

FACT SHEET

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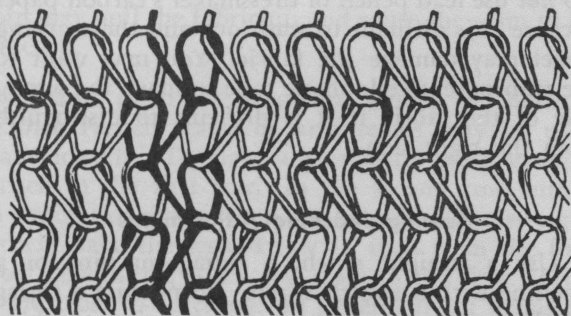
TRICOT KNIT LOOKS ALL SEWN UP

Margret Ann Vanderpoorten*

Sewing tricot knits can be a rewarding experience for the home sewer who enjoys expressing individuality and likes to work with challenging fabrics.

Tricot, a warp-knit, is characterized by fine vertical ribs on the right side and crosswise ribbings on the wrong side. Tricot is runproof, snag resistant and non-raveling. It resists bagging and creasing in wear. Tricot fabrics are usually smooth, soft and flowing.

Tricot varies in weight from very light, such as chiffon tricot, to heavy and opaque. Medium weight tricot is the type most often available for home sewing. Tricot fabrics may have the appearance of satin or crepe, or be brushed like flannel-ette. Pile knits and velours are often of tricot construction.



Tricot fabrics are used for women's wear in dresses, blouses, lingerie, lounge wear and swimwear. Men's lounge wear and some underwear may be of tricot. Knit garments such as jackets, vests and skirts may be lined with tricot. Lining in these garments will give them a finished look, protect the seam allowances from abrasion, and make them more opaque. Slips need not be worn with lined or underlined skirts since the tricot lining will reduce clinginess. Tricot that matches or harmonizes may be used.

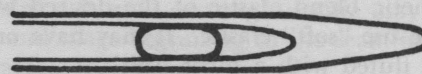
Tools

Regular sewing equipment can be used with some possible additions.

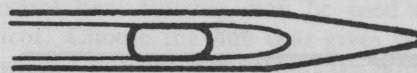
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Shears — Use bent handle shears because they lift the fabric less. Wipe lint from blades frequently. Special shears are also available that are designed to stay sharp when used for synthetic knits.

Needles — Use a #9 or #11 ball point or a rounded point needle. This pushes the yarns aside instead of piercing and damaging the fiber. If you cannot find ball point needles, use a #9 sharp machine needle; however, this is hard to thread and bends easily. Use a #9 needle for hand sewing. Change needles often as synthetic fabrics dull needles. A new needle makes more even stitches. All-purpose needles are also designed for use on tricot fabric.



BALLPOINT NEEDLE



REGULAR NEEDLE

Pins — Ball point pins which slip between the yarns in tricot knit, rather than piercing them, are available. Fine, sharp-pointed pins are also suitable.

Presser Foot — A roller presser foot is helpful, since it assists both layers of fabric through the machine at the same rate.

Patterns

Purchase patterns in the size normally used. Patterns designed for knits are particularly suited for use with tricot. Since tricot is a soft fabric, it is especially effective when used for styles with gathering or draping. Caftans, hostess pajamas and other at-home styles are attractive in printed or brightly colored tricot knits.

Lingerie patterns are sold by all major pattern companies. These patterns have a measurement

chart on the envelope and are sold by dress size. Buy patterns for pants, petti-pants and half-slips to fit hip measurements; full slips and gowns to fit bust; or make your own patterns from old garments that have both style and fit you like.

Notions

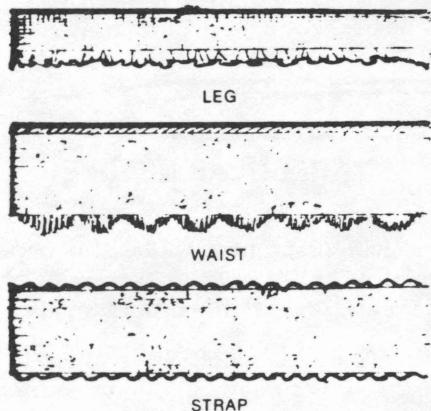
Thread — Use cotton polyester core thread or 100 percent polyester thread. Both are strong and have “give.” Nylon thread designed for tricot or silk thread may also be used.

Note: If your sewing machine has a special stretch stitch and a specific kind of thread is recommended, use the thread specified by your machine manufacturer.

Zippers — Use the lightest zippers possible. The ones with knitted tapes and synthetic coils are best. Either regular or invisible styles may be used. Always preshrink the zipper before using it.

