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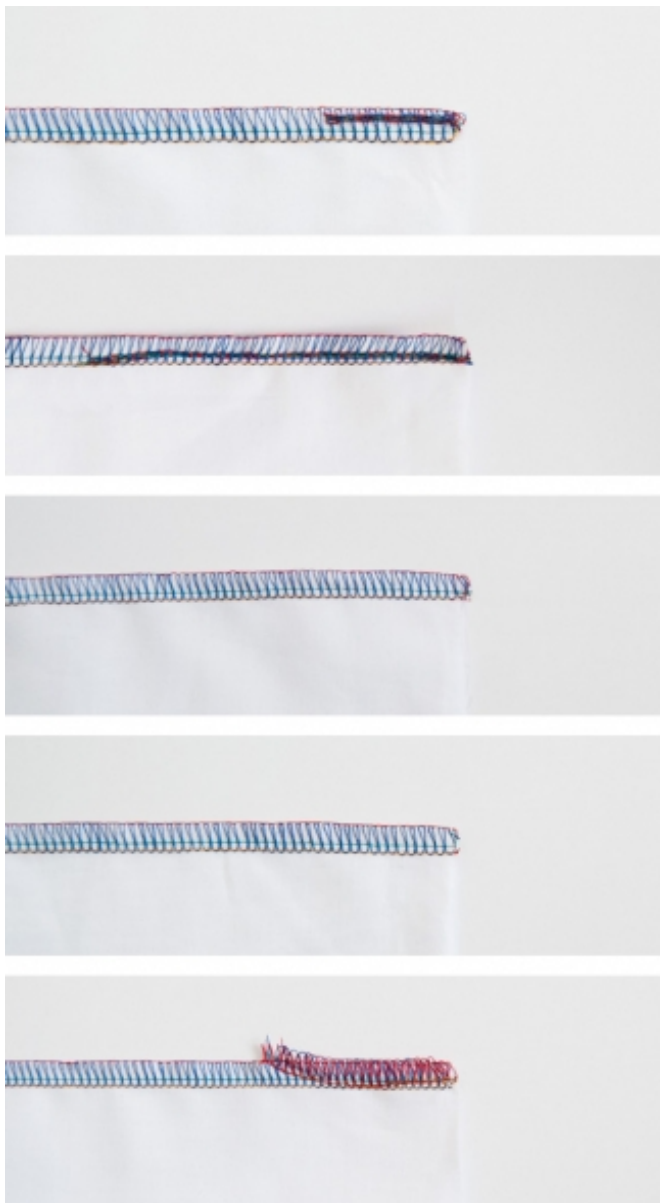
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# Five Ways to Finish a Serger Thread Chain

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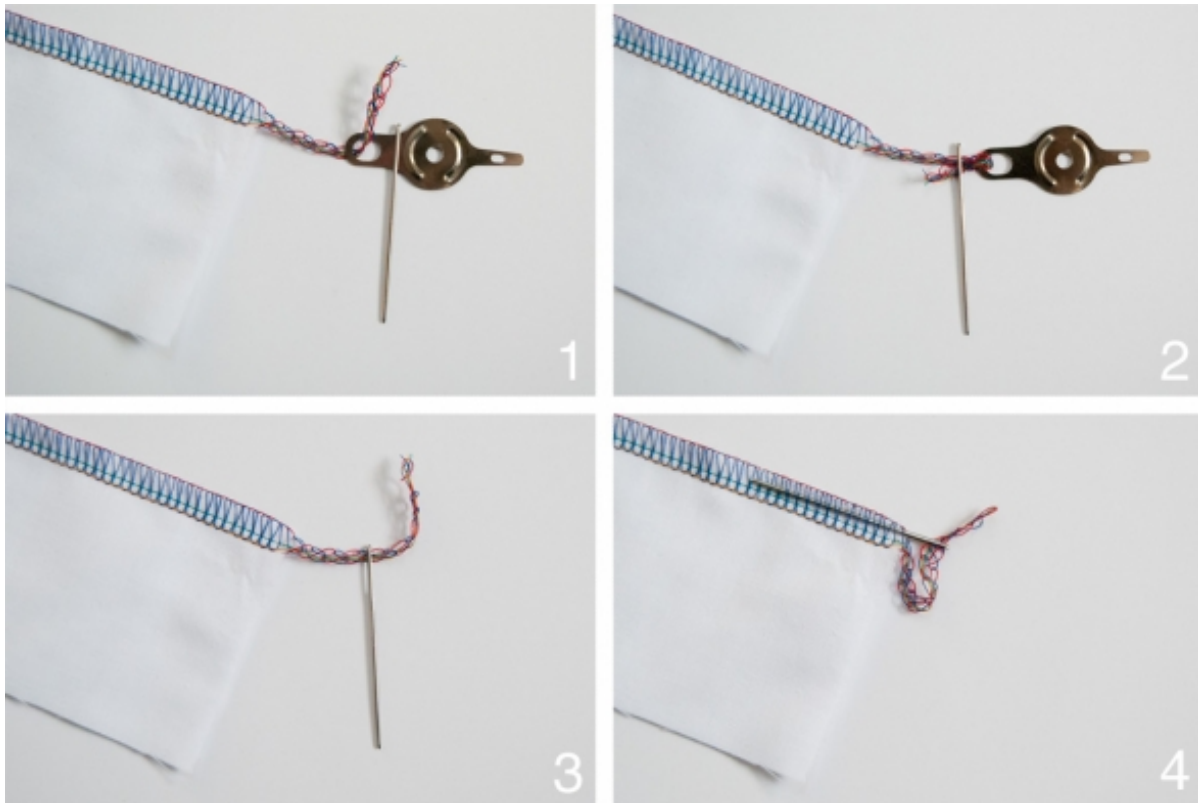
# FIVE WAYS TO FINISH A SEGER THREAD CHAIN

