



How to Hem Jeans

Shorten your jeans while keeping the original hem/cuff.

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INTRODUCTION

Jeans a little too long? No problem. Hem your own jeans for the perfect fit.

This guide will show you how to hem or shorten your jeans while keeping the original hem or cuff, and includes instructions on how to restore the original length at the end, which is perfect for growing kids.

You'll need a sewing machine and some thread that matches the color of your jeans. You'll want to put a heavy-duty or denim needle in your sewing machine before you get started.

Don't know how to use a sewing machine? No sweat. This guide only requires a simple straight stitch—and we've got [a guide for that](#). Check out our [Basic Sewing section](#) for more information.

For help with sewing terms, check out our [Sewing Glossary](#).

TOOLS:

- [Sewing Machine](#) (1)
 - [Heavy Duty/Denim Sewing Machine Needle](#) (1)
 - [Tailor's Chalk](#) (1)
 - [Seam Gauge](#) (1)
 - [Sewing Pins](#) (1)
 - [Safety Pin](#) (8)
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Step 1 — How to Hem Jeans



- While wearing your jeans, have a friend help you fold the cuffs of each pant leg to your desired length.
- Have your friend safety pin the folded cuff to the pant leg to hold the fold in place.
 - ⚠ Be careful that your friend only catches the fabric and doesn't stab you with a pin in the process.
 - ⓘ Using safety pins as opposed to straight pins allows you to change out of the jeans without getting stabbed by a pin.
 - ⓘ You only need to do one pant leg, as you will measure to make them even. If you have legs that are slightly different lengths, you can do this on both sides.

Step 2



- Measure the length from the cuff of the jeans to the fold. This is the length you want to remove from the jeans.
- Unpin the cuff of the jeans.

Step 3



- Unfold the cuff of the jeans and turn them so that the hem faces you.

Step 4



- Use the measurement from [Step 2](#) to measure from the cuff of the jean and make a mark with tailor's chalk.
- Move over a few inches and measure from the cuff again, making a second mark in line with the first.
- Continue marking your measurement all the way around the pant leg.

Step 5



- Add an inch to the measurement you took, and use tailor's chalk to mark this new measurement as a second line one inch above the first line you made.
- ⓘ We need to double the hem length, so we'll be adding one inch to our measurement since a standard jean hem is half an inch. If you have a different size hem, simply add double the hem length to your measurement.
- Continue marking all the way around the pant leg.

Step 6



- Insert a row of straight pins along the marks of your second line, which sits one inch above the amount you want to remove.
 - ⚠ Be sure to only catch one layer of the jeans, as you don't want to pin the pant leg shut!
 - ℹ The pins should lay along the length of the line, not perpendicular to it.
- Insert pins all the way around the pant leg.

Step 7



- Fold the cuff of the pant leg up to meet the line of pins, matching the edge of the jeans with the row of pins.
- Insert a row of pins perpendicular to the bottom of the cuff, catching the fold and holding it in place.
 Be careful not to pin the pant leg shut. You only need to pin the cuff to a single layer of the pant leg.
- Insert pins all the way around the pant leg.
- Remove the first horizontal row of pins.

Step 8



- [Set up your sewing machine](#) with thread that matches your jeans and a heavy-duty/denim needle.
- Insert the pant leg into the sewing machine, sliding the cuff around the arm of the sewing machine.
- ⓘ You may want to remove the table on your sewing machine to make it easier to get around the arm.
- ⚠ Make sure the pant leg is around the arm of the sewing machine so that you don't sew the pant leg shut. There should only be the two layers of the fold between the presser foot and the sewing machine arm.

Step 9



- Align the center of the presser foot (and needle) with the edge of the hem on the jeans.
 - ⓘ This is where the dark bottom edge of the jeans meets the light inside color of the jeans.
- Lower the presser foot and take a few stitches, keep the line of stitches right at the edge of the hem.

Step 10



- When you come to the first pin, stop sewing.
- Without lifting the presser foot, remove the pin.
- ⚠ Never sew over pins. If the needle of the sewing machine hits a pin it can bend or break.
- Continue sewing around the pant leg, at the edge of the hem, stopping to remove pins as you go.

Step 11



- When you come back to where you started sewing, continue sewing, overlapping the first few stitches.
- ⓘ In this photo we've sewn slightly off of the edge of the hem for visibility. When you sew your jeans, you will want to sew as close to that edge as possible.

Step 12



- Lift the presser foot and slide the jeans out.
- Clip the threads that attach the jeans to the sewing machine.

Step 13



- Unfold the jeans, tucking the fold you just sewed inside the pant leg.
- Insert the pant leg back into the sewing machine, right-side out, around the arm of the machine.
 - ⚠ Make sure the pant leg is around the arm of the sewing machine, so that you don't sew the pant leg shut. There should only be the two layers of the fold between the presser foot and the sewing machine arm.
- Align the presser foot along the edge of the side seam of the pants.

Step 14



- Lower the presser foot and take a couple of stitches.
- Use the reverse function on your sewing machine to backstitch a couple of stitches.

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Step 15



- Sew along the edge of the hem for about a dozen stitches.
- Use the reverse function on your sewing machine to backstitch a couple of stitches.

Step 16



- Remove the pant leg from the sewing machine and clip any threads.
- Repeat [Steps 13-16](#) of this guide, sewing the side seam on the other side of the pants.
- ⓘ You can trim the excess fabric of the fold on the inside of the pants if you want, or you can leave it folded inside the jeans. If you leave it, you can always [remove the stitching](#) to restore the original length to the jeans, which can be useful for growing kids.
- Repeat [Steps 2-16](#) of this guide for the other pant leg of your jeans.