How to replace a garment zip

YOU WILL NEED

- Zip of the correct size and colour
- Matching thread
- Seam ripper
- Pins
- Scissors
- Hand-sewing needle
- Sewing machine with a zipper foot
- Iron and ironing board

DIFFICULTY

ADVANCED

METHOD

1. Take a photograph of the original zip in the garment to remind you how it looked when you're fitting the new zip.

2. Carefully remove the old zip from the garment using a seam ripper.

3. Source a zip that matches your garment. Take the old zip to the shop with you to ensure you get the right type, length and colour. Don't be tempted to buy a cheap zip – they break too easily.

4. Make sure the space in the garment where the zip used to be is free from old or loose threads. Press the garment if you have to, but it can stretch the fabric. And any steam will close up old stitch holes which can be useful as a guide when you're working on the garment.

5. Turn the garment inside out and position your new zip onto it, with the zip pull facing the garment front. Take your time over this and, once it looks right, pin the zip to the garment along both sides of the zip.
6. Check the positioning by turning the garment the right way round and making sure the zip-pull is to the front and both sides are even and flat.

7. Turn the garment inside out again and keep the pins in both sides – any movement in the placement can have very strange effects on a zip.

8. Set the sewing machine stitch to a long straight-stitch, known as a stay stitch.
   Sew down both lengths of the zip, taking the pins out as your needle gets to them.
   The large stitch length is just in case it’s not quite right – it’s quicker to unpick.

9. Have a look at the right side of the garment again to see if you’re happy with the zip placement.
   If not, undo the stitches and start again.

10. Change the presser foot on your machine to a zipper foot. This will allow you to stitch close in to the zip and give a much neater finish.
    Change the straight-stitch length to a shorter stitch that matches the rest of the garment.

11. Sew the zip into the garment by sewing straight down each side.
    The zip foot will act as a guide for how close to the zip to sew.
    Make sure you do a few reverse stitches at the beginning and end of each line of stitch so your sewing doesn’t come undone.
    Snip loose threads off straight away so they don’t get caught up in the zip.

12. The tail at the bottom of your zip will need securing to the seam allowance on the inside of your garment.
    To do this, you can hold one side of the zip tape to the seam allowance it lies against.
    Change the foot on the machine to the regular presser foot and sew a few stitches back and forth to secure the zip.
    Repeat on the opposite zip tail.

   Alternatively...
   - From the right side of the garment, have the zip done up.
   - Carefully machine-sew through all layers with a short straight-stitch to link the ends of the rows of stitching you’ve done.
   - Avoid sewing through the zip teeth – just through the end of the zip tapes.

13. Remove the stay-stitching that you did in Step 8.
At the top of the zip, you'll need to follow whatever the previous zip did to ensure there is a neat finish.

This usually involves tucking the top of the zip inside a waistband or hiding it under a facing.

Pin and then a do a few machine or hand-stitches to secure.

Depending on the fabric of your garment, you might want to give it a press for a nice finish.

Press lightly and with caution – it's really easy to spoil the garment at this stage with an iron that's too hot.

And zips are lumpy, so you could end up damaging the fabric if you're too heavy-handed.