

eBook  
SERIES

Just SEW It!

# Piping Fundamentals



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# Custom Piping

Make custom piping and use it to define and accent edges and seam lines. A traditional embellishment, piping is made by wrapping a strip of fabric around a filler cord then inserting it into a seam or stitching it along an edge. "Standard" piping is about  $\frac{3}{8}$ " -  $\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter; mini and jumbo piping can also be made so there's a style to fit any project.

The following stitch techniques are described on the following pages:

- Piping Presser Feet
- Piping Prep
- 3-Step Piping
- Piped Curves & Corners
- Mini Piping
- Jumbo Piping



## Piping Presser Feet

Even though most of these presser feet do not have the word "piping" in their names, they are well-suited for the process of making custom piping. Each one has some method (tunnel on the sole, clear sole, open on one side) of letting the needle stitch close to the cord, resulting in tightly covered cord and beautiful piping. *Note: A zipper foot may also be used as it allows stitching close to the cord; however, it doesn't offer as much control and precision as the presser feet discussed in this eBook.*

**Bulky Overlock Foot #12/12C**—Originally designed for stitching heavy (bulky) sweater knits, the tunnels on the soles of these feet are perfect for holding the wrapped cord when stitching standard piping. Foot #12 accommodates cords up to  $\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter and Foot #12C works with cords up to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

**Clear Applique Foot #23**—The clear sole of this foot makes it easy to see exactly where the stitch is being placed, making it simple to stitch next to the cord. The 2mm track on the sole makes this foot ideal for stitching mini piping.

**Piping Foot #38**—This foot is also used for mini piping. It evens out an uneven surface such as when layers of seam allowances, bias strips, and cording are along the edge of a project.

**Leather Roller Foot #55**—This unusual foot has a large wheel to the left of the needle and is open on the right side of the needle, allowing the stitching of large or jumbo piping that does not fit under a typical presser foot.



# Piping Prep

Before the actual sewing begins, there are several cutting and preparation steps to take when making custom piping. A good understanding of fabric grain lines along with a sharp rotary cutter, clear ruler, and cutting mat all work toward simplifying the prep phase of constructing custom piping.

## Fabric Grain

**Lengthwise Grain (1)**—Runs parallel to the selvage edges and is the most stable of the grains with little or no stretch. Garments are usually cut with the lengthwise grain running vertically to enhance the fit and drape.

**Crosswise Grain (2)**—Runs perpendicular to the selvedge and has a slight stretch or “give” to it.

**Bias Grain (3)**—Running 45° across the fabric, the bias grain has the most stretch and is useful for making piping.

Crosswise strips can be used when piping straight edges with no shape. Always use bias strips for curved or shaped edges. Lengthwise strips do not work well for piping. If the fabric is rippled, it usually means that the fabric does not have enough stretch to smoothly wrap around the cord.

## Cutting Bias Strips

Place the 45° line on the ruler along the straight edge of the fabric. This positions the edge of the ruler at a 45° angle; cut along the edge of ruler to cut bias strips.

To determine the size of the strips needed, use this simple formula:

