

STEP BY STEP

Beginner to Advanced sewing



Created by
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HIKING DRESS



Suzi – Beginner
(Requires one t-shirt)



Maddy - Intermediate
(Requires three t-shirts)



Loren - Advanced
(Requires three to four
t-shirts)

THE SUZI

Beginners start here with just one Upcycled T-shirt

Supplies:

Oversized T-shirt

Chalk, Scissors, Pins, Needle & Thread

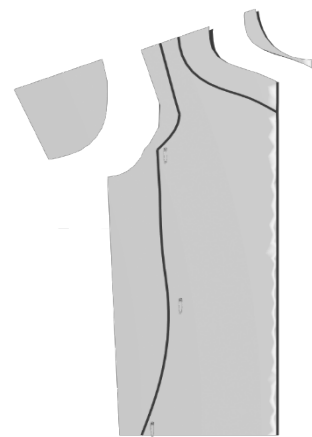
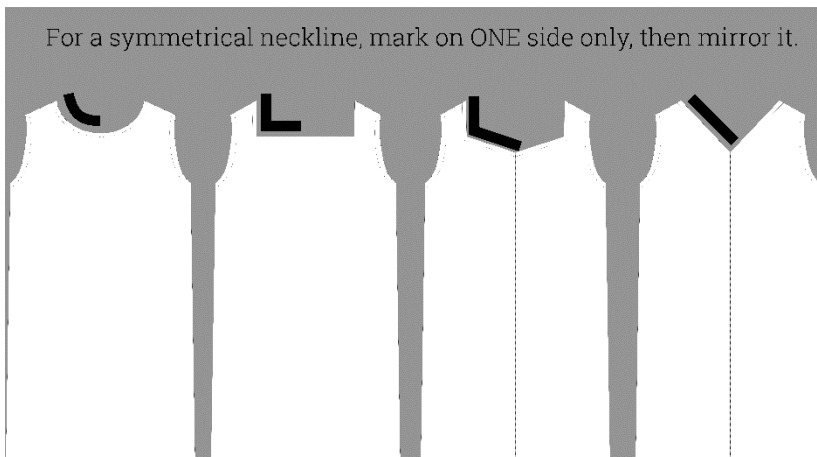
OPTIONAL: Embroidery Thread

Sewing Machine, Serger



Start with an oversized T-shirt of the preferred finished length after prewashing. Try it on with the wrong side out. Use chalk to map the body starting at the top. Dab with chalk to make small dots at neckline, sides, center back, front, shoulder width, depth of the arm hole and how snug or loose it is to be at the waist. Remove the shirt and fold down the midline and match up layers. Connect the dots on one side of the body only, drawing a single arm opening and just one side of the neckline. Add pins on each side at the top and bottom of arm openings, waist, and down to the hem. Mark between the pins to complete the side seam placements, symmetrically marking sides, arms, and neckline front and back.

Cutting leaving a generous 5/8" to 1" seam allowance outside the lines on the sides, neck and arm openings to allow for ease in wearing. Consider rewashing your finished Suzi again before trimming the seam allowance to allow for shrinkage. Keep the factory hem along the bottom edge for durability.



Review Sewing Terms on the last page.

