

Serger Tips:: How to Gather with a Serger

MARCH 15, 2013 BY [LESLIE](#) 49 COMMENTS

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Serger owners: Did you know you can use your serger to gather fabric? Imagine the possibilities ~ no more knotted or broken threads when you gather fabric. It will be like you've died and gone to *gathering Heaven*. Now that I know how to gather on the serger, I will never go back.

Here's a quick recap in case you don't really know what a serger is or what it does. A serger is a unique sewing machine that cuts fabric and finishes seams at the same time. Most sergers will do additional edge finishes such as a rolled hem. Some fancy-schmancy sergers will do things like a chain stitch, wave edge, or cover stitch.

Today, I want to show you how to use your serger to gather fabric. It is so unbelievably easy; you will never go back to sewing a double row of gathering threads. And, there are no special feet required ~ just your standard serger foot.

If you have a serger hidden away in the closet, now is the time to dust it off and put it back to work.



Step 1:

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Set your serger for 4-thread serging.



Step 2:

Increase your Differential Feed to the highest number ~ mine is a 2.

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Step 3:

Increase your Stitch Length to the highest number ~ mine is a 4, but some sergers go up to 5.



Step 4:

Serge along the raw edge. You will notice that it does a little gathering. This is normal.

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Step 5:

Notice the two needle threads (the black threads). Near the fabric edge, put a needle underneath the two parallel threads. Be sure not to catch either of the looper threads ~ it will knot if you do. Just the needle threads.



Step 6:

Pull the two needle threads out of the chain of threads. Do not let these get tangled. If you do this correctly, they will slip out easily.

Pull the two needle threads to gather your fabric.



Step 7:

Voila! You have nice, even gathers that can easily be adjusted and then attached. No stray threads that end up on the outside of your project. What's not to love about this!

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Sewing Basics: Ruffling + Easing with a Serger

on August 2 | in [Sewing Essentials](#), [Sewing Tutorials + Patterns](#) | by [Beth](#) | with [15 Comments](#)



For me, gathering on the sewing machine is tedious and frustrating but gathering on the serger is fast and easy. Gathering is made possible by the serger's differential feed. A setting higher than 1.0 will cause the fabric to 'bunch up.'



You can use the bunching to create even gathers that won't shift or pull out.

Ruffles

For ruffles we need to crank up the gathering power on the serger. Each of the following will cause more voluminous ruffles:

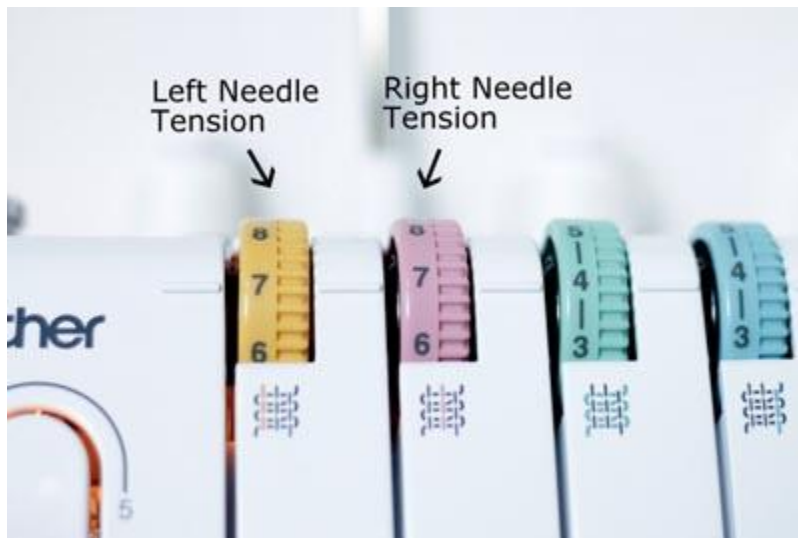
1. Increase your differential feed.

