

Festive

Circle

Skirts

A sweeping silhouette that's fun to wear

What could be more fun than a twirly skirt in crisp red taffeta? A circle skirt is easy to create and fabulous to wear. And the great thing is you don't need to buy a pattern to make this skirt. It is just a full circle with a hole in the middle. All you need are your waist measurement and a basic formula. Because the sewing is fast, this is the perfect project to get you in the party mood. Once you've made one, why not try a tea-length variation in polka-dot flocked tulle with a girly bow? Start with these two looks, and then get adventurous to make other styles and lengths. There are countless possibilities.

GRETCHEN HIRSCH loves vintage fashion and writes a popular sewing blog called *BlogForBetterSewing.com*.

Supplies

- 2 to 2½ yards fabric
- 9-inch zipper
- Measuring tape
- Pattern paper
- Pencil
- Pins
- Scissors
- Sewing machine
- Thread

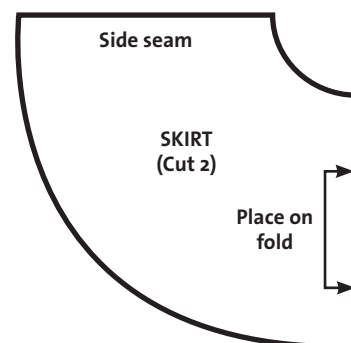
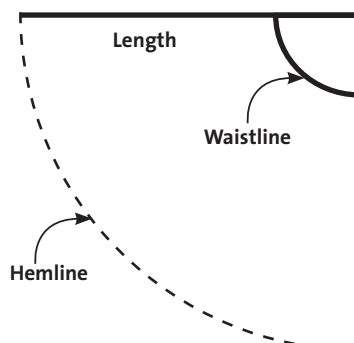
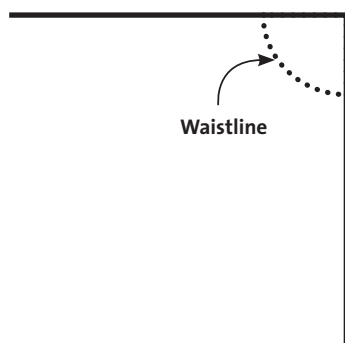
Optional:

- Tulle fabric



Draft the pattern

Imagine the skirt as a doughnut: a perfect circle with a smaller circle cut out of the center to accommodate your waist. For the pattern, draft only a quarter circle, and cut it on the fold. You'll need to measure your waist first, and determine its radius. To do this, divide your waist circumference by 3.14, then by 2. Then round that number to the nearest ¼ inch.



{1} MARK THE WAISTLINE. On pattern paper, draw a 90-degree angle. Draft the waistline curve by drawing several marks the distance of your waist radius out from the corner of the angle. Connect the dots with a French curve (a dinner plate also works well).

{2} MARK THE LENGTH. Decide how long you want your skirt to be, and add ½ inch for a narrow hem. Measure this length from the marked waistline seam, and draw little marks all around the right angle, as in step 1. Connect the dots to form your hem curve.

{3} FINISH THE SKIRT PATTERN. Add a "place on fold" bracket to one straight side of the right angle. The other side is the side seam. Write "Cut 2" on the pattern. Add a ½-inch seam allowance to the waistline and to the side seam.

Waistline radius formula:
(Waist measurement ÷ 3.14) ÷ 2

FABRICS COURTESY OF B&J Fabrics, New York, New York, BAndJFabrics.com.

tip

MARK THE WAISTLINE WITH A HOMEMADE COMPASS

With a thumbtack, secure a measuring tape to the angle's point. Mark the waist radius on the tape. Draw the waistline, using the tape as your compass.

{4} DRAFT THE WAISTBAND. Draw a rectangle 3 inches wide by your waist measurement plus 1 inch. This is folded lengthwise in construction to give you a 1½-inch-wide waistband. Add ½-inch seam allowances to all edges.

Sew the circle skirt

Sew just two side seams, insert the zipper, attach the waistband, and finish it off with a closure and hem.