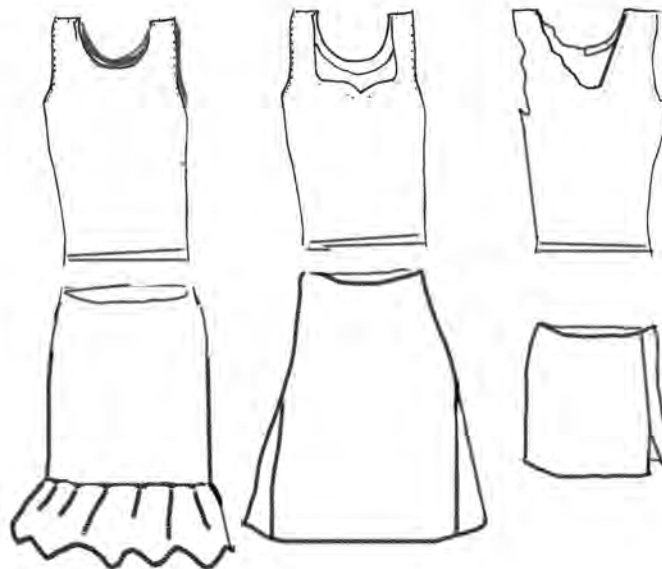
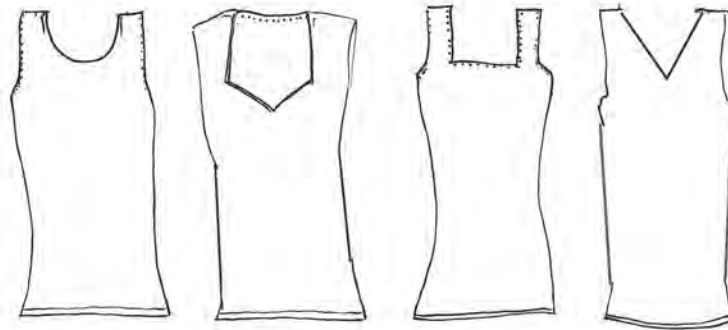
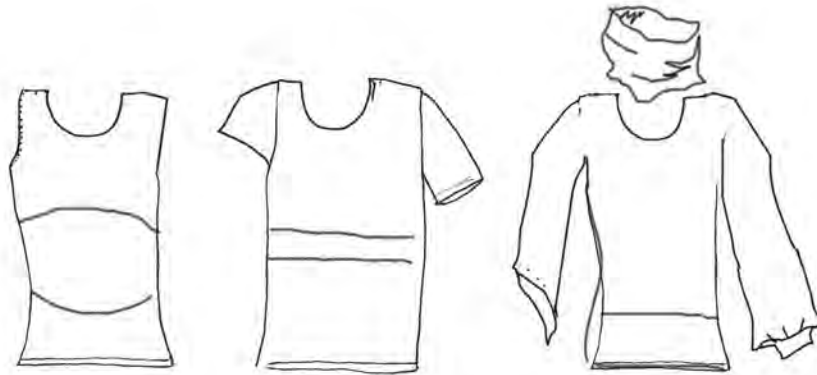
Hand sewing knits a with straight stitch works well but avoid using your machine's straight stitch on T-shirt knit. Consult your machine's manual for a knit stitch or try a zig zag stitch (set to 2.5 stitch length and a 0.5 stitch width). Test sew your preferred stitches on a scrap. If serging, use a three-thread over-lock stitch. To finish the arm and neck openings leave the cut edges to naturally curl or turn a narrow hem and use a running stitch in a contrasting color of embroidery floss to secure the edge.

Build on Basics

After a Suzi success, keep your momentum going. Collect T-shirts for future inspiration and big fun. Think about adding and subtracting elements in the composition. Transform scrap into a wrap, ruffles or frame your face with a frill.

Design new looks inspired by special occasions, vintage t-shirts, favorite color combinations, and friendly movement essentials.

Look for inspiration in your wardrobe. Explore shape, placement, dramatic necklines, try and recreate a favorite garment from a photo. Build flattering silhouettes, be playful and share your unique creations with the world.



THE MADDY

Intermediate, Combine 3 shirts for length and contrast

Supplies:

