

Zipper Repair

Zipper repair usually means replacing the zipper pull. If zipper teeth are missing or damaged or the zipper tape is torn next to the teeth, it can't be fixed. In that case either take out the original zipper and replace it or cut off the zipper teeth and as much of the zipper tape as you can and install a new zipper by topstitching it in place. The zipper can either be on the outside, hiding the cut edge of the zipper tape, or on the inside. Either will make it functional.

If all the zipper teeth are undamaged, most likely you can replace the zipper pull and make it functional again. Zipper pulls wear out over time, especially metal zippers. Zipper pulls may be damaged by being pinched (think getting stepped on or slammed in a locker door). To replace the pull, you must have an exact match. If you have the original zipper pull, it helps to compare to ones available in a zipper repair kit. The pulls for metal zippers and plastic or coil zippers are different and not interchangeable. If you don't have a zipper repair kit or need a specific color, your best option may be to buy a new zipper and take the zipper pull from that. Many zipper pulls will have a brand and code on the back side which may help in identifying a compatible pull.

Whether you replace the pull from the top or the bottom depends on whether the zipper is a separating zipper or not. Separating zippers are easiest because you simply remove the top stop on the side with the zipper pull, put on the new pull and add a new top stop from the zipper repair kit or take a few stitches across the top of the zipper tape to keep the pull from sliding off the top. A few minutes with pliers is all it takes to remove the top stop and crimp a new one in its place.

If it is a non-separating zipper, more thought is needed to decide which end to replace the pull. If the teeth are zipped up and you can get to the top of the zipper easily enough, then from the top works. Usually there is a top stop on only one side of the zipper but sometimes both sides. Metal stops can sometimes be reused if you can get them off without destroying them. You may need a helper to get the pull onto a closed zipper as you often need to pull both sides of the zipper tape simultaneously to get the zipper to open as the pull is slid on.

If you must replace a non-separating zipper from the bottom, take out enough stitches at the bottom of the zipper and cut off or remove the bottom stop. Then slide the zipper pull on to both sides of the zipper being very careful to keep the teeth on both sides aligned correctly. Again, a helper may be needed for extra hands. Be sure to put a new bottom stop on the zipper before finishing the zipper opening.

Replacing a zipper pull can be quite a fiddly task, but often well worth the effort to rescue a garment.