



Stitch Awl Tutorial - Sweatband Installation

Here's my stitch awl tutorial. I apologize for some of the photos being out of focus. It was hard to tell at the time, and not very easy taking photos with one hand.

I use a Singer 70/9 sewing machine needle in my stitch awl's chuck. I don't have the thread wound onto the spool inside the awl, though, as I've never been able to open this one up, even with pliers. So, my thread remains loose, but I just have to make sure I have enough thread. I use enough thread to go around the crown four times, and cut off the excess at the end. Three times is about right, but I always like to have plenty to work with.

Before stitching, I mark off the stitch line with a tailor's pencil.



The sweatband has already been basted in place and has been turned out for working. Make the initial hole, and pull one side of the thread all the way through, so that it remains on the inside of the crown.

Stitch Awl Tutorial by Brad Bowers



When making each hole, I always tug down on the tape into the crown. This makes the sweatband fit snugly into the hat, and prevents it from extending below the brimline.



It's easy to get into a rhythm with the stitch awl and the sewing goes by pretty fast.

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This photo shows how you thread the end back through one of the loops. Always make sure you put it through the correct loop, or you'll have to pull that stitch out and start it over again.



When I finish stitching, but before I tie it off, I go around to each stitch, and insert a letter opener and pull outward, taking up the slack. I do this on the outside and the inside. Even when you think you are pulling your stitches tight, you'll still end up with a couple of inches of slack, which you take out with this step. This is a good habit to get into, even if you don't use a stitch awl.



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Finally, the stitching is finished.



Brad

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Additional Notes/Comments

Brad: I sew the seam closed before I stitch in the sweatband. You can see the stitching in the photos.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **scottyrocks**

Are stitch awls and 70/9 sewing machine needles commonly available at sewing stores?

Brad: Stitch awls aren't but the sewing machine needles will be. I got mine at Wal-Mart. I picked up the stitch awl at my local Harbor Freight Tools store, but they're also available online.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **scottyrocks**

What does it mean to baste something in place?

Brad: A baste stitch is a temporary stitch to hold it in place while sewing the actual stitches. You can see the baste stitches in the first photograph, they're black, and right at the brim break. I sew through the existing holes where the tape is sewn to the sweatband. That way, I don't have to make unnecessary holes. You remove the baste thread once you're done.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **scottyrocks**

What size and type of thread is that? It looks thick.

Brad: It's upholstery thread, recommended to me by another hatter. It's a little thicker than what you'd use for sewing on a ribbon, but then, it needs to be.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **scottyrocks**

How do you pull the thread back through a loop?

Brad: It's probably easier to see in the instructions that come with the stitch awl, but one half of the thread will remain on the inside of the crown, and the other on the outside. When you pierce the crown with the needle, you push the thread into the crown, and then pull back slightly. This creates a loop that you put the inside thread through. Then you pull the needle back out of the crown, which creates the lockstitch. I know I'm not describing it properly. It's one of those things you have to see as you're doing it, and then you'll understand.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Bob Smalser**

Look at the pounce wheel in the tutorial I posted. Spacing stitches what it does, and masking tape can be used as a batten or flexible straight edge.

Brad: I use a pounce wheel to mark the holes for the stitches in the rear seam. Works great for that.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **scottyrocks**

Im getting the hang of what Im doing, but how many ways can you put a piece of thread through a loop?

Ill tell you. Quite a few different ways, apparently, because half the time when I pull the awl out, the needle is in the middle of the stitich instead of on the end of it and I either have to unthread the needle, put it through the loop on the outside and rethread, or I have to take the stitch out completely and redo it. I dont get what Im doing wrong. Theres only one loop in there when you put the needle in.

Brad: That's what I meant when I said you have to be careful which loop you put the thread through.

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Oh, yeah, it's slow going through the learning process, and just using a needle and thread is faster until you get the hang of the stitch awl. I guess I should only recommend the stitch awl if you're going to be doing quite a few hats. One or two, it's probably not worth the trouble to learn.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Bob Smalser**

Even with fixing your mistakes, the stitch awl is a heckuva lot easier than making all those lock stitches using traditional needle and sewing palm.

The needle has a grooved side and a smooth side.

Always insert the needle so the grooved side has a consistent orientation.

Always insure the loop you form to insert the backing thread into is on the smooth side of the needle.