Knits

You will need:
- Sewing machine or overlock (serger) machine
- Pattern
- Knit fabric
- Shears or sewing scissors
- Long, sharp pins or weights
- Marking pencils or chalk
- Measuring tape
- Notions
- Parent or leader to help you

You will learn:
- Basic skills for making a knit garment
- Fabric selection and layout tips
- How to sew knit seams and seam finishes
- How to sew hems on knit fabrics
- How to apply ribbing
- How to topstitch

Sew:
Sew one or more of these knit items:
- T-shirt and slacks, shorts, skirt, or culottes
- Beach cover-up
- Jogging suit
- Sweatshirt or jacket
- Playsuit
- Dress
- Other simple knit outfit
- Outfit using both knit and woven construction

4-H Textile Science
Intermediate Project

PENN STATE
College of Agricultural Sciences Cooperative Extension
Choose Your Pattern
Knits either stretch or they are “stable” (don’t stretch much). Stretch knits require the use of a special pattern labeled “for stretch knits only.” This pattern has a stretch gauge on the back of the envelope to help you measure how much the knit fabric stretches. Ask your parent or leader to show you how to use the gauge.

Choose Your Fabric
There are many types of knit fabrics. Choose one that is easy to care for and does not snag. A good knit will “recover,” or go back to its original size when stretched. Check the fabric you like by stretching it along a crosswise fold and then letting go of it. If it does not recover, select another fabric that will. A fabric with some stretch is easiest to sew.

Make sure that any pattern printed on the fabric is printed an equal distance from the selvage. Though a knit doesn’t really have a “grain,” knits can stretch in ways that will change the look of the garment design. It may be possible to “block” a knit, like a sweater, so that the stitches run parallel.

Because all the pattern pieces will be laid out in the same direction to avoid shaded effects, buy the amount you would if you were buying napped fabric—plus a little more. Select a fabric with a design that doesn’t require matching and one that does not have a permanent crease on its fold. Test the knit to see if it ravel or runs.

Read the Pattern Guide Sheet Carefully
Remember to follow the “with nap” layout. Also make sure that you have placed the directional arrows correctly. Knit fabric does not stretch the same in all directions, and some pattern pieces are designed to make use of the fabric’s stretch.

Many patterns for knits have only a 1/4-inch (6-mm) seam allowance. Follow the seam allowance width on your guide sheet or adjust the pattern seam allowances for your fabric.

Getting Started
File any rough fingernails and remove any jewelry that will snag your knit.

You must preshrink knits before cutting so that you don’t end up with a smaller garment after the first washing. Also, many knits have been treated with extra finishing chemicals that can cause skipped stitches. Preshrinking will take these chemicals out.

Preshrink your fabric according to the care instructions on the label. Don’t forget to preshrink the trims, interfacings, zippers, and other washable notions, too.

Stretch Gauges
Achieve correct fit by checking your knit fabric against the gauge on the back of the envelope.

For Moderate Stretch Knits Only
Stretch (crosswise) 4’ (10cm) of folded knit from here to here

For Two-Way Stretch Knits Only
Stretch (crosswise and lengthwise) 4’ (10cm) of folded knit from here to here

For Rib Knits Only
Stretch (crosswise) 4’ (10cm) of rib knit from here to here
Stitching
Use a ball-point machine needle or a needle designed for both knits and wovens. Wind the bobbin slowly with a long-staple polyester or polyester-wrapped cotton thread. Make a test seam to check the needle tension, pressure, and stitch length.

Plain Seams for Knits
Plain seams may be straight-stitched or zigzagged. When straight stitching, stretch the fabric slightly as you sew. Some machines have a “stretch stitch” feature. You can also use a very narrow zig-zag. Press seams open or to one side. If the seam does not ravel, a seam finish is not needed.

When you are sewing together two sections of knit fabric that are not the same length, stretch the smaller section to fit the larger. Make a test sample to check the needle, tension, pressure, and stitch length.

Most commercially made garments use straight, zigzag, or overlock stitching to construct a double-stitched seam. Trim seam allowances close to the stitching and press the seam to one side.

Sometimes the seam allowances of lightweight single knits tend to roll or curl. To prevent this, stitch 1/4 inch (6 mm) from the raw edge of the seam allowance, or use a double-stitched seam.

