Simple Skirts

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Simple Skirts

Skirts make excellent projects for sewists of all levels. They’re among the easiest garments to fit, and can be easily customized with unique design details. These four projects feature fun and simple ideas for creating your own stylish skirts. Easily embellish a basic skirt pattern with a ready-made eyelet border as featured in “Pretty in Purple.” "Yoke Skirt" demonstrates how to correctly fit a skirt with a flattering yoke-style waistline. Learn how to make a trendy tiered skirt in “Bohemian Beauty”—no pattern needed! Add an eye-catching scalloped edge to a skirt hemline in “Hem Couture.” Each project includes easy-to-follow instructions and helpful how-to illustrations to help you stitch stunning skirts to update and enhance your wardrobe.

Happy sewing!

Beth Bradley
Associate Editor, Sew News

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pretty in purple

Stitch this skirt in an afternoon to add some swing to your summer wardrobe.

KWIK SEW 3220, View B (modified)
**Make basic pattern alterations to accommodate finished-edge eyelet.**

**MATERIALS**
- A-line skirt pattern (such as Kwik Sew 3220)
- 2 yards of finished-edge eyelet (for featured skirt, size small)
- Matching all-purpose thread
- 4½ yards of coordinating ½”-wide ribbon
- Zipper as noted on pattern
- Hook-and-eye fastener

1. Measure the width from the finished fabric edge to 2” above the border’s upper motif. Add ½” for the seam allowance. This will be the border width.

2. Slash the pattern pieces along the shorten/lengthen lines, and shorten the pattern the width of the eyelet border minus the seam allowance. (For example, the featured skirt’s border is 8¾” wide, so the pattern was shortened by 8”). When shortening the pattern, align the grainline and foldline, and then true the side seamlines.

3. Right sides together, fold each eyelet cut end toward the center on the crosswise grain. Align the motifs. Place the front and back pattern pieces on the foldlines and line up the motifs the same way underneath each pattern (A). Pin the patterns to the fabric and cut out.

4. Aligning the motifs, pin the skirt front to the skirt back at the side seams. Stitch the side seams, stitching from the dot to the hem on the left side for the zipper opening. Serge- or zigzag-finish the seam allowances.

5. Insert the zipper and apply the waistband according to the pattern guidesheet. Add a hook-and-eye closure to the overlap.

6. To cut the border, fold the entire fabric yardage in half lengthwise and align the motifs and lower edge. (The featured skirt’s border was 2 yards long.) Fold the length in half again, keeping all motifs aligned, and cut the border the determined width. Right sides together, match the motifs on the border short ends; stitch (B). Serge- or zigzag-finish the seam allowance.

7. Quarter-mark the border raw edge and the skirt lower edge. Stitch two rows of basting ¼” and ½” from the border raw edge between each quarter mark.

**tip:** To make a finished-edge eyelet skirt without the border, choose a skirt pattern with a straight hemline.

Begin and end stitching at each quarter mark, leaving long thread tails (C).

8. Right sides together, pin the border to the skirt at the quarter marks. Gather the border to fit the skirt lower edge; pin. Stitch the border to the skirt using a ⅜” seam allowance. Serge- or zigzag-finish the seam allowance and press it toward the skirt body.

9. If the border has eyelet holes, weave ¼”-wide coordinating ribbon through the holes, beginning and ending at a side seam. Secure the ends by stitching them at the seamline on the skirt wrong side; trim the excess. ∞
A yoked skirt is a must-have piece for your wardrobe this year. This classic style is very flattering, slims your figure, and is usually more comfortable than a skirt with a binding waistband.

McCall's 5053
tip: Use multiple-sized patterns to your advantage. A pattern may fit the waist in one size, but the hips in a different size. Measure your body and cut on the corresponding pattern line, blending the line from one size to another as necessary.

ALSO KNOWN AS A GYPSY SKIRT, the yoked skirt lends itself to myriad styles, including a simple A-line shape, box pleats, full-flare bias cut, tiered ruffles, multiple bias tiers, asymmetrical pleats, wrap fronts and gores. The yoke can be narrow or wide, straight around, crescent shaped, V-shaped, or asymmetrical.

