Whimsy Couture™

This super easy t-shirt has no set-in sleeves. Simply add the bands to make a snug fitted short sleeve. The t-shirt length is a bit shorter than usual to let the cute waist band sit on the hips. The neck is a boat neck style. The inner seams may be serged/zigzag stitched for a more professional look. If you prefer that please do so after each step where necessary. Topstitching is not required but feel free to do so. Using a twin needle is best for this!

Please read the information documents about sewing with knits first. Starts at the end of this tutorial past the templates.

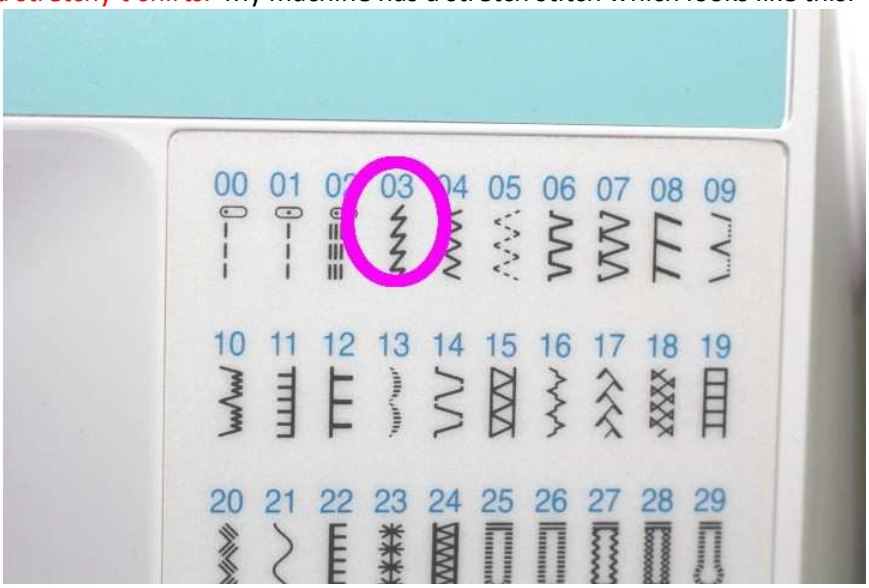
List of required materials:

- Knit Fabric such as interlock, heavier jersey knits
- Sewing machine
- Serger (optional)
- Straight pins
- Iron

Seam allowance: 3/8" unless stated otherwise

Sewing stitch: stitch suitable for knit fabrics such as a knit stitch or slight zigzag stitch unless otherwise stated.

NOTE: when sewing with knits it's important to sew with a stitch that "gives". Sewing with a regular straight stitch would cause the thread to break when pressure is being put on the garment such as with a stretchy t-shirts. My machine has a stretch stitch which looks like this:



IMPORTANT NOTICE WHEN SEWING WITH KNITS: prewash your knits because most knit fabric will shrink up to ONE INCH!!!

Always have the stretch of the fabric go ACROSS to ensure a proper fit!

(if your machine doesn't have this stitch please choose a narrow zigzag stitch like this: stitch length at 2.5 and stitch width at 1)

Stretch gauge: can be found in the document INFO ABOUT SEWING WITH KNITS among other important factors at the end of this tutorial.

Sizing chart – based on 60 inch wide knit fabric WITH print direction (2" SHRINKAGE INCLUDED!!!)

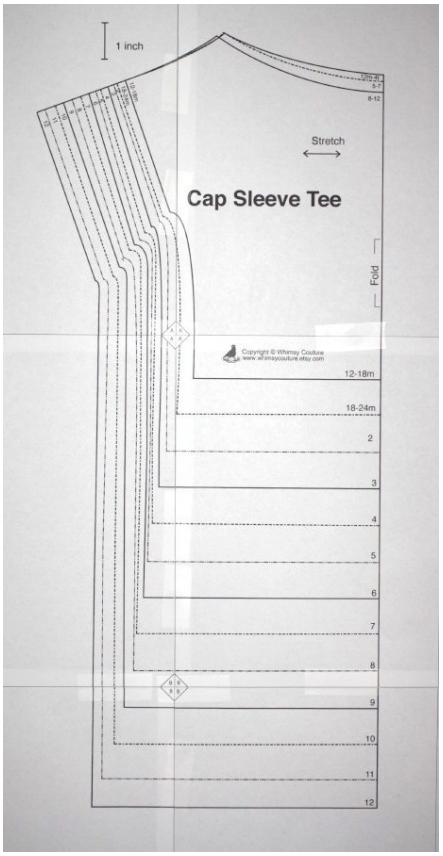
L x W*= Length goes vertically (down) and Width goes horizontally (across the fabric width)

Size	Appr. finished shirt length f.shoulder to hem	Main shirt yardage	Cut 2x For Neck bands L x W*	Cut 2x For Sleeve bands L x W*	Cut 1x For waistband L x W*	Band yardage (neck, sleeves & waist
6-9m	9.5"	1/3 yd	2.5"x7 1/4"	3"x5.5"	3"x17"	1/4 yd
12-18m	10.5"	1/3 yd	2.5"x7 1/4 "	3"x5.5"	3"x17 1/4"	1/4 yd
18-24m	11.5 "	1/2 yd	2.5"x7 1/4"	3"x5 3/4"	3"x17.5"	1/4 yd
2t	12.5"	1/2 yd	2.5"x7 1/4"	3"x6"	3"x18"	1/4 yd
3t	13.5	1/2yd	2.5"x7.5"	3"x7"	3"x18 1/4"	1/4 yd
4t	14.5"	1/2 yd	2.5"x7.5"	3"x7 1/4"	3"x18 1/4"	1/4 yd
5t	15.5 "	1/2 yd	3"x 7 3/4"	3"x7. 5"	3"x18.5"	1/4 yd
6	16.5"	2/3 yd	3"x 7 3/4"	3"x7 3/4"	3.5"x18 3/4"	1/4 yd
7	17.5"	2/3 yd	3"x 7 3/4"	3"x8"	3.5"x19"	1/4 yd
8	18.5"	2/3 yd	3"x 7 3/4 "	3"x8 1/4"	3.5"x19 1/4"	1/4 yd
9	19.5"	2/3 yd	3"x 7 3/4 "	3"x8.5"	3.5"x19.5"	1/4 yd
10	20.5"	2/3 yd	3"x7 3/4 "	3"x8 3/4"	3.5"x19 3/4"	1/4 yd
11	21.5"	2/3 yd	3"x8 "	3"x9"	3.5"x20"	1/4 yd
12	22.5"	3/4 yd	3"x8 "	3 1/4"x9.5"	3.5"x20 1/4"	1/4 yd

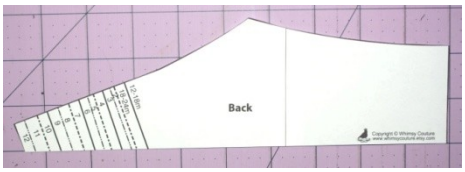
To print your front and back templates:

Print without scaling and double check the 1 inch print scale. Cut around the perimeter of each page and piece the pages together matching the letters in diamonds. Tape pages together without overlapping or leaving gaps.

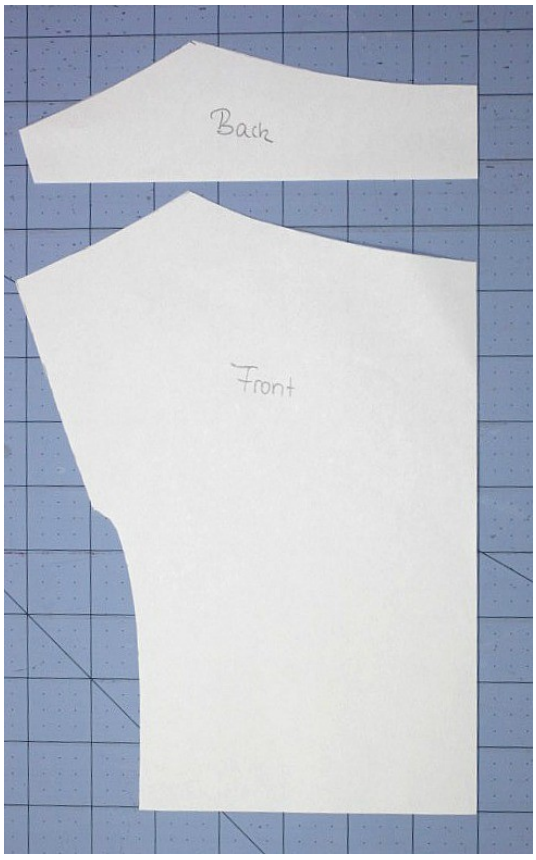
This is your finished template for the FRONT:



And BACK cutout:



Select the size you are making and cut it out. You may trace it onto transfer paper or a big poster roll (from Office Depot) to preserve the other sizes. The small template cutout is for making the BACK:

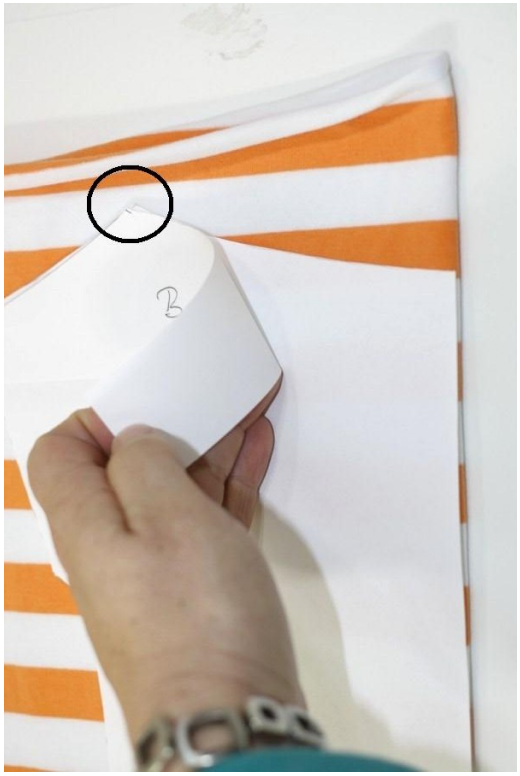


To cut the front:

Fold your fabric over sideways (print direction going down) and place the front templates onto the fabric FOLD. Pin in place and cut around it. Do not cut the fold:

To cut the back:

Use the front template and place it onto the folded fabric as you did with the front. Then place the small BACK cutout onto the top edge of the front template. Align the shoulder/neckline corner as circled:

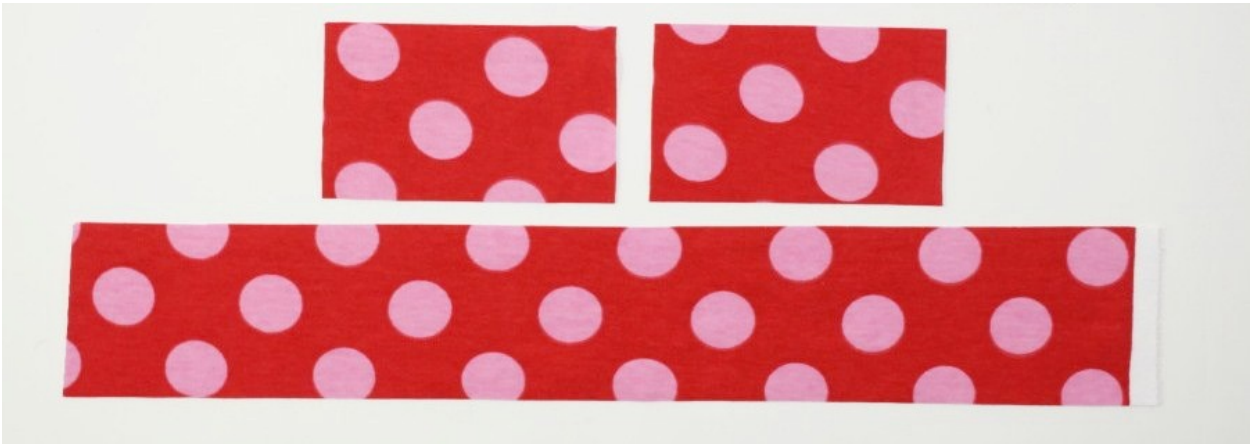


……and the FOLD edge as circled below. Pin and cut around template:

Cut around the templates.

These are now your front and back t-shirt pieces:

These are the 2 sleeve bands and the waist band:



These are the 2 neck bands:

TIP: if you want to omit the gathering you can go to page 9 now and come back when you are done.

To gather the neckline:

Set your machine to the longest stitch and the highest tension. This should automatically gather your fabric. Or you may use your preferred method for gathering. Sew along the dashed line on the neckline with a 1/4" seam allowance:

To sew the neckband on:

Fold the neckband over so both long edges meet. Fabric print showing. Press:

Place it above the gathered neckline with fold facing up. Distribute the gathers to match the width of the neckband:

Flip neckband over the t-shirt's gathered neckline and pin both together. Then sew along the dashed lines using a stretch or slight zigzag stitch and a 3/8" seam allowance:

This is how the sewn on neckband looks like now from the right side:

This is the back view where you can sew the gathering stitches slightly above the neckband stitches:

Gently pull on each side of the neckband to break the gathering stitches. You might find them loose and pull them out.

Repeat this with the other t-shirt piece and neckband.

Option for sewing on the bands:

You can easily omit the gathering and pin/sew the bands on like this…….

Place folded and pressed neckband with the raw edges down above the t-shirt as shown:

Pin the left side…….

……pin the right side…….

……gently stretch the neckband over the t-shirts' width and pin entire band on as shown:

Sew band on. Serge/zigzag stitch if you prefer.

This is how your neckline looks on a finished t-shirt:

Once you have sewn on both neckbands you want to continue here:

To sew the shoulder seams:

Place front and back t-shirt with right sides together and pin the shoulder. Sew along the dashed line. Backstitch the beginning and end using a straight stitch:

Repeat with other shoulder.

To sew the sleeve bands on:

Either gather the sleeve edge as you did with the neckband or go straight to sewing it on as described on page 9.

Fold one of the sleeve bands in half and press as you did with the neckbands. Place it aside the gathered sleeve edge with raw edges facing the sleeve:

The next steps are not pictures but are the same you did with the neckbands.

1.flip sleeve band over the gathered sleeve edge

2. pin and sew in place with a 3/8” seam allowance

3. gently pull on sleeve band to break the gathering stitches

4. repeat with other sleeve and sleeve band

To sew the side seam:

Place t-shirt with right sides together and pin along the sleeve/side. Then sew along the dashed line. Backstitch the beginning on the sleeve band with a straight stitch. Sew the rest with a stretch/zigzag stitch.

Do not sew the other side yet!

To sew the waist band on:

In order to sew the waist band on in one piece you want to keep the other side unsewn for this step.

To do same steps as you did with the neckbands and sleeve bands.

1.gather the bottom edge of the t-shirt with a ¼" seam allowance

2. Fold waist band in half lengthwise and press.

3. pin waist band to the bottom edge of the t-shirt

4. sew in place with a 3/8" seam allowance

To sew the other side of the t-shirt:

Pin and sew the other side along the dashed line as shown with a stretch/zigzag stitch. Backstitch the beginning and end with a straight stitch:

Last steps are to tuck in all loose hanging threads where the bands meet (on neckline, sleeves and one side on waist band) and top stitch. To “mark” the backside you may sew in a care/size tag to the center back:

Design examples:

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Blog: http://whimsycoutureboutique.blogspot.com/

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For questions please email whimsycouture@hotmail.com

Thank you so much for using this pattern!

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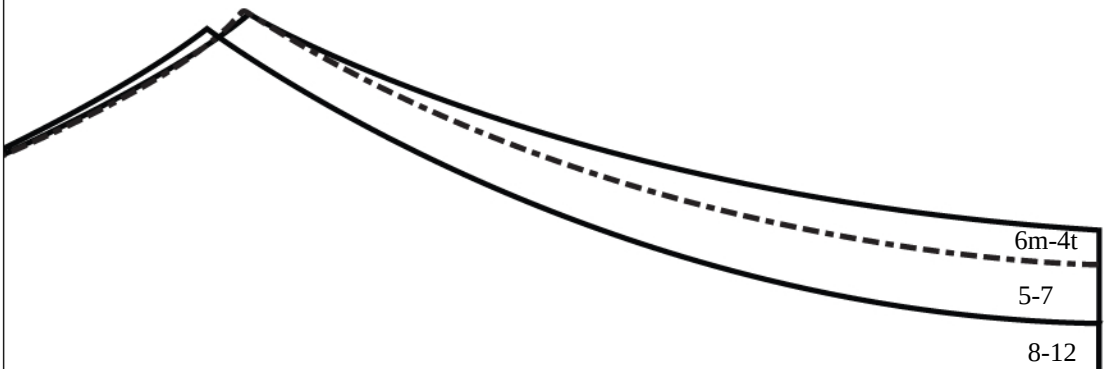