Over the past few months in my [Craftsy class](#), I've had students ask me about the various ways to end serger chains. I review two different ways to end them in my class, but I thought I'd highlight the five main ones here, for my students and anyone else who is interested. Not all of these methods can be used for every stitch. For instance, you wouldn't try to serge over the beginning of your thread chain if you were making a rolled hem, because it would be bulky and ugly.

## Method One: Tail Tuck

The first way to end a serger chain is to feed the thread chain back into the stitching using a tapestry needle. When you have finished serging, leave a nice but somewhat short length of thread chain hanging off the end of your project. Push a tapestry needle threader thru the eye of a blunt tapestry needle (1), and

pull the thread chain thru the needle eye (2, 3). Use the needle to feed the thread back into the stitch, feeding it under the looper threads for at least an inch (4).



Clip off any excess thread chain length, being careful not to cut the stitch looper thread. Dab a touch of seam sealant such as Fray Check on the end if you want to make sure the thread doesn't work its way out of the end of the stitching.



## Method Two: Serge Over Chain

The second way to clean up your thread chain actually begins before you even make a stitch on your fabric. This method is used at the beginning of your stitch, and can't be used at the end of it. You could choose any of the other four methods for ending the bottom of your thread chain though.

Begin by making a thread chain on your serger.





Lift your presser foot, and pull this thread chain around to the front of your serger. With your presser foot still lifted, place your fabric under the foot so that the next stitch your serger makes will be on your fabric. Arrange the thread chain so that it will not fall past the left needle (or right needle, if you're not using the left needle). Keep the thread chain between the needles and the blade, so it is not cut off, and begin serging.



You can make your serger thread chain shorter than mine if you'd like, and this will still work the same way.





## Method Three: Thread Knots

The next method involves untangling your thread chain, and separating the individual threads to knot them off.



Use a tapestry needle or a long sewing pin to help you quickly untangle the threads. I cut off a bit of extra thread chain so I didn't have to untangle as much, which was probably not the best idea. It's harder to tie knots when you only have very short needle threads!

As you've probably noticed, I made all of these samples using a 4-thread overlock. This is the easiest thread chain to knot off, because you can match one needle thread to one looper thread, and they are evenly paired. If you are sewing a 3-thread overlock, then you should pair up the needle thread and one looper, and tie those around the other looper thread.



This is really nice to use for decorative threads on the outside of garments, where you don't want to add bulk or sealant to the stitch.





## Method Four: Seam Sealant

The most common way that I see students finish their serged seams is with seam sealant. My favorite brand of sealant is Fray Check, which is easily found in fabric stores and online. You can apply it to the ends of all of these thread chain treatments for extra security, if you like. However, I wouldn't use it on fabric like chiffon and silk because it can make the end of the stitch very stiff. To combat the stiffness, you can place muslin over the sealant as soon as you apply it and then steam iron it to dry it. The glue will then be softer and more pliable.



I keep a plastic headed craft pin in the end of my Fray Check at all times. The cap still closes securely with the pin inside of it. It keeps the hole in the applicator tip from closing up with dried glue, and also keeps it from leaking out into the cap when the bottle falls over.