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2. Increase your stitch length. The longer stitch length gives the fabric more room to ruffle with each stitch.



3. Increase your needle tension.



4. Loosen your presser foot. Not all sergers will have this option. Look for a little knob over the presser foot. Some machines may have a digital setting. You can check the manual if you aren't sure.

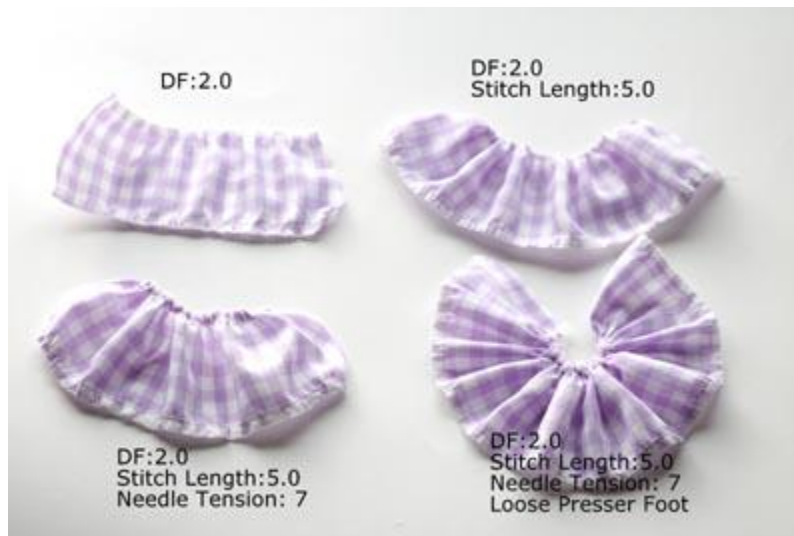


Run your fabric through the machine and watch those beautiful ruffles form.



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If you find you want fewer ruffles, adjust either the differential feed, stitch length, needle tension or presser foot pressure until you get the desired amount of ruffles. Here are a few examples of the variety you can get.



Now you can attach your ruffles to your project using either a sewing machine or your serger. Remember to change your serger settings back to normal stitching!

You'll notice that serged ruffles are more evenly distributed and less likely to shift and pull out during the sewing process than those done by sewing machine. For more information you can check out [my tutorial on gathering feet for sergers](#).

Easing

Easing is like ruffling's uptight older sister. This technique still uses gathering; but the gathers need to be very even and controlled. Easing is used to sew a seam where two fabrics are different lengths or curvatures. The extra fabric is 'eased' into the seam by slightly gathering the longer fabric to match the shorter fabric. Easing is used to set in sleeves, attach bodices to skirts and on some skirt hems. The trick is gathering the fabric so slightly and evenly that no tucks or puckers show on the finished seam; that is where a serger's differential feed shines.

1. Here are two uneven length strips.



2. For normal sewing the differential feed is set at 1.0. To cause the fabric to gather, increase the differential to 1.5 (increase this number for more ease, if needed).
3. Leave the stitch length and width at normal. Having a normal stitch length will prevent your easing gathers from become tucks or ruffles.



4. Serge over the strip to be eased; making sure to leave a long tail on either end.



5. You'll see that the fabric is gathered ever so slightly. Compare your eased piece to the fabric you are sewing to. Adjust the piece by pulling on the thread and fabric until it's a perfect match.



6. Reset your serger's differential feeding setting to 1.0. Serge both pieces together.



7. Be sure to press your piece to block it into place, especially if it's a curved piece.



Troubleshooting

Finding the best differential feed setting for a particular pattern and fabric combination takes a little trial and error. If you find yourself consistently having problems, try increasing your differential feed to 2.0 and letting out the gathers until it fits the fabric it's to be seamed to. This way requires more hand manipulation, but it is sometimes easier than trying to hit on the perfect settings. Now you can say goodbye to basting and pulling bobbin threads on your sewing machine! Happy serging!



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