Stretch

Banded Knit Tee

A

A

Fold

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www.whimsycouture.etsy.com

6-9m

12-18m

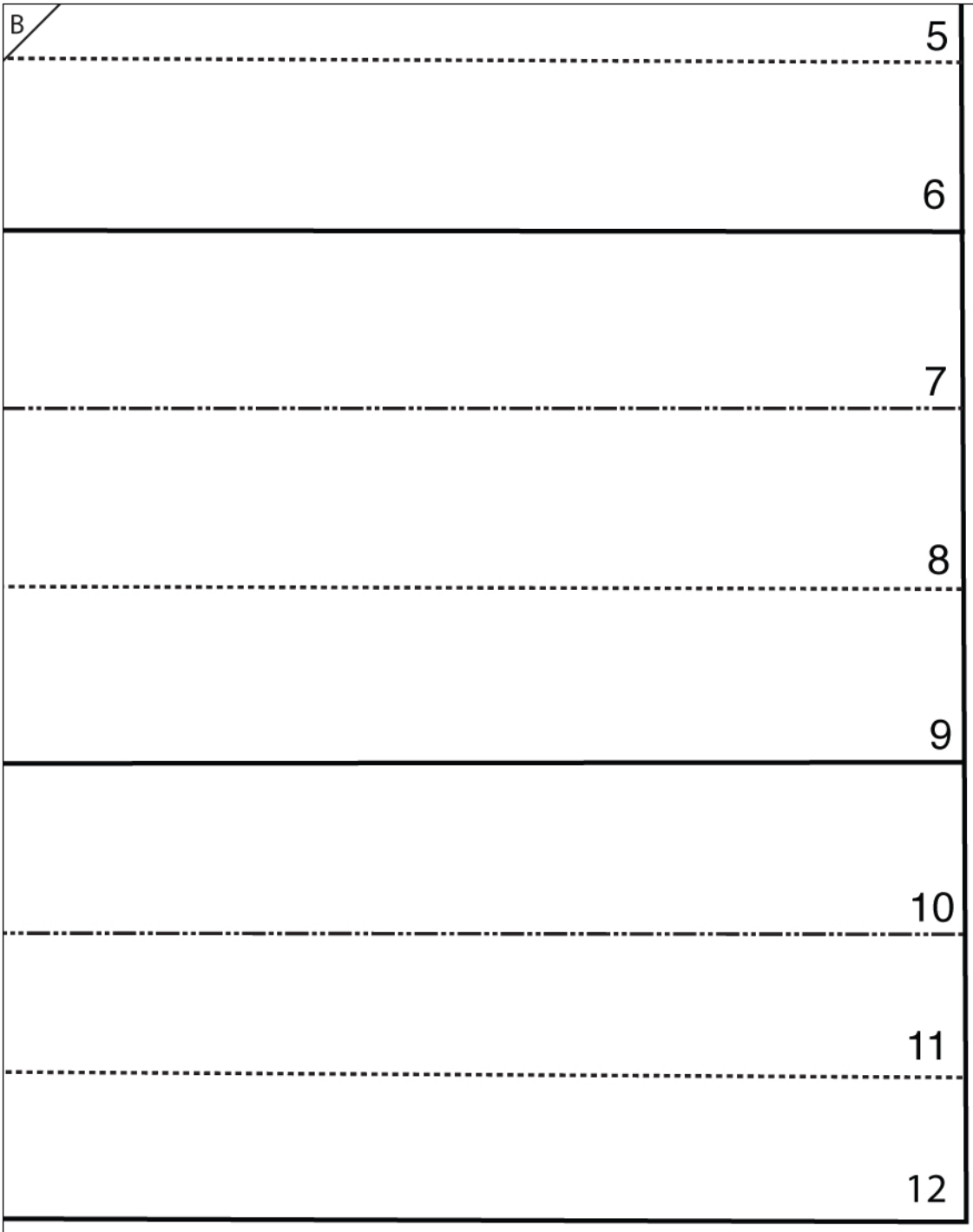
18-24m

2

3

4

B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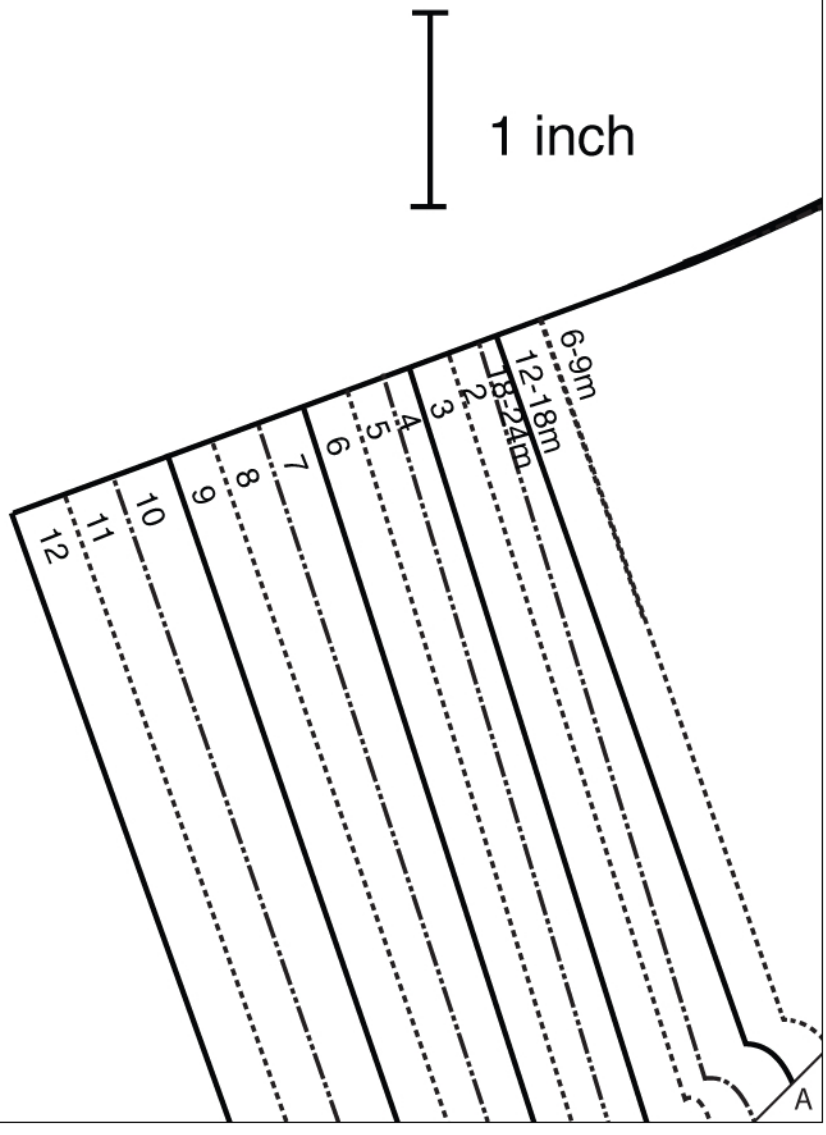
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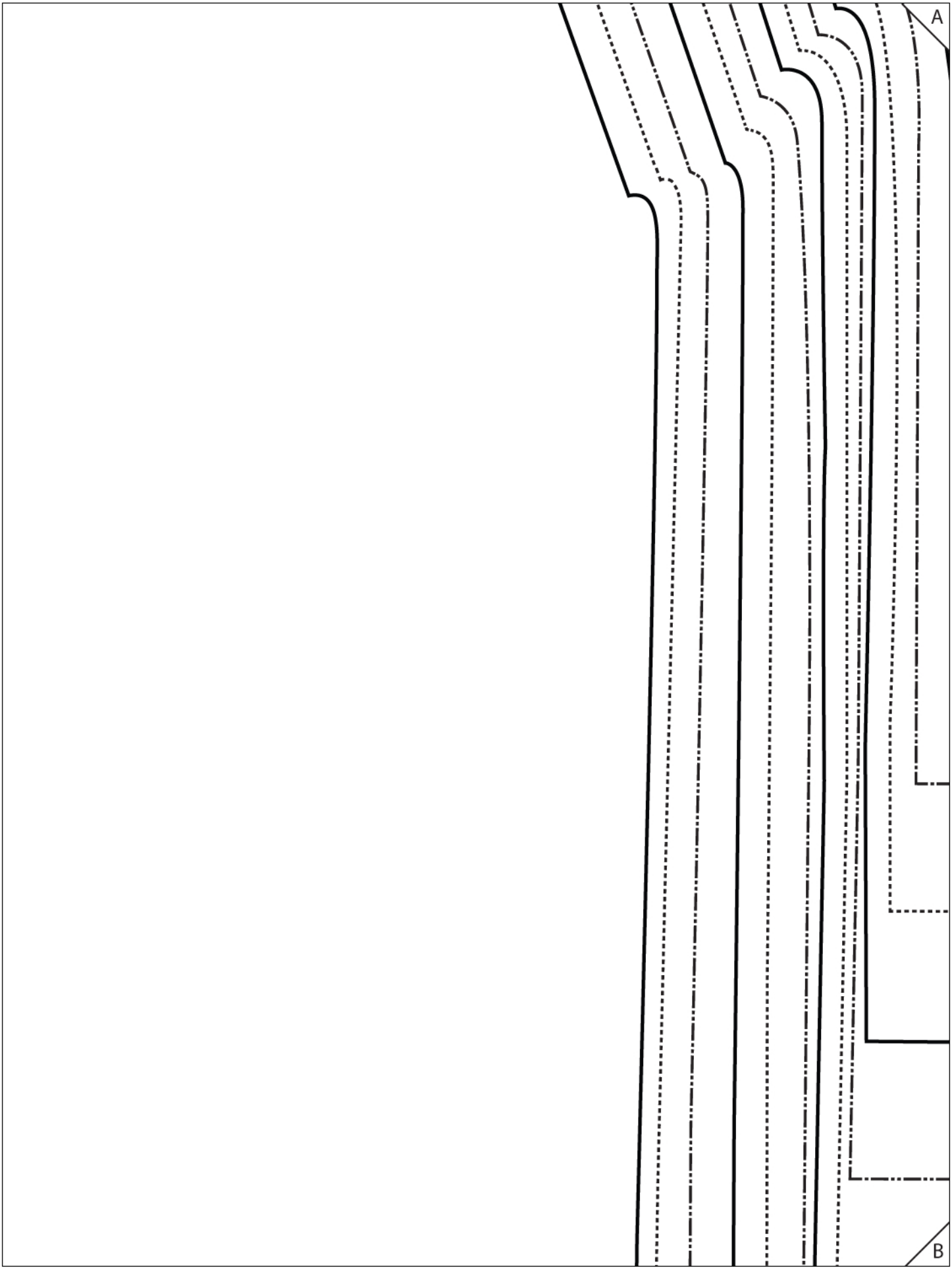
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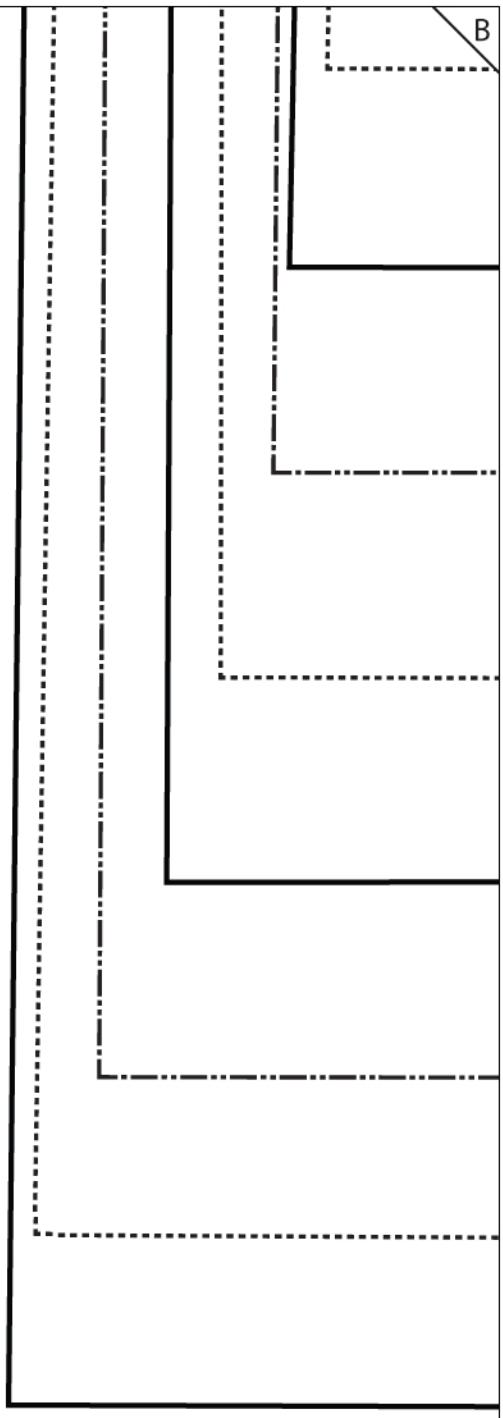
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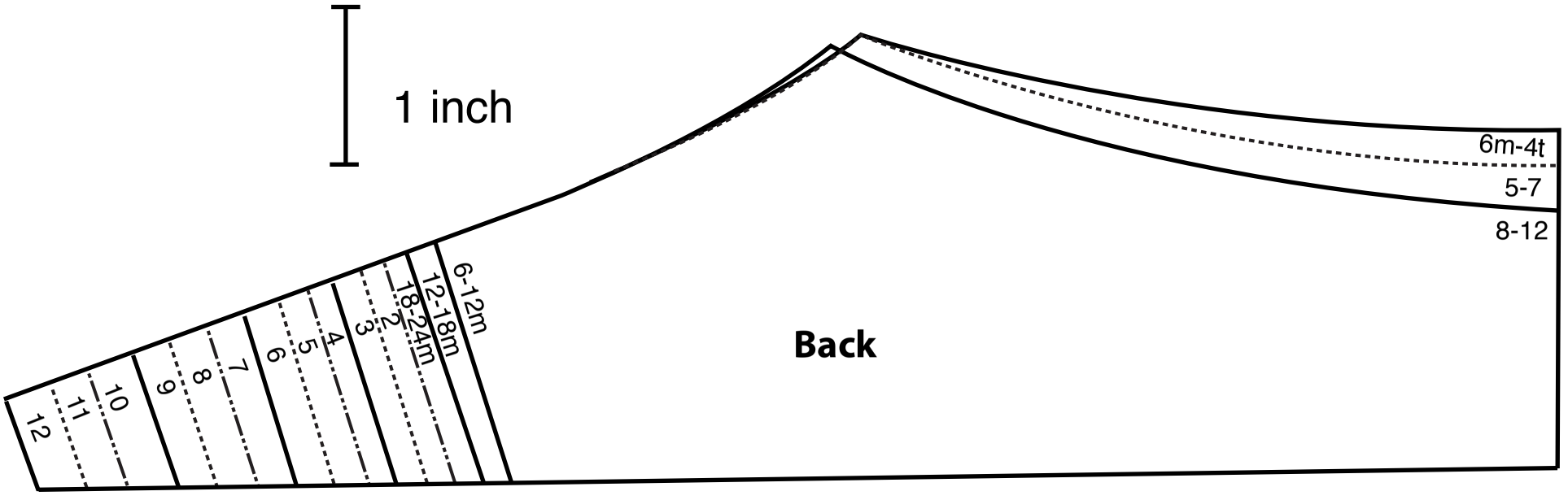
1 inch
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18-24m
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12

