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# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DRESSMAKING

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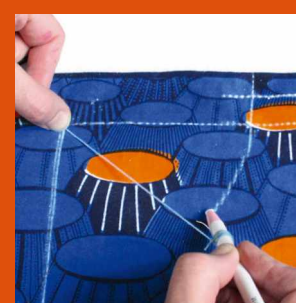
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15 patternless makes



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# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DRESSMAKING



New to dressmaking, or simply want a little refresher? You're in the right place. We know some techniques can be intimidating if you're starting out, which is why we've put together this fantastic collection just for you – it's the kind of book we wish we'd had when we started! From cutting out your pattern to seam finishes and inserting zips, we're with you each step of the way. Whether you prefer to follow a pattern or try some upcycling and patternless makes, keep this guide close to your sewing machine and tick off the skills as you go. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised at just how easy it is...

**Charlie Moorby**, *Simply Sewing* magazine  
[www.gathered.how/simplysewing](http://www.gathered.how/simplysewing)



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# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DRESSMAKING

24



14



30

## TOOLS & MORE

From essential tools, to sewing machine basics to choosing fabric

- 08 Your basic sewing kit
- 10 Sewing scissors
- 12 Rotary cutters & shears
- 14 Guide to fabric types
- 20 Fabric markers
- 21 Interfacing
- 22 Laundry symbols
- 23 Measuring yourself
- 24 Sewing machine overview
- 28 Sewing machine skills
- 29 Bobbins
- 30 Machine needles & threads
- 34 Know your overlocker
- 36 Faux-verlocking
- 38 Glossary

## USING PATTERNS

Master following pattern sheets and making alterations for the perfect fit

- 42 Pattern markings
- 44 Pattern layplans
- 46 Pattern tracing
- 48 Copyshop patterns
- 50 Pattern alterations
- 52 Fabric pattern matching



12



8

**324**  
**EXPERT TIPS**  
Get started today!





## FINISHING SKILLS

Learn finishing touches such as pockets, zips and buttons

- 60 Hand stitching
- 62 Pressing (ironing)
- 63 Adding darts
- 64 Finishing seams
- 66 Adding zips
- 68 Buttonholes
- 70 Seam pockets
- 72 Sleeves
- 74 Hemming



**78**  
Cover make!

## PATTERNLESS WARDROBE

15 gorgeous no-pattern designs: dresses, tops, skirts and cover-ups

- 78 Tiered top & skirt ❖
- 83 Casual joggers
- 86 Relaxed coatigan
- 90 Boxy dress
- 94 Paperbag skirt
- 98 Dip-hem tunic
- 102 Dressing gown
- 107 Maxi dress
- 109 Handkerchief skirt
- 111 Cami top
- 113 Headbands
- 116 Peplum top
- 119 Cover-up cardi
- 122 Crepe party dress
- 126 Jersey dress



**109**



Get the equipment  
you need before you  
start sewing!







# TOOLS & ESSENTIALS

Start your dressmaking journey with the foundations, from useful tools, to sewing machine basics to choosing the right fabric for your makes





**MARKING PENCIL**

Choose a colour that shows up on your fabric. See your options on page 20.



**TAILOR'S CHALKS**

Chalk temporarily marks fabric and can be easily brushed away.



TOOLS & ESSENTIALS

# ESSENTIAL TOOLS

Get to grips with these essential sewing tools and make a head start building your stash and boosting your skills.

**THIMBLE**

Wear to protect your fingers when hand stitching.



**SHEARS**

Keep a pair of sharp shears just for cutting out your fabric. See page 10 for more info.



**SMALL SCISSORS**

Use for snipping threads and cutting notches. Turn to page 10 to learn more.

**SEAM RIPPER**

This sharp blade cuts through and unpicks stitches.



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Go online for more sewing terms and beginner advice at [www.gathered.how](http://www.gathered.how)





**TAPE MEASURE**

A flexible fabric tape measure will take accurate measurements.

**PINS**

Stainless steel pins with sharp points are the very best.



**THREAD**

This forms the top side of the machine stitch on your fabric. There's a thread guide on page 32.



**BOBBINS**

This forms the underside of the machine stitch. We've got more info on these on page 29.



**FABRIC CLIPS**

Use these instead of pins when sewing thicker fabrics.



**FABRIC WEIGHTS**

Use instead of pins to hold your pattern or templates in place.



**PINKING SHEARS**

These cut a zigzag edge on fabric to neaten. Find out more on page 13.





# SCISSORS & SHEARS

From cutting out sewing patterns to snipping threads, scissors and shears are some of the hardest-working tools in your kit. Get the most out of yours with these tips for choosing, using and maintaining them.



**B**uying the best tools you can afford is always a wise choice, and this is particularly true when it comes to scissors. There are lots of different sizes, types and qualities on offer, so firstly you need to decide what you're going to use them for. Shears are ideal for cutting fabric, and you'll need ones with an angled handle if you're cutting out fabric on a flat surface. If you're going to be working with fine or slippery fabrics, choose a pair with serrated blades, which will grip the fabric and give a better cut. General-purpose and small scissors are more suited for clipping and snipping. Always try them out before you buy, as you'll need to make sure they feel right and are

comfortable, and that you have good control. If you're left-handed, find a specialist pair – they'll work much better for you. Scissors with tempered blades are high-quality and strong, and stainless steel blades are more lightweight but sharp and rust-proof. Make sure they give a smooth cut from the back of the blades to the points. It's better if they have adjustable bolted joints that secure the blades. Blades can move out of alignment, so it's very handy if you can correct this from time to time.

## LOOKING AFTER SCISSORS

There are three things that blunt dressmaking scissors: dust (or lint from fabric), moisture

and being used to cut anything other than fabric. It's important to look after your scissors. Wipe your scissors clean with a dry cloth after use – especially after cutting synthetic fabrics as the lint is abrasive and can dull the blades. Don't allow moisture to come into contact with them and never put them in the dishwasher. Always keep the cutting blades sharp – get them sharpened when the blades become dull. Occasionally oil the pivot screw with a tiny drop of sewing machine oil, then wipe the blades with a soft cloth and make a few cuts on scrap fabric to remove any surplus. Never use your fabric scissors for paper – label them so everyone knows they're for fabric only!





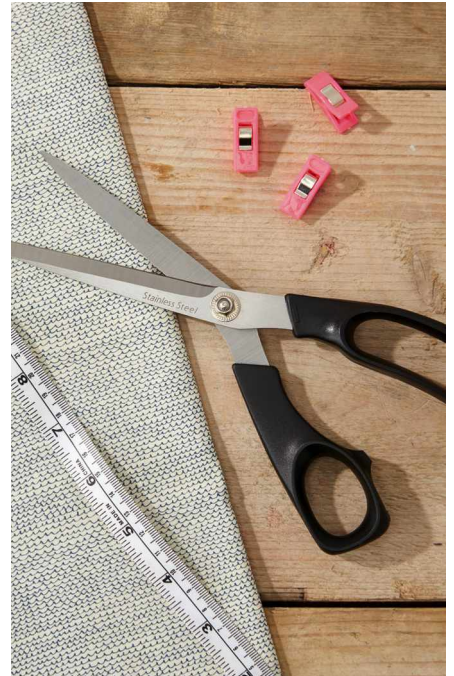
### ANGLED-HANDLE SHEARS

These have an angled lower blade so your hand will be in a comfortable position while keeping the fabric flat when cutting out. They usually measure from 18-25cm. Some of these scissors have micro-serrated blades for more accurate cutting of thick or slippery materials.



### DROP-FORGED SHEARS

These are hot-drop-forged from steel, which means the steel is heated and shaped into one continuous piece to make half of the scissors, then trimmed, hardened, tempered, ground and polished. These will last for years, but are heavier than scissors with plastic handles.



### GENERAL-PURPOSE SHEARS

These are great for many sewing projects and come in different sizes, with some having serrated edges. They can be used for cutting fabric and are also ideal for trimming twine, trims and ribbons. Soft-touch scissors have a spring rather than a hinge, so need less pressure to cut.



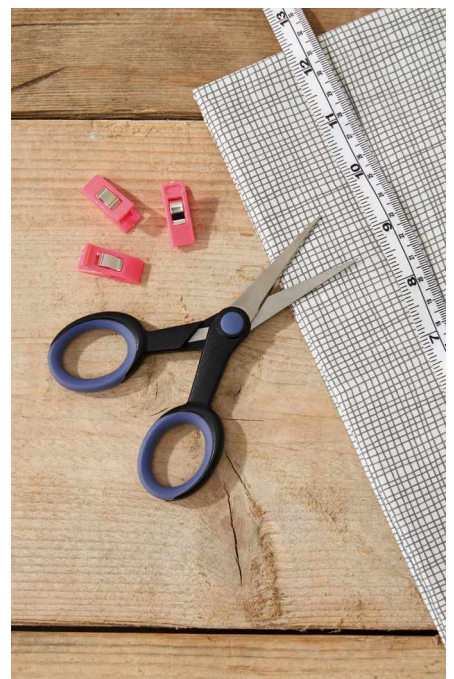
### TAILOR'S SCISSORS

Tailor's scissors, also called trimmers or sewing scissors, have tapered blades with one pointed and one rounded tip; the blunt tip prevents the fabric from snagging. They are light, especially the ones with plastic handles, and are used for tasks such as snipping and trimming seams.



### LEFT-HANDED SCISSORS OR SHEARS

If a right-handed pair of scissors is used in the left hand, the cutting blade will be forced apart and the cutting edge will be behind the top blade, so you won't be able to see what's being cut. Investing in a left-handed pair will therefore give a much better result.



### SMALL SCISSORS

Small scissors are perfect for precise jobs, including snipping threads, clipping, notching, trimming, and cutting trims and appliqué. Keep a pair by your sewing machine and one on the ironing board – there's nothing more annoying than not being able to find your snips!



# ROTARY CUTTERS

Along with fabric scissors and pinking shears, rotary cutters are invaluable when it comes to cutting out your fabric accurately. And not only are they precise, they're speedy, too! Here's how to use them.



*Keep your blades clean of lint.*

*Use a special non-stick cutting ruler.*

*Stainless steel blades and ball bearing joints ensure smooth, sharp cutting.*

*Use different blades for different effects.*

**R**otary cutters are invaluable to dressmakers and home sewists for getting accurate results, particularly with tricky-to-handle fabrics – and it's often faster, too! They come in various sizes – use smaller blades for detail and curves and larger blades for faster cutting.

## WHEN TO USE A ROTARY CUTTER

As well as cutting accurate strips and shapes for patchwork, rotary cutters are great for dressmaking. They make it easy to cut out layers of fabric together, but do experiment with how many you can cut at once without compromising on accuracy.

Rotary cutters are also great for cutting slippery fabrics such as rayon, silk, velvet and knits, as you won't need to lift them from the table to cut – just hold them flat and cut through for neat edges. When cutting out patterns, you

can pin or weigh them down on the fabric and around them carefully with the rotary cutter. You'll get smooth, even lines rather than the jagged edges you can get with scissors.

## CUTTING USING A ROTARY CUTTER

It helps to stand up when using a rotary cutter to get a more even downwards pressure. Practise holding the cutter before you start – you may prefer to put your index finger on top, or wrap all your fingers around the handle. Keep your wrist straight and always cut away from you, as this is safer and you'll get a neater cut. Protect your surfaces with a large self-healing mat.

If you're using a ruler, hold it firmly in place with your other hand, making sure your fingers are all on the ruler and not hanging over the edge. Apply pressure to the cutter then push it alongside the ruler. The cutting blade is circular

and extremely sharp so it will glide through the fabric easily. Press down firmly but not too hard, or it won't go through and you may slip and hit the ruler, which can dull the cutting blade and chip the edge of the ruler.

Once you've finished cutting, always lift the ruler rather than sliding it, then move it into the next position ready to cut again – never move the fabric or you'll lose accuracy.

## CUTTING OUT CURVES

Curved edges are easy to cut with a rotary cutter, and you'll get a neat finish. Pin or weight the pattern on to the fabric, then run the cutter along the edges of the pattern piece.

Always cut away from you and hold the cutter so you can see the blade clearly. Use a smaller blade for tight curves, and add enough pressure so the blade slides through the fabric easily.



# PINKING SHEARS

Pinking shears are an essential, used for finishing edges and clipping curves. Here's all you need to know about buying, using and looking after them.



*Soft-grip handles will help you to cut through even the thickest fabrics.*

*Stainless steel blades and ball bearing joints ensure smooth, sharp cutting.*

*Keep a pair just for cutting fabrics so they stay sharp.*

**F**inishing raw edges so they don't fray is a key part of sewing and dressmaking – it'll give your finished projects longevity and make them look nice and neat on the inside too.

If you don't have an overlocker to do this with, there are two easy ways to finish edges – with a zigzag stitch on a regular sewing machine, or by using pinking shears. These look like regular scissors, but they have triangular-shaped teeth that make zigzag points in the fabric. Pinking shears have long been a favoured seam-finishing method – if you've ever bought vintage clothes, you're likely to have come across pinked seams.

## BUYING PINKING SHEARS

Pinking shears are usually around 21-23cm (8-9in) long. Good-quality shears have ball joints to

ensure the blades run smoothly, and some have soft-grip ergonomic handles. As with all cutting tools, it's advisable to buy the best shears you can afford so they will last.

## PINKING SHEAR USES

Pinking shears are ideal for keeping fabric edges from fraying, particularly as a speedier alternative to using a machine zigzag stitch. It's a quick and easy finish and also helps to reduce fabric bulk in the seams, with the resulting sawtooth edge lying flatter under a garment. They're also great for cutting curves, as they have a similar effect to clipping lots of triangles out of a seam allowance for a smooth, neat finish. You can cut most fabrics with them, so they're a versatile tool to have in your kit.

## CUTTING WITH PINKING SHEARS

Holding your pinking shears straight as you cut and starting from the second rear tooth on the blade, simply bring the blades together on the fabric until they are completely closed. After you have made the first cut, open the pinking shears, line up the teeth with the last notch cut on the fabric and then press down again. It's best not to cut through too many layers at once as the fabric will warp. When cutting delicate fabric, put a scrap of thicker fabric behind it for stability. Always sew the seam before you trim the edges, as it's easier to line up the edges to get a consistent seam allowance. Don't use pinking shears on paper or card as this will dull the blades, and have them professionally sharpened if they aren't cutting correctly.



# FABRIC TYPES

From the lightest chiffon and softest cotton to heavyweight denim and canvas, there are so many fabrics to choose from! Pick the right one for your project with our fabrics guide and handy table.

**B**rowsing the shelves in fabric stores is a favourite pastime for sewists! Touching fabrics in person is a great way to get an idea of what your garment will look and feel like once sewn. It's still easy to make the wrong choices though, so read our tips to avoid the trap of buying up a pretty print only to find it doesn't behave in the way you'd hoped!

There's such a wide range of fabrics available that it can be impossible to know where to start, but it all begins with the project. Firstly, decide on what you'd like to make, and then use the recommendations given in the pattern instructions to pick a fabric type that suits – the print and colour are up to you, though! With a few different garment projects under your belt, you'll soon be able to match fabric types to sewing patterns with ease.

Fabrics are made from different types of fibres, either natural or manmade, which give them their properties and govern how they behave. Fabrics can be woven, non-woven and knitted, which again affects their weight, drape and stretch. Many fabrics can be bought in different weights, too.

Once you have this information about the fabric types, you can decide which one best suits your project. For example, if you'd like to make

a flowing summer dress, it's best to do it with a lightweight woven, natural fibre, such as cotton, which is breathable but has a little synthetic fibre added to give it drape. A cotton mix would be a good choice here.

## NATURAL FIBRES

Natural fibres can be split into two categories: animal or plant-based. Animal-based fibres include wool, silk and hair, such as lambswool, camel, merino, alpaca, mohair, llama, angora and cashmere. These fabrics are wrinkle-resistant, warm and comfortable to wear and drape well.

There are three plant-based fibres extracted from different parts of the plant – the fruit, the bast (stems) or the leaves. Fabrics in this category include cotton, coconut (coir), bamboo, jute, flax (linen), hemp and sisal. These fabrics are usually strong and breathable, and are often naturally renewable.

## MAN-MADE FIBRES

Regenerated natural polymers such as acetate, rayon and viscose rayon are extracted from plants like wood pulp; synthetic polymers are derived from petroleum oil such as acrylic, nylon and polyester. These fibres all have different properties and are often blended with natural

fibres by different ratios to mix the desirable qualities of both.

## WOVEN FABRICS

Woven fabrics are made from two groups of threads – the lengthwise warp and the widthwise weft. They come in a variety of different weights, so are suitable for a range of dressmaking projects.

## NON-WOVEN FABRICS

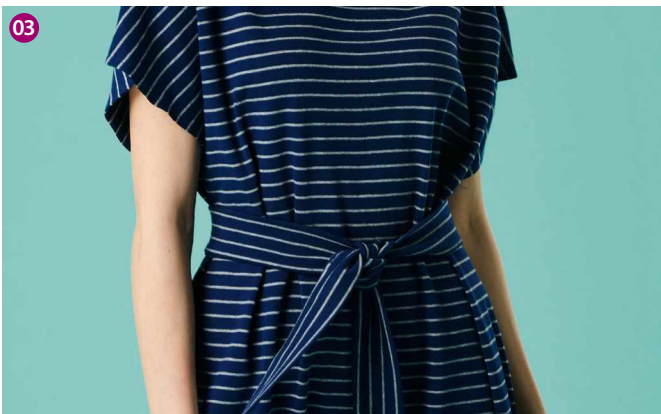
These fabrics are fray-resistant, don't stretch and can easily be cut to any shape. They include fabrics such as felt and fleece, which are created by condensing woollen fibres. Real or faux leather and suede can also be used entirely for garments or work well as smaller accent details such as pockets and lapels, and are great for making bag and accessories, too.

## KNIT FABRICS

These fabrics are formed by threads that loop around each other and give the fabric its stretch and elasticity. Double knit fabric is formed of two layers combined in one fabric, so it's thicker and has greater strength but less elasticity. Knit fabrics are virtually crease-free and comfortable to wear – hello, secret pyjamas!







# FABRICS & USES

When you're fabric shopping, the variety can be overwhelming! So we're here to explain common fabric types and what they're used for.

## LINEN

**Features:** Linen is a natural material made from flax fibres. It's breathable and comfortable to wear and available in a variety of weights. Most linens are plain-weave materials with visible slubs. <sup>01</sup>

**Uses:** Tops, dresses, trousers, jackets, jumpsuits.

**Pros:** Breathable, comfortable, cooling.

**Cons:** Not crease resistant, shrinks when steamed/washed, doesn't machine wash well, frays easily, difficult to ease, wears away at fold lines so not great for garments with tucks, pleats in key areas.

**Tips for choosing quality linens:** Quality linen will feel smooth yet a little wiry, and be firm when stretched slightly. Look for fine yarns that have been used to weave the linen and check that the yarns are straight (with the warp and weft running perpendicular to each other) and closely woven.

**Stitching tips:** Special techniques aren't required for sewing linen. Always use a new machine needle and steam press the fabric on the wrong side as linen is prone to shrinkage.

## COTTON

**Features:** Cotton fibres are taken from cotton plants and spun into thread that's woven to make a durable fabric. Breathable and comfortable to wear, it's made in a variety of weights. Most dressmaking cottons are plain weave fabrics. <sup>02</sup>

**Uses:** Lightweight cottons can be used for summer tops, dresses, trousers, jackets and jumpsuits while heavyweight cottons can be used for winter wear.

**Pros:** Comfortable, versatile, durable, absorbent, drapes well, washes well.

**Cons:** Creases easily, shrinks when washed.

**Tips for choosing quality cottons:** As with linen, closely woven cottons will be of greater quality than looser weaves. This is why cotton bed sheets have a thread count; this indicates how many threads there are per square inch – the greater the number the greater the quality.

**Stitching tips:** Always use a new needle and steam press the fabric on the wrong side before cutting, as natural fibres are prone to shrinkage.

## JERSEY

**Features:** Jersey is a knitted fabric. It's a weft knit meaning horizontal rows are knitted one at a time. It can be identified by vertical ribs on the front and purls loops on the reverse side – similar to hand knitted stocking stitch. It's elastic across the width and is comfortable to wear. <sup>03</sup>

**Uses:** Lightweight jersey can be used to make t-shirts, dresses and underwear. Use heavyweight jersey for tops, dresses, jumpers and cardigans.

**Pros:** Soft, comfortable to wear, warm.

**Cons:** Doesn't machine wash well, sags with wear, unravels easily, curls at cut edges.

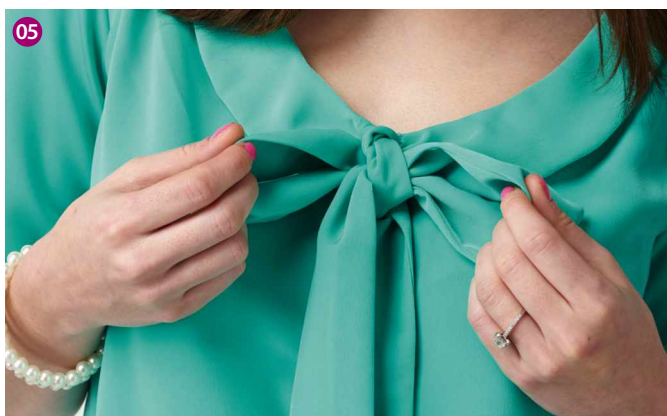
**Tips for choosing quality jerseys:** Closer knit jerseys will be of higher quality and are less likely to sag than looser knit jerseys. Select a jersey with a stretch percentage that matches the requirements of your chosen pattern.

**Stitching tips:** Use a walking foot or a knit foot to sew with jersey. Ballpoint or stretch pins and machine needles have rounded tips to avoid piercing the threads – instead the tip passes through the fabric and therefore doesn't cause snags, ladders or holes to form in the fabric.

## RAYON

**Features:** Rayon is a regenerated cellulose fibre. It's made from wood pulp so is essentially a natural fibre, but as it's not taken direct from a plant it's classed as a man-made fibre. Rayon was introduced as an 'artificial silk' due to its softness, ability to drape well and low cost. There are many different ways that the processing is completed





– viscose, cupro, modal and acetate are all types of rayon. These variations are types of rayon that are each created by applying a different treatment to cellulose. <sup>04</sup>

**Uses:** Rayon can be used to sew lightweight tops, dresses, trousers and jumpsuits.

**Pros:** Comfortable, absorbent, durable, resistant to static, resistant to pilling.

**Cons:** Flammable, burns easily when ironed, ravels easily, shrinks easily.

**Tips for choosing quality rayon:** Rayons that are woven tightly will ravel less.

**Stitching tips:** Use a new needle for every project. If you find your fabric is slipping when sewing you can sandwich the fabric between two sheets of tissue paper. Stitch through the paper and tear it away when the seam is complete.

#### SILK

**Features:** Silk is a natural fibre obtained from the cocoons of the silkworm. It's the most luxurious fibre available in most fabric stores, and is a very popular choice for evening wear and lingerie due to its high sheen and drapability. <sup>05</sup>

**Uses:** Silk can be used to sew many garments including tops, dresses trousers and lingerie.

**Pros:** Luxurious, comfortable, cooling and warming, lightweight, drapable, high lustre.

**Cons:** Susceptible to moths, some silks snag easily due to their satin weave, tricky to sew.

**Tips for choosing quality silks:** Silk with a higher thread count is more durable but may not drape as well. Try scrunching a piece of silk in your hand

– if the silk wrinkles easily it's not the best quality. Examine the fabric closely to look for any imperfections, slubs or snags.

**Stitching tips:** Use a specialist sharp needle to sew with silk to avoid skipped stitches. Test a few thread options as this can sometimes be the cause of skipped stitches or 'birds nests' of thread gathering in the bobbin. Pre-wash a swatch to check for changes to colour and size.

#### WOOL

**Features:** Wool is a natural animal fibre. It's available in a range of weights and weaves. Wool yarns are soft and warm, making the fabric perfect for winter wear and also suitable for suits. <sup>06</sup>

**Uses:** Coats, jackets, trousers, waistcoats, suits.

**Pros:** Water-repellent, comfortable, warming and cooling properties.

**Cons:** Easily damaged by heat from the iron, can be damaged by moths and faded by sunlight.

**Tips for choosing quality wool:** Examine the fabric to ensure it's not faded, marked or snagged. If the yarns part easily this indicates that the fabric will ravel. As with many other fabrics, closer weaves are more durable.

**Stitching tips:** Use a new needle, the size of which will depend on the weight of your fabric. Use a longer stitch length for heavier weight fabrics to help feed the fabric through the machine.

#### DENIM

**Features:** Denim is a twill weave fabric, and it's this weave type that creates the diagonal surface

pattern. It's woven with indigo warp yarns and white weft yarns which create the blue denim colour. <sup>07</sup>

**Uses:** Lightweight denim can be used for tops and dresses, while heavier weight denims can be used to make hardwearing jeans, jackets and work wear.

**Pros:** Durable, long lasting, softens after washing.

**Cons:** Can be bulky which leads to difficulty when sewing, shrinks when washed, the indigo colour yarns can fade when washed.

**Tips for choosing quality linens:** Quality denims are often preshrunk at the mill and there will be very little colour transfer. Ask for a swatch of it to check the quality before purchasing.

**Stitching tips:** Use a jeans needle. Lengthen your stitch for heavier weight denims.

#### CORDUROY

**Features:** Corduroy is durable and a popular pick for casual wear. It comes in a range of weights. The vertical lines are referred to as wales (counted per inch) – fewer wales indicate a chunkier rib. <sup>08</sup>

**Uses:** Trousers, jackets, skirts, pinafores.

**Pros:** Easy to sew, easy to wash and care for.

**Cons:** Corduroy sheds when cut into, heavier weight corduroys can be bulky to sew with.

**Tips for choosing quality corduroy:** Quality corduroy will shed less and may have a higher pile than lower quality corduroys. Ask for a swatch and see how easily the fabric frays and sheds.

**Stitching tips:** Increase the stitch length for heavy weight corduroys. Use a walking foot or roller foot to help to ease bulky fabrics through the machine.



# FABRICS...

And the list doesn't stop there – here are even more common fabric types, from acrylic to velvet, and what they're used for. Take these pages with you next time you fabric shop!

FABRIC NAME	FIBRE TYPE	DESCRIPTION	USED FOR
<b>Acrylic</b>	Manmade fibre (synthetic polymer)	A wool-like texture, colourfast, washable, strong and warm	Sweaters, sportswear, knits and upholstery
<b>Calico</b>	Natural fibre (cotton)	Tightly woven, inexpensive fabric	Dresses, aprons, quilts and toiles
<b>Challis</b>	Natural fibre or blend	Lightweight woven fabric. Soft, fluid and easily washable	Dresses, blouses and skirts that need to drape well
<b>Chambray</b>	Natural fibre (cotton or linen)	Light to mid-weight plain woven fabric with a coloured warp (usually blue) and a white weft	Shirts, dresses and blouses
<b>Chiffon</b>	Natural fibre (cotton, silk) or manmade	A lightweight, sheer fabric with an irregular surface and slightly rough feel. Tricky to work with	Eveningwear, especially as an overlay, blouses, scarves and lingerie
<b>Crêpe</b>	Natural fibre (silk, wool) or manmade	A general term for all fabrics which are made by twisting the fibres to create a crinkled texture. Doesn't crease easily	Evening dresses, trousers and suits
<b>Fleece</b>	Natural fibre (wool) or manmade	Knit fabric with a deep, soft pile stretching across the grain	Jackets, tops, childrenswear
<b>Georgette</b>	Natural fibre (silk)	Sheer fabric with a grainy feel that is soft, fluid and strong	Scarves, blouses and eveningwear
<b>Lawn</b>	Natural fibre (cotton, linen)	Fine, lightweight fabric with a crisp finish. Crease-resistant	Summer clothes, nightwear and handkerchiefs
<b>Lyra</b>	Manmade fibre (synthetic polymer)	Trademark name for a brand of Spandex fibre. Strong and very stretchy	Sportswear
<b>Nylon</b>	Manmade fibre (synthetic polymer)	Strong, stretchy and quick drying. Often blended with natural fibres	Outdoor clothing, jackets and bags
<b>Organza</b>	Natural fibre (silk) or manmade	Plain weave, sheer fabric	Bridal and eveningwear or sheer curtains
<b>Polyester</b>	Manmade fibre (synthetic polymer)	Strong, soft and supple and doesn't crease. Dries quickly	All clothing types and sportswear
<b>Poplin</b>	Natural fibre (cotton)	Lightweight fabric with fine cross ribs. Soft and durable and less prone to creasing than plain cotton	Dresses, skirts and shirts
<b>Satin</b>	Natural fibre (silk) or manmade	Smooth, shiny and drapes well	Lingerie, nightwear, eveningwear
<b>Tulle</b>	Natural fibre (silk) or manmade	Finely woven, mesh fabric. Lightweight and softer than net	Skirts, costumes and veils
<b>Velvet</b>	Natural fibre (cotton, silk) or manmade	Thick, soft pile. Frays easily but has a luxurious finish and drapes well	Eveningwear





Roisin browsing the shelves in the Like Sewing Amazing fabric shop in Bristol. [www.likesewamazing.com](http://www.likesewamazing.com)

# TIPS & GLOSSARY

Use our handy guide on how to sew with a range of different dressmaking fabrics to become more familiar with fabric fibres and weaves.

## WASHING FABRIC

**Not all fabrics wash in the same way, so here's how to ensure you use the best setting for your chosen material.**

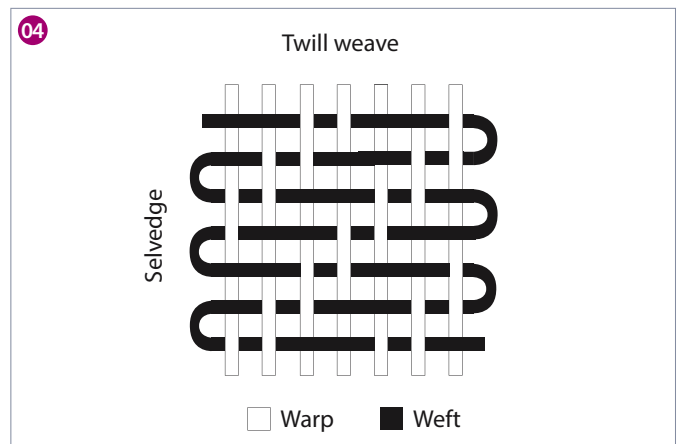
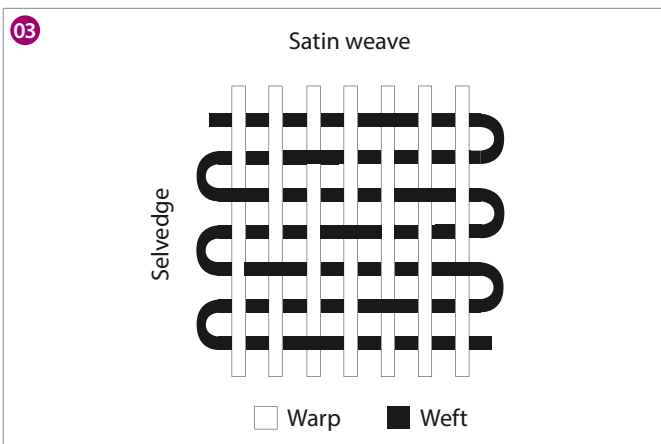
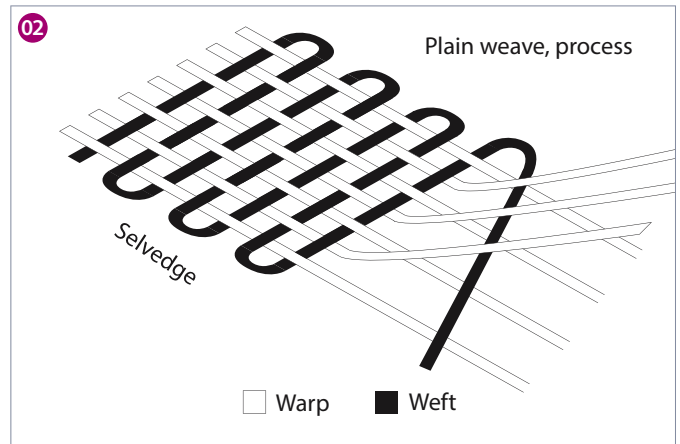
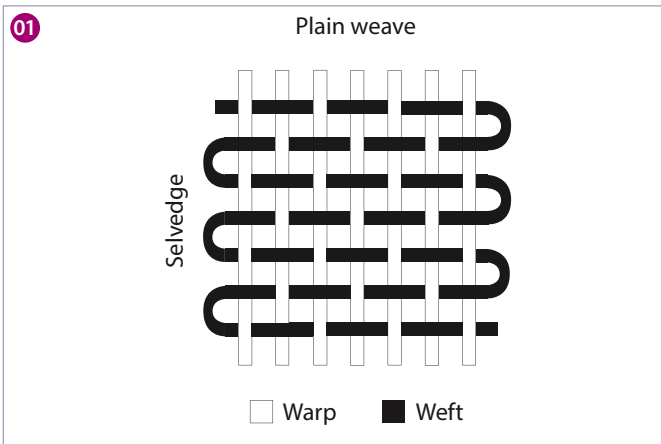
It's an age-old sewing debate: to pre-wash, or not to pre-wash? It may not seem like it, but washing your fabric is one of the most important steps in dressmaking. It's vital for the longevity of your finished garment. Fabric can shrink and its dye can run, so – as much as we might want to skip this step and get stuck into sewing – it's always best to pre-wash it before you start your project, either by hand or by machine. This depends on the fabric type and how you intend to wash the garment when it is made – wash it on the temperature setting you usually use for accurate results, but always check the fabric care instructions first, too. If you're unsure, cut out a small sample, measure it and wash it using different methods to see what causes the least shrinkage and colour-run. Testing this will ensure any shrinkage happens before you start to stitch – which in turn means you can wear your me-mades for years to come. For more tips on fabric care, refer to the laundry symbols on p22.

## TOP TIPS

Follow these tips in the fabric store for a stress-free shopping experience that will make the entire garment making process so much easier.

- 1** If you have a pattern picked out, take it shopping with you so that you can visualise the fabric in the design.
- 2** If you're browsing in the fabric store with no project in mind and are just looking to build up your stash (we're all guilty of this!), it's important to understand the fabric composition, weight and weave so you don't buy fabric that will be difficult to work with and thus end up unused.
- 3** It's important to see the fabric for its many qualities instead of just the print. Many sewists, especially beginners, are drawn in by a beautiful design but fail to realise how tricky the fabric may be to work with or how the fabric will feel when worn.
- 4** If you're unsure of how a fabric will behave, ask for a swatch in the store so that you can see it in daylight, and see how stitches will behave on the swatch before buying several metres.
- 5** Start a swatch book of fabrics – note down information about the composition so that you can explain what you're looking for in the future.





## FABRIC GLOSSARY

### WARP AND WEFT

The warp runs up and down the fabric length and the weft runs from selvedge to selvedge. If you love an easy rhyme to help remember things, try this: *'the weft runs from right to left'*.

### SELVEDGE

The selvedge is the finished edge of the fabric. This will sometimes have a brand name or the fabric composition printed along it. There are sometimes a line of small holes running along the selvedge called 'tenter holes', which are a result of the manufacturing process when the selvedges are attached to a frame. This is where the phrase *'on tenterhooks'* comes from, meaning to be in a state of tension – the hooks hold the stronger woven fabric (the selvedge) in place which supports the weaker woven fabric.

### GRAIN

All woven fabrics have a lengthwise grain (the warp) and a crosswise grain (the weft). There is also the bias grain which runs at 45-degrees from the warp and weft grains (running diagonally across the fabric). You will most often need to align pattern pieces with the lengthwise (warp) grain. However some pieces may have a horizontal grainline (meaning you

should align it with the weft grain), or a diagonal arrow (meaning you should lay it on the bias grain). To ensure the main parts of the garment sit along the correct grain of the fabric, when placing pattern pieces on the warp grain (which is most common) it can be useful to measure from the grainline arrow to the selvedge in a few places to check that the whole pattern piece is the same distance away from the selvedge. Fabric that is printed off grain can be tricky to work with as you need to follow the grainline when cutting, but the garment won't look right if the print isn't level. You might find fabric that's printed off grain in the reduced section, and while it could work well for a toile it might not be your first choice for making your garment.

### PLAINWEAVE

Plain weave is the most basic and most common weave used to create fabrics. <sup>01</sup>

The weft yarn is woven under a warp yarn and then over the next; this pattern continues and then alternates on the next row to create a weave that is strong and durable. <sup>02</sup>

Many garments and home furnishings are made from plain weave fabrics as the weave is designed to be worn and washed frequently. There is only one 'float yarn' so snagging isn't as common as with weaves such as satin weave. Examples of plain weave fabrics include chiffon,

calico, organza, lawn and voile.

**Pros:** easy to sew, washes well, luxury feel, smooth surface.

**Cons:** often shrinks, creases easily, rips easily, often off grain.

### SATINWEAVE

Satin weave produces a sheen on fabrics and is frequently woven with silk yarns to produce silk satins. Our diagram shows a warp facing satin weave where more warp yarns are 'float' yarns, carried over the weft yarns in multiples. This creates the soft sheen satin fabrics are famous for. Some examples of satin weave fabrics include brocade, satin and charmeuse. <sup>03</sup>

**Pros:** Luxury feel, smooth surface.

**Cons:** Snags, frays and tears easily, difficult to sew, requires special wash care.

### TWILLWEAVE

Twill weave is very durable and the weave creates a distinct diagonal pattern. Twill weave fabrics are ideal for sewing skirts, jackets, shirts and uniforms. Some examples of twill weave fabrics include denim, khaki, chino and ticking.

**Pros:** The close weave of twill fabrics makes some twills naturally water resistant. <sup>04</sup>

**Cons:** Frays easily, there can be wear and abrasion at seam lines, bulky to sew with, can shrink when washed.



# FABRIC MARKERS

Fabric markers are something you can never have too many of. Here we take you through the marker types that will work for most projects and fabrics – but don't forget to test!



*Iron-on transfer pencils are great for embroidery*

*Air-erasable pens are easy to use*

*Pencils come in many colour options*

**FABRIC ERASER**

**F**abric marking is used for a whole host of stitching techniques so choose a marker that will suit your project and fabric. Although you could also tack the markings or snip the notches, with fabric markers you can copy pattern markings straight from your sheet before you unpin it from your fabric. And they're not just for dressmaking! For patchwork and quilting, drawing quilting lines onto your fabric before you start sewing is an effective way to ensure your stitching is spot-on. Pens, pencils and chalks are useful for transferring sewing pattern markings. Whatever your chosen project, fabric and marker, always test on a scrap piece of your fabric before you start, as the results can vary depending on the type of material you use. Here's a quick overview of the types available at your local fabric store.

## WATER-ERASABLE PENS

The marks made by water-erasable pens (or pencils) are designed to be removed from fabric either by wiping the mark with a damp cloth or by washing. They're available in many colours, so pick one that shows up on your fabric. Pens will come in a variety of tip sizes. Some have a brush or eraser on the end, which you can use to remove lighter markings. Have a fabric eraser to hand and a specialist pencil sharpener to keep a fine, sharp line.

## AIR-ERASABLE PENS

The ink in air-erasable pens is made to stay visible for a few hours, but this depends on the brand of pen and the fabric you're marking. They come in different tip sizes, and some types can also be removed with water.

## CHALK PENCILS

Chalk compressed into pencil form, these are a convenient and clean way to mark your fabric. They rub off quite easily, which is great for quick removal but can mean that you can accidentally rub away your lines whilst working. Sharpen these pencils often to keep a fine point.

## IRON-ON TRANSFER PENCILS

These are ideal for intricate embroidery designs – draw the pattern in reverse onto tracing paper, then iron it pencil-side down to the fabric and the image will transfer. These are usually permanent, so make sure your stitching covers all of the transferred lines.



# INTERFACINGS

From stiffening pockets, collars and hems to keeping your stitches steady, interfacing and stabilisers will give a new, professional dimension to your sewing – here's what's out there.

*Use sew-in interfacing for textured fabrics*

*Knit interfacing is very thin so iron on a low heat.*

*Iron-on interfacing is the most common.*

**S**trengthen and support your fabric or prevent it from stretching out of shape by adding an unseen layer of interfacing. In dressmaking it gives body to certain parts of garments, such as facings and collars. There are different types and weights, and it's usually available in white, black and grey. If possible, test interfacing on a scrap piece of the fabric first to check colour and weight.

