

Take serging out of the everyday mainstream of stretchy seams and rolled edges to stitch within a piece of fabric...

Serger Smocking

BY NANCY BEDNAR

...to create delicate shirring on an easy and elegant pillow. Blend beautiful silks and decorator weight wovens with the unique feed dog-regulating feature to make people wonder “just how did she do that with a serger?”

MATERIALS

(for a 14" x 10" rectangular pillow)

Fabrics

- Pillow center (smocked insert): 8" x 42" – lightweight fabrics work best; sample uses silk dupioni
- Pillow sides/back/piping: 1/2 yard of 54" wide mid-weight decorator fabric

Notions

- 1 1/3 yds. brush fringe
- 2/3 yards 3/8" diameter piping filler cord

- 14" x 10" rectangular pillow form insert
- 4 cones Mettler Metrocor polyester serger thread

Machine

- BERNINA® serger with differential feed and chain-stitch capabilities:
 - Model 1300DCC or
 - Model 009D for smocking plus any other model for piping and overlock seaming
- Serger Multi Purpose Foot

PREPARATION AND CUTTING

- Center panel (silk) – one piece, 8" x 42"
- Pillow front sides (stripe) – two pieces, 7" x 14" each
- Pillow back (stripe) – one piece, 17" x 14"
- Bias piping strips (stripe) – two pieces, 2" x 14" each

DIRECTIONS

Smocked Center Panel

Serger smocking is possible because of a feature called differential feed. Generally located near the

stitch length dial, it regulates how fast or how slow the feed dog pulls slow fabric. At the lowest setting, 0.7, the feed dogs drag the fabric, slightly stretching it before it is sewn by the needles. This is the rippling look that is often found on little girl's anklets, ribbed necklines or elegant flounces on bridal and eveningwear. Dial the differential feed up to its highest setting, 2.0, and the fabric is fed faster by the front feed dogs, resulting in a kind of gathering or easing before it is captured by the needles. Serging row



upon row of fabric with closely placed lines of chainstitching duplicates time-consuming machine smocking in a very short amount of time. Make sure that you are working with a single layer of lightweight fabric for the best possible results. Because lightweight fabrics will gather quite a bit, always allow at least 3 times the finished length. Test on a swatch to see how much is drawn into the smocking.

Settings for chainstitch smocking

Thread the right needle and side chainstitch looper with all purpose serger thread. Refer to your serger manual for threading illustrations. SL: - 4 Differential Feed: 2.0 Needle tension – slightly tightened – appx 6. Looper tension – M.

Draw a vertical center line on the wrong side of the silk dupioni. Since the decorative chainstitch is created by the lower chainstitch looper, fabric will be placed underneath the presser foot *wrong side* down.

Position the fabric, wrong side down to stitch on the chalk marked line. Stitch along the entire length of the fabric. Gentle puckers will appear.

Continue to chainstitch-smock in parallel lines, alternating to the right and left of center smocking rows approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart. *Hint: use the width of the serger presser foot as a spacer between rows and avoid marking additional guidelines.* Continue to fill in the entire 8" width of fabric.

Remove the chainstitch-smocked fabric from the serger. Gently pull of the fabric on the right and left sides to straighten the gathers. Lightly steam the smocking to set the puffing in the rows.

Trim the smocked center panel to $6\frac{1}{2}$ " x 14".

SERGER PIPING

Set the serger to basic 4-thread overlock seaming with all purpose serger thread in all 4 positions, all tensions balanced, appx. 4-5, SL – 2, differential feed returned to Normal.

Install the serger Multi Purpose Foot on the serger.

Center one piece of filler cord on the wrong side of one piping bias strip.



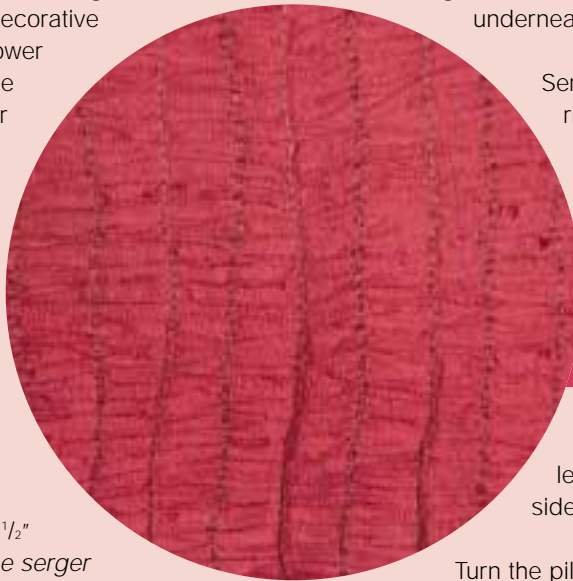
Fold over the bias strip, encasing the filler cord.

Place the folded, cord filled strip underneath the Multi Purpose Foot so that the ridge of the filler cord is positioned underneath the tunnel located on the bottom of the foot.

Serge the bias strip together, positioning the needles so that they stitch just outside the filler cord, trimming excess fabric.

Repeat for remaining piping strip.

Position the finished piping to the right and left sides of the smocked center panel. Serge the piping to the pillow center using the Multi Purpose Foot to allow the ridge in the filler cord to ride smoothly underneath the presser foot.



Serge-seam the pillow left and right fronts to the piped sides of the smocked center, using the Multi Purpose Foot. *Note: It is also possible to stitch the piping and seam on the side panels simultaneously.*

PILLOW TOP ASSEMBLY

Serge-seam the completed pillow front to the pillow back, leaving an opening at one short side.

Turn the pillow right sides out. Insert the pillow form into the pillow through the opening. Slipstitch the opening closed.

Cut the brush fringe in half. Using a sewing machine, sew the trim to both the front and back side edges for a lush, full look. Compressing the pillow form within the pillow as you stitch will allow you to sew the trim onto a pillow that is already stuffed.

For more fun serger techniques, see *Creative Serging – A Comprehensive Guide* by Nancy Bednar and Anne van der Kley. Available from SterlingPublishing in Spring 2005.