2 Lg T-shirts, same color for **Top** and **Bottom**

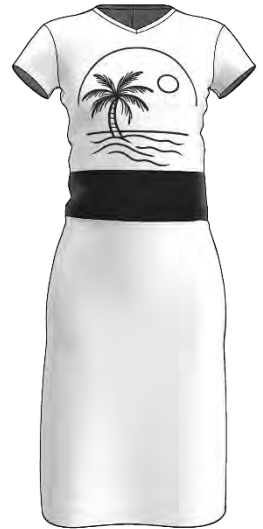
1 T-shirt for **Contrast**

Chalk, Scissors, Pins, Needle, Thread, Measuring Tape and Mirror

see Sewing Terms, last page

OPTIONAL: Embroidery Thread, ½" elastic

Sewing Machine, Serger, iron



Tips for Sewing with T-shirts

Choose size large or greater

Color can vary but select shirts of the same fiber content and similar weight

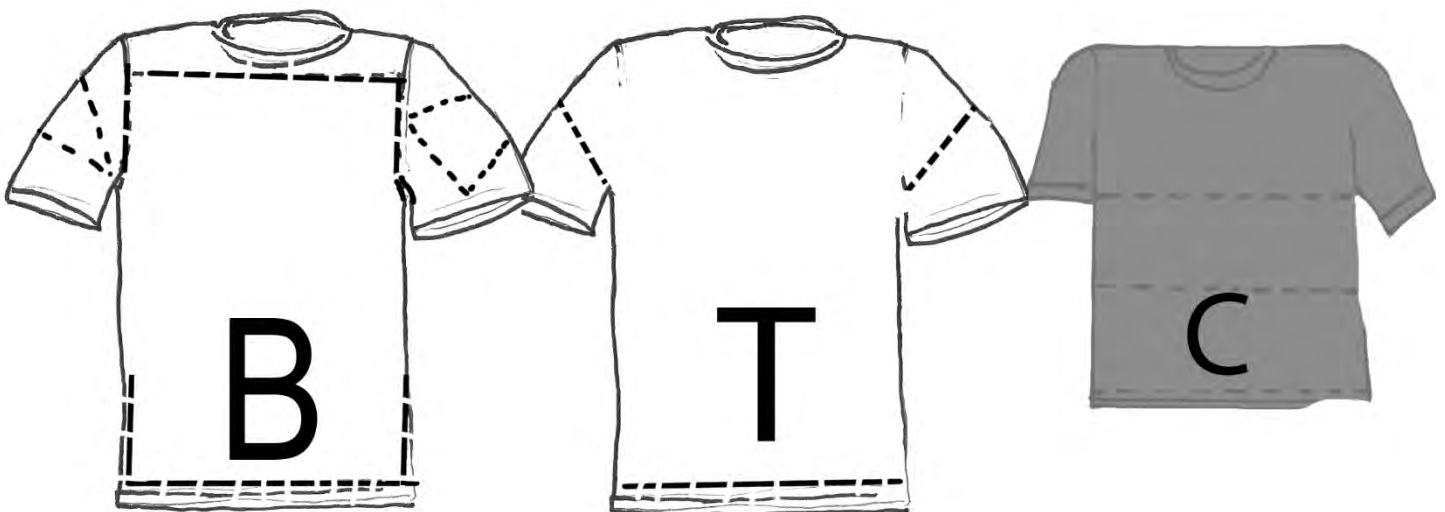
NO raglan baseball style

prewash ALL shirts

Cut edges will curl over time, so if piecing piece right side together to curl in the same direction

Leave wide seam allowances of 1" for hand finishing curled edges or future alterations from personal growth.

Hand sewing knits a with straight stitch works well but avoid using your machine's straight stitch on T-shirt knit. Consult your machine's manual for a knit stitch or try a zig zag stitch (set to 2.5 stitch length and a 0.5 stitch width). Test sew your preferred stitches on a scrap. If serging, use a three-thread over-lock stitch. To finish the arm and neck openings leave the cut edges to naturally curl or turn a narrow hem and use a running stitch in a contrasting color of embroidery floss.

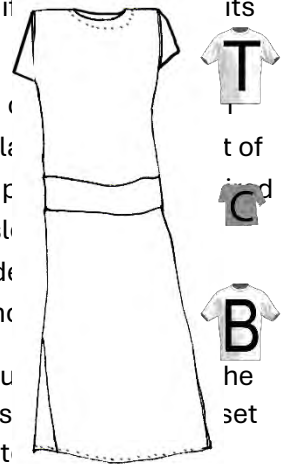


Maddy Cutting Guide (see diagrams and previous page)

Working from the **B**ottom up, choose one of the twin shirts. Cut the sleeves off and snip off the shoulders with a horizontal cut just below the neckband. Keep hem in place. Open the tube and step inside. Pin the top edge so it stays on your hips to see where the skirt lands best on your torso and how long the hem will be. Estimate how wide the center band will be and take up extra length at the waist. Evaluate the proportions to see if it is too tight or to add triangular panels to add ease or keep the hem it is wide enough for you.

