

Maybe you need jeans to be shorter. Shortening jeans and keeping the original hem is a straightforward procedure for even a beginning sewist. Lengthening jeans, well that is possible and requires some creative planning and sewing. One creative solution is adding coordinating fabric in a similar type. When this added fabric is decorative the solution has the added bonus of creating a one-of-a-kind garment. To lengthen a pair of jeans, fabric can be found from two different sources. Look for a coordinating pair of jeans and upcycle the bottom legs from that second pair of jeans. (These jeans are now a new pair of shorts!) Alternatively, look for fabric that works well with the jeans and can be added to the bottom of the legs. The creative trick is to make this addition look intentional and add some style to the original pair.

Shorten Jeans and Keep the Original Hem

Supplies

- Brother Stellaire Sewing/Embroidery Machine
- UltraT Narrow Zipper Foot
- Thread to Match Jeans

The original hem on jeans gives them the “official” look of a pair that came from the factory. The original hem is also more challenging to re-create at home due to the thickness of the fabric and the thread used. Jeans can be shortened by several inches and keep the original

hem. Pants that have an extreme taper toward the ankle or a zipper/slit at the ankle are not good candidates for this technique.

Remove the original hem by cutting about ½" from the top of the stitching. Mark the hems left and right leg. Determine the new length of the pants including the depth of the removed hem. It's a good idea to pin the removed hem and try on the pants before trimming them to determine the length to remove. Remember that it's easy to remove the excess fabric and impossible to replace it once cut. Mark where the new hem should be sewn and add an additional ½" to determine the cutting line. Cut on the cutting line. Lay the pants with the inseams together and trim the second leg identical to the first.

Place the original hem right sides together on the pants. Match the raw edges and make sure that the seams are aligned. Remove the sewing table to expose the free arm of the machine. Place the pants over the free arm with the original hem side up. Using a narrow zipper foot and matching thread, stitch very close to the original stitching as seen on the inside of the pants. Change to the standard foot and select a zigzag stitch. Stitch over the raw edges to prevent fraying.

Creatively Lengthen Jeans

Supplies

- Brother Stellaire Sewing/Embroidery Machine
- Pair of Jeans to be Lengthened
- Fabric to Add Extension to Bottom of Jeans such as:
 - Second Pair of Jeans with Equal or Greater Leg Width at Hem
 - Bottom Weight Fabric like Denim, Canvas, Vinyl
- Thread to Match Extension Fabric
- Fusible such as AppliKay Wonder

Let's pay attention to the seam and the fabric that will join to the bottom of the jeans. Sewing the addition to the bottom of each leg in a straight line will create a band at the bottom. The band, if it is wide, will change the focus of the garment. We look for straight lines, such as the horizon, naturally. The eye will be drawn

down and the straight line creates a visual stop. If the new bottom fabric is high contrast, the effect is even greater. If the bottom seam is softened by stitching a pattern that interplays the original fabric with the added fabric, the look will be more intentional and less visually demanding. Bottom fabric in a similar shade or value will add embellishment and not scream for attention.

Lengthening jeans is a more involved process than shortening them. Obviously extra fabric needs to be added to create the extra length. Fabric can be purchased or removed from a donor pair of jeans. The donor pair will still be useful as cropped pants or shorts. Look for a second pair of jeans where the width of the lower leg is the same as the pants to be modified. If the donor pair is wider in the bottom, they can be used but the process is more difficult. The donor pair can be any color or hem style including pants with a zipper or slit hem. Try to keep the fabric weight somewhat similar. Read through the instructions below before you begin to cut and sew.

The extension will be added as a decorative shaped edge and not a straight line. The overlap adds style and strength to the modification. The length of the extension can be only the length needed or as high as below or above the knee. Create a decorative shaped edge by drawing a design that fits the diameter of the pants at the overlap. The decorative edge can be as simple as a diagonal line, fairly simple as a sawtooth edge or an intricate fleur-de-le. Keep in mind that the edges need to be sewn down and the more intricate designs will require some free motion techniques. Make use of the lateral sewing capabilities of the machine and the extra wide decorative stitches. To audition possible edges, draw the design on a piece of paper or adding machine tape.

Determine the needed length of both the pants and the donor pants plus the overlap. Determine the amount of overlap depending on the size of the decorative shaped and overlapped edge PLUS extra fabric above and below the join. (If the lower leg of the donor pair is wider, cut the pants along the simple non double stitched seam line. The hem will need to be re-sewn when the pants are re-seamed to the correct size.) Before cutting either

pair of jeans, mark both pair of pants to double check both the correct place to trim and matching the cut line on both legs of the pair.

- Cut a strip of fusible web the width of the pants at the overlap and the height of the overlap plus 2". Draw the decorative shape on the paper side of the fusible web. Iron the fusible to the wrong side of the top of the extension and then carefully cut along the drawn line. Lay the now cut extension on the bottom of the pants by inserting the wrong side of the extension "tube" onto the leg of the pants. Check the length before fusing and cutting the pants. Following manufacturer's directions, fuse the extension to the pants. Turn the pants inside out and trim the pants 1" below the bottom of the overlap.

Place the pants on the free arm of the machine. Stitch the extension down close to the cut edge.

Alternatives to Using a Donor Pair of Jeans

- Instead of using a donor pair of jeans, purchase denim or other similar weight fabric to create an extension. Embellish the fabric with embroidery or leave it plain.
- Add a split or zipper to the seam at the hem of the donor fabric.
- Keep the original hem and add one or more inserts of fabric with a decorative shaped edge. Instead of a shaped edge, fray both edges of the pants at the cut.