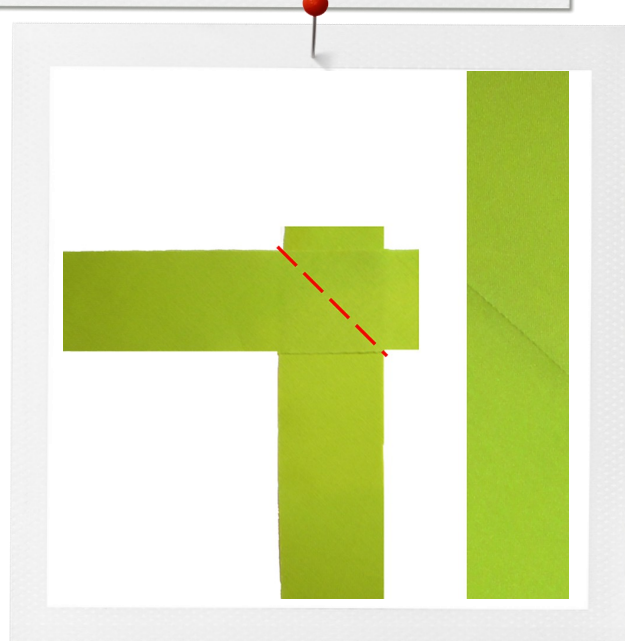
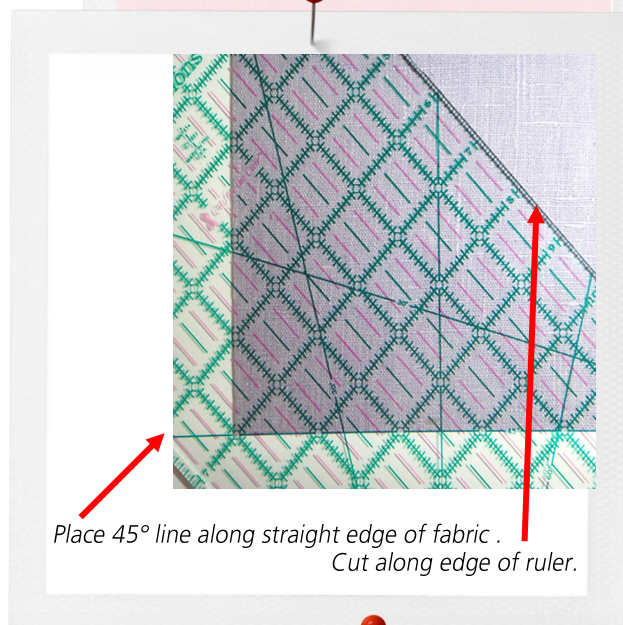
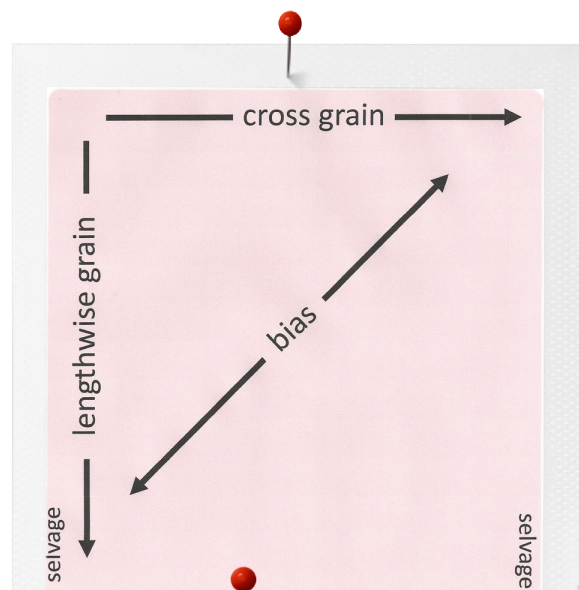
- Width = Diameter of cord + 2 seam allowances
- Length = Enough to go around edge or seams of project + about 10”-15”

## Joining Bias Strips

For the most inconspicuous and bulk-free seam, join bias strips with diagonal seams. Place the strips at right angles as shown and stitch the seam at a diagonal; trim excess and press open.

## Filler Cord

Cotton cable cord is readily available in various sizes and is sold in most fabric stores and upholstery shops.



# 3-Step Piping

A piped seam or edge has more definition and style than a plain one and is an embellishment that is pretty straightforward and simple to sew. Using the same fabric as the project gives an understated, subtle look while contrasting fabric adds a pop of color and makes the piping (and the project lines) highly visible. This 3-Step method is easy to sew and allows the most precision in placing the piping exactly where needed.

## Machine Settings

- Overlock Foot #12/12C to the machine.
- Filler Cord
- Cotton or polyester sewing thread
- Straight stitch with adjusted needle position (see below)
- Needle Stop Down

## Prep

Cut and piece bias strips as needed. Attach Bulky Overlock Foot #12/12C to the machine.

## Step 1

*Covering the Cord:* Place the filler cord on the wrong side of the bias strip, wrapping the fabric to cover the cord. Position it under the presser foot with folded edge to the left and the cord under center of foot so it rides in the large groove. Use a straight stitch and adjust the needle to the far right so it stitches beside the cord (align with engraved line on top of the sole). Begin sewing; stitches will be sewn alongside cord. Once the piping is covered, it is ready to be inserted into a seam.