From the **C**ontrast cut horizontally to make a 5" loop or two. If shirt **C** is smaller than **B** torso, cut right sides together to join, shifting any seam bulk to the sides. Pin to fit, the **C**ontrast band plus leeway, it could sit up high under the bust or on the low hip, a 5" cut sews up to be 4". Hold up for length, then trip **T**op horizontally below mark. Keep the neck and sleeves intact or swap the sleeves for a contrasting T-shirt. On an XL **T**op, the arm opening could need adjusting upwards. Draft a side seam for sleeves or remove for sleeveless style. When cutting, leave a generous 5/8 - 1" seam allowance.

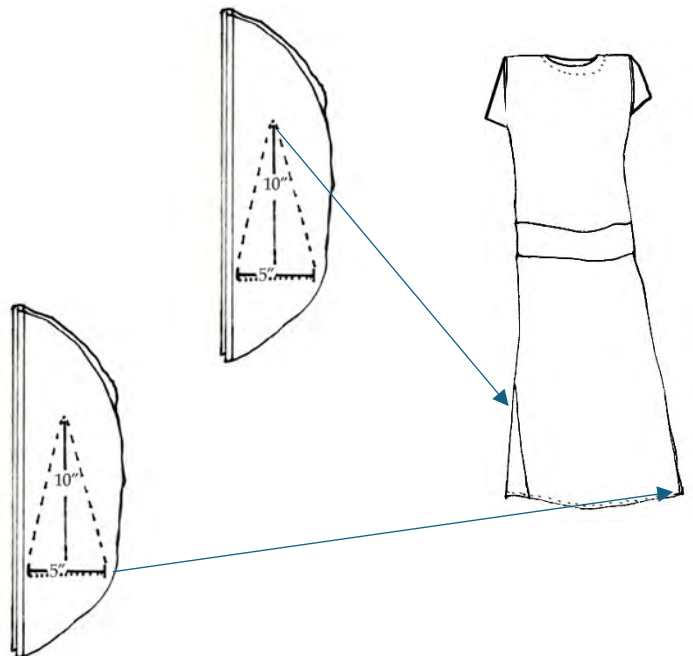
Pin all three parts together, with wrong sides out. Put it on to Pin Fit the proportions. Once you are fit, chalk mark the side seams, level up the waist, draw symmetrical armholes neck opening and level the hem at the **C**ontrast band if needed. Baste. Press. Try right side out, pay extra attention to alignment to the **C**ontrast to **T** and **B** at the side seams. Unstitch basting and realign, re pin and baste again if needed. Fit again, and once all is well, stitch over the basting.

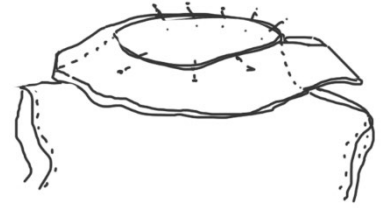
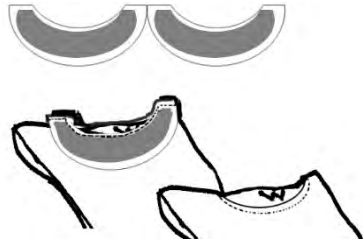


Add a Wide Stride

A **B**ottom edge can expand. Level one is to cut side slits, reinforce with stay stitching especially at the top. Next level is to add a Wide Stride gusset to widen the **B**ottom edge. Use the **B** shirt sleeves or other available t-shirt cloth to cut out two triangles 5" wide and 10" high. Mark the wrong side of the cloth, pin fit triangles into the side slits, with right sides together with 1" dangling at the bottom edge to later turn up into a hem. Start with a basting stitch at the lower front corner, stitch up to the top point, keep the needle down, rotate the cloth to sew the second side. Sew with care as it can easily stretch or not be symmetrical. After both are in, sew over the baste and clip off bulk.

Clean up the hem, turn up a hem on the triangles or cut it all off and declare the cut edge the final finish and enjoy the curl.