## IRON-ON INTERFACING

Iron-on interfacing has a matte side and a shiny (adhesive) side. For woven styles, the grainline of the pattern must match the grainline of the interfacing when cutting out. To attach it, place the fabric wrong-side up on the ironing board, then place the interfacing glue-side down over it. Next, place a damp cloth over the fabric and interfacing and press your iron on top of it. This provides steam and protects the layers. Hold the iron in place for 10 to 15 seconds, then lift,

move and press again. Check to see if it's firmly glued in place. An iron's wool setting is about the right temperature for interfacing most fabrics, but always start low and increase the heat as needed to avoid damage to your fabric.

Use knit interfacing for fabrics with a little bounce like jersey or stretch. Fusible webbing is great for appliqué, as it has a peel-off paper side that you can draw on.

## SEW-IN INTERFACING

To add sew-in interfacing, place the interfacing on the wrong side of the fabric and then tack together around the edge. It's easier to cut the interfacing to shape after it's been tacked on. This type is useful for materials that aren't suitable for pressing, such as sequined fabrics.

Stabilisers are applied to the wrong side of your fabric to stabilise it while the stitching is worked through from the right side. These come in wash or tear away styles.

## WHICH WEIGHT?

WEIGHT	USE FOR	TYPE OF FABRIC
Light	Small areas of garments like collars, pockets and flaps	Delicate fabrics such as silk, voile, viscose and acetate
Medium	Facings for dresses, waistcoats, jackets, collars, pockets and flaps	Lightweight fabrics such as pure cotton, cotton blends, rayon challis and chambray
Heavy	Coats, jackets and bag-making	Wools, tweed, heavy cotton and denim
Ultra heavy	Bag bases, pelmets and caps	Thick felt fabrics or canvas



# LAUNDRY SYMBOLS

Treat your fabrics with love and they'll last for years. Washing them correctly is the key to longevity, so keep them in top condition with this care symbols guide.

**M**ost handmade fabric items will need washing from time to time (especially your favourite garments!), and it's important to know how to do this properly to keep them looking fresh and in good condition.

It's always best to wash all fabrics before you begin cutting or stitching them. Although the temptation is to get started on a project, taking the

time to do this is really worth it. Fabric can shrink when washed and often at different rates. So, if you're stitching several different fabrics together you may find that they shrink differently and you'll have an uneven finished piece. Sometimes, especially if using vintage fabrics, the colours can run, so it's best to get all this shrinking and excess dye release out of the way before you start stitching. Also, it's much easier to cut and stitch

with newly washed and pressed fabric as it's crisper and flatter. Most fabric you'll be using is 100% cotton so simply unfold it, put it in the washing machine (remembering not to mix up darks and lights!) and wash it on a 30° to 40° cycle. If the fabric isn't pure cotton, handwash it in warm water with suitable detergent then rinse. Many fabrics have washing symbols on the selvedge – use this guide to refer to when washing and pressing.

## WASHING



Wool, cashmere and delicates where the temperature needs to be similar to handwashing



Cotton, linen or viscose without special finishes where colours are fast at 40°C but not at 60°C



Cotton, linen or viscose without special finishes where colours are fast at 60°C



Handwash (do not machine wash)



Acrylics, acetate and triacetate, including mixtures with wool and polyester/wool blends



Nylon; polyester/cotton mixtures; polyester cotton and viscose with special finishes; cotton/acrylic mixtures



Wool, wool mixed with other fabrics; silk



Do not wash

## IRONING



Iron on hot temp setting



Iron on warm temp setting



Iron on cool temp setting



Do not iron

## TUMBLE DRYING



May be tumble-dried



Do not tumble-dry

## BLEACHING



Chlorine bleach may be used



Do not use chlorine bleach

## DRY CLEANING



Dry-clean



Dry-clean using any solvent



Dry-clean using any solvent EXCEPT trichloroethylene



Dry-clean using petroleum solvent only



Do NOT dry-clean

## DRYING AND PRESSING

How you dry your fabric depends on two things: the type of fabric, and how you intend to dry the garment you'll be making with it once it's finished. Wash your fabric at the correct setting, then hang it on the line to dry or drape it over the banisters inside. While it's still just slightly damp, iron out the creases and you're ready to begin sewing. If it's an artificial fabric, such as polyester or fleece, then place a thin clean cloth on top of it before you press it. If you'd like to use a tumble dryer to dry the finished garment, test a scrap of fabric first to see if there's any shrinkage.

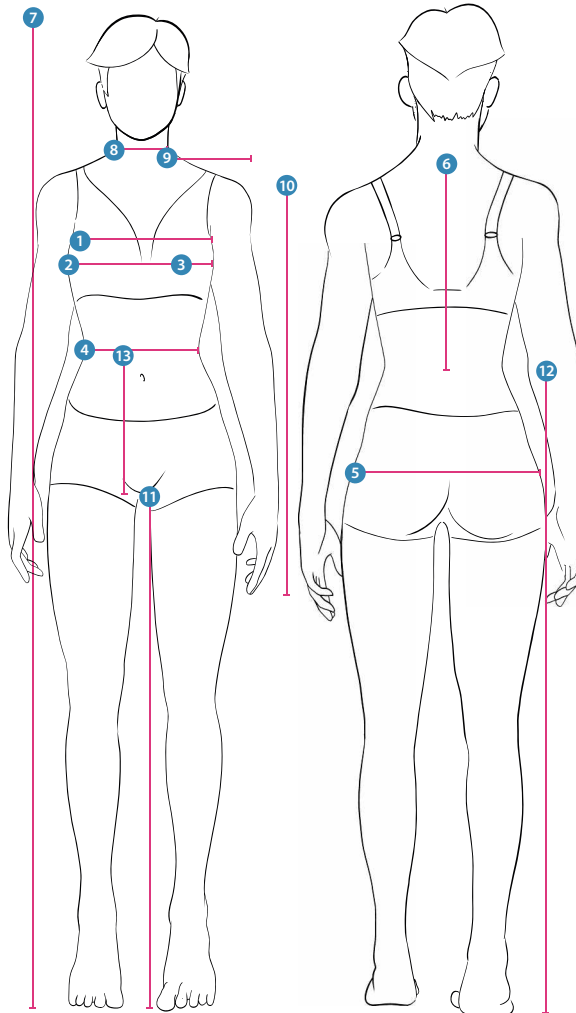


# MEASUREMENTS

A great fit always starts with accurate measurements! Follow these steps for taking key body measurements - don't miss our printable resources online.

**S**izing can vary greatly, so don't just assume you are a particular size. Take all of your measurements, then compare them with the size chart (usually printed with the pattern).

Measure yourself in your underwear (if wearing a bra, use the one you will wear with the garment). We recommend a fabric tape measure as it'll curve around your body. Measure yourself standing in front of a mirror, or for best results ask a friend to help so they can check the tape measure is in the right places and sits snugly. These are the most common measurements you'll need for most dressmaking DIYs, so take them carefully and write in the chart opposite.



## YOUR MEASUREMENTS

Once you've taken your measurements, write them down in this table so you'll always have them to hand

	CM	IN
HIGH BUST/ CHEST		
BUST		
BUST POINT		
WAIST		
HIPS		
BACK WAIST		
HEIGHT		
NECK		
SHOULDER		
ARM		
INSIDE LEG		
OUTSIDE LEG		
FRONT RISE		

### MORE TO MEASURE

Scan the QR code below to download our helpful guide – including how to measure yourself or a friend in a wheelchair and how to make a toile (a practice version in a basic fabric). Plus printable downloads of the chart below and a full set of croquis (body sketches) for you to try your own designs.



SCAN ME

Go online for printable resources and measuring help at [www.gathered.how](http://www.gathered.how)

Illustrations by Samantha Claridge (@samanthaclaridge)

## WHAT TO MEASURE

- 1 HIGH BUST/CHEST** Across the back, directly under the arms and above the bust.
- 2 BUST** Around the fullest part of the bust, across the centre of the nipples.
- 3 BUST POINT** This is the nipple point. Use this to determine the positioning of the dart if you are performing a bust adjustment. For more on this, see p50.

**4 WAIST** The natural waistline, where you bend to the side.

**5 HIPS** Around the fullest part of the thighs and bottom.

**6 BACK WAIST** From the top of the spine at the base of the neck to your natural waistline.

**7 HEIGHT** Stand against a wall without shoes on and measure from the top of your head to the floor.

**8 NECK** The circumference of your neck at its fullest.

**9 SHOULDER** From your neck to the garment shoulder seam.

**10 ARM** From the shoulder seam to your wrist.

**11 INSIDE LEG** From your crotch to the floor.

**12 OUTSIDE LEG** From your waist to the floor.

**13 FRONT RISE** From your crotch to your waist, or wherever you want your waistband to sit.



# SEWING MACHINE

Familiarise yourself with the basic functions of your sewing machine with this handy at-a-glance guide.

## THREAD FEED

Your spool of thread sits at the top of the machine. The thread goes through a series of channels and loops before it reaches the needle (your manual will detail exactly how to thread your machine). There will also be a numbered dial that can be raised or lowered to adjust the thread tension as your fabric requires.

## NEEDLE

Most machines come with a needle already in place (and a replacement), but your manual will show you how to swap it for a different one. When sewing speciality fabrics (for example, a heavy denim, or a slippery lace) you should change to a different needle size to ensure the best results – ask for advice when buying fabric. See page 30 for more information on needles.

## PRESSER FOOT

This metal attachment sits beneath your needle and holds your fabric in place. A lever moves it up to position the fabric and back down when sewing. The basic presser foot is the one you'll use most, although there are lots of speciality feet to use for everything from quilting to zips.

## BOBBIN

This small plastic or metal spool sits in a special unit underneath the sewing area, below the foot and needle. Check your machine's manual to find out how to load your bobbin. Once it's been loaded, the bobbin thread and the top thread feeds meet to form each stitch. The bobbin case is either drop-in or front-loading. We've got more info on bobbins on page 29.

## FEED DOGS

Feed dogs are teeth underneath the presser foot that guide the fabric through. Some machines allow you to drop the feed dogs, which is needed for freehand embroidery.







## HAND WHEEL

Use the hand wheel to move the needle up and down manually. This is essential for controlling the stitching line in tight spots and corners. To avoid your thread getting caught or tangled, be sure to always turn the wheel towards you. When winding bobbins, you may need to disengage the needle action by pulling out the hand wheel (consult your manual for how to do this on your machine).

## BACKSTITCHING

Most machines have a button or switch that enables you to sew in the reverse direction. It's the best way to start and finish your line of stitching – just stitch forwards and backwards for a few stitches to secure your thread.

## STITCH SELECTOR

The method used to change the type of stitch varies between machines, but the principle is the same. For most projects, you'll just need the basic straight stitch and zigzag stitch.

## STITCH LENGTH

This allows you to change the stitch length. For standard seams, aim for a setting of 2 or 2.5. A longer stitch length is useful for quick tacking lines.

## MACHINE FEET

With these five feet in your collection you can tackle most sewing projects.

- 1 Standard
- 2 Zip
- 3 ¼ inch
- 4 Free-motion
- 5 Walking/quilting



## MACHINE TYPES

There's a machine option for every skill level, from beginner to seasoned pro.

### ELECTRONIC & COMPUTERISED

There's a wide range of machines available to suit budget and needs. Basic machines might only have 5-10 stitch types, but everything you need to make a project (and can come with either manual or computer controls). More advanced machines have a larger selection of stitches, and are more suited to more experienced sewers as there is more room for adjustment and using decorative stitches for customization.

### OVERLOCKING MACHINES

Overlockers finish seams by over stitching the edge and trimming away excess fabric in one go – find out more on p34. And if you're not ready to invest, find out how to finish seams by 'faux-verlocking' on p36.



SCAN ME

Go online for advice on great sewing machines for beginners  
[www.gathered.how](http://www.gathered.how)





A powerful, easy-to-use machine will give your productivity a boost

# TAKE YOUR MAKING TO A NEW LEVEL

Creativity knows no bounds with Brother's extensive range of sewing, embroidery and electronic cutting machines

**W**hen starting an exciting new business, it takes time to discover your strengths and priorities and where to invest your time and money. Once you've found your unique style and established what your customers love, it's time to consider how you can increase productivity without piling on the pressure. For creatives working with fabrics and soft materials, Brother has an extensive range of machines for stitching, cutting and embroidery. If you're a sewist, start with a sewing machine with plenty of expert features – the Innov-is A50 is a multi-featured, portable and quick-to-get-started unit with 50 built-in stitches, which gives smooth, strong, even feeding on all kinds of fabrics. And to take your dressmaking one step further,

adding an overlocker to your craft space will ensure a professional finish on seams and more. For cutting needs, the Disney ScanNCut SDX2250D is a versatile machine for all kinds of materials – fabrics, card, leather, vinyl and beyond. Cut shapes to your own designs using the built-in scanner or pre-loaded templates – ideal for bespoke packaging flourishes or cards, gift tags and stickers that complement your designs.

## GET PERSONAL

Designer merchandise and personalised gifts have seen a huge growth in recent

times and having the tools to hand to be able to offer bespoke embroidered

“Consider how to increase productivity without piling on the pressure”

motifs, logos and slogans is more accessible than you think. The Brother range of embroidery machines will take your product offerings to a whole

new level – all from your own home or studio. Why not add stitched names to personalise your creations? The embroidery machines even come with pre-loaded fonts for speed.

Take a look at the options opposite and see how a new Brother machine can enhance not only your creativity but your productivity too.



# WHAT'S THE BEST MACHINE FOR YOUR CREATIVITY?

A top selection of Brother machines to support your productivity and creativity

## PR680W EMBROIDERY MACHINE

The Brother PR680W is a 6-needle embroidery machine with crosshair laser pointer for perfect needle positioning. It combines the easy-to-use features from Brother's home embroidery range with the speed and accuracy of our semi-professional machines, making it a great choice for those moving from hobbyist to small business owner. Wireless connectivity and automatic needle threading included.

RRP: £6,699 inc. VAT



## AIRFLOW 3000 OVERLOCKING MACHINE

For dressmakers and sewists who have found their groove, an overlocker is next-stage professionalism when it comes to beautifully finished seams and edging. The Airflow 3000 has an electronic air threader, fast sewing speeds, 2/3/4 thread stitching and 7 distinct finishes. The unit can handle tricky fabrics and comes with a range of feet and accessories to help you get the most out of your machine.

RRP - £899 inc. VAT



## INNOV-IS A50 SEWING MACHINE

This feature-filled machine is ideal for beginners and beyond. The A50 includes 50 built-in stitches, electronic jog dial, LCD screen, advanced needle threader, one-step button holes, top loading drop-in bobbin and a sliding speed control. In the box are a range of feet and tools so you can get the best from this compact and lightweight unit.

£429 inc. VAT



## INNOV-IS STELLAIRE XE1 EMBROIDERY MACHINE

For cutting-edge stitched designs, the Stellaire features an LED drop needle pointer for laser accuracy and speedy embroidery over a large area. Use My Design Snap app to upload your images, photos or handwriting to turn your designs into stitched pieces.

£4,599 inc. VAT



## SDX2250D SCANNCUT DISNEY MODEL

The Brother ScanNCut is a superbly versatile machine that cuts designs and shapes in a range of media. This model is perfect for Disney fans with 1,485 built-in designs and 17 fonts, incl. 182 Disney designs, plus 63 new rotary blade designs. The newly added rotary blade provides clean straight and curved cuts in your fabric with no need to stabilise it. Quilters will find block and appliqué designs built in too. Standalone – no PC required.

£749 inc. VAT



10.1 HD touch screen provides fast, powerful on-screen editing

To find out more about  
Machines • Local retailers • Crafty inspiration & ideas  
Visit [sewingcraft.brother.eu/en](http://sewingcraft.brother.eu/en)

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at your side



# MACHINE SKILLS

Whatever type of sewing machine you have, it's key to use and maintain it correctly to keep it whirring away nicely! Follow these tips to get the best out of your machine, from cleaning to tension settings.

**1** Use the same colour of thread in the top and bottom spools for most of your stitching – only use different colours for decorative stitching.

**2** Use the same type of thread in the top and bottom spools, as this will result in a more even tension.

**3** Always ensure your fabric is flat and smooth, as you'll get neater stitching. Pressing before you start is a good rule.

**4** Always work a few stitches on a spare scrap of the same fabric you'll be using to make sure that the machine tension is correct. Different thread and fabric will need different tensions, so check it whenever you start a new project. If your stitches are loopy or overly tight then you need to change the tension so that the top and bottom thread loop together evenly. Read your machine manual to see how to change the tension as each machine differs.

**5** The most important thing is to keep the stitches straight. Machines come with marked measure lines on the needle plate – keep the edge of your fabric running along it as you stitch. Stitch very slowly to start with and increase your speed as you gain confidence.

**6** If you are stitching curves, stitch very slowly and gradually ease the fabric round using both hands so you stitch a neat curved line.

**7** Don't forget to clean your machine regularly – fluff gets caught under the teeth and this will stop your machine working smoothly. Your manual will show you how to remove the needle plate and get all the fluff out.

**8** Get your sewing machine serviced by a professional regularly or when you don't feel it stitching the same as usual – it will make a great deal of difference! Look online to find your nearest machine service or repair shop.

**9** Keep your sewing machine covered up when you're not using it. This will keep the dust out and protect it from accidents and spills. With your new-found sewing skills you could even make your own pretty cover!

**10** Have a look at all the different stitches your machine can do and read your manual, which will tell you what to do with them. Mostly, you will only use the straight stitch for seams and hems, but the zigzag stitch can be just as useful – it's brilliant for working along the edge of a fabric to stop it from fraying. You can alter the length and the width of the zigzag using your machine dials, so adjust it to suit your fabric weight. The zigzag stitch can also be used for decoration, so have a practice to see which different effects you like.

**11** Change your needle regularly – they become blunt with time and use. Change it at the start of every project, using a needle that suits your fabric type. See page 28 for more on needles.

## MACHINE STITCHING

You've cut out your sewing pattern and fabric, pinned your first pieces together, and now it's time for the fun part – sewing on your machine! Follow these machine-sewing steps for a neat line of stitching every time, whether you're sewing a seam or topstitching.



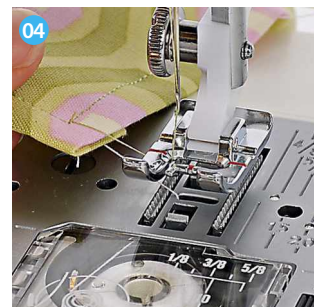
**01** Raise the presser foot and slide the fabric under it where you want to start sewing. Machines often have a guide on the plate, giving measurement guides for seam allowances. Line up the fabric edge with this guide to your pattern's seam allowance.



**02** As you control the speed of your sewing with the foot pedal, gently feed the fabric under the presser foot. If you find that you need to support the fabric with a little more tension, hold it in front of, and behind, the foot and ease it carefully through.



**03** It's easy to turn a corner without finishing your thread. Make sure the needle is down in the fabric at the point where you need to turn, then raise the foot and spin the fabric round to the new direction. Lower the foot and continue your line of stitching.



**04** Once your stitching line is done, finish securely by making a few stitches back and forth over your line. With the needle in the up position, raise the presser foot and pull out your fabric. The threads will still be attached, so snip these off to finish.

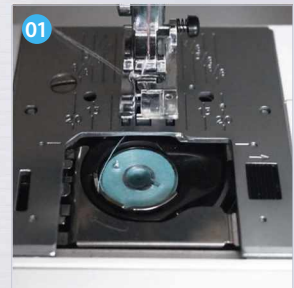


# BOBBINS

What's so important about a bobbin anyway? Here are some top tips for essential bobbin etiquette.



A selection of Hemline bobbins. For stockists email [consumer-enquiries@groves-banks.com](mailto:consumer-enquiries@groves-banks.com)



This is an example of a drop-in bobbin



A front-loading bobbin sits inside a metal case

The core of all sewing machines is the same. A top thread and a bobbin thread entwine to form a strong stitch that connects two layers of fabric. Threading the machine is the first thing you will need to learn, particularly winding and inserting the bobbin.

### WHAT'S THE BOBBIN FOR?

The bobbin is the thread that appears on the underside of the stitch. For domestic machines, they're circular with a cylindrical centre and are made from plastic or metal. The bobbin is wound on a pin at the top or side of the machine and is inserted either directly into the machine (drop-in <sup>01</sup>) or into a metal case and then placed in a compartment underneath the needle plate (front loading <sup>02</sup>).

### WINDING A BOBBIN

**Step one** Place an empty bobbin on the winder – refer to your manual if you can't locate yours.  
**Step two** Place your chosen thread colour on the spool, pass it through the tension disc.

(There may be a diagram on your machine of the thread path for bobbin winding; if not, check the manual.) Wind the thread clockwise around the bobbin a few times then pass the thread tail up through the hole on top of the bobbin. Trim off all but approximately 5mm (1/4in) of thread to prevent it from getting caught.

**Step three** Push the bobbin winder to the right.  
**Step four** Put your foot down on the pedal and the bobbin will start to wind. If your bobbin doesn't move it will be because it hasn't been properly engaged. Push the bobbin winder to the right until it is securely in place.  
**Step five** Once the bobbin is fully wound it will come to a stop. If you know that you only need a small amount of thread on the bobbin then you can half wind the bobbin to save thread. Pull the bobbin winder back to its regular position on the left, then snip the thread and remove the bobbin.  
**Step six** Thread the top thread of the machine as usual, following the thread path.

## TOP BOBBIN TIPS

- 1** Buy more bobbins than you think you need. Pre-wind a selection of your most used colours/thread in case you run out mid-project!
- 2** Use bobbins that are made for your machine. Metal and plastic bobbins aren't the same. Always check your manual as using the incorrect bobbin can damage your machine.
- 3** Don't double wind – practical yes, but the chance of things going wrong increase when you wind one colour on top of another.
- 4** Pre-wound bobbins can be a time-saver but only if you can buy the specific type for your machine with a thread that's suitable for your project. If in doubt, take the time to wind your own bobbin to prevent thread nests, needles coming unthreaded, and more!

# MACHINE NEEDLES

Fitting your machine with the right kind of needle is a must for smooth stitching. Follow these tips for selecting the best type for your sewing task and fabric type, from topstitching to hemming, jersey to denim.



## NEEDLE SIZE GUIDE

EUROPEAN SIZE	AMERICAN SIZE	FABRIC
60	8	Silks
70	10	Lightweight fabrics
75	11	Medium weight fabrics
80	12	Medium weight fabrics
90	14	Medium weight fabrics
100	16	Heavy weight fabrics
110	18	Upholstery fabrics/denim
120	20	Heavy canvas
Leather		Has a built-in knife to cut through the leather. (If you use one, you will also need a walking foot to slide over the leather or a special presser foot which has a Teflon sole.)
Industrial		Has a rounded shank at the top (domestic machine needles are flat on one side).

Those new to machine sewing may have only used the universal needle, but it isn't always the right one for every project. Sewing with the correct needle for the fabric, thread and stitch type can prevent stitching problems and broken needles. Use a new needle when you start a new project, or after around eight hours of sewing time.

### SIZING IT UP

Needles are labelled with two numbers. The larger number is the European metric size, and the smaller number is the American size. The lower the number, the finer the needle. The table on the right gives you a rough guide.

### NEEDLE TYPES

Needles differ by the shape of the point, eye and shaft thickness. Refer to the needle guide opposite to ensure you're using the right type.

### THE ANATOMY OF A NEEDLE

**Shank** This is locked into place with the needle clamp screw. It's flat on the back and rounded on the front.

**Groove** The slit on the front of the needle above the eye that protects the thread as the needle stitches.

**Point** The tip that pierces the fabric. The length and sharpness varies depending on the needle type.

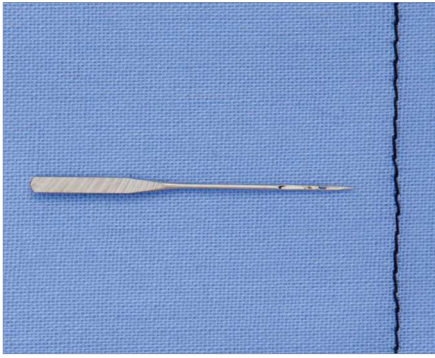
**Shaft** The part of the needle below the shank. The diameter of the shaft determines the needle size.

**Scarf** The small indentation on the back of the needle. A long scarf helps to avoid those skipped stitches.

**Eye** The hole that the thread goes through from front to back. The shape changes with the needle type.

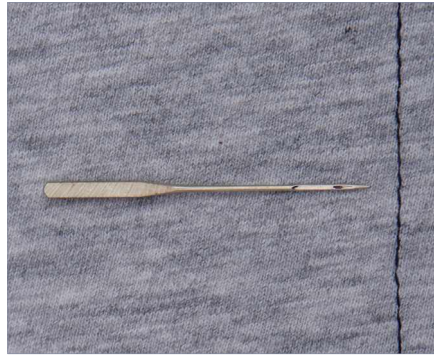






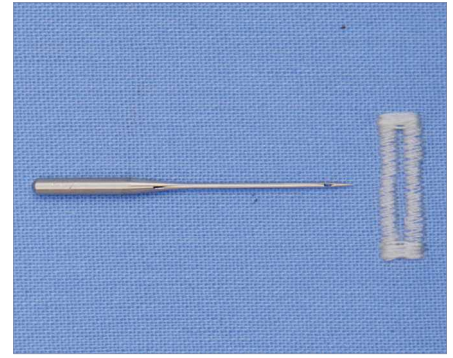
### UNIVERSAL

This needle has a slightly rounded point for stitching knits, but can also be used for woven fabrics. The finer points are ideal for lightweight fabrics, but choose a larger point for the heavyweights. You can use polyester, cotton or silk threads. Keep a few different sizes to hand.



### BALLPOINT

This one has a more rounded point than the universal needle, so is only to be used for knit fabrics. The needle slides between the fabric threads rather than piercing them, so you won't get snags, ladders or holes. Good for jersey fabric and fleece, as well as heavy knits.



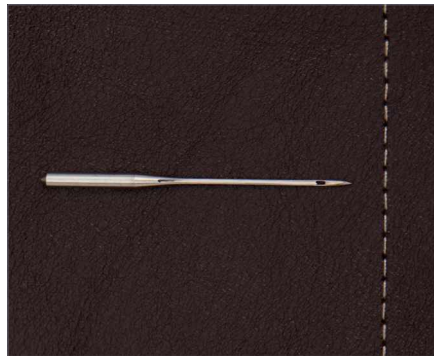
### SHARPS

The sharp point and narrow strengthened shaft will pierce several layers of fabric. Ideal for straight stitching, particularly topstitching, on very fine and delicate fabrics. The sharp point makes it perfect for stitching neat buttonholes where the stitches are worked close together.



### JEANS

This has a strong shank, so it won't break easily, and a very sharp point. It's perfect for stitching several layers of fabric, as well as densely woven fabrics like denim, canvas, workwear and heavy twill or linen. Use synthetic or cotton threads or a heavier topstitching thread.



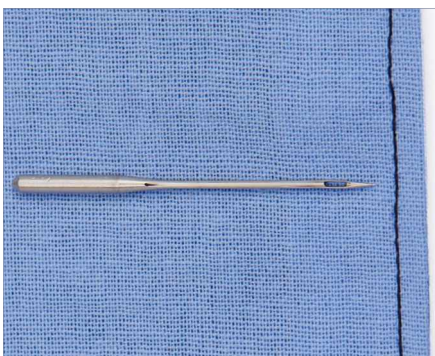
### LEATHER

With a wedge-shaped cutting point, this needle is used to work strong seams on non-woven fabrics such as leather, suede and vinyl. It shouldn't be used on woven or knit fabrics, such as synthetic suedes and PU imitation leathers, as it may tear the fabric and not seam properly.



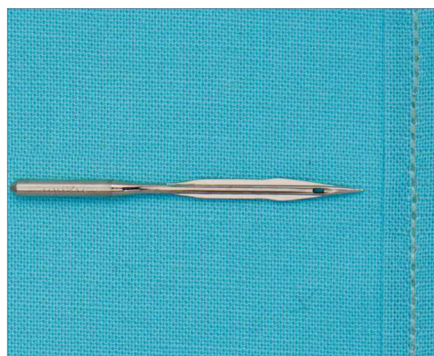
### STRETCH

Stretch needles have a deep scarf, which allows the bobbin thread to get close to the eye and prevents skipped stitches on fine knit fabrics. It's designed for two-way stretch knits such as silk jersey and spandex. It's also ideal for synthetic suede and sewing elastic.



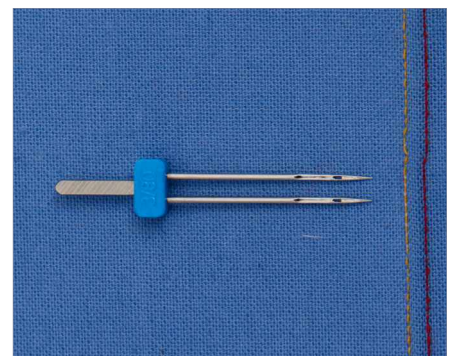
### TOPSTITCH

This has an extra sharp point and an extra large eye and groove so that thicker topstitching thread can be used. This needle is perfect for straight stitching with thicker threads on any fabric and the stitches will be even and regular. Use a contrasting or matching thread colour.



### HEMSTITCH

The wing blade on the side of this needle cuts a narrow hole in your fabric. It's perfect for stitching hems and other decorative stitches on closely woven fabrics, such as pure linen. It's often used for heirloom stitching on tablecloths and napkins or for sheets and pillowcases.



### TWIN AND TRIPLE

These have two or three needles, which extend from a single shank. Twin needles are available in a variety of types, but the triple ones are only universal needles. The size is measured from tip to tip. They are used for stitching parallel rows, such as pintucks and on hems.

# MACHINE THREADS

With so many thread choices, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. We give you the know-how to approach your next project with confidence.

**A**longside your sewing machine and your fabric, thread is one of the most essential parts of any project. It can be tempting to overlook thread and use a bad quality one or a spool that you've had in your stash for years, but using the correct thread for your project is important, as is using quality thread. Many of us will select thread simply by searching for a colour to match our fabric. Although this is an important part of the process, understanding the different types of thread, their compositions, and their different uses is crucial to achieve a smooth stitch line.

## CHOOSING YOUR THREAD

Although an all-purpose polyester thread will work well on most material, the general rule is to use the same type of thread as the fabric. So, for example, if you're sewing with 100% cotton material, use 100% cotton thread and match the thread weight to your fabric. Sometimes your sewing pattern or instructions will give you advice on which type of thread you should use. If you can't find an exact colour match, choose a thread one to two shades darker than the fabric, as light thread will stand out more. If you do a lot of work that requires perfectly matched colours, some thread companies sell shade charts which can help you to select the right one for your project. You will also need to consider the stretch of your fabric and how thick it is when selecting a thread.

## THREAD QUALITY

One of the most important things when it comes to purchasing thread is selecting a spool that is good quality, ideally from a well-known brand. Poor quality thread that you can buy in packs can be appealing as they are often cheap and come in lots of colours; however, these threads can snap easily when threaded through your machine and cause birds' nests to form under your work. Quality thread isn't necessarily expensive, and if it saves hours of your time at the machine then it's well worth the cost!



100m thread spools by Gütermann. Email [gutermann@stockistenquiries.co.uk](mailto:gutermann@stockistenquiries.co.uk)  
1,000m spools by Coats Moon threads, available at A&N Trimmings, [antrimm.co.uk](http://antrimm.co.uk)

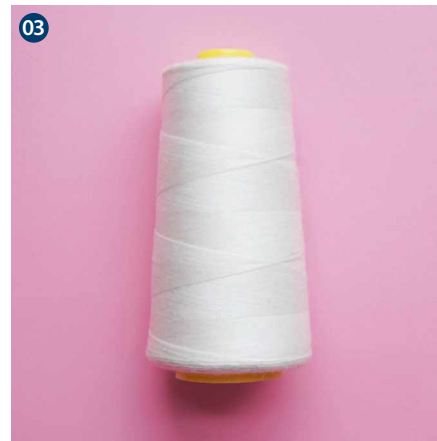




01



02



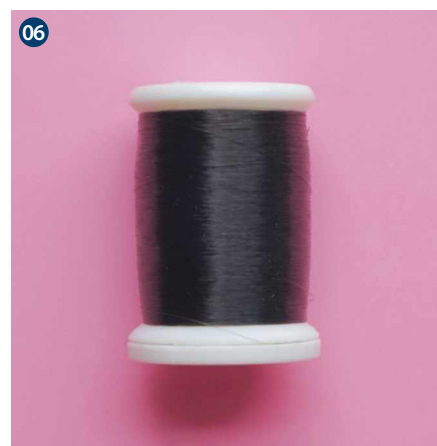
03



04



05



06

### READING A SPOOL

The end of the thread spool lists the fibre content, the manufacturer and colour number (invaluable if you need to buy more thread later), and often its weight and the number of plies (strands) that are twisted together. This is usually listed with two numbers – the higher the first number, the finer the thread.

### TYPES OF THREAD

There are several types of thread, which can be spilt into categories depending on what fibre they're made from. Within these there are different strengths (number of plies) and thicknesses (weights).

### COTTON THREADS

Cotton thread has very little stretch and is great for delicate projects, particularly for cotton fabrics or sheers, but not for stretchy fabrics. Most cotton thread is mercerised, which means it has gone through a series of chemical processes that increase the lustre of the thread and make it more water- and dye-absorbent. This means it's less likely to run in the wash.

### POLYESTER/NYLON THREADS

These are strong threads that have some stretch. They often have a wax or silicone finish that allows the thread to slip through the fabric with

little friction. This thread is also suitable for stretch fabrics such as synthetics and knits. Cotton-wrapped polyester thread can be used with most fabrics, too. Note that if you plan to dye the garment, polyester thread will not take the dye, unless it is a dye designed for polyester. Gutermann 100% polyester thread is an all-purpose thread that comes in a vast choice of colours and is widely available. You can use it for machine sewing as well as hand stitching, and it will work with most fabrics. <sup>01</sup>

### JEANS THREAD

This Gutermann denim thread is designed to match the colour of blue denim and is a polyester cotton blend. It can be used to darn jeans by hand and is also a great one to add to your collection if you regularly turn up jeans or work with denim fabrics. <sup>02</sup>

### OVERLOCKING CONES

These large cones can contain 2,000–5,000 metres of thread on a cone. They are designed for working on overlockers and industrial machines as they will need replacing less frequently than the smaller spools designed for domestic machines. If you are threading an overlocker you will need four cones of thread in the same colour (similar colours can also be used if your overlocked edges won't be visible). If you

are trying to use an overlocker cone on your sewing machine you will find that it will be far too big for the spool holder. To counter this, insert a smaller spool of thread (a 1,000m/yard spool will be ideal) inside the larger end of the cone and it will allow the spool to fit snugly on the holder. <sup>03</sup>

### METALLIC THREAD

This Gutermann thread is made from metal (surprise!). These glitzy threads require a metallic needle as metallic needles have a larger eye which won't be worn away by the metal in the thread. Sew slowly as these threads are very delicate and can break very easily. <sup>04</sup>

### SHIRRING ELASTIC

Shirring elastic is used to create multiple lines of elasticated stitching that draw in an area, usually across the bust or waist of a garment. The elastic needs to be wound onto your bobbin by hand to prevent too much stretching. <sup>05</sup>

### CLEAR THREAD

Clear/invisible threads are 100% nylon and blend invisibly with your fabric and other threads. These threads are available in clear and black. The clear thread is best used with lighter fabrics, while the black is best used with darker fabrics to blend in better. <sup>06</sup>

# OVERLOCKER MACHINE

Getting the best out of your overlocker starts with knowing the names and uses of its dials, settings and fixtures.

**A**s if it wasn't hard enough to learn about all the parts of your sewing machine, you've finally bought an overlocker and now there are dozens of new parts to learn the names and functions of! Don't stress, though – we've got you covered with this guide to the key overlocker terms.

While not all of these parts will be relevant to your machine's make and model, features are generally similar across the board so this should be a good reference. Be sure to read through the instructions that came with your machine before you start your project, too.

Not sure about investing in one yet? Turn over for an introduction to 'faux-verlocking', a way to finish seams without an overlocker.

## PRESSURE ADJUSTMENT SCREW

This is used to adjust the presser foot tension. If your fabric is stretching this may be the reason why. It is usually best to save this adjustment until after you have tried everything else. Consult your manual for guidance and only adjust the screw a small amount before testing the stitch again.

## TENSION DISCS

It is important that the thread is securely placed inside each tension disc as these control the tension of the thread.

## LEFT NEEDLE TENSION DIAL

This dial changes the tension of the left needle. The left needle stitch secures the upper and lower looper stitches in place. It is the straight stitch that is the furthest from the fabric edge and closest to the seam.

## RIGHT NEEDLE TENSION DIAL

Used to change the tension of the right needle. This stitch is a straight stitch that secures the upper and lower looper stitches in place along with the left needle stitch. It is the straight stitch that runs along the centre (or just off centre) of the overlocker stitch.

## PRESSER FOOT LEVER

As with a sewing machine, this is used to raise and lower the presser foot.

## UPPER BLADE

This cuts through the fabric and works best when it is sharp. For this reason it is important to not put pins through your overlocker as they will dent the blade, causing it to snag your fabric. The blade should be changed if you run over a pin to prevent cutting issues. Refer to your manual for how to do this.



## TOP THREAD GUIDES AND REEL SUPPORTS

The spools sit on reel supports (cone-shaped plastic pieces). The thread is then taken up to the relevant guide in the thread holder before being threaded through the top guides and through the tension discs.

## THREAD HOLDER

The thread holder is used to ensure the threads do not tangle and to correctly feed them into the tension discs.

## LOWER LOOPER TENSION DIAL

Used to change the tension of the lower looper. The lower looper creates the back and forth stitch on the back of your work which weaves in and out of the needle stitches. This stitch should meet the upper looper thread at the fabric edge where the loops interlock with each other.

## UPPER LOOPER TENSION DIAL

Changes the tension of the upper looper. The upper looper creates the back and forth stitch on the front of your work which weaves in and out of the left and right needle stitches. This stitch should neatly meet the lower looper thread at the edge of the fabric where the loops interlock with each other.

## STITCH WIDTH (STANDARD/ROLLED HEM SELECTOR)

This dial is used to alter the stitch width; the higher the number the wider the stitch. Set this to a wider stitch for thicker fabrics and to a narrower stitch for lightweight fabrics. A rolled hem has a very narrow width making it ideal for finishing lightweight fabrics.

**JANOME**

LEFT NEEDLE

RIGHT NEEDLE

UPPER LOOPER

LOWER LOOPER

STITCH LENGTH

## STITCH LENGTH INDICATOR

## DIFFERENTIAL FEED INDICATOR

DIFFERENTIAL FEED

## STANDARD/ROLLED HEM SELECTOR

STD. R.H.

## STITCH LENGTH

This dial is used to change the stitch length; the higher the number the longer the stitch.

## DIFFERENTIAL FEED

Overlockers have two sets of feed dogs. When set to 1.0 the feed dogs move at the same speed. When set to higher than 1 the front feed dogs move faster than the rear feed dogs – this helps to prevent the machine from stretching fabrics. When the number is less than 1.0 the front feed dogs move slower than the back feed dogs to prevent lightweight fabrics from puckering.

## HANDWHEEL

Used to move the needle up and down. As with a sewing machine, thread your overlocker with the needles in the upmost position.

## REMOVABLE SIDE COVER

## LOOPER COVER

This cover is lowered for threading the upper and lower loopers. Some overlockers will also

6234XL



# FINISHING SEAMS

Not ready to invest in an overlocker? We take you through how to finish your seams without an overlocker (we like to call it *faux-verlocking!*), using just your sewing machine.

**W**hen working with commercial sewing patterns, you'll often be instructed to 'finish the raw edges' before or after sewing the seams. The stitch type you choose to finish the raw edges of a garment will affect the appearance of a seam, the garment's overall life-span and its comfort when worn. There are many ways to finish a raw edge – pinking shears, zigzag stitching and binding are just a few – but overlocking has become a firm favourite as it provides a quick-to-sew, long-lasting and professional-looking finish. While overlockers were once the preserve of clothing factories, in the last 50 years domestic overlocking machines have become widely available and more affordable, making them appealing to home sewists. For many stitchers, however, deciding whether to purchase an overlocker in addition to a sewing machine is a tough choice. Before diving in, explore the stitches on your sewing machine, as often it will be jam-packed with clever finishing stitches.

