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## Transform a T-Shirt in 60 minutes or less!

### \*Supplies:

- Basic notions including a wash out marker and thread to match T-Shirt
- ¼-inch wide washable ribbon to trim sleeves
- T-Shirt with standard crew neckline
- [Dritz Seams Great™](#) for finishing neckline
- [Dritz Styling Design Ruler](#) for drawing a curved line. (You can draw this line “freehand” but this ruler comes in handy for pattern alterations and re-styling many ready-made garments.)
- [Fray Check seam sealant](#) to treat cut end of ribbon
- [Brother Braiding Foot](#) (Optional but recommended, this foot makes it easy to attach narrow ribbon and similar trims. It’s an accessory foot I reach for time and time again!)  
[CLICK HERE](#) to watch a short video featuring the braiding foot.

*\*Be sure to visit your local sewing machine dealer for supplies featured in this tutorial.*



### **Description:**

*Souvenir and special event T-shirts bring back happy memories of special occasions. However, if you're like me you prefer shirts that look less like a T and more like a TOP! Follow these step-by-step instructions to transform a t-shirt into a stylish alternative with a more feminine look.*

*With a slightly scooped neckline and a bit of sleeve embellishment you will hardly recognize the original T-shirt, except for the special memories!*

**Note:** The sewing machine stitches illustrated in this project are from the [Brother Dream Machine XV 8500D](#).

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### Step 1.

Carefully cut away labels from the back neck. Save the labels to re-sew if you want to retain the size and care instructions. Select thread for topstitching neckline.

**TIP:** I like to use polyester embroidery thread. It comes in lots of colors so it's easy to match the shirt and it has a bit of a sheen making the topstitching look pretty.



### Step 2.

Fold T-shirt along center front and center back, having the shoulders match. I prefer to pin the neck together to keep it from shifting.



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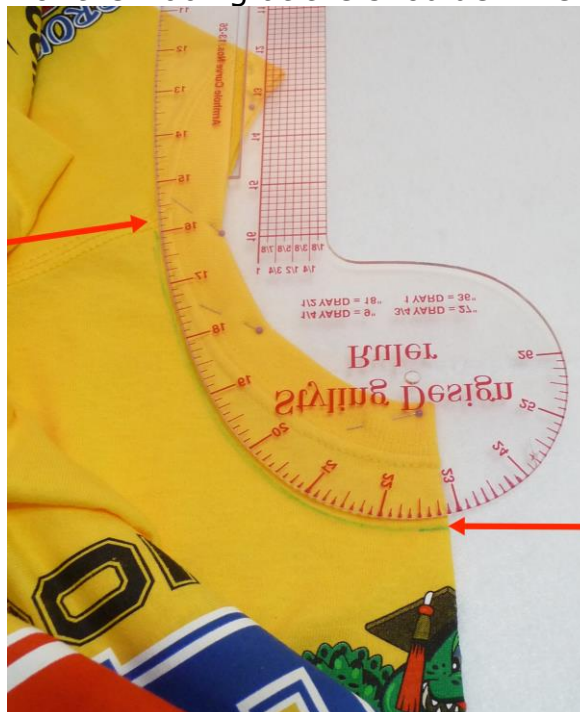
### Step 3.

Mark the center front 2 to 2½-inches below the ribbed edge of the neckline. Note that you need at least ¾-inch of free space for this neckline finish. Depending on the T-shirt motif you may need to adjust the distance from the edge of the ribbing. In this example I marked a line ¾-inch above the top of the alligator.



### Step 4.

Lay the fashion ruler on the T-shirt with the deep curve along the marking on the center front. Line up the opposite end of the ruler along the bottom edge of the ribbing, ending at the shoulder line. See arrows below. Use a marker to draw a smooth curve from the center front to the bottom of the ribbing at the shoulder line.



