

BLING on a SWING TOP

A case for experimenting small

By Sara Gray of Sew Together



Swing Top pattern custom drafted using the Sure Fit Designs Dress Kit. Sure Fit Designs (surefitdesigns.com) is a custom pattern-making system that uses your measurements to create a body blueprint master pattern, which is then altered to create any style you like. Glenda Sparling (aka Glenda the Good Stitch) was most kind and patient in helping me to get my body blueprint perfected. From there, it was easy to follow the dress kit's instructions on how to design a swing top.

I made a navy knit swing top! It was fine as is, but I wanted to add some kind of trim around the neckline to jazz it up a bit. Found a pretty silver and white metallic cord trim, but wasn't sure which stitch, stitch length and width, presser foot, and thread color to use to sew the trim.

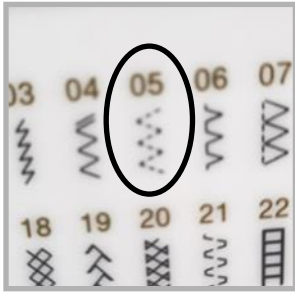
So, I made a front neckline shaped sample (same fabric, same curve, same number of layers).

By sewing on the sample, I was able to determine a good stitch length and width that was barely visible but secured the trim in place. I tried a couple of thread colors to see which blended best. I also machine washed and air dried the sample to see how well the trim held up—very well, thankfully.

I am so glad that I made a sample first—removing zigzag stitches from a knit fabric would not be fun, and the trim was somewhat 'delicate' and wouldn't have stood up to overhandling/unsewing very well. Read on for more thoughts and details.

The Trim





STITCH SETTINGS

Which Stitch:
3-step Zigzag Stitch



Stitch Length: 3.0

Stitch Width: 7.0
This is the widest width my machine would do—wish I could have set it a little wider, but this worked.



No matter what 'new technique' you want to try, experimenting small can save you time in the long run (and remove the fear of ruining the real project) — and the sample can be filed for future reference, including your notes regarding stitch settings, etc).

The Real Deal—sewing trim to the neckline

Started with cord ends taped to prevent fraying as I sewed around the neckline. Also started with taped parts in an area where I wanted/knew they would be cut off before the final join-up of the end tails. Started stitching about 1/2" from taped ends, on the cords, with the taped parts being behind the presser foot—much easier than starting at the very end of the cords.

Here, I have sewn almost completely around the neckline and am ready to cut off the beginning tails even with the center back seam (and then cut the end tails to meet the beginning tails).

Beginning tails trimmed even with center back seam. End tails trimmed to meet beginning tails with no gap or overlap. Yes, it looks wonky, but the ends did meet up perfectly.

Presser Foot Note—Used a zigzag foot with a clear shield in front of the needle (this foot came with my machine). The clear shield helped me to be able to see where the cords were as they approached the needle. Later, I used an open toe foot, and it worked just as well, if not better. So, try more than one foot when you experiment.





For the join:

Which Stitch:
3-step Zigzag
Stitch

Stitch Length:
0.4 (should have
tested this
better —this
was too short
for the machine
to feed nicely)

Stitch Width: 7.0



For 1/2" before and after the join, shortened stitch length to secure stitches. Had to help machine feed the fabric due to bulk of seam, and had to attempt to keep wispy trim ends inside the stitching. Sort of worked. If I had it to do over, would only do shorter stitches for 1/4"- 3/8" before and after join—1/2" was overkill. Used Fray Check seam sealant to hopefully prevent further fraying. If it does fray too badly, will use 1" wide ribbon or fabric to cover the join.



This could have been 'the end', but in some places, the stitches pushed metallic parts of the trim to the inside of the shirt, where they were scratchy on the skin. So, to cover the scratchies, I did a facing flip & stitch.

FACING FLIP & STITCH

I folded up the lower part of the neck facing to cover the stitches, and straight stitched it in place right next to the upper edge of the trim, with a zipper foot.

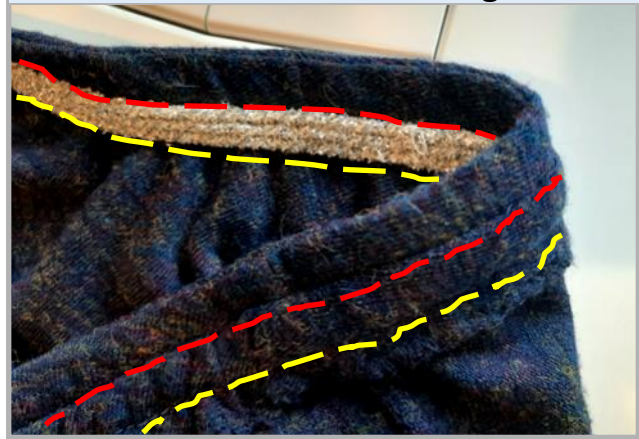
Fold up and stitch the facing—covers zigzag



Fold down and stitch the facing

I initially thought I would trim off any excess facing, but instead decided to fold the facing back down again and sew next to the lower edge of the trim. This worked well, and did not add excessive bulk, since the fabric was on the thin side to begin with.

A wide fabric strip sewn under the trim on the inside of each wrist may be needed if the scratchies bother me there.



Finished neckline before and after the Facing Flip & Stitch

The 'after' not only feels better, but looks better, too.

