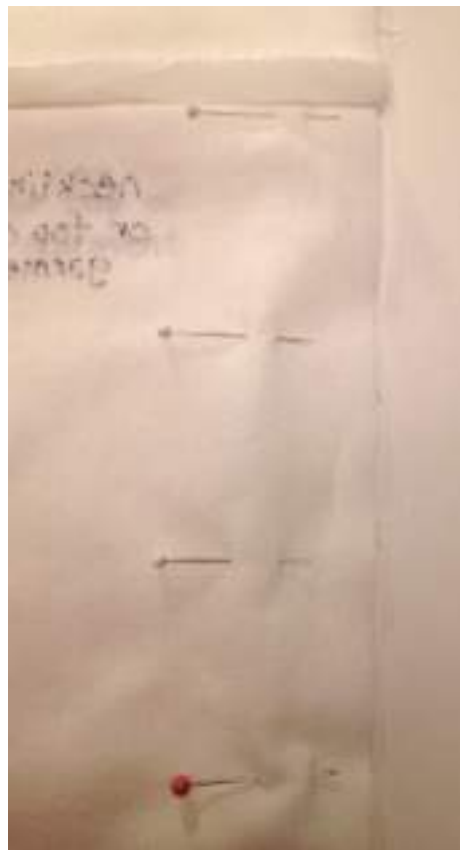
Clip top of zipper at a diagonal to reduce bulk.



If you need to shorten the zipper you can do so by sewing across the zipper at the desired length -
sew back and forth several times then trim the zipper 1/2" below the sewing.



Align the top of the zipper tab 1/8" down from the neckline seam along one edge of the center back.
Use a straight pin to mark the fabric at the bottom of the zipper.



*This photo shows the step in
a sample fabric.*

With right side together, line up the center back edges of the dress. Make sure the neckline seams (and any waistline seams) are lined up evenly. Pin. This photo shows a pink pin marking the spot where the zipper bottom meets the fabric. Leave your "zipper bottom" pin in place.

This photo shows the step in a sample fabric.



Take a couple of backstitches at the top (neckline). Use a larger than normal stitch length to machine baste stitch from the neckline to the zipper bottom marking - using a 5/8" seam allowance. When you reach the zipper bottom point, stop sewing. Then, using a regular length stitch (still 5/8" seam allowance), take a couple of backstitches - up to the pin marking - and then sew - from that point to the bottom of the dress. In this photo the basting stitches are black & the regular seam stitches below where the zipper will be are pink. The basting stitches will be removed later. Some pattern instructions will call for you to sew the seam section - from the zipper bottom to the dress bottom - at an earlier point in the dress construction-leaving an opening for the zipper. If this is the case, you need only sew the basting stitches at this point.



Press seam open.



Use a standard zipper foot for the following steps. This is what mine looks like.

Working with the dress inside out. Lay the dress on a work surface folding it along the center back seam so that the right side seam allowance is opened out with no dress fabric behind it.

Lay the zipper - right side down on top of the pressed open seam - centering the zipper within the seam allowances.

Pin the right side of the zipper to the right side seam allowance.

The top of the zipper tab should be 1/8" down from the neckline seam.

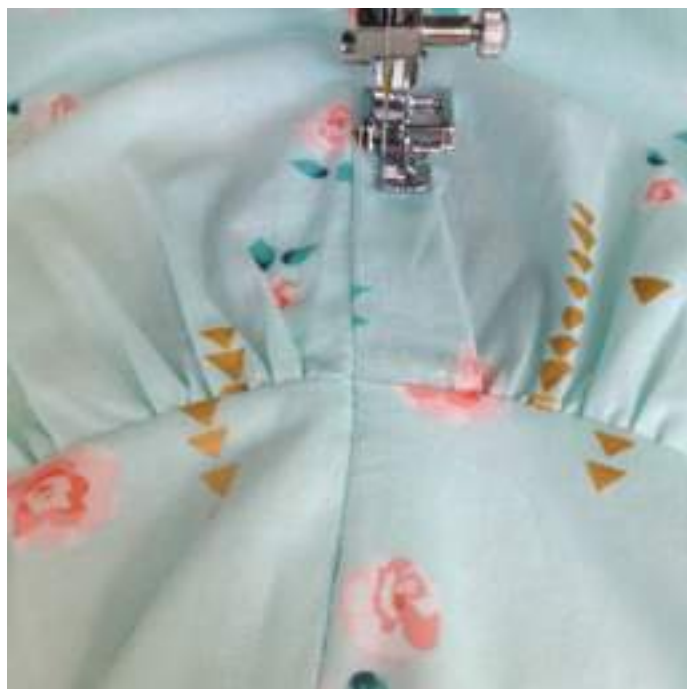
** I have found that, for a dress, when I place the zipper top 1/8" away from neckline edge - it's not necessary to include a hook and eye above the zipper.*