## TOP FINISHING TIPS

No overlocker required – finish seams like a pro with these amazing tips

- 1** Test the stitch before tackling your final garment, as you may need to adjust the tension and stitch width settings. Refer to your machine manual for guidance regarding the presser foot and stitch settings required.
- 2** Once you've found a stitch that works well for you, be sure to note down the stitch width, length, presser foot and tension settings you used. Complex stitches can be difficult to be recreate a second time!
- 3** Some machines have hundreds of stitches to choose from, others have just a few. No matter how many stitches your machine has, there will be at least one stitch that can be used or combined with other stitches to finish an edge.



For hemming, use a trim needle to neatly finish a sleeve seam





## PRESSER FEET

The three main presser feet required for edge finishing stitches will be the zigzag foot, the overcasting foot and the overedge foot. Some other speciality feet could be available to aid with the stitches on your machine, so check your manual for guidance. You'll need to use the correct foot for each stitch as the wrong foot could risk the needle breaking or the stitch failing. It's also important to use the correct sewing machine needle for the fabric type you're working with. For example, you'll need to use a stretch or jersey needle when finishing the edges of a stretch fabric or a sharps needle for fine fabrics. Always test a stitch on a scrap of fabric with the correct presser foot and needle before starting on your main project.



### ZIGZAG STITCH

**Presser foot: zigzag foot or overedge foot**

With the overedge foot, simply sew along the raw edge of the fabric, aligning the guide on the presser foot with the raw edge.

Alternatively, if you're using a zigzag foot, you can stitch close to the edge and trim any excess if necessary.



### OVERCASTING STITCH

**Presser foot: overedge foot**

This stitch can be used to simultaneously sew a seam and finish the raw edges. It's ideal for seams that need to be pressed flat rather than open as it sews the seam allowances together. The combination of zigzag and straight stitch prevents fraying and creates a stable seam.



### DOUBLE OVEREDGE STITCH

**Presser foot: overedge foot**

This stitch sews a double row of zigzag stitches, one on the edge of the fabric, and connects to a straight line of stitching. Like an overlocker, this stitch could be used to both sew and finish a seam in one go. This is perfect for fabrics that fray heavily.



### OVERLOCK STITCH

**Presser foot: overedge foot**

This type of stitch gives a similar finish to an overlocker. It has a straight stitch just off the raw edge with a criss-cross stitch connecting it to the inner straight stitch. This is another stitch perfect for fabrics likely to fray a lot as the edge stitches will prevent shedding.



### 3-STEP ZIGZAG

**Presser foot: zigzag foot**

This stitch can be used to finish the raw edges of stretch fabrics. The three diagonal stitches in each section will allow the fabric to stretch comfortably and protect the raw edges from fraying. This stitch provides more elasticity than zigzag stitch, making it great for jersey fabrics.



### KNIT STITCH

**Presser foot: zigzag foot**

This stitch is great for sewing knit fabrics as it's a strong stitch that provides a lot of elasticity. Stitch close to (but not on) the fabric edge, leaving an adequate seam allowance. Trim the seam allowance close to the stitches. This stitch will provide a durable, long-lasting seam finish.

# DRESSMAKING TERMS

From backstitching to understitching, binding to overlocking, this glossary takes you through the terms you'll come across when dressmaking.



**APPLIQUÉ** Stitching a small piece of fabric on top of another, usually for decoration. This can be done by hand often using blanket stitch or by machine using a zigzag stitch.

**BACKSTITCH** Also called reverse stitch, this is done at the beginning and end of a seam to prevent it from coming undone. It's also used to describe an embroidery stitch where the stitches are worked backwards so they touch each other to form a solid line of stitching.

**BIAS** The stretchiest part of the fabric, which runs diagonally to the selvedge or straight grain.

**BINDING** A method to encase the raw edges of the fabric using a narrower strip of fabric. Ready-made bias binding can be used for this, or fabric strips cut on the bias.

**BOBBIN** A plastic or metal cylinder which holds the bottom thread of a sewing machine. Thread is wound on the bobbin and this lower thread loops with the upper needle thread to form the stitches.

**BODICE** The part of a garment which reaches from the shoulder to the waist. It can be attached to the skirt piece to form a dress.

**CASING** A channel usually made from an edge of fabric which is folded over and stitched down. It can be used to hold a drawstring or elastic to gather clothing such as a waistband, or at the top of a bag to close it.

**CLIP** Small snips made into the fabric edge. These help a seam lie flat or remove bulk from the fabric and are ideal for easing tight curves. Small snips are used for outside curves, and little wedges (notches) are clipped out for inner curves.

**CUTTING LINE** On a pattern, this is the line you cut along. This is either the outer, usually solid, line or the patterned line relevant to your size.

**DARTS** Stitched folds used to shape a garment by taking away fullness from a seam line. They are usually wedge or triangle-shaped and often used at the bust, waistline, hips and back. They allow the garment to fit smoothly over a rounded area of the body. Darts are marked on the fabric from the pattern then stitched from the broad end towards the point, tapering narrowly.

**DRAPE** This describes the way a fabric hangs under its own weight. Different fabrics have different drape qualities as some are more fluid than others.

**EASE** The addition of extra fabric in a pattern to allow the finished garment to drape well and fit the body without being too tight.

**EDGE STITCH** A row of stitching 2-3mm (1/16-1/8in) from the folded or seamed edge. Used to hold the fabric edge neatly in place.

**EYELETS** Also called grommets, these are made from metal, plastic or rubber and inserted into a hole in the fabric. They are used to reinforce the hole, and are inserted using a special tool which is often sold with the eyelets.

**FACINGS** Used to stabilise and create a neat finish on the edges of a garment, such as the neckline or armholes. The facing is cut separately, often stiffened using interfacing, then sewn right sides together with the garment edge.

**FAT QUARTER** A term used to describe a cut piece of fabric, often used for patchwork or small accessories. Half a yard of fabric is cut from the length of the fabric then this is cut in half again. This usually measures 18x22in (46x55cm) if cut from a standard 44in (112cm) width fabric.

**FINGER PRESSING** Using your fingers and pressure to open a seam flat, either for speed or for a seam that may not be suitable for pressing with an iron.

**FINISHING/NEATENING RAW EDGES** This is to stop the fabric edges from fraying, particularly on a seam. It can be done by machine zigzag stitching, using an overlocker or trimming the edge with pinking shears.

**FOLD LINE** Many pattern pieces are placed on the fold of a piece of fabric to make sure that you cut a symmetrical piece. Follow the cutting layout to see whether to fold the fabric right sides or wrong sides together, then place the edge of the pattern pieces marked 'cut on the fold' right up to the fold of the fabric, pin in place and cut out.

**FUSIBLE** Also referred to as iron-on and used to describe interfacing or webbing. The fusible, rougher side has the glue applied and should be placed directly onto the fabric and pressed.





**FRENCH SEAM** A completely enclosed strong seam that's stitched on both sides of the fabric to enclose all of the raw edges for a neat finish.

**GATHER** Gathering one piece of fabric allows it to fit a shorter piece of fabric. A line of hand or machine stitching is worked along the fabric, then the stitches are pulled to gather it. Once pinned it can then be permanently stitched in place. Often used for inserting wider sleeves into armholes or for a skirt to fit to a bodice on a dress.

**GRAIN/GRAINLINE** The direction of the fabric which runs parallel to the selvage. Patterns have the grainlines printed on them, usually represented as an arrow, and you should make sure this arrow is parallel to the fabric selvage before pinning in place. This makes sure the cut pieces all face the correct direction, which is particularly important for patterned, textured or napped fabrics.

**HEM** The finished, usually turned-under and stitched lower edge of a garment. It creates a neat edge and prevents fraying. Sewing patterns usually include extra fabric for the hem which is specified in the pattern instructions.

**INTERFACING** Available in different thicknesses or weights and applied to fabric to stiffen it or stabilise it to prevent it from stretching out of shape. It can be non-woven, woven or knitted depending on the usage and is either iron-on (fusible) or sew-in (non-fusible).

**NAP** Fabrics such as velvet, corduroy and fur have hairs or loops called the nap or pile, which lie in a particular direction. The hairs lie smooth and flat with the nap when your hand runs over them. When cutting out pattern pieces, make sure the grainline arrow always runs in the direction of the nap.

**NOTIONS** Small tools or accessories used in sewing other than the fabric and the sewing machine, such as zips, fasteners, lace and buttons.

**OVERLOCKING** An overcast stitch used to prevent the fabric from fraying. Overlockers are machines which not only work this overlock stitch but also trim the seam allowance at the same time. Known as sergers in the US.

**PATTERN/CUTTING LAYOUT** Directions in the pattern instructions which show exactly how to fold the fabric and lay the pattern pieces on it for pinning and cutting.

**PIPING** A cord encased in a strip of folded-over fabric that's used as a decorative edge, often for cushions or upholstery. Narrow piping can be used in seams in dressmaking.

**PRESS** Pressing as you go along gives a garment a professional finish and should be done once each seam or area is completed. Pressing is done by

placing the hot iron onto the fabric and holding or 'pressing' into place, rather than moving the iron across the fabric.

**RAW EDGE** The cut edge of fabric that is not stitched or finished in any way.

**RIGHT SIDE (RS)/WRONG SIDE (WS)** The right side of the fabric with the design on it is also called the 'public' side. For a plain fabric, the right side is usually a little brighter or shinier.

**SEAM ALLOWANCE** The fabric between the raw or cut edge of the fabric and the seam is called the seam allowance. Patterns will state the seam allowance to be used, which is usually 1.5cm (5/8in) for dressmaking but can vary.

**SELVAGE** The finished woven edge of fabric which often has the fabric name printed along one selvage. The grain runs parallel to this and the bias diagonally. Called selvage in the US.

**SLIP STITCH** Often used on hems or for closing a turning gap. Small, neat, almost invisible stitches are worked into the fold of the fabric with a fabric thread caught on the other side.

**STAYSTITCHING** A line of regular machine stitching usually worked 3mm (1/8in) inside the seam line, used to stabilise curved edges in particular to stop them stretching out of shape. This is worked before the permanent stitching, then curves can be clipped up to the staystitching if required.

**TACK/TACKING** A line of temporary stitching used to hold fabric pieces together before machine sewing. These are removed once the permanent stitching is complete. Known as basting in the US.

**TENSION** This refers to the pressure being placed on the needle and bobbin thread by the sewing machine. The thread tension and the bobbin tension needs to be set correctly following the sewing machine manual for even stitches.

**TOILE** A test garment, often made from muslin or calico, to check the fit or test a pattern before the real fabric is used. Known as a muslin in the US.

**TOPSTITCHING** A line of stitching worked in the same way as edgestitching but usually 5mm (1/4in) from the folded or seam edge. Used to neaten the fabric edge and hold the seam in place.

**UNDERSTITCHING** A line of machine stitching worked through the facing and seam allowance 3mm (1/8in) from the seam, to keep the facing from rolling to the outside of the garment. The stitching will not be visible on the right side.

**ZIGZAG STITCHING** A machine stitch mainly used for neatening raw edges and sewing stretch fabrics. The length and width of it can be altered.



20



126



14



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Go online for more sewing terms and beginner advice at [www.gathered.how](http://www.gathered.how)



*Learn how to follow patterns and update your wardrobe*





# USING PATTERNS

Following pattern sheets can seem daunting at first, but our step-by-step guides will help you learn how to use them as well as make alterations for the perfect fit



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some of *Simply  
Sewing's* exclusive  
garment patterns  
[etsy.com/uk](https://www.etsy.com/uk)

# PATTERN MARKINGS

Pattern instructions and markings are the sewing equivalent of a recipe, there to help you through the making process. Our pattern markings guide covers all the need-to-know lines, marks and symbols.

**W**ith so many markings to follow, sewing patterns can seem a little daunting at first, but these marks and symbols are there to help you achieve a great fit and finish on your me-made garments. Not all markings will be found on every pattern, as some are only used for specific details, such as pleats and tucks. Markings such as cutting

lines, grain lines and fold lines are used for positioning and cutting out the pattern on your fabric, while others, such as the lengthen and shorten lines, are for adjusting the pattern pieces. Some markings, including notches and darts, need to be transferred onto your fabric to help you construct your garment. Here we take you through the key markings to get you started.

## PDF PATTERNS

Print-at-home patterns require assembling.

## INSTRUCTION SHEETS

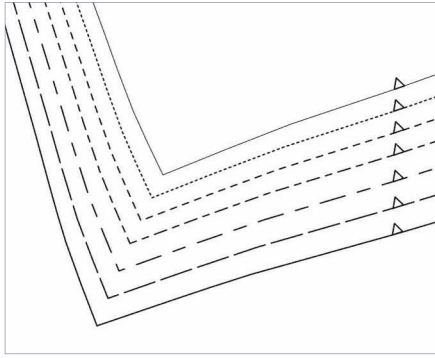
Often contain a key of what markings will be included.

## SIZE INDICATOR LINES

The various line patterns indicate different sizes.

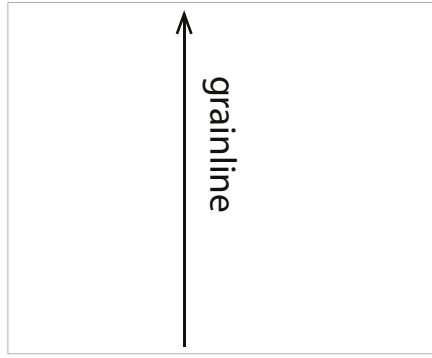






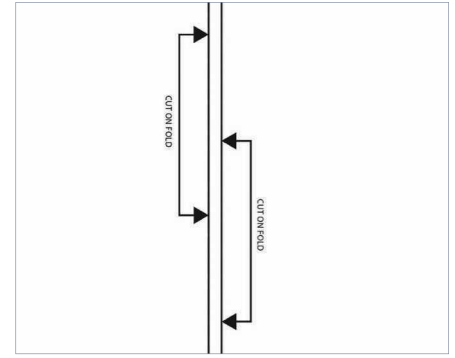
## CUTTING LINES

These are the outer lines of the pattern. Multi-size patterns have different style lines for each size, such as dots and dashes or a combination of the two. Cut along the line that matches your size – it may help to mark this with a coloured pen before cutting out.



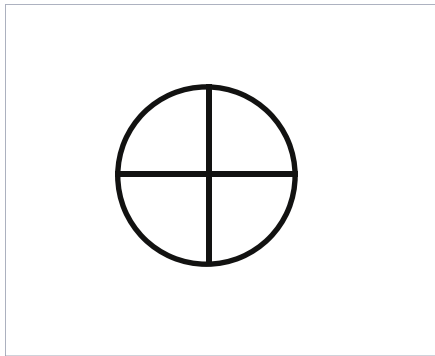
## GRAINLINE

You should match up the direction the arrow is pointing with the grain on the fabric. This runs parallel to the selvages, the woven finished edges of the fabric. This is so the fabric's print, pile or nap will run in the same direction and the garment will hang correctly.



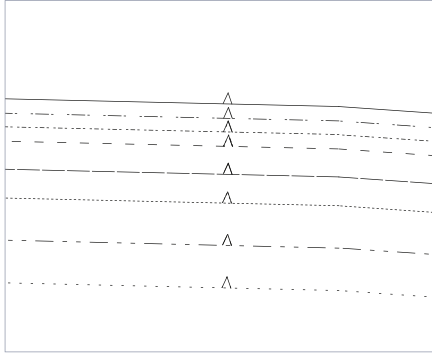
## ON THE FOLD

When you need to cut a pattern piece on the fold, line up and pin this marking with the fold of the fabric. The cutting layout will show you where and how to fold your fabric so you cut a perfectly symmetrical piece that's twice as large as the pattern piece.



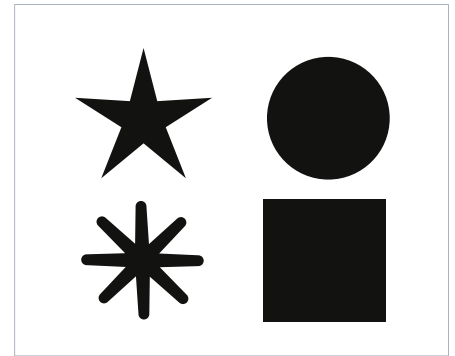
## BUST AND HIP INDICATORS

These are used to show the bustline, waistline or hipline points on the pattern. They are a good way of checking if the pattern fits with your own measurements as they usually detail the full circumference of the pattern at these points. Check these before cutting out.



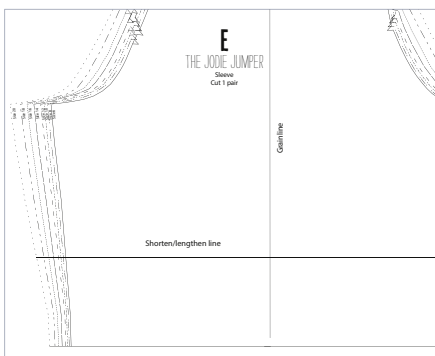
## NOTCHES

These triangles or lines are marked on the edges of a pattern to indicate where to match up two pattern pieces and fit them together. This helps to get accurate results, particularly with curves. There may be single and double notches on a pattern for matching different sections.



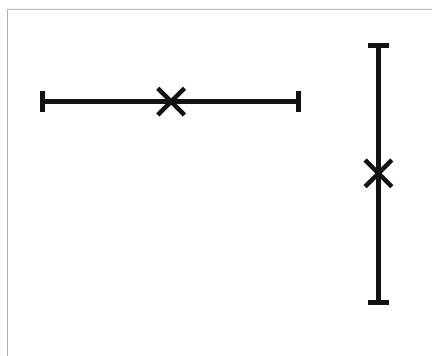
## OTHER SHAPES

These are used to mark specific parts of the pattern, such as pocket placements, dart points, clipping, gathering and staystitching. They indicate points that need to be matched or starting and finishing points for sewing, as detailed in the pattern instructions.



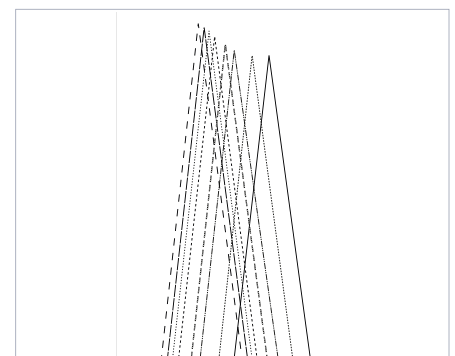
## LENGTHEN AND SHORTEN LINES

These are two horizontal, parallel lines which show the point on the pattern where you can lengthen or shorten it to suit. To shorten, cut along the lines, overlap the pieces and stick them back together. To lengthen, cut along the line and pin the two halves apart on the fabric.



## BUTTONHOLES AND BUTTONS

Buttonholes are usually shown by horizontal or vertical lines shaped like a capital I. The button position is often marked within this line with an X. Mark the buttonholes on one piece and then mark buttons on the opposite one so they will match and meet up exactly.



## DARTS

Darts are used for shaping and are usually shown on a pattern as a diamond shape or as two lines coming from one point. They also often have dots for you to match up. Mark them on the wrong side of the fabric, then fold the fabric, match the lines, and stitch along them.

# PATTERN LAYPLANS

From choosing your size to picking the right cutting layout for your fabric width and understanding the key layplan terminology, here's how to ensure your sewing pattern and fabric are cut out accurately.



**B**eginning a new sewing project is exciting, and, if you're anything like us, you'll be eager to get going on the sewing machine. However, take time to prepare both your pattern pieces and fabric correctly to ensure a perfect fit and finish on your completed garment.

## FINDING YOUR SIZE

Most patterns come in multiple sizes, with a different type of line used for each. The pattern's instruction sheet or envelope will have measurements on it to help you find out which size you are. See page 23 for more help.

## PREPARING THE PATTERN

Read the guide sheet that comes with the pattern to work out which pieces you'll need to cut for your chosen style – these are usually numbered or lettered. If you'd like to reuse your pattern you can trace your size from the pattern instead of cutting into the original copy. To do this, lay a large sheet of paper on top of your pattern and hold it in place with a couple of heavy objects or pattern weights, then trace around your size line using a sharp pencil.

Cut out your pattern along the drawn lines – it is important not to stray from the lines, as

accidentally adding or taking away just a few millimetres at each edge can result in fit issues. Use a dry iron on a low heat to press your pattern pieces to remove any folds and creases so they will lie flat on your fabric.

## CHOOSING A CUTTING LAYOUT

Pattern guides often have different cutting layouts for different width fabrics, or for fabrics with nap or without nap. The nap is the textured surface of a fabric such as fur, fleece, velvet and corduroy. If you stroke the fabric, you'll feel the direction it lies flat in – this is the nap direction. It is also present on silks



and satins, but will be less easy to spot. If you're using a directional-print fabric, use the 'with nap' pattern layout.

## PRE-WASHING FABRIC

Before cutting out your fabric it's always best to pre-wash it on a cool wash. If you can't wash the fabric, steam it so that any shrinkage occurs before it becomes a garment! Once washed, press the fabric on the wrong side. If you can use steam on your fabric (check on a scrap first!) then this will help to remove deep-set creases.

## LAYING OUT THE FABRIC AND PATTERN

The best place to lay out your fabric is on a large table. Smooth the fabric out so it lies flat and there are no wrinkles and creases. Lay the pattern pieces in the order shown on the correct layout. The layout will show you if they need to be right or wrong side down. Check whether your pattern includes a standard seam allowance – this will be stated in the instructions or on the envelope. Most patterns include seam allowance, but if you do need to add this yourself make sure you space your pattern pieces far enough apart to allow for this. Once you're happy with the layout, check to make sure that the grainlines of the pattern are parallel with the selvages. To do this, measure from both ends of the grainline to the selvedge, making sure the measurements are the same. You are now ready to pin your pattern in place.

## PATTERN MARKINGS

All the markings on your pattern pieces need to be transferred to the fabric. These are important for matching up pieces and for positioning elements such as darts and pockets – see page 36 for our pattern markings guide.

## PINS AND PATTERN WEIGHTS

You can either pin your pattern to the fabric or use pattern weights. Use sharp stainless steel pins or, for delicate fabrics, buy specialist pins to avoid snagging. Some people prefer to use weights as they don't leave marks in your fabric and there's no possibility of snagging.

## HOW TO CUT

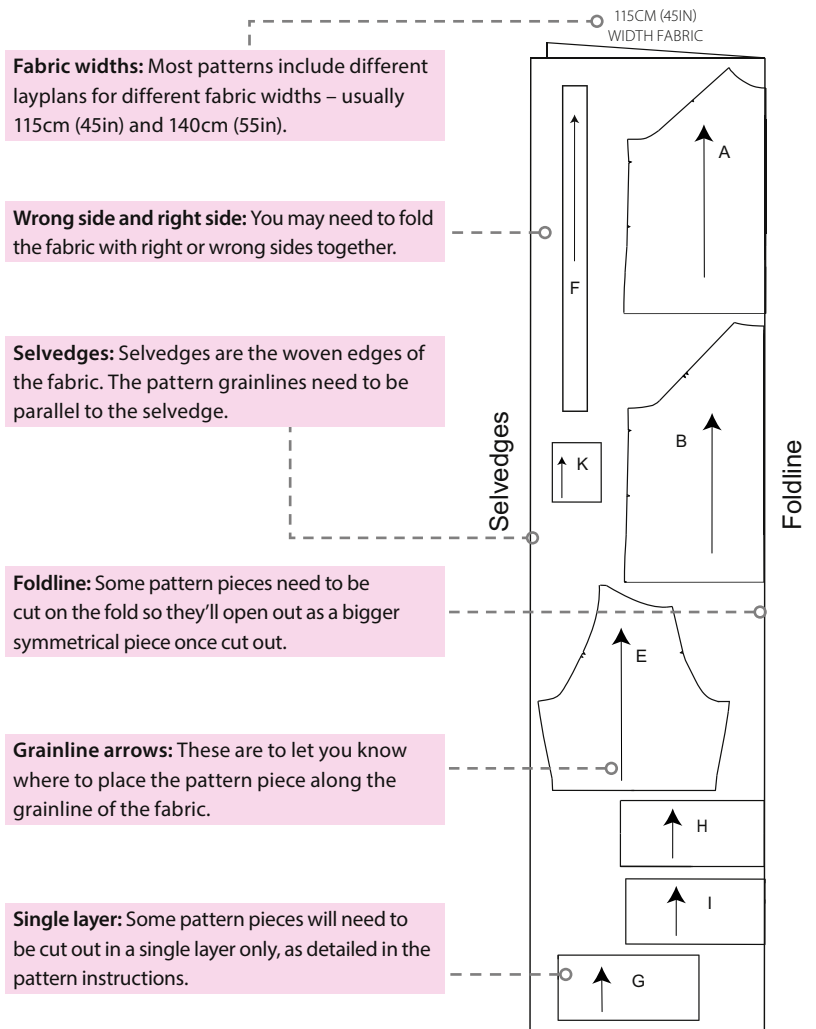
Cut out your pattern close to the paper edge but trying not to cut into the paper (which can dull your scissor blades). Try to use the whole blade of the scissors to make big cuts. If you're right-handed cut with the paper to the left of the scissors so you can see the cutting line clearly. If you're left-handed cut with the paper to the right. Don't forget to snip into the centre of any notches and mark other points such as darts with tailor's chalk, an erasable fabric marker or tailor's tacks.

## READY TO SEW

Keep all your pattern pieces pinned on the fabric until you need them so you know which piece is which. Now you're ready to start sewing!

# LAYPLAN GUIDE

All patterns include a layplan – a diagram to show you how to best lay out your pattern pieces depending on the width of fabric. Here are common layplan terms and what they mean...



# CUTTING DIFFERENT FABRICS

Many fabrics require special cutting out processes, so check before you begin

## Lightweight fabrics

Lightweight fabrics should be laid out and cut in one layer. Don't cut lightweight or slippery fabrics on the fold as the fabric will shift and your pattern piece will not be symmetrical. Instead trace the pattern piece off so that it's one whole piece. Don't use pins to attach the pattern as these can leave holes in the delicate fabric, but opt for pattern weights to hold your pattern in place. Fabrics such as chiffon can be sandwiched between two layers of tissue paper, then with your pattern pieces on top, cut through the tissue paper layers and fabric in one go. This stops the fabric from shifting about. Always use your sharpest scissors to cut fine fabrics as they will snag very easily.

## Heavyweight fabrics

Fabrics such as denim and corduroy will fray/shed when they are cut into. It's important to handle the cut pieces with care and finish the raw edges as soon as you can.

## Stretch fabrics

Before cutting into jersey fabrics or other stretch fabric it's always best to check the grainline, as sometimes the line that a rib or knit row will follow is not perpendicular to the selvedge. While a good pair of sharp dressmaking scissors will work just fine, a rotary cutter and cutting mat will help you to achieve a perfect edge. The rotary blade won't stretch the fabric as it cuts.

# TRACING PATTERNS

We all know we *should* trace a pattern before cutting, but how many of us can honestly say we do? Here are our top tips for perfect tracing.

**W**hy trace a pattern if you have the sheets in front of you? It's best practice to trace your pattern before cutting into it. If you worked for a designer and cut into their master pattern you'd never live it down! If you've spent good money on a pattern, it's nice to save it for future use and be able to pass it on to family or friends should you wish. Sometimes tracing is optional, but sometimes when patterns are double-sided or overlapped you have little choice. Tracing allows you to make multiple versions should you wish, which is especially important if the garment has multiple variations. You might need to remake the pattern in larger or smaller sizes further down the line; and you will also be able to make any amendments if need be.

## TOOLS FOR TRACING PATTERNS

There are a few basic tools you will need to trace a pattern. As with any task, there are specialist tools you can buy to make the task simpler, but it's always best to start with the basics if you're a beginner and see how much you enjoy your first few projects!

To begin tracing a pattern, as you might have guessed, you'll need some paper, a pencil, and a ruler. Dressmaking rulers and curves will make the task much easier, but if all you have to begin with is a meter rule or a 30cm ruler, these will work fine. Specialist pattern paper for tracing is inexpensive and can be bought in rolls of ten+ meters. If you do a lot of dressmaking this is the most economical way to purchase the paper. Many variations exist: dot and cross paper (with markings at regular intervals); plain paper; and Swedish tracing paper – this paper can be sewn through so you can turn a traced pattern into a toile! You will also need a mechanical pencil and an eraser. Mechanical pencils are much better for tracing as the ultra-fine lead will give a much sharper line than a regular pencil.

Other tools which might come in handy include a tracing wheel (a specialist wheel with spikes for tracing patterns), pattern weights (these are useful to stop your paper moving while you are tracing)



The English Rule curved edge ruler from Sew on Sew Forth. Visit [sewonsewforth.co.uk](http://sewonsewforth.co.uk) or call 01485 534349.

and a lightbox (helps you see through the tracing paper to the pattern) – these aren't essential tools if you're a beginner to dressmaking, but if you already have them in your crafting kit, you'll definitely be able to make use of them.

## TOILE MAKING

It can be helpful to make a toile – this involves running up a quick sample of your traced pattern to check the fit and make any necessary adjustments before cutting into your fabric. You can also pin the paper pattern to your clothing to see how it will fit (provided the garment is a loose-fitting design, this won't work if the garment is close-fitting). Find out more about accurate measuring on p24.

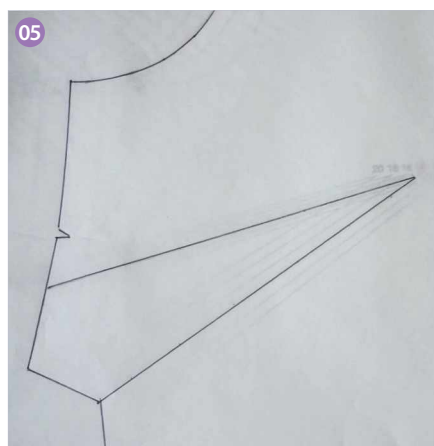
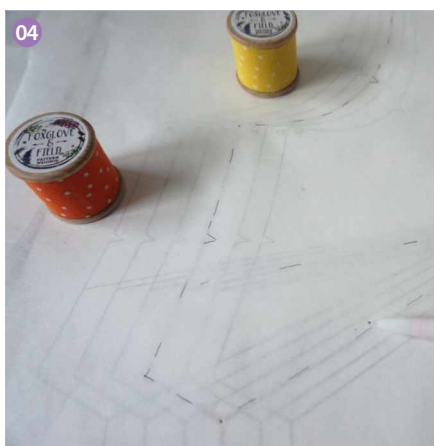
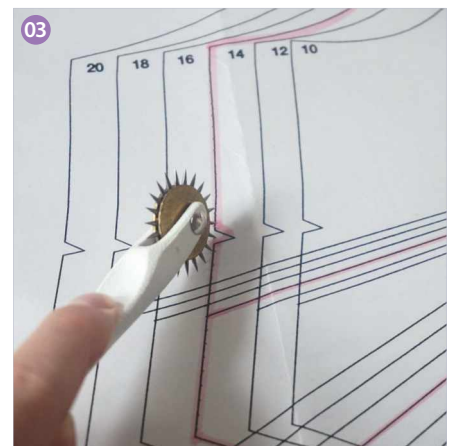
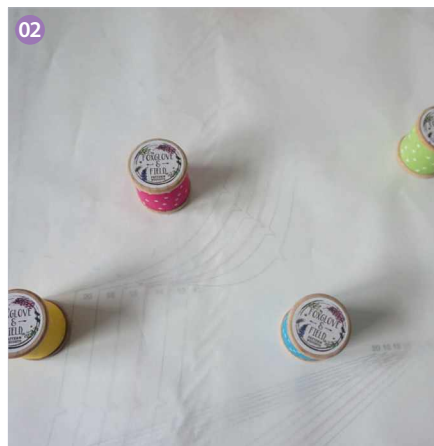
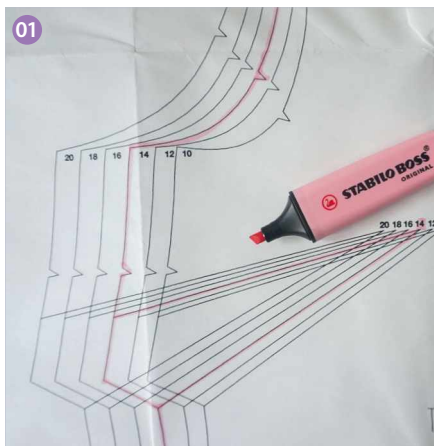


SCAN ME

Go online for toile and measuring help and printable resources at [www.gathered.how](http://www.gathered.how)







## YOU WILL NEED

- Rulers – specialist curves are ideal but a straight ruler will do the job!
- Pattern paper – a translucent paper such as tracing paper, thin pattern paper or baking paper works well. Beware that newspaper ink can transfer to your fabric!
- Mechanical pencils – when tracing, the fine lead will create a much sharper line than a regular pencil – if each line is too wide then you can throw the whole pattern off.
- Fineliner – like mechanical pencils it's important to use a pen with a very fine nib for marking patterns or you could inadvertently add to the pattern sizing!

## OPTIONAL

- Tracing wheel – a specialist wheel with spikes for tracing patterns. This leaves little indentations on the paper that you can then join.
- Pattern weights – these are useful to stop your paper moving while you are tracing. If you don't have special weights use tins!
- Lightbox – not necessary, just helpful if you have one!

## PREPARING THE PATTERN

Before you begin, make sure your pattern is as flat as possible. A crinkled pattern will be difficult to trace and any folds could lead to you tracing a smaller piece than intended. If need be you can iron your pattern on a low heat setting to remove any creases.

**Step one** Outline your size using a highlighter or a felt tip pen. Mark all pattern markings as well (darts, grainlines, notches etc.). <sup>01</sup>

**Step two** Lay your pattern on a flat work surface such as a desk or dining room table. Place the pattern paper on top and secure with pattern weights. Weights are much better than pins as they won't mark your paper or get in the way of your tracing. Pins will also cause the paper to lift slightly which could result in uneven tracing. <sup>02</sup>

**Step three** Alternatively you can place your pattern paper underneath the pattern and use a tracing wheel to trace over your size. If you are doing this make sure to protect your work surface with a cutting mat. <sup>03</sup>

## TRACING THE PATTERN

**Step one** Start by marking the highlighted line with dots or dashes – straight lines can be marked with a dot at each end and connected later on with a ruler (e.g. sleeve side seams or shoulder seams). Marking curves in this way will also help you to achieve a more accurate result

than tracing directly from the pattern. Make sure your markings aren't too heavy as you may need to erase some if you make a mistake. <sup>04</sup>  
**Step two** Connect all of your pencil markings and then trace over them with a fine liner. Make sure to include all pattern markings such as notches, darts, pivot points, gathering lines etc. <sup>05</sup>

## FINISHING

**Step one** Label your pattern pieces with the pattern name, piece name, cutting information and any grainlines or foldlines to finish. This is important as it will help you to see if a piece is missing. Even though you might think you'll remember which piece is which, in a year's time you'll have no memory of which pattern a random collar piece belongs to – trust us! <sup>06</sup>  
**Step two** This method will give you a copy of your pattern to use for your project. Once you have made any necessary adjustments to the pattern (bust, shoulder, stomach etc.) you could also trace a copy onto manilla card.

Card patterns will stand the test of time and can be manoeuvred easily. Their weight makes them great for tracing onto paper and they can also be used to hack patterns if ever you decide to customise the design even further. Store card patterns hanging up and try to avoid folding your traced paper patterns, instead roll them and store them in tubes.

# COPY SHOP PRINTING

In this masterclass, The Fold Line talk all things copy shop printing, which is quickly becoming sewists' favourite way to print PDF patterns.

**W**hat is copy shop printing? It's no secret that in recent years there has been an explosion of PDF sewing patterns from new independent designers around the world. There is no better feeling than being able to instantly purchase a sewing pattern and start sewing straight away. The downside to this is that you'll probably end up spending a couple of hours taping or sticking together all the A4 paper sheets and then cutting out the pattern pieces. This can be anything from a few paper sheets for a pair of knickers to over 60 sheets for a full-length coat. For many of us, this isn't the fun part of a new sewing project. But fear not, there is an alternative, welcome to the joy of copy shop printing!

Copy shop printing is the best of both worlds. You'll receive the PDF pattern instantly and can start to plan your project by collecting all your supplies together, and then a day or two later a printed A0 sheet version of the PDF pattern arrives in the post. The pattern is printed out on a large-scale industrial copy shop printer and posted to you. Unlike A4 PDF pattern files, A0/copy shop pattern files are much larger, and they can fit many more pattern pieces onto them.

#### THE BENEFITS

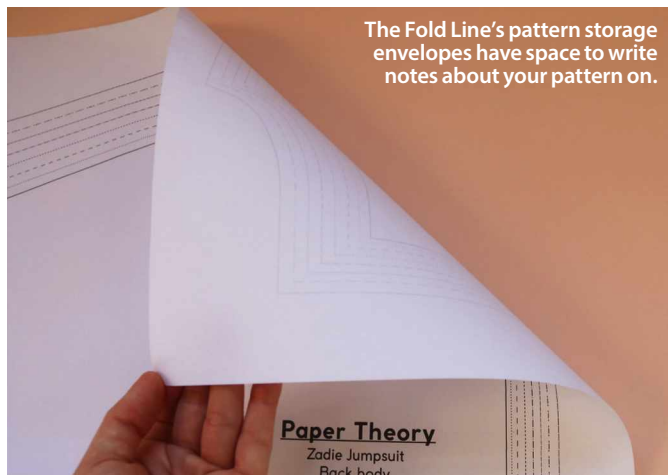
One of the main joys of printing your PDF patterns on large A0/copy shop sheets is that it saves you time and hassle. No longer do you need to spend

the time taping small sheets of paper together or making sure you have enough ink or paper at home. It's also more accurate because sometimes it's possible to introduce errors when taping lots of sheets of A4 paper together. An extra millimetre or two on every sheet really adds up, or worse still, the pattern pieces might be too small! We find that it is also easier to cut out pattern pieces on A0/copy shop paper, rather than A4 sheets that have been taped together or tissue paper patterns. This, in turn, makes it easier to pin the pattern pieces to fabric. Choosing a semi-opaque paper to print on (around 60gsm or less) is also great for tracing and making alterations. The paper is long-lasting and resistant to tearing when compared to



Patterns printed on 60gsm paper are easier to cut out and pin to your fabric.





The Fold Line's pattern storage envelopes have space to write notes about your pattern on.



tissue paper, too. Pattern designers often lay out their pattern pieces so that you can print out the pieces you need for the version of the garment you want to make. Make sure you only print the pages you need as it will save you money and also use less paper. It's also worth remembering that if you make a mistake, you can easily upload your A0/copy shop digital file and have it printed again (no one wants to stick another 60 sheets of A4 paper together again!).

#### A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE ON HOW TO PRINT AN A0/COPY SHOP PATTERN

- 1 Purchase a PDF sewing pattern that includes an A0 PDF file.
- 2 Visit an online sewing pattern printer.
- 3 Upload the A0 PDF file for printing.
- 4 Make sure you upload all the pages of the A0 PDF file and select colour or black and white printing, depending on your file type.
- 5 Ensure you select A0 size for printing.
- 6 Wait for your pattern(s) to arrive in the post.

#### HOW TO CHOOSE A PRINTER COMPANY

There are now many small businesses that will print sewing patterns for you. The main differences between these companies are the price of printing, how much it costs to ship, the type of paper they use and how they package your sewing pattern. For the price, this is usually

per sheet of paper but many have a minimum order requirement. The type of paper is personal preference, and it is measured by weight in grams per square metre (gsm). This is effectively the thickness of the paper and can range from around 20gsm (thin like tissue paper) to 90gsm (thicker than standard A4 printer paper). At The Fold Line we print on 60gsm paper, which has been specifically designed for sewing patterns. The benefits are it is easier to cut out, pin to fabric and handle; semi-opaque (which is great for tracing); it uses less paper than thicker 90gsm (making it better for the environment); it's long-lasting (resistant to tearing when compared to tissue paper); and takes up less space to store. In addition to these options, you might also have a preference on how your sewing patterns are packaged. Printing companies will either fold them to fit into an envelope for posting or roll it into a tube (this is usually more expensive).

*Kate Underdown and Rachel Walker founded The Fold Line (thefoldline.com) in 2015. As well as offering over 10,000 patterns and a range of sewing kits in their online store, they offer an easy and affordable copy shop printing service, too. Follow @thefoldline to hear about new pattern releases.*

## TOP TIPS

If you haven't used digital patterns before, here are some extra tips for a seamless pattern printing experience!

