

WORKSHOP: "SEWING STRETCH"



Summary: We will discuss the basics and options for sewing with stretchy fabrics. We will then use machine sewing to shorten and then lengthen a t-shirt. Participants can practice on a t-shirt provided or work on a garment of their own. We will learn add a lace insert to lengthen a t-shirt.

Materials and Equipment:

3 t-shirts to practice on
polyester sewing thread - spool and bobbin
hand sewing needle (ball point)
small fabric scissors
cotton press cloth
stretch lace
iron and ironing board
paint brush
acrylic paint
instructions/ideas sheet

sewing machine
presser foot for zigzag sewing
stretch knit/ball point/jersey machine needle
hem gauge or measuring tape
water soluble marker
sewing shears
pins (ball point if available)
foil for palette
piece of paper card
optional: overlocker and cones of matching thread

Class Plan: Sewing Stretch Knit

1. There are two general categories of stretch fabrics.
 - a. Two-way stretch fabric stretches either widthwise across the fabric or lengthwise.
 - b. Four-way stretch fabric stretches in two-directions, widthwise and lengthwise. This fabric offers the greatest freedom of movement and is great for more tightly fitting clothing like athletic wear. T-shirts are generally 4-way stretch knits.



- c. Both types generally include some elastic fibres. The woven fabrics that stretch must contain some elastic fibres to allow them to stretch.
2. Woven fabrics can be stretchy when elastic fibres are mixed with base fibres like cotton, nylon, polyester, wool, etc. They only have two-way stretch.
3. Knit fabrics are stretchy because they are formed with a continuous yarn in a series of interlocking loops. Many knit fabrics have four-way stretch but some can be two-way stretch.
4. Prewash your fabrics to avoid shrinkage after you have made your project. For this project, the prewashing of materials has already been done for you.
5. All-purpose polyester thread works well with stretch knits as it has some give. Cotton thread is not recommended because it doesn't stretch enough and will break when the fabric stretches.



6. Use ball point, stretch or jersey needles for sewing stretch. They have a rounded tip that goes between fibres instead of ripping through. Breaking a thread in the fabric of a knit can result in a ladder or unravelling vertically of the fabric.



7. For presser foot use a foot with space to accommodate a zigzag stitch.



- a. You can also use a walking foot, which has teeth that help feed the top layer of fabric like the feed dogs move the bottom layer along. This can help if you are getting puckering in your seams from the fabric layers feeding unevenly.

8. If the fabric puckers decrease the presser foot pressure to avoid the fabric stretching while you sew.
9. For sewing stretchy fabrics with a regular sewing machine, use stitches that will stretch with the fabric.
10. Option 1: The straight stretch stitch is often marked as a series of 3-parallel lines. The machine takes two stitches forward and one stitch backward. It holds seams together well but does not go over the edge to prevent fraying. For edge finishing, fold the edge under twice or use a zigzag stitch.



11. Option 2: The zigzag stitch works for sewing stretch fabrics for top stitching and edge finishing. The widest zigzag setting (below centre) gives the most coverage.



- a. This stitch is less ideal for seams because the fabrics can pull apart a bit when the seam is opened. If this is the only option for seams, use a short stitch length and width.



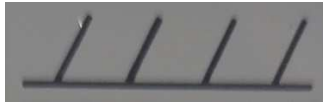
12. Option 3: A triple zigzag stitch is like a regular zigzag stitch except the machine takes three tiny stitches for each edge of the zigzag, where a regular zigzag stitch takes one.



- a. A triple zigzag stitch can be used for things like edge finishing (right side of image) where a regular zigzag stitch would pull too tight (left side of image) and create a channel under your stitches.



13. Option 4: Overcasting or knit stitch is good for seams because the fabrics will not pull apart along the straight edge. It also works well for edge finishing. The stitch looks like a straight stitch with angled points coming off of it.



14. Option 5: A blind hem stitch can be used on stretch fabric hems (below left). On the front of the fabric, it looks like a ladder (centre) and on the back it looks like a zigzag with every third stitch elongated (right). See below next section for instructions on how to fold your fabric for this seam.



15. Make your stitch length longer when going around curves to avoid puckering.
16. Option 6: An overlocker is a machine (below left) that uses multiple threads to loop around the fabric edge encasing it in thread to finish the raw edge (below right).



17. Practice the stitches you have available on scrap two-way and four-way fabric or a t-shirt that doesn't matter. Practising on scrap stretch fabric that you plan to use in your project is ideal.

18. Check your tension as you go. If you can see the bobbin thread on the top of the fabric, loosen your top thread tension. If you can see the top thread (blue) on the back of the fabric (below), tighten your top thread tension.



19. Happy creating, and please share pictures of your creations if you feel comfortable.

Class Plan: Shortening or Hemming a T-Shirt

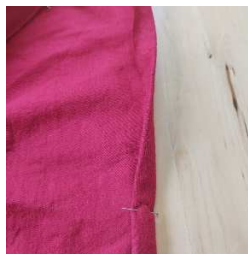
1. We will work on the t-shirt provided for practicing on. If you prefer you can work on a t-shirt of your own instead, but practising first on something that doesn't matter is recommended.
2. If you are shortening your t-shirt by a significant amount, measure the previous hem width using either a tape measure or hem gauge. This will be your seam allowance.