This compilation is all about sewing with knits! Here you will find necessary info which can be found on the internet. This info is not part of your purchase. It's free!

Article from Sew Mama Sew!

Tips for Working With Knits & Mock-Coverstitch Tutorial

Many people think that knit fabrics are scary, when, in fact, they are such gentle monsters-– kind of like Muppets, really. Although they're kind of funny, they're also super soft and pose no real threat to the motivated sewist. I've taken up sewing with them a lot more since having a baby-– there's nothing better for comfort wear, and what's more important than coziness for little ones?

The key to working with these Muppet-like knits is to know which strings to pull to get the professional-looking results that you want. I thought I'd share some of my favorite tricks:

1. **Know your sewing machine or serger inside and out.** You don't need a serger to sew knits successfully, but you do need to know the capabilities of your machine. Any tips that you read online or pick up in a book won't tell you what settings your machine needs in order to sew knits without frustration. Read the manual and set aside an afternoon to really master your machine, fiddling around with different settings and plenty of scrap fabric. If you purchased your machine (or serger) from a dealer, they usually offer free machine mastery classes for their customers. Take advantage of your dealer! I just had an issue with the coverstitch function on my serger, and I took it in and had someone sit down with me and troubleshoot. It was super helpful.

2. **Get the right needles for the job.** More often than not, I use Schmetz Stretch needles (130/705 H-S) for sewing with knits. On heavier-weight knits, I might use a ballpoint/jersey needle, but if I'm getting skipped stitches, I'll switch back to my trusty stretch needle. You'll also want to have Stretch Twin needles on hand for sewing hems and a mock coverstitch (more on this below!).

3. **Overlock or zigzag stitch all seams.** Knit patterns are cut with less ease because the fabrics themselves are stretchy. Think of the neck opening on a basic t-shirt-– it needs to stretch a good deal just to get over your head. So, the seams that you sew on a knit need to stretch as well, or else the thread will break. An overlock stitch on a serger is a very stretchy and strong seam, and is perfectly suited for sewing seams on knits. If you're sewing on a regular machine, check your manual to see if it has a mock-overlock stitch or a jersey stitch. Both are well-suited for knits. The standard option for sewing seams on a basic sewing machine is to use a zigzag stitch, set to a width of .7 mm and a length of 3.0 mm.

4. **Reduce the pressure of the presser foot if your seams stretch out when you sew.** If you're getting stretched-out, wavy seams, it's likely due to too much presser foot pressure. Most machines (and sergers) have the option to lower the pressure of the foot; check your manual. If you have a serger and you're getting wavy seams, make sure your differential feed is set to 1.5 instead of N (N is the setting for woven fabrics, 1.5 for knits).

5. **Consider using a walking foot.** If you've reduced the pressure of the foot on your regular sewing machine and you're still getting unsightly seams, try a walking foot. This nifty foot grabs at both the top and bottom fabrics and pulls the fabric through more evenly.

6. **Use quality thread, and pick up some wooly nylon.** You can always use regular spools of thread to sew knits-– you don't need to buy those big cones. That said, if you're using a serger, it does use lots more thread than a typical zigzag stitch on a sewing machine. Most sergers are somewhat picky about thread-– any inconsistencies in thread thickness will wreak havoc on the delicate tension balance, resulting in skipped stitches, broken threads, or other ugliness. Stick to quality cones, such as those made by Mettler, and you'll save yourself a lot of frustration.

When you're on the market for quality thread, be sure to pick up some wooly nylon thread. This usually comes in limited colors, but it doesn't matter-– you'll only use it in the bobbin of your machine or the loopers of your serger; in otherwords, it will only show on the wrong side of your garment. Wooly nylon is extra stretchy, making it perfect for use in most knitwear. If you use it in your serger, make sure to test your settings on a scrap piece of the fabric with which you'll be sewing. You'll most likely have to fiddle with the recommended tension of the needles and loopers, as wooly nylon has different properties than regular thread. Once I find the setting that works perfectly for wooly nylon on any given knit fabric, I write down the "formula" and keep it posted near my serger, so the next time I work with a similar fabric, I've cut down significantly on my guess work.

7. **Know how to make a professional-looking hem finish on your regular sewing machine.** Even if you're lucky enough to have a serger, you probably don't have a coverstitch machine. (Some sergers have a combo overlock/coverstitch function, like mine, but it can be a bit of a pain because I have to do some extensive re-threading if I want to switch between functions.) A coverstitch is comprised of the two parallel lines of stitching that you see on the hem of your t-shirts, which has a looping stitch on the wrong side of the fabric. The coverstitch is stretchy, and creates a very professional finish when it comes to knitwear. Perhaps you were worried that your knit garments will look too homemade because your only option for hem finishing was a zigzag. The good news is that you don't have to shell out another $800 just to be able to sew a coverstitch. You'll just need the following:

- a machine that allows you to sew with a twin needle (most do)
- a Stretch Twin needle in either 2.0 or 4.0 mm width
- wooly nylon thread
- Lite Steam-A-Seam 2, 1/2" wide

1. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to fuse the Steam-A-Seam tape to the wrong side of the fabric, about 1/8" from the raw edge that you wish to hem.

Remove the paper backing, then fold the sticky tape to the wrong side of the fabric, using the edge of the tape as your folding guide. Press again following the manufacturer's instructions. You should have a 5/8" hem.

2. Hand-wind a bobbin with wooly nylon thread (don't stretch the thread too tightly as you wind) and insert your bobbin. Since a mock-coverstitch isn't quite as stretchy as a real coverstitch, the wooly nylon will create extra give in your hem, assuring that you won't snap any threads during everyday wear and tear.

3. Change out your regular Stretch needle for a Stretch Twin needle. Check out your sewing machine's manual for instructions on how to thread a twin needle. Thread, then test your stitch on a scrap of your fabric. If you're getting a ridge between the two lines of stitching, you need to reduce the top tension. (Mine is usually at a 4 or 5, but I turn it down to 1 for mock-coverstitching.)

Denver fabrics:

Knit Fabric

Sewing with Knit Fabrics

Knit fabrics are easy to sew and fit, require less pressing and care, and are comfortable to wear. Knit fabrics range from casual sweatshirt fleece to elegant stretch velvets and are available in a wide variety of fibers both natural and synthetic and a combination of the two. The degree of stretch varies from 20 to 35%. Select patterns which are designed for stretch knits only. These patterns require fabric that stretches a specific amount and the pattern envelope gives the degree of stretch.

Knit Fabric Types

Double knit is a firm, medium to heavy weight fabric which has fine ribs and usually looks the same on both sides. Because the fabric has minimal stretch, patterns designed for woven fabric can also be used. Suitable for skirts, pants, jackets and dresses.

Sweatshirt fleece has minimal stretch, flat vertical ribs on right side and a brushed soft surface on the wrong side. Suitable for sweatshirts, pants, jackets, and other sporty garments.

Single knit fabrics and jersey knits are light to medium weight fabrics with flat vertical ribs on the right side and dominant horizontal lines on the wrong side. Fabric stretches from 20 to 25% across the grain. Suitable for T-shirts, tops, dresses, pull-on pants, shorts, skirts, and sleepwear.

Interlock is a light to medium weight fabric with a fine rib on both sides. Fabric stretches 25 to 35% across the grain. Suitable for tops, dresses, pull-on pants, shorts, skirts, and sleepwear.

Velour and stretch velvet are available in various weights. Velour and stretch velvet have a soft brushed nap on the right side, velvet has a shinner appearance than velour. Fabric stretches 25 to 35% or more across the grain. Suitable for tops, shirts, dresses, skirts, pull-on pants, and shorts and easy jackets.