- 1 Check the digital file types you receive from the pattern designer. In the UK the file is usually called 'A0' (33" wide and 47" long), whereas in America they are often called 'copy shop' files and are larger (36" wide and 46" long). Most large-scale printers in the UK can only print A0-sized digital files.
- 2 Compare the cost of printing locally and online. Often, it can be more expensive to print at a general printer rather than a small business that specialises in printing sewing patterns. Typically, you should look to pay around £6-7 to print three A0 sheets plus postage and packaging.
- 3 Most copy shop printers don't print sewing pattern instructions. You can either print these on a home printer or, to save paper and resources, view them on a laptop or tablet as you sew. This is another benefit of digital patterns – you'll never lose your instructions!

# PATTERN ALTERATIONS

Once you've sewn up a few garments and feel comfortable working with patterns, it's time to make them your own! Just a few tweaks can completely transform the fit and look. Here are some to try.

**A**djusting sewing patterns can seem like an intimidating task, but once you've mastered a few of the key adjustments the sewing world will be your oyster!

After you've worked out which adjustments work best for you, you can apply the same principles to any sewing pattern. If you're new to pattern alterations, start by making a note of all of the adjustments you make to the next few patterns you sew. It's also important to take accurate measurements and note these down (use the table on page 23), and to check these regularly so you have up-to-date measurements to work with. Before you cut out your main fabric, it's best to always make a toile (a test garment), or muslin, after altering a pattern so you can check the fit is spot-on and make any further adjustments needed. Here, we take you through the most common pattern alterations – adjusting the length and altering the bust.

## LENGTH ADJUSTMENT

Making your garment longer or shorter is one of the simplest adjustments to make to a pattern. Many patterns have two sets of horizontal lines marked on them, labelled 'lengthen or shorten here', so it's easy to see where to do this.

If your chosen pattern doesn't have these lines, you can draw your own set of lengthen or shorten lines onto your pattern where you want to make this adjustment.

## LENGTHENING A PATTERN

**Step one** Measure yourself (or, ideally, make a toile) to work out how much longer you will need your pattern piece to be.

**Step two** Cut along the pattern's lengthen/shorten line to separate the pattern piece.

**Step three** On a separate piece of paper, draw a strip that is a little wider than the width you want to add to the pattern and slightly longer than the cut line.

**Step four** Stick this strip of paper beneath the pattern pieces between the lines to lengthen the pattern piece by exactly the amount you need. Redraw the side seams so they merge from one cut pattern piece to the other gradually, if they weren't straight lines originally.

**Step five** Remember to adjust any other relevant pattern pieces in the same way. For example, if

you lengthen the bodice front then you'll need to lengthen the bodice back by exactly the same amount. You can now use your pattern to cut out the fabric in the usual way. **01**

## SHORTENING A PATTERN

**Step one** Measure yourself, or make a toile, to work out how much shorter you'll need your pattern piece to be.

**Step two** Cut along the lengthen/shorten line to separate the pattern piece.

**Step three** Overlap one piece on top of the other by the amount you want to shorten it, then stick into place.

**Step four** Redraw the side seams to this new length so that they merge or curve gradually, and your pattern will be ready to use. Remember to shorten any other relevant pattern pieces by the same amount as well. **02**

## BUST ADJUSTMENT

Most patterns are designed to fit an 'average' bust size – which is a B cup according to the pattern manufacturers! So if your cup size is smaller or larger than this you'll need to adjust your pattern for a perfect fit.

If you choose a pattern size that matches your bust measurement, then the garment may not fit properly on the upper chest and shoulders. If the garment you're making has quite a loose fit then this may not matter, but if it's a closely fitted design you'll need to make some adjustments.

Use your bust measurement and your high bust measurement and work out what the difference is between them. If it's more than 6.5cm (2½in) you'll need to make a full bust adjustment. If it's less than 4cm (1½in) then you'll need to make a small bust adjustment.

## ALTERING THE PATTERN FOR A FULL BUST ADJUSTMENT (FBA)

**Step one** Choose the pattern size that matches your high bust measurement and trace around it and cut it out (so you can keep the original pattern uncut). The difference between your bust measurement and high bust measurement is the amount you need to add to your pattern, but you need to half this difference for each side of the garment so they add up the same

for both sides once cut out. For example, if the difference is 3cm then you'll need to add 1.5cm to the pattern piece as it will most likely be cut on the fold.

**Step two** Mark your bust point on the pattern piece (by either measuring it or holding the pattern pieces against yourself) and draw three lines out from this point:

A = down to the waist, or hem, parallel to the centre front.

B = to the lower third of the armhole curve.

C = to the side seam, through the centre of the bust dart.

D = from line A at right angles to the centre front, about a third of the way above the waist or hem. **03**

**Step three** Starting at the bottom edge, cut up line A then along line B, stopping just before the end so you have a small hinge in the paper.

**Step four** Starting at the side seam, cut along line C, stopping just before the end again to make a small hinge.

**Step five** Carefully lay your cut pieces out onto a new piece of pattern paper to draw your new pattern. Tape the centre-front seam to the paper to hold it in place.

**Step six** Spread the pieces apart at line A by half your calculated difference between your high bust and bust. This is shown by arrows on the diagram. As the paper pieces are hinged, lines B and C will open up as well to form spaces between them for the new bust dart. **04**

**Step seven** Cut along line D and move it down so it lines up with the waist or hem, as this will have moved downwards.

**Step eight** Pin or tape these moved pieces to the pattern paper beneath to hold them securely in place.

**Step nine** Draw around your moved pattern pieces, extending the centre front line too so it lines up with the waist or hem. **05**

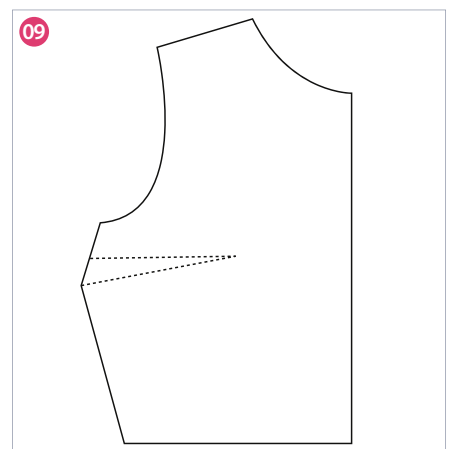
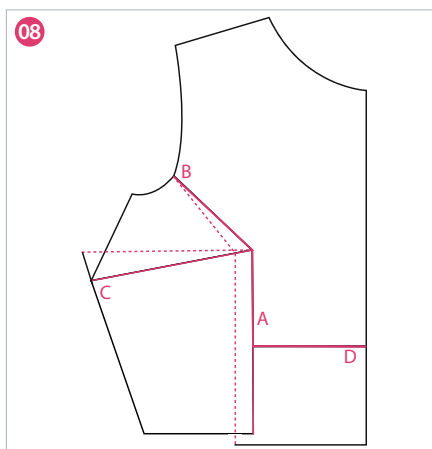
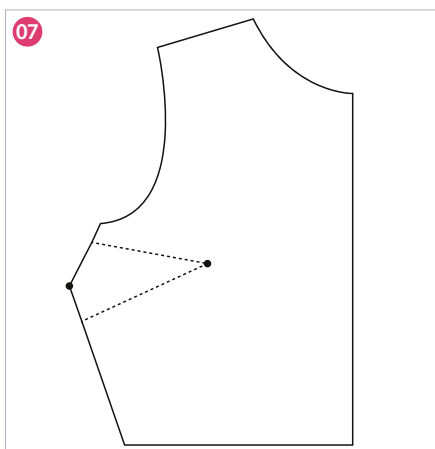
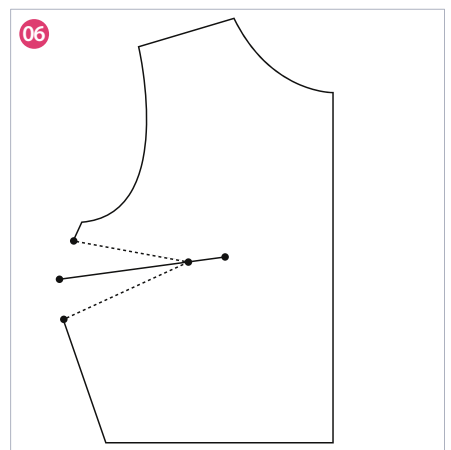
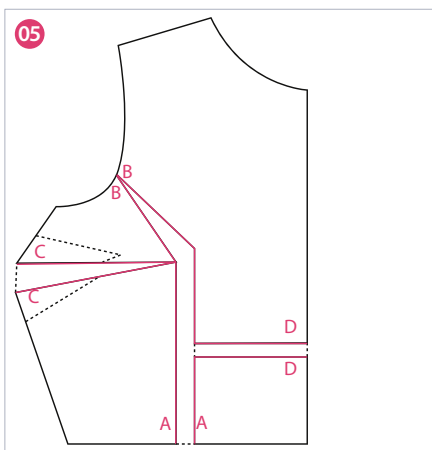
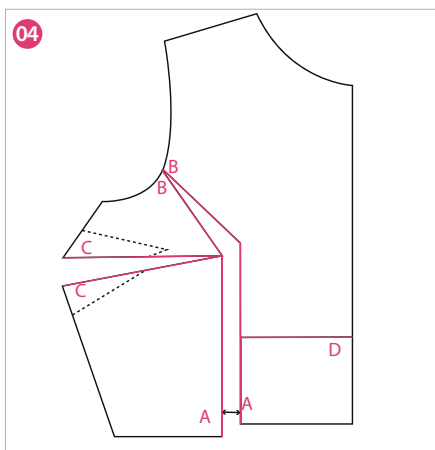
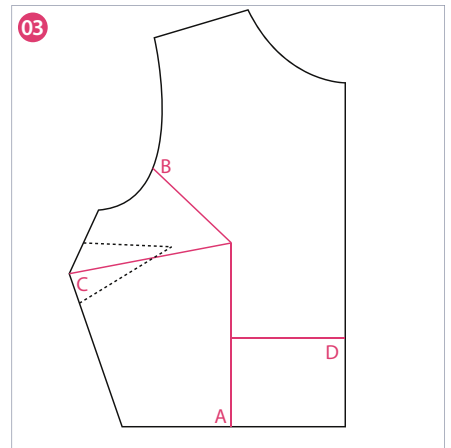
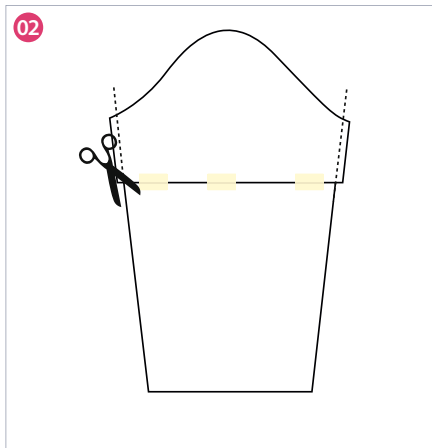
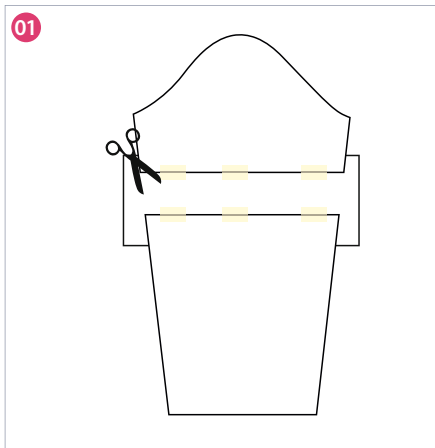
## DRAWING THE NEW BUST DART

**Step one** Now you need to draw the new bust dart. Draw a line from the bust point to the side seam through the centre of the section you've opened up when you separated line C.

**Step two** Mark a point 2cm (¾in) in from the bust point along this line for the new dart apex.

**Step three** Draw the dart legs from this new dart





apex to the side seams where the original dart legs started. **06**

**Step four** Redraw the side seams so they're joined at the centre line between the dart legs. **07**

**Step five** You can now remove your cut pattern pieces to reveal the newly adjusted pattern piece below. Cut around the new pattern and use it to make your garment.

## ALTERING THE PATTERN FOR A SMALL BUST ADJUSTMENT (SBA)

This is done in the same way as a full bust adjustment but in reverse.

**Step one** Draw the lines on your pattern and

cut along them as in steps three and four of the FBA. But, instead of opening out lines A and B, overlap them to the right by half of the difference between your bust and high bust. Line C will overlap too when you straighten up line A. **08**

**Step two** Cut along line D and move it up so that it lines up with the waist or hem, as this will have moved upwards. Draw around your moved pattern pieces.

**Step three** Redraw the bust dart in the same way as for the FBA.

**Step four** Redraw the side seam by drawing a line from the underarm to the centre of the dart, then another from there to the waist. **09**

**TIP**

*You can use any paper for tracing and adjusting patterns, though it's easier if you can see well through it to be sure you trace all markings.*



# PATTERN MATCHING

Be a pro at working with prints with this pattern-matching how-to, and make a swishy skirt in an eye-catching design.

Designers: **REBECCA REID AND ROSEE WOODLAND**



**W**e just can't get enough of prints. Florals, geometrics, stripes, checks – you name it, we love it. But deciding where to pattern match when you make a garment can be tricky, as it's not always possible to pattern match on every seam. The first thing to look at is whether the pattern on the fabric runs in one direction, as it's important that each pattern piece is cut in the same direction. If the fabric has a bold motif it's best not to cut your pattern pieces on the fold. Instead, cut out one half, flip the pattern piece and then cut out the other half, or trace it as one whole piece before cutting out – this is the most accurate way of making sure that the pattern piece lies correctly and straight on your fabric.

Pattern-matching straight seams is simple, but once curved seams are involved then you won't be able to get a perfect match. However, if there's a seam where you can pattern match, for example on the back seam of a skirt, then it's worth doing this for a better finish. If it's impossible as you have too many seams to match, then try to get the pattern running on the same plane horizontally around the garment, even if you can't achieve a perfect vertical match.

If you have a fabric with a large print – like with our circle skirt project on page 55 – then decide where you would like the motifs of the pattern to go on your garment. It will look more even if a larger motif runs down the centre of the bodice and skirt of a dress, but you need to check how this affects the rest of the pattern. Always place your pattern pieces on your fabric and move them around to choose the positioning that works for you. Really, though, it's all about finding the placement that is pleasing to your eye and looks right for that particular garment.

## VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL REPEATS

Before you buy your fabric you'll need to work out how much you need, and this is where the pattern repeat comes in. Fabrics can have a vertical pattern repeat as well as a horizontal one. The vertical pattern repeat is the measurement of one whole pattern as it's printed down the fabric; the horizontal pattern repeat is the width of the pattern as it's repeated across the fabric from selvedge to selvedge. This is important to know when you're folding your fabric to cut it out. Many fabrics have their pattern repeats listed or labelled on them, but it's always a good idea to check this yourself. To measure the pattern repeat, lay the fabric out flat and mark a prominent point of the pattern with a pin. Find the next place that this is repeated and mark this with a pin, too. The space between these pins is the pattern repeat.

## HOW MUCH FABRIC TO BUY

If you are going to pattern-match your pieces then you will, most likely, need to buy more fabric than is listed in the pattern instructions. The most accurate way to work this out is to measure each of your pattern pieces before you buy your fabric. Next, find out the pattern repeat of the fabric you



want to use. Each pattern piece needs to start and finish at the same point of the pattern repeat, so calculate how much fabric you'll need for this to happen. If you have a striped or check-print fabric then you may want the pattern pieces to match up horizontally, so bear this in mind when calculating your fabric quantity. There may be wasted fabric, but your garment will have a more professional look if the pattern is matched accurately (and you can keep the scraps for another project!).

## LOOSE WEAVE FABRICS

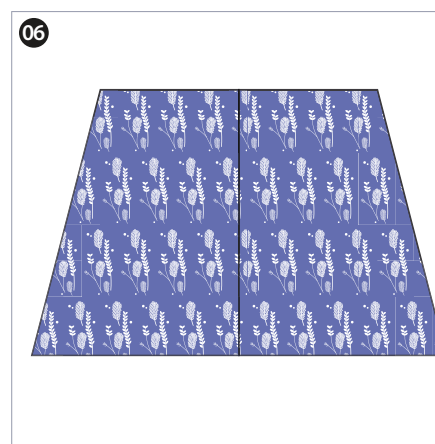
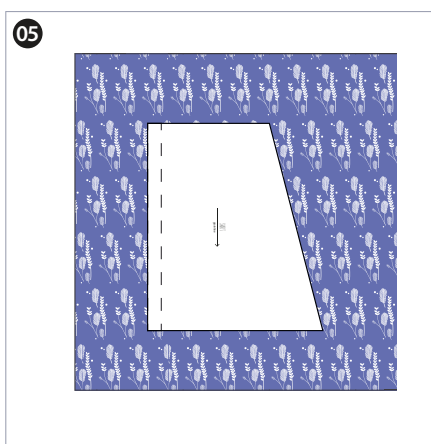
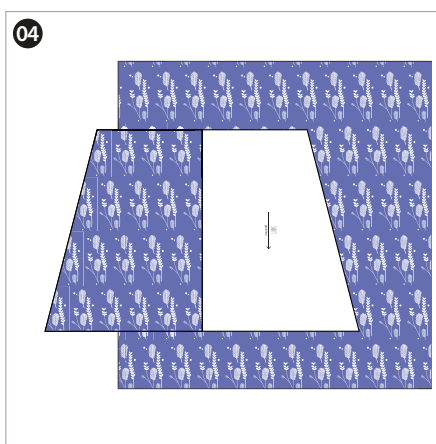
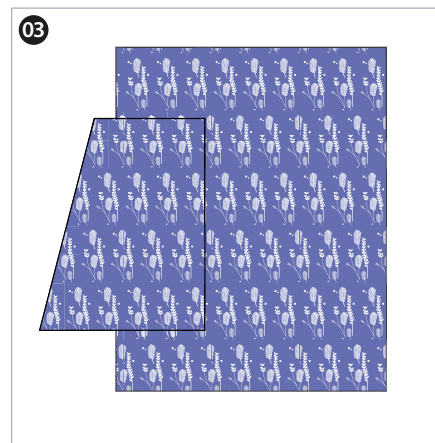
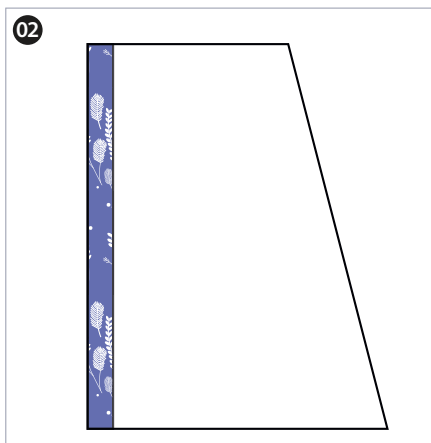
Loose weaves are trickier to pattern match as they are less stable and shift as you're working with them. Try spraying the fabric edges with spray starch before you match, pin and cut. Tacking your fabric pieces together as well as pinning will help to keep them stable.

## THINGS TO TRY

Once you've mastered pattern-matching basics, try experimenting with directional prints – for example, using stripes horizontally and vertically. It's important in home sewing, too, such as when joining large pieces to make curtains.



*To match up stripes, tack them together before sewing. Using a walking foot on your machine will help as well.*



## CUTTING OUT THE FIRST PIECE

**Step one** Cut out one piece from your fabric – in this example, we've cut out the left back piece for a skirt and we want to cut out the right back piece so that the centre-back seam will match. The pattern usually says to cut them out together but to get a perfect pattern match they need to be cut out separately. **01**

**Step two** Next, turn under and press the centre seam allowance to the wrong side along the centre back seam. **02**

## MATCHING THE PATTERN

**Step one** Lay the cut out piece right side (RS) up on top of the RS of your fabric and match the pattern print along the turned-under edge. **03**

**Step two** Take your paper pattern piece, flip it over and fold the centre line under by the the seam allowance. Line up this folded edge with the folded-under edge of your cut-out left back piece on the fabric. Make sure the fabric fold and the paper fold match up exactly with no space between them. **04**

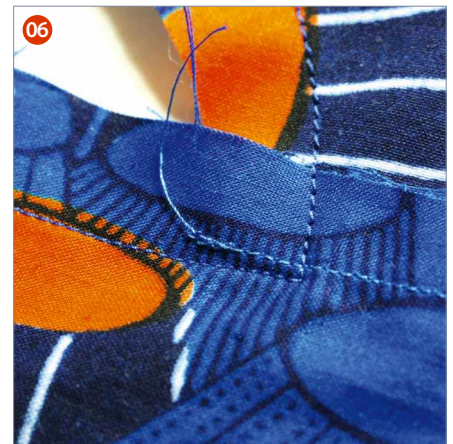
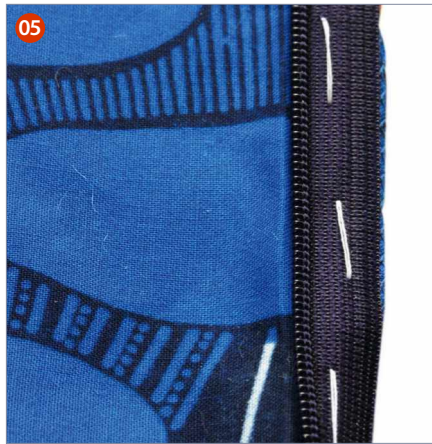
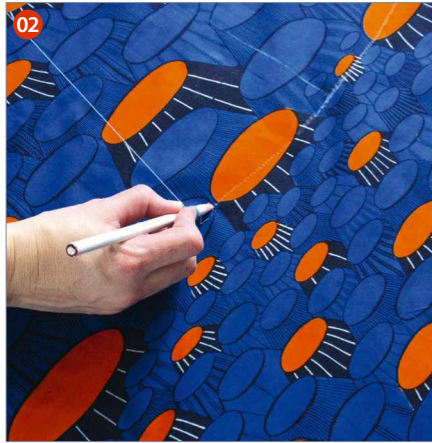
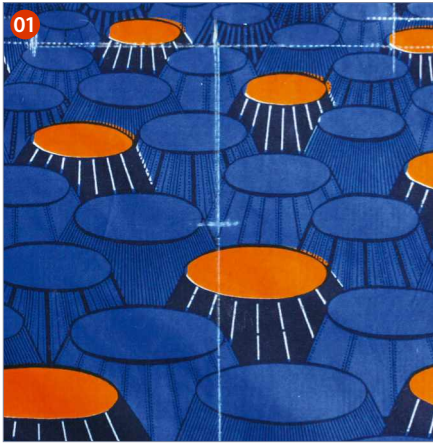
**Step three** Pin the pattern into place, with the folds still touching. Take off the fabric left back piece and then unfold the seam allowance on the paper pattern piece and pin it to the fabric.

**Step four** Cut around the paper pattern to cut out the right back piece. **05**

**Step five** You can now sew your two skirt back pieces RS together and the pattern will match. **06**







## YOU WILL NEED

- Main fabric: 110cm (43in) width x 4m (4½ yds) or 150cm (60in) width x 2.5m (2¾yds)
- Iron-on interfacing to suit the weight of your fabric: see instructions for details
- Invisible zip: 25cm (10in)
- Bias binding: see instructions for details
- Hook and bar closure or button
- Embroidery thread or yarn
- Fabric pencil or chalk
- Matching thread
- Invisible zip foot
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Use a 1.5cm (½in) seam allowance unless otherwise stated.

## MEASURING UP

**Step one** Decide how long you would like your skirt to be, from your waist to the lower hem.

Take this measurement and add 1.5cm (½in) for the seam allowance. This measurement is called Skirt Length.

**Step two** Measure your waist circumference and take off 10cm (4in). This measurement is called Adjusted Circumference. It accounts for the fact that the fabric around your waist will be cut on the bias and stretch quite a bit. You need to add 3cm (1¼in) seam allowance per piece to the Adjusted Circumference. Our circle has three pieces, so we have added 9cm (3½in) to give us our Waist Circumference.

**Step three** Divide your Waist Circumference by 3.14. This will give you the Waist Diameter measurement. Divide your Waist Diameter by 2. This measurement is called Waist Radius.

## DRAWING THE LENGTH AND WAIST

The circle skirt is made from six pattern pieces – a half circle for the front of the skirt, two quarter circles for the back of the skirt, a waistband, and two pockets.

**Step one** Mark out the half circle piece as follows, starting from the bottom edge of your length of fabric: mark out your Skirt Length 1cm (¾in) down from the selvedge in a contrasting fabric pencil or chalk. Mark another line 1.5cm (½in) parallel and below this. This is shown by

points A to B on the diagram on page 53, and the section marked Seam Allowance.

**Step two** Mark out your Waist Radius along the top edge but in line with the lower second drawn line, as you don't need to add a seam allowance to this section. This is shown by points C to B on the diagram.

**Step three** Working from the upper of the two parallel lines, mark out your Skirt Length and Waist Radius at right angles to the first measurements. This is shown by points C to D and D to E on the diagram.

**Step four** Working 1cm (¾in) down from the top edge again, mark your Waist Radius along the top edge, then the Skirt Length, and the parallel seam allowance. This is shown by points C to F and F to G on the diagram. **01**

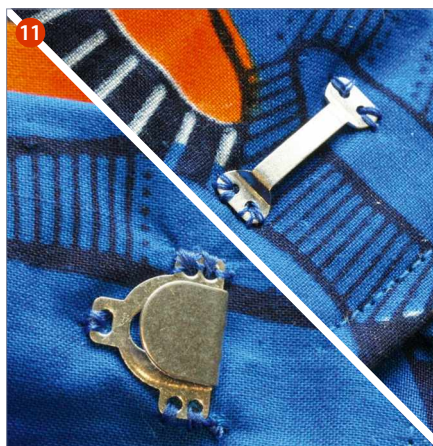
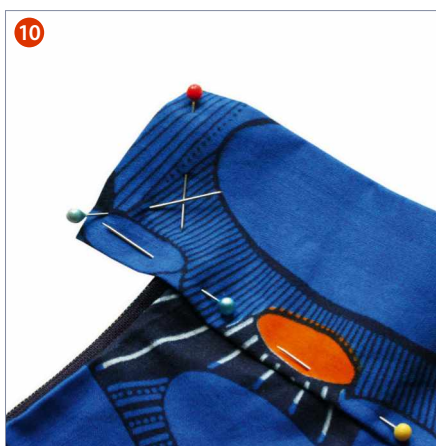
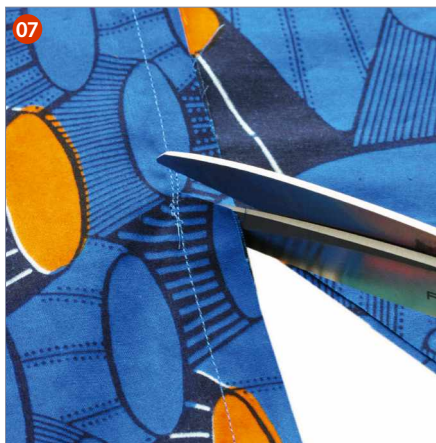
## DRAWING THE CIRCLE EDGE

**Step one** To draw out the half circle, tie a pencil or chalk to a piece of embroidery thread or yarn and measure out from the centre of the pencil a length as long as your Waist Radius plus the Skirt Length.

**Step two** Hold the thread or yarn firmly at the centre point (marked C on the diagram).

**Step three** Working across the upper of the two parallel lines, draw a half circle from the far left mark for the Skirt Length (G on the diagram), to the far right mark for the Skirt Length (A on the diagram). The halfway point you marked at right





angles (E on the diagram) will help to keep you accurate as you do this. **02**

**Step four** Making the length of thread shorter, so that it is the same length as your Waist Radius, and working across the upper of the two parallel lines, draw a half circle from the far left mark for the Waist Radius (seam allowance line above F on the diagram) to the far right mark for the Waist Radius (seam allowance line above B on the diagram). The halfway point you marked at right angles (D on the diagram) will help to keep you accurate. **03**

**Step five** Repeat this process to mark two quarter circles on your fabric, but this time adding a parallel line 1.5cm (5/8in) to the right of the lines you drew at the right angle as well. The quarter circle diagrams show you how to mark them out.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** Cut along all your outer drawn lines to make one half circle piece and two quarter circle pieces. **04**

**Step two** Create a pocket template from an existing garment (turn to page 86 for more on how to add pockets). Cut out four pockets, making sure that you cut them in pairs so that they are mirror images.

## INSERTING THE INVISIBLE ZIP

**Step one** Work a machine zigzag stitch or

overlock along all the straight raw edges on the quarter and half circle pieces to neaten them.

**Step two** Press the seam allowance under by 1.5cm (5/8in) to the wrong side (WS) on the left of one quarter circle piece and on the right side of the other quarter circle piece and press (marked D to E on the diagram).

**Step three** Open the zip all the way and press the zip tape flat on the WS, unrolling the coils as you go, but take care not to press the coils as this may melt them.

**Step four** Place the quarter circle that has the right edge pressed, right side (RS) up. Unfold the pressed-under fabric edge and, with RS together, pin the left side of the zip tape to the unfolded fabric edge. The zip coils need to lie along the pressed seam line. The top stop of the zip should be positioned 1.5cm (5/8in) below the top of the fabric.

**Step five** Tack the zip into place and then remove the pins. Attach an invisible zip foot to your sewing machine. **05**

**Step six** Position the zip foot at the top of the zip with the left groove of the foot over the coil. Stitch along the zip tape, stopping 3cm (1 1/4in) from the bottom and reverse stitching.

**Step seven** Pin and then tack the other half of the zip tape to the RS of the other quarter circle piece in the same way, making sure the top edges of the skirt match up evenly. Position the zip foot at the top of the zip, with the right

groove of the foot over the coil. Stitch along the zip tape all the way down to the same point that you finished on the other side of the skirt.

## STITCHING THE BACK SEAM

**Step one** Close the zip all the way up to the top then pull the free unstitched ends of the zip tape away from the seam allowance. Pin the two quarter circle pieces RS together from the bottom of the zip to the hem.

**Step two** Change your sewing machine foot to an ordinary zip foot. Stitch the seam starting about 1.5cm (5/8in) above the zip stitching line. You won't be able to stitch exactly on top of the zip stitching as the zip coils are in the way so just stitch as close as you possibly can. Stitch down to the hem.

**Step three** With WS facing up, press the seam open below the zip.

## ADDING THE POCKETS

**Step one** Measure 15cm (6in) down from the top waist edge of each side of the half and quarter circle pieces. Pin the top of each of the four pockets at these marks RS together.

**Step two** Stitch along the straight edge to attach the pocket to the skirt pieces using a 1.25cm (1/2in) seam allowance. Using less than the seam allowance means the pockets are slightly recessed from the side seam.

**Step three** Fold out the pockets out and press.



**Step four** Pin the half and quarter circle together then pin the pairs of pocket pieces RS together around the outer edges.

**Step five** Using a 1.5cm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ in) seam allowance, stitch the side seam, pivoting at the pocket and sewing around it. When moving from the side seam to sew around the pocket, stop sewing with your needle down, lift the presser foot, turn your fabric, put the presser foot back down and carry on sewing. **06**

**Step six** Clip the seam allowances where the pocket and side seams meet. **07**

**Step seven** Press the side seams open.

**Step eight** Trim and clip the pocket seam allowance then work a machine zigzag or overlock around the edges of the pockets. **08**

### ADJUSTING THE SKIRT TO FIT

**Step one** Try on your skirt and see how it fits. If it's too small you can trim a little from the top edge all the way around to make the waist circumference bigger, making sure that you curve up towards the top edge before you get to the zip. If it's too big, you can narrow the waist by taking it in at the side seams, above the pockets. Tack this first to make sure you have not over-adjusted.

### ADDING THE WAISTBAND

It's better to wait until this point to cut out the waistband as you can measure it against your finished waist circumference after you've made any adjustments.

**Step one** Put your skirt on and measure around the finished circumference of the top edge. This measurement is called Finished Top Edge.

**Step two** Measure and cut out a long thin rectangle for the waistband of your skirt, across the grain. It needs to be twice as deep as you want your finished waistband to be, plus 2cm ( $\frac{3}{4}$ in), and as long as Finished Top Edge plus 5cm (2in).

**Step three** Cut out a piece of interfacing slightly longer and deeper than the waistband and use a warm iron to fuse it to the waistband WS. Trim back the excess interfacing so that it's exactly the same size as the fabric.

**Step four** Fold the waistband in half lengthwise with WS together and press.

**Step five** Open out the folded piece, fold under all the edges by 1cm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ in) to the WS and press. Trim the inside corners diagonally to reduce the bulk of the folded fabric. **09**

**Step six** Fold the waistband back in half lengthways with WS together and press.

**Step seven** Starting at the centre of the waistband and skirt and then working outwards, pin the waistband in place along the top edge of the skirt, sandwiching the skirt between the two lower edges of the waistband by 1.5cm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ in). **10**

**Step eight** Your waistband is designed to overlap to allow you to add a fastening, so make sure you leave an equal amount of overlap at

either end of the waistband.

**Step eight** Topstitch the waistband into place, stitching 5mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$ in) from the turned-under edge seam along the long pinned edge and the short edges.

### ADDING A FASTENING

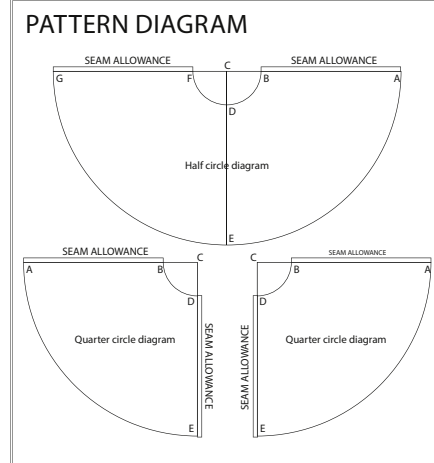
**Step one** Add a buttonhole and button or hook and bar fastening using your preferred method, making sure they line up correctly once the waistband is overlapped. **11**

### HEMMING THE SKIRT

**Step one** Use bias binding to hem the lower edge for a neater finish. Measure around the bottom of your skirt and buy a length of bias binding to this measurement plus 5cm (2in) for ease and turnings.

**Step two** Fold the binding in half lengthwise, aligning the two folded edges, and press.

**Step three** Pin the binding in place around the



lower edge of the skirt and stitch, overlapping and turning under the two short ends. Stitch in place close to the edge to finish. **12**





Use our tips to  
give your garments  
a professional finish





# FINISHING SKILLS

Now you've mastered the basics, it's time to learn finishing touches such as pockets, zips and buttons that make your clothes look amazing

# HAND STITCHING

Hand-sewing isn't only used for embroidery – it's an essential skill when it comes to making garments and homewares, too. These are the main stitches you'll need, from simple tacking stitches to hem finishes.

**P**reparing your fabric before you sew does take a little time but it's worth it in the long run. It saves you from having to unpick mistakes and you'll also get a neater finish. Pin, tack and then stitch is the golden rule – particularly if you are a beginner, as it'll help with accuracy.

Although a sewing machine can be used for a lot of projects, some hand stitches are also necessary so it's important to understand these and practise them first before starting a project.

## PINNING

The first step! Pins are vital for stopping your fabric moving about while you're sewing. For larger projects, insert pins at right angles to the edge of your fabric, about 15cm (6in) apart. For smaller projects, insert your pins much closer together. You should also use more pins if you're securing

a curve or corner. Don't use pins with plastic heads if you're going to press your fabric because they could melt under the heat; you can buy larger glass-headed pins, which are ideal for thicker fabric and you can iron on top of them.

If you're pinning tricky areas, such as curved edges, then place your pin lengthways along the seam line. Always remove the pins as you go if you're machine stitching as you may bend or snap your needle if you stitch over them.

When pinning hems you can pin in either direction, but if the hem is quite deep then place pins at right angles because it's easier for easing fabric into place using this method.

## TACKING

Tacking (also known as basting) is something we often skip as it does take time. Pinning is fine for

just straight seams, but if you're working on curves, or joining slippery or stretchy fabrics together, then tacking is well worth the effort. It prevents you having to unpick your seam later, and possibly marking your fabric in the process.

The more projects you sew, and the more confident you become, the less you'll feel the need to tack seams first. Use a contrasting coloured thread for tacking so the stitches can easily be seen when you remove them later.

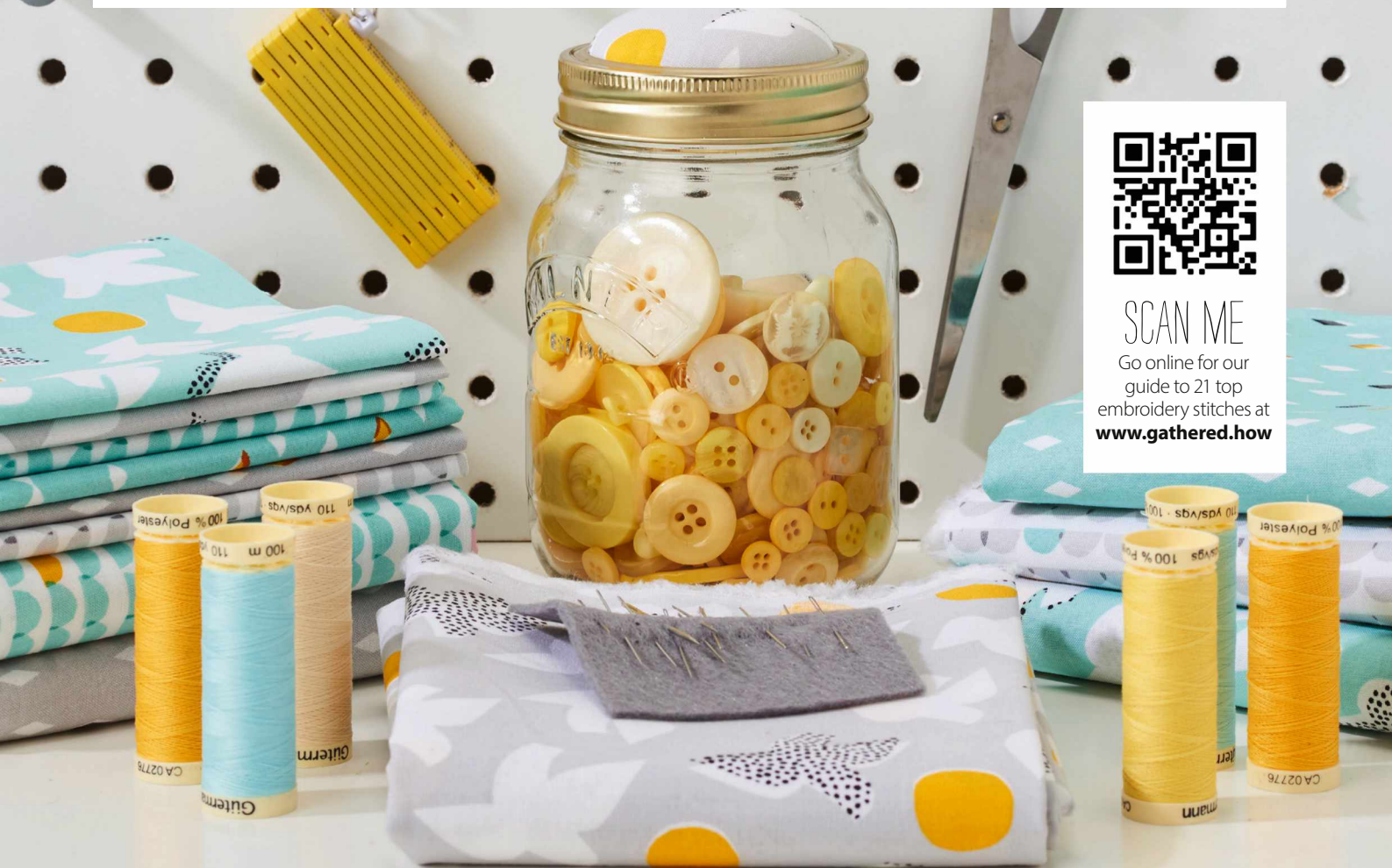
## HAND STITCHING

For most sewing projects you'll need to do some hand stitching, such as when making hems, tacking facings in place, stitching trickier areas or simply for a little added decoration. Each hand stitch has a specific purpose, and mastering them will help you achieve a neat, professional finish.

