



Sewing with Knits – Lesson 1

Master sewing knits by first understanding the ins and outs of knits, the types, the stretch, and tips for best sewing them!

Skill Level: Basic

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Supplies:

- Various Knit fabric samples of your choice
- Class samples include: jersey knit, printed jersey knit, neoprene, sweater knit, fine silk knit, spandex, fine linen knit. You can use any scraps that you have
- 4 spools serger thread
- Wonder clips
- While we stitched on the Baby Lock Imagine, knits can be sewing on any of the Baby Lock sergers! Joi will also have tips for sewing knits on a sewing machine in Lesson 2!

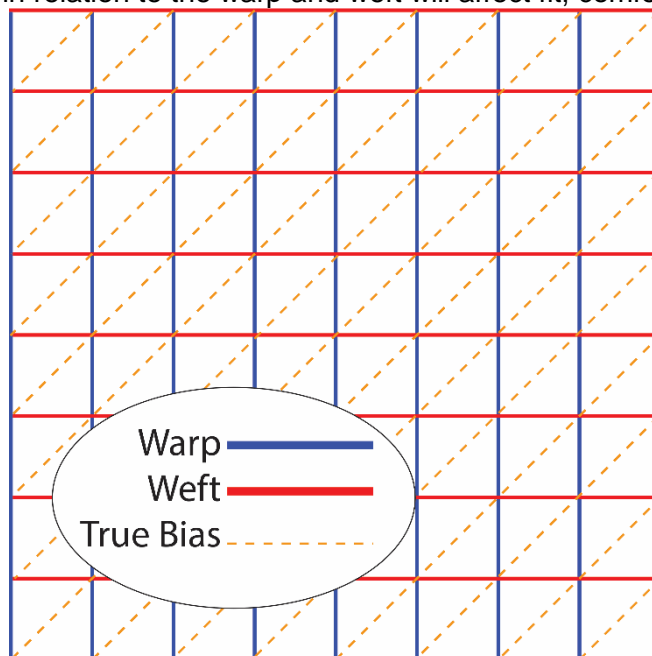
Introduction to Knit Fabrics Part 1

To understand knit fabric, you must first understand the characteristics of woven non-stretchy fabric. Woven fabrics are created by first laying the WARP vertical yarns and then filling in with the WEFT horizontal yarns. The WARP runs vertically up and down parallel to the selvedge. These are the strongest stable yarns of the fabric with little to no give and what you match the grainline to on the pattern. Weft yarns are not as close together and thus have a little give. (*True Bias is at a*

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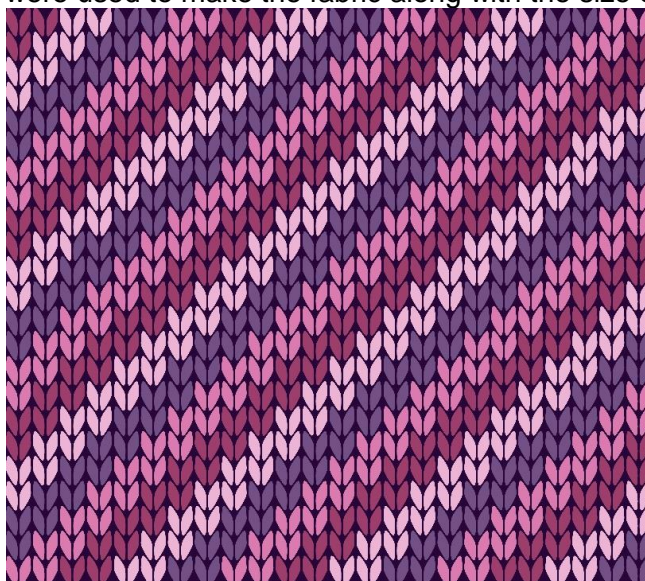
45° angle and anything off grain or off warp is on the bias, however that is not covered in this class just know it is part of a woven fabric)

How you cut a garment in relation to the warp and weft will affect fit, comfort and stretch.



Knit Foundations

- Knits have a “grain” and one direction that is more stable than the other.
- Knits have Courses and Wales similar to Warp and Weft in a woven.
- The stretch comes from interlocking loops in the knitting process.
- The loops are called stitches.
- Gauge is how many stitches per inch fit in a square inch and this is affected by how many needles per inch were used to make the fabric along with the size of the yarn.

