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ready?



Brought to you by Joanne Banko

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Knit Know How

Fabric Tip Sheet for:

Sewing and Embroidery on Knit Garments

Embroidered Color Block Top
Featured in [Designs in Machine Embroidery Volume 93](#)

Embroidered Dress
Featured in [Designs in Machine Embroidery Volume 97](#)



Refer to the featured magazine articles for more embroidery tips for knits.

General tips for knits:

- ✂ Needles for Sewing Knits: A size 11 Stretch needle is what I use for sewing about 99% of the knit garments I make. For hemming I am a big fan of using a twin needle, size 4.0 mm - 75/11. Be sure to use the stretch version of this needle to avoid permanent holes in your fabric.
- ✂ Needles for Embroidery on Knits: A standard size 11 Embroidery needle has a modified rounded tip and works best for embroidering on knits.
- ✂ Thread for Sewing: For seams, seam finishing, hemming, etc., choose a good quality all-purpose polyester sewing thread such as [Gutermann](#) or [Coats Dual Duty XP Fine](#) or [Coats Dual Duty Standard](#). Do not use cotton thread, when the seam stretches the thread will snap.
- ✂ Thread for Embroidery: Use good quality Polyester embroidery 40-50 weight thread. Knit garments are likely to be washed frequently and poly threads hold up well.
- ✂ Pins: Select [Dritz Fine Ball Point Pins](#) for all your knit fabrics. They penetrate knit fabrics and do not leave holes. Be sure to keep these separate from sharp pins so they don't get mixed in.
- ✂ True *Ball-point* sewing machine needles are usually only necessary for heavy, double knits.
- ✂ Choose thread and sewing machine stitches that will allow fabric to stretch and recover.
- ✂ Press, launder, and store knits carefully to avoid distorting their shape.
- ✂ Interfacing: [Lightweight fusible tricot](#) or [all bias knitted](#) interfacing is best if you need to interface areas such as facings. *See photo below.
- ✂ When possible, eliminate facings and use self same fabric for binding edges.
- ✂ Embroidery stabilizer: I prefer to select lighter weight designs for knits. For designs that are slightly heavier or larger I will often or beef up the area with fusible interfacing and add a layer of [Temporary Iron-on tear away](#). [Light weight cut-away mesh](#) along with a layer of light weight tear away is also an option.

Interfacing:



Machine stitches for knits:

For straight stitch set length to 3.0 Be sure to select a center needle straight stitch for hemming with a twin needle and use a length of at least 3.5	1-01	1-02	1-03	1-04	
"lightening" stitch for stretchy seams	1-05	1-06	1-07	1-08	
Overcasting stitch to substitute for serger - set width to 7.0 if possible	1-09	1-10	1-11	1-12	
	1-13	1-14	1-15	1-16	

This stitch is ideal for knit seams. It offers more stretch factor than a standard straight stitch. This may be called a stem stitch on your machine or a stretch straight stitch. I call it the lightning stitch because it resembles a lightning bolt. The benefit of this stitch is two-fold. It will stretch without breaking but it also presses flat. This is especially helpful if you are pressing the seam open.

What is "knitted" fabric and how does it differ from "woven" fabric?

Simply put, knits are made up of a series of yarns that are interlocked together. A series of loops make up the fabric rather than yarns that are "laced" over and under one another. Because the loops will give, knitted fabrics can be made with varying degrees of stretch. Knits blended with Lycra® or elastic type fibers have the most stretch. The percentage of Lycra® determines the degree of stretch, in other words, more Lycra® equals more stretch.

KNIT TYPES

There are many different types of knits available to the home sewer today. Some are readily available, others are a little more difficult to find. Some of the most popular include: Double knit, Interlock, Jersey, Rib knit, Sweater knit, Sweatshirt knit, Stretch terry, Stretch velour, Tricot, and Swimwear. These may be found in a variety of different fibers and blends. To be compatible with the pattern selected, the knit must have the proper stretch factor, weight and texture. Always check your knits with the gauge printed on the pattern envelope.

Knits can be divided into a few basic categories.

- 1.) Stable knits – These have very little stretch and are generally thicker.
- 2.) Stretchy and *super stretchy* knits. Note: Stretch factor is dependent on a variety of things such as fiber content and the way the loops are formed in the knit.
- 3.) Two -Way and four-way stretch knits such as swimwear.

More KNIT TIPS

Knowing a few do's and don'ts will prevent problems when sewing with knits. Here are a few for you to consider:

- Cotton knits must be dried 2-3 times to allow for progressive shrinkage.
- Use a "with nap" layout and follow a straight lengthwise rib for your straight of grain line. Do not allow fabric to drape off the end of the table. It may be helpful to cut a full pattern for each pattern normally cut on the foldline, and then cut fabric single layer instead of double.
- Press edges of single knits with spray starch to control curling. Use low tack tape to flatten and secure selvedge edges to cutting surface while cutting pattern pieces from fabric.
- If your knit has a high percentage of synthetic fiber it is important to take care when pressing. Iron temps can vary greatly so I'll go with my standard advice, "to test is best." For pressing during construction I prefer to use my favorite removable [Iron shoe](#). Use a press cloth if you do not have an iron shoe.
- **Seam finishing tips:** A serger is my **go to** machine for finishing seams on most every fabric I sew. Most knits don't require a seam finish but the serger can be used throughout construction of a knit garment, sewing the seam and finishing the edge all in one quick step. If you are sewing seams on your conventional machine you can serge finish or overcast the two layers of the seam together and then press the finished seam to one side. The serger help compact knits and makes the garment look like ready-to wear on the inside. Always test your stitch on scrap fabric and don't be afraid to experiment with new stitches and different settings.