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Rose Marie Tondl

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Sewing with Rayon Challis

Rose Marie Tondl, Extension Clothing Specialist

What is challis? Challis (shal-ee) is a lightweight, plain woven fabric with a loose weave structure. The name comes from an Anglo-Indian word meaning soft. Besides rayon, challis is also made from cotton, cotton/polyester blend and wool. The loose weave allows the fabric to drape well.

Patterns

When choosing patterns, look for unstructured styles such as full pants, full skirts and dresses, pullovers and wrap-around styles. Because of the draping qualities, let the fabric's design and drape be the focal point of your garment.

Preshrink

Machine wash in cold water and machine dry on permanent press. You also may hand wash the garment. Some fabrics may need to be dry cleaned. Read the label on the end of the bolt for care of fabric. Test a corner of the fabric to see if the dye bleeds. If fabric dyes are soluble in water, the fabric will need to be dry cleaned.

Layout/Cutting

Maintain the grain line if fabric is loosely woven. Use a "without nap" layout. Use sharp shears or a rotary cutter and mat.

Marking

Use marking pens, chalk, soap slivers or tracing paper.

Interfacing

Use fusible or sew-in. Test the effect you want on fabric scraps.

Needles

Select universal needles sizes 60/8 to 80/12 depending on the weight of the fabric.

Sewing

Set the stitch length at 2 to 2.5 mm or 10 to 12 stitches per inch. Consider topstitching near the finished edge.

Seam Finishes

If making plain seams, finish each seam separately by binding with sheer nylon bias tape, turn and stitch edges or serge. Double ply seams by bringing the two seams together with a straight stitch or zigzag.

Pressing

Use a steam iron set on medium heat.

Hemming

Serge or edge finish with sheer tape or turn and stitch. If garment is on the bias, let it hang overnight. Hand hem in place with a blindstitch, catchstitch or machine blindstitch.

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