Sweater and textured novelty knits are available in a variety of weights and textures. The degree of stretch varies. These knit fabrics are suitable for pull-over sweaters, cardigans, simple dresses and pull-on skirts.

Two way stretch fabrics are fabrics with Spandex/spandex and have approximately 75% stretch. Swimwear fabrics of Nylon/spandex usually have the most stretch on lengthwise grain, Cotton/spandex has most stretch on crosswise grain and is suitable for swimwear, activewear, dancewear, leotards and leggings.

Ribbing has approximately 100% crosswise stretch and has prominent vertical ribs on both sides. This stretch makes it suitable for neckbands, waistbands and cuffs. TIP: Do not pre-wash ribbing as it will be more difficult to sew.

Needles and Thread

Use a ball-point needle size 10/70 or 11/75 for lightweight fabrics, 12/80 for medium weight fabrics and 12/80 or 14/90 for heavyweight fabrics. Use an all purpose thread, polyester or cotton wrapped polyester.

Interfacing

Interfacing is used to reinforce closures, add shaping to collars, cuffs and plackets and stabilize areas such as shoulder seams and some necklines. The best interfacing is a 100% polyester fusible lightweight knit interfacing.

Preparing Fabric

Purchase a little extra fabric, because most knits shrink to some degree. Wash the fabric in the same manner you intend to use for the finished garment. This will preshrink the fabric and remove the surface finish which will make it easier to sew.

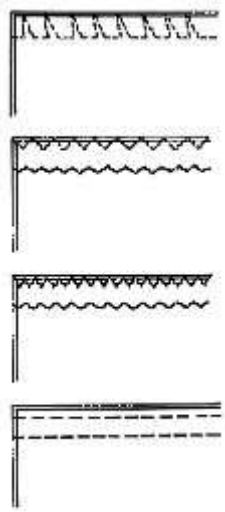
Cutting

Knits have shading and pattern pieces should be cut in one direction and be placed with the greatest degree of stretch around the body. Use weights to hold pattern pieces in place. A rotary cutter works very well with knits, just be sure to use a matt to protect your cutting table.

Sewing Procedures

Seam allowances vary on patterns, the 1/4" (6 mm) seam allowance is the easiest to use.

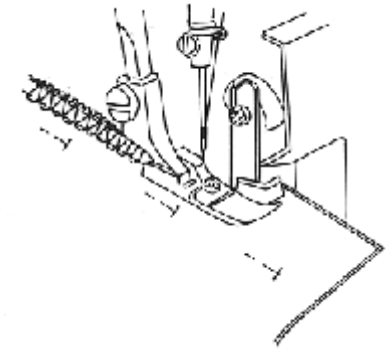
Sew the seam using an overlock stitch. This stitch sews and overcast in one step. It is not necessary to stretch the fabric while sewing as stretch is built in.



The seam can also be done with a narrow zig-zag width and a medium stitch length. This seam will stretch with the fabric (Fig. 2). Overcast the seam allowances together with a larger zig-zag stitch or you can use a three step zig-zag stitch placing the stitches one right next to the other.

On a straight stitch machine, sew the seam using a medium stitch length; stretch the fabric in the front and in the back of the presser foot as you sew. Sew another seam on the seam allowance close to the raw edges to keep seam allowances together. If pattern allows for a 5/8" (1.5 cm) seam allowance, sew the seam, trim the seam allowances, and overcast the raw edges together.

On the Serger (overlock) machineuse three or four threads, guide fabric, being sure that the correct seam allowance is used.

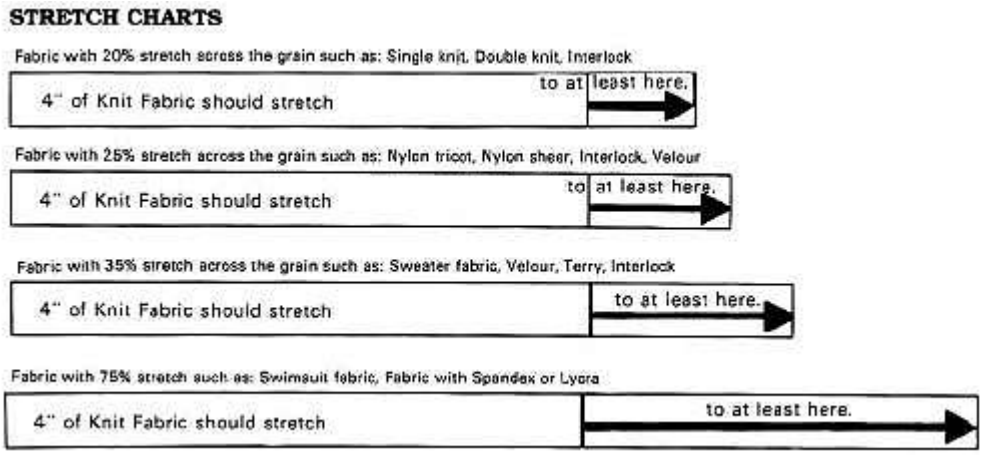


Hemming

Hems can be topstitched or blind hemmed. Sew the hem with a catchstitch by hand or use the blind hem on your machine. To topstitch hems, loosen the pressure on the presser foot to prevent the hem from stretching. Topstitch with a narrow zigzag and a medium stitch length, a double or a triple needle, or use the cover hem on the serger machine.

Stretch Chart and Gauge

To use the stretch chart or gauge, fold over the crosswise edge of the knit fabric 3" (8 cm). Hold 4" (10 cm) of the folded fabric against the chart and gently stretch to the outer line. If the fabric stretches easily without excessive rolling to the outer line or slightly farther, the fabric has the correct amount of stretch for the pattern. this is an elastic seam.



Craftstylish:

Tips and Tricks for Sewing with Knits

Professional knit hems tend to favor the strength of a double row of stitches.

Photo: Ann Steeves

Nowadays, it seems that knits are the fabric mainstay of our lives. Fashionistas and seamsters have embraced the comfort, ease, and wearability that knits afford. But for the beginning (and even not-so-beginning) seamster, there are some techniques that make sewing with knits easier and more enjoyable. Here are a few to get you started.

Use the right needle - The needle you use in a project with knits can make or break the results. Generally speaking, you need a specialized needle to sew knits. There are two types that I use for knits: Ballpoint (also called Jersey) and Stretch. Ballpoint needles are best used for sweater-type and loosely woven knits. They have a rounded point that penetrates the fabric without catching or cutting through the yarns. Stretch needles are perfect for sewing through tightly knitted jersey fabrics with high Lycra content. I use them on all my wool, polyester and rayon jersey garments. For more on choosing the right needle for your project, check out Machine-Needle Know-How, an article from *Threads* magazine.

Stitch type and length - If you have a straight-stitch-only machine, set your stitch length to a medium (2.5mm-3mm) setting. When sewing knits with a straight stitch, you need to stretch the fabric very slightly (and very gently) as it goes under the presser foot. To do this, apply equal pressure on both sides of the needle by slightly pulling the fabric as shown.

Do not pull the fabric as it goes through the feed dogs: you may risk breaking your needle and damaging your machine if you do.

If you have a zigzag machine, set your stitch length to the narrowest zigzag setting (.5mm on many machines), and your stitch length to between 2.5mm and 3mm. If you have a very thick knit, you may need a longer stitch length. You do not need to stretch the fabric as you sew. The slight zigzag will give you the stretch needed.

Seam finishes - Knit fabrics, especially jerseys, don't generally ravel, so you can get away without finishing the seams in many cases. If you are fortunate enough to have a serger or overlock machine, you can use that to stitch and finish your seams in one fell swoop. You can also use your serger to finish the raw edges of hems before sewing them in place. I like to do this when working with sweater knits, terrycloth, or any knit that might have a tendency to "shed" slightly at the edges.

About face - Many patterns for knits call for using a facing for necklines and other exposed edges. With many knits, especially very stretchy jerseys, you can often skip the facing entirely. Simply fold under the seam allowance and stitch in place. I have been able to eliminate the facings on most necklines this way. If you have a very curved edge (like an armhole), you should test on a scrap of fabric cut to about the same curvature to see how you like the results.

Shouldering the burden - When making a knit top or dress, I stabilize the shoulder seams to prevent stretching. To do this, I fuse a piece of interfacing to the back shoulder piece or pieces. I prefer to use a 3/4-inch-wide piece of fusible tricot, which is made even with the cut edge of the fabric, but extends slightly beyond the seamline. This adds stability, but is light enough and has enough give to work with most knits. For heavier knits or sweater knits, I sometimes center a selvage of silk organza in the

seamline and stitch through all layers. The organza provides a lot of strength to the seam, but adds no bulk.

Hemming - If you examine knit ready-to-wear, you'll notice that most hems are sewn with a double row of stitches on the outside. Manufacturers use a specialized machine, called a coverstitch, to achieve this finish. If you don't have a coverstitch, you can still achieve this look. Most zigzag sewing machines can accommodate a double needle. This needle sews a perfectly spaced double row of stitches on the needle side of the fabric, with a zigzag on the bottom.

This stitch has more stretch than a regular straight stitch, and is perfect for giving you a professional-looking finish. Before stitching your garment, make a test on a scrap of fabric. Double needles may require some adjustments to your needle and bobbin tension to achieve a smooth, flat hem. Mark your hem on the right side of your garment. I like to use tailor's chalk that can easily brush or wash away. Then sew along this marking so your double row of stitches is on the right side.

I hope these hints will help you get started with sewing knits. With a little practice, I think you will find sewing with knits addicting!

End of info

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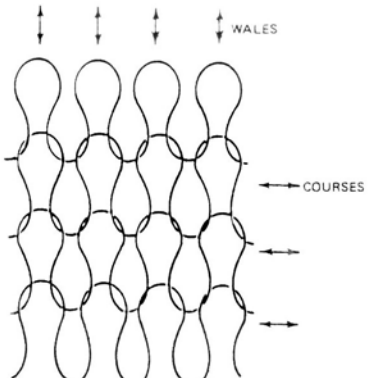
Sewing with Knit Fabric

Knits are an important part of every wardrobe because they are comfortable to wear and easy to care for. Because of their elasticity, knit garments do not require a lot of fitting and they shed wrinkles well. Most knits do not ravel, making them quick and easy to sew. Knits are versatile and can be seen in everything from the most casual wear to the dressiest of clothing attire. They come in a variety of fabrics that vary in texture, elasticity, fiber content, weight, and design.