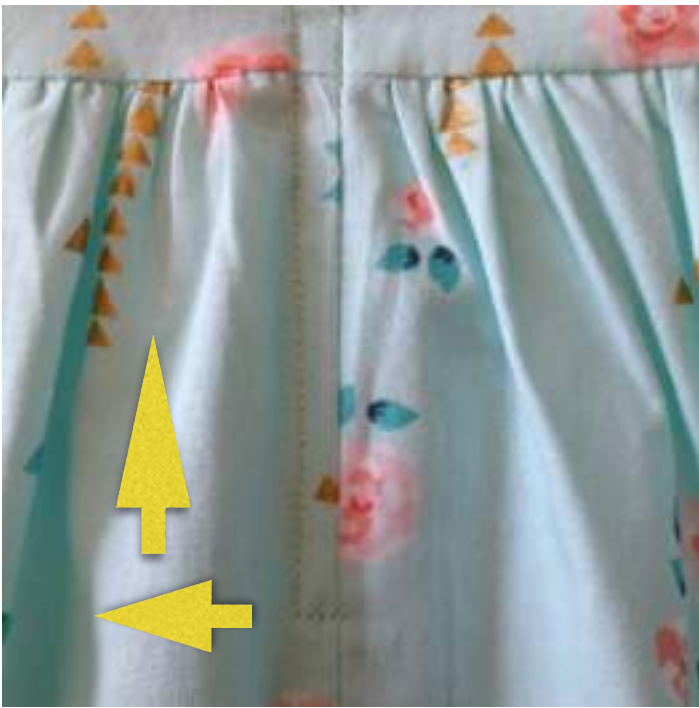
Position the zipper foot so that the needle is to the left of the presser foot.

Sew from the top of the zipper to the bottom about 1/4" to the right of the zipper teeth.

This stitching will not be seen - its purpose is to keep the zipper in place while working on the right side of the dress.







Working on the right side of the dress, start at the bottom of the zipper. Your first stitches will be perpendicular to the seam. Start 1/4" from the center seam with 3-4 back stitches. Sew from the seam for 1/4" to the side. Pivot at a 90 degree angle and continue to **sew until you reach a couple of inches from the zipper top**. Follow direction of arrows. Stop sewing and leave the threads about 6 inches long. Use care to keep your stitching line straight. These stitches should be a standard length. Take the top thread, thread it through a hand sewing needle and bring the thread to the back of the garment. Tie the thread together with the bobbin thread in a double knot.

** A common problem with zipper installation is that it is difficult to sew around the zipper tab without having the stitches bow out . This is why I like to stop sewing a couple of inches below the zipper top - then, later after opening the zipper and moving the tab out of the way it is easier to sew.*

** It is best to start sewing at the zipper bottom for each side of the zipper-sewing toward to top -rather than starting at the top and sewing around the bottom and back up the other side. The reason for this is that you do not want one side of the zipper to be pulled one way by the stitching and the other side to be pulled the other way. This can distort the look of the zipper.*



It is necessary to change the position of the zipper foot from one side of the needle to the other when you work on the other side of the zipper. Change the zipper foot position and sew the other side in the same manners the first side.



With a seam ripper, unpick the basted portion of the seam running down the length of the zipper. Remove any threads. Open the zipper so that the tab is down lower - out of the way of where you will be sewing the top 2" of the zipper.

Pin the top of one side of the open zipper to the fabric - keeping the zipper teeth lined up just as they are on the section of the zipper that you have already sewn. Begin sewing right where you left off, leaving the thread 6" long (to be moved to the back of the fabric by bringing it through with a needle - as in the previous step). Sew until you reach the zipper top and backstitch a few stitches.



Change the position of zipper foot and repeat for the other side of the zipper.



Use a hand sewing needle to bring the thread to the inside of the dress and tie it in a square knot with the bobbin thread.



Dress bodices typically include a neck facing or bodice lining. Tuck the trimmed top ends of the zipper into the facing or lining to hide them and keep them from fraying. If the bodice is fully lined, turn the lining in 5/8" along the zipper. Pin, then hand sew the lining along the zipper - keeping it out of the way of the zipper teeth.

Your done! :)

