

Viola Lee

Sewing Knit Fabrics

There are some techniques that make sewing with knits easier with better results. Here are a few basic tips to get you started.

Needles

Most of the time you will need a specialized needle to sew knits. There are 2 types used for knits, ballpoint & stretch. Ballpoint Twin needles are used for hemming knits. Stretch needles work well with tightly knitted jersey type fabrics. Ballpoint needles work well with loosely woven knits, they have a rounded point that will not catch on yarns.

Stitch Type & Length

If you have a straight stitch only machine set your stitch length to 2.5mm or 3mm. When sewing with a straight stitch you will need to very slightly stretch the fabric as it goes under the presser foot. Practice with a scrap piece of the fabric that you are using first!

If you have a zigzag machine, set the ZigZag to .4mm or .5mm setting. Set stitch length between 2.5mm and 3mm. Very thick knit fabric may need a longer stitch length. Do not stretch the fabric as you sew. The slight zigzag will give the fabric the stretch it needs.

Seam Finishes

Knit fabrics usually do not ravel, so you don't need to finish seams. Overlock machines & Sergers will stitch and finish seams at the same time. If you prefer, you can finish seams with a serger.

Hemming

Most hems on knits are sewn with a double row of stitching. A Ball Point Twin needle can be used with a zigzag machines. Twin needle sew a perfectly spaced double row of stitching on the needle side of the fabric, with a zigzag on the bottom. There is no need to turn under raw edges of knit fabrics before hemming.

The stitch using a twin needle has more stretch than a regular straight stitch, it will give your garments a professional finished look. Test on the fabric you are using first, you may need to adjust needle & bobbin tension to get a smooth flat hem. Press hems after stitching. Use a chalk pencil or something that will easily come off to mark your hem on the right side of the

*There are many free recourses for advanced technique for sewing with knits on the web!
Explore & practice withh your knit scraps!*



Ruffle Instructions

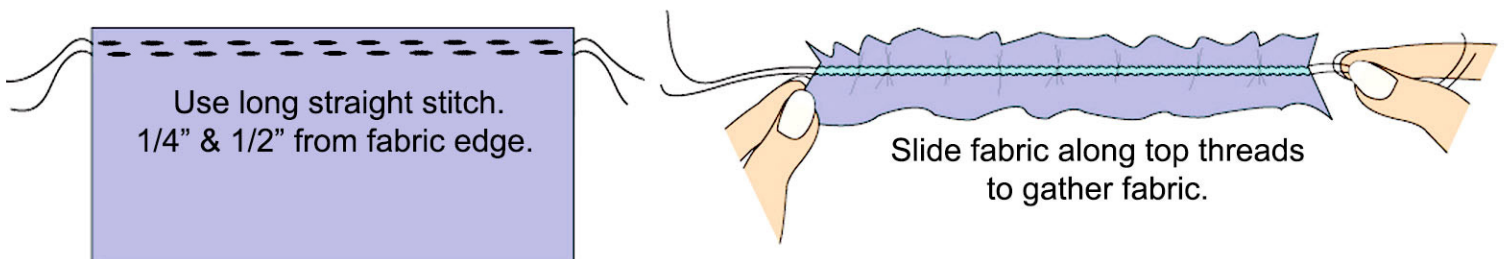
Hem ruffle strips before gathering.

- * Set the straight stitch on your sewing machine to the longest stitch length. Slightly loosen the tension on the top thread, if you can on your machine.
- * Stitch **2** rows of stitching **1/4"** & **1/2"** from raw edge of fabric strip. Leave **4"** or longer tails on all the thread ends. Do **NOT** back stitch at the ends of stitching. You should now have **2** parallel rows of long straight stitches with long thread tails at both ends.
- * At one end of your strip, tie the upper & lower threads together in a knot for both rows of stitching, this will keep the upper threads from pulling out when gathering fabric.
- * At the other end of your fabric carefully tug on the **2 TOP** threads. Your fabric will slide along these threads like a curtain on a curtain rod, gathering into ruffles. Continue pulling, adjusting and evening the ruffles as you go.
- * Gather until the strip is the finished length you need for your project. Tie a knot in the loose ends when you are sure your ruffle strip is the correct length.
- * When sewing ruffles to the item you are making, be sure to stitch just below **1/2"** gathering stitches so they won't show. Use a **5/8"** seam allowance.