Made from interlocking looped stitches, knit fabrics do not have lengthwise and crosswise yarns like woven fabrics. Instead, the interlocking loops of yarn create lengthwise ribs called **wales** and crosswise lines called **courses**. In single knits, the wales are visible from the right side of the fabric and the courses are visible on the fabric's wrong side.



A single yarn or set of yarns is looped together.

Knit fabrics are either weft or warp constructed. The type of fiber used as well as the method of construction affects the amount of stretch in each. **Weft knits** include single knits, double knits, and rib knits and are created by inter-looping the crosswise or filling yarns. Knitting can be done flat or in the round, creating a tube which is often cut to form a flat fabric. **Single knits** are created by knitting machines with a single bed of needles. Fabrics such as jersey look different on the reverse side and their edges tend to curl. **Double knit** fabrics are constructed on machines with two beds of needles, back to back. Double knits generally look the same front to back, are more stable than single knits, and the cut edge doesn't curl. Interlock knits are made from fine lightweight yarns, while other double knits are heavier in weight. Velour, terry knit, and sweatshirt fleece are double knit but tend to curl because they have a single knit base and look different from front to back. **Rib knits** are created by alternating knit and purl stitches in various combinations. They may look the same or different front to back, edges don't curl, and they may stretch 100 percent in the crosswise direction. Rib knits are generally used for band trims around necklines, armholes, and hemlines but can also be used for form fitting garments. **Warp knits** are created by inter-looping the warp yarns. They are knitted flat rather than in a tube. **Tricot** and **raschel** knits are the most common types of warp knits but look completely different because of the types of yarns used in knitting. Raschel knit is a novelty knit with textured yarns, recognized by its lacy construction. Whereas tricot knit is a lightweight knit with lengthwise ribs on its face.

Knit fabrics are typically classified by their amount of stretch.

- **Firm, stable knits** have very little stretch and are handled much like woven fabrics. These may include double knit, sweatshirt knit, boiled wool, and raschel knit.
- **Moderate stretch knits** are those that stretch about 25 percent in the crosswise direction. Moderate stretch knits allow enough stretch for comfort but are not intended to conform to body

contours. These may include lightweight single knits such as jersey and warp knits such as tricot. Interlock knits are lightweight and drapable, slightly heavier than jersey knit, and don't curl at the edge, making them easier to handle than jersey knit. However, runs may form on the crosswise edge. Fleece is a double-napped knit that has a moderate amount of stretch.

- **Two–way stretch knits** may have up to 50 and 75 percent stretch in the lengthwise direction and up to 50 to 75 percent in the crosswise direction. Typically used for leotards, swimsuits, and bodysuits; they can also be used for other form fitting garments.
- **Super stretch knits** stretch 100 percent or more in both directions. Spandex and latex add the extra elasticity to these knits. Super stretch knits are used for performance enhancing sportswear and ski wear.

CHOOSING PATTERNS

Patterns designed for knits generally have fewer pieces and less shaping details, making them quick to sew. Look for the words "For Stretch Knits Only," and always check the pattern envelope for suggested fabrics. Patterns designed for stretch knits have less ease built in than patterns for stable knit and woven fabrics. Facings are often replaced by ribbing, binding, or turned and stitched necklines. Zippers are a more suitable closure than buttons and buttonholes. If these features are not included, choose a pattern that does or one that can be adapted for them.

Most patterns designed for knits will include a stretch gauge printed on the back of the pattern envelope. Follow the guidelines for recommended stretch. If the pattern does not have a stretch gauge, it was likely designed for stable knit or woven fabric.

The amount of ease built into the pattern design is based on the number of inches or the percentage stretch the specific knit will stretch. If the fabric has more stretch than recommended, the garment may fit looser. If less stretch, then the garment will fit tighter.

Please refer to the stretch gauge chart on page 8. To use the gauge, avoid stretching along the cut edge by folding the fabric back about 4 inches. Most gauges use a 4-inch measurement to check the degree of stretch. Place the folded 4-inch section against the 4-inch section on the gauge and gently stretch towards the right end to see if the fabric has adequate stretch for the pattern. If the folded edge starts to curl, you have stretched the fabric too much. This guide tells you the minimum amount of stretch needed for the pattern. If the knit stretches a little beyond the mark, it is still suitable for the pattern. Generally, stable knits stretch ½ inch or less (10 percent), moderate-stretch knits stretch 1 to 1 ¼ inches (25 to 35 percent), super stretch and two-way stretch knits will stretch 2 or more inches in both directions (50 to100 percent).

Check for fabric recovery after stretching. When the fabric is released, it should spring back to its original size. If the fabric remains distorted, it will likely stretch out of shape with handling and wear and should be avoided.

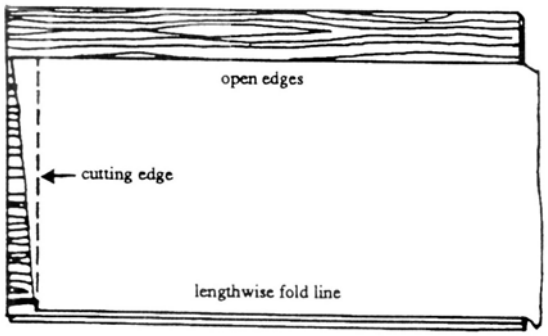
Swimsuits and leotards require knits with two-way stretch. Often, two-way stretch nylon spandex has a greater amount of stretch in the lengthwise direction while cotton spandex has greater stretch in the crosswise direction. Use the stretch gauge for the direction indicated on the pattern envelope. There may be separate gauges for lengthwise stretch and crosswise stretch. As with all knits, the greatest amount of stretch should go around the body.

If lining fabric is required for the pattern, be sure that it also meets the recommended stretch guidelines.

PREPARING THE FABRIC

Washable knits tend to shrink more often and to a greater degree than woven fabrics. Always purchase extra yardage to allow for shrinkage. For best results, wash and dry the fabric as you would the finished garment. Washing also helps to relax the fabric and removes fabric sizing. Excess sizing can cause skipped machine stitches. Preshrink trim, interfacing, lining, and other notions that will be used in the garment. Generally, rib knit should not be prewashed if being used as a trim. Washing softens it and makes it difficult to cut accurately.

Blocking Knits
Mark “grainline” by marking along a course near each cut end of the fabric. Cut the edges of the fabric so they are straight with the course. Fold the fabric so the lengthwise edges and the cut crosswise edges are even. If the fabric is a tubular knit or doesn’t have an open edge, the fabric can be cut along a lengthwise wale or rib-line. Do not use the fold as a guide for cutting because it may not be straight.



Fold knit fabric to check for straightness, and to straighten if necessary.

Lay the fabric on a blocking board or on a similar padded surface with the lengthwise and crosswise edges pinned to the surface at right angles to each other. If the fabric has wrinkles or is stretched to create the rectangular shape, it is not completely straight of grain and should be blocked. Hold a steam iron about ½ inch above the fabric to steam fabric in place. Let the fabric rest until completely cool and dry so it will retain its shape. If the blocking surface is smaller than the amount of fabric, block the fabric in sections from one end to the other.

Layout, Cutting, and Marking
Determine if the knit has a right and wrong side. Jersey and tricot knits have lengthwise ribs on the right side and crosswise loops on the wrong side. Most knits will curl to the right side when stretched along the crosswise cut edge. If the right side is undetectable, designate one side to be the wrong side by marking with chalk or tape.

Fold the knit fabric with right sides together, making sure that the wales and courses are perpendicular to each other. It may be necessary to fold small sections at a time or cut pieces out separately to ensure that all pattern pieces are cut “on grain.” If the lengthwise fold or crease remains after prewashing and steaming, it is likely to be permanent. Fold knit in such a way as to avoid the crease when cutting. Do not let knit fabric hang over the edge of the cutting table. The weight of the fabric will cause it to be distorted. Roll extra fabric up along one end to prevent fabric overhang.

Lay out all pattern pieces going the same direction by following the “with nap” layout. Use fabric weights or use ballpoint or sharp, fine pins along seam allowances to secure pattern pieces for cutting. Be careful not to stretch fabric

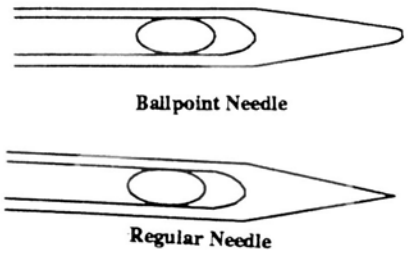
while cutting. A rotary cutter and mat make cutting out knits easy and eliminates movement and distortion.

There are a variety of marking methods. Try pins, water-soluble marking pens, tailor's tacks, or hard milled soap slivers. Test marking pens on scrap fabric to be sure the ink can be removed before using on fashion pieces. Mark the wrong side of each garment piece with tape.

NOTIONS FOR KNITS

As with any project, using the appropriate notions will help in achieving the best results.

- **Pins:** Use ballpoint pins on knit fabric. The rounded points on these pins separate the yarns instead of piercing them, creating holes in the fabric.
- **Needles:** Universal sewing machine needles stitch well on most knit fabrics. Ballpoint needles like ballpoint pins have a rounded tip



Use a ballpoint needle with knits.

that eliminates snagging, and stretch needles work well to prevent skipped stitches. If skipped stitches are a problem, use a larger needle or try a needle lubricant. All these needles come in a variety of sizes from 60 to 90. Needle size will depend on fabric weight. The finer the fabric, the smaller the needle and thread should be. Stretch twin needles come in various widths and are great for topstitching hems.