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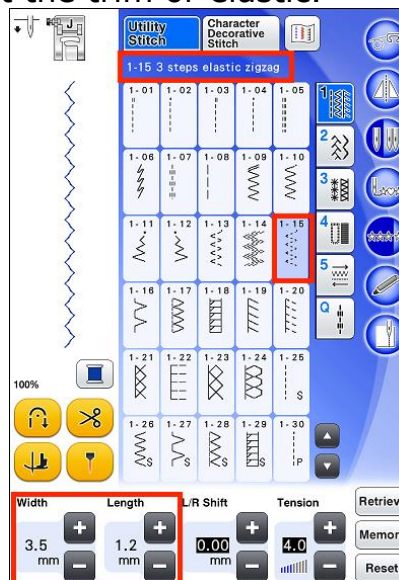
### Step 5.

Cut just above the marked line, trimming away the all the ribbing at the back neckline.  
**TIP:** From this point onward, you will need to handle the shirt carefully to keep the neckline from stretching.



### Step 6.

It's time to stabilize and then topstitch the neckline. Set up the machine with the stretch needle and thread to match your shirt. Select a triple zig zag stitch for attaching the stabilizer to the neckline. This is a common stitch on most machines and one of my all time favorite utility stitches. Each zig and zag is made up of three small stitches. This stitch is ideal for anchoring something like this lightweight stabilizer strip. Adjust the width and length settings similar to the ones shown below. **TIP:** Be sure to try this stitch next time you need to sew narrow trim or elastic in place. Experiment with different width and length settings to suit the trim or elastic.



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Test the stitch using a small piece of stabilizer on the discarded neckline piece, lining up the edge of the stabilizer with the cut edge and stitching close to the raw edge. See example of the stitch below, stitched with contrast thread for better visibility:



### Step 7.

Measure the amount of stabilizer you need for your shirt by carefully walking the stabilizer along the folded neckline, (see dashed line for reference). Since your T-shirt is folded in half you will need to double the measurement for the stabilizer. Next, subtract 1-inch from the total length. **Note:** This measurement is an average that will work for many T-shirt sizes and body types. It allows you to stretch the stabilizer slightly as you stitch and eases the neckline in slightly. If you have narrow shoulders and a full bust, or if you are shallow in the neck area you will likely need to subtract 1 ½ to 2-inches from this measurement. If your t-shirt is really special I suggest trying this whole process on another "unimportant" shirt to customize the measurements and perfect the technique.



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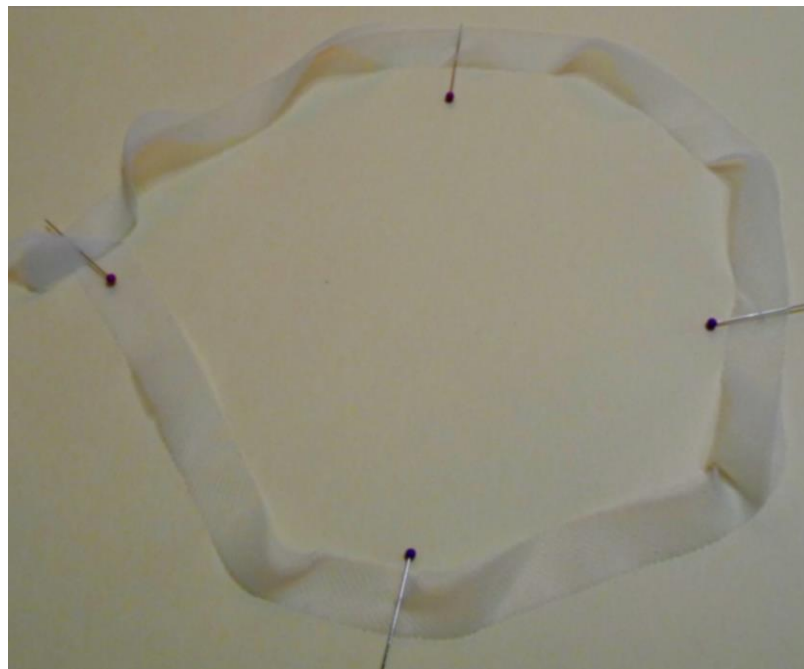
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**Step 8.**

Place a pin at the center front and center back of the shirt. To quarter mark the entire neckline, fold the neck of shirt in half again with all the raw edges of the neckline matched up. Mark the other two quarters of the shirt, near the shoulder line. You could of course measure the whole neckline and divide it by 4 to find out what the spacing should be between each pin.