## Step 2

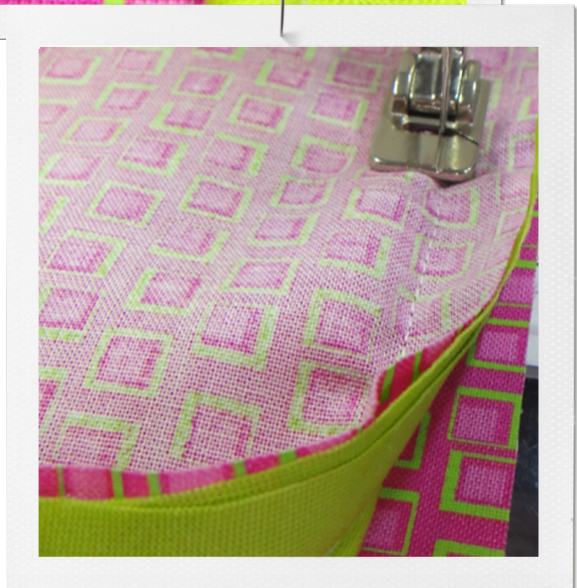
*Attaching Piping:* Matching raw edges of fabric, place piping along the edge of one fabric piece. Using the same machine settings as above, sew along the side of the cord on top of the previous stitching.

## Step 3

*Inserting Piping:* Matching raw edges, place the second fabric piece right sides together with piping and first piece. Position fabric/piping under presser foot; adjust needle one position closer to center.

## Tip

When attaching the piping to the project (Step 2), adjust the stitch length to 4mm. This makes the needle penetrate the fabric in different holes than in the other two steps and keeps the fabric from being overworked. The stitch length should be returned to 2.5mm for Step 3.



# Piping Curves & Corners

When adding piping to shaped seams and edges, it is especially important to cut the strips that will cover the cord on the bias. The extra "give" in the bias-cut fabric will let the piping lie flat and follow the shape without rippling. Knowing how to maneuver corners and curves will add to the smooth look of the beautiful piping.

## Machine Settings

- Overlock Foot #12/12C to the machine.
- Filler Cord
- Cotton or polyester sewing thread
- Straight stitch with adjusted needle position (see below)
- Needle Stop Down

## Step 1

Attach Clear Bulky Overlock Foot #12/12C to the machine.

## Step 2

*Covering the Cord:* Cover the cord following the directions found on the previous page.

## Step 3

*Piped Corners:* Mark the point at each corner where the seam allowances intersect on one fabric square.

Place piping along edge of fabric; stitch on top of previous stitching. Stop at the marked corner; clip the seam allowances of the piping up to, but not through, the stitching.

Pivot fabric 90°, then pull piping around to align with second edge. Continue stitching.

## Step 4

*Piped Curves:* Place piping along edge of fabric; stitch on top of previous stitching, stopping to clip the seam allowances along the curve.

Continue stitching, shaping the piping to fit around the curve.



**Click for Video!**

See how to make basic piping and other uses for Bulky Overlock Foot #12/12C.

# Mini Piping

Great for children's clothing or anytime a delicate or subtle embellishment is needed, mini piping is made the same way as traditional piping, but on a smaller scale.

## Machine Settings

- Clear Applique Foot #23
- Narrow cord (2mm)
- Cotton or polyester sewing thread
- Straight stitch with adjusted needle position (see below)
- Needle Stop Down

## Method #1: Clear Appliqué Foot #23

Cut and piece bias strips as needed. Attach Clear Appliqué Foot #23 to the machine.

### Step 1

*Covering the Cord:* Fold wrong side of bias strip around filler cord and position it under the presser foot with the cord riding in the 2mm groove in the center of the sole of the foot. Adjust the needle position to sew next to, but not into the cord. Sew alongside the cord, creating a  $\frac{5}{8}$ " seam. Once piping is covered, it is ready to be inserted into a seam.

### Step 2

*Attaching Mini Piping:* Adjust stitch length to 4mm. Matching raw edges of fabric, place piping along the edge of one fabric piece. Using the same machine settings as above, sew along the side of the cord on top of the previous stitching.

### Step 3

*Inserting Mini Piping:* Return the stitch length to 2.5mm. Matching raw edges, place the second fabric piece right sides together with piping and first piece. Position fabric/piping under the presser foot; sew on top of the previous stitching.