Tissue paper (optional) — Tissue paper strips under seams help prevent bunching and skipped stitches. Tissue tape is available marked with seam allowances or you may cut your own.

Elastic — The kind of elastic to buy depends on use. For waistband casings, wristbands or necklines use a synthetic blend elastic of the desired width. For lingerie use “soft” elastic. It may have one or both edges fluted with a picot finish.



Nylon or polyester elastic is best for lingerie. Use 1/2-inch width for waist and 1/4-inch width for legs.

Bra fasteners and shoulder straps — These are available in many stores for use in making lingerie. They are convenient and easy to use.

Fabric Preparation, Cutting and Marking

Wash the fabric before using to remove excess sizing that often causes skipped stitches. Using a fabric softener in the final rinse may also help pre-

vent skipped stitches caused by static electricity. Dry on a flat surface away from direct heat or tumble dry on correct heat setting for the fiber content. Do not hang to dry as the fabric will stretch.

Determine wrong side by stretching fabric edge on the crosswise. It will roll to the right side. Since tricot stretches, don't let it hang off the flat surface when cutting. Let fabric relax overnight after spreading it out and before cutting. If it has been stretched, this will allow it to regain its shape.

Lay fabric with right side up if cutting a single layer.

Use a “with nap” layout since knits frequently appear different when viewed up and down the fabric. Pinning the pattern to the fabric in the seam allowance will eliminate the possibility of snags or pulls. If fabric slides on the cutting surface, pin it to tissue paper along the selvage and the folded edge. Or cover the cutting table tightly with an old sheet before laying out the fabric. A commercial cutting board may also be used since it has a soft surface and the fabric will not slip as easily on it.

Cut notches out rather than snipping into seam allowances.

Use tailor's tacks, chalk or dressmaker's pencil that will wash out to mark construction symbols. *Do not* use lead pencil or dressmaker's carbon paper because it is difficult to wash out and the marking wheel may damage the fabric. You may want to use transparent cellophane tape to mark the wrong side of the fabric if it is difficult to distinguish from the right side.

Sewing Machine Adjustments

Use a straight stitch, a zigzag machine or a machine with a stretch stitch. Do not use a zigzag attachment that converts a straight stitch machine into one that will make zigzag seams because it “grabs” and damages tricot.

The new machines with special stretch stitches are perfect for tricot. These include both straight and decorative stitches that automatically incorporate stretch into a seam. Machines are also available which stitch and overcast a seam all in one step.

The machine must operate well because of the delicacy of tricot fabrics. The sewing surface must be free of sharp or rough spots, lint, dust and oil as these may damage the fabric.

Loosen upper thread tension as much as possible while keeping a balanced stitch. Do not change bobbin thread tension.

Pressure should be light to normal, depending on the weight of the fabric.

Use 10 to 12 stitches to the inch. Test machine adjustments on scraps of fabric until a satisfactory seam is obtained.

Use a straight stitch throat plate with a small hole when stitching with a straight stitch. If your machine has only a general purpose throat plate with an oval hole, set the needle to the left of center when stitching a straight seam. Using the wrong throat plate or centering the needle in a general purpose throat plate allows the fabric to follow the needle into the bobbin area and may cause the seam to bunch.

Sewing Tricot

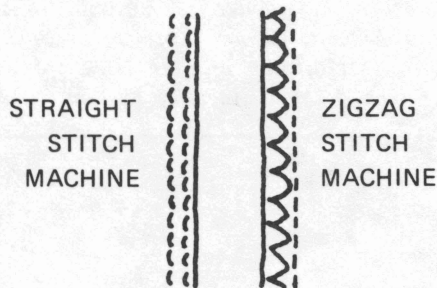
Tricot must be held flat and taut for zigzag and stretch stitch seams. Use a fine, narrow zigzag to avoid bunching the fabric.

When making a straight stitch seam, stretch the fabric slightly to put extra give in the seam. Stitch with a slow, even speed for best results.

Stay stitch shoulders, necklines, armholes and waistlines. Reinforce shoulders with seam tape if garment is heavy or will be stored on a hanger.

Never stitch over pins. Since tricot is light, a pin may pull the fabric up and cause the seam to be uneven.

Seams in tricot garments should be narrow. Either French seams or knit seams may be used satisfactorily. To make a knit seam, use a straight stitch in the first row. In the second row, either a straight or zigzag stitch can be used. For a straight stitch make the second row $\frac{1}{8}$ inch from the first row. For zigzag stitch sew close to the first. Trim seam close to stitching. In general tricot seams do not have to be pressed.