{1} CUT, PREP, AND STAYSTITCH THE PIECES.

Cut two skirt pieces on the fold and one waistband piece not on the fold. Staystitch the front and back waistlines to prevent stretching. Apply lightweight fusible interfacing to the waistband.

{2} SEW THE SIDE SEAMS.

With right sides together, sew the skirt's right side seam. Starting at the waistband, place the zipper along the left side seam and mark the zipper's bottom stop location. Sew the left side seam below this mark. Press open the side seams, leaving the left side's unsewn portion unpressed.



{3} ATTACH THE ZIPPER'S RIGHT SIDE TO THE GARMENT.

On the garment's left side seam, press the back seam allowance under $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Pin the zipper to the folded seam allowance, with right sides together and the fold along the zipper teeth. Use a zipper foot to stitch close to the fold.



{4} FINISH THE LAPPED ZIPPER.

Press the front zipper seam allowance under $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. Position the seam allowance over the zipper so that the front fold just covers the stitching line on the back seam allowance. Pin to the left of the teeth. Topstitch from the top of the zipper to just below the stop, then pivot, and sew across the bottom of the zipper to the seamline.



{5} APPLY THE WAISTBAND.

Fold the waistband in half lengthwise, wrong sides together, and press. Press one long edge under $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. Pin the unpressed long edge to the skirt waistline, with right sides together. Extend the waistband beyond the back zipper opening by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches (1 inch underlap and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch seam allowance).



{6} STITCH THE WAISTBAND TO THE SKIRT.

Then grade the seam allowances (clip if necessary), and press toward the waistband. Fold the waistband right sides together. Stitch across the waistband's short ends (the under- and overlap). Clip the corners, and trim the seam allowances.

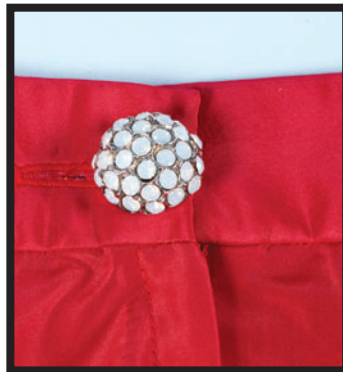
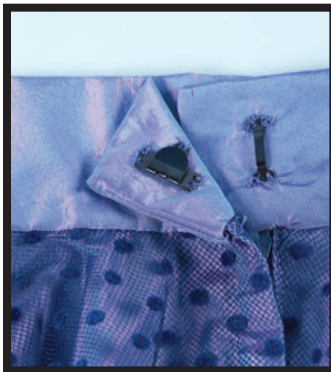
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Finish the waistband with hand stitches.

{7} TURN THE WAISTBAND RIGHT SIDE OUT, AND POKE OUT THE CORNERS.

Finish by hand stitching the waistband to the waistline seam allowance using a slipstitch.



{8} CREATE A CLOSURE. Hand-sew a hook and bar—the hook to the wrong side of the skirt front at the waistband opening, and the bar to the underlap. Or show off a sparkly button with a buttonhole on the waistband.



Sew a narrow hem.

{9} HEM AND PRESS. Let your skirt hang overnight to allow the bias portions to stretch out. Mark, press, and sew a narrow hem suited to your fabric. Press the seam allowances, waistline, and hem.

Dress it up with tulle

This glam variation has a sheer overlay. Tulle is easy to work with and doesn't require hemming.



Baste the overlay and underlay together at the waistline and zipper opening.

{1} CUT OUT THE SKIRT. Extend the skirt pattern to your desired length (the skirt shown is 29 inches long). Cut two skirt pieces for the front and the back from the underlay fabric and two pieces from the overlay tulle fabric. Cut the waistband from the underlay fabric.

{2} START THE SKIRT CONSTRUCTION. Follow steps 1 and 2 on page 63 to construct the underlay skirt.

{3} SEW THE TULLE AT THE SIDE SEAMS, LEAVING THE LEFT SIDE OPEN FOR THE ZIPPER. Trim the tulle seam allowances to about ¼ inch. If you must press the tulle, do so with a cool iron and a press cloth. Tulle melts easily! Place the skirt underlayer inside the tulle skirt, both with right sides out, and baste together at the waistline and at the zipper opening.

