Zippers
Glossary, Tips, and Common Questions

The toothed Vislon #10 size is the most common zipper used in marine applications as is a #5 for smaller assemblies. The #10 zipper teeth measure roughly 5/16” when closed and the #5 roughly 7/32”. Make sure the slider is sized appropriately for the size of the zipper so the slider can easily be worked onto the teeth from either direction (goes on in reverse if the zipper teeth are closed first).

Vislon zippers are extremely tough. Peel apart easily from closed end without damage and teeth can be interlocked by hand (without a slider) if needed. The zipper may separate under extreme stress, but it is not likely to damage it. Simply push the slider back over the separation (in reverse if necessary) or interlock by hand to restore original functionality.

**PROTECTION**: Plastic zipper teeth do not require lubrication, however we have found that a periodic application of 303 Protectant, Zippy Cool, or Iosso E-Z Snap Zipper & Snap Lubricant helps keep slide action smooth and dependable. 303 Protectant also provides UV shielding which prevents the teeth from hardening and eventually breaking when exposed in sunlight (also protects vinyl window material and keeps it soft). 303 Protectant will not hurt the fabric tape (where the teeth are mounted) since it is not intended to be water resistant, but do not get any on your canvas since it will remove the “proofing” that is used to make synthetic fabrics water resistant.

Water resistance can be restored with 303 Fabric Guard, but do not get any on the zipper teeth or vinyl window material since it tends to remove the “plasticizers” that keep plastics from getting brittle. Although this may be confusing due the similarity in product names, the benefits incurred from their use far exceeds the time spent in application.

**SHORTEN A FINISHED ZIPPER**: Simply cut from the end that is last to close. Provide a stop at that end to prevent the slider from coming off. Create a stop with: a piece of leather or fabric folded over the...
last few teeth and sewn in place, the last few teeth bent back at 90° angles, or, a personal favorite, a tooth or two cut from scrap can be inserted between the last two teeth on each side of the zipper and welded together with a hotknife or a soldering gun.

Check out www.sailrite.com for streaming video demonstrations and helpful installation tips on everything zippers!

- Answers to All Your Zipper Questions
- Zipper Stops
- Zipper Pulls (Tabs)
- Replacing a Finished Zipper
- Zipper Plaque Installation
- Installing a Zipper along a Curve
- Installing Hidden Vertical Zippers

Sailrite also has Zipper Stops available for both finished and continuous zippers. Finished zippers require two YKK Zipper “Top” Stops that are squeezed in place over the zipper tape between the final two teeth. Pull the next to last tooth with pliers so the beaded edge of the tape remains intact. Then crimp the YKK Top Stop over the exposed beaded edge.

Alternatively, stainless steel top stops are available which do not require the removal of a zipper tooth. The stop is simply crimped over the top of an existing zipper tooth (see photo). Remember to install one on each side of the zipper.

INSTALL A CONTINUOUS ZIPPER: Without a starting end, the slider must be pre-installed on the zipper chain and retained from coming off. This is done by interlocking the teeth at one or both ends and hand sewing 3-4 times around the final few teeth or sewing over the end of the zipper with a sewing machine. A leather or fabric pull tab can be made to assist with zipper closure.

Be careful when sewing over the plastic teeth as they can bend or break the needle. To avoid getting to close, sew up to the teeth and then lift the presser foot and skip over the teeth to the other side of the zipper where the machine can continue without danger of needle breakage, or bend a YKK Zipper Bottom Stop over the interlocked teeth and crimp the legs over to lock the zipper end together.

If only one end of the zipper is to be interlocked (e.g., a camping tent opening), the other end will require Top Stops to keep the slider from coming off when the zipper is pulled closed. See above for Top Stop installation.

INSTALL OR REPLACE A SLIDER: For a finished zipper, remove the end stop (cut below the melted teeth end or cut off the webbing or leather stopper). Do not remove the starter box end. Remove the old slider. Work the new slider on backwards on the zipper side with the starting box. Recreate a stop by melting two teeth together, using webbing, leather, or two zipper Top Stops.

For a continuous zipper, remove the old slider from either end by cutting away the stitches that hold the zipper in place. Remove the old slider. Work on the new slider capturing both sides of the zipper teeth and re-stitch the zipper tape.
FREQUENTLY ASKED ZIPPER QUESTIONS

Q: Should metal or Delrin zippers be used outdoors?

A: Sailrite recommends Delrin or plastic zipper teeth. Enameled metal teeth have been used, but once corrosion starts the zippers can seize. The slider material selection is more debatable. Delrin sliders can become bridle with sun exposure and will break sooner than their metal counterparts, but metal sliders can corrode and no longer slide freely. We have found middle ground by offering RIRI brand zippers which have sliders that are mostly Delrin but have stainless steel pull tab connections. The pull is generally the most exposed portion of the slider and using metal for strength here makes good sense. YKK brand zippers have delrin pulls, but Sailrite has had excellent service life with YKK for over forty years.

Q: Several teeth of my zipper have broken free from the zipper tape. Can this be repaired?

A: It can not be repaired. The only solution is to install or sew on a new zipper.

Q: I am looking at YKK #5 continuous Vislon zippers. I only see #10 stops (bottom and top). Do the stops work on both #10 and #5?

A: The #10 stops are for the #10 chain. There are separate types for the two different brands – RIRI and YKK. Sailrite does not stock stops for the #5 size. Generally #5 is used for cushion covers and the zipper ends can simply be sewn over to keep the slider from coming off. There are also other ways to create a stop such as using leather or fabric.

Q: What is the difference between Vislon and Coil?

A: Vislon zippers have teeth that are molded to the zipper tape. When the slider is pulled along the tape, the teeth lock together closing the zipper. This zipper configuration is similar to the zipper on a pair of blue jeans, except the teeth are much larger. Overall, Vislon zippers hold up well in sunlight and in outdoor applications because the teeth are molded to the zipper tape.

Coil zippers have continuous loops of Delrin, almost like a long Slinky, sewn along each side of the zipper tape. When the slider is pulled along the tape the coils lock into one another closing the zipper. This closure method is very strong and ideal for curved applications. However, the thread that holds the loops to the zipper tape can deteriorate with exposure to sunlight.

Sailrite would recommend a Vislon zipper over a Coil zipper for outdoor applications, unless the zipper is needed on a curve.