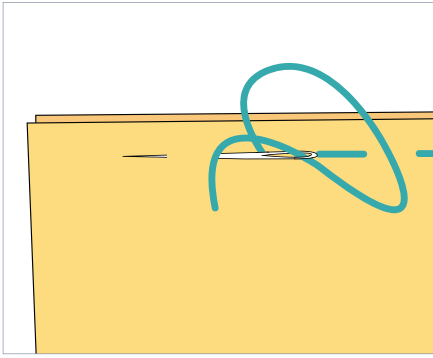


SCAN ME

Go online for our guide to 21 top embroidery stitches at [www.gathered.how](http://www.gathered.how)

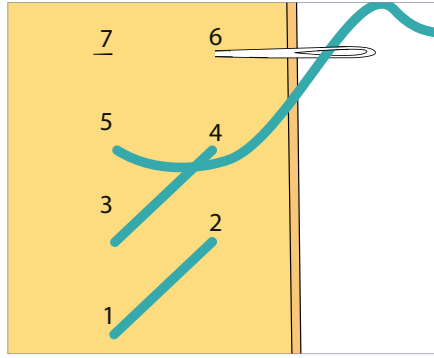






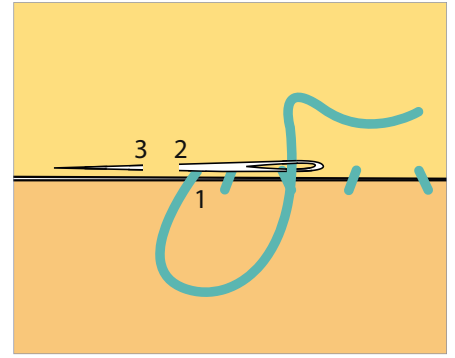
### BASIC TACKING

Tacking (known as basting in the US) is used for holding two pieces of fabric together temporarily. Start with a knot then use a single thread to make straight stitches, evenly spaced. When you need to remove them, pull the thread out or cut it every few stitches if there are lots of them.



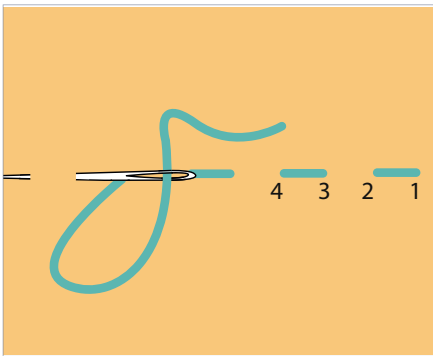
### DIAGONAL TACK

This stitch is worked horizontally and parallel to form diagonal stitches on the front. It's used to hold layers together securely, as the diagonal stitches will stop the fabric shifting, and is ideal for slippery or thicker fabrics. To work this stitch, follow the numbers on the diagram.



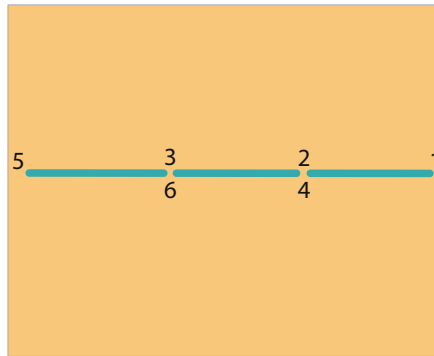
### SLIP STITCH

This stitch is almost invisible so is ideal for hems. Bring the needle up at 1 on the top fabric or turned-over hem then back in at 2 and out at 3 on the base fabric. Make the stitches small so they can't be seen from the front. Repeat by making a vertical stitch back into the top fabric.



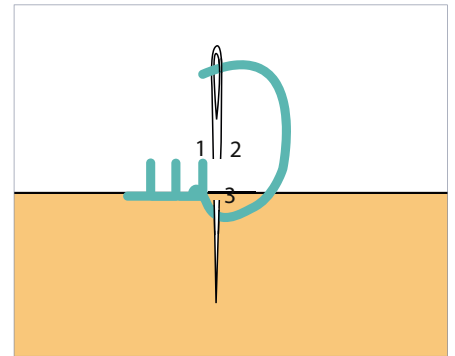
### RUNNING STITCH

This stitch is similar to tacking and is used for decorating a finished project or for gathering fabric. Bring your needle up and down through the fabric to create regular stitches. Make sure the stitches are the same length, and the spaces between them are the same length as well.



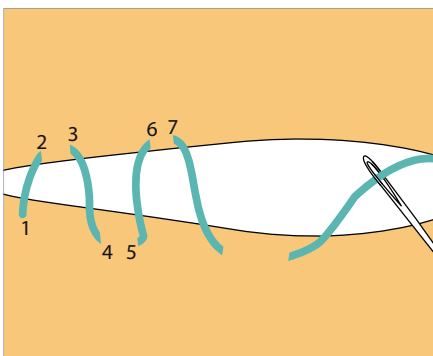
### BACK STITCH

This is a strong stitch and ideal for working any small, fiddly parts of seams that you can't reach with your machine, particularly when mending. The stitches should all be the same length with no gaps between them. Bring the needle up at 1 and down at 2, up again at 3 and so on.



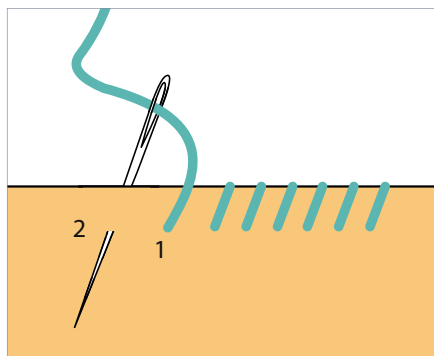
### BLANKET STITCH

This can be used to neaten blanket edges as well as for attaching appliqué shapes to a base fabric. Bring the needle out a short distance from the edge of the fabric at 1, then back in at 2 and out at 3 with the thread underneath the needle. Pull it through to form a loop.



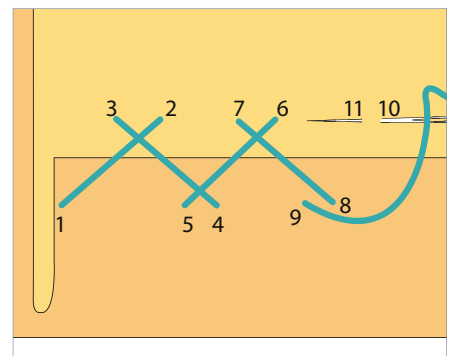
### LADDER STITCH

This is used to join and close two turned-under edges invisibly, such as on a lining or toy. Bring the needle up at 1 on one side of the seam, then in at 2 on the opposite side and out at 3, so the stitch is 3mm (1/8in) long. Push the needle back in the opposite side at 4 and out at 5.



### WHIP STITCH

Whip stitch (or overcast stitch) is used to join two edges on fabrics that don't fray, such as felt. With the fabric right sides together, bring your needle out at 1 on the front of the fabric, over to the back, then through and out at 2. Continue in this way to work small, neat stitches.



### HERRINGBONE STITCH

This stitch can be used to keep layers of fabric flat against each other, so is perfect for hems. It allows the hem a little give so works well on curves and thicker fabrics. Bring the needle out at 1 on the hem, in at 2, out at 3 and so on, keeping your stitches evenly spaced.

# PRESSING TOOLS

For a professional-looking finished garment, pressing correctly is as important as the sewing itself. Find out more about pressing methods and equipment to give your projects a quality finish.



*Sawdust-filled pressing rolls and tailor's hams help with accurate pressing.*

*A pressing mitt protects your hand while you press.*

*A tailor's point presser and clapper is a handy tool.*

**Q**uality pressing is the secret to a well-finished garment, and pressing as you go along is the key. Ironing is the process of sliding the iron back and forth across fabric, whereas pressing is placing the iron on the fabric and pressing down with some force, often applying steam at the same time.

Pressing is a step that can be easily missed when you're sewing as it can slow the process down, but it is essential. Press as you sew, then each stage of the stitching process will be neat and flat before you move onto the next. Use a steam iron with a variety of settings and an ironing board or ironing sheet, which can be used over a table and often has handy pockets.

## HOW TO PRESS

Set up the iron and ironing board near your sewing area, ready to use. Set your iron to a temperature suitable for your fabric – if you're unsure, start low then work up, and always test

a scrap of fabric first to avoid marks or melting. Most pressing is done on the wrong side of the fabric so you don't mark the right side, but when you do press on the right side, use a pressing cloth. These cloths are made from muslin or silk organza, and protect the fabric as well as being slightly see-through so you can see what you're doing. You can buy pressing cloths, or just make your own from thin fabric. Always take care not to press over pins as this can melt the plastic heads and could also leave impressions in the fabric.

## PRESSING NAPPED FABRICS

Napped fabrics, such as velvet, have a 'pile' which will be flattened and may be marked if pressed in the usual way. Whenever you can, steam these fabrics by holding your iron over your fabric for a few seconds rather than pressing them. However, if you really need to press the fabric, then pad your ironing board with a soft towel first to help prevent crushing the fabric pile.

## PRESSING TOOLS

**Pressing mitt** This clever tool enables you to use your hand as an ironing board, as the padded surface protects your hand from the heat – perfect for spot pressing, moulding curves and pressing hard-to-reach areas.

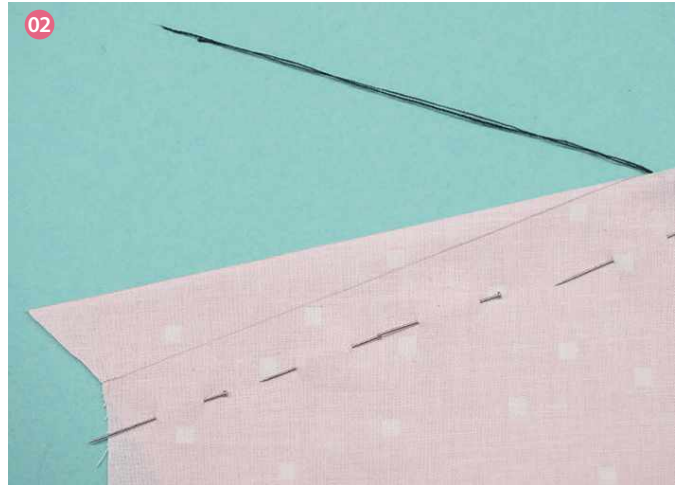
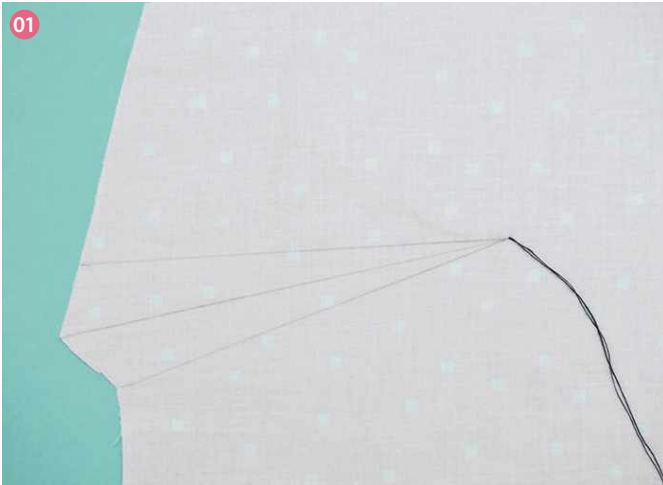
**Sleeve pressing roll** Also called a seam roll, this cylindrical cushion is for pressing seams open. It's filled with sawdust to give a solid pressing surface. Look out for tailor's hams too, for shaping darts and curves.

**Tailor's point presser and clapper** This wooden tool presses open seams in corners and points for flat, sharp edges. The flat base is a clapper for flattening seams and bulky edges. First steam the fabric, then press the clapper down firmly. The wood absorbs the steam and sets the fabric.



# DARTS

These essential shaping tucks allow a garment to fit smoothly over a rounded area of the body, such as the bust, waistline and hips.



**D**arts are a simple technique, used for shaping a garment and achieving a more fitted look. They're essentially stitched folds used to shape a garment by taking away fullness from a seam line. They're usually wedge or triangle-shaped and often used at the bust, waistline, hips and back. Darts are usually marked on the fabric from a pattern then neatly stitched from the broad end towards the point, tapering narrowly.

While sewing a straight line might sound like an easy feat for a beginner sewist, stitching darts can be a tricky challenge due to the importance of these shaping tucks. Stitching a precise dart is important if you want the garment to fit nicely, particularly around the bust area. Your stitching line must be straight, and it's important to make

the dart as smooth as possible so that it's barely visible when worn. For more on darts, see pattern alterations and full bust adjustments on page 50.

## PREPARING THE DART

**Step one** Mark the darts on the wrong side (WS) of the fabric using tailor's chalk. Mark the point of the dart with a tailor's tack if desired. Thread a needle with a length of thread (20cm (8in) is plenty) and pass the needle through the tip of the dart, leaving thread tails on each side. **01**

**Step two** Fold the dart along the centre so that the dart leg markings align and right sides (RS) of the fabric are facing. Lightly press to secure the fold, then pin along the side of the dart to hold it all in place as you sew. Quickly check that the dart legs are aligned before you begin. **02**

## STITCHING THE DART

**Step one** Stitch along the dart legs from the raw edge of the fabric to the tip of the dart – it's important to work in this direction on both darts. Stitch with a 3mm stitch length as this is small enough to hold the fabric together but also not so short that it would be difficult to unpick if you made a mistake. At the end of the dart leave a thread tail approximately 10cm (4in) long. Tie the thread tails together in a double knot which sits against the dart tip and then trim the excess thread. **03**

**Step two** Working on the WS of the fabric, press the dart down towards the hem. **04**

*Use neat French seams to construct garments in lightweight fabrics.*



# SEAMS

Seams are one of the first stitching skills you learn when you start dressmaking – you can't make a garment without them, after all! Learn about plain & French right here.

**S**titching two or more layers of fabric together is called seaming. It's the basic skill needed and there are several different types of seams. The most important thing is that you stitch the same distance from the raw edges for a neat and even finish – luckily, your sewing machine has marks to guide you with this, and your pattern will tell you the seam allowance measurement to use.

Once you've mastered sewing a simple straight seam, you might like to experiment with other seam finishes – making the inside as pretty as the outside is one of the joys of sewing clothes!

## WHICH SEAM TO SEW?

There are several different types of seams you can use depending on the finish you want, your fabric type, where the seam is placed and the wear it will have. Flat seams, such as a plain seam, have the fabric lying flat on the wrong side (WS). Ridged seams, like a French seam, are formed with a ridge on the WS so aren't ideal for heavier fabrics. Some seams, such as flat fell seams and welt seams, have rows of stitching which show on the right side (RS) and are both strong and decorative.

## PINNING SEAMS

To ensure the two raw edges line up exactly, first lay the fabric flat RS or WS together depending on the type of seam you're stitching. Gently lift the fabrics until the raw edges are touching so you don't stretch the fabric. For a straight seam, place the pins at right angles to the fabric edge as this allows movement to ease the fabrics together. For curved seams, place pins parallel to the fabric edge. For straight seams, add one pin about every 5cm (2in), but for curves, fiddly seams, matching prints or slippery fabrics, place as many pins as you need to keep it secure. You can also tack the seam so you won't need to take the pins out as you go.

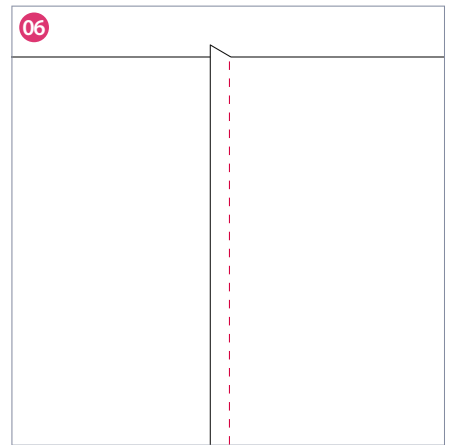
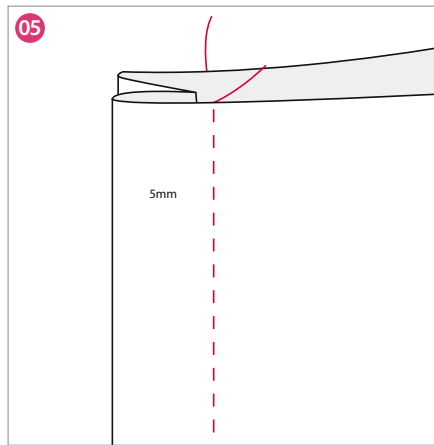
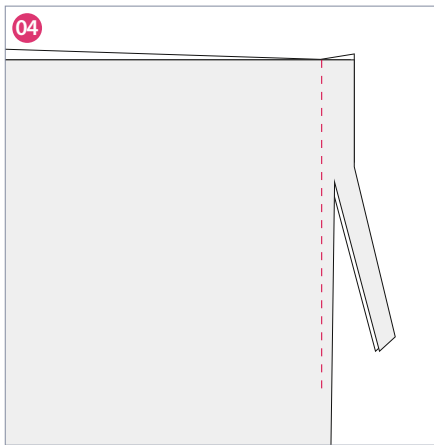
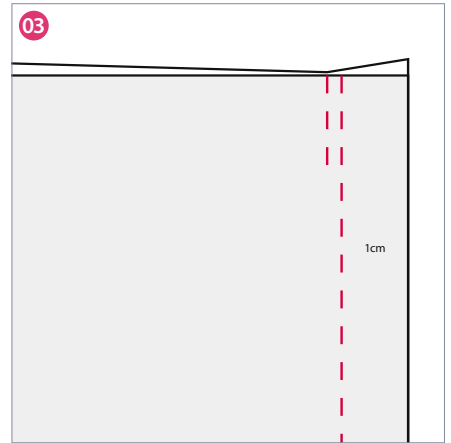
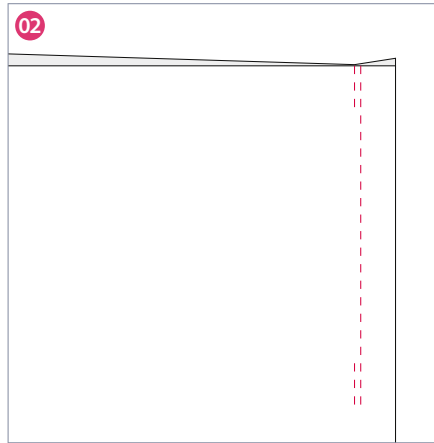
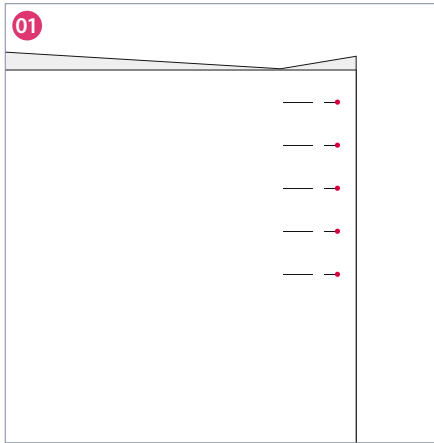
## SEAM ALLOWANCES

Your pattern will tell you the seam allowance, the most common one being 1.5cm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ in). Once you've pinned or tacked, place the fabric under your machine foot and line up the raw edges with the mark on the foot plate for the seam allowance you want to use. Make sure you keep the raw edges lined up with this mark for a straight, even seam. If your plate doesn't have the mark you need, measure from the point of the needle and across to the right of the foot plate to your seam allowance width, and stick masking tape in this position to follow as you stitch.

## FINISHING SEAMS

Once you've sewn a plain seam you need to finish the raw edges. To reduce bulk, trim the seam allowances down a little first. Finish edges using an overlocker or a machine zigzag down both raw edges. You can also finish the edges together, but press the seam open first and then to one side. To finish by hand, work an overcast stitch over and over the raw edge to turn it under. For more on overlockers and 'faux-verlocking' see from p34.





## SEWING PLAIN & FRENCH SEAMS

**Most home and dressmaking projects can be constructed using two common seam types – plain seams and French seams. We take you these techniques step-by-step.**

### PLAIN SEAMS

A plain seam is the most commonly used seam as it gives a flat, neat finish. You can use this seam on most garments, although it's not suitable for transparent fabrics or those that fray easily – French seams are better for these fabrics. It's also not as strong as other seams as there is only one line of stitching involved. Use this seam type for general dressmaking or home sewing projects.

### HOW TO STITCH A PLAIN SEAM

**Step one** Place the pieces of fabric that you want to join together with right sides (RS) facing.

**Step two** Pin the fabrics together all the way down the length. If the fabric is slippery, the seam is curved or you're matching up prints or other seams already sewn, you may also wish to tack it together to keep the fabrics securely held as you stitch. **01**

**Step three** Backstitch at the beginning of the seam and then stitch together all the way down, following the set seam allowance and removing the pins as you go.

**Step four** Backstitch at the end of the seam to secure the stitching. **02**

### FINISHING OFF

**Step one** Finish off the raw edges.

**Step two** If you're stitching plain seams that cross over each other, such as on an armhole, then trim the seam allowance of the first seam before you pin and stitch the second seam over it to reduce bulk.

### FRENCH SEAMS

French seams achieve a neat finish as they enclose the raw edges. They're stronger than plain seams as there are two lines of stitching, and so are ideal for areas that will have more strain. They're best worked on lightweight fabrics as the extra bulk on the WS may show through with heavier materials. French seams are stitched from the right side first, which may seem incorrect but makes sense once finished.

### HOW TO STITCH A FRENCH SEAM

**Step one** Place the two pieces of fabric you want to seam wrong sides (WS) facing and pin.

**Step two** For the first stage, stitch the fabric together 1cm (3/8in) from the raw edges, remembering to backstitch at both ends. **03**

**Step three** Open up the fabrics and press the seam open. Turn the fabrics over to the WS and press the seam from this side as well.

**Step four** Turn the fabric over again so the RS is facing up and press the two seams together lightly just to put them together but without distorting your pressed-open seam.

**Step five** Trim both fabrics down so they are 3mm (1/8in) outside the stitched seam. **04**

**Step six** Open out the fabric and refold it so they're RS together this time. Now move and roll the seam so it's right on the edge then pin the two fabrics together.

**Step seven** Stitch this second seam through both layers of fabric, but this time sew 5mm (1/4in) from the seamed edge you worked in the first stage. This will enclose the raw edges on the inside. **05**

**Step eight** Open out the seam then press it to one side. If you're adding this in a garment then you usually press it towards the back section so it won't show at the front. **06**

**Step nine** Turn the fabric over to the RS and press again to finish.



*For a fancy finish to your seams, try making binding strips in a contrasting fabric and binding the raw edge.*

# ADDING ZIPS

Zips can cause major headaches in the sewing room. Here we walk you through this essential skill to help you improve your garments!

**T**he most frequent questions we receive from our readers are about zip insertion. How do you know which type of zip to use? How do you insert a zip neatly? Which presser foot do I need? These are great questions, and ones that we asked ourselves too when we were making our first garments! In this workshop, we guide you through choosing a zip for your pattern, inserting a zip and some handy accessories that you can add to your toolbox!

## CHOOSING A ZIP

Zips come in many forms, from invisible zips for dresses, to open-ended metal zips for heavyweight jackets. The type of zip you need will depend on your project – check the pattern envelope to see what type of zip is recommended. Zips also come in variety of colours to match your project and different lengths to accommodate the size of the opening in your garment. As a general rule, the zip needs to reach the widest point of a garment (such as your hips) in order for the garment to be put on and taken off easily.

## INSERTING A STANDARD ZIP PREPARING THE SEAM

**Step one** Finish the raw edges of the fabric pieces where the zip will be inserted.

**Step two** Stitch the seam from the hem up to the point where the zip will end, backstitch at the beginning and end to secure the stitches.

**Step three** Machine tack the rest of the seam closed with the longest stitch length on your machine. Don't backstitch at either end of the tacking as these stitches are temporary.

**Step four** Press the length of the seam open.

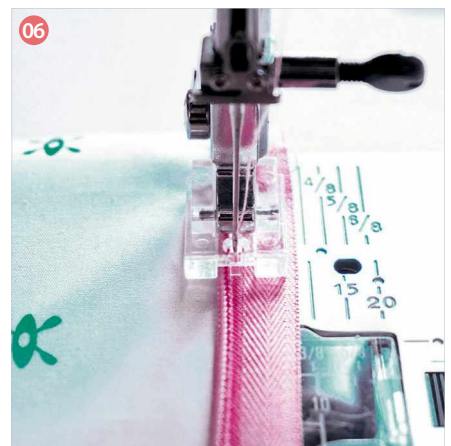
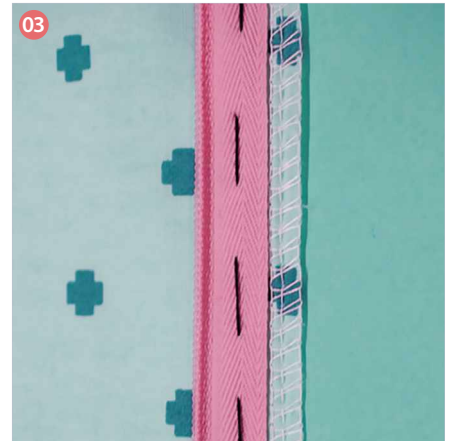
## STITCHING THE ZIP IN PLACE

**Step one** With the wrong side (WS) of the seam facing up, place the closed zip right side (RS) down with the teeth on the seam. Pin the zip tape to both the seam allowance and the outer fabric along both sides.

**Step two** Tack the zip in place by hand to secure







and check the positioning. **01**

**Step three** Topstitch the zip in place from the RS of the fabric. To avoid puckering, start stitching at the bottom of the zip, working from the seam outwards and then up to the top edge on each side. **02**

**Step four** Remove the tacking, then press using a pressing cloth and a low-heat iron to avoid melting the zip teeth. Be careful not to press over the slider as this can scratch your iron.

### INSERTING AN INVISIBLE ZIP PREPARING THE SEAM

**Step one** With RS of the fabric together, tack the centre back seam with a long machine stitch. Press the seam open.

**Step two** With the fabric WS up, place the closed zip centrally on top RS down. The zip teeth should lie exactly on top of the seam with the zip slider in the position you want it to be in when finished.

**Step three** Undo the zip and tack into place on the seam allowance only. **03**

**Step four** Undo the original machine tacking. Your zip is now positioned in the correct place and both sides will align when stitched in place.

**Step five** Roll the teeth over and press from the WS so they lie flat. Use a warm, dry iron so the zip teeth don't melt.

**Step six** Open out the fabric so it is RS up. The

zip will be RS down on top with the seam allowance folded out flat.

### STITCHING THE ZIP IN PLACE

**Step one** Swap to an invisible zip foot. At the top of the zip on the right side of the fabric seam, slot the teeth of the zip into the left groove of the invisible foot. The needle will go into the zip tape/fabric just to the right of the zip teeth.

**Step two** Backstitch to start, then stitch all the way down the zip, making sure the zip teeth stay in place under the groove on the foot. Stitch until the end of your tacking stitches so there is a little of the untacked zip beyond. Backstitch to secure. **04**

**Step three** Repeat to stitch the other side. The teeth should lie under the right groove of the foot this time and the needle will go into the zip tape and fabric just to the left of the teeth.

### STITCHING THE SEAM BELOW

**Step one** Close the zip and swap to an ordinary zip foot. Pin the fabric RS facing, from the bottom of the zip to the end of the seam.

**Step two** Holding the unstitched part of the zip out of the way, begin stitching the seam 2cm from the bottom of the stitching worked to insert the zip. You won't be able to stitch right on top as the zip teeth will be in the way.

However, stitch as close as you can without catching the zip tape or teeth with the needle.

**Step three** Continue stitching the seam.

**Step four** Hand stitch the bottom ends of the zip tape to the seam allowance to neaten. Don't stitch through to the front.

**Step five** From the RS, press the seam and zip edges flat using a cool iron and pressing cloth.

### NARROW ZIP FOOT

The narrow zip foot is similar in function to the regular zip foot. However, instead of switching its position on the presser foot holder, this foot simply requires you to change the position of the needle depending on which side of the zip you are sewing. Therefore, a machine with the capability to change the needle position is essential to use this foot. The back of the narrow zip foot is, as you may have guessed, narrower than the regular zip foot. This allows you to get nice and close to edge you are stitching against for a closer fit. **05**

### CLEAR INVISIBLE ZIP FOOT

This foot serves the same purpose as a regular invisible zip foot, except, as the name suggests, it's clear. This allows you to see what is happening under the foot as you sew, so if the zip teeth have slipped out of the groove you will know before the section emerges. **06**

# BUTTONHOLES

Mastering sewing buttons and buttonholes opens up a whole world of dressmaking possibilities – think smart blouses, shirt dresses and button-up coats! Learn the different methods with this step-by-step.

One of the basic sewing skills everyone should know is how to sew on a button. Obviously this is essential for sewing buttons back on which have fallen off, but it's important to sew them on securely so they won't fall off again. When buttons are sewn onto shop-bought garments this is done using a machine in the factory. If the beginning or the end of the thread is not secured really tightly then the button can easily fall off, by just pulling the thread. Then there are your own makes – you don't want to lovingly craft a tailored garment, only to have the button fall off on first wearing (especially if it's a gift!).

When it comes to making buttonholes, there are several different ways to make them, depending on the type of fabric, and the effect you are wanting to achieve. They can be done by hand or by machine. Whichever method you choose, always practise a few times on a spare scrap of fabric to make sure they're neat and the button fits snugly through.

## THE BEST WAY TO SEW ON A FLAT BUTTON

Flat buttons have flat backs that sit flush on the fabric. They have two or four holes in them to stitch them on through. There are two ways of sewing these on, as follows.

## SEWING A FLAT BUTTON TO FINE FABRIC

Use an ordinary sewing thread for this, but double it up – cut twice the length you need, then fold it in half. Thread the two ends through the eye of your needle so you're left with

a loop at the other end. To secure the thread in the fabric, push the needle through the fabric exactly in the centre of where you want your button to be, then thread the point of your needle through the loop and pull. Work a couple of small stitches on top of each where the loop lies and it will be even more secure.

Pass your needle up through one hole of the button and down through the other into the fabric, then repeat. <sup>01</sup>

If your button has two holes, repeat this about six times until your button feels nice and secure. If it has four holes, then there are a few different ways you can sew it on, depending on the pattern you want on display. <sup>02</sup>

To finish, work a few small stitches on top of each other on the back of the fabric to secure the stitching.

## SEWING A FLAT BUTTON TO THICK FABRIC

If the buttonhole the button will go through is on thick fabric, you need to ensure it sits slightly away from the back to give it a little movement when pushing it through the buttonhole. This is important with larger flat buttons, too.

Sew the button on as before, but this time slide a needle or cocktail stick underneath the thread so the button is sewn on loosely. <sup>03</sup>

Wrap the thread three or four times around the loose thread underneath the button and take the needle down through the fabric, then fasten off. <sup>04</sup>

## SEWING ON A SHANK BUTTON

A shank button has a protruding shank at the back of the button, which keeps the button away from the fabric so all the layers of fabric sit flat when the button is through the buttonhole.

Attach the thread to the fabric in the centre of where the button is to be placed in the same way as with a flat button. Stitch through the shank and into the fabric six or seven times until it feels secure, then finish off the thread securely on the wrong side of the fabric. <sup>05</sup>

## MAKING BUTTONHOLES

You can make a buttonhole by hand or machine, depending on the finished effect you prefer.

To work out the length of a buttonhole, take the button diameter, add the button height then add 3mm (3/16in).

Decide where you want your finished button to sit on your garment then, using tailor's chalk, draw on the buttonhole line (which you calculated earlier) onto your fabric in this position to mark where the buttonhole will be stitched. The line will not be visible when you're finished, so you can use a pen or pencil if you haven't any tailor's chalk to hand.

## HAND-STITCHED BUTTONHOLES

Cut along the drawn line using small, sharp scissors, and then secure the thread on the back of the fabric at one end of the cut line using small stitches. <sup>06</sup>

Work buttonhole stitch all along one side, making sure the looped end of the stitch is on the raw edge of the fabric. <sup>07</sup>

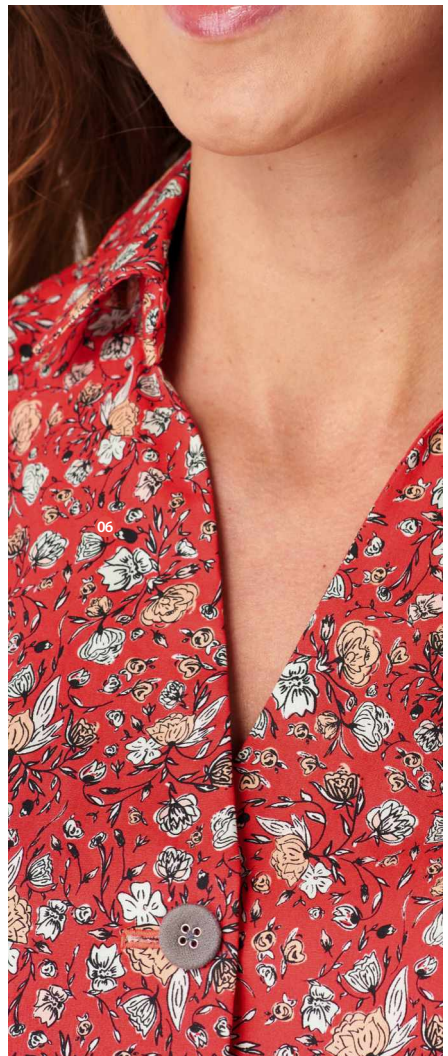
At the ends, work a semi-circle of buttonhole stitch then continue down the other side. <sup>08</sup>

Strengthen the end with a bar of short stitches close together. <sup>09</sup>

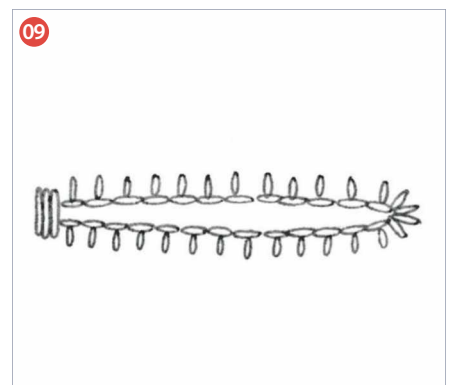
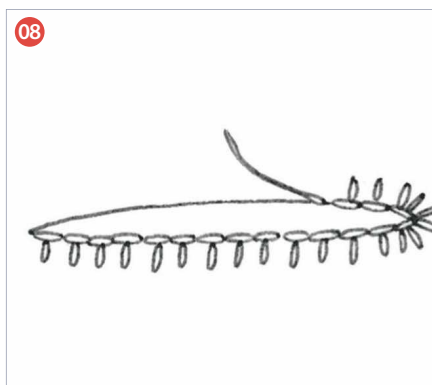
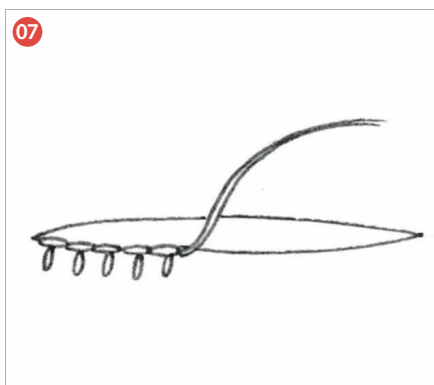
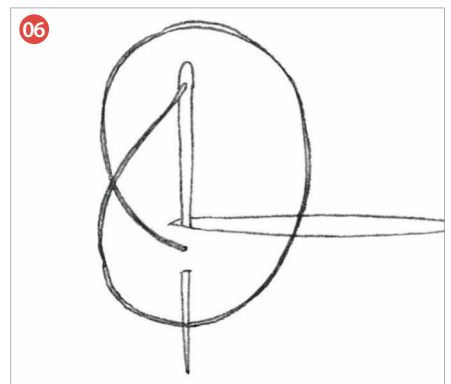
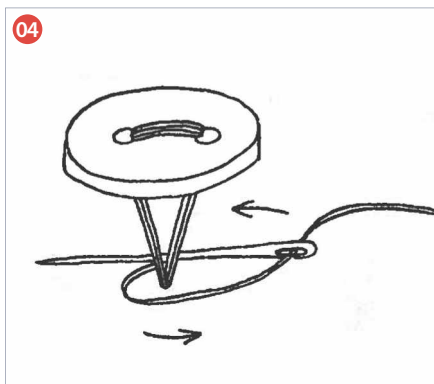
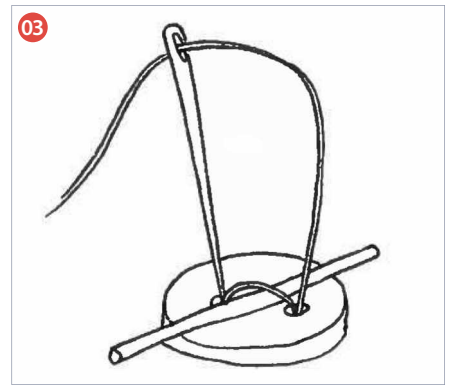
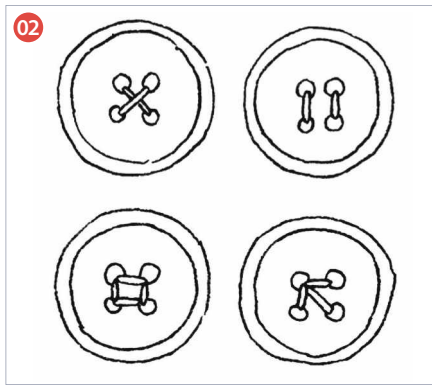
## MACHINE-STITCHED BUTTONHOLES

If your machine has a buttonhole foot and setting you can easily make buttonholes with it. Your machine handbook will explain how to do this – settings do differ slightly from one machine to another, so follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Once you've stitched the buttonhole, use a seam ripper or a pair of very sharp scissors to cut the fabric inside the buttonhole – but be careful not to cut your stitches!





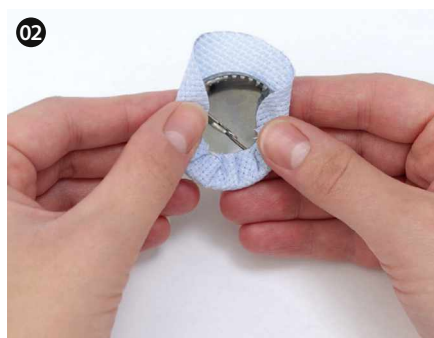


## HOW TO MAKE SELF-COVERED BUTTONS

Self-covered button blanks can be bought in white plastic or metal in a range of diameters from 11-45mm (3/8-1 3/4in). They come on cards or loose in larger quantities. They're easy to cover without any tools, just a fabric scrap.



01 Cut the fabric into a circle with a diameter 1.5cm (1/2in) bigger than the button diameter. Sew a gathering thread round the edge.



02 Secure the thread at the beginning, then pull it up tightly and work a few stitches over each other to secure.



03 Snap the back part of the button blank in the centre of the back of the fabric to cover the gathered fabric entirely.

# IN-SEAM POCKETS

Every dress needs those all-important pockets! Here we take you through how to add simple in-seam pockets to your next dressmaking project.

**S**kirts and dresses are much improved by the addition of pockets to pop your phone in (or tape measure!) and keep your hands cosy. It's simple to add a pocket to a pattern that doesn't already include one, or to sew a pocket into an existing garment from your wardrobe. A seamed pocket is formed from a bag attached to the seam allowances of side or panel seams, and can be added to any garment with a side seam.

## CHOOSING A FABRIC

You can make your pockets from the same fabric as the rest of the garment so that they blend in, or, if you want some contrast, make them in a different colour or patterned fabric. The pocket won't show from the outside until you put your hand in so it's nice to add a little flash of colour or print. Choose a lightweight fabric if you're concerned about adding bulk to your garment, but make sure it's not too flimsy or the pockets may wear through with use. A quilter's weight cotton is ideal, or light fleece pockets are great for garments of a heavier weight.

## MAKING A PATTERN

To create a template for the pocket, you can use a pattern piece from a dress pattern you already have, or draw around a pocket from an existing garment that has them. If you're drawing your own pattern then remember to add a seam allowance all the way around the pocket. This seam allowance should be the same as the side seam allowance, whether this is on a pattern or an existing garment.

## CUTTING OUT THE POCKETS

You need a piece of fabric that you can cut out two pocket pieces from for each pocket you want to add. Fold the fabric in half with the right sides (RS) together and then pin your pocket pattern on top and cut around it. You'll now have a pair of pocket pieces which are the mirror image of each other. Neaten the raw edges of each cut out pocket piece all the way around using a machine zigzag stitch or an overlocker. Press the pocket pieces flat.

