

SWEET SPRING STYLE

Make a fun and flirty jersey wrap dress for work or play. *By Jeanne Spaziani*

YOU WILL NEED

- Pattern templates on page 90
- 2m x 160cm jersey (if using narrower fabric or a directional print allow for more)
- 1m fusible knit interfacing
- A sewing machine that does stretch stitches as well as straight stitches
- Long ruler and pencil
- 24cm of 3mm wide elastic to stabilise shoulder seams (optional)

Many people think an overlocker is required to sew stretch fabrics, but it really isn't. Though I have an overlocker I still prefer using my trusty 1964 Bernina for my jersey projects. As well as a straight stitch it has three types of stretch stitches: 1 – the basic zigzag – best for neatening seam allowance edges and attaching elastic more than for sewing seams as zigzagged seams can look not so nice from the right side of the garment. 2 – the wave stitch, which is simply straight stitches that run in a wavy line and is the least stretchy of the three. I use this for hems sometimes. 3 – the real stretch stitch, which I would describe as three straight stitches followed by a single zigzag. It's a very stretchy stitch and seams look best from the right side when using this stitch. This is the one I use to sew all my stretch seams.

Experiment on some jersey scraps with the stretch stitches your machine does... try different length and width settings too to see how they affect the stitches.

The pattern includes 1cm seam allowances and 2cm hems. If you want the skirt or sleeves longer simply lengthen the pattern by the desired amount.

1. Cut out all the dress and interfacing pieces from the printed pattern on page 90. The interfacing strips for the skirt and sleeves are drawn directly onto the interfacing with a ruler using the

measurements written on the pattern. I think you get more accurate strips this way rather than pinning long skinny patterns onto the fabric. However if you prefer paper you can make pattern strips for the skirt and the sleeves using the measurements given.

2. Fuse the facings and belt interfacing pieces onto the wrong side of their matching jersey pieces. Leave the hem strips off for now as it is better to wait until later on in the construction in case you want to change the sleeve or skirt length.

3. Join the two front bodices to the back bodice at the shoulder seams (pin them right sides together and sew with a stretch stitch). Join the fused front neck facings to the back facing. To neaten the edge, the facing can be oversewn with a small zigzag, overlocked or simply pinked. If you wish to stabilise the bodice shoulder seams now is the time to zigzag some 3mm elastic cut to the length of the shoulder onto the seam allowances and close to the stitching line. Press the seam allowances to the back.

4. Pin the facing to the neckline, right sides together and sew. Here I used a straight stitch. Do allow the fronts to stretch a little while you sew but only a very little. Clip into the curved areas of seam allowance near the shoulders to release the curves. Next, sewing from the right side, understitch the entire neckline so the facing will turn in nicely. I used a straight stitch here too to help control the neck.

5. Working from the right side of the fabric pin the three pleats in place on each of the fronts: keep the facing free and follow the direction of the arrows on the pattern. Once the pins are in place fold the facing in place so it backs the pleats and stay-stitch them in place onto the facing seam allowance.

6. Pin and sew (stretch stitch) each sleeve into its corresponding armhole, matching the balance notches. Press the allowances towards the sleeves. ▶

Tip

I like to keep shoulder seams in jersey garments the correct length by this method: cut two pieces of 3mm wide elastic the full length of the shoulder seams (measure the pattern). After joining the shoulder seams together simply zigzag an elastic piece in place, flat with no stretching, along the first sewing line. This will keep the seam from 'growing' yet still allows it to stretch when it needs to.



7. To complete the bodice, wrap the right front over the left so the stay-stitched pleated areas meet the side seam of the opposite sides. Stay-stitch the two fronts together along the waistline with a stretch stitch.

8. To sew the bodice underarm and side seam, pin together with right sides together and sew from the sleeve hem to the bodice waist in one go using the stretchiest stitch and catching the pleated sections into the seams as well. Press the seam allowances towards the back.

9. To make the skirt, join first join together the centre back seams and then the two side seams (stretch stitch) Press the side seams towards the back.

10. The waist seams are joined next: pin with right sides together matching the bodice and skirt side seams and all is sewn together with the stretch stitch.

11. Try your dress on. Level the hem as necessary for your figure and shorten the sleeves if desired. Working with the dress hem wrong side up and spread out on your ironing board place the 2cm wide bias strips along the cut edge a section at a time. Stretch the strip very gently only as much as needed to follow the curve of the hemline. Iron a section in place and then the next until the entire inside hem has been stabilised. Turn and press the hem up 2cm.

12. Iron the two sleeve hem strips onto the inside of the sleeve hems and press them up too.

13. Working from the inside, machine sew the hems in place. Again here I used straight stitching and sewed 1.5cm in from the fold. The skirt hem shouldn't be stretched while sewing but the sleeve hems should so they can stretch a bit around your arm. The edge of hem turn-up beyond the sewing line can be trimmed away if you like, for neatness.

14. To make the tie belt first join the two interfaced belt pieces together to create the full length. Press the 1cm seam allowances in all the way around. Fold the belt in half, pin the edges together and edge stitch closed, across the ends and along the fold edge too. Make chain stitch belt carriers at each side seam and you are done.

RESOURCES

Fabric: www.plushaddict.co.uk

150cm wide fusible knit interfacing: www.sewbox.co.uk

LINKS

How to make a chain stitch belt loop: ow.ly/IzZrd

How to do under stitching: ow.ly/IzZAg