A yoked skirt’s length will vary from mini to full length and will have plenty of volume. Wear a yoked skirt with waist jackets, fitted blazers, and other slim-fitting tops, such as wrap skirts and shrugs that tie in the front. This style lends itself to embellishment, either on the yoke or the skirt body. The yoke and skirt fabrics don’t have to match. Be creative and design an original style.

After you’ve designed your skirt and purchased a pattern, you must adjust the pattern’s fit to match your shape. The upper finished edge on most yoke patterns falls slightly below the waistline, or where the skirt would fit if it didn’t have a waistband. If you love the pattern, but want a lower fitting, hip-hugger style yoke, see “Lowering the Yoke” on page 15.

fitting the yoke

When choosing a pattern, select the size that best fits your measurements.

On some commercial patterns, the waistline falls approximately ¼” below the natural waistline. The pattern waistline will need adjusting depending on where you fit the yoke. Some patterns have a waistline target mark and some don’t.

To fit the yoke and skirt, measure your body at the necessary places, then measure the pattern in the same places, calculating the ease. Adjust the pattern accordingly as directed below.

If you want to embellish the yoke, make a muslin yoke and fit it first, or add 1” seam allowances when cutting and trim away the excess fabric after fitting and stitching.

how much ease?

Ease is the difference between your body measurement and the finished garment measurement in a given area. A yoke’s ease is usually ½”, which is considerably less than the ease of most garments.

The yoke shouldn’t fit snug like a waistband. If you know how much waistband ease you like, apply that ease amount to the entire yoke from the waist area to the lower edge.

To determine your waistband ease, put on your best-fitting pants or skirt, and pinch or pin the fullness from the waistband (1). Obtain the ease amount by doubling the depth of that amount. If you pinched ¼”, your total ease is ½”.

Mix a variety of fabrics and styles to create a yoked skirt all your own!
pattern adjusting

Open your pattern, and cut out and press all the necessary pattern pieces.

Locate the waistline target mark on the yoke if the pattern has one. If it doesn’t, estimate where the yoke upper edge should be.

If your pattern has a hip-hugger style yoke, it’ll indicate where the upper finished edge falls. For example, “Natural waistline is 1½” above upper finished edge.”

Measure the yoke length from the finished upper edge to the finished lower edge and record that measurement on the pattern.

Take the following measurements, add your desired ease amounts, and record the totals on the corresponding pattern pieces:

- The waistline, or where you want the yoke upper edge to rest.
- Around the body where the yoke lower edge will lie.
- The full hip.
- The skirt length from the waist to the desired hemline.

Many patterns have the finished waistline measurement printed on the pattern. If this is the case, then cut out the size that matches your measurement plus the ease.

If the finished measurements aren’t on the pattern, then measure the pattern, compare your measurement plus the ease to the finished amount of the waistline, and adjust the pattern accordingly.

Measure the total finished waist circumference on the front and back yoke pattern from seamline to seamline (2). Don’t include the seam allowances in the measurement.

Compare the finished measurement to your waist measurement plus the ease.

Mark the pattern at the side seams where your cutting line should be. It may not be on a specific size cutting line.

When cutting, follow the line for the larger size if the markings are in between two sizes and the difference between sizes is less than ⅜”. Repeat the steps to determine what size to cut the yoke lower edge.

Your side seam cutting line might be on size 8 at the waist and size 10 at the lower yoke edge. This isn’t uncommon, and sometimes the opposite scenario applies.

Cut the yokes and apply appropriate interfacing.

Baste the front and back yokes together and pin-fit while wearing a top you’d tuck into the skirt (3). Mark the new sewing lines. Transfer any changes to the pattern.

After pin-fitting the yokes and making all necessary changes to the yoke pattern, make the same changes to the facing pattern pieces.

Some patterns instruct you to cut two of each pattern piece, one for the yoke and one for the facing. If your pattern has standard facing pieces, discard them and use the yoke pattern pieces for the facing.

tip: If you don’t want to make a muslin, cut the skirt yoke pieces with 1” seam allowances and pin-fit the yoke. After fitting, transfer the changes to the pattern for future reference.
matching skirt & yoke alterations

Cut on the same size line for the skirt body upper edge as for the yoke lower edge.

