

It's that time of year when every gal needs a flirty dress or two—or three! Here, you'll see how to make three quick and easy-to-sew dresses that are anything but homespun. They are modern, stylish, and fun choices suitable for an upcoming holiday party, date night, or adventure out on the town. So when you make that killer entrance, don't be surprised when you shock your friends with the news that you made it yourself.

—CHRISTINE HAYNES

Dressy Trio

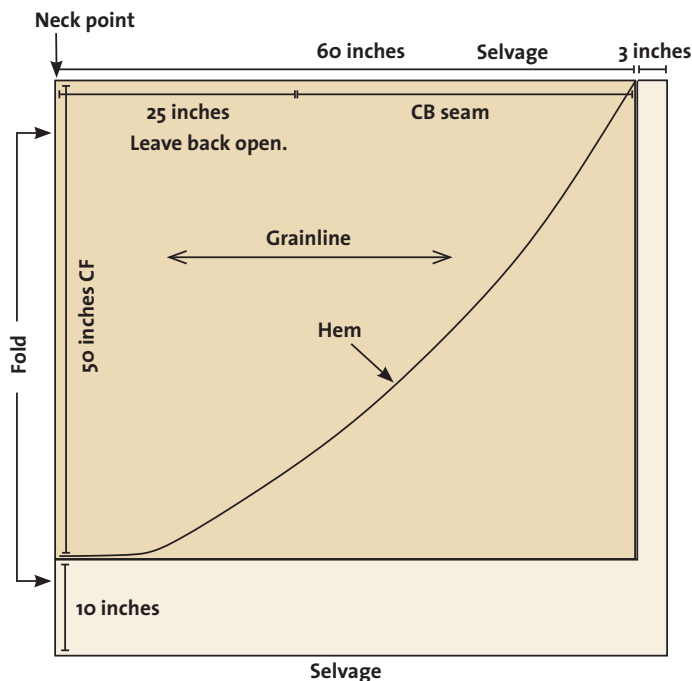
Simple patterns for
three quick dresses

The timeless halter gown

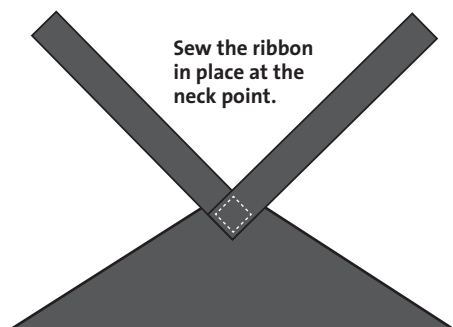
When you need to make a big impression, showing up in a dress this dramatic is the way to do it. This version is made of prepleated stretch polyester. To get the look, stick to a stretch fabric such as polyester jersey that doesn't have to be hemmed. This dress is one size fits all, so there's no need to worry about sizing.

{1} REFOLD THE STRETCH FABRIC. Open the fabric center fold from the bolt, and fold the fabric in half along the cross-grain with the selvages aligned and right sides together. On a 60-inch-wide piece of fabric, cut 3 inches from the cut end and 10 inches from one selvage edge.

{2} DRAW YOUR PATTERN PIECES. Following the pattern diagram at right, draw the pattern on the fabric. Follow the markings to cut the pattern from the fabric. Cut carefully for clean, smooth edges; this dress won't be hemmed, so you want a perfect edge. You can adjust the depth of the open back to your size in the next step.



{3} SEW THE CENTER BACK. With right sides together and starting at the center-back seam, sew a 35-inch-long, $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch-wide seam allowance along the selvage edge from the cut edge up. This is the center-back seam. If you want to adjust the depth of the back opening, baste the seam together first, and try the dress on. Adjust the opening, and stitch. Then remove the basting stitches, and press the seam allowance open.



{4} ATTACH THE RIBBON. Mark the center-front neck point with a pin at the fabric fold. Fold the ribbon in half at a 90-degree angle to form a "V" shape, as shown above. Pin the ribbon to the marked center-front neck point. Using a straight stitch, sew the ribbon to the dress. Sew by making a square on top of the ribbon overlap.



{5} EMBELLISH THE DRESS. Cluster your fabric flowers, and twist the wire stems to interlock them. Fold the wires at the base of the flowers, and trim the excess wire. Hand-sew the flowers to the velvet ribbon over the machine-stitched square at the center front. Step into your gorgeous halter dress, and adjust the neck ties behind your head.

