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Sewing with Elastic

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What is elastic? Elastic is a stretch yarn made of rubber or synthetic rubber material such as spandex that has stretch, recovery and spring characteristics. The purpose of elastic is to create an expandable opening in a garment. The elastic should stretch and return to its original dimensions. How well it stretches and recovers depends upon how it was made, what fibers were used and how it was applied.

Elastic can be braided, knitted, woven or transparent polyurethane. **Braided elastic** is identified by the lengthwise, parallel ribs and becomes narrower when stretched. If sewn through, the needle pierces the rubber causing loss of stretch and recovery. Use this type of elastic in a casing. **Knitted elastic** is strong and soft and doesn't narrow when stretched. You can stitch through this elastic and use it for direct applications. **Woven elastic** is identified by the crosswise and parallel ribs creating a window-pane effect. It doesn't narrow when stretched and may be stitched through. **Transparent elastic** is clear and stretches up to three to four times its length and has complete recovery. It is used for direct applications.

There are many kinds of elastic, each with different stretch and recovery characteristics. They are suitable for different applications, depending on the type and fiber content. Stores may not carry all of the different kinds. You will need to shop around or order from a sewing catalog. As new ones enter the market, others may be removed. Directions for applying elastic are generally found on the back of the package. For best results, always use a ball point sewing machine needle when sewing on elastic.

Waistband Elastics

When applying elastic in a casing, preshrink it before measuring. If elastic is stitched on, it does not require preshrinking.

No-Roll or Non-Roll

An elastic that does not roll or twist. It is a woven elastic with lateral ribs. Use it in casings.

Knit Non-Roll

A monofilament elastic that does not roll and shows minimal shrinkage. Use it in waistline casings.

Skirt Waistband Elastic

An elastic that is designed for a gathered waistline finish. The lower edge has a 1/4 inch stitching guide.

Underwear and Pajama Elastic

An elastic that has a soft stretch and texture to make it comfortable to wear against the skin. It is stitched directly to the wrong side of fabric.

Stretchband

An elastic with vertical monofilament threads with an open see-through look that pops back to its original shape. It does not roll and is lightweight.

Drawstring

An elastic with a drawstring inserted in the center. It is a good choice for sweatpants, gym shorts, or other casual sportswear.

Sport Elastic

An elastic constructed with four unbraided lengthwise rows. You stitch in the unbraided rows, stretching the elastic to fit.

Stitch and Stretch Elastic

An elastic with a polyester woven band with rows of spandex elastic threaded through. Stitch on the blue lines provided. The elastic is pulled up to create gathers. Use it for waistbands and cuffs. It is not recommended for heavy fabrics.

Ruffled Elastic

An elastic that is 2-3 inches wide and comes in fashion colors with one ruffled edge. When applied it is totally exposed as the waistband.

Specialty Elastics

Lingerie Elastic

An elastic that has one or two picot edges with a soft backing for comfort against the skin. It is used for half slips and panties.

Transparent Clear Elastic

An elastic made from 100% polyurethane. It stretches three to four times its original length. Before applying clear elastic, stretch and release it several times before applying to ensure 100% recovery. If cut or nicked with scissors, the stretch and recovery are not affected. Use it for stitched-on or topstitched applications in swimwear, aerobic wear and lightweight fabrics. It can also be used to stabilize seams in knit garments.

Buttonhole Elastic

An elastic with buttonhole slots made 1 inch apart in unknitted sections. This allows for easy waistline adjustments on children's wear, maternity wear or whenever waistline adjustments are needed.

Cycling or Waistband Elastic

An elastic with exposed rows of elastic thread that grips the skin or garment. It keeps pantlegs from riding up and shirttails from coming untucked.

Stretchlace Elastic

An elastic designed especially for lingerie. It is soft and flexible and shapes to the body.

Elastic Thread

Elastic thread is a very thin covered core wrapped with cotton or acetate, used for shirring, smocking and other decorative stitching. Wind bobbin with elastic thread using the bobbin winder or you may need to wind the bobbin by hand, slightly stretching the elastic thread.

Fold-over Elastic

This satin-finished elastic of 81% nylon and 19% Lycra folds in half and stays in place while you stitch. On knits, use it in place of bias tape to finish a neckline or edge of sleeve.

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