3. With a water-soluble marker, mark where you want your new hem.
 - a. Test your marker first on an inconspicuous area to make sure it will wash out of your fabric.
 - b. If you are folding your hem over once add the seam allowance below your new hem.



- c. If you are rolling your seam twice, add double the width of your seam allowance and mark it for cutting your shirt.



4. Mark the new hem plus seam allowance all the way around your t-shirt hem.



5. Turn your t-shirt inside out and iron your hem up on the inside using a low iron setting or a higher setting with a cotton press cloth over your garment fabric. The washable marker marks now run along the crease you've created.



6. Trim your t-shirt hem along the marks for the bottom edge of your seam allowance (about 5/8" below where your pressed hem edge is for a single fold).



7. If you are shortening your t-shirt a small amount, you can fold over the existing seam once and stitch it in place using a zigzag or triple zigzag stitch.



8. Option 1: With a regular sewing machine, use a zigzag or triple zigzag stitch to secure your hem.
- a. A zigzag stitch will look the same on the front and back of the t-shirt.



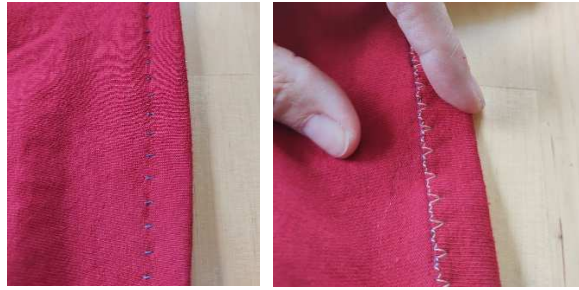
9. Option 2: With a regular sewing machine, use a blind hem stitch to secure your hem.
- a. Fold your hem over twice to the inside (below left). Then, working from the inside of the t-shirt, fold the rolled hem underneath to the front leaving a small edge 1/16" of it showing (below right).



- b. Stitch along this edge, with the longer stitches catching the body of the t-shirt (left). You can use a zigzag foot (centre) or a blind hem foot (right) if available.



- c. Once stitched, gently open the seam flat. The seam will look like a ladder on the front of the t-shirt and an alternating length zigzag on the back.



10. Secure your thread ends at the start and end of your seams with a few stretch stitches forward and back.

Class Plan: Adding a Band of Lace to a T-Shirt

1. We will work on the t-shirt provided for practicing on.
2. Mark a line around your t-shirt where you would like to add a band of lace. This can be used to lengthen your t-shirt or to hide holes or marks.



3. Pin your lace along the marked line. Placing a paper card inside the t-shirt helps prevent pinning the lace to the front and back of the t-shirt in the same place.



4. Cut your lace leaving enough to fold over to hide the raw edges and pin it in place.



5. Sew one edge of your stretch lace along the line marked on your t-shirt using a stretch stitch. We recommend using a narrow width zigzag stitch.



6. Flip your lace up towards the top of your t-shirt so it is out of the way and carefully cut your t-shirt in a straight line just below your stitching line. Be careful not to cut your lace.



7. Stitch the edges of your lace together (left). The image on the right shows how your t-shirt looks so far.



8. Pin the other edge of your lace to the lower section of the t-shirt you just cut off. Placing a white card underneath the lace can help you to see where to place the lace and pins.



9. Stretch stitch (narrow zigzag) your lace to the lower section removing pins as you go to avoid sewing over them.



10. Iron your lace and seams on a low setting or using a press cloth. Keep in mind that the lace insert will be somewhat see through if there is no backing on it.



11. Happy creating, and please share pictures of your creations if you feel comfortable.

Useful Information/Adaptations/Variations:

- A serger and an overlocker are the same thing. A serger creates an overlock stitch. The term serger is used in the USA. Its primary function is to finish raw edges, encasing the edge in stitches.
- If the item you're making needs to be stretchy and form fitting you can use elastic thread. When sewing by machine, only put the elastic thread in the bobbin and wind it by hand.
- In terms of terminology, Spandex is the name used in the USA, known in Europe as elastane and in the UK and Australia as Lycra. Spandex is an anagram of expands.
- You can add a band of lace over a t-shirt without cutting it if you want to add decoration, or cover fabric damage like a small hole.



- Try lengthening a t-shirt by attaching a band of fabric from another t-shirt at the bottom turning the raw edges to the back and triple zigzagging over them.

Trouble Shooting:

- To avoid puckering your seams, don't pull on your fabric while stitching. Guide the fabric through the machine without stretching it.
- One reason your fabric might distort while stitching is too much presser foot pressure. Loosen the pressure and test your seam again.
- Only use a regular straight stitch with stretchy fabric if the fabric is not going to have to stretch, otherwise the seam thread will break.