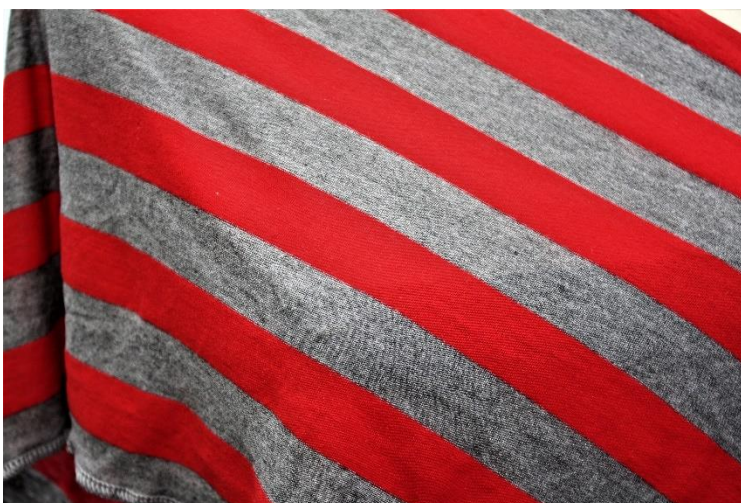


Fabric Tips

The quality of your fabric is key for successful results when sewing knits. Good quality does not necessarily mean expensive, but sometimes paying just a little more will help you avoid common pitfalls such as skewed or off grain fabric structure, skipped stitches and twisting when wearing. Good quality knit fabrics will have straight course and even stitches and are not twisting on the bolt. Avoid the bargain bin at the big box store. Look and evaluate the fabric for quality because it will last longer and will be worth your investment.

Printed Knit Tips

Many knits have patterns printed on the surface rather than being woven into the fabric. These offer many choices in our sewing, but there are a few things to keep in mind. The print or pattern needs to be printed on grain. In this example, red stripes were printed on the base gray layer of fabric. This fabric is an example of a poor quality knit. The knit is off grain to begin, then the stripes are printed onto the knit. Because it is a poorly produced fabric, corners were cut and the stripes are not even straight on the fabric. Now when you lay a pattern piece on the fabric and you match the grainline to the stripe while the grainline on the pattern matches the stripe it will not hang straight on the body. This is also another cause of skipped stitches when sewing and other sewing issues. So, either sew a sample of your fabric or do a quick evaluation of the grain and print before buying.



Knit Front and Back

- Stitches run vertically on the front and show the loops
- Configuration is horizontal on the back with smaller stitches
- Some knits are reversible
- Decorative threads are placed on the front
- Knits that roll do so toward the front like Jersey
- Single knits like jersey have a distinctive front and back
- Double knits look the same on the front and back
 - They don't roll
 - They are reversible
 - They lay nice and flat
 - May be easier for a first time knit sewer

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New Knit Fabrics

Knits are easy to sew and offer ease in fitting due to the stretch. They require minimal ironing and construction too. New technologies in fabrics occur all the time. Neoprene or “scuba” is a recent knit that became available to the home sewer.

- It looks difficult, but is easy to sew
- It is like rubber but is NOT made from rubber
- Great for simple garment shapes like a pencil skirt or simple jacket
- Decorative zippers make a great accent
- Neoprene can be hot



Comparing Knit Fabrics Part 2

Fabric Weight

- Lightweight knit example: stretch silk, thin knit linen
- Mediumweight knit example: cotton jersey, spandex
- Heavyweight knit example: sweater knit, neoprene, knits for outerwear

Direction of Stretch

One or Two-way stretch

- These are the same with stretch going either back and forth or up and down
- The stretch needs to go around the body when making your garment
- Great for easing in sleeves

Four-way stretch

- These stretch in all directions or four directions back and forth and up and down
- Provide the ultimate stretch for the fabric
- Still has one direction that stretches more than the other. That goes around the body

Amount of Stretch

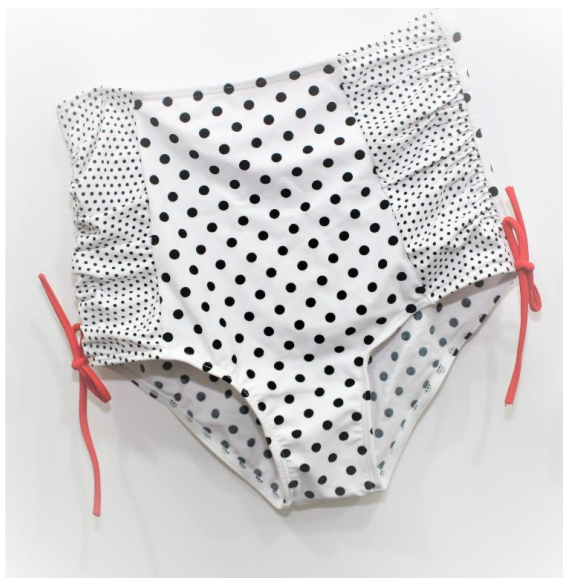
Just because a fabric is stretchy even with four-way stretch does not mean that it has a high degree of stretch. After you have the weight and direction the next element is the degree of stretch. You can use the amount of stretch to your advantage when sewing.

