



PATTERN HACKS

Instructor: Catherine Gentile

Date: Saturday, October 25th, Sunday, Oct 26th, 2025 Time: 10am to 4pm

For garment sewers of all levels. Take your favorite t-shirt and create a perfect pattern from the garment. You don't even need to cut it apart. We will copy it with pattern tracer and perfect the fit. Use your new pattern to cut out a new shirt and sew it together using your serger or sewing machine.

On Sunday, we will use that same pattern as home base for your new wardrobe. Create different sleeves, necklines and hems even make a t-shirt dress.

- 3 yards of pattern tracer, red dot tracer or something similar
- 3 yards double knit or yardage required to make a shirt
 - Two shirt lengths plus a sleeve length plus 12"
 - If you are petite you may be able to fit front and back to a width of fabric
- 6" x 12" ruler
- Pencil, eraser and thin Sharpie
- Fabric cutting scissors
- Polyester construction thread
- **If using serger:** 3 spools serger thread for 3 thread overlock, 4 spools for a 4 thread seam
- Schmetz Jersey/Ball Point needles #12
- Basic sewing gear
- **If using a sewing machine,** look for a stitch in your utility stitch section at the beginning that looks like a lightening streak.
- Be sure to bring the foot control and power cords for your machine. Also the all zig zag throat plate and all purpose sewing foot.

Making your pattern:

Shirt front and back -

1. Iron your t shirt right side out and fold it in half down the center front.
2. Press the center front fold to leave a crease.
3. Take a section of pattern trace that is longer than your shirt. Fold it in half along a line.
4. Align the fold of the t shirt with the fold of the tracer.
5. Use a few pins to hold the shirt in place or use pattern weights.
6. Use a pen or pencil to trace around the body of the shirt.
7. At the front neckline, pin along the front neckband seam. Fold back the neckband and trace around the seam.
8. Pin along the back neckline seam, fold back the neckband and trace the back neckline.
9. Pin along the armhole seam. Fold back the sleeve and mark the seam line.
10. Connect the marks with solid lines using a short ruler.
11. Add a 5/8ths seam allowance at the sides and shoulder.
12. Add a 1" to 1 1/2" allowance for the hem.
13. Add a 1/2" seam allowance along the front neckline and back neckline.
14. Cut the pattern out through both layers of tracer and along the center fold.
15. Take the pattern with the marked front neckline and trim along the line.
16. Mark the patterns front and back.
17. At the center front and center back, place a small 1/4" notch on the pattern.
18. On the back pattern, mark 2 notches on the armhole about 3" up from the side seam.

Sleeve –

1. Fold the sleeve in half lining up the sleeve hem.
2. Pin along the sleeve seam and mark the line.
3. Remove the sleeve and connect the marks with a solid line.
4. Add a 1" to 1 1/2" seam allowance along the hem.
5. Add a 1/2" seam allowance along the short under arm seam.
6. Add a 5/8" seam allowance along the sleeve cap.
7. Cut the pattern out, do NOT cut the fold.
8. Mark a notch at the top center of the sleeve.
9. Fold the pattern in half lengthwise matching the center top and the hem. Crease the seam
10. Fold it in half again lengthwise and crease the seam. You now have 3 crease line.
11. Starting from the top center and working from the top to the first crease line down the left or right side, it doesn't matter which side.
12. Draw a line from the top center edge angled to 1/8" at the first crease.
13. Continue the angle to 1/4" to the middle crease.
14. Taper the line back to 1/8" at the bottom crease.
15. Finish the taper back to the original line at the short sleeve seam.
16. Cut away the excess. Draw in 2 notches around the middle crease of the new edge.
17. This is the new back seam line.

Neckband –

1. Use a cloth tape measure or to measure the front and back neckline arcs from seam line to seam line.

2. Cut a pattern piece that is 2" wide and the neckline length plus ½" for seam allowance. This will be adjusted later.

Sewing it all together –

Shoulder seam -

1. Pin the pattern pieces aligned with the stretch.
 - Two way stretch has the stretch across the width of the patterns aligned with the selvage.
 - Four way stretch is also aligned with the selvage.
2. Set up your sewing machine or serge with good thread, a stretch needle and your chosen stitch.
3. Be sure you have your zig zag needle plate on the machine, not the single needle plate.
4. Start with the shoulder seams. Sew a 5/8" seam. Gently press the seam to the shirt back.
5. Go back and sew a strip of twill tape, clear elastic or narrow ribbon to the underside of the seam near the seam line.
6. Trim away ¼" leaving a 3/8" seam allowance. Press toward the back and top stitch if you choose.

Neckband –

1. Hold the neckband at opposite ends and gently stretch it straight and measure the length.
2. Double the measurement.
3. Multiply the full length by 0.85 to find 85% of the total measurement. Add ½" seam allowance.
4. This measurement is an average for knits. The length will be shorter or longer depending upon how stretchy the knit is. Ribbed knits stretch a lot, cotton double knit stretch less.
5. Adjust the pattern and cut the neckband fabric. The measurement could be 85%, 80% or 75%.
6. Join the ends with a ¼" seam and press the seam open. This will be the center back.
7. Pull the neckband in half with the seam on one end and place a pin or notch at the other end.
8. Match the center back seam and front notch in the center and notch or pin the two ends. You should have 4 points marked, the seam and 3 notches evenly spaced.
9. Repeat with the shirt neckline marking the 4 quarters.
10. Match and pin the center back and center front to the matching point on the neckband.
11. Pull gently to line up the neckband and neckline.
12. The neckband should stretch a bit. If the neckband fits then it is too long.
13. If too long, restitch the neckband seam another ¼", DO NOT cut the excess, and test it again.
14. Hand baste the adjusted neckband in place and lay the shirt flat on the table front and back aligned.
15. If it fits correctly, the rolled edge of the neckband will lean toward the neck without puckers.
16. Start sewing at the back about 1" from the shoulder seam. Stitch or serge a 5/8" seam allowance.
17. Trim the sewing machine seam to a scant 3/8" seam.
18. Topstitch the neckband edge about an 3/16ths" from the seam.

Sleeves –

1. Fold up and gently press in the hem. Do not sew the hem.
2. Align the top center notch with the shoulder seam and the make sure the double notches are on the same side.
3. Sew a 5/8ths" seam allowance on both sleeves.
4. Trim to 3/8" and press toward the sleeve.

Join the sides –

1. Align and pin the sides from sleeve hem to shirt hem.

2. Stitch or serge starting at the sleeve with a ½" seam allowance to the underarm seam.
3. Taper the seam allowance to 5/8th" from the underarm seam.
4. Trim to 3/8th" and press toward the back.

Hems –

1. Take the accessory box off the sewing machine or serger to use the free arm.
2. Wrap the Solvy around the sleeve hem and pin through the Solvy.
3. At the underarm seam, twist the seam allowances in opposite directions.
4. Place the pins from the front side of the fabric with the pin heads toward the hem.
5. Sew the sleeve hem with your chosen stitch.
6. Repeat with the shirt hem.
7. Gently pull off the Solvy.