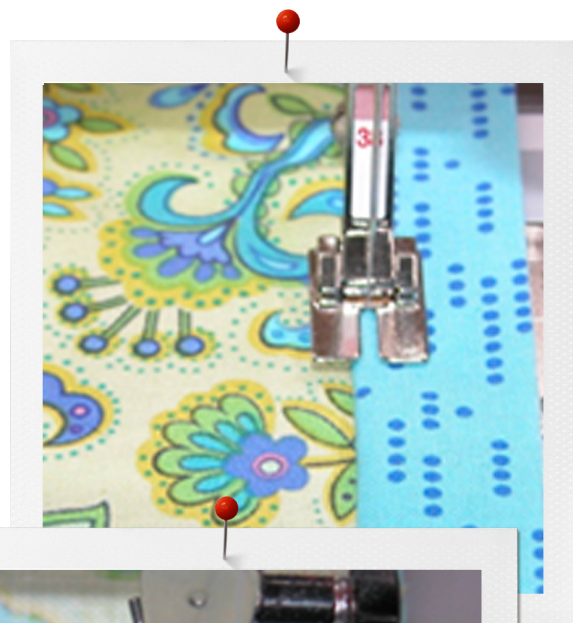
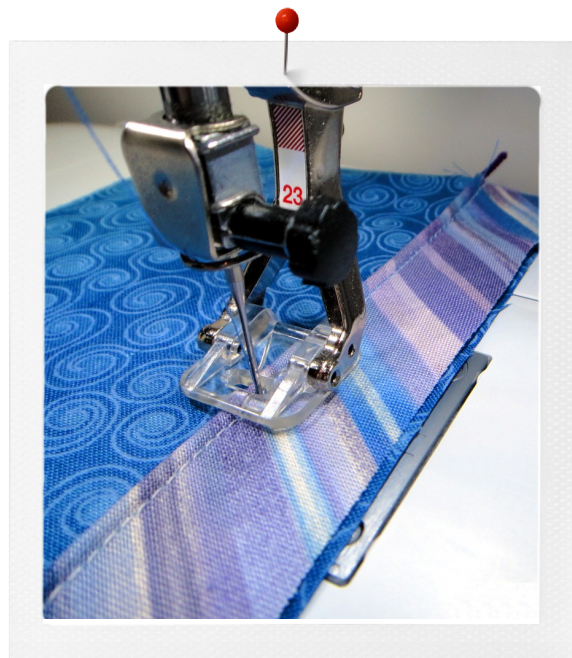
## Method #2: Piping Foot #38

Cut and piece bias strips as needed. Attach Piping Foot #38 to the machine.

Follow the stitching directions above, placing the folded edge of the piping against the inner left side of the sole of the foot.

### Tip

When stitching the seam in Step 3, turn the fabric over so the stitching from Step 2 is visible. Be sure to sew on top of this stitching or slightly beside it to keep it from showing on the right side of the finished project.



# Jumbo Piping

Add a designer decorator look to home decorating projects by attaching jumbo piping along the edges. The trick to this is stitching close enough to the cording for a tight, polished look. This unique-looking presser foot solves the problem and makes it easy!

## Machine Settings

- Leather Roller Foot #55
- Large filler cord
- Cotton or polyester sewing thread
- Straight stitch with adjusted needle position (see below)
- Needle Stop Down

## Step 1

Attach Leather Roller Foot #55 to the machine; adjust the needle position to the far left to sit next to the wheel of the foot.

## Step 2

*Covering the Cord:* Wrap the bias strip around the jumbo cord and place the wrapped cord under the needle with the cord to the right of the foot. The needle should be positioned next to the cord, leaving a seam allowance. Stitch the length of the cord.

## Step 3

*Attaching Jumbo Piping:* Matching raw edges of fabric, place jumbo piping along the edge of one fabric piece. Using the same machine settings as above, sew along the side of the cord on top of the previous stitching.

## Step 4

*Inserting Jumbo Piping:* Matching raw edges, place the second fabric piece right sides together with piping and first piece. Position fabric/piping under presser foot and sew on top of previous stitching.

## Tip

Attach large decorator trims in the same manner using Leather Roller Foot #55.