- Light Stretch: Fabrics like sweater knits or even jersey can have little to moderate stretch
- Medium Stretch: This might describe printed fashion knits, slinky knits, and jerseys
- Heavy Stretch: Spandex is a great example of a fabric with the ultimate amount of stretch

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Use stretch to your advantage. Areas like necklines, and armholes need to be able to stretch and then recover to the natural shape.

“Recovery” is the term used to describe how a knit resets to its original shape after stretching. This can be a good or bad thing. Areas like the crotch curve, neckline or armhole should not stretch out and stay stretched or it will distort the garment. You would not make a swimsuit brief out of t-shirt jersey for example because the leg opening would not hug the body after being stretched out.



Prepping Your Serger Part 3



Sergers are fast, efficient and ideal for sewing knit fabrics. There are many features available and you can reference your manual for all the options. However, serging knits is easy. First, determine the type of knit you are using including the weight, amount of stretch and the direction. When you sew a seam, you are joining two edges together to form a seam. With a lighter weight fabric, you don't want a heavy bulky seam and with a heavy fabric you may need a heavier set up.

1. Select the Stitch
2. Select the Width
3. Select the Length
4. Select the Thread

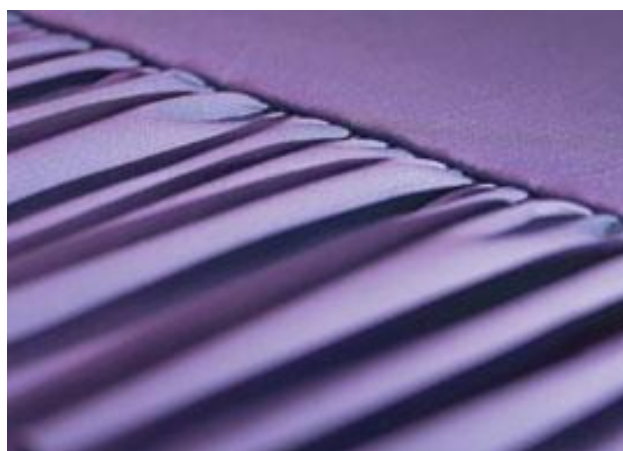
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If you are not sure you can always test on a sample piece of fabric. Also, use the markings on the front of the machine to help guide you as you sew. This stripe linen knit is very delicate with a very open weave. A heavy dense stitch would not form well on this fabric. Instead, use a lighter more open stitch to match the fabric such as a 3 thread overlock.



Differential Feed

The Differential is how the fabric is pulled through the machine. On your Baby Lock, it will be the lever with the “N” on the right side. Sometimes knits stretch as they sew or they ripple. If this happens to you, then you can adjust the rate at which both layers feed through the machine. Test your fabric to see if you need to adjust this. The differential feed is also a great tool for easing things like sleeves into an armhole, or a band into a neck or waistline. You can even gather your fabric with the differential lever. Shift it all the way up to “2” and test your fabric to see the effect. Just note that the weight of your fabric will determine how much it will gather.



IMPORTANT!!! NEVER serge over a pin it can harm our project and machine

Tool Tip: Wonder Clips are a great alternative to pins and a hands-free way to hold your fabric seams together when serging.

Needles for Knits

- You can use Ball Point or Stretch needles on knits in your serger
- Skipped stitches often occur when the wrong needle is used.
- Prevent running and holes in your knits by using the correct needles
- Use only Schmetz or Klasse quality needles

Sewing Machine needles use the needle system HAX1SP which is a standard needle length and size for fitting into the machine. What is different is the tips and you can select these for your project. These include Ballpoint, Jersey or Microtex. For fine knits use a microtex for best result.



Serging Fabric Samples Part 4

How to Serge

1. Anchor your two fabric pieces for the seam with wonder clips
2. Place the fabric under the foot. The feed dogs extend in front of the foot so they will pull the fabric through, however; you can lightly lift the front of the foot and place the fabric under the foot to begin.
3. Line your fabric up with the markings on the machine. If the blade is engaged, it will trim off excess.
4. Press the foot pedal and let the machine work its magic

Evaluate

- Do the stitches hug the fabric evenly?
- Is the stitch too heavy, too light, or appropriate for the fabric and garment?
- Most importantly is it durable for its function?



Fabric Samples

It is important to test your fabric and seams before you begin sewing. This will enable you to have perfect results when it comes to your actual project. Following the steps listed above, cut some small strips of your fabric from the scraps and test the stitches, threads, needles, and seam selections before you begin. It only takes a few moments for you to be well on your way to successful knit sewing.



For more great resources like this one, visit our websites at www.babylock.com or www.totallystitchin.net.

To find out more about Designer Joi, check her out at www.designerjoi.com and all her social media channels.



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