Supplies

- Fabric flowers, 3 medium-size with wire stems
- Fabric marking tool
- Ribbon, $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide velvet, 2½ yards
- Stretch fabric, 60-inch-wide, 3½ yards

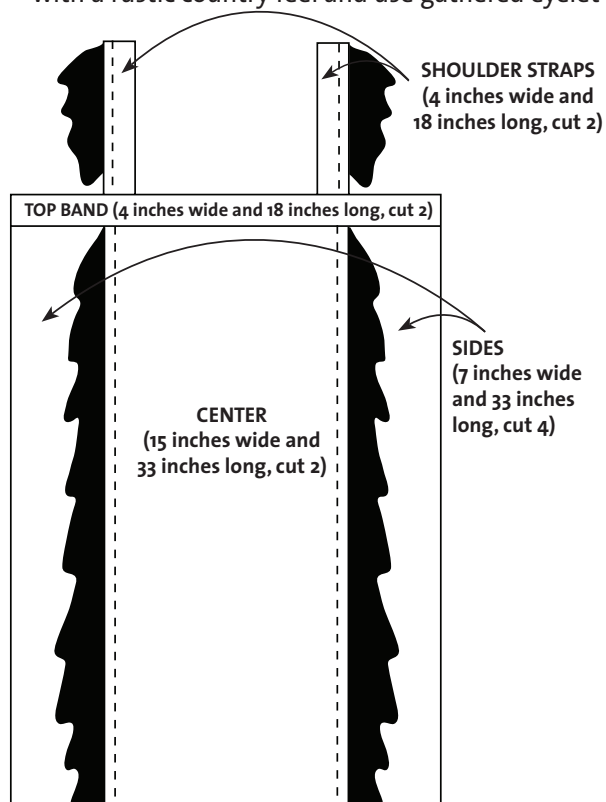


The lace ruffle dress

This dress has a great modern flapper feel. It's totally unique and fun but made with a sweet edge by choosing a delicate floral print. Yours can be bold and brazen, depending on the fabric you choose. If you like finer fabrics, this dress would be great in something like silk satin. Or, go with a rustic country feel and use gathered eyelet for the ruffles and gingham for the dress.

Supplies

- Fabric, 2 yards
- Pre-gathered lace trim, 3-inch-wide, 5 yards



{1} CUT OUT THE DRESS. Follow the drawing at left to measure and cut the pieces from your fabric. This dress pattern is a size 6 small. To adjust to a larger size, simply widen each dress piece, except the straps, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch for each larger size. So for a size 8, add $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to the width, and for a size 10, add 1 inch.

{2} CUT THE LACE. Cut two, 16-inch-long pieces and four, 34-inch-long pieces of lace.



{3} SEW ON THE LACE. With right sides together, lay one 34-inch-long piece of lace on one dress center with the lace's straight edge aligned with the fabric's long raw edge. Leave the extra length of lace at the bottom of the front dress piece for hemming. Sew it in place. Repeat on the remaining long edges of the front and back center pieces.



{4} ATTACH THE DRESS SIDES. With right sides together, pin one dress side to a dress center with the lace sandwiched between the layers and the three top edges aligned. Sew with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam allowance. Sew another dress side to the dress center's opposite side. Repeat to sew the remaining dress sides to the other dress center.

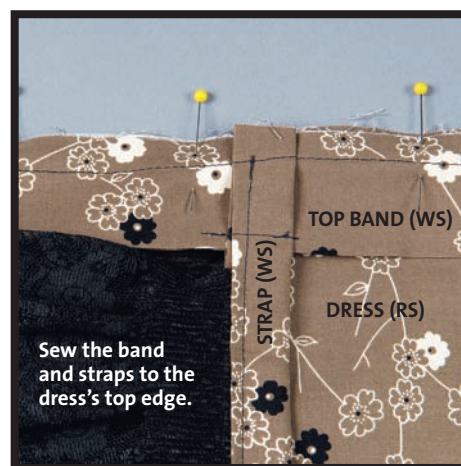


{5} ASSEMBLE THE DRESS. Pin the dress front and the dress back right sides together along the side seams. Sew the two side seams with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam allowance. Press the seam allowances open.

{6} PRESS AND TOPSTITCH THE SEAM. Lightly press the lace-filled seams from the wrong side, and press the entire seam allowance toward the center of the dress. Repeat on all four seams. Topstitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch away from the four lace-filled seams, sewing the seam allowance flat.

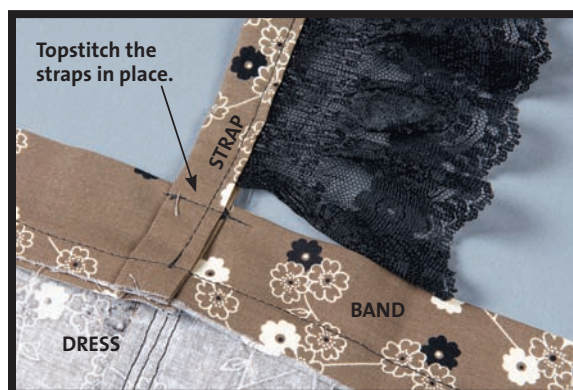


{7} SEW THE STRAPS. With wrong sides together, fold a strap in half lengthwise, and press. Fold the two long edges in towards the fold, and press. Unfold the strap. With right sides together, center a lace strip on the strap's long edge. Align the fabric's raw edge and lace's gathered edge, and stitch it in place. Following the strap's creases, fold it around the base of the lace, and press again, concealing the raw edges. Topstitch along the edge, sewing the strap closed. Repeat for the second strap.