Pin a 1/2- inch seam at the cut ends of the stabilizer and then quarter mark this circular piece with pins. See below:



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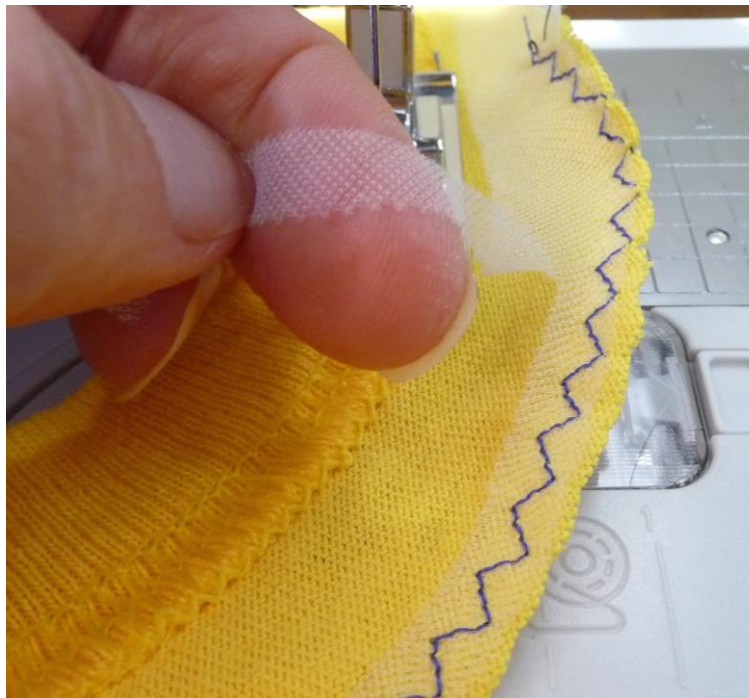
**Step 9.**

Match the pins on the shirt to the pins on the stabilizer, having the excess 1/2-inch seam allowance at the center back. With the wrong side facing up, slip the neckline over the free arm of the machine. Begin sewing the stabilizer along the edge of the neckline, stretching stabilizer gently as necessary. Stitch all around the neckline and then overlap each end of the stabilizer by 1/2-inch at the center back.



**Step 10.**

Trim close to the stitching to remove excess stabilizer from the edge.



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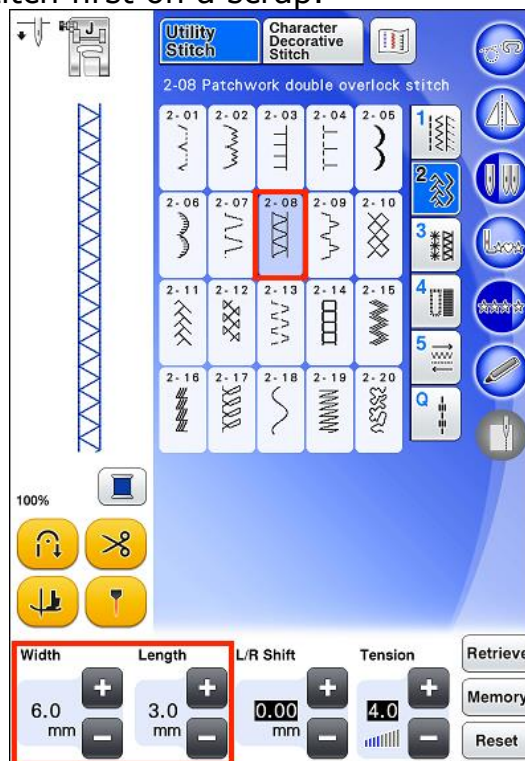
**Step 11.**

Turn under 3/8-inch, turning the raw edge to the inside and pinning as you go.