Avoiding and Solving Problems

Skipped stitches are the most frequently encountered problem when sewing tricot. Washing the fabric and using softener controls skipping caused

by static electricity. Also rubbing the seamline with a moist (not wet) sponge is especially helpful in dry climates. Other causes of skipped stitches are using too large a needle, a bent needle, too heavy a thread, or too little tension.

Backstitching and static electricity may draw threads into the bobbin area and cause bunching of the fabric. To avoid this, do not backstitch. Holding both thread ends away from the needle when beginning a seam also helps.

Seams may look corded or fabric may not lie flat between stitches in a zigzag seam. This may be caused by using too wide a zigzag stitch for the sheerness of the fabric, incorrect tension, or both. Test upper and bobbin thread tensions and use a slightly narrower stitch width. Make a test seam. If necessary, stitch through tissue paper.

Puckered seams are also a frequent problem. Using too large a needle or a dull or burred needle may contribute to this. Puckering may also be caused by using too long a stitch, unbalanced tension, too light a pressure, too tight a tension and failure to keep the fabric taut. Stitching through tissue paper or brown paper helps prevent puckering and skipped stitches.

Using a burred or rough needle may also cause pulls and snags beginning in the seamline and running across the fabric.

Hems and Edge Finishes

Several hem finishes may be used successfully on tricot. Choose the one that gives you the look you want. Facings can often be eliminated by using decorative edge finishes. Some edge finishes may also be suitable as hems.

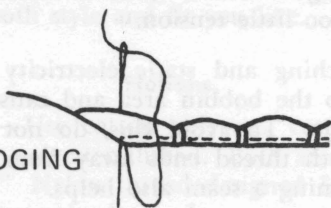
The simplest hem is turned and topstitched. The hem will be more attractive if it is double. A 2- or 2½-inch hem gives an expensive tailored look to your garment.

A corded or Trapunto hem can give an unusual and dramatic look. Trapunto hems have from 3 to 5 rows of cording or heavy yarn between the two layers of hem. Rows of topstitching separate the cords.

Rolled hems and French binding are also attractive and are simple finishes. French binding is especially effective around necklines and armholes as a finish.

For a softer edging, either as a hem or to replace facings, make shell edging. Trim seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch; fold to wrong side on seamline. Working on wrong side, take two or three small running stitches along raw edge in seam allowance only.

Take two stitches over edge of hem pulling thread taut. This forms a scallop or "shell." This effect can also be achieved with decorative machine stitching.



SHELF EDGING

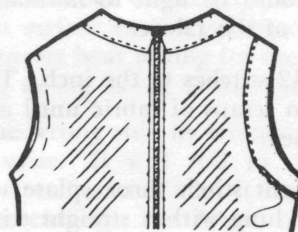
The ruffled or lettuce edge finish is an excellent choice for tricot. It may be used as a hem or for trim on ties, jabots and sashes.

Lace edging can be used quite effectively. Flat lace may be applied in a feminine but tailored manner or gathered lace may give an ultra feminine look.

Use stretch lace for curved edges. Non-stretch lace that has been preshrunk can be used for straight edges. At corners, form miters. Pin lace in place, folding it with excess on the wrong side. Remove lace and topstitch miter. Cut excess lace close to stitching. Repin lace to garment; stitch. Tricot may be trimmed away under lace for a see-through effect.

Lining Techniques

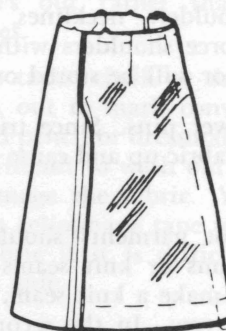
Using the garment's main pattern pieces, cut and construct the lining. With the wrong sides together, pin the lining to the garment at the neckline and armhole edges, and at the waistline seam before joining the facings, sleeves or waistband. When the lining is positioned properly, slipstitch the lining to the zipper tape and baste the pinned edges. Additional garment sections can be attached in the usual manner, and the lining will be permanently inserted. The facings can be hemmed to the lining. Complete the garment by hemming the two layers separately. The lining may be hemmed by machine using either a straight or zigzag stitch. Simply turn up the hem and stitch in place.



A partial underlining will prevent stretching in some knit garments. Use the back pattern piece to cut the underlining. Make it either the full skirt length or cut it off just below the buttocks so the underlining will absorb the sitting strain.

Transfer all pattern markings to the right side of the fabric. On a short underlining, turn $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to the wrong side at lower edge and stitch in place. Baste the underlining to the fabric with wrong sides together along the seamlines and darts.

From here on, treat the two layers as one and complete the skirt. On the full-length underlining, sew the skirt hem to only the underlining.



For lining other types of garments, follow the pattern guide.

The author acknowledges contributions by Marilyn Brown, former Extension consumer education: clothing and textiles specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

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