



Basic Sewing Tips For Making Doll Clothes

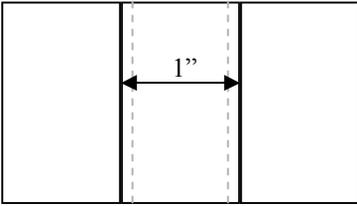
As a child I enjoyed dressing up my dolls in their clothes, lining them up, and having mother take their picture. Girls especially have that mothering instinct when dressing up and acting out the care and feeding of their dolls. Sewing doll clothes is an exciting and economical way to express yourself.

Sewing doll clothes is more difficult than sewing larger clothing items. Since you will be sewing smaller clothing items you will need to make a few changes in your sewing techniques. Dolls have larger heads and shorter necks, so you will find our doll clothes patterns accommodate this. If little hands are dressing the doll, you will need to consider the type of closures you use. The fabrics you will use must be appropriate to reduce bulkiness and stiffness. For example, 100% cottons work well for doll clothes. You must change how the item you are sewing is put together because of the small nature of the doll garment.

Please take time to read through the following tips and suggestions before stitching your doll clothes to make their clothes easier to sew, and turn out perfect the first time.



Seams and Seam Finishes

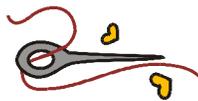
- Seam allowances on doll patterns are 1/4". Most machines have a 1/4" presser foot. By following the presser foot as your seam guide, you will achieve the 1/4" allowance. To determine if you have a correct 1/4" seam allowance, cut 3 pieces of fabric 1 1/2" wide by 3" long. Sew the pieces together lengthwise, so they are lined up side by side. Press both seams toward the center, and measure the width of the inside piece. It should measure exactly 1". If it is less, then your seam allowance was too large. If it's more than 1" then your seam allowance is not large enough. Once you determine where your exact 1/4" seam allowance is, place some blue painter's tape across the throat plate of your machine to use as a guide in stitching your doll clothes.
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- Backstitching is important to lock the stitches, but limit the amount of backstitching you do. It only takes 2-3 stitches to secure the threads, and any more will make the area stiff.
 - Begin your stitching 1/4" in from the beginning of the seam. Beginning your stitching at the edge of the fabric will cause your machine to chew up the material. Leave a long tail of thread to start with to hang on to as you begin your stitching to prevent the threads from being pulled into the bobbin. If you have problems stitching, place a sheet of typing paper under the fabric piece to do the stitching (your paper becomes a stabilizer). Then pull the paper off after stitching, when you are finished..
 - For finishing raw edges after the seam has been sewn, zigzag close to the edge of the fabric. This will prevent the doll garment from raveling in the wash. Knit and polar fleece fabric do not require the seam finishing.
 - A professional way to deal with facings around the neck and arms is to fully line the bodices and vests

- Press ¼” finished seams to one side or direction. This quilting technique makes the seams stronger. A rule of thumb is to sew the seam and then press the seam. Remember sew and press.



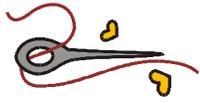
Closures - Velcro, Snaps, Buttons and Zippers

- When considering the type of closure to use when sewing doll clothes patterns ask yourself, “Who will be dressing the doll? Little hands or adult dexterity?”
- Buttonholes do not work well as they would have to be much too small, however buttons can be sewn over the tops of snaps and Velcro for that “button look.”
- Velcro works well for all ages to dress the dolly (but will snag in dolly’s hair). Cut the length needed, and then cut the Velcro in half lengthwise. Use the sew-in variety as the stick-on will gum up the machine needle and come off in the wash if not stitched on.
- Small size snaps are sewn on by hand at the end of the project, but may be more difficult for small hands to fasten.
- Exposed zippers can be used and are often a focal point. Lapped and centered zippers are not recommended due to the size of the item sewn. Always sew the zipper in while the fabric is flat, before construction begins. Velcro can serve as a “look alike” zipper by extending the Velcro ¼” above the upper edge of the garment.



