

***Deonn's Favorite Tips for sewing with KNITS

By Deonn Stott

Sewing with knits can be fun! Knits are easy to sew, easy-care, and are so comfortable to wear!

Here are a few of my favorite tips regarding the fabric, supplies, stitches and finishes for today's knits.

The Fabric:

PREWASH. If you are planning to wash and wear knit articles, prepare the fabric before you cut into it! Knits will shrink. Sometimes a lot, even up to 10% for some of today's jersey cotton knits! "Allow for shrinkage" = buy extra. Plus you can use that extra fabric for ribbing or self-binding. Machine wash warm. Non-chlorine bleach as needed. Tumble dry low.

Tools & Supplies:

MACHINE. Your sewing machine will need at least a zig-zag feature. Most machines today come with a built-in stretch stitch or overcast stitch options. A Serger will stitch, overcast and trim the seam at the same time, but you can achieve the same seam finish with a regular sewing machine.

NEEDLES. Use a ball-point sewing machine needle. It will usually say "stretch" or "ball point" somewhere on the label. A ball-point needle will part the knit fibers when making the stitch. Try a double-needle for a nice finish (see example below).

OTHER SUPPLIES:

Glue-stick = very helpful in preparing edges and keeping in place for a stitched finish.

Freezer paper = Iron waxy side to the back of knits for stability when machine-stitching applique'. Stitch using a satin stitch, then peel paper off.

Lightweight fusible knit interfacing = faced neck edges, collars, cuffs. Pellon SK135 or EK130 comes in black or white tricot.

Stitches:

If the fabric stretches, the seams must stretch too. Most machines come pre-loaded with several stretch-stitch options. Do a test. The most basic is a simple narrow zig-zag stitch. Set the stitch length to 2 and set the width at 1. Then try the different overcast stitches on your machine to see what works best. An overcast or serged seam also allows the needed stretch. Refer to your machine manual for suggested stitches.

Finishes:

RAW EDGES. Jersey knit does not fray. Unfinished edges will have a slight curl, which is all the fashion today. Stitch the skirt together and leave the hem unstitched. It will curl on it's own, or give a little tug to make it curl even more.

DOUBLE-NEEDLE. Fold the raw edge under once, measuring between 1/2 to 1", then use a double-needle to top-stitch. Use a washable **GLUE STICK** to keep hem in place as you top stitch on the right side. The single bobbin thread with double needle straight stitch will also creates a stretch stitch. Looks great for hems on sleeves, shirts and skirts.

OVERCAST. Serged or overcast seams can finish the edges nicely, both inside or outside the garment as a decorative feature. You don't have to have a serger to achieve this look; try different overcast stitches on your sewing machine.

SCALLOP EDGES. Use an overcast stitch on the machine. Fold the edge over about 1/4" and stitch, making sure the needle goes off the edge to create the scallop. This finish works well on t-shirts or lingerie.

LETTUCE EDGE. Shorten the length and width of a zig-zag stitch then pull the fabric to stretch the edge as it's stitched. This looks cute on kids' clothing at the edge of sleeves and hemlines.

SELF-FINISH: Use a strip of cross-cut knit to create ribbing or binding. The knit must stretch at least 50% in order for this technique to work well. For a classic T-shirt neckline finish, measure the circumference around the neckline. To determine the length of the neckband strip to cut, reduce that measurement by about 15%.

$$\text{Circumference} \times .85 = \text{LENGTH}$$

Determine the width of the strip by doubling the desired finished width and adding two seam allowances (usually 1/4").

$$\text{Finished width} \times 2 + .5 = \text{WIDTH}$$

Example: If the neckline measures 15 inches around, the length of the strip will be about 12.75 inches plus 1/2-inch for seam allowances. Finished size of the neck band will be 3/4-inch, so the cut width of the strip will be two inches. The strip will be cut at 2" x 13-1/4" on the cross-grain.

With right sides together, join the short ends and stitch using a 1/4-inch seam allowance. Open the seam, and fold the tube in half lengthwise, right side out. Fold the neckband in half and quarters and mark with pins. Repeat the steps on the raw edges of the neckline, dividing into quarters and pinning to mark.

With the neck opening and folded neckband piece right sides together, match the pins with the neckband seam at center back.

Align the raw edges, stretch to ease the neckband slightly and pin into place. **STITCH** using 1/4-inch seam allowance. Zig-Zag or overcast the edges then give it a press. Perfect! Use the same principle for cuffs. A 2-inch finished cuff would need about 4-1/2 inches in width. Measure the circumference of the wrist for the length.

See the full illustrated tutorial at this link: goo.gl/L2BCVI