Tip: For really *long ruffle strips* or when you have sewn **2** strips of fabric together, make **2** sets of double rows of stitching starting & ending the rows at the seam between the 2 strips.

Tip: To make it easier to spread ruffles out evenly, before gathering mark the center of the strip on the seam allowance on the wrong side of the fabric. On long strips you can mark the strips to evenly divide it into **1/4** or **1/8** sections. Mark the fabric piece you are sewing the ruffle to just as you have the ruffle strip. Pin the gathered strip to the fabric you are sewing it to at the ends & together at the matching marks. Adjust the ruffles evenly between the pins.

Option: You can use a wide zig zag & stitch over a heavy strong thread or dental floss. Slide fabric along heavy thread or floss to gather fabric. Use seam allowance in the pattern you are using as a guide for placement of gathering stitches.



Common Sewing Steps

This page is a guide to sewing steps used in most of my patterns.

Consult this page when referenced in the pattern instructions.

Once you are familiar with these steps your projects will be easier & be completed faster.

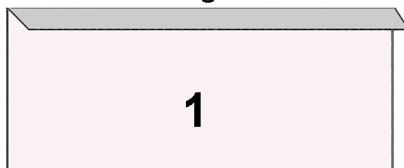
I have included these diagrams because sometimes they can be clearer to see than a photo.

Hems & Elastic Casings

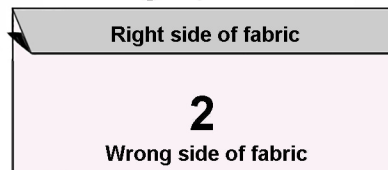
Hems & Elastic Casings can vary in width. *Specific widths* to fold over fabric will be given in pattern instructions. Elastic Casings are done the same way except an opening is left to insert the elastic through.

Follow the **3** steps below.

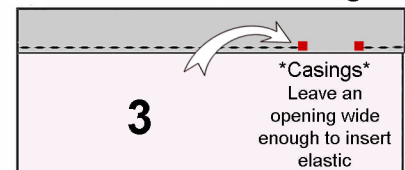
Fold raw edge over 1/4"



Fold over again, to hide raw edge



Stitch close to folded edge.

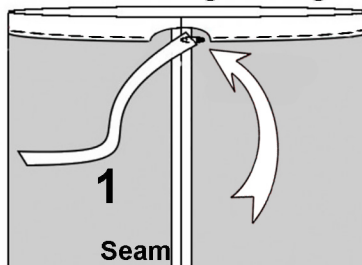


Elastic Casings

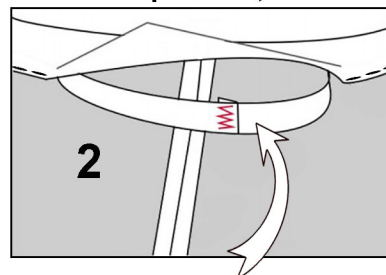
When stitching a casing for elastic, leave an opening wide enough to insert the elastic.

Feed the elastic through the casing with a large safety pin.

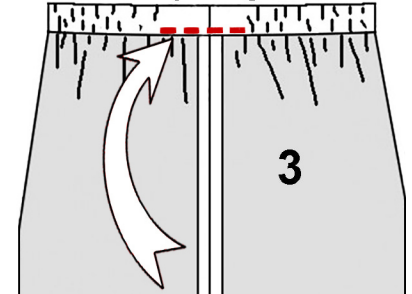
Use a safety pin to feed elastic through casing.



Overlap elastic, stitch.



Stitch opening closed



Top Stitching

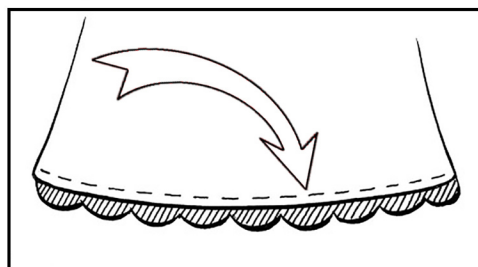
Top stitching is usually sewn with a little longer stitch than is used on seams.