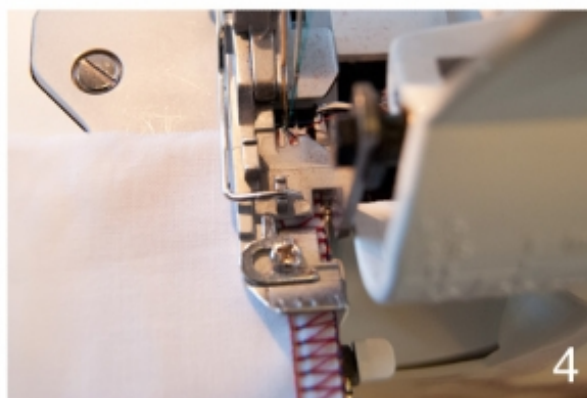
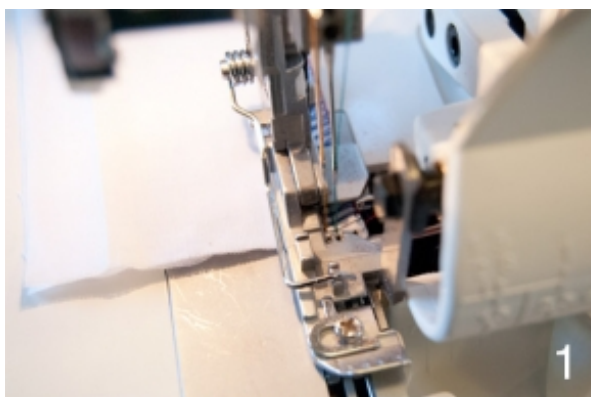
To use the sealant, simply dab it on the end of the stitch and clip off the excess thread chain. This is my favorite way to end rolled hems, particularly when I make fabric napkins.



## Method Five: Flip and Serge

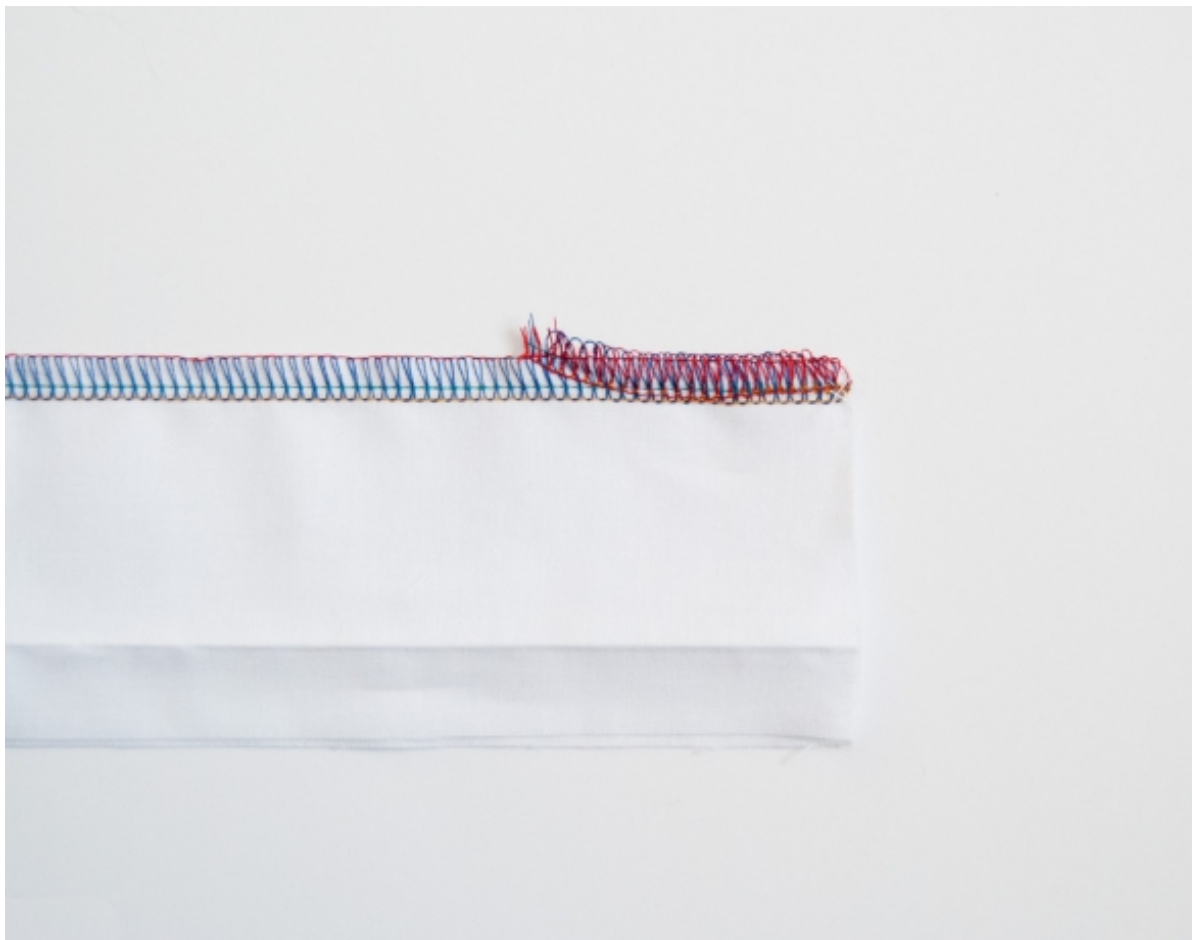
The last way to finish your thread chain is a very strong option, but it can look a

little bulky. With this method, you complete your serging right up to the end or edge of your fabric, and raise the needles to their highest position (1). Give each of your needle threads a slight tug, to loosen the tension so the next step is easier (2). Raise the presser foot, and flip your project all the way over so that you see the back of the stitching (3). The loosened needle threads help with this step. Then, place the project (wrong side up) back underneath the presser foot, making sure to keep the original stitching and looper edges away from the blade (4). You don't want to cut the looper threads! Serge over the existing stitches for at least an inch, and then pull your fabric to the left of your machine and serge off the edge of the project.



Clip the thread chain near the edge of the fabric. Notice how the secondary stitching came (very!) close to the original needle thread, but did not cross over it.





Did you have any idea there were so many options? What is your favorite way to end your serger thread chain?

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This entry was posted in [How to Sew](#) and tagged [serger](#), [sewing](#), [tutorial](#) on [March 15, 2013](#) by [Amy Alan](#).

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**ozzyblackbeard** · 3 years ago

I am ashamed to say that I just try a knot in the end of the threads. And, yes, it does look like a dog's breakfast, but I hadn't a clue of how else to do it! So thank you for this post, and I shall be trying out these different methods. Lynne :)

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → ozzyblackbeard • 3 years ago

You're welcome! "Looks like a dog's breakfast"- HA! :) Hopefully now your serging ends will be a bit prettier!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Mary Wilson** • 3 years ago

For prewashing, I just tie the tail into a knot where the tail leaves the fabric. For finishing, I use method 1 by threading a double-eyed needle through the serging, threading the tail through the exposed eye, and pulling the needle out the other end.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Mary Wilson • 3 years ago

I don't usually bother to tie a knot in the tail when I'm prewashing fabric that I've serged the edge of. I'm used to cutting off the piece of fabric that's been serged because I wouldn't sew with it, so I don't worry if the thread tails come unraveled a bit. I just leave a longer thread tail on the stitching and I don't have any problems with the stitches coming off of the fabric.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**J. Logan** • 10 months ago

Very helpful thank you, I am just learning on a serger machine without a manual. Thanks for sharing.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Andy** • a year ago

What would you use for the edge of a polartec blanket?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Andy • a year ago

I think that depends on which serger stitch and type of thread that you are using on the edge of the blanket. What are you considering using?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Jen Jenuine** • 2 years ago

One more note about Method 3: tying the threads... When separating the beginning chain of an overlock stitch, I find that it's easy to simply pull the needle threads out of the chain from where they enter the fabric. When separating the end of the chain (at the end of a stitch), it is also easy to pull

the needle threads out the chain. However, if you simply pull the needle threads out from the base, you'll be left with the looper threads in a position that can easily unravel. This is great if you want to pull the stitch out (it's kinda like crocheting - you can easily pull out what you've made by pulling on end of the yarn). But if you want to tie it off, then first pull the needle threads out from the base of the stitch. Then carefully leave the looper threads in their loopy position, and use your pin to pull one of the looper threads completely through the other loop. This is like finishing as crochet project where you pull the end of the yarn completely through the last loop of the garment. Then pull all the threads tight and tie an overhand or square knot with your threads. I hope that makes sense!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Jen Jenuine • 2 years ago

Yes, this makes total sense to me. If I have a longer thread tail, I also separate it by pulling out the needle threads first. It does make quick work of it!

Along the same thread (terrible pun, Amy) I love to remove 3-thread flatlocking by simply pulling out the lower looper thread. It's so satisfying and fast!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Jen Jenuine** • 2 years ago

I use method 3 ~ separate the threads and tie them in an over-hand knot as opposed to a square knot. I find that the overhand knot pulled close the fabric is more durable. And if I'm sewing with nylon or poly threads, I will sometimes use a lighter to singe the frayed ends of the knot, melting the threads together. This makes for a really solid knot, but works best on exteriors seams, as you don't want to feel a hard, plastic knot against your skin. It's like having a pesky nylon tag rub at the back of your neck.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Jen Jenuine • 2 years ago

That's a great idea to singe the poly thread ends together, if they aren't too close to your fabric. Thanks for the input!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Koreen Hoover** • 2 years ago

I've been using the tail tuck method...sometimes it works great, but often times I end up with a "ball" of thread at the end and cannot pull the rest of the chain through. Any suggestions as to what I am doing wrong?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Koreen Hoover · 2 years ago

I would recommend that you pull on the thread chain before you feed it thru the needle. Try to get all of the threads as straightened out as possible, and know that you can clip your thread chain to make it a little bit shorter. This will help because you want to feed your needle far enough down the stitch to pull the chain all the way into it. Does that make sense? If you don't pull the needle down along the stitch far enough, then you may end up with extra thread tail length sticking out of the end of your stitch.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Sarah C.** · 2 years ago

Thank you for this! Just got my first serger and was befuddled at what to do with the ends!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Sarah C. · 2 years ago

You're welcome! I hope you find it to be very useful.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Skyylar** · 2 years ago

This was awesome!! Thank you!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Skyylar · 2 years ago

You're very welcome!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Shindig Apparel** · 2 years ago

Thanks, this was really helpful! I'm doing a lot of decorative serging and tucking in the tail is getting really tedious!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Amy Alan** Mod → Shindig Apparel · 2 years ago

You're very welcome! I agree- tucking serger tails is not my favorite. Which method do you think you'll use instead?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**sewmama** · 3 years ago

Thank you for the tips. On hidden seams, I definitely like the 'flip over' method. On exposed seams I think the 'fray check' option is easiest. I wonder however, does the glue dissolve over time and washing??

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

**Amy Alan** Mod → sewmama · 3 years ago

You're very welcome! Yes, I love the flip over method too, but I'm partial to encasing the thread tail in the seam at the beginning of the stitch as well. The Fray Check on the ends of my rolled hem napkins has held up alright, and they have been washed many times. I wouldn't use Fray Check to hold together a seam on a piece of clothing, but for projects like napkins, small bags and decorative stitching, I've found it works very well.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

**Michelle** · 3 years ago

Perfect timing, I just borrowed a friend's serger to deal with some raw edges. I'm going to have to seek out that nice threader you show in option one.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

**Amy Alan** Mod → Michelle · 3 years ago

That threader is great. I found it locally, at a store called Fabric Depot, but I recently saw them at Joann's as well. If you find them, buy at least four. They're hard to come by and replace!

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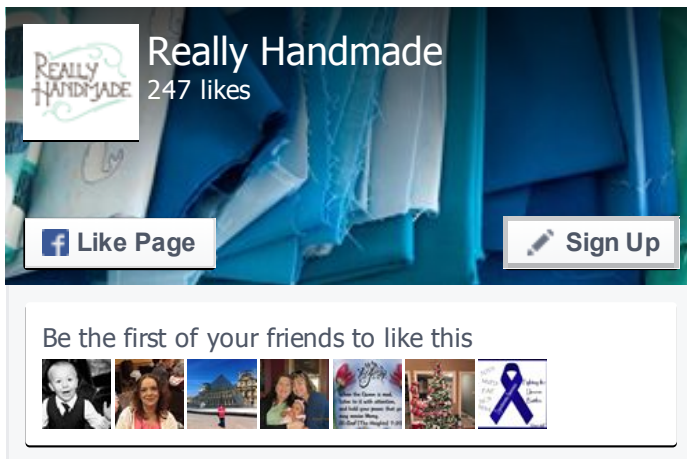
**Jennie** — I think I'd need a whole year of full-time sewing to put a dent in my fabric stash ;D Hopefully I'll have

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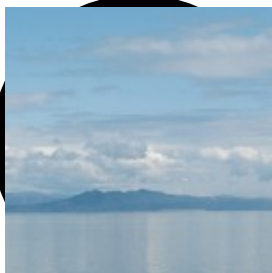
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