## PLACING YOUR POCKET

Whether you're adding a pocket to an existing garment or adding one to a pattern you're in the

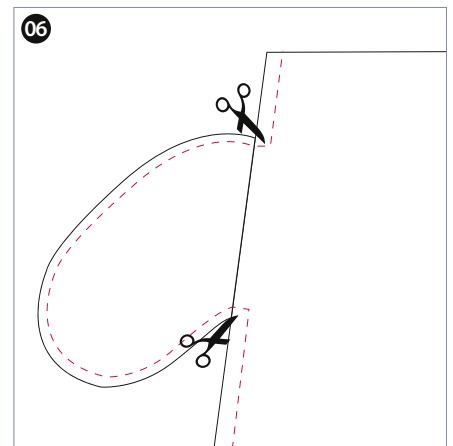
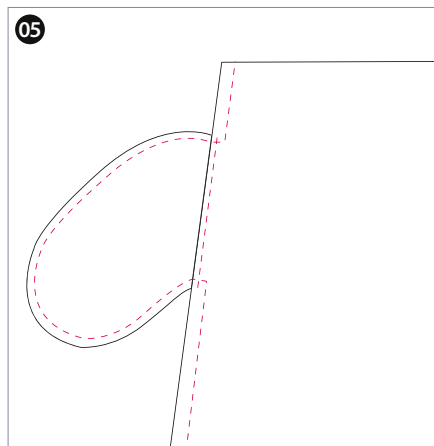
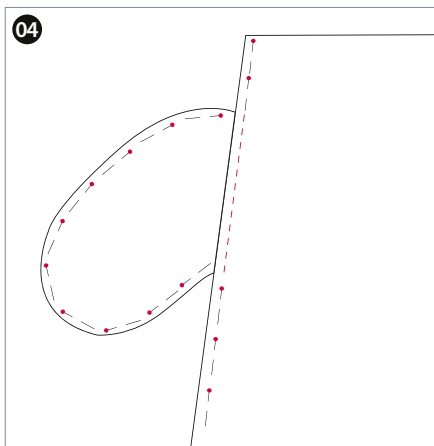
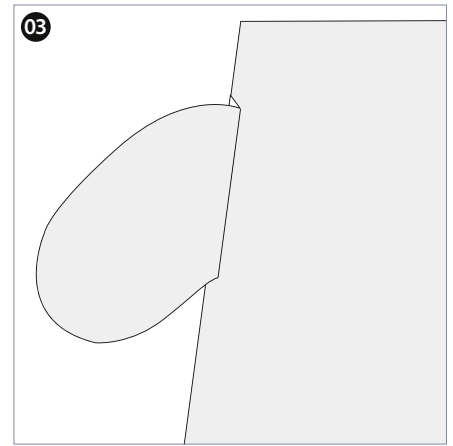
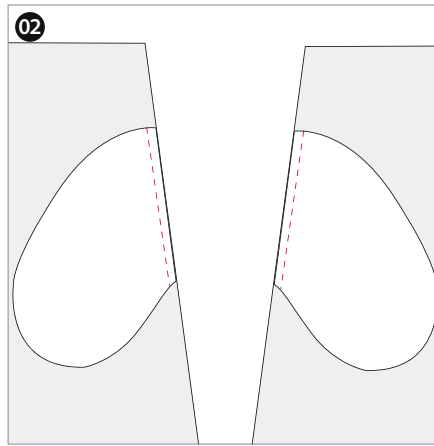
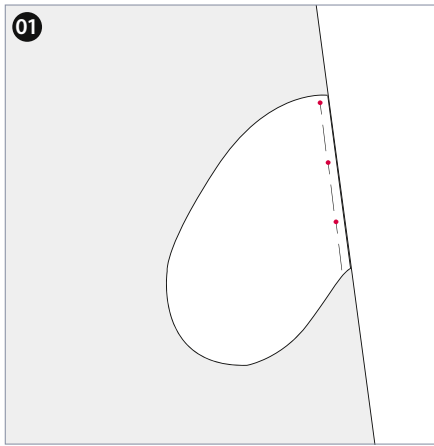
process of making, you'll need to decide where to place it. Try your garment on and stand in front of a mirror, then place your hands on the side seams so you can see exactly where you want the top and bottom of the pocket to be. If you're not sure, then have a look at a garment you own that already features pockets and use this as a guide. You could pin your cut-out pockets to it as well to be sure they're in exactly the right position. The placement of the pockets really depends on your personal preference.

To ensure both pockets are accurately placed,

mark the top and bottom of your pockets on the side seams with pins. Take your garment off and mark these same positions on both side seams at the front and back at exactly the same height. This ensures your pocket goes into the seam correctly and lies flat. If you want to add a pocket to the other side seam then it's important to mark both seam allowances in exactly the same positions. This is so that the pockets look even, and will also ensure the skirt or dress hangs correctly. Now you're ready to insert your pockets! Just follow the steps on the next page.







## PINNING THE POCKETS

**Step one** The pockets are added at the point in the pattern instructions that it says to stitch the side seams. The pockets are attached before the side seams are stitched.

**Step two** If you're adding the pocket to an existing garment, unpick the seams between the two pocket placement points you've marked with pins.

**Step three** Turn the garment wrong side (WS) out. Place the straight edge of one of the pocket pieces right sides (RS) together with the seam, matching up the raw edges and making sure that the top of the pocket is facing the top of the garment and the garment and pocket pieces are RS together.

**Step four** The top of the pocket should align with the top pin marker you marked earlier, and the bottom of the pocket should be level with the bottom pin marker.

**Step five** Pin the pocket into place all the way along the straight edge of the pocket. <sup>01</sup>

**Step six** Repeat this process to pin the other pocket piece RS together on the other side of the side seam. It's important that the two pocket pieces line up at the top and bottom, so check this against the pocket you've just pinned on.

## SEWING THE POCKETS

**Step one** You can now stitch your pocket pieces into place. To do this, you need to use a seam

allowance that's 5mm (¼in) smaller than the seam allowance given on your sewing pattern (or the existing seam allowance if you're adding the pocket to an existing garment). This is so that the pocket will sit slightly inside the garment with a little bit of the main fabric rolling to the inside when the side seams are finished.

**Step two** Start this line of stitching at the top and finish at the bottom of each pocket piece so that one is stitched to one side seam and one to the other side seam. <sup>02</sup>

**Step three** Turn the pocket pieces outwards away from the main body. Press the seams so they face neatly outwards. <sup>03</sup>

## STITCHING THE SIDE SEAMS

**Step one** Line up the two pocket pieces so that they're RS facing and then pin together all the way around.

**Step two** Pin the side seams all the way from the top of the garment to the top of the pocket, then from the bottom of the pocket to the hem.

For adding a pocket to an existing garment, pin the side seams above and below the section that you unpicked earlier.

**Step three** Fold the seam allowance that you've stitched the pocket pieces to on top of the pocket, so they're facing towards the pocket and not towards the garment. Pin these seam allowances in place. <sup>04</sup>

**Step four** Starting from the top of the side seam,

sew down the side seam using the existing seam allowance or the one set by your pattern, then stitch down past where the pocket begins to the same distance as the seam allowance width.

**Step five** For an existing garment, start stitching 2cm (¾in) above where you unpicked the side seam so you're stitching on top of the seam that is still there.

**Step six** Keeping your needle in the fabric, lift up the presser foot and turn the garment to sew around the pocket pieces using the same seam allowance to join them.

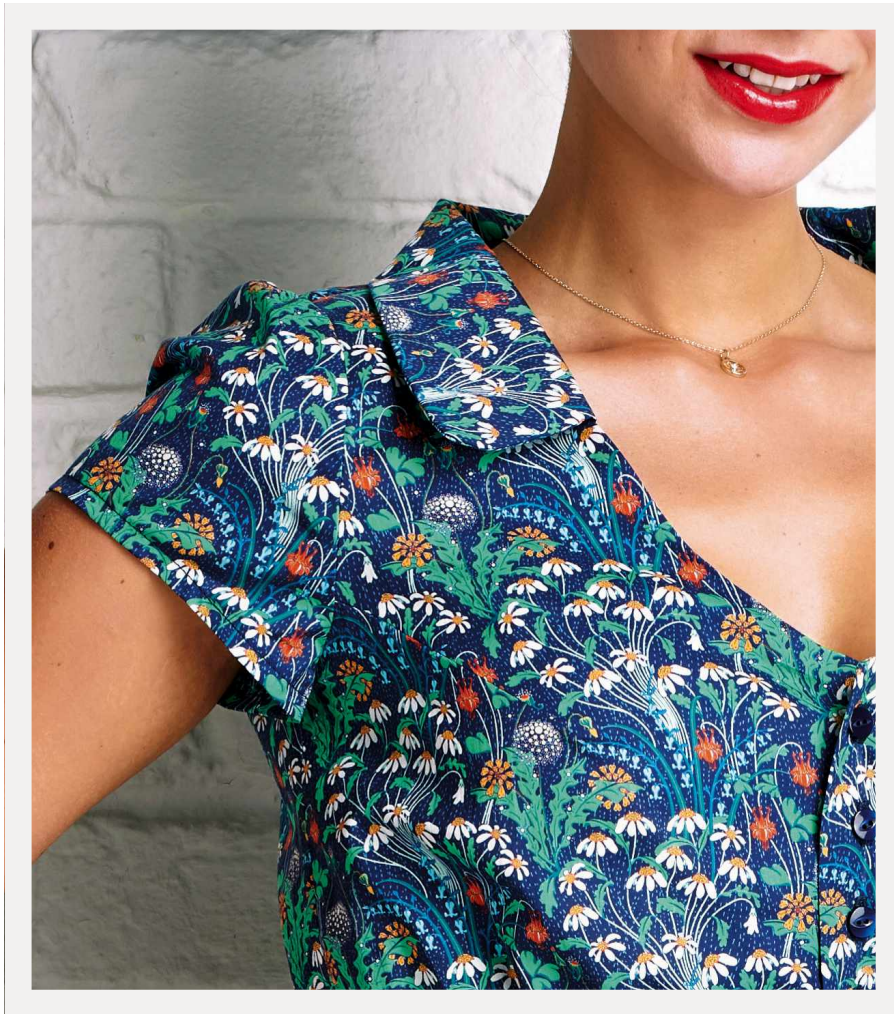
**Step seven** When you reach the side seam again, keep the needle down, lift the presser foot, turn the garment, then continue stitching down the side seam below the pocket down to the hem. <sup>05</sup>

**Step eight** Make a small diagonal snip in the side seam (but not the pocket) near the top and bottom of the pocket to help it sit flat. <sup>06</sup>

**Step nine** Turn RS out and press.



*Making the pockets using a contrasting print or colour is a great way to use up scraps from your stash.*



# INSERTING SLEEVES

Blouses, shirts, shirt dresses – they just wouldn't be the same without sleeves! So level up your skills with two methods for inserting sleeves: set-in and flat.



## SET-IN SLEEVES

These have a reputation for being tricky, but it's easy when you know how! Try the technique with these simple steps.

Set-in sleeves are larger than the armhole so the sleeve head can be gathered to fit for a smooth, even finish – this is also known as ease. There should be no gathers or tucks on the right side of the sleeve. If you do end up with a few though, don't panic! These can easily be unpicked, smoothed out and re-sewn as you go.

### MAKING THE SLEEVE

**Step one** Finish the sleeve underarm raw edges.

**Step two** Stitch two rows of gathering stitches between the arrows of the sleeve head within the seam allowance.

**Step three** Fold the sleeve in half with right sides (RS) facing and then stitch together along the underarm seam. Press the seam open. 01

### INSERTING THE SLEEVES

**Step one** Insert the sleeve into the armhole so they're RS facing.

**Step two** Match the notches of the sleeve with the notches on the bodice, then pin into place.

**Step three** Match the side seam of the bodice with the underarm seam of the sleeve, and the centre point of the sleeve head and the bodice shoulder seam, and pin into place.



**Step four** Pull each end of both rows of the gathering stitches so the sleeve fits neatly between the notches. Adjust the gathers so they're even and pin into place.

**Step five** Stitch the sleeve into place. It can be easier to do this in sections – sew the underarm section from notch to notch, then sew from one notch to the centre point, and then the other notch to the centre point, ensuring you even out the gathers so the RS is smooth.

**Step six** Finish the raw edges of the sleeve and bodice together at the armhole, then press. 02

**Step seven** Fold the sleeve hem by 5mm (1/4in) to the wrong sides (WS) then a further 1cm (3/8in) and topstitch to hem the sleeve.



## FLAT INSERTION SLEEVE

The flat insertion method is a quick and easy way to add sleeves to most garments. Give it a go with this how-to.

Sleeves attached using the flat insertion method are often found in garments made using stretch fabrics, although the same technique can be used for most projects with sleeves. The sleeve head is sewn to the armhole of the bodice first, then the sleeve underarm seam and the bodice side seams are sewn together in one pass. It can be a quicker and easier method than set-in sleeves as there's no easing or gathering required, so is ideal for beginners.

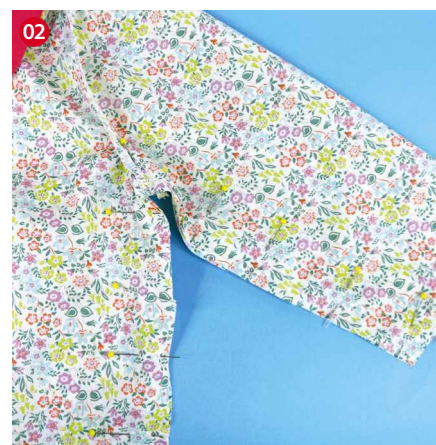
### INSERTING THE SLEEVE

**Step one** Place the sleeve head right sides (RS) together with the armhole of the bodice. At this stage, the bodice should only be sewn at the shoulder seams, and the side seam of the bodice and the underarm seam of the sleeve should both be left unsewn.

**Step two** Make sure you match the front and back notches on the sleeve head with the corresponding notches on the bodice.

**Step three** Pin and then stitch in place along the sleeve head. 01

**Step four** Finish the raw edges and press.



### FINISHING OFF

**Step one** With the RS facing, pin and then stitch the underarm seam and the side seams of the bodice in one pass. Start at the sleeve hem and finish at the bodice hem or waist, depending on the pattern you're working with. 02

**Step two** Finish the raw edges and press towards the back.

**Step three** Hem the sleeve by first folding 5mm (1/4in) to the wrong sides (WS) and then a further 1cm (3/8in).

**Step four** Topstitch all the way around the sleeve hem at around 7mm (5/16in) from the edge to hold it in place.

TIP

*When inserting a sleeve in a garment made with slippery fabric such as silk, always tack the sleeve before sewing it to make sure that it won't move out of place as you sew.*



# HEMMING

Sewing neat hems isn't just one skill to add to your repertoire – there are so many ways to do it! Here are five different types to suit a variety of projects.

**H**ems are the crucial finishing touch for every garment and many home sewing projects, so it's important to choose, work and finish them properly. They can be worked with your sewing machine or by hand – here, we show you how to hem using your sewing machine. We've covered the most popular hem types and shared some tips to help you work them as neatly as possible on your machine.

## CHOOSING A HEM

There are many types of hem and you need to consider several factors when choosing one, such as the shape and style of your garment, the weight and drape of the fabric and how visible it may be. The width of the hem is also crucial. Generally, the fuller the fabric, the narrower the hem so minimal bulk is added. Sewing patterns will usually set a hem allowance – this is the width of the fabric that will be folded under to create the finished hem.

## HEMMING WITH KNITS

If you're hemming a knit fabric, then you need to use a slightly different technique, as the fabric stretches. Use a ballpoint or stretch needle in your machine so it separates the threads in the fabric rather than pierces them. A regular zigzag stitch is ideal as it has give to it, but many sewing machines also have a stretch stitch which you can use instead. A single fold hem is usually enough as the knit fabric won't fray.

## SINGLE FOLD HEM

This type of hem is ideal for when you want minimal bulk, such as on a full skirt or for knit or heavier fabrics. It's also useful for lengthening a garment when you're short of fabric.

## DOUBLE FOLD HEM

This is the most common hem type. It works best on straight fabric edges and if there isn't too much fullness or flare in the garment. If the fabric you're using has a tendency to fray, this is a good choice as the raw edges will be neatly enclosed within the folded hem. For lightweight fabrics, use a narrow hem allowance so that it drapes well; for heavier weight fabrics, a wider hem is best and will add weight to pull the fabric down, which is ideal for trouser legs.

## CURVED EDGE HEM

This technique is used when the hem is curved, such as on a full circle skirt, a peplum top or a shaped sleeve. The raw edge that is folded under is longer than the actual seamline, which adds bulk to the hem. It's best worked with lightweight fabrics or those with drape.

## ROLLED HEM

This is quite a fiddly, narrow hem, but it gives a neat finish so is often used for occasionwear and delicate fabrics. It can be worked by using a special rolled hem foot, or with an ordinary

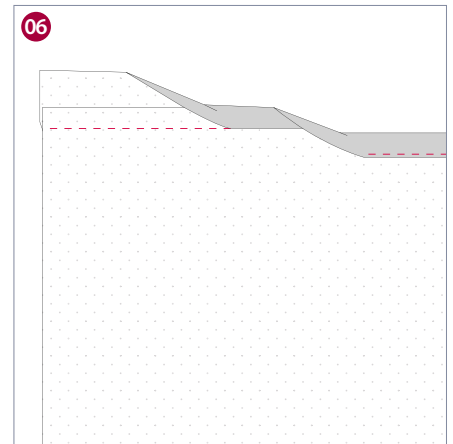
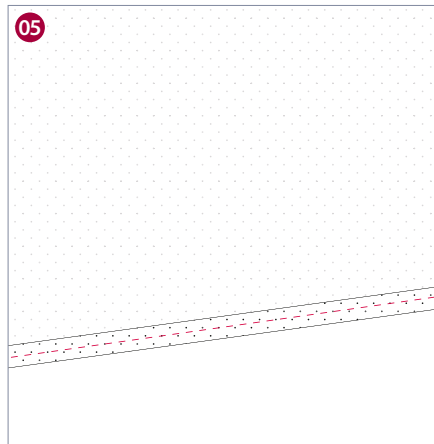
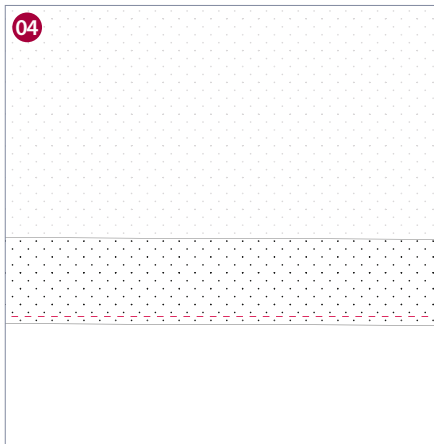
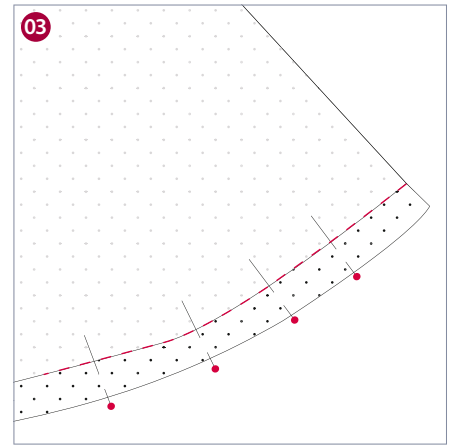
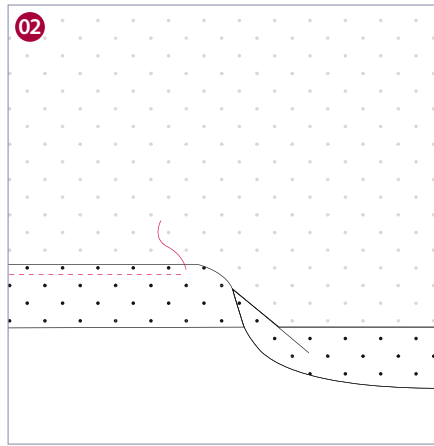
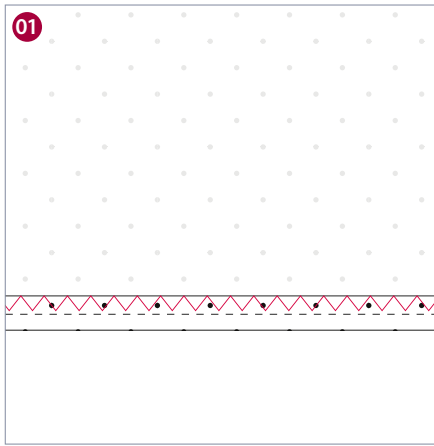
machine foot by using some extra steps. It's the ideal hem to use for lightweight fabrics such as lawn, voile, satin and silk. It's perfect for hems on sheer fabrics as well as it doesn't stand out and only adds minimal bulk.

## BIAS FACED HEM

Bias faced hems are ideal for using on curved edges and also for heavier fabrics as the hem of the garment is only folded once. Use pre-made bias binding or make your own by cutting strips diagonally on the bias. It's a good way to add a little print or colour inside a garment.







### 1. SINGLE FOLD HEM

**Step one** Work a machine zigzag stitch or overlock stitch along the raw edge of your fabric to neaten it and stop it fraying.

**Step two** Turn the neaten edge under by the hem allowance to the wrong side (WS) and press, then machine stitch this into place just inside the raw edge. **01**

### 2. DOUBLE FOLD HEM

**Step one** Decide the hem allowance and add 1cm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ in) to this. Turn the raw edge under by 1cm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ in) to the WS and press.

**Step two** Fold the hem under by the hem allowance to the WS and press.

**Step three** Stitch the hem into place close to the first folded-under edge to secure. **02**

### 3. CURVED HEM

**Step one** Work a line of stitching just 5mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$ in) from the raw edge around the hem.

**Step two** Press the raw edge over to the WS, keeping this line of stitching on the edge so you get a neat and even curve.

**Step three** Now turn and press the hem over again to the WS so that the raw edge is tucked under and is touching the first pressed edge. The line of stitching will sit on the very edge of this second fold and can be used as a guide to follow whilst pressing the fold over. **03**

**Step four** Pin and stitch close to the second fold.

### 4. ROLLED HEM

**Step one** Decide what your hem allowance is then stitch a line 5mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$ in) inside this. For example, if you want a 2cm ( $\frac{3}{4}$ in) hem you'll need to stitch a line 1.5cm ( $\frac{5}{8}$ in) in from the raw edge.

**Step two** Fold the fabric to the WS so that the stitched line lies just inside the folded edge. **04**

**Step three** With the WS facing upwards, stitch the fabric again on top of the first stitched line.

**Step four** Press the hem and then trim the folded-over fabric off right up to the stitched line but not through the actual stitches.

**Step five** Fold the fabric over again by 5mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$ in) to encase this raw trimmed edge – this is the actual hem line you wanted to achieve at the beginning of the process.

**Step six** From the right side (RS) there will be no stitching showing as it's just on the WS.

**Step seven** Working from the WS again, stitch on top of the stitched line to hold the hem in place. You will now have one line of stitching on the RS and what will look like just one line of stitching on the WS. **05**

### 5. BIAS FACED HEM

**Step one** Trim your garment so it has the same hem allowance as half the width of the bias tape – this is the distance between the raw edge of the tape and one folded edge.

**Step two** Take the strip of bias tape and unfold it to open out one side. Place this RS together with

the hem, matching the raw edges, and pin together all the way along the hem.

**Step three** Leaving about 5cm (2in) of tape loose at the beginning, stitch the tape to the fabric, working along the creased line you unfolded.

**Step four** Stop stitching about 10cm (4in) from where you started.

**Step five** Trim and join the short ends of the bias tape RS together and then stitch the joined tape to the hem.

**Step six** Trim the seam off both the fabric and the bias tape then press the seam open between the binding and hem.

**Step seven** Fold the binding over to the WS of the fabric. Press again so that just a little of the fabric edge can be seen from the WS.

**Step eight** With the unstitched edge of the bias tape folded under, pin it to the fabric then stitch close to the folded edge of the tape to create the neat faced hem. **06**

**TIP**

*When hemming knits, use an iron-on stabilising tape within the hem allowance to prevent wavy, stretched hems.*



*Use your own clothes  
as the base for these  
gorgeous garments!*





# ULTIMATE PATTERNLESS WARDROBE

Put your new skills to work with this pick of 15 of the best patternless designs from *Simply Sewing*. Choose from dresses, tops, skirts and cover-ups



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Lifestyle photographs: Pepper Robinson

# GO WITH THE FLOW

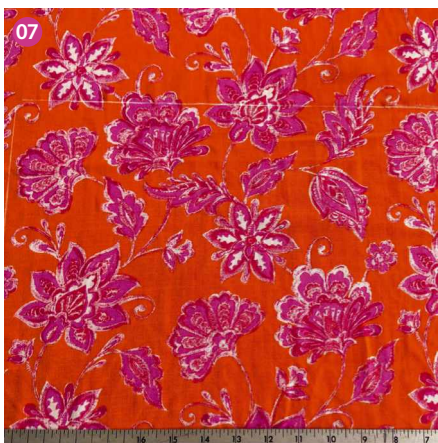
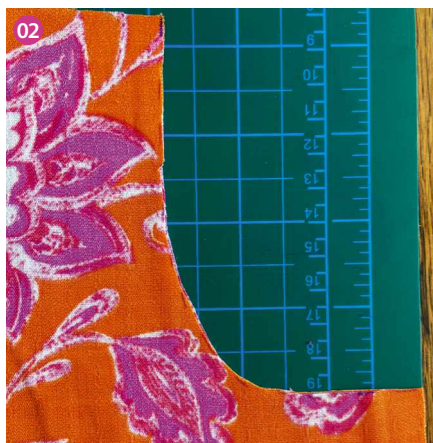
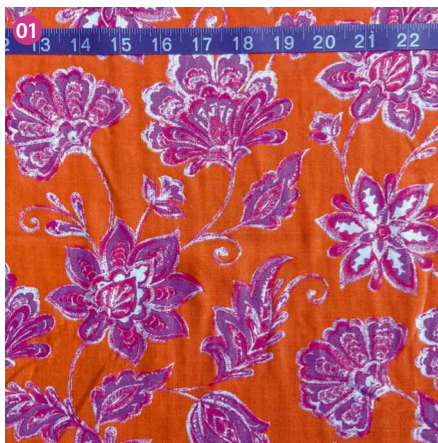
**Macy Knight's** top and skirt set has endless potential for summer styling. Get creative and draft your own statement set.







## TIERED TOP & SKIRT



### YOU WILL NEED

- Fabric: 4.6m x 152cm
- Elastic, 2.5cm wide: one pack for waistband
- Elastic, 0.95cm wide: one pack for top edge
- Tailor's chalk
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

### NOTES

- Seam allowance is 1.5cm.

### RECOMMENDED FABRICS

- We suggest using a woven fabric such as polyester, crepe or cotton.

### BEFORE YOU START

**Step one** Measure your shoulder circumference. This means from shoulder to shoulder across, around your body.

**Step two** Measure your bust at the largest point.

**Step three** Measure the length of your torso, to find this we will place the top of the measuring tape at the bottom of our armpit and measure to where our waist ends.

**Step four** Take your waist measurement at the narrowest point.

### MAKING THE PULLOVER TOP

**Step one** Add 5cm to your bust measurement for slight ease. With the wrong sides (WS) of the fabric folded together, draw a horizontal line in tailor's chalk which measures your bust measurement (plus the 5cm ease previously added). Perpendicular to the ends of this line, draw two lines using your torso length measurement. Connect the ends to create a rectangle. Cut out the rectangle through both layers. These pieces are now the Front and Back side of the top. **01**

**Step two** With WS together, along the top edge of your rectangle, mark 7.5cm in from the corner and then 13cm down from this point. Square across and then cut away the marked rectangle. This will create room for your arm. **02**

**Step three** With right sides (RS) together, pin the side seams. **03**

**Step four** Sew the side seams. Finish the raw edges of the armhole and press the seam open. Finish the raw edges of the armhole, then press then to the WS and topstitch to secure.

**Step five** To cut out the Ruffle, we will use your shoulder circumference. Double your shoulder measurement for the Ruffle width. The length is 20.5cm. Sew the short ends together to make a loop. Sew two rows of gathering stitches along the top edge of the Ruffle. Pin the RS of the gathered Ruffle edge to the WS of the blouse and sew with a 2.5cm seam allowance. **04**

**Step six** To create the elastic casing along the top edge, press the fabric to the WS by 5mm to neaten and then fold over again by the width of your elastic. **05**

**Step seven** Cut the elastic to your shoulder circumference measurement. Insert the elastic into the casing. Sew the seam shut. Hem your top, as well as the Ruffle.

### MAKING THE SKIRT

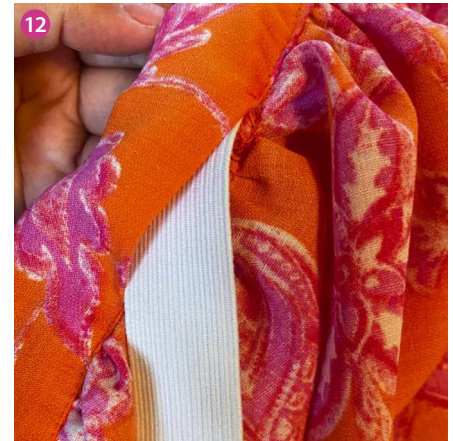
**Step one** Add 5cm to your waist measurement and draw a horizontal line that is this length. At each end of the line, draw perpendicular lines that measure 10cm. This will create the Waistband. **06**

**Step two** Next, we will begin making tiers for the skirt. Cut the following pieces:

**First Tier:** 54x31cm (WxL) cut three on fold (measuring a total of 108x31cm).



# TIERED TOP & SKIRT



**Middle Tier:** 59x31cm (WxL) cut four on fold (measuring a total of 118x31cm).

**Bottom Tier:** 64x38cm (WxL) cut five on fold (measuring a total of 128x38cm). <sup>07</sup>

**Step three** With RS together, sew the three First Tier pieces together along the short edges, then finish the raw edges. Repeat to create loops for all of the other tiers. <sup>08</sup>

**Step four** We will now gather the top of every tier. Sew two rows of long-length gathering stitches along the top of each tier, leaving long thread tails at each end. <sup>09</sup>

**Step five** RS together, pin the gathered part of the Middle Tier to the ungathered edge of the First Tier and sew together. Next, we will pin the gathered edge of the Bottom Tier with the ungathered edge of the Middle Tier and sew. <sup>10</sup>

**Step six** Sew the Waistband to the top gathered edge of the First Tier. Clip in the excess seam allowance fabric. <sup>11</sup>

**Step seven** Press the raw edge of the Waistband to the WS by 5mm, then fold the entire Waistband in half, bringing the folded edge to meet the seam. Pin and sew the Waistband in place, creating a casing but leaving 5cm open to insert the elastic. Guide the elastic through the channel until it reaches back where it started. Sew the two pieces of elastic together and close the Waistband. <sup>12</sup>

**Step eight** Finish the raw hem edge then press 5mm to the WS and sew in place.

## IDEAS TO TRY

- 1** Add as many tiers as you like to this dress – it's really up to you! You could simply add one skirt piece for a simple, ungathered effect, or add ten for a full-on party dress!
- 2** Play with different lengths, this dress would look great as a mini, midi or maxi.
- 3** Try binding the edges of your top and skirt in a contrasting colour or print instead of hemming.
- 4** Create a simple waist tie for a faux belt, you could also add belt loops to the waistband to hold it in place.
- 5** Put some of your fabric scraps to good use and use them to add simple straps to the top.
- 6** Add in-seam pockets or patch pockets to the front of the skirt for a handy place to store your essentials.
- 7** Make your dress in a medium-weight chambray for cooler months.





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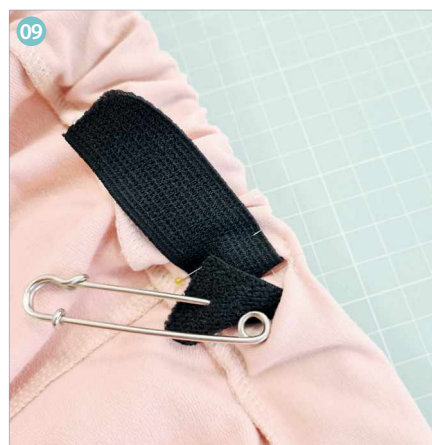
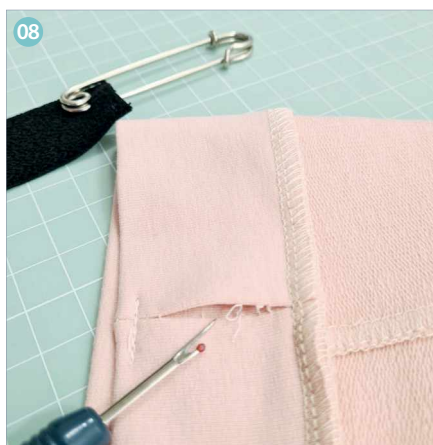
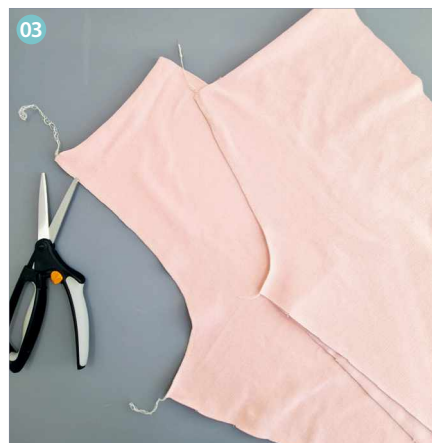
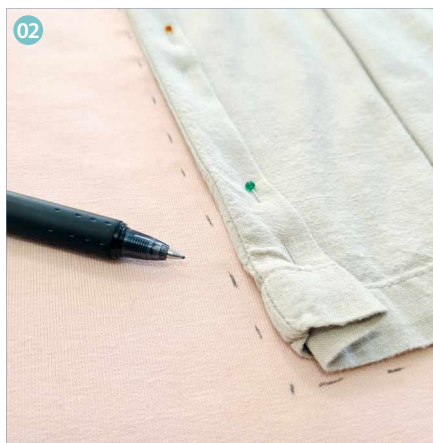
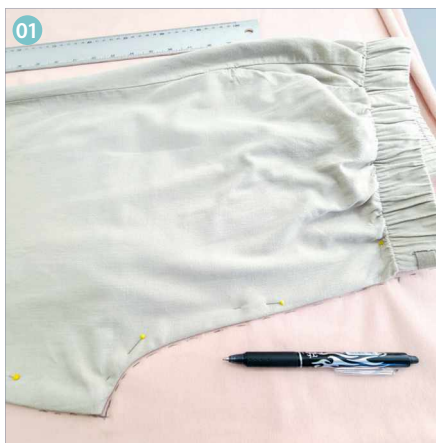




# LOVE TO LOUNGE

Take it easy and treat yourself to a new pair of comfy and stylish joggers with this project by **Portia Lawrie**.

# CASUAL JOGGERS



## YOU WILL NEED

- Soft knit fabric, eg. terry: 1.5m
- Woven relaxed fit trousers (for template)
- Elastic 3cm wide (see notes)
- Erasable fabric marker
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Our template trousers were a larger size than our model to begin with so we omitted adding a seam allowance. If your template trousers are closer in size and fit to your desired finished measurements, then add a seam allowance to your markings.
- Elastic requirement will depend on your waist measurement; add approximately 5cm to your waist measurement for the length to buy.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** Fold your knit fabric in half wrong sides (WS) together. Fold your trousers in half lengthwise and align the inseams and crotch curves on top of each other. Pin this inseam/crotch curve to your folded fabric.

**Step two** Starting at the waistline, trace the centre back/centre front crotch and inseam line directly onto your fabric. <sup>01</sup>

**Step three** Trace across the hem to the opposite side seam and trace up the other side. When tracing the side seam of your front leg you may need to roll back your trouser legs along the seam to reveal it, as pictured. Square across at the waistline to finish. <sup>02</sup>

**Step four** Repeat for the front and back legs so you have one of each drawn directly onto your folded fabric then cut out through all layers. You will now have two Front Leg and two Back Leg pieces.

## ASSEMBLING THE TROUSERS

**Step one** With right sides (RS) together, sew the Front Leg pieces together at the centre front/crotch, and the Back Leg pieces together at the centre back/crotch. <sup>03</sup>

**Step two** Sew the Front and Back sections RS together along the entire inseam. Repeat to sew the side seams. <sup>04</sup>

## MAKING THE WAISTBAND

**Step one** Cut elastic to fit your waist plus a few

centimetres extra. Measure a folded band long enough to fit the waist circumference of your joggers and wide enough to encase your elastic. Add 1cm seam allowance along all edges.

**Step two** With RS facing, sew the short ends of the waistband together. Clip the corners of the seam allowance at an angle, and cut a deep V notch centred on the fold line, and up to (but not through) the stitching line as pictured. <sup>05</sup>

**Step three** Press the seam allowance to one side in opposite directions above and below the centre fold line as pictured. <sup>05</sup>

**Step four** Fold the waistband in half along the length, with WS facing, and give it a good press.

**Step five** With RS facing and raw edges aligned, pin the Waistband to the waist (position the Waistband seam at the centre back). <sup>06</sup>

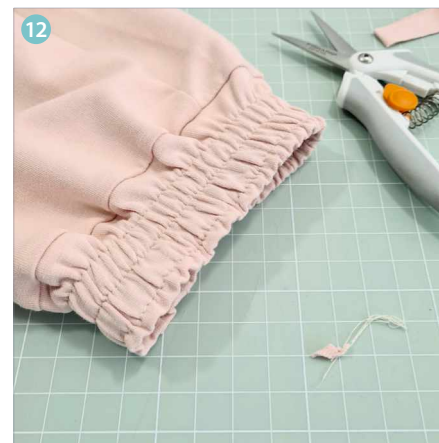
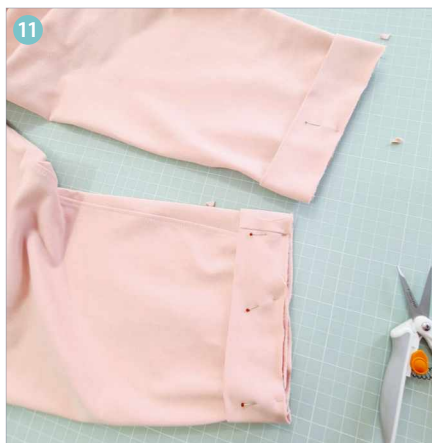
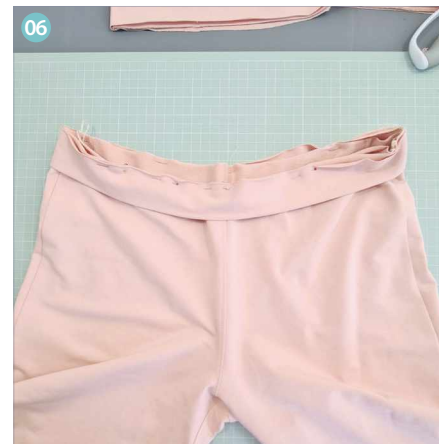
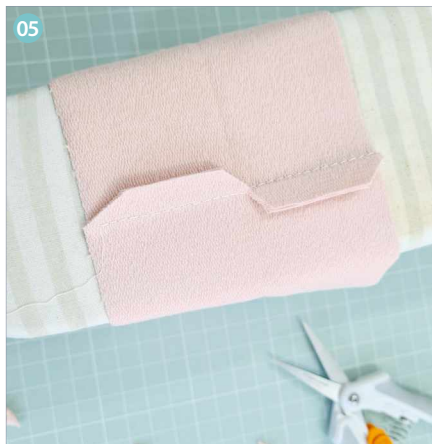
**Step six** Sew or overlock in place then press the Waistband up and away from the joggers and the seam allowance inside toward the joggers. <sup>07</sup>

**Step seven** On the inside of the Waistband unpick a section of the stitching from before to allow you to access the inside. You can sew a few anchor stitches along the folded edge to prevent the stitching coming undone any further than you need it to. <sup>08</sup>

**Step eight** Insert the elastic through this unpicked opening, all the way round and out the other side. Cut your elastic to fit, and stitch the ends together. Your elastic should fit your waist comfortably and stretch enough to slide over your hips. <sup>09</sup>



## CASUAL JOGGERS



**Step nine** Snap the elastic to the inside of your casing and pin the opening closed. Hand stitch to close.

**Step ten** Optional: stretch your waistband out and sew 1–3 lines of straight stitching around the circumference through all layers for a shirred waistband effect. <sup>10</sup>

### FINISHING

**Step one** Square off the hems of your trouser legs.

**Step two** Create cuff bands in the same way that you created your waistband. <sup>11</sup>

**Step three** Attach, add elastic, and finish cuff bands in the same way as for the waistband. <sup>12</sup>

TIP

*Use pre-bought ribbing for the waist and cuff bands for a quick-sew project!*





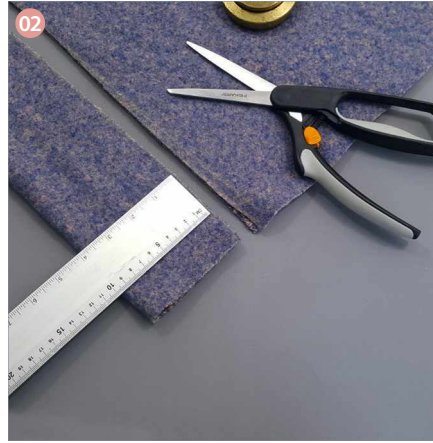




# STEPPING OUT

We love this bouclé coatigan project from **Portia Lawrie**. It's smart, cosy, and you can make it to suit the season!