Cut the same size lines for the skirt side seams as you did for the yoke side seams.

For a fully-pleated skirt, you might have to adjust the pleats’ size so the skirt body fits the yoke edge. For example, if your skirt body’s circumference is 4” greater than the finished pattern’s circumference, you’ll need to divide 4” by the number of pleats and take that measurement out of each pleat. (See “The Basics” on page 23 for more information on pleating and gathering.)

lowering the yoke

There are two ways to lower a yoke to create the hip-hugger style. Either cut the upper edge of the yoke lower, which lowers the waist and narrows the yoke, or fit the existing yoke lower on the body.

To cut the yoke down, decide where you want the yoke upper edge to sit on your body, and measure down from your waist.

Locate the pattern waistline. If it’s already below your natural waistline, subtract that amount from the total amount you measured down from your waist. That’s how many inches you’ll remove from the yoke upper edge. For example, if you want the yoke to sit 5” below your waist, but the pattern’s waistline is already 2” lower than your waist, subtract 2” from 5”. The resulting 3” is the amount the pattern must be lowered.

Measuring down from the cutting edge, mark the yoke the amount you want it lowered, keeping the marks parallel with the upper edge (4).

altering ready-to-wear yoked skirts

There are TWO WAYS to alter a ready-to-wear yoked skirt.

1. Take out the zipper, pin-fit the skirt, stitch the new seams and replace the zipper.

2. Take out the skirt’s right side seam, and make the alteration there.

Make your choice depending on the skirt’s construction. It might be easier to remove the zipper than to separate the yoke from the facing, and then remove the facing and yoke from the skirt at the side seam.

A Zapp Rule on Zippers

If your pattern calls for a center-back zipper, use an invisible zipper or a lap method application. Centered zippers are notorious for stretching open, making a garment look homemade.

To fit the yoke lower edge, measure around your body where the yoke upper edge will rest. This will be your new waistline measurement. Measure around your body where the lower edge of the yoke will sit. Adjust the pattern as explained above.

Cut the yoke with 1” seam allowances (5). Pin-fit the yoke, placing it as desired.

If you’re designing your own yoked skirt and want to get a sense of the yoke-to-skirt proportion, look at available patterns for examples.

Consider your body type. If you’re short-waisted, you’ll want a wider yoke, and if you’re long-waisted, a narrower yoke will give a more proportionate look.

The shorter the skirt, the more narrow the yoke, but not always. The skirt’s appearance also depends on the fabric choice and how heavy the skirt lower portion appears. If, for instance, you’re embellishing the yoke, be careful that the skirt has enough weight and/or volume to balance out the decorated yoke.
Bohemian BEAUTY

Catch the spring breeze in a tiered peasant skirt made from eyelet, cotton and gauze. A serger makes gathering the tiers simple—but you can also achieve the same look using a conventional sewing machine.

MATERIALS
• 1 yard of white cotton batiste
• 3 yards of white cotton gauze
• 5½ yards of white cotton eyelet (Use less fabric if tiers are pieced together.)
• 1 yard of 1”-wide elastic (more or less depending on waist measurement)
• White all-purpose thread

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE. Add as many tiers as desired to complete your custom skirt. Choose the tier widths depending on the desired number of tiers and the chosen skirt length. Do you want your skirt short and flirty? Construct a two-tiered skirt with 10”-wide tiers. Or do you want your skirt long and romantic? Construct a six-tiered skirt with varying tier widths (as shown). The featured skirt has six tiers ranging from 5” to 8” wide.

Measure for Measure

For the waistband tier length, measure your hips at the widest point and add 3”. The featured skirt’s waistband tier measures 5” x 40”. From the batiste, piece together fabric as needed to cut the waistband tier to the determined dimensions.

For the second tier length, multiply the waistband tier length by 1.5. The featured skirt’s second tier measures 6” x 60”. From the eyelet, piece together fabric or cut the second tier to the determined dimensions.

For the third tier length, multiply the second tier length by 1.5. The featured skirt’s third tier measures 8” x 90”. From the gauze, piece together fabric or cut the third tier to the determined dimensions.