Notions & Sewing Supplies

- Select small, flat buttons that are decorative. BeeLee and other companies offer buttons specific for doll clothing. Check the internet for these companies. Use extra small snaps, to match the size of the garments.
- *Wonder Tape* works “wonders” to hold things in place while sewing, eliminating the need to use pins. *Wonder Tape* is a double-sided sticky tape that can be stitched through and washes away.
- Fine, short pins are preferable. The large ones leave holes in delicate fabrics, and are much too bulky for the small doll clothes garments.
- Soft ¼” or 3/8” pajama elastic is used for casings for waistlines, sleeves, wrists, and headbands.
- 1/8” or 1/4” clear elastic is very stretchy and works well for sewing into areas that need to be gathered for ruffling, such as the bottom of puffy sleeves.
- Use narrow lace and ribbons for sleeve, collar, and hem trims. If your sewing machine has fancy embroidery stitches as an option you might use that to decorate areas that perhaps otherwise would be plain. Hand embroidery can accomplish the same thing to embellish doll clothes patterns.
- Quilter’s Grid works well for doll quilts, making them quick and easy to make as well as insuring accuracy. Quilters Grid is an iron-on fusible interfacing with lines running horizontally and vertically, two inches apart. Look for it in the quilting or interfacing section at your local fabric store.



Collars and Neckline Finishes

- Collars look best on dolls when they lay flat versus having a roll. I often use front collars only, the neckline and shoulder seam lines are the same as the bodice, assuring that the collar will lay flat.
- If you have a back collar, you will want the two sides of the collar to meet but not overlap even though your closure overlaps.
- Although collars are very small and perhaps difficult to sew, larger collars look nice on dolly and are much easier than the Peter Pan type.
- Be sure to clip and notch extremely well before turning small collars.
- Unless your fabric is exceptionally soft, you need not use interfacing.
- Using paper under the stitching will stabilize the fabric, and prevent the machine from drawing the fabric down into the bobbin area. Pull the paper off the underneath side when you are finished stitching.
- Sometimes it is easiest to add lace to the underside of the finished collar, topstitching in place, rather than trying to sew it onto the tiny curved edges.
- Necklines without collars can be trimmed with 1/4" lace either sewed into the seam to stand up or applied to the neck area after the seams have been sewn so the lace or trim lays flat.
- Piping makes a clean finished look when sewn into the collar seam. Plain necklines are just as lovely.



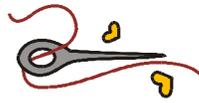
Construction Considerations

- Single rolled edges work best. For example, if you are hemming the bottom of your doll's jumper, place a seam finish on the edge of the fabric and turn it up just once and stitch in place. Turning it up twice make the hemline bulky and stiff.
- Fully line all bodices and vests, thus eliminating the need for facings. Clip curves after stitching on the raw wedges, such as the neckline or armholes very closely for the seams to lay flat.
- Tiny pockets should be lined using a fold at the top of the pocket to eliminate bulk.
- If you have the need for a zipper, use the exposed method of application and integrate it into the lines of the garment. Lapped and centered zippers are much too difficult on tiny garments.



Sewing in Sleeves

- Because the sleeve opening is so small, sewing sleeves on doll clothes cannot be done the conventional set-in sleeve way. You must leave the side seam open when sewing the sleeve to the bodice.
- Fully finish the whole sleeve before attaching it to the rest of the garment. Add any embellishments, use hem or lace on the bottom edge of the sleeve, gather it into a band, or make an elastic casing.
- Use elastic to achieve a ruffle at the bottom of a puff sleeve. Finish the bottom edge first, then stretch and sew down the middle of the clear elastic to the sleeve's wrong side, 1" above the finished edge. Clear elastic is essential because it is so stretchy, has less bulk, and is easier to slide dolly's arms in and out of
- Once you complete these procedures, run your gathering thread over the sleeve cap. Run 2 rows of gathering threads, 1/8" and 3/8" from the edge of each sleeve head. Pull the two gathering threads at the same time for even gathers. Stitch down the middle of the two rows with a regular (2.5) stitch. That should put you at a seam allowance of 1/4" from the edge of the sleeve for your final stitching. Be sure to pull your gathering threads out after it stitching. Zig-zag the seam allowance to finish the raw edges.



Accessorizing

- Adding the finishing touches to your dolly's outfit means that she is ready for any occasion. Accessorize her outfits with an array of hats, purses, shoes, socks, tights, jackets, and hair pretties. For bedtime, add a tiny pillow and blanket or warm sleeping bag. Include a colorful shawl for an evening out on the town. Remember to include a miniature toy dog, bunny, or kitty as your dolly's special pet. You might need a hand knitted sweater for those cold days, or a comfy crocheted afghan for lounge time. A pretty neck scarf or cozy poncho can be hand-crafted out of scraps of soft polar fleece.

Use your creativity to “doll up” your outfit! You will be happy you did.