# RELAXED COATIGAN



## YOU WILL NEED

- Medium- to heavyweight (non fraying) knit fabric, eg: Bouclé coat fabric: 2m (2¼yd)
- Tailor's chalk or erasable fabric marker
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- The specific measurements given will give a finished garment that will fit a UK 10–14. For larger or smaller sizes simply increase/decrease the width of your rectangles.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** Fold your fabric in half, selvedge to selvedge. Cut a strip 20cm (7¾in) wide from the entire length of the selvedge through both layers (set this aside for your Shawl Collar strip) then cut your fabric into two 1m (1⅓yd) lengths (set one of these aside for the Sleeves and Pockets). From the remainder, cut along the folded edge to create two rectangles of equal size. Ours were approx 70cm wide x 80cm long (28x32in). One will become the Coatigan Front pieces and the other the Coatigan Back. **01**

**Step two** Take one of those rectangles and fold it in half (bringing the long edges together) and cut a 10cm (4in) wide strip away from the folded edge and discard; leaving you with two narrower rectangles, these will be the Coatigan Front pieces. **02**

## ASSEMBLING THE COATIGAN

**Step one** Place the Coatigan Front pieces right sides (RS) facing on top of the Coatigan Back rectangle (with the outer edges aligned and a gap in the middle). From the neck edge to 3cm (1¼in) down from the top edge, cut a slanted line on both sides as indicated in the picture. These will be your shoulder seams. **03**

**Step two** Sew your shoulder seams with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance. Press the shoulder seams, then align the side seams so that your shoulder seams are rotated forward as pictured. **04**

**Step three** This will have the effect of making the front sections proportionately longer than the back section at the hem. Trim away the now excess length from the front pieces in line with the hem of the back piece. **05**

**Step four** Mark a point on the side seam 28cm (11in) down from the shoulder for your armhole opening. Then cut a shallow curved underarm seam as pictured, cutting away 3cm (1¼in) of width from each side seam in the process. **06**

## MAKING THE SLEEVES

**Step one** Open the garment out flat as pictured. Cut Sleeve pieces that match the curve of the underarm section as pictured. We've angled the side seams of our Sleeve pieces inwards slightly. **07**

**Step two** With RS together pin the curved edge of the Sleeve to the armhole opening. Sew together with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance. Press seams open and flat. **08**

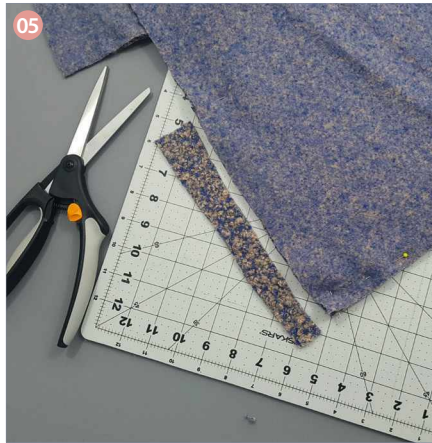
**Step three** With RS together align the raw edges of the front and back sleeves and sides, matching underarm seams, as pictured. Starting at the wrist sew the sleeves and side seams in one pass with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance. Press seams open and flat. Repeat for the other sleeve. **09**

## ADDING THE SHAWL COLLAR

**Step one** Take the Shawl Collar strip you set aside earlier. With RS together pin the band all around the opening of the coatigan, aligning the raw



# RELAXED COATIGAN



edges of the band with the raw edges of the coatigan opening. <sup>10</sup>

**Step two** Sew with a 1cm ( $\frac{3}{8}$ in) seam allowance. Press seam to the inside, grade the seam to reduce bulk, and topstitch seam allowance in place from the RS 2–3mm ( $\frac{1}{8}$ in) from the seam.

**Step three** Fold the collar back on itself at the neck to reveal the contrasting wrong side (WS) of the fabric. You can hand tack this in place at the centre back but it's not essential. It will naturally form a shawl collar effect as the WS rolls back to the inside the closer you get to the hem. <sup>11</sup>

## ADDING THE POCKETS

**Step one** Oversize patch pockets were created from simple rectangles and hand stitched in place. We utilised the selvedge for the pocket tops too. Hems were left raw and we turned the cuffs outwards and hand tacked in place, to echo the contrasting element of the collar. If your fabric edge can't be left raw, sew single fold hems. <sup>12</sup>

**TIP**

*Try adjusting the coatigan to different lengths depending on the season.*

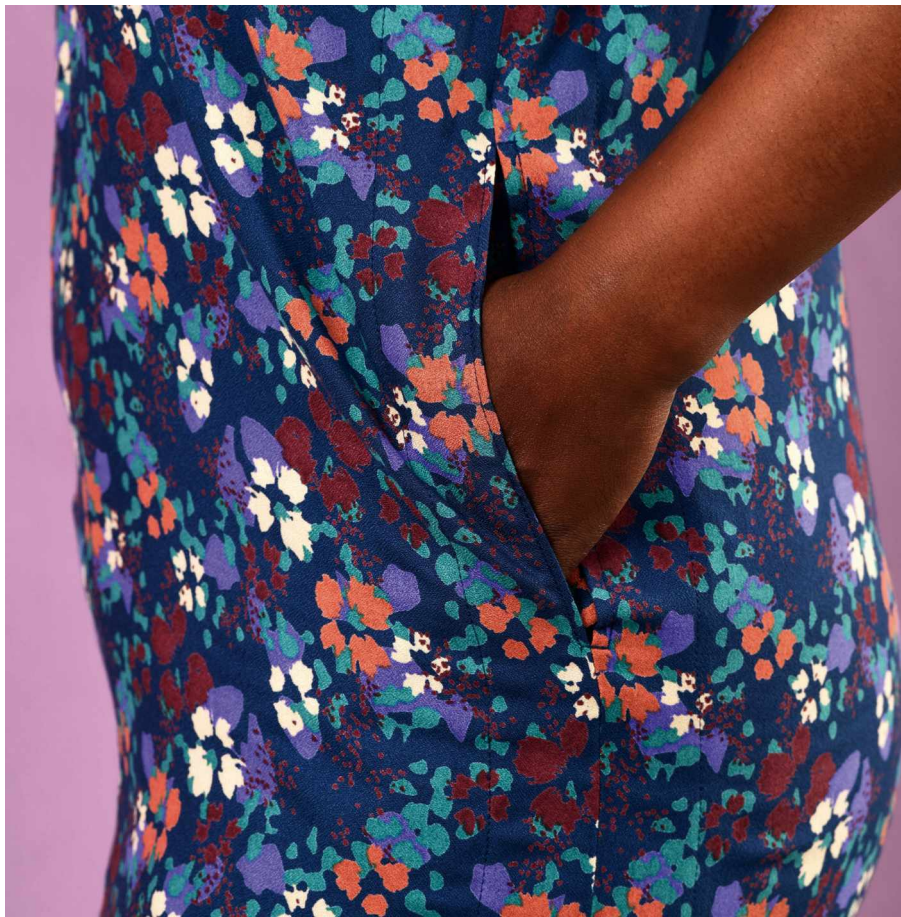
Hacking possibilities are endless! Try adding slanted edge pockets or a contrast cuff band.







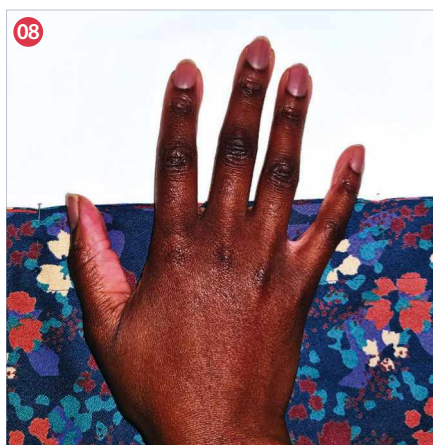
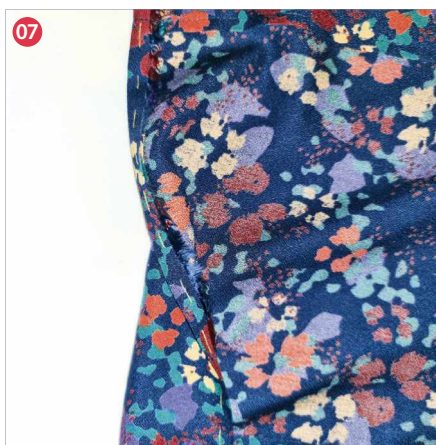
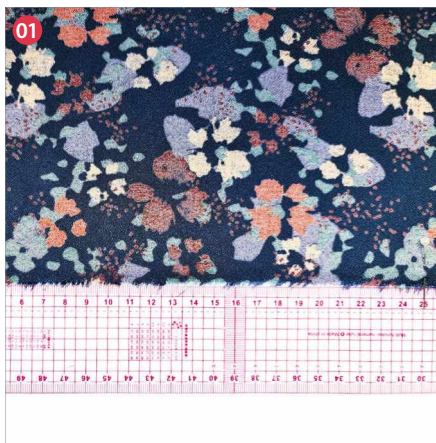




# SUNSHINE STROLL

Transform four panels of fabric into a stunning new boxy dress with this skill-boosting tutorial from **Linda Mafuba**.

# BOXY DRESS



## YOU WILL NEED

- Viscose crepe fabric: 140x200cm
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## FABRICS USED

- Cousette Primerose Navy viscose crepe from Sew Me Sunshine, [sewmesunshine.co.uk](http://sewmesunshine.co.uk).

## NOTES

- Seam allowance is 1cm unless otherwise stated.
- We recommend sewing a toile/sample before sewing with your chosen fabric.

## TAKING MEASUREMENTS

**Step one** Take your measurements. The measurements listed below are of our model.

**Bust:** 91cm

**Waist:** 78cm

**Hip:** 98cm

**Shoulder Neck Point (SNP)** = where your shoulder meets your neck

**SNP to desired length of dress:** 106cm, this includes shoulder seam allowance (1.5cm) and hem allowance (6cm).

**SNP to Neck Opening:** 25cm

**Step two** Select the largest measurement from your bust, waist and hip. Our hip is the widest.

**Step three** The dress is made up of four equal panels. Two side seams, one centre front seam, one centre back seam and two shoulder seams. To get the width of each panel, divide your widest measurement by four. Ours is  $98\text{cm} \div 4 = 24.5\text{cm}$  (round up to 25cm).

**Step four** We added 2cm ease for a slightly fitted look:  $25+2=27\text{cm}$ . Add as much ease as you like; remember this is being applied to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the panels.

**Step five** Add 5cm seam allowance to either side of the panels:  $27\text{cm} + 5\text{cm (side)} + 5\text{cm (side)} = 37\text{cm}$ . The panel now measures: 106x37cm.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** From the main fabric cut:

**Main Panels:** four 106x37cm

**Belt:** one 16x200cm (desired length and width)

**Pocket Bag:** four 30x30cm

## SEWING THE SHOULDER SEAMS

**Step one** With wrong sides (WS) facing, sew a front and back panel together at the shoulders with a 5mm seam allowance. Press seam open.

**Step two** Bring the right sides (RS) facing and press together at the shoulder seam.

**Step three** Stitch roughly 6mm from the edge to create a French Seam. Repeat step one to step three with the other front and back panels.

## SEWING THE FRONT AND BACK SEAMS

**Step one** Measure and mark the neck opening at the centre front, ours is 25cm (use your neck opening measurement) from the shoulder. **01**

**Step two** Repeat step one to mark the neck opening at the centre back. Measure and mark a 5cm seam allowance along the centre front and centre back edges.

**Step three** With RS facing, pin the two long panels together at the centre front and centre back. Starting at the shoulder seams.

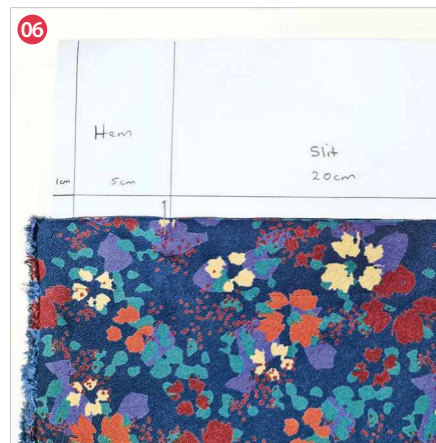
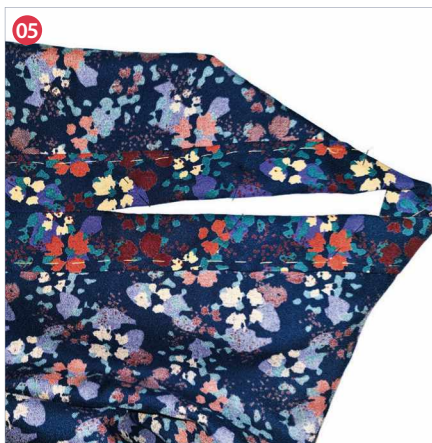
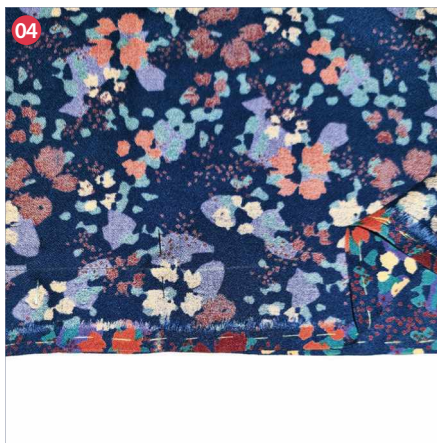
**Step four** Stitch from the neck opening mark towards the hem on both pieces. This now leaves a 50cm (25cm front/25cm back) gap which is the neckline. Press the seams open.

**Step five** Mark a fold line (5cm) along the neck opening. Fold with WS facing, press. **02**

**Step six** Press or tack under 1cm seam allowance



# BOXY DRESS



on the raw edges with WS facing, on both sides. Pin down the edges and stitch. <sup>03</sup>

## SEWING THE SIDE SEAMS

**Step one** Tack or press the raw edges of both sides, over to the WS by 1cm. <sup>04</sup>

**Step two** Measure 25cm from the shoulder seams and make marks for the armholes.

**Step three** With RS facing, bring the front and back together and pin in place.

**Step four** Mark 4cm seam allowance (1cm already pressed/tacked so 3cm extra).

**Step five** Stitch from the 25cm markings down to the hem on both sides. Press seams open.

**Step six** Mark 4cm from the raw edge at the armholes and press flat. Pin the edges down and stitch. <sup>05</sup>

## THE SLIT (OPTIONAL)

**Step one** Mark the slit from the hem line, this can be as much or as little as you like.

**Step two** Unpick the seam from the hem to the mark. Reinforce by stitching around the slit.

**Step three** Mark a 6cm hem. Tack or press the raw edge to the WS by 1cm. <sup>06</sup>

**Step four** Fold the marked hem to the WS and pin/tack in place before stitching. <sup>07</sup>

## THE POCKET OPENING (OPTIONAL)

**Step one** With the front of your dress facing up, use your hand to determine the length of the

pocket opening. <sup>08</sup>

**Step two** Mark your opening with pins and chalk. We also marked the centre. <sup>09</sup>

**Step three** Unpick between the markings. You may wish to backtack over the stitching each side of the opening.

## INSERTING THE POCKET BAGS

**Step one** Double fold 1cm to one side of all four Pocket Bags with WS facing and stitch.

**Step two** Transfer the pocket markings from the RS of the dress to the WS of the dress.

**Step three** With WS facing, place the hemmed edge of a Pocket Bag along the side seam with the pocket markings (on the front of the dress).

**Step four** Place the top edge of the Pocket Bag 2cm above the top pocket marking. Pin within the marked points and stitch close to the edge withing the markings. <sup>10</sup>

**Step five** With RS facing place the second Pocket Bag on top of the first Pocket Bag. The stitched edge of the second Pocket Bag should fall in line with the seam of the dress. This means the second Pocket Bag lies on the back side of the dress and the first Pocket Bag is on the front side of the dress.

**Step six** Pin and stitch close to the folded edge, matching the front Pocket Bag position.

**Step seven** Stitch across the folded edges of both Pocket Bags on both the top and bottom marked points to secure the pocket opening.

## SHAPING THE POCKET BAGS

**Step one** Lay a piece of paper on top of your Pocket Bags. Make sure it is the exact same size as the panels. Mark the pocket opening points. Place your hand at the desired angle of the pocket bag (towards the hem of the dress).

Draw the desired shape and size of your Pocket bag and cut out the shape. <sup>11</sup>

**Step two** Lay the pocket pattern on the Pocket and mark the shape with chalk. Pin the pocket panels together and cut around the pocket shape allowing 1cm seam allowance.

**Step three** Stitch along the chalked line and overlock, zigzag stitch or bind the raw edges. <sup>12</sup>

**Step four** Repeat to insert the other pocket.

## MAKING THE BELT

**Step one** Fold the Belt in half lengthways, WS facing. Press the fold. Open and bring the edges to the centre, WS together. Press the folds again.

**Step two** Topstitch along the long edge to enclose the raw edges. Tuck the short ends inside the belt and topstitch closed. Topstitch along the other long edge.



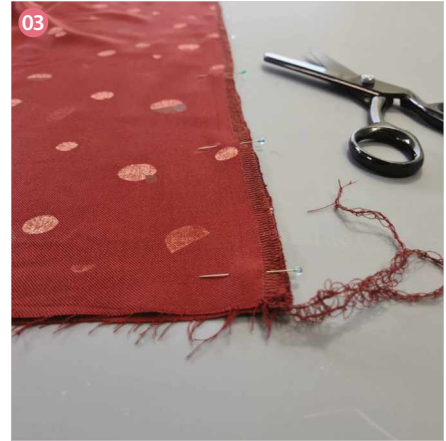
# PAPERBAG SKIRT

Sew an everyday garment that can be worn again and again with **Portia Lawrie's** self-drafted skirt tutorial.





# PAPERBAG SKIRT



## YOU WILL NEED

- Viscose fabric: 1m x 140cm
- Elastic: 3cm wide (see instructions for length)

## NOTES

- The split on this skirt can be orientated to the side or the back according to preference

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Step one** The skirt width (W) = your waist measurement x 1.8. If W + seam allowance exceeds the width of your fabric then double your yardage and make your skirt from two rectangles that are each  $(W \div 2) + \text{seam allowance}$
- Step two** Cut a length of your elastic to fit your waist and stretch over your hips (with seam allowance for joining if you overlap).

## CUTTING OUT

- Step one** With the yardage folded in half and selvages aligned, cut two 10cm strips across the full width of the fabric and set aside for the tie.
- Step two** From the remaining 80cm, cut a rectangle that is W+2cm wide (see note above). <sup>01</sup>

## MAKING THE SKIRT

- Step one** Finish the vertical edges of your rectangle. <sup>02</sup>
- Step two** With side seams pinned RS together, sew the top 5cm of the seam with a longer stitch, the next 55cm of the seam with a standard stitch, then switch back to a longer stitch for the remainder of the seam (where the knee split will be). Press seams open and flat. <sup>03</sup>

## MAKING THE CASING

- Step one** Along the top edge of your skirt, press the raw edge to the inside by a scant 5mm; then press over again by 5cm and pin in place. <sup>04</sup>

- Step two** Stitch the bottom edge in place right on the fold from the WS. Then, from the RS, run a second (parallel) line of stitching 1cm in from the folded top edge as pictured.

- Step three** For reference, your elastic should sit comfortably within these two lines of stitching with approx. 2mm either side, as pictured. <sup>05</sup>

- Step four** On the inside of the waistband, open up the back/side seam between these two rows of stitching to create an opening for the elastic. <sup>06</sup>

- Step five** Attach a bodkin or safety pin to your elastic and begin feeding it into the casing through this opening, taking care to keep it flat and not let it twist as you feed it. <sup>07</sup>

- Step six** Join the edges of the elastic with your preferred method. Here, we've butted the raw edges of the elastic together and sewed a wide zigzag back and forth over the seam to minimise bulk (recommended). <sup>08</sup>

- Step seven** Hand sew the opening closed. <sup>09</sup>

## FINISHING THE SKIRT

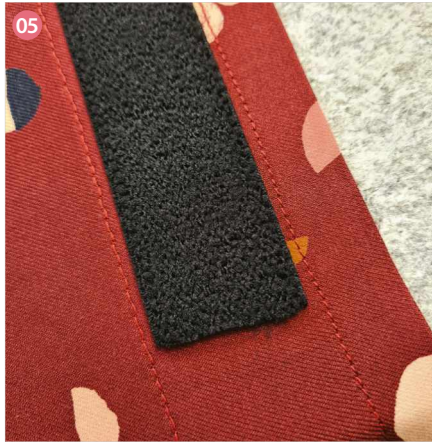
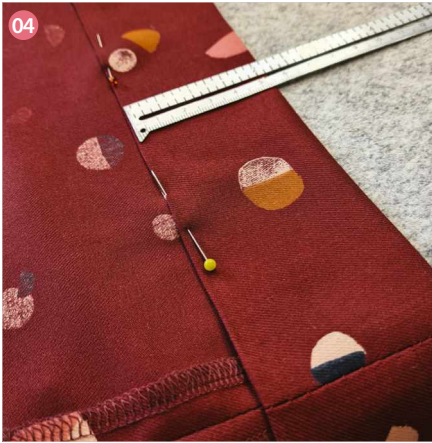
- Step one** Topstitch the seam allowance around the back/side split section of your seam in place. (up, across and then down to 'box' that section in) and then unpick and remove the longer basting stitches you sewed previously. <sup>10</sup>

- Step two** Try the skirt on. Trim the length if needed and then turn and hem the bottom edge. <sup>11</sup>

- Step three** Use the fabric set aside to create a waist tie the same width as your elasticated channel. <sup>12</sup>



## PAPERBAG SKIRT



### IDEAS TO TRY

- 1** Make the skirt in a plain neutral colour fabric for work; and something with a bit of sparkle for the evening.
- 2** Play with the length of your skirt to add different styles to your wardrobe. Try mini, midi and maxi versions – this is the perfect way to build a handmade capsule wardrobe of your own!
- 3** Exaggerate the paperbag waist effect by creating a deeper channel at the waist and sewing the second (parallel) line of stitching further in from the folded top edge. Experiment with wider elastic, creating a channel to match the width.
- 4** Add pockets to the side seam of your skirt. Alternatively, add patch pockets to the skirt front.
- 5** Omit the knee slit completely or add one in both side seams. You could also change the length of the slit.







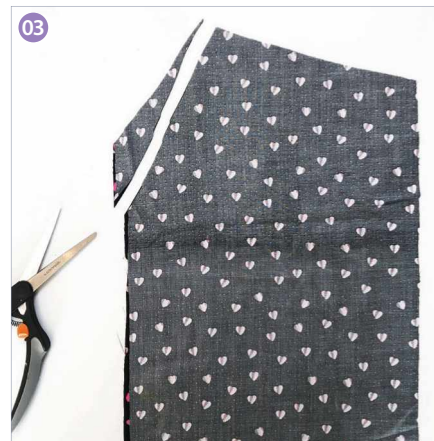
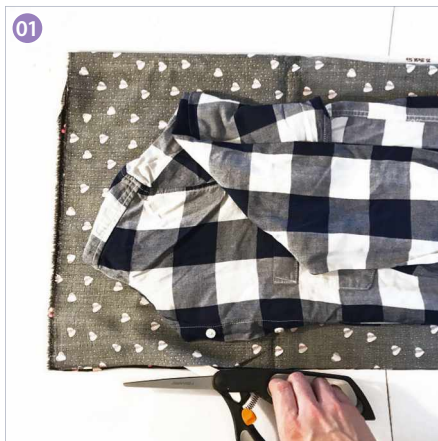




# THE DIP-HEM TUNIC

Sew a comfortable everyday tunic dress using just a few clever measurements, some floaty viscose fabric and **Karoline Dahrling's** handy step-by-step guide.

# DIP-HEM TUNIC



## YOU WILL NEED

- A shirt that fits you to measure from
- Woven viscose or soft woven cotton sateen: 140x130cm (55x51in), for sizes up to 16.
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Use a 1cm (3/8in) seam allowance unless otherwise stated.
- Always wash and iron your fabric before sewing to make sure it does not shrink.
- You will need more fabric if you would like a longer or wider dress, or if you need to make it larger than a size 16.
- If you are unsure about fit, then cut the shirt dress with extra seam allowance to allow for alterations.

## CUTTING OUT THE FRONT AND BACK

**Step one** Fold the fabric in half with right sides (RS) together aligning the selvages, then fold in half again to create four layers of fabric.

**Step two** Lay your folded shirt with the collar and sleeves tucked in on top of the fabric. Cut along the fabric folds to make four separate pieces of fabric, keeping them stacked on top of each other. <sup>01</sup>

**Step three** Decide how long you would like your finished shirt to be and add 2cm (3/4in) extra for the hem allowance. Cut the length of the fabric to this measurement. If you are unsure it is always best to add a little extra and trim it later on.

**Step four** Ensure the collar and sleeves are tucked in then draw straight down each long side adding extra seam allowance if you would like the garment to be a little looser. At the neck opening follow the line of the tucked-in collar. On the shoulder point be careful not to trace a dramatic slope towards the arm hole, this seam line should be straight and gradual.

**Step five** Mark a 2.5cm (1in) seam allowance all around your drawn lines then cut along them. <sup>02</sup>

**Step six** Take the top two layers of the fabric off for the shirt back and put to one side, these should be a mirror image of each other.

**Step seven** The remaining two layers will be for the shirt front, these should also be a mirror image of each other. If you would like the shirt dress to be shorter at the front then cut off approximately

15cm (6in) from the hem of each front piece.

**Step eight** On the two short front pieces, mark and cut 2–3cm (3/4–1 1/4in) down the front neckline. This will make the neck opening a bit lower at the front of the shirt. <sup>03</sup>

**Step nine** Overlock or machine zigzag the edges of all the cut-out pieces, except for the bottom edge which will be hemmed later.

## CUTTING OUT THE SLEEVES

The sleeves will be a lot looser than your original shirt sleeves as they are simply rectangular pieces joined to the armhole for a relaxed fit.

**Step one** The sleeve length in our sample is 30cm (12in), however you can cut adjust this to suit. The sleeve width should be approximately 10cm (4in) more than the width of the shirt's arm opening. Add 1cm (3/8in) seam allowance all the way around then cut four pieces according to your measurements.

**Step two** Overlock or machine zigzag the edges of all four sleeve pieces except for the bottom edge which will be hemmed later.

## ASSEMBLING THE DRESS

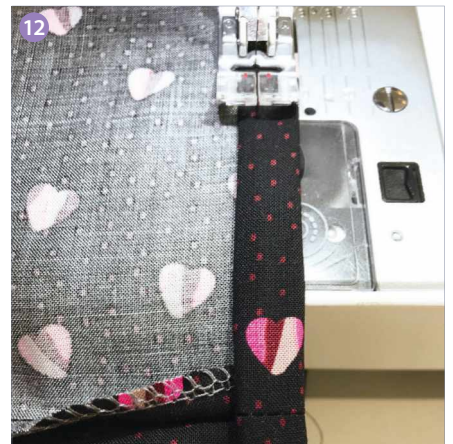
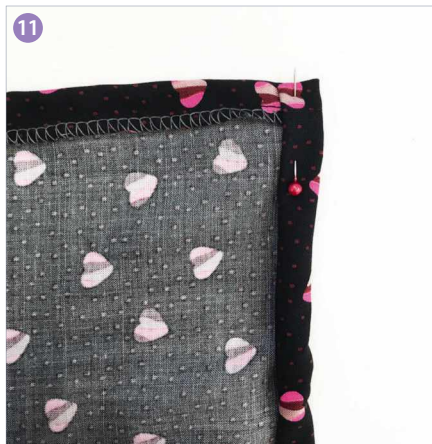
**Step one** Fold and press under the necklines on all four shirt body pieces by 1.5cm (3/8in) to the wrong side (WS).

**Step two** Stitch in place 1cm (3/8in) in from the folded edge. <sup>04</sup>

**Step three** Place the two front pieces RS facing



# DIP-HEM TUNIC



and stitch together down the front edge, making sure the two folded edges meet up accurately. <sup>05</sup>

**Step four** Repeat this for the two back pieces.

**Step five** Place the joined front pieces and the joined back pieces RS facing, then pin the shoulder seams together.

**Step six** Stitch the shoulder seams together. <sup>06</sup>

## ATTACHING THE SLEEVES

**Step one** Place two sleeve pieces RS facing and stitch together along the top edge.

**Step two** Lay the main body out flat with RS facing up. Place the sleeve piece RS together on top of the main body, lining up the sleeve seam with the shoulder seam. Pin in place.

**Step three** Stitch the seam to the main body. <sup>07</sup>

**Step four** Repeat to stitch the other sleeve to the other side of the shirt body.

## STITCHING THE SIDE SEAMS

**Step one** Place the shirt front/back and sleeves RS together, aligning raw edges and pin together.

**Step two** Stitch the side seams starting at the sleeve hem, then sew around the under arm and down towards the hem. Finish stitching 30cm (12in) from the bottom at the back to leave an opening for the slit. <sup>08</sup>

**Step three** Repeat on the other side.

**Step four** Turn the edges of all slit openings to the WS by 1cm (3/8in) and press then pin in place. <sup>09</sup>

**Step five** Topstitch close to the edge to hem the

slits, stitching across the top of the slit opening when you reach it for a neat finish. <sup>10</sup>

## HEMMING THE SHIRT

**Step one** Turn the bottom raw edge under by 1cm (3/8in) to the WS and press then turn it under again by 1cm (3/8in) and press. Fold the corners neatly where the hem meets the slit and pin in place. <sup>11</sup>

**Step two** Stitch the turned under edges to hem. <sup>12</sup>

**Step three** Turn the raw edges of the sleeves under twice, press then stitch to hem.

## IDEAS TO TRY

- 1 Play with the sleeve length; shorten for summer or lengthen for cooler months.
- 2 Use the same techniques to create a top, a mini dress or a maxi dress.
- 3 The 'looseness' of your finished dress is dependent on the fit of the template top you use *and* the distance from the garment edge you trace your new underarm/side seams. Make a looser or tighter fitting dress if you like!
- 4 Add inseam or patch pockets to add an extra function for everyday wear.
- 5 Add belt loops to the waist and create a simple belt from leftover fabric.











# LAZY SUNDAY

A homemade dressing gown is the perfect gift for that person in your family who's tricky to buy for! Draft your own with **Debbie Wainhouse**.

# DRESSING GOWN



## YOU WILL NEED

- Fabric: 2.5m x 150cm (see notes)
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Seam allowance is 1cm unless otherwise stated.
- If your fabric is narrower than 150cm you may need 3+ metres of fabric.
- If you are sewing the robe for someone pear shaped (ie, their hips are bigger than their bust), you will need to use their hip measurement every time we use the bust/chest measurement.

## FABRICS USED

- Medium waffle cotton from [minerva.com](http://minerva.com).

## TAKING YOUR MEASUREMENTS

**Step one** We are going to make a pattern based on your own body measurements.

### Measurements needed:

- Bust or chest and hips
- Neck to waist
- Waist to knee
- Arm length (base of neck to wrist)

## MAKING THE RECTANGLE PATTERN:

**Step one** Our model has a 96cm chest so the first measurement will be:

$$96\text{cm} \div 4 + 8\text{cm} = 32\text{cm}$$

**Step two** Draw a horizontal line with this measurement.

**Step three** For the length, your rectangle will be the neck to waist measurement plus the waist to knee measurement, plus any extra length you want to add, or you can shorten it here if you would like a shorter dressing gown. We made ours 121cm in length. Your first rectangle will be your quarter chest measurement x desired length.

**Step four** Next, measure down 5cm from the left-hand edge of this rectangle and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the neck measurement across. Join these points with a curve, this will form the back neck. This rectangle, cut on the fold, will be the Back of the dressing gown.

**Step five** To form the Front of the robe, draw another rectangle as in step one. Again measure

$\frac{1}{4}$  neck width across the top of the rectangle and join this point with a straight line to your waist measurement. Cut two mirror images of these to form your two Front panels.

**Step six** To make the Sleeves, start by subtracting the shoulder length (top of the rectangle from back neck) from the arm length. Add 5cm to the result, and that is the length of your Sleeve. We want nice wide Sleeves so make them half the neck to waist measurement and add 3cm for ease. Cut two on the fold.

**Step seven** Also cut the following (pockets are optional but handy!):

**Pockets:** two 25x20cm

**Belt:** one 190x9cm

**Belt Loops:** two 6x15cm

## MAKING THE BELT AND BELT LOOPS

**Step one** Take the Belt Loops and fold each long edge in by 1cm, press and fold in half. Stitch down the open edge 5mm in from the edge. Repeat for the other Belt Loop, you can leave the two short ends unfinished.

**Step two** Take your Belt and as we did with the Belt Loops, fold each long edge in by 1cm and press, you may find it useful to use some sewing clips to hold your fold in place as waffle cotton is very bouncy and doesn't hold a press line very well. Fold each short end in by 1cm and press, then fold the entire Belt in half along the long edge so all your raw edges are enclosed.



# DRESSING GOWN



Pin in place and stitch all the way around with a 5mm seam allowance. **01**

## MAKING THE POCKETS

**Step one** To make the Pockets, Turn one of the short ends down by 1cm, press then fold again by 2.5cm and press. Stitch in place close to the fold line. Now fold the other three edges in by 1cm and press. Put these to one side. **02**

## ASSEMBLING THE GOWN

**Step one** To sew the main body of the dressing gown together, start by placing the Fronts face down on the Back with right sides (RS) together and stitching at the shoulders. Finish the seam. Press the seams open or towards the back. **03**

**Step two** Next, take one of your Sleeves and make a notch in the centre of the top of the sleeve. Centre the Sleeves over the shoulder seams, RS together. Double check your measuring here to make sure you don't sew the Sleeves sideways. Stitch in place and finish the edges with a zigzag stitch or overlocker the whole way down from front hem to back hem.

**Step three** Take your Belt Loops and pin them onto the Fronts of the dressing gown at your waist point. Make sure the raw edges of the Belt Loops are lined up with the raw edges of the gown and they are facing in towards the dressing gown, they will get sandwiched in between the Front and Backs and stitched in

place in the next step. **04**

**Step four** Fold the robe RS together so the Sleeve side seams meet and stitch all the way from the end of the Sleeve to the hem of the gown. Finish the raw edges of the Sleeves with an overlocker or zigzag stitch. **05**

## ADDING THE POCKETS

**Step one** Now it's time to add your Pockets. Placement is up to you; you might find it easier to put the dressing gown on at this point and mark with a pin where you want the top of the Pocket to start.

**Step two** Pin and edge stitch the sides and bottom in place with the Pocket sitting 4cm away from the side seam. Edge stitch the Pockets in place.

## HEMMING THE GOWN

**Step one** Hem the bottom of your dressing gown by overlocking the raw hem and turning up by 2.5cm and stitching in place.

**Step two** Hem your Sleeves in the same way.

## MAKING AND ATTACHING THE COLLAR

**Step one** To make the Collar piece, measure from the centre back around the neckline and front opening down to the hem of the dressing gown, add 2cm. Draw a rectangle with this measurement as the length x 12cm. Cut two of these. Stitch two of the short ends together and

press open. Now press a 1cm hem in towards the wrong side (WS) along one long edge. **06**

**Step two** With WS facing, stitch down each short end of the Collar piece, stitching over the fold you just made to hold it in place. Clip across the inner corner and turn RS out, poking out the corner. This will form the bottom of your Collar piece which attaches to the hem of your dressing gown in the next step. **07**

**Step three** Starting at the back neck, pin the unfolded edge of the Collar to the RS of the dressing gown all the way around. Stitch in place and iron the seam allowance in towards the collar. **08**

**Step four** Fold the Collar to the inside, covering the seam from the previous step with your folded edge. Pin in place and stitch all the way around as neatly as possible, stitching in the ditch if possible.

## FINISHING

**Step one** Thread your Belt through the Belt Loops to finish.





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### THE MILA DRESS

**DRESS**

FRONT

BACK

**SIZES 6-30**  
US 2-26  
EUR 34-58

Statement

### THE SPRING DRESS

**SIZES 6-22**  
US 4-20  
EUR 34-50

### THE VIVIAN DRESS

**SIZES 6-20**  
US 4-18  
EUR 34-48

### THE VERNA TOP

**SIZES 6-20**  
US 4-18  
EUR 34-48

### ALEXANDRA DRESS

**SIZES 6-32**  
US 4-30  
EUR 34-60

**DRESS A**

FRONT

BACK

**DRESS B**

FRONT

BACK

Gathered waist and floaty skirt

Two sleeve choices and optional pockets

### THE MARIA DRESS

**SIZE 6-20**  
US 4-18  
EUR 34-48



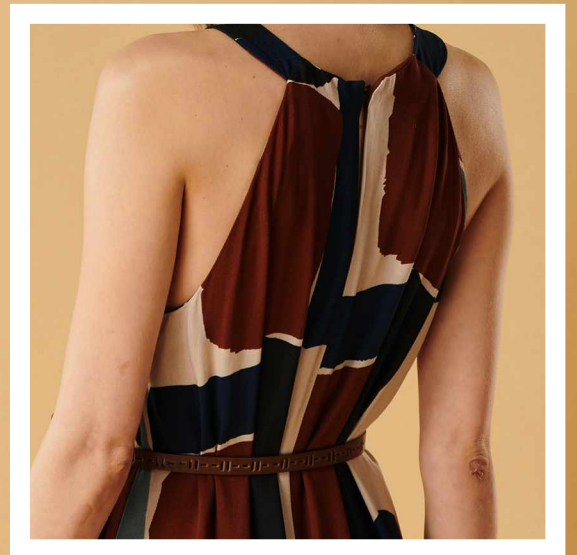
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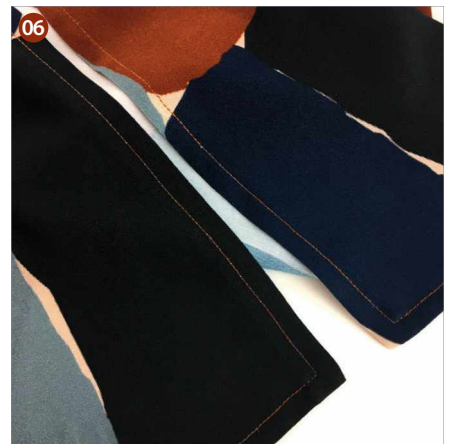


# MAX IMPACT

Use this simple tutorial from **Debbie Wainhouse** to transform your favourite top pattern into your new go-to maxi dress.



# MAXI DRESS



## YOU WILL NEED

- Viscose fabric: 2m x 140cm (2½ yd x 55in) or 3m x 110cm (3½ yd x 43in)
- Iron-on interfacing (depending on pattern requirements)
- Hook and eye: x 1
- Tailor's chalk or erasable fabric pen
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Seam allowance is 2cm (¾in) unless otherwise stated.
- We used McCall's M7899 pattern (View A).
- If you are 5ft2in or shorter (156cm or less), the dress will likely measure around 56in (142cm) in length. If you are 5ft3in–5ft8in (160cm–173cm), the dress will likely measure around 58in (147cm) in length.
- We cut a size 8 for a 5ft7in model so adjust your length measurements accordingly.

## FABRICS USED

- Brick Blue Viscose from Mind the Maker, [mindthemaker.com](http://mindthemaker.com).

## MAXI DRESS HACK

This pattern hack will show you how to turn a top pattern into a maxi dress. You can use any pattern you like; we used McCall's M7899 pattern (View A). Use an evening wear pattern for a glamorous maxi like this one, or use a shirt or T-shirt pattern to create a more casual look.