For the fourth tier length, multiply the third tier length by 1.5. The featured skirt’s fourth tier measures 6” x 135”. From the eyelet, piece together fabric or cut the fourth tier to the determined dimensions.

For the fifth and sixth tier lengths, multiply the fourth tier length by 1.5. The featured skirt’s fifth and sixth tier lengths both measure 7” x 203”. From the eyelet, piece together fabric or cut the fifth and sixth tier lengths to the determined dimensions. Eliminate the need for hemming the skirt lower edge by using an eyelet with a finished edge for the sixth tier (as featured).

Before measuring the elastic, determine where you want the waistband to rest. The waistband rests a couple inches below the waist on the featured skirt. Cut the elastic to the desired measurement.

Gather Together

Set your serger for gathering by adjusting the differential feed to its highest setting and the stitch length to its longest stitch (4 mm on most sergers). Increase the needle tension to 6. The upper and lower loopers should remain on a neutral or balanced setting. (Refer to the machine’s manual for assistance if needed.) Set aside the waistband tier and gather each remaining tier’s upper edge independently.

tip: If you don’t have a serger, or if the fabric is too thick for the serger to gather effectively, gather and assemble the skirt at the same time with a ruffling-foot attachment on a conventional sewing machine. Experiment on scrap fabric before stitching the final garment.
serger in the raw

For a different look, center and then overlap the adjoining skirt tiers \( \frac{1}{4} \)" (with the wrong side upper edge of the lower tier overlapping the right side lower edge of the upper tier (A). Raise the serger blade so it doesn’t cut the fabric as you sew and serge the tiers together. This technique leaves the upper raw edge of each lower tier exposed. Continue stacking each tier and follow the instructions below to finish constructing the skirt. Leave the lowest edge raw and straight stitch \( \frac{1}{4} \)" from the raw edge to prevent raveling. Or hem the lower edge or add an eyelet with a finished edge for the last tier.

A Overlap tiers; serge, leaving upper edges exposed.

Serge the tiers together by setting the serger for a four-thread safety or overlock stitch. Right sides facing, center the waistband tier lower edge over the gathered second tier upper edge; pin and serge, removing the pins as you sew. Repeat to serge each tier to the one above it. Each tier will extend slightly past the tier above it.

Finish Line

Place the skirt on a large flat surface. Use a yardstick to trim the tiers diagonally on either side (1).

Fold the skirt lengthwise with right sides together, and match the raw edges; pin. Serge the raw edges together.

Serge-finish the skirt upper edge. To create an elastic casing, fold the skirt upper edge \( 1 \frac{1}{2} \)" to the wrong side and press. Straight stitch close to the serged edge, leaving a 2" opening for inserting the elastic.

Guide the elastic through the casing. Anchor the elastic loose end with a pin so it doesn’t disappear inside the casing as you feed the elastic. Make sure the elastic isn’t twisted, and overlap the elastic ends. Zigzag through both elastic layers several times to secure the ends. To evenly distribute the elastic, place your hands inside the waistband and stretch it. Straight stitch the casing opening closed.

If you don’t use a finished eyelet for the lowest tier, serge-finish the skirt lower edge. Fold the edge \( \frac{1}{4} \)" to the wrong side and straight stitch close to the serged edge. ⊙

tip: Pin a diaper pin or large safety pin to an elastic end to easily guide it through the casing.
Hem Couture

Vogue 7735, View A (modified)
**satin stitching SUBSTITUTES**

If your sewing machine doesn’t have a special satin-stitch setting, adjust the zigzag stitch length so the stitches touch and no fabric is seen between the stitches—but not so short that the stitches stack up.

- Use an open-toe presser foot so you can see the stitching line.
- Slightly tighten the bobbin tension so the top stitches are smooth with no bobbin stitches showing on the right side.
- Set the stitch width to 4 mm to 5 mm.

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You’ll be the party’s main attraction in this flirty skirt.
A simple-to-sew skirt gets gussied up with satin-stitched scalloped edging.