I usually use a stitch length of **3** on my machine, adjust the length to your preference.

When top stitching above *ruffles*, be sure you are stitching through seam allowance, so ruffles lay flat.

** Location of stitching will be given for specific pattern steps.

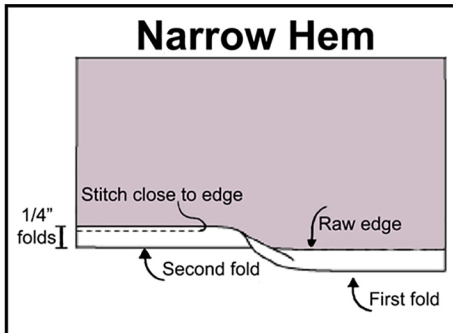
Top stitch 1/8 - 1/4" from seam.



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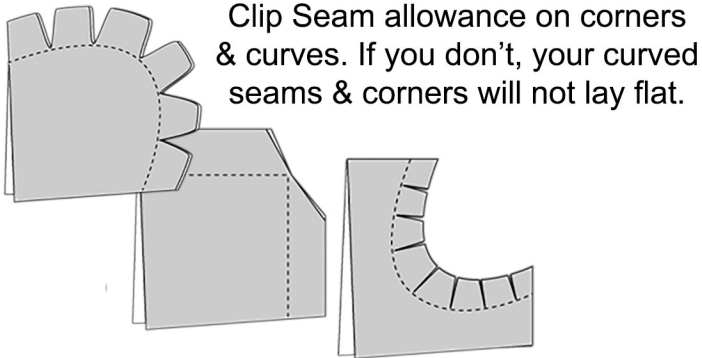
Sewing Tips

Narrow Hem



To make a narrow hem, turn raw edge up 1/4" toward wrong side of fabric, press. Turn up again 1/4", press. Stitch close to edge.

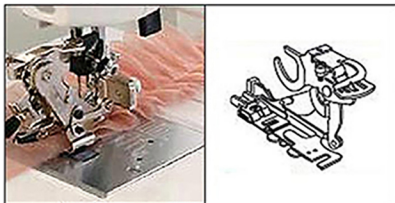
- ** narrow hems can be narrower or wider than 1/4".
- ** You can also use a Narrow Hemming foot



Example of Top Stitching

A longer decorative stitch is used. The distance can vary between 1/16" to 1/4" from the edge of a garment or a seam.

When Top Stitching above ruffles on a garment, press seam allowance away from ruffles so you will be stitching through seam allowance. This will help the ruffles to lay flat.



A sewing machine Ruffle Foot is a worthwhile investment if you will be making a lot of ruffles!

Chalk pencils are great for marking fabric. Use them to mark centers, pleats, buttonholes etc. on fabrics. Use chalk or fabric marking pens to trace patterns onto fabric.



Narrow Hemming feet are time saving for hemming ruffles & other sewing projects.

Rotary cutters, cutting rulers & mats are perfect for cutting fabric strips for ruffles & other fabric rectangles. Mats give a surface to cut on plus helpful measuring lines



Printing Instructions

Check your printer setting before printing pattern pieces.
Check settings in the program you use to print the pattern.

Different printer brands & pdf programs have their own default settings.

They may have different names for the settings that I have listed.

Be sure your settings will not change the size of the pattern or rotate the pattern to landscape format.

If pattern is not fitting together correctly, your printer may have changed just 1 page.

It usually has printed the page in landscape format or changed the pattern size.

Check to be sure pattern prints to measurements on pattern pieces.

Please review instructions for assembling pattern.

*** Check "Actual Size"**

*** Check "Portrait"**

* Choose NONE if there is a Page Scaling option.

* Do NOT choose "Fit to Page" or "Fit to Printable area"

* Do NOT choose "Shrink Large Pages" or "Custom Scaling"

* Do NOT choose "Auto Portrait/Landscape."

* Do NOT check "Center" or "Rotate Page"

If your printer screen has "Properties", click on it & check settings.

This is my Epson
printing screen.
Other brands of
printers will have
different screens
but settings
should be similar
but may have
different names
for settings.