- **Thread:** For lightweight knit use extra fine polyester or polyester/ cotton thread; for medium weight knits use an all-purpose polyester or polyester/cotton thread. Mercerized cotton thread does not have as much stretch as synthetic thread. Using a textured nylon thread in the bobbin to sew a plain seam makes it more elastic. Textured nylon thread gives a nice soft edge to serged seams and can also be used in the bobbin when working with a twin needle. Be sure to wind bobbin slowly to prevent thread from stretching, which can cause puckered seams in the finished garment.
- **Elastic:** Elastics differ in their stretch and recovery characteristics. Braided elastic narrows when stretched and can lose stretch and recovery if it is pierced when stitched. Knitted and woven elastics retain their original width when stretched. Non-roll elastic is appropriate for pull-on pants and skirts. Transparent elastic works well when topstitched and can stretch up to four times in length. It can also be used to stabilize seams when not stretched. Elastic used in swim-wear should be chlorine resistant.
- **Interfacing:** The choice of interfacing is determined by the purpose and the relationship to the general characteristics of the fashion fabric. More than one type of interfacing may be needed within the same garment. Select interfacings such as a fusible tricot or a stretch non-woven to stabilize areas such as

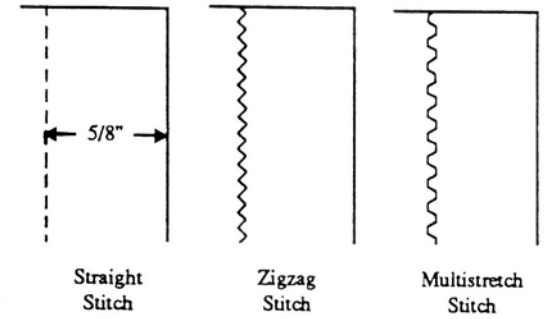
necklines, collars, cuffs, plackets, and buttonholes. Consider the weight, stretch, and care requirements of the knit as well as the desired finish. Since fleece does not tolerate heat well, a sew-in interfacing is recommended. To determine its compatibility, always test a swatch of fabric with the chosen interfacing before using in the garment.

SEWING TECHNIQUES

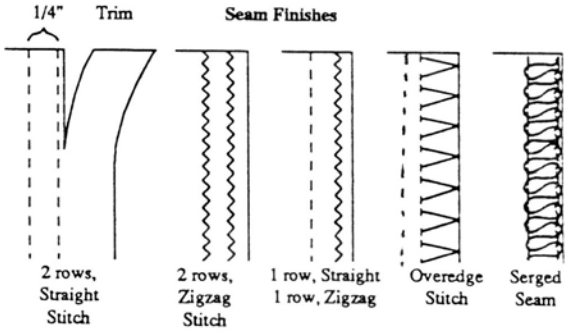
Seams and seam finishes for knits must stretch with the knits or broken stitches will occur. Check the pattern for recommended seam allowance. Some patterns designed for knits will have ¼-inch seam allowances, eliminating the need for trimming but also eliminating any margin for adjusting size. Select a seam with enough stretch for the fabric.

Sergers are great for sewing knits. A three- or four-thread serger stitch will give a quick, durable, professional finish to seams while maintaining stretch. Adjusting the differential feed on the serger prevents seams from stretching too much and becoming wavy. Sergers and cover stitch machines allow you to duplicate techniques found in ready-to-wear, such as the flat lock or double-sided flat seam.

The conventional sewing machine is also quite capable of producing seams on knit fabric. Use a plain seam for stable and moderate-stretch knits. For lighter weight knits and some medium-weight knits, use a double-stitched seam using a straight stitch, zigzag, or a twin needle. Stitch on the seam line and $^1/_8$ inch away. For greater elasticity in seams, stitch length can be shortened slightly.

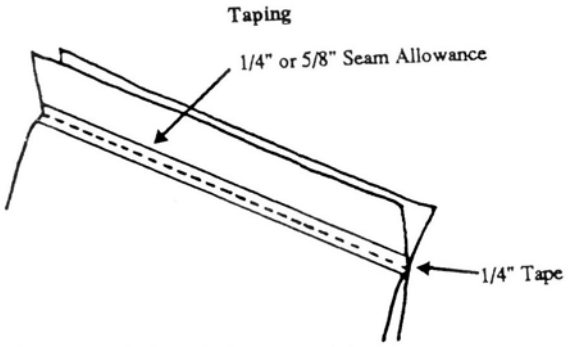


Since knit fabric doesn't ravel, seam finishes are optional. However, if the cut edges curl, serge the seam or sew two rows of stitching ¼ inch apart and trim close to the second stitching line. A wide zigzag stitch or one of the utility or overlock stitches found on most machines will also work to finish the edges. For best results with the overlock stitch, trim seam to ¼ if needed, and use the proper overlock foot for the machine to guide the raw edges along as the stitches are formed over the edge of the fabric. Reducing the foot pressure slightly on soft loose knits will help prevent seams from stretching and being wavy.

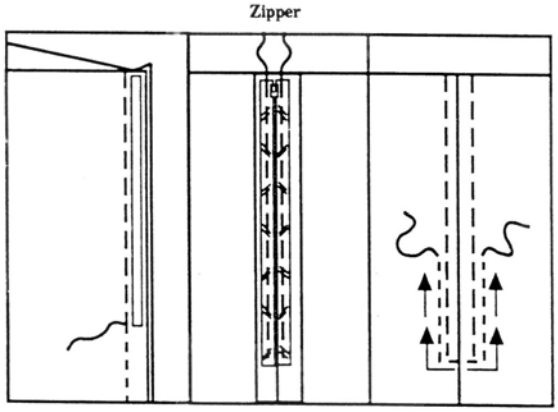


Areas to Stabilize
Seams that get a lot of stress and may stretch out of shape, such as shoulder, neckline, and waistline, need to be taped for stability. Narrow twill tape,

woven selvage, woven seam tape, or transparent elastic can be used. Stay-Tape™ is a lightweight nylon tape that doesn't add bulk and is washable and dry cleanable. Sew the seam, catching the tape in the seam. On lightweight knit, press the seam allowance to one side and topstitch close to the seam line through all layers.

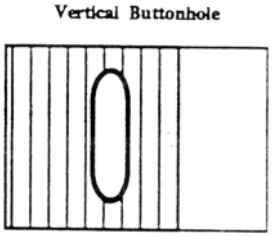


Zipper plackets should also be stabilized by applying a strip of lightweight fusible interfacing or hand stitching a piece of seam tape within the seam allowance area only. Stitch the zipper by beginning at the bottom of the zipper stop and stitch up one side. Start at the bottom again and stitch up the other side.



Reinforce zipper with lightweight fusible interfacing.

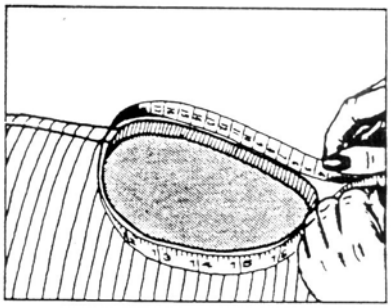
For buttonholes, the lengthwise grain of interfacing should follow the direction of the buttonhole. A corded buttonhole will also give more stability to buttonholes on knit fabric. Some machines even have special stretch buttonhole stitches. If the fabric has a lot of crosswise stretch it may be necessary to make vertical buttonholes to get a smoother, neater looking buttonhole.



Use vertical buttonholes that run parallel to ribbing.

Ribbing

Rib knit trim is designed to have great crosswise stretch and recover to its original size and shape after stretching. It is generally sold by the inch in tubular form. Rib knit is folded double with the folded edge used as the outer finished edge for band trims. Some ribbing comes with finished outer edges and is then applied single layer. Select a ribbing similar in weight to the fabric. If pattern pieces are not provided, cut ribbing twice the desired width and long enough to fit around wrists, upper arms,



Stand tape measure on end to determine ribbing length.

and ankles. Add ½ inch for seam allowances in both directions. To measure necklines and armholes, stand measuring tape on end along pattern seam line to determine length accurately. Cut ribbing two-thirds the

measured length of garment seams lines plus ½ inch for seam allowances. V-necklines are cut the same measurement as the garment neckline seam measures. Ribbing may be applied flat or in-the-round. In the flat method leave one seam open before applying ribbing. For the in-the-round method, seam ends together, trim seam allowance if necessary to ¼-inch. In both methods, fold ribbing is half lengthwise and press crease, match center and quarter marks to each other, and stretch ribbing to fit as it is sewn in place.

Pressing

Knits do not require a lot of pressing during construction, another reason that makes them quick to sew. When pressing is needed, test on fabric scraps for the correct amount of steam, heat, and pressure. Remember to press and not iron the fabric. To prevent the fabric from being flattened too much, place the fabric on a terry towel and use a press cloth.

Hems

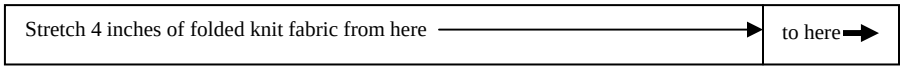
Allow the garment to hang 24 hours before measuring the hem. Hems can be done by hand or machine, or they can be fused. For very heavy knits, double stitch the hem. If topstitching a hem on textured knits, a zigzag stitch may look straighter than a straight stitch. A cover stitch is also good for hemming knit garments. If a cover stitch machine is not available, using a stretch double or triple needle can duplicate the look of the cover stitch. The two or three rows of topstitching on the right side and a row of zigzag stitching on the bottom side gives the necessary stretch required for knits. Choose a 2.5 mm or 4 mm twin needle and textured nylon thread in the bobbin and lengthen the stitch length slightly. If the knit tends to curl, interface the hem area with a lightweight fusible tricot knit interfacing. A machine blind stitch can be used for an invisible hem on stable knits for a dressier look.