Seams at the shoulder, neckline, and waistline need to be stable to prevent a droopy appearance. Stabilize the seams by topstitching, by stitching-in-the-ditch (pressing the seam open and stitching from the right side), or by zigzagging over elastic or yarn.

Make buttonholes more stable by fusing a layer of interfacing to the underside of the fabric, or use a tear-away stabilizer. Vertical buttonholes are more stable if they run parallel to the ribs of the knit. Always test on a scrap before sewing one on your garment.

Hand baste zippers to reduce the stretch. Reducing the pressure on a presser foot can prevent shifting and stretching. If necessary, make a zipper more stable by using seam tape or interface.

Caring for Knits
Knit garments require a little extra care. They need to be handled and stored carefully so they don’t stretch. Most sweaters and stretchy knits need to be folded rather than hung in a closet.

Knits can snag, so be careful to keep sharp objects away from them. If they do snag, carefully weave or bring the loose end to the inside of the garment. Do not cut it off, which will result in a run or hole.

Some knits need to be handwashed carefully and laid flat to dry away from direct heat. Others can be machine washed by turning them inside out and placing them in a special laundry bag that can be washed.

Pills can form on the outside surfaces of knits that have two or more fibers (one stronger than the other). This often happens in areas of wear such as the legs or underarms. Remove pills by using a special pill “shaver” or tape. Do not use a razor blade! It is not safe and can cut the garment.

Knits with wool fibers that have been worn need to be handwashed or drycleaned at least every season to keep insects away. Cedar blocks or herb sachets can keep insects away, but insects are very attracted to perspiration and other stains. Do not use moth balls. They are often toxic and the odor is hard to remove.

Pressing
Press on a sample fabric scrap before pressing any part of the garment you’re making. Synthetic and wool fabrics can scorch with too much heat! Use a low to moderate setting and press with an up-and-down motion. Prevent a “flattened” surface by using a scrap of self-fabric (placing it right side to right side) as a press cloth.
What I learned in this project (new skills, new words)


What I shared with others (presentations, helping other members, community service)

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<th>TOPIC OR SKILL</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NO. OF PEOPLE WHO WATCHED</th>
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Did I participate in Fashion Revue? __________

Where? ______________  When? ______________

Project story
Use this space to write about your project. What did you do? What did you enjoy doing most? Least? Tell about the type of pattern and fabric you selected. What did you have the most difficult time sewing? Include a picture or make a sketch of your final outfit, complete with accessories. Tell about the fiber content of your fabric(s) and attach sample swatches. Talk about the sewing resources you used, the resource people you met, and the activities you did at your group meetings.
Knits Project Record

Name ____________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________

Age as of January 1 __________

Club ____________________________________________

Number of years in this project __________

Number of years in Textile Science projects __________

Leader’s signature _______________________________________

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Total number of garments made this year __________.

People who helped me and resources I used for this project

________________________________________________________________________
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Sharing What You've Learned
Share what you learned with at least one other person. Show how to do one of the following:
• Use a stretch gauge to select fabrics
• Preshrink a knit fabric
• Stitch-in-the-ditch
• Apply ribbing
• Make a buttonhole in a knit garment
• Fold a sweater
• Handwash a knit
• Repair a hole in a knit garment
• Repair a snag in a knit garment
• Remove “ pills”

Or give a talk on one of the following:
• Topstitch knits
• Types of knits
• Interfacings for knits
• Seam finishes for knits
• What a ballpoint needle is

Or come up with your own idea.

Want to Know More?
There is so much to learn about knits! Look for books at your library or local fabric store. In Pennsylvania, 4-H resource materials are listed on PENpages at your county extension office.

Exhibits and Fashion Revue
Exhibit your garments and model them in the fashion revue! Check current fair or round-up listings for more information. Don’t forget to put a fabric label on the inside of your garment(s) with your name, age, 4-H club, and county. Also, ask about fashion revue entry dates and rules.

Taking the Project Again
You may want to take this project for more than one year. If so, choose activities and knit garments that will help you develop new skills.

Name  Kelly Taroe  
Age  12  
4-H club  Socks 'n ties  
County  Snippet

Prepared by Jan Scholl, assistant professor of agricultural and extension education.


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