FACING Maddy continued

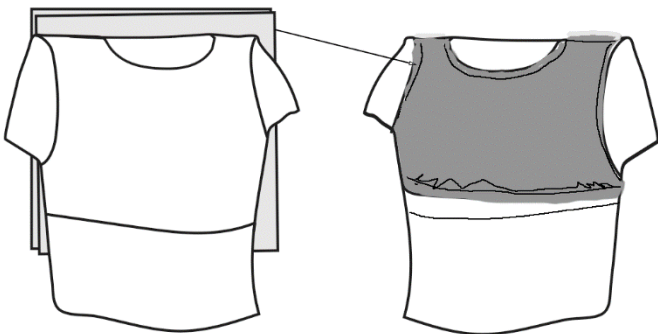
is a piece of fabric used to neatly finish the edges of a garment. Usually sewn to the inside of the garment it helps reinforce an area and prevent fabric from fraying while maintaining the garment's shape. Round openings are covered with pieced crescent shapes, cut from the same cloth and sometimes fused with interfacing. Facings can be made from more of the same cloth or it can be from the **Contrast** band or another scrap of similar cloth.

Pieced t-shirt seams can get bulky, so clip the excess fabric after assembling and build the facings only as wide as necessary to stabilize the opening. Consider adding a lightweight fusible interfacing made specifically for knits, look for "Fusi-knit" lightweight interfacing. Cut at the seam line of a pattern and ironed to the wrong side, on it stays put when laundered, and adds structure without adding bulk to garments.

Under Lining as Facing

Another approach to facing is to use underlining, cut to echo the shape of the bodice, pieced from scrap shaped from another sleeveless t-shirt. All the raw edges and seams around the arm and neck openings are enclosed inside of the undershirt seams. This is a great treatment on sleeveless, as it neatens up all openings at once.

Pin right sides together, matching up at side seams, chalk mark neckline then baste. Turn and fit to ensure neckline is properly shaped before stitching. Enclose arm openings or seams with the facing in the same way. The facing may extend to enclose the **Contrast** top seam.



Shelf Bra

For a smaller bust, with the addition of ½" elastic cut to your circumference, test fit inside out to mark where your band needs to be. Fold the bottom edge to create a casing with an opening on one side. Pin fit the elastic to ensure when your arms are raised it stays put. Then stitch loop closed, and tack facing to the side seams. Secure facing with top stitches at the neck opening.

THE LOREN

Advanced, Long lines, 3-4 shirts, elegant fit



Supplies:

3 to 4 Lg T-shirts, same color, size large XL. (No raglan baseball shirts, Free of Side SEAMS, if not available, skip this design. Prewash all shirts.)

Chalk, Scissors, Pins, Needle, Thread, Measuring Tape and Mirror

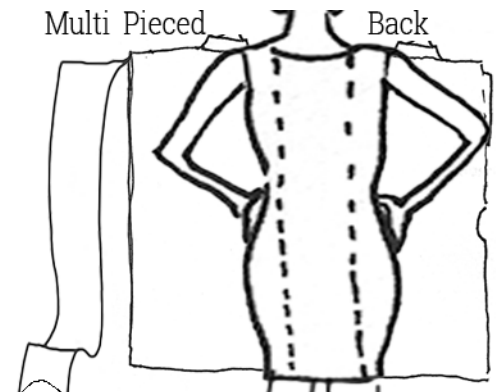
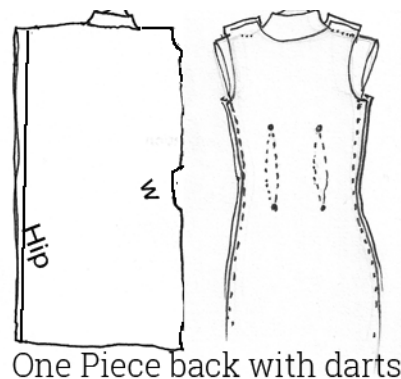
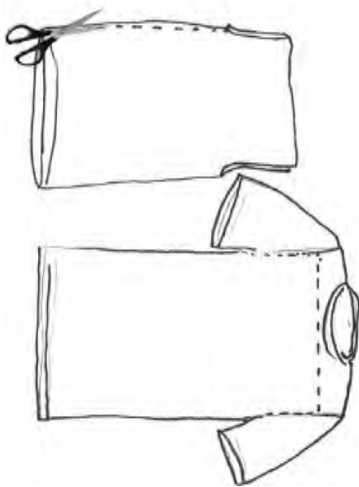
See Sewing Terms, last page