Sewing Checklist

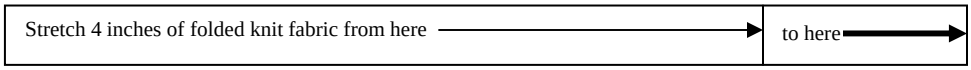
	Needle size	Machine Setting	Marking Methods	Seams
Single Knits	8/60–11/75	12 / 2mm	Chalk, marking pens, soap sliver	Plain, double sewn, twin needle
Double Knits	8/60–14/90	10–12 / 2–2.5mm	Chalk, marking pens, soap sliver, thread	Plain, double sewn, welt, slot, piped
Interlock Knits	6/60–11/75	12/2mm	Any type except wax	Plain, double sewn, twin needle, stretch
Raschel Knits	12/80–14/90	10–12 / 2–2.5mm	Pins, tailor tacks	Plain, double sewn
Sweatshirt Knits	10/70–14/90	9–12 / 2.5–3mm	Chalk, marking pens, soap sliver	Plain, zigzag, double sewn, twin needle, welt, serged, flatlock, piped
Athletic Mesh Knits	10/70–12/80	10–15 / 1.5–2.5mm	Marking pens, tape	Double sewn, serged, zigzag
Tricot Knits	8/60–12/80	12 / 2mm	Outward notches, chalk, soap sliver	Double sewn, twin needle
Sweater Knits	10/70–14/90	10–12 / 2–2.5mm	Pins, thread	Double sewn, zigzag, serged
Stretch terry/velour	10/70–14/90	10–12 / 2–2.5mm	Chalk, marking pens, soap sliver, pins	Plain, double sewn, welt, piped
Action Knits	10/70–14/90	10 / 2.5mm	Chalk, marking pens, soap sliver, pins	Stretch, twin needle, serged

STRETCH GAUGE

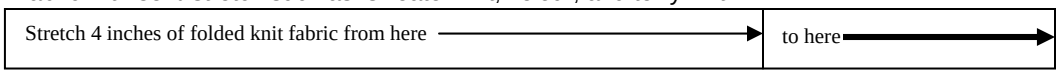
Fabric with 20% stretch such as: jersey knit, double knit, and interlock knit



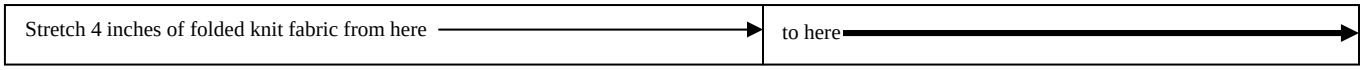
Fabric with 25% stretch such as: nylon tricot, interlock, and velour



Fabric with 35% stretch such as: sweater knit, velour, and terry knit



Fabric with 75% stretch such as: swimsuit knit, fabric with spandex or Lycra®



For more information on sewing knit fabrics, see Claire Shaffer's *Fabric Sewing Guide*.

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March 2006

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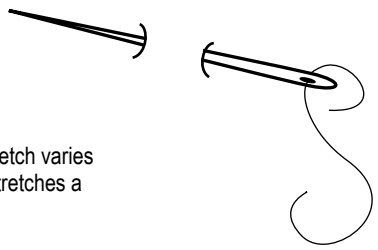
Sewing with Knits

Knits are easy to sew and fit, require less pressing and care, and are comfortable to wear.



Knits range from casual sweatshirt fleece to elegant stretch velvets and are available in a wide variety of fibers both natural and synthetic and a combination of the two. The degree of stretch varies from 20 to 35%. Select patterns which are designed for stretch knits only. These patterns require fabric that stretches a specific amount and the pattern envelope gives the degree of stretch.

KNIT FABRICS TYPES

Double knit is a firm, medium to heavy weight fabric which has fine ribs and usually looks the same on both sides.

Because the fabric has minimal stretch, patterns designed for woven fabric can also be used. Suitable for skirts, pants, jackets and dresses.

Sweatshirt fleece has minimal stretch, flat vertical ribs on right side and a brushed soft surface on the wrong side. Suitable for sweatshirts, pants, jackets, and other sporty garments.

Single knit and jersey are light to medium weight fabrics with flat vertical ribs on the right side and dominant horizontal lines on the wrong side. Fabric stretches from 20 to 25% across the grain. Suitable for T-shirts, tops, dresses, pull-on pants, shorts, skirts, and sleepwear.

Interlock is a light to medium weight fabric with a fine rib on both sides. Fabric stretches 25 to 35% across the grain. Suitable for tops, dresses, pull-on pants, shorts, skirts, and sleepwear.

Velour and stretch velvet are available in various weights. Velour and stretch velvet have a soft brushed nap on the right side, velvet has a shinner appearance than velour. Fabric stretches 25 to 35% or more across the grain. Suitable for tops, shirts, dresses, skirts, pull-on pants, and shorts and easy jackets.

Sweater and textured novelty knits are available in a variety of weights and textures. The degree of stretch varies.These knits are suitable for pull-over sweaters, cardigans, simple dresses and pull-on skirts.

Two way stretch fabrics are fabrics with Spandex/Lycra and have approximately 75% stretch. Swimwear fabrics of Nylon/Lycra usually have the most stretch on lengthwise grain, Cotton/Lycra has most stretch on crosswise grain and is suitable for swimwear, activewear, dancewear, leotards and leggings.

Ribbing has approximately 100% crosswise stretch and has prominent vertical ribs on both sides. This stretch makes it suitable for neckbands, waistbands and cuffs.
TIP: Do not pre-wash ribbing as it will be more difficult to sew.

NEEDLES AND THREAD

Use a ball-point needle size 10/70 or 11/75 for lightweight fabrics, 12/80 for medium weight fabrics and 12/80 or 14/90 for heavyweight fabrics. Use an all purpose thread, polyester or cotton wrapped polyester.

INTERFACING

Interfacing is used to reinforce closures, add shaping to collars, cuffs and plackets and stabilize areas such as shoulder seams and some necklines. The best interfacing is a 100% polyester fusible lightweight knit interfacing.

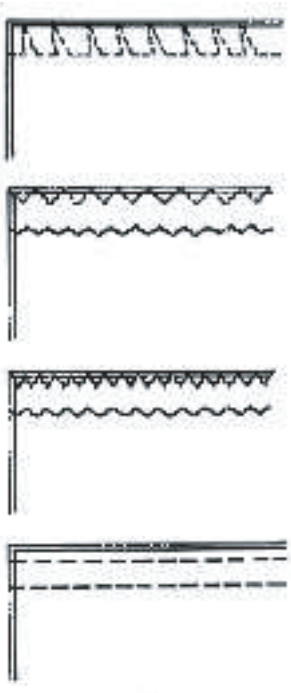
PREPARING FABRIC Purchase a little extra fabric, because most knits shrink to some degree. Wash the fabric in the same manner you intend to use for the finished garment. This will preshrink the fabric and remove the surface finish which will make it easier to sew.

CUTTING

Knits have shading and pattern pieces should be cut in one direction and be placed with the greatest degree of stretch around the body. Use weights to hold pattern pieces in place. A rotary cutter works very well with knits, just be sure to use a matt to protect your cutting table.

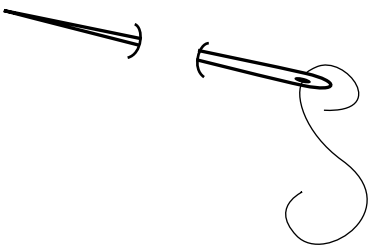
SEWING PROCEDURES

Seam allowances vary on patterns, the 1/4" (6 mm) seam allowance is the easiest to use.



Sewing with Knits – page 2

Knits are easy to sew and fit, require less pressing and care, and are comfortable to wear.



SEWING PROCEDURES

Seam allowances vary on patterns, the 1/4" (6 mm) seam allowance is the easiest to use.

Sew the seam using an overlock stitch. This stitch sews and overcast in one step. It is not necessary to stretch the fabric while sewing as stretch is built in.

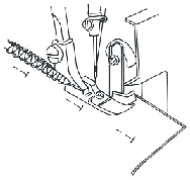
The seam can also be done with a narrow zig-zag width and a medium stitch length. This seam will stretch with the fabric (Fig. 2). Overcast the seam allowances together with a larger zig-zag stitch or you can use a three step zig-zag stitch placing the stiches one right next to the other (Fig.3).

On a straight stitch machine, sew the seam using a medium stitch length; stretch the fabric in the front and in the back of the presser foot as you sew (Fig. 4). Sew another seam on the seam allowance close to the raw edges to keep seam allowances together. If pattern allows for a 5/8" (1.5 cm) seam allowance, sew the seam, trim the seam allowances, and overcast the raw edges together.

On the Serger (overlock) machine (Fig. 5) use three or four threads, guide fabric, being sure that the correct seam allowance is used.

Hemming

Hems can be topstitched or blind hemmed. Sew the hem with a catchstitch by hand or use the blind hem on your machine. To topstitch hems, loosen the pressure on the presser foot to prevent the hem from stretching. Topstitch with a narrow zigzag and a medium stitch length, a double or a triple needle, or use the cover hem on the serger machine.

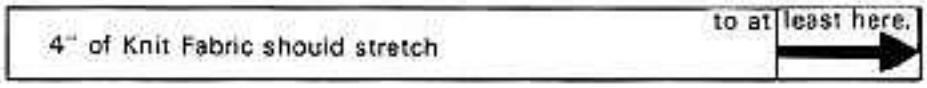


STRETCH CHART AND GAUGE

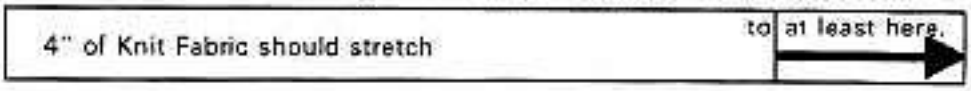
To use the stretch chart or gauge, fold over the crosswise edge of the knit fabric 3" (8 cm). Hold 4" (10 cm) of the folded fabric against the chart and gently stretch to the outer line. If the fabric stretches easily without excessive rolling to the outer line or slightly farther, the fabric has the correct amount of stretch for the pattern. this is an elastic seam.

STRETCH CHARTS

Fabric with 20% stretch across the grain such as: Single knit, Double knit, Interlock



Fabric with 25% stretch across the grain such as: Nylon tricot, Nylon sheer, Interlock, Velour



Fabric with 35% stretch across the grain such as: Sweater fabric, Velour, Terry, Interlock

Fabric with 75% stretch such as: Swimsuit fabric, Fabric with Spandex or Lycra