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EC65-441 Knitted Fabrics

Georgia Petersen

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KNITTED FABRICS

By Gerda Petersen
Clothing Specialist

Knitted fabrics include jerseys, double knits, tricot knits, lacy and novelty knits.

In the knitting process, fabric is produced by a series of interlocking loops formed by one or more yarns. As the loops are interlocked they form chains in both directions of the fabric. Chains running the length of the fabric are called wales (correspond to lengthwise grain). Chains running across the fabric are called courses (correspond to crosswise grain). Since knitted fabrics are formed of loops, they have more spring, stretch, and elasticity than woven fabric of the same type of yarns.

Some knits made of synthetic fibers or machine washable wool or cotton (these have been given a permanent finish) may become distorted and lock in an off-grain position during the manufacturing process. Avoid buying this fabric because it may be impossible to straighten it. If you have purchased it cut each pattern piece single following a lengthwise rib (wale) to preserve the grain.

Choosing the Pattern for knits

1. Check the pattern envelope to see if knits are recommended.
2. Choose a design with simple, easy lines and few seams.
3. Fullness from gathers or unpressed pleats allows the fabric to drape.
4. Avoid flared, gored or circular skirts because the fabric is apt to stretch.

JERSEYS

Preparation for Cutting

1. Preshrink (unless knit is bonded or guaranteed not to shrink).

2. Cut tube open following a lengthwise rib if pattern layout shows the pieces cut singly (Jerseys are usually knit in a tubular form).
3. Open flat, square off the ends and steam press to remove fold creases. Lay pattern to avoid fold creases.
4. Pin closely with dressmaker pins.
5. Be careful not to stretch the fabric.

Construction Techniques

1. Make a test seam on double fabric using 14-16 stitches per inch or a fine zigzag stitch. Use fine to medium zigzag machine needle depending on weight of fabric. It may be necessary to loosen the tension and adjust the pressure.
2. Stay-stitch each piece immediately after cutting to prevent stretching out of shape. When bodice and sleeves are in one piece do not stay-stitch shoulder and top sleeve line. This seam needs to be stretched slightly (rather than stayed) to prevent puckering and to shape it to the arm.
3. Stretch fabric slightly to keep seams from breaking later. When doing permanent stitching use thread suitable to fiber content and weight of fabric. Silk and nylon threads have more "give" than mercerized cotton. Silk is preferred for wool jersey.
4. Reinforce with double stitching or ~~tape~~ at points of strain such as waistline, underarm and elbows of long sleeves.

5. Interfacing of faced edges may be needed in necklines, collars, cuffs, etc.
6. Underline slim skirts, sheath dresses, etc., to prevent stretching out of shape. Attach lining at waistline.
7. Hang garment for 24 hours before marking hemline. Hem skirt and lining separately. A tailor's hem with two rows of machine stitching on the hem edge is effective. Attach hem to the skirt with a loose hand stitch.
8. Reinforce buttonholes with a light-weight fabric. Unless machine buttonholes can be made on the lengthwise grain, a bound or corded buttonhole will probably be more satisfactory.
9. Waistbands on skirts and belts should be made on lengthwise grain of fabric. Preshrunk grosgrain ribbon makes a good backing or interfacing.
10. Steam press lightly step by step as you sew. Press with the fabric rib (wale), being careful not to stretch the fabric.

TRICOT JERSEY

Much of the nylon and rayon jersey is knit on tricot machines. It is a warp-knit fabric with each loop so interlocked that it is impossible for it to run or ravel.

Construction Techniques

Follow same procedure as for jersey with some exceptions:

1. Pin fabric more closely at right angles to seamline to keep edges from rolling.
2. Use the finest sewing machine needle possible for the thread. A coarse needle cuts the threads in the fabric.
3. Seam allowance may be trimmed to 1/4" after stitching to prevent edges from rolling.

DOUBLE KNITS

Double knits are made with two sets of yarns in a double stitch which gives the fabric double thickness. There is very little difference on right and wrong side. Double knits are firm and stretch less than jersey. They tailor well. Most patterns planned for light weight wools can be used.

Construction Techniques

Follow the same general procedure as for jersey with a few exceptions:

1. Stay stitch only where no stretching is desired (neckline etc.).
2. Lining is optional depending somewhat on the effect desired. Lining helps to retain suppleness of fabric. Some prefer to wear a well-fitted tafetta slip instead of underlining the skirt.

NOVELTY KNITS

1. Face necklines and sleeves of bulky knits with tafetta or a cotton lining fabric to eliminate bulk.
2. Lacy knits may need to be backed with light weight lining fabric to give the knit body and help it to hold its shape. The two fabrics are stay-stitched together and used as one fabric.
3. Stitching on tissue paper prevents some knits from catching on the sewing machine. It can easily be removed after stitching.

*These circulars may be obtained from your County Extension Office.

Lining Skirts & Dresses - E.C. 63-428

Making Bound Buttonholes - E.C. 63-429