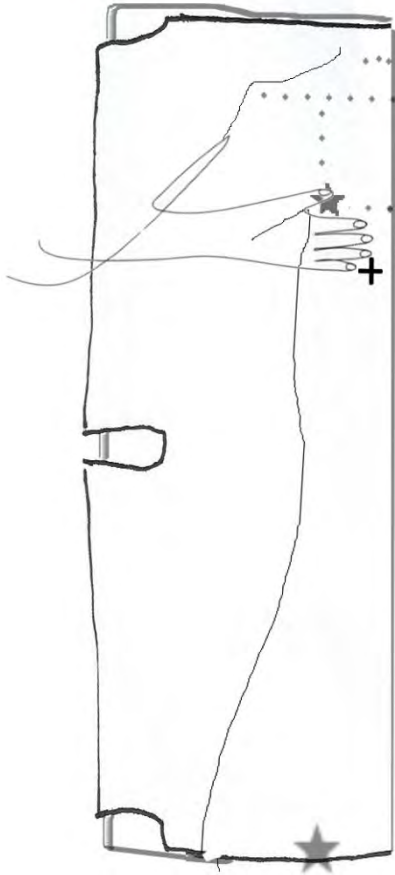
OPTIONALL: Iron, Sewing Machine, Serger

The Loren dress takes t-shirt dress design on a sharp sideways turn. The design is inspired by what I call a Long Cut. The t-shirt tube is split open and sideways to eliminate the waistline seam that often cuts across the midline in a pieced construction. This is why the t-shirts selected must be free of side seams so that style lines run vertically from shoulder to hem. This along with other fine tailoring techniques create a flattering shape and a more elegant structure. While the darts and facings require precision in placement the effect is elegant and crisp.

Cutting Guide

Using identical shirts side seam free, chalk mark each with a horizontal line to just below the neckband. Cut along the line to remove the shoulders and sleeves, cut one side open but keep the hems intact, creating three Long Cut panels. Mark a W inside of each for wrong side. Hold up a Long Cut with the hem running vertically to see if it is wide enough to cover your back side. Tip: unpick the hem stitches at your widest area to widen. If more width is needed make a fourth Long Cut for a multi pieced back.



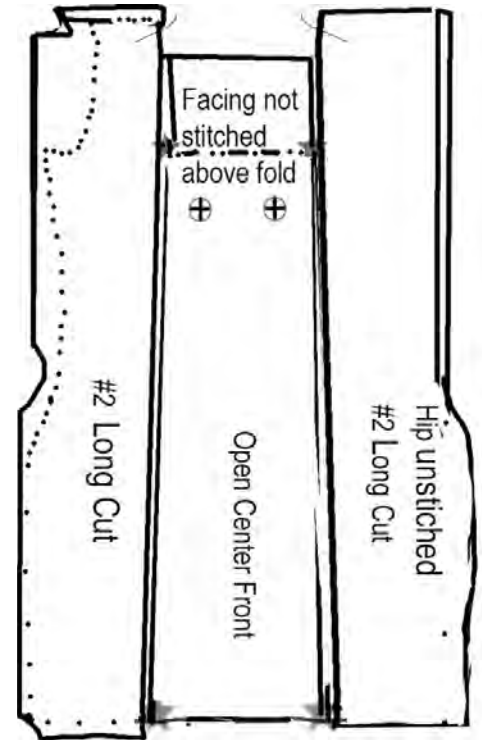


Loren Construction

Front Center Panel

On the midline of your body, place folded #1 Long Cut. Place the bottom edge 2" lower than the desired hemline. Mark the breast point + then, on the same side of the body, measure with your flat hand, place your pinkie fingertip at the bust apex, then mark a star at the tip of the thumb * for the top of the neckline. Draw a cut line straight up from the * star, and place stars at the hemline directly below. From a split Long Cut #2, pin vertically parallel on center front, between stars. Chalk mark the desired strap width and arm openings.