{8} MAKE THE TOP BAND. With right sides together, sew the front band to the back band along the short ends with a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch seam allowance. Press the seam allowances open. Fold the finished piece in half, wrong sides together, and align the long edges. Press to form a crisp edge.

{9} ATTACH THE TOP BAND. With right sides together, pin the folded top band to the dress's top edge, matching side seams and raw edges. Pin the straps to the dress 4 inches from the side seams, keeping the raw edges even. Make sure the straps' lace is pointing towards the side seams. Stitch around the pinned top edge with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch seam allowance through the band, straps, and dress.



{10} FINISH THE DRESS. Turn the top band right-side out, and press the seam allowance down. Secure the straps by topstitching them at the band's top edge. Turn under the hem $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, catching the lace, and press. Topstitch in place, and trim off the excess lace.



The Two-Toned Shift

With just a change of fabric, this shift dress is suitable for nearly any occasion. This version is made with beautiful white eyelet for the yoke and vintage-inspired, medium-weight stretch cotton for the bottom. Your version can be anything your heart desires—a print on the bottom and a matching solid on the yoke such as a gingham or floral bottom with a solid cotton top; it can be two solids that look great together; or you can go really fancy and make the whole thing out of black lace to be worn over a slip. It's your creation, and doing what you want is half the fun of making your own clothing.

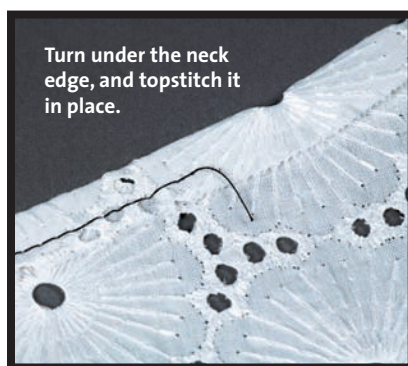
{1} TRANSFER THE PATTERN DIAGRAM MARKINGS TO YOUR FABRIC. Use the diagrams on page 95. Cut one front yoke on the fold and one back yoke on the fold. Cut two dress skirts. The size shown is for a size 6 small. For each size up, increase each pattern piece measurement by ½ inch, e.g., for a size 8, add ½ inch to all the measurements; for a size 10, add 1 inch.

Supplies

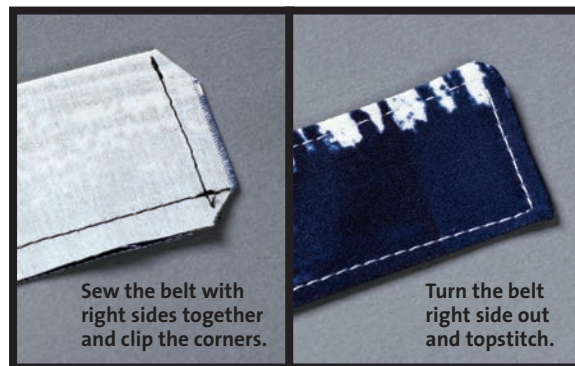
- Fabric
 - > for the bottom: 2 yards
 - > for the top: ½ yard
 - > for the belt: ¼ yard



{2} MAKE THE DRESS FRONT. With right sides together, sew the front yoke to the skirt front with a ⅝-inch seam allowance. Press the seam allowance towards the skirt. Topstitch just under the seam, stitching the inside seam allowance down flat. Repeat on the back pieces.



Turn under the neck edge, and topstitch it in place.



Sew the belt with right sides together and clip the corners.

Turn the belt right side out and topstitch.

{3} ATTACH THE FRONT TO THE BACK. With the right sides together, sew the side and shoulder seams with a ⅝-inch seam allowance. Press the seams open.

{4} FINISH THE EDGES. Turn the hem under ½ inch, and press. Repeat and topstitch. Fold the sleeve and neck raw edges inside ¼ inch, and press. Topstitch it in place.

{5} MAKE A MATCHING BELT. Cut two 3-inch-wide, 40-inch-long pieces of fabric. With right sides together, sew around all four sides with a ⅝-inch seam allowance, leaving a 2-inch opening on one long side. Clip the points off the corners. Turn the belt right-side out though the 2-inch opening. Use a point turner to make the corners crisp. Press the entire belt with an iron, and tuck the seam allowance inside the belt at the opening. Topstitch around the belt's edges to close the opening.

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Use the templates below and at right to draw the shift-dress patterns. To enlarge the pattern, extend the edges indicated by the dotted line.

