1964

Fabrics Worth Noting: Stretch Fabrics

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_fact

Recommended Citation
South Dakota State University, Cooperative Extension, "Fabrics Worth Noting: Stretch Fabrics" (1964).
SDSU Extension Fact Sheets. 858.
https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_fact/858

This Fact Sheet is brought to you for free and open access by the SDSU Extension at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in SDSU Extension Fact Sheets by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.
Stretch Fabrics

Reprinted with permission from Pub. HXT 43, Fabrics Worth Noting Stretch Fabrics, by Thelma Thompson, Extension clothing specialist, University of California.

Published and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Cooperative Extension Service of South Dakota State University, Brookings, John T. Stone, Director, U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

2M-9-64-File: 9.5.2-1648
Garments made of stretch fabrics made their first appearance about ten years ago on the ski slopes of Europe. They were enthusiastically endorsed for their comfort, long wear, good fit, and eye appeal. Stretch fabrics have been gaining in popularity, and their uses have expanded to include home furnishing items and such apparel as jackets, bowling shirts, shorts, skirts, foundation garments, lingerie, and sleepers.

Even the military forces are using stretch fabrics: for insert panels in high-altitude flight suits to prevent excessive ballooning from rapid pressure changes, and in cummerbunds for the Air Force Academy dress uniforms. The Navy is experimenting with stretch fabrics for frogmen’s suits.

TYPES AND USES OF STRETCH FABRICS

Stretch fabrics may be either woven or knitted with lengthwise, crosswise, or two-way stretch. To make a stretch yarn from a man-made fiber such as nylon, the yarn is crimped or curled by heat to make it permanently elastic. A one-way stretch fabric is made with stretch yarn in one direction only, while a two-way stretch fabric is made entirely of stretch yarns.

Woven stretch fabrics that are being used for casual and sports wear and children’s clothing include denim, twill, shantung, seersucker, corduroy, and velveteen.

Knitted stretch fabrics are going into action garments, such as slacks and sweaters that require a smooth fit and elasticity for freedom of movement. Two-way stretch knits are being used in hose, leotards, lingerie, and creepers.

All-cotton stretch fabrics were introduced recently in drills, poplins, gabardines, and batistes. Apparel made from woven and knitted cotton stretch fabrics ranges from work clothing to lingerie. Manufacturers report that these fabrics stretch from 16 to 30 per cent, depending on the fabric construction.

Manufacturers of wool fabrics have produced stretch woolens and worsteds. At present these are going only into men’s wear.

Sometimes stretch yarns are used with yarns of the man-made elastic fibers called “spandex.” Spandex fibers (Lycra and Vyrene) are rapidly replacing rubber in swimwear and foundation garments.

Clues to the Consumer

- Be sure to try on stretch garments before you buy them. If stretch fabric is not “relaxed” before it is cut, the size label will not indicate the true size. A stretch garment should feel comfortable, never strained.

- If a stretch garment bags or sags at the knees or other areas of strain after wear, it should be returned to the retailer. After all, stretch garments should keep their shape as long as you keep yours.

- Slacks or pants with lengthwise stretch will have a bootstrap that holds slacks taut to give sharper creases and smoother hip and knee lines.

- Denim slacks are being made from horizontal stretch fabric; the stretch is in the knee and seat areas, making the bootstrap unnecessary.

- Keep garments with lengthwise stretch in a drawer—they may become longer if hung on hangers.
Seams should be sewed with nylon thread, using a chain or a lock stitch with at least 14 stitches per inch. Seams should give without popping. Since many stretch fabrics ravel, look for well-finished seams.

Check label for care instructions. Stretch fabrics can be washed or dry cleaned, depending upon the fiber and construction of the garment.

Construction Techniques

Pattern Selection

Only a limited number of patterns designed for stretch fabrics are available. Check pattern book for these.

Standard patterns may be adjusted. Here is one recommendation for adjusting patterns:

- Slacks—place a ½-inch tuck across crotch line, and turn up 1 inch at hem.
- Skirt—make a lengthwise tuck equal to amount of ease, ½ inch to 1 inch.

Buy pattern and