PHOTOS: SLOAN HOWARD; STYLIST: JESSICA SAAL; HAIR AND MAKEUP: RICHARD COOLEY/UTOPIANYC.COM; ILLUSTRATIONS: KAT RIEHLE; STYLING: CREDITS (P. 61 AND P. 62, RIGHT) TOP—(HIM.COM), EARRINGS—(SUZANNADAL.COM), SHOES—BRASH (PAYLESS.COM); (P. 62, LEFT, AND P. 65) TOP—(TOPSHOP.COM), EARRINGS—(K-AMATO.COM), NECKLACES—STYLIST'S OWN, SHOES—SILVIA TCHERASSI (PAYLESS.COM)



Sew the zipper and waistband.

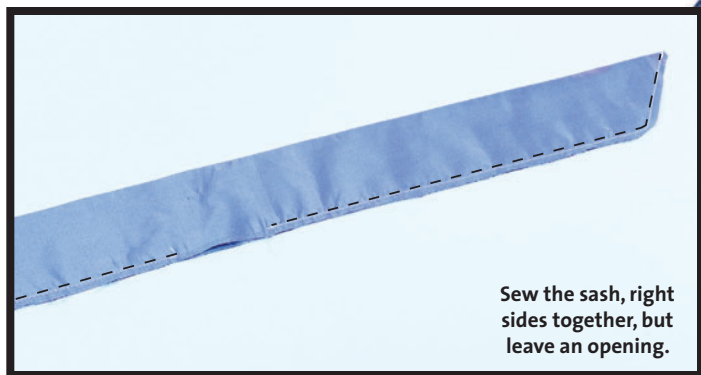
{4} INSERT THE LAPPED ZIPPER, AND APPLY THE WAISTBAND. Follow steps 3 through 8 on pages 63 and 64, treating the underlay and tulle layers as one. Because tulle is delicate, you may wish to apply your zipper by hand with a small pickstitch.

{5} HEM THE SKIRT. Hem the underlay skirt to the desired length as described in step 9 on page 64. Trim the tulle skirt level with the lining hem.

Make a sash

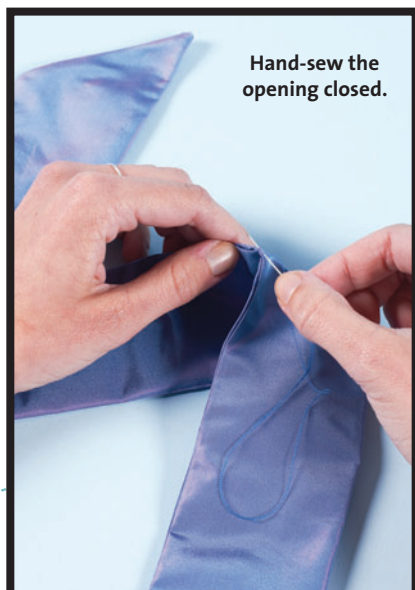
Finish your circle skirt with a fabulous bow. How could you not be in the party spirit wearing this little number?

{1} MAKE THE PATTERN PIECE. Create a rectangle that measures twice your waist measurement by 4 inches wide. Add seam allowances to all four sides of the sash pattern.



Sew the sash, right sides together, but leave an opening.

{2} SEW THE SASH. Fold the sash lengthwise, right sides together. Cut the short ends so they are slanted. Stitch along all three raw edges. Leave a small opening in the middle of the long edge to turn right side out. Cut the corners, and trim seam allowances.



Hand-sew the opening closed.

{3} FINISH THE SASH. Turn the sash right side out, pushing out the corners to form sharp angles. Slipstitch the opening closed, and press the seams.

Getting that retro look

If you want an extrafull, '50s vibe skirt, it's important to have a strategy for achieving maximum "poofiness," since circle skirts don't stand out on their own. The easiest way to do this is to purchase a crinoline petticoat or to add a horsehair braid hem.