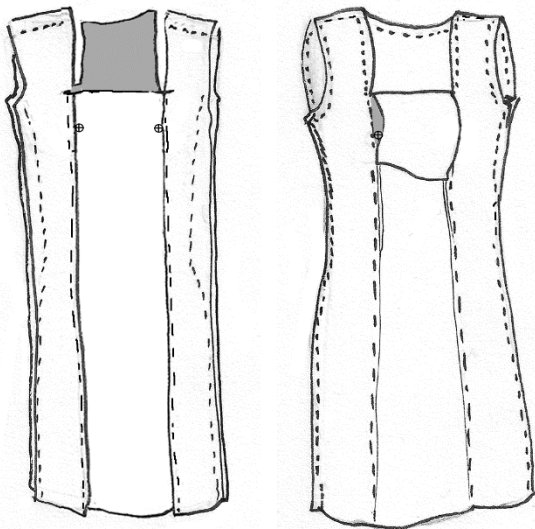
Cut Generously
WIDE seam allowances
1" on center front
2" 2" on side seams



Combine Fronts and Backs

Stack Long Cut #3 (or a pieced Long Cuts back) right sides together with fronts. Pin at the shoulders and sides, chalk mark neckline and side seams, add ease and baste. Fit test. Sew shoulders, stitch arm and neck openings, trim, then turn narrow hems, top stitch openings, skipping the front fold. Stitch over basting once sides are straight and center seams are parallel. Tack facing vertically to cover center seams. Trim excess bulk.

A pieced back like the front trio requires parallel seams, the center panel being rectangular, so fullness is adjusted at the side seams, so darts are not used in a pieced back construction



French Darts

A dart takes up fullness and adds shape. French darts start and end with a point. You may wish to shape a Whole Cloth Back, if the fit is too loose add darts.

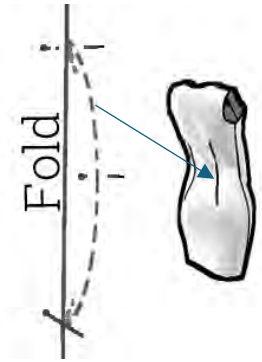
Tip: practice a dart sewing on a scrap, to perfect starting well inside the dart, backstitching to get to the zero pin point, then proceeding along the line, past the fullest point, to end with a backstitch, sew to the point, then knot well inside the dart. Use the presser foot's width as sewing guide, if not confident, start with a baste stitch. Unstitching tight stitch lines in a prominent location can be unforgiving, so confirm fit and placement before final stitches, then press darts toward the center to complete.

Loren Continued

To place darts, try on the dress inside out. With your hands on your hips, reach back toward the spine and feel for the two divots. Chalk mark those points. Straight up from the divots at the bra line, add two more dots. Take off the dress and add pins to mark the four dots.

Make vertical folds on each side of the spine starting and ending with a pin. At the midpoint, measure .25" on each side of the line to become a center with of .5" and add another pin there. Use chalk to mark to connect the dart sewing lines between pins (remove pins as you sew).

Trim excess bulk and clean up the bottom edge as needed. Turn an even hem pin and press, hand sew, or stitch in place to finish.



SEWING TERMS

Baste: Loose, long stitches to temporarily join fabric. *Pin basting* means securing a seam with pins in a line.

Edge Curl: How a knit edge will deform after washing or stretching, notice this direction if piecing cut edges.

Hem: Usually a folded bottom edge, stitched to prevent fraying and give a clean finish.

Launder: Wash garments in cold water, inside out, and dry flat or on a cool setting to avoid shrinkage.

Pin: Temporarily hold fabric layers together with straight pins before sewing.

Pockets: A small patch pocket works on a T-shirt dress, skip side pockets—add a bag or jacket instead.

Press: Using an iron to flatten seams or shape fabric; helps set stitches and create crisp edges.

Running Stitch: A basic hand stitch that goes in and out at an even pace—great for seams or gathering.

Serge / Overlock: Stitch on stretch knit with a 3-thread wide setting for a durable, enclosed, flexible edge.

Stay Stitch: Regular stitch lines placed to prevent stretching or distortion, especially around curves.

Stitch on Knits: Use your machine's stretch stitch (check manual) or try a zigzag: 2.5 length and 0.5 width.

Tack: Short, secure stitches to hold small areas together—can be done by hand or machine.

Test Sew: Try stitch settings and tension on scrap fabric (same type) before sewing your actual piece.

Top Stitch: A visible stitch line on the outside of a garment, close to a seam or edge for function or decoration.

Top Stitch by Hand: Use embroidery thread in a contrasting color for a decorative, functional finish.

Zippers & Buttons: Tight machine stitches don't perform well on T-shirt fabric—test alternatives.