TRANSFORM AN ORDINARY SKIRT to suit any special occasion by adding elegant scalloped edging. Choose an A-line or slightly flared skirt pattern and replace the traditional hem by satin stitching a shaped edge. Draw scallops using a curved edge, or create a different design based on a shirt or jacket detail. Any design you choose will give your wardrobe a little edge!

MATERIALS
• Skirt pattern (such as Vogue 7735)
• Fabric and notions according to pattern envelope plus ⅝ to ⅞ yard additional fabric for hem facing
• Pattern-tracing cloth
• ½ yard of 19”-wide fusible interfacing (appropriate type for chosen fabric)
• Lightweight cardboard (The featured size 8 skirt uses a 4”x8” cardboard rectangle. Cut it larger or smaller depending on the skirt panel widths.)
• Air-soluble marking pen
• Fabric glue (such as Fiber Etch) or seam sealant (such as Fray Check) (optional)
• Matching embroidery thread

The following instructions are for an eight-gore skirt with the panels the same width at the lower edge. If the skirt panels in your chosen pattern aren’t the same size, adjust them or adjust the scallop design for balance and symmetry.

Add a hem facing to hide the interfacing when you’re sitting and add body to the hemline. If you make a skirt in a fabric suitable for tear- or wash-away stabilizer, you won’t need a hem facing. Choose an appropriate stabilizer for your fashion fabric. The featured skirt is made from silk dupioni and the hem is stabilized with fusible tricot.

**Creating Scallops**

Adjust the skirt pattern to fit in the waist and hips.

Decide the desired skirt length (this will be the outer scallop curve) and add 1”.

Using one skirt panel pattern piece as a guide, trace the panel hemline and 4” of the side seams (not the panel cutting lines) onto the pattern-tracing cloth. Draw a straight line from one marked side seam upper edge to the other (1). Cut out this piece. Also copy this piece to use for the hem-facing pattern and set it aside.

Fold the pattern-tracing cloth widthwise according to the number of scallops you want in each panel; unfold. In this case, the pattern-tracing cloth was folded into thirds and then into sixths to accommodate the center scallop.

Using a French curve, a protractor or any curved edge, draw a scallop design onto the pattern-tracing cloth using the fold marks as a guide. The featured skirt has three scallops per panel—two that are placed ½” higher on either side of the center scallop. Cut out the design. Fold the design in half to check the design symmetry.

Redraw the design from the pattern-tracing cloth onto the cardboard rectangle to create a scallop template. Cut out the cardboard template (2).

For a perfectly symmetrical design, fold the marked pattern-tracing cloth in half and then cut the design.
Hem Facing

Look at the pattern envelope to determine the finished skirt width.

Trace the hem-facing pattern onto the fabric, repositioning the pattern to extend it to the full skirt width (3). If the fabric needs to be pieced, add a ¼” seam allowance on the edges where the pieces are joined. Place the hem facing slightly on the bias, allowing for less piecing and providing a more forgiving fit.

To stabilize the hem, use the hem-facing pattern piece as a guide to cut as many pieces of fusible interfacing as skirt panels. Cut the interfacing wide enough to cover the scallop edge and as long as each panel is wide, not including the seam allowances.

Pink the fusible interfacing upper edges to diffuse the lines, making them invisible from the right side.

Fuse the interfacing to each skirt panel wrong side lower edge within the seam allowances, following the manufacturer’s instructions (4).

Construction

Sew the skirt according to the pattern instructions. Serge-finish the side seams and press open.

With an air-soluble marking pen, mark 1” from the lower edge at each panel center.

Using the cardboard template, draw the scallop design on each skirt panel placing the center scallop lower edge on the 1” mark (5).

Piece the hem facings together at the short edges to create a strip. Serge-finish the hem facing upper edge.

Wrong sides facing, pin the hem facing to the skirt lower edge.

Adjust the hem facing if necessary and stitch the remaining short edges together. Repin the hem facing in place, wrong sides facing (6).

Edging

Straight stitch just above the drawn scallop lines to secure the hem facing to the skirt. Set the machine for satin stitching.

**Tip:** Practice satin stitching below the intended design. This area will be cut away after stitching is complete.

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A clean and oiled sewing machine makes satin stitching smoother and faster. Always begin with a new needle.
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