

Sewing with Knits - Cheat Sheet

A quick reference guide to working with knits - Rosy Peña

KNITS: Stretchy fabrics most commonly used for leggings, simple dresses, comfortable pants, t-shirts, swimwear, etc.

FABRIC CARE TIP: Pre-wash all fabrics. Knits shrink according to fiber contents (cottons shrink more than polyester).

COMMON KNITS USED IN APPAREL SEWING: Jersey, interlock, rib knit, double knits.

Jersey - a single knit with two-way and sometimes four-way stretch. The edges tend to curl towards the right side of the fabric, jerseys do not retain shape well or stretch as much as other types of knits (unless mixed with lycra/spandex). Jersey knits are most commonly used in t-shirts, simple dresses, skirts.

Interlock - a stable knit that is very popular and easy to sew with. Interlocks do not curl and have a similar appearance on both the right and wrong sides. This fabric is thicker than jerseys and can be used for skirts, dresses, sleepwear, pants, shirts, tunics. Tip: If you're a beginner, start sewing with interlock knits, you will find it much easier to manage and sew.

Rib Knit - a textured knit with long vertical ribbing offering a large amount of stretch and flexibility. This fabric is thicker than jerseys and most commonly used in close fitting garments such as body-con dresses, or as stretch trims in collars, cuffs, turtlenecks.

Double Knit - a stable knit that holds shape well. Double knits are double-faced meaning there is no "wrong side" to the fabric. This fabric is heavier in weight with little to no stretch and most commonly used for, jackets, coats, cardigans, pants, skirts.

NEEDLE SIZE: For light to heavyweight knits use Universal or Ballpoint/Jersey needles in sizes; 70/10 - 90/14 (smaller needle sizes are meant for lighter weight fabrics).

STITCH LENGTH: You may use a straight stitch along vertical seams of loose fitting knit garments. Use a recommended stitch of 2.5 - 3mm length and low pressure on the pressor foot. Along all other seams use a stretch stitch or a zig-zag stitch, so the seams will stretch with the fabric. Test various stitch lengths on a swatch of fabric before sewing to see what works best. A common zig-zag settings for seams are 1.5 width - 2.5 length. A common zig-zag settings for topstitching is 2.5 x 2.5. Again, test what works best for your particular project.

SEWING TIP: A popular tool used when sewing with knits is a walking foot. This foot is attached in place of your standard machine foot and helps to evenly feed the fabric while sewing, providing a neat finished garment.

CUTTING: Cut your knit fabrics with the grainline of the pattern parallel to the selvage edge of the fabric.

SERGER: A serger is a machine that neatly finishes the raw edge and seams of all types of fabrics. Sergers are sometimes used instead of sewing machines when sewing with knit fabrics as the finish provides a great amount of stretch and flexibility. A serger is not needed in order to sew, but it can be a great addition if you find yourself sewing often. Recommended serger: Brother 1034D.