**Step 12.**

Select a stitch to use for topstitching the neckline. While you could use a straight stitch or even a stretch 4.0/75 twin needle, I like a stitch that looks like the one below. Again, it's a good idea to test the stitch first on a scrap.



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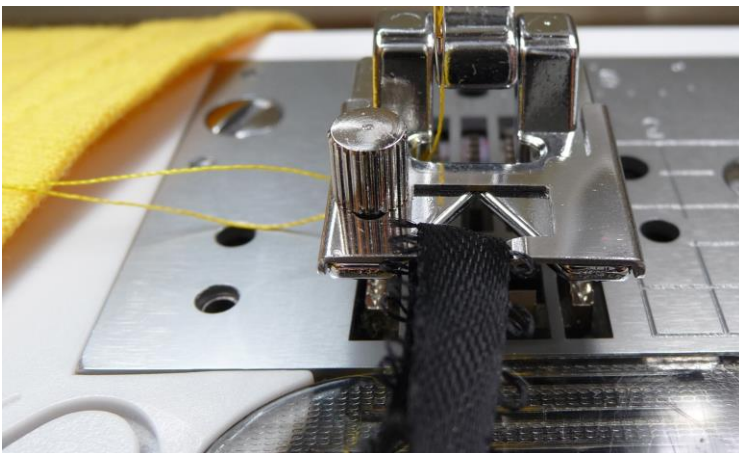
Place the shirt over the free arm of your machine and stitch around the neckline, removing pins and stitching close to the folded edge of the neckline.



### Step 13.

Trimming the sleeves with ribbon is a nice finishing touch. I simply stitched narrow ribbon to the sleeves, positioning it within the two lines of topstitching on the sleeve hem. You can use the same stitch used for topstitching the neckline or something similar. Even a standard zig zag stitch will do. You can certainly use the standard presser foot to sew over the ribbon. In this case it is a good idea to use wash out glue to secure the ribbon in place before stitching. I like a product called ROXANNE'S Glue-Baste-It.

I prefer to use the braiding foot for this technique. It's ideal for holding narrow trim in place as you stitch. To use this foot for stitching ribbon follow the steps below:



Place the braiding foot on the machine and then feed the needle thread to the underside of the foot. Feed ribbon into the slot, leaving a couple extra inches at the back of the foot. Adjust the opening on the front of the foot as necessary.

**TIP:** Use thread to match the ribbon if you want the stitching to be less noticeable. Use contrast thread for a more decorative effect.

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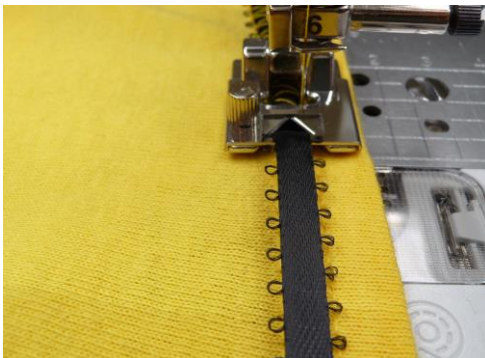
Test the stitch on a scrap and adjust the width and length of the stitch as needed.

**Tip:** If you want your stitches to show choose a thread that contrasts with your ribbon.



Guide ribbon into the foot and stitch along the sleeve hem, stopping near the end to trim excess ribbon. Overlap slightly, finish stitching, and then remove from machine. Treat raw end of ribbon with a slight amount of seam sealant.

Enjoy your pretty new T-shirt!



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