## CUTTING OUT

- Step one** Cut out your size from your chosen pattern, as well as any relevant facing, sleeve and detail pieces. **01**
- Step two** Cut your interfacing pieces out as per the instructions and press them to the wrong side (WS) of the fabric.
- Step three** Lay out your chosen fabric folded in half lengthways.
- Step four** Decide how long you want your dress. We decided to make ours 58in long from the back neck down. Our pattern was 22in long from the neck to base, so we added 36in to this length extending the bodice out following the side seam line. **02**

## EDITING THE PATTERN

- Step one** Mark your desired length on your fabric and mark the same measurement from the centre front down. Join these two marks, slightly curving your line to make the dress hem line. **03**
- Step two** Cut your back piece in the same way. This is not cut on the fold, so you may be able to fit

your pattern upside down next to the bodice as we did. This will, of course, depend on the width of your chosen fabric and if you are attempting to pattern match.

- Step three** Measure the length again and make sure the measurement from the side seam to the hem is the same as on your front cami piece. **04**
- Step four** Maxi dresses can be hard to walk in without a side slit, so mark a notch 17–25in up from the hem of the skirt on the front and back pieces at the side seam. Cut your front and back pieces out, making sure to mark all notches on the pattern pieces as you would normally. **05**

## MAKING THE DRESS

- Step one** Sew the dress following the pattern instructions. When you are sewing the side seams, sew down to the notch you made for your side slit. Press the side seams open all the way down to the hem so that your slit is pressed open as well.
- Step two** Press the hem up 5mm (¼in) then another 5mm (¼in) and sew. Sew around the slit and hem with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance. **06**



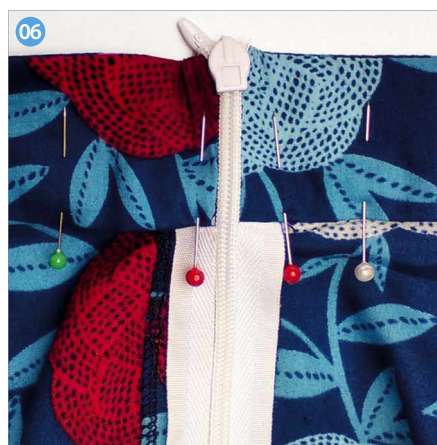
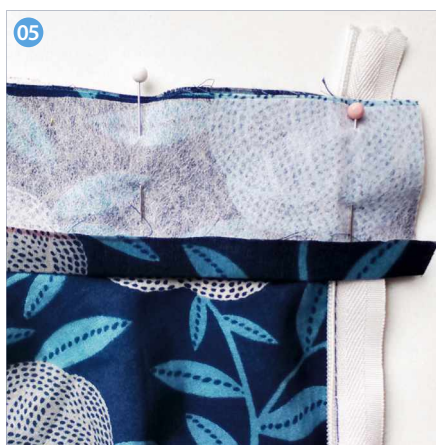
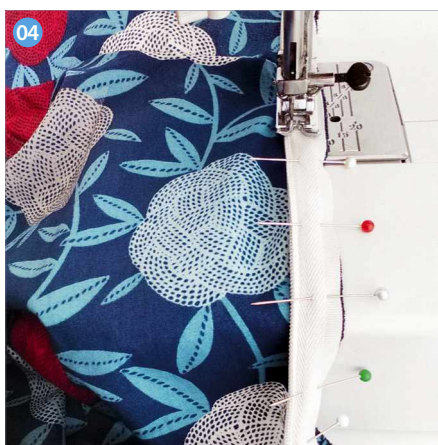
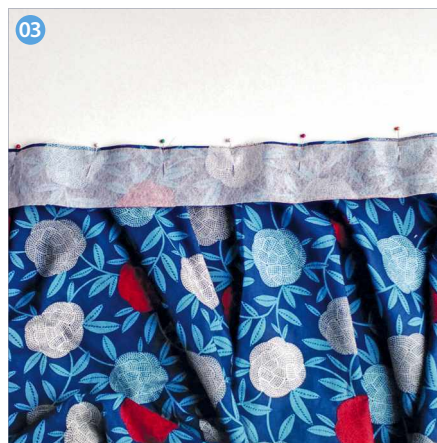
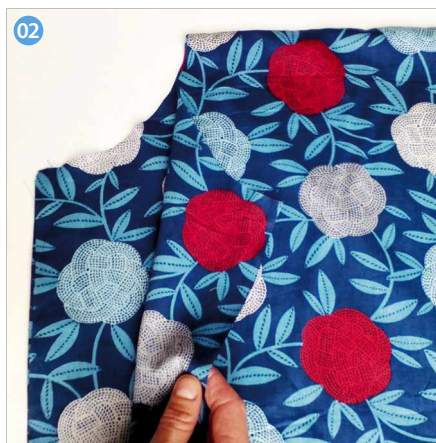
# FLORAL FLING

Make a swishy midi skirt with a handkerchief hem – no sewing pattern needed! **Jennie Jones** shows you how.





# HANDKERCHIEF SKIRT



## YOU WILL NEED

- Main fabric, lightweight cotton: 1.5m (1¾yds) x 125cm (50in) wide
- Invisible zip: 20cm (8in)
- Medium-weight interfacing: see instructions
- Matching sewing thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Use a 1.5cm (¾in) seam allowance unless otherwise stated.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** Cut 125cm (50in) from the length of the main fabric to make a square.

**Step two** Fold the fabric square in half and then in half again to make a smaller square.

**Step three** Take your waist measurement and divide it by 3.14, then half this. For example: for a 66cm (26in) waist the calculation would be 10.5cm (4¼in). Mark this at the sides of the centre fold, using an erasable pen, and join them together in a curve – you can draw around a small plate to get a smooth curve. Cut and then open out and you'll have a circle for your waist. **01**

**Step four** From the main fabric, cut two strips of fabric that are 6.5cm (2½in) deep and 5cm (2in) longer than your waist measurement in length. These are for the waistband.

**Step five** From the interfacing, cut two strips to the same measurement as you did for the waistband strips.

## MAKING THE WAISTBAND

**Step one** Cut from the bottom of the fabric to the centre along one of the fold lines to create a back seam. Zigzag or overlock the raw edges. **02**

**Step two** Interface both waistband strips and pin one into the waistline of your skirt, right sides (RS) facing. Sew, open out and press. **03**

## INSERTING THE ZIP

**Step one** Press the zip to flatten it out.

**Step two** Pin one side of the zip to the skirt, making sure the stopper at the top of the zipper is 1cm (¾in) down from the top of the waistband, then sew. **04**

**Step three** Match up the other side of the zip and repeat.

**Step four** Sew the rest of the back seam up to the zip, sewing as close as you can to the zip.

## FINISHING THE WAISTBAND

**Step one** Take the other waistband strip and pin it along the top of the joined waistband with RS facing, then press the bottom edge up so it aligns with the bottom of the waistband on the skirt outer, sandwiching the zip between the two strips. **05**

**Step two** Sew the waistband in place along the zip and top edge.

**Step three** Turn the waistband RS out and press. Topstitch the waistband 5mm (¼in) in from where the waistband joins the skirt. **06**

## FINISHING OFF

**Step one** Hem the skirt by machine or hand, or by overlocking the raw edge.



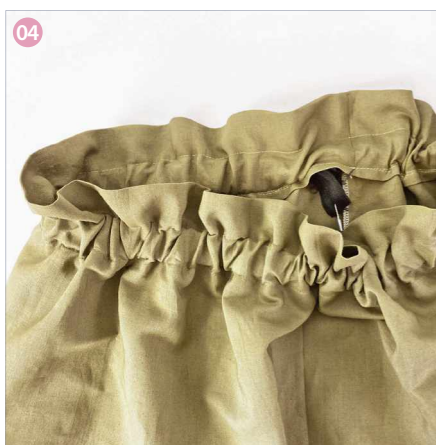
# TAKE A BOW

Add a lightweight, loose-fitting cami top to your summer wardrobe with this quick and easy patternless make from **Debbie Wainhouse**.





# CAMI TOP



## YOU WILL NEED

- Woven fabric, eg linen viscose: 1m x 150cm
- 2.5cm wide elastic x your bust measurement
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Seam allowance is 1cm unless otherwise stated.
- We used the width of our fabric as the top front and back (cut as one piece). If your bust measurement is larger than the width of your fabric you can use the fabric length (this may require more fabric). Measure yourself before purchasing your fabric if you want to be sure the width and length of your desired top will work.

## MEASURING YOUR MAIN FABRIC PIECES

Measure your bust and add 60cm, this will be the width of your top. Measure down from your high bust (just under your arms) to where you want the hem to sit; if you would like to make a cropped top this will be approximately 40cm. If you want a longer top, make the length approximately 50cm. For example:

Bust measurement = 84cm  
 84cm + 60cm = 144cm

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** From the main fabric cut:

**Top Main:** 144x50cm (using your measurements)

**Straps:** four 45x10cm

## MAKING THE TOP

**Step one** Take the Strap pieces and fold them in half lengthways with right sides (RS) together. Stitch down the long edge and one short edge with a 1cm seam allowance. Clip the corner, being careful not to cut through any stitches, then turn the strap RS out and press with an iron. Repeat to make the other three straps. <sup>01</sup>

**Step two** Take your Top Main fabric and fold it in half with RS together, bringing the short edges together. Stitch then finish the seam with an overlocker or zigzag stitch and press. Hem the top and the bottom of this fabric loop by finishing the raw edges with an overlocker and pressing a 1cm hem to the WS. Topstitch the hem in place.

Alternatively, if you don't have an overlocker, double fold the hem and topstitch in place. <sup>02</sup>

**Step three** Turn the hem at the top edge over by another 7.5cm. Press and stitch a channel 5cm wide around the top of the hem, 2.5cm down from the top of the hem, leaving a gap of 4cm to thread the elastic through. <sup>03</sup>

## ADDING THE ELASTIC

**Step one** Stretch your elastic slightly and hold it around the top of your bust where the top will sit. Cut it at a length that feels comfortable. Thread your elastic through the channel at the top of the cami top using a safety pin and stitch the edges together with a zigzag stitch. Make sure your gathers are nice and even then close the gap. <sup>04</sup>

**Step two** Fold the raw ends of your Straps in by 1cm and press. <sup>05</sup>

**Step three** Try the top on and decide the placement for your Straps and pin in place.

**Step four** Stitch the Straps in place, lining the ends up with your original lines of stitching in the top of the elastic channel. <sup>06</sup>





# GOOD HAIR DAY

Tame your tresses with Jennie Jones' sailor's knot and wrap-style headbands in bold floral prints.



# HAIRBAND UPCYCLE

## YOU WILL NEED

- XL men's cotton T-shirt (per hairband)
- Basic sewing kit

Designer Jennie Jones says: "These easy T-shirt transformations are quick solutions to bad hair days and great for festivals or the beach. I've opted for a big floral print that's on trend for this summer."

## WRAP HEADBAND

**Step one** Take an XL men's T-shirt and cut a horizontal tube – mine is 15cm (6in). <sup>01</sup>

**Step two** Take the tube and, holding both ends, twist them twice to make a figure of eight shape. <sup>02</sup>

**Step three** Bring the ends together and you'll have your finished headband. <sup>03</sup>

## SAILOR'S KNOT HEADBAND

**Step one** Cut four vertical strips approx 5cm (2in) wide through the front and back of the T-shirt. <sup>04</sup>

Trim off the top and bottom seams so that you now have eight strips.

**Step two** Pull the strips so they roll up, then section into two lots of four. Create a loop with one lot of strips and a U-shape with the other. Overlay the U-shape on top of the loop. <sup>05</sup>

**Step three** Create a Carrick Knot by threading first the U-shape ends then the loop ends under and over each other. Look closely at the photo to see in which order this is done. <sup>06</sup>

**Step four** Making sure you keep the whole knot flat, hold all four ends and slowly and carefully pull them gently – this will create the knot. <sup>07</sup>

**Step five** Try your headband on and cut the strips so there is a gap of around 5cm (2in) at the back when on - this will close once the headband is tied. Leave two strips 15cm (6in) longer than the others from each bunch. These will be the ties which you'll use for tying your headband on when you've finished.

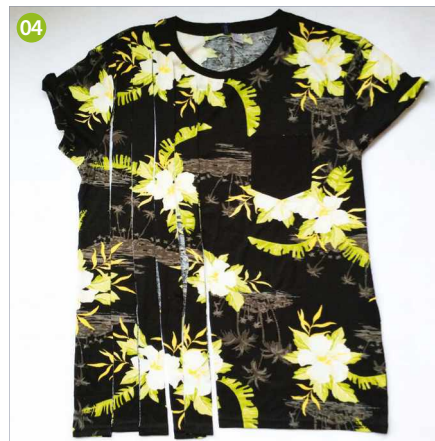
**Step six** Cut a binding piece of fabric, 6x8cm (2½x3½in) and turn the long edges under by 1cm (¾in) to the wrong side. Place the short strips flat inside, tucking them under one turned over edge. <sup>08</sup>

**Step seven** Fold the binding piece round the short strips, turning the short ends under, then pin and sew into place to secure the strips. Repeat with the strips at the other end of your headband.

**Step eight** Tie the long tie ends together and your headband is now ready to wear.

TIP

*You can wear your wrap headband as a scarf too!*





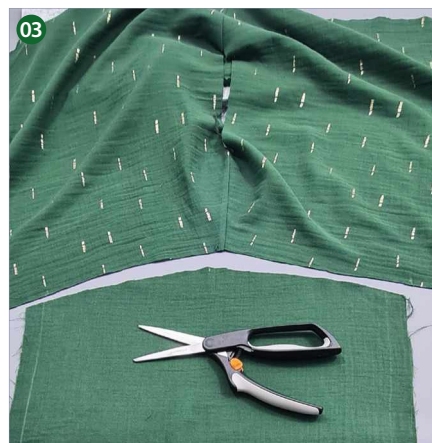
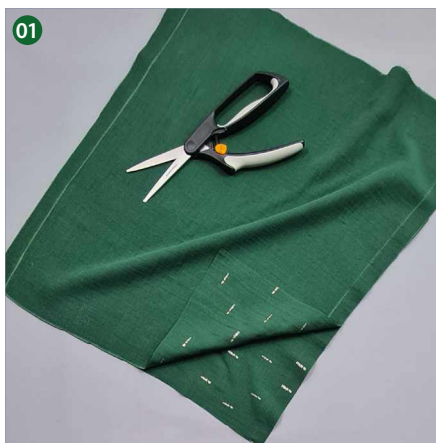


# CASUAL GLAMOUR

Perfect for those 'jeans and a nice top' events?  
Meet your new fave go-to for easy style with  
Portia Lawrie's patternless peplum top.



# PEPLUM TOP



## YOU WILL NEED

- Light- to medium-weight woven fabric, eg. gauze: 2m (2¼yd)
- Lightweight iron-on interfacing
- Erasable fabric marker
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- The specific measurements given will give a finished garment that will fit a UK 10-14. For larger and smaller sizes simply increase/decrease the width of the front and back pieces.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** From the main fabric cut:

**Front/Back Bodice:** two 55x55cm (21½x21½in)

**Sleeves:** two 50x40cm (19¾x15¾in) <sup>01</sup>

## CREATING THE NECKLINE

**Step one** With the Front and Back Bodice pieces RS together and folded along the warp/grainline cut out a 2.5cm (1in) deep and 12cm (4¾in) wide shallow neckline through all layers, from the folded edge as shown in the image.

**Step two** Cut a shoulder slope through all layers. <sup>02</sup>

## ASSEMBLING THE TOP

**Step one** Unfold. With RS together sew the shoulders with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance. Press the seam allowance to the back. Take a Sleeve rectangle and curve the top (50cm) edge to match the curve of the armhole, having the centre of the Sleeve head align with the shoulder seam. <sup>03</sup>

**Step two** Sew the Sleeve heads to the armholes RS together with a 1cm (¾in) seam. Press the seam towards the Sleeve. Finish the seam allowance. <sup>04</sup>

**Step three** Fold the whole garment RS together with raw edges of the Sleeve and side seams aligned. You can shape the Sleeve at this stage if you wish by cutting a shallow wedge from the seam allowance, starting at the cuff and finishing at the underarm. Sew the Sleeve and side seams with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance in one pass, curving at the underarm. Press the seam to the

back. Finish the seam allowance. <sup>05</sup>

**Step four** Try the top on. Mark a front neckline curve that sits smoothly along your collar bone. With the garment folded along the centre front, and neckline edges and shoulder seams aligned, cut from the centre front fold, along the marked curve, blending to nothing at the shoulders. <sup>06</sup>

## ADDING THE FACING

**Step one** With the top laid open and flat, trace the front neckline curve, and 3.5cm (1½in) along the shoulder slopes, onto the interfacing. Join the ends of this line with a bottom curve spaced 3.5cm (1½in) from the first, to create a neckline facing. Repeat for the back neckline and then cut both pieces out. <sup>07</sup>

**Step two** Press the Front and Back interfacing pieces onto fabric. Cut out with a 1cm (¾in) fabric seam allowance along the shoulder edges. Finish the shoulder seam and bottom curved edges. <sup>08</sup>

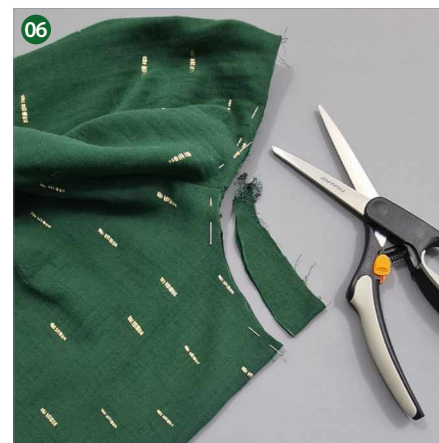
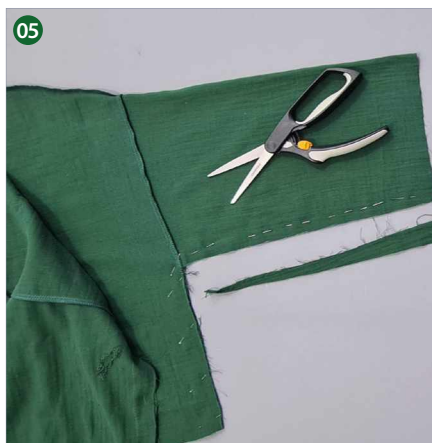
**Step three** With RS together sew the Front and Back facing pieces together along the shoulder seams with a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance. Apply the complete facing piece to the garment neckline with RS together, raw edges aligned, and a 8mm seam allowance. Understitch then press the facing to the inside. <sup>09</sup>

## ADDING THE PEPLUM

**Step one** Try the garment on. With a 1cm (¾in) seam allowance, mark where you the peplum seam will sit. Cut away any excess fabric below this mark. <sup>10</sup>



## PEPLUM TOP



**Step two** The peplum is a closed loop of fabric that is hemmed along the bottom edge and gathered until it is the same circumference as the hem of the garment. Dimensions here are entirely your choice depending on how gathered and how deep you want the peplum to be. Ours is approximately 1.5 times the garment hem and 10cm (4in) deep before being gathered and hemmed. **11**

**Step three** Secure the gathering on the peplum in place with machine tacking. Sew to the garment hem with RS together, raw edges aligned, and a 1cm (3/8in) seam allowance. Press the peplum away from the garment and press the seam allowance towards the garment. Finish the seam allowance.

**Step four** Hem the sleeves to finish. **12**

## IDEAS TO TRY

- 1** Try positioning the frill seam at different locations. Under bust for an empire line or at the hips for a dropped waist version.
- 2** Use lightweight cottons for daywear, or try using a lustrous silk for parties!
- 3** Add tiers using three or four longer frill lengths for a boho dress.
- 4** Add a matching frill to the cuffs for a more exaggerated silhouette.





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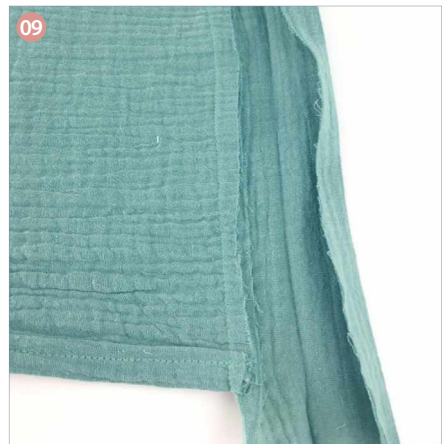
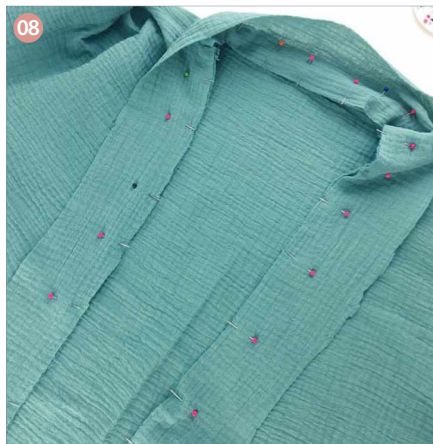
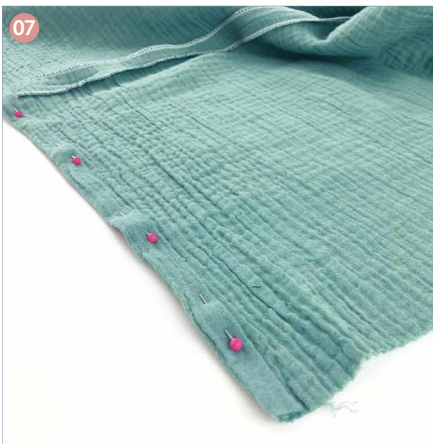
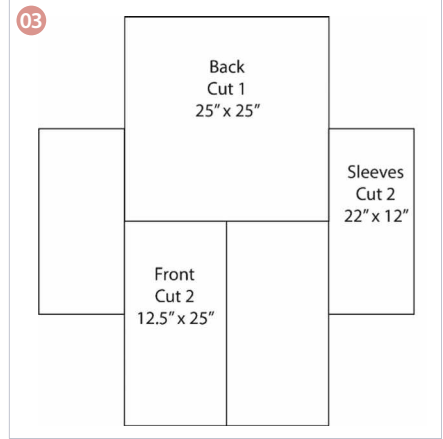
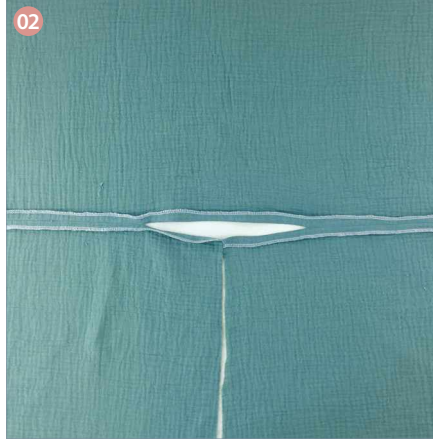
# COOL COVER

Grab a drapey fabric and sew yourself a lightweight cover-up for the warmer evenings with this project from **Debbie Wainhouse**.





# COVER-UP CARDI



## YOU WILL NEED

- Cotton Gauze, Double Gauze or any fabric with a nice drape: 1.5m (1¾yd)
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Seam allowance is 1.5cm (¾in) unless otherwise stated.
- The measurements shown will fit a UK size 10-12; increase the size of your fabric panels to enlarge.
- If you are unsure about your size, use a garment you already own such as a jacket or t-shirt to calculate approximate measurements for your jacket.

## CUTTING OUT

- Step one** From the main fabric cut:
- Back:** 64x64cm (25x25in)
  - Front:** two 32x64cm (12.5x25in)
  - Sleeve:** two 56x30cm (22x12in)

## ASSEMBLING THE JACKET

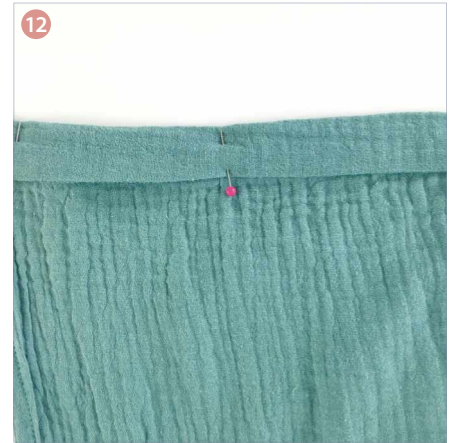
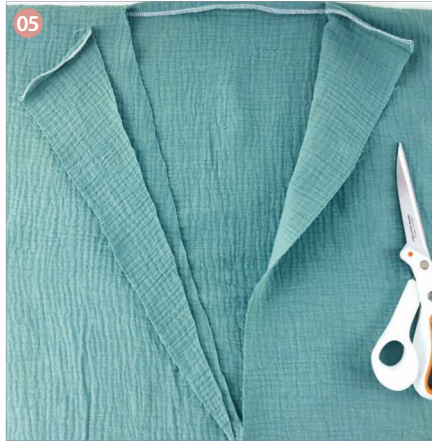
- Step one** Place each Front on top of the Back right sides (RS) facing and pin along the top edges leaving a gap of 10cm (4in) either side of the front opening and sew. **01**
- Step two** Finish the edges with your overlocker or with a zigzag stitch. **02**
- Step three** Lay out the assembled Back and Front RS facing up. Find the horizontal centre of the Sleeve rectangle, then pin that centre to the shoulder seam RS together. Sew. **03**
- Step four** Fold the jacket, RS together, in half along the shoulder seams. Pin and sew the bottom of the sleeves and the sides of the garment. Finish all seams with an overlocker or zigzag if your fabric is likely to fray. **04**
- Step five** Fold the front edge in from the side of the neck opening to centre front on both sides, then trim these pieces off. **05**
- Step six** Hem the sleeves. Fold over approximately 5mm (¼in) and then a further 5mm (¼in), pin and then sew. **06**
- Step seven** Hem the bottom of the jacket. Fold over approximately 5mm (¼in) and then again, pin and sew. **07**

## ADDING THE PLACKET BAND

- Step one** Cut a 7.5cm (3in) wide strip (on the straight of grain) as long as the length of the opening is of the front of the jacket which should be approximately 152cm (60in). We made our strip a bit longer and trimmed off the excess later on. This will be attached to make the front opening trim. You can make this strip wider if you would like a thicker band.
- Step two** Pin this strip RS together along the opening edge of the jacket front from the bottom all the way around the neck and back down. Stitch. **08**
- Step three** Press a 1cm (¾in) hem on the unsewn edge of the facing. This will help to align it with the already sewn seam. **09**
- Step four** Fold the strip in half, lining up the folded edge of the pressed edge with the inside seam. Press again and pin in place. **10**
- Step five** To finish the facing ends, pin the facing back onto itself with RS together.
- Step six** Stitch across the bottom matching your stitching line with the bottom of the hem of the jacket. Then turn back to the RS and you'll have a neat hem. **11**
- Step seven** Topstitch the facing in place all the way around the neckline and the front of the jacket using a slightly longer stitch length (we used 2.8).
- Step eight** Give the jacket a final press on the WS to finish. **12**



## COVER-UP CARDI



## IDEAS TO TRY

- 1** Lengthen the jacket to make a longer length cover-up for cooler evenings.
- 2** Add a trim to the hem and sleeve hems, you can personalise the style to your taste. Use tassels for a holiday cover-up or pom-pom trim for party wear.
- 3** Add patch pockets to the front of the garment. Try the jacket on when complete and decide where you would like to place them.
- 4** Dip the hem at the back for a subtle design detail. You could choose to curve the back hem or simply cut the back a few cm longer and turn the side seams in.
- 5** Use a lightweight gauze as we have for summer or make this in a denim or lightweight wool depending on the season.
- 6** Make a tie belt from leftover fabric to take in the waist; you could also add belt loops at the side seams to hold the belt.





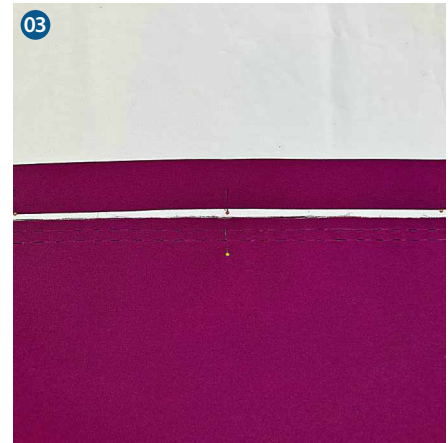
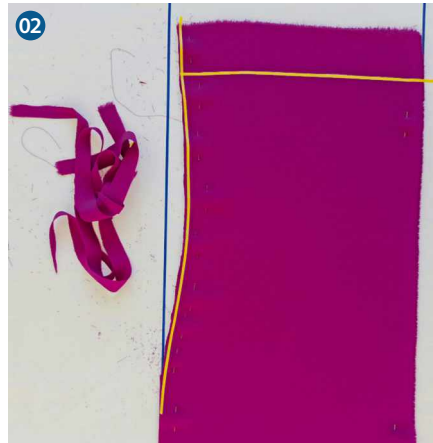
## POWER OF PINK

Brighten up your winter wardrobe with this ruffled party dress by **Linda Mafuba** in this season's hottest high-octane hue.





# CREPE DRESS



## YOU WILL NEED

- Existing fitted dress
- Triple crepe fabric: 2m
- Stiff netting: 1m
- Medium-weight interfacing: 30x90cm
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- Seam allowance is 1cm unless otherwise stated.

## FABRICS USED

- Heavy triple crepe in fuchsia from [minerva.com](http://minerva.com).
- Extra stiff dress net in burgundy from [minerva.com](http://minerva.com).

## MEASUREMENTS NEEDED

Take the following measurements:  
Bust, Waist, Hip, Desired length.

## CUTTING OUT THE DRESS PANELS

**Step one** Cut four panels: Width = your widest measurement divided by 4 plus seam allowance. Length = your desired length plus 5cm for hem allowance at the top and bottom.

## SHAPING THE DRESS

Your panels can be left as rectangles if your bust and hip measurements are similar.

**Step one** Lay all panels against a straight edge to ensure the edges align. Chalk mark a 5cm hem allowance at the top of the panels. Pin the panels together to prevent the fabric from moving.

**Step two** Turn your existing dress inside out and fold in half lengthwise. Lay the folded dress on top of the panels with the folded edge of the dress against one straight edge and aligning with the marked 5cm hem. Fold sleeve away at armhole. Chalk mark from the top hem line to the hip. **01**

**Step three** Cut out along the chalk marked edge from the previous step. **02**

## CUTTING OUT THE STRAPS

**Step one** Cut two straps, 12cm wide. Decide on the finished length of the straps and add 5cm hem allowance to each end.

## CUTTING OUT THE FRILLS

**Step one** Cut two frill panels, double the strap length and with a width of 46cm including seam allowance. Repeat to cut two pieces of netting.

## SEWING THE DRESS PANELS

**Step one** Finish the edges of the panels to avoid fraying. Join the fronts at the centre, right sides (RS) facing. Press seams open. Repeat with the back panels, leaving a slit opening if desired.

**Step two** With RS facing, join the front and back panels at the side seams and press.

**Step three** Hem the top and bottom of the dress.

## PREPARING THE STRAPS

**Step one** Add interfacing to the straps. Press the seam allowances to the wrong side along the long edges. Fold the straps in half lengthways, RS facing. Stitch along the short edges and press. Turn RS out. Pin or chalk mark 5cm at both short edges, then pin or chalk mark the centre. **03**

## PREPARING AND ATTACHING THE FRILL

**Step one** Add interfacing to both frill panels. Pin or tack the netting on the interfaced side.

**Step two** Fold the panels in half lengthways, RS facing. Stitch together along the short edges. Turn inside out and press.

**Step three** Pin or mark the centre of the frill panels.

**Step four** Sew two rows of gathering stitch near the raw edges. Gather the edges. Insert the frills into the straps matching centres. Adjust the frill to fit the straps between the 5cm marked points. **04**

**Step five** Stitch together by hand or machine.

**Step six** Pin the straps in your desired position. **05**

**Step seven** Sew by machine or hand finish. **06**



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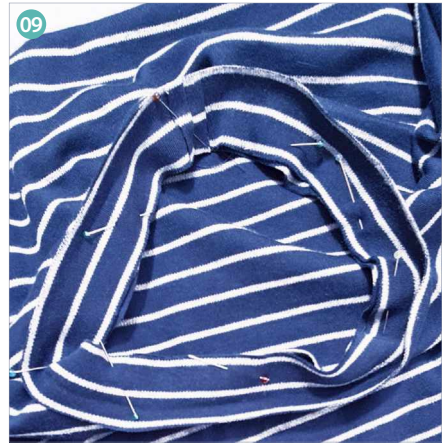
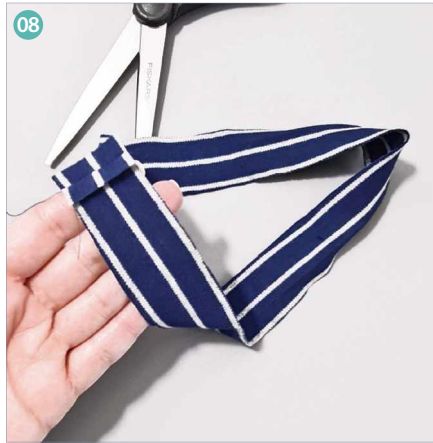




## COMFY AND CHIC

Make a super simple and stylish patternless midi dress from **Portia Lawrie**. Wear it loose and casual or cinched in with a waist tie belt.

# JERSEY DRESS



## YOU WILL NEED

- Ponte or similar stable knit jersey fabric: 1.5m (1¾yd)
- Loose-fitting top
- Walking foot (optional)
- Matching thread
- Basic sewing kit

## NOTES

- A walking foot can help prevent stretching when sewing with knit fabrics and can also help to pattern match striped fabric.

## CUTTING OUT

**Step one** Fold your fabric in half lengthwise, selvedge to selvedge. If you're using a striped fabric like ours then aligning and pinning the stripes together helps ensure you can pattern match your front and back pieces later on. **01**

**Step two** Centre your template top on your fabric. Using it as a guide (and keeping in mind how your top fits you compared to how you want your dress to fit you) cut around it at the underarm and side seam as pictured. Extend the length to whatever length you would like your dress to be. Then cut closely along the shoulder and neckline, stopping at the opposite shoulder and marking the shoulder point with a pin. **02**

**Step three** Remove your template top and fold your partially cut fabric in half lengthwise, aligning the cut edge of the neckline and the shoulder points. (If you're using a striped fabric like ours, then align and pin the stripes together again). Then use the side you already cut as a template to cut the opposite side, as pictured. **03**

**Step four** You will now have two identical pattern pieces – one for the front and one for the back. Pin together at the shoulders and side seams (aligning stripes if relevant). **04**

## ASSEMBLING THE DRESS

**Step one** Sew or overlock together at the shoulders and side seams with a scant seam allowance. The underarm and side seams are

sewn together in one pass. **05**  
**Step two** Hem the dress and the sleeves. **06**

## MAKING THE NECKLINE BINDING & BELT

**Step one** Cut two strips across the width of the fabric. A narrow (1.5cm/5⁄8in) one for the Neckline Binding, and a wider one (ours is approximately 7cm/2¾in) to make the Tie Belt. **07**

**Step two** Cut the narrower Neckline Binding strip to length, 2–3cm (¾–1¼in) shorter than the circumference of the neck opening so it stretches slightly when applied. Then sew the short ends together to form a loop. **08**

**Step three** Pin the Neckline Binding to the neck opening with raw edges aligned and stretching slightly to fit. Sew with a scant seam allowance. **09**

**Step four** Press the seam allowance towards the garment. Fold the Neckline Binding so the cut edge covers the seam allowance and the folded edge peeks out along the neck edge. Pin. **10**

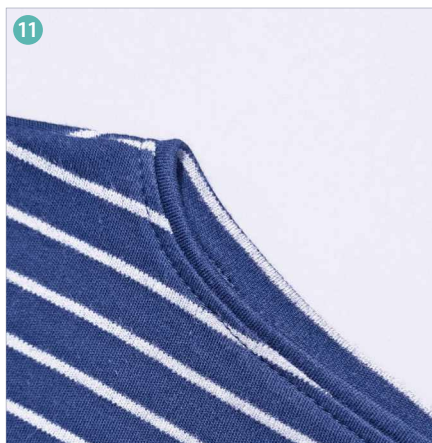
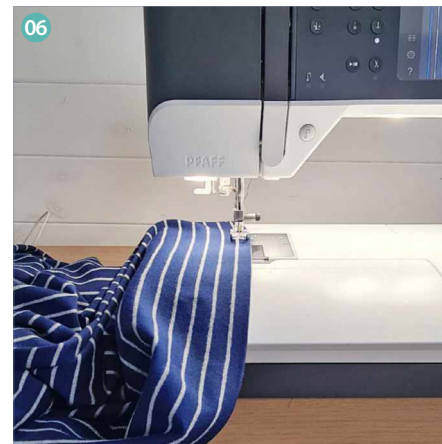
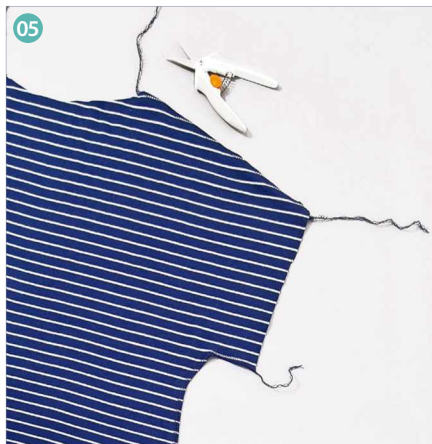
**Step five** Edgestitch the seam allowance and Neckline Binding in place around the neckline. **11**

**Step six** Use the Tie Belt strip you cut previously to create the waist tie. Cut the strip down to your desired length; try wrapping the belt around your natural waist to work this out.

**Step seven** Fold the strip RS together lengthwise. Sew across the short ends and long edge, leaving a gap for turning in the middle. Turn RS out, poke out the corners, and press and stitch the turning gap closed. **12**



## JERSEY DRESS



### IDEAS TO TRY

- 1** Add patch pockets to the dress using scraps of matching (or contrasting) fabric. Add the pockets at the end so that you can pin them in place and try the dress on to check their positioning. Finish all raw edges of the pocket squares/rectangles and then hem the top edge. Fold the other three edges under and press. Topstitch these folded-under edges onto the dress.
- 2** Experiment with different lengths or with an asymmetrical hem, dipping the back hem slightly. Be aware that sewing a curved hem will be trickier than a straight hem – always press under the hem allowance first for a neat finish.
- 3** If you are making this in a woven fabric you will need to drop the neckline a little to allow you to get the garment over your head. Given the fit of the dress, it is suited to a wide range of fabric. Just bear in mind that stretch fabrics will give the most flattering fit as they 'spring' back into shape.
- 4** Add embellishment to the dress once complete. A coordinating strip of lace would look great sewn to the sleeve hems, or you could experiment with beading around the neckline!



# CONTRIBUTORS



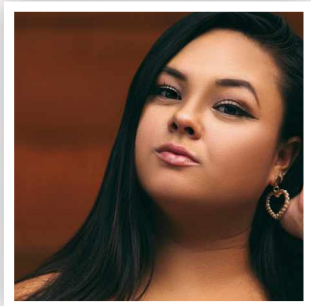
## PORTIA LAWRIE

Portia is a regular contributor to *Simply Sewing*, coming up with ingenious pattern hacks and patternless projects. Be inspired by her casual joggers, coatigan and top in our Ultimate Patternless Wardrobe starting on p78.



## LINDA MAFUBA

Linda Mafuba is a Kent-based fashion designer. She makes custom womenswear under her brand, MYDEI (@mydeiofficial). Make her gorgeous patternless crepe or boxy party dresses on p90 and p122.



## MACY KNIGHT

Macy Knight is a passionate fashion designer and sewing blogger, her designs have a 'modern feminine-whimsical vibe'. She makes formal gowns at macycamile.com (@macycamile) and you can make her tiered top and skirt on p78.



## DEBBIE WAINHOUSE

Debbie studied womenswear at the London College of Fashion and now runs her own creative business, Hila Studio (@hila.studio). Find Debbie's patternless dressing gown and maxi dress on p102 and p107.



## KAROLINE DAHRLING

Karoline is a crafter, designer, teacher and author (@karoline.skandimama). She lives in the north of Denmark and loves to upcycle clothes and furniture. Try making her patternless dip-hem tunic on p98.



## JENNIE JONES

Jennie Jones discovered sewing when she had children, and has designed and made some stylish garments for *Simply Sewing*. Make her super-stylish headband and handkerchief skirt on p90 and 114.

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