

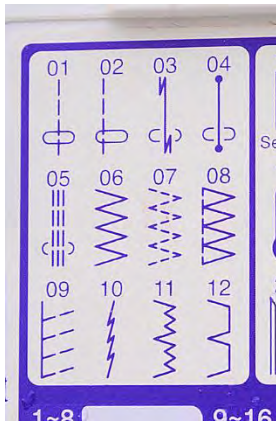
The Swimming Seamstress

Understanding machine stitches

One of the confusing things about starting to make swimwear is trying to decide what stitches to use to make your cozzies. Here is a little guide to help demystify what the stitches are and how they can be used.

First of all, many of these stitches will come as standard on reasonably priced domestic sewing machines. You may find the stitches are pre-programmed – in other words you cannot change the stitch length of the stitch width. On more sophisticated machines it is likely that you will be able to alter the needle position, stitch length and stitch width as well as the amount of pressure or force exerted by the presser foot – this is useful to alter when working with ‘difficult’ fabrics – i.e., very fine, thick or slippery.

Here we have a photograph from the front of a standard domestic sewing machine.



1. Standard straight stitch with the needle in the central position –this means you can use the seam guide on the throat plate. This look like vertical lines with small numbers next to and indicates the distance between the needle and the line. Useful for sewing accurate seam allowances.
2. Standard straight stitch with the needle in the far left position – useful for top stitching or when a small seam allowance is required.
3. Automatic lock stitch – this will create a backstitch at the beginning and end of your sewing.
4. Invisible lock stitch – this creates a ‘knot’ on the underside if you want to avoid an unsightly backstitch.
5. Triple stretch stitch – for strengthening areas of a garment whilst allowing for some movement.
6. Standard zigzag – can be used as a stitch for a holding seam in swimwear e.g., sewing the side seams.
7. Triple stitch- excellent for topstitching when elastic has been applied.
8. Mock overlocking stitch – this mimics an overlocker but doesn’t have the blade to trim the fabric but this can be done by hand once the stitching is in place. Useful for finishing an edge.
9. Knit stitch for a holding seam – quite similar to the overlocking stitch but provides more movement in the fabric.
10. Lightning bolt stitch – this is like a staggered zigzag with a larger stitch inbetween which provides some elasticity in the stitches. I use this a lot when making lingerie.
11. Blind hem stretch – use to sew a blind hem on stretch fabrics.
12. Blind hem for stable woven fabrics.

The stitches I use most frequently when making my swimming costumes are;

Zigzag for applying elastic and for small hems.

Mock overlock for holding seams

Triple stitch for topstitching elastic into position

Lightning bolt stitch for sewing darts.

!!!CREATE SAMPLES AND TRY OUT YOUR SETTINGS BEFORE MAKING YOUR COZZIES!!!

In stitches,

Amanda x