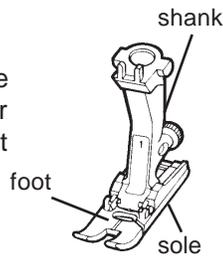


Anatomy of a Foot

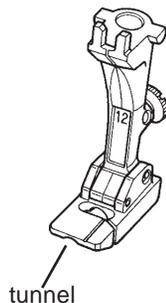
Take a look at a sewing machine presser foot and become familiar with the parts so you can dissect it to reveal its true purpose.



The shank of the foot should be solid and connect securely to the sewing machine. If it is loose or unsteady, it could affect the quality of your stitching. The most sturdy presser foot is usually a one-piece unit where the foot and the shank are not detachable. If using presser feet where the foot does detach from the shank, be sure that the connection is solid and will not come loose with the movement of the sewing machine.

Look at the Sole

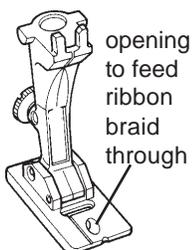
The biggest clue to the use of a presser foot is found by turning it over and looking at the sole. If there is any kind of indentation, the foot was made to ride over something thick such as satin stitching, cord, or trim. The size of the indentation can give a clue as to the use. For instance, a foot made for piping will have a large groove or tunnel that can travel easily over the cord. A short indentation makes it easier to maneuver curves, while one that goes all the way to the back of the foot is usually best for stitching straight lines.



Most indentations on the sole are behind the needle so the stitched area can travel under the foot and out the back. If there is an indentation in front of the needle as well, it usually indicates the foot is made for multi-motion or forward/reverse pattern stitches. The same logic holds true for indentations on each side of the needle — they indicate a foot for multi-directional or sideways stitching.

Check Out The Top

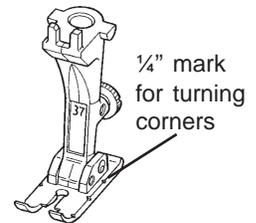
After looking at the sole of the foot, turn it over and look at the top of the sole. Does it have any holes or openings in it? If it does, it probably means that something is to be fed through the opening and into the needle area. These feet are often made for embellishment techniques such as couching yarns and trims or attaching cord, but some may also accommodate items such as elastic or stay tape.



Footwear

With literally dozens of different presser feet available for today's sewing machines, it's sometimes difficult to know which one to use for a particular sewing task. Even if you're not sure of the purpose of a foot, with a little detective work, you should be able to make a well-educated guess!

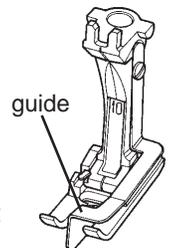
Next, look for any markings or engravings on the foot. These usually serve as guidelines for some specific setting such as the position of the needle or the placement of the fabric edge.



Also look at the needle opening to see what type of stitches will work with the foot. If the opening is a single hole, the foot will only work with a straight stitch. This often means that it is being used for delicate or light-weight fabric or it may indicate a very narrow stitching area such as with a double-turned 2mm hem. It is usually best to use a straight stitch needle plate in conjunction with the foot so that the fabric has equal support top and bottom. If the needle hole is wider, that tells you the maximum stitch width that can be used; again, the opening in the plate should match the one in the foot.

Anything Extra?

If the foot has anything additional added to it, it is often a guide so that fabric, trim, elastic or the like can be controlled and placed under the needle in a specific way. Feet such as a blind hem foot or an edgestitch foot have "blades" or "walls" that the fold of the fabric is placed against to position it so the needle barely pierces the folded fabric, making the stitch almost invisible.



A foot that has a "double layer", such as a gathering foot, is used to separate two layers of fabric. In this case it is so that one layer can travel over the feed dogs to be gathered and the upper layer can remain flat as the needle stitches the two together.

Don't Stop There!

Once you have ascertained the obvious purpose of a foot, don't be afraid to try it for other techniques. Use the information here to decide if it will work for the technique you are stitching and then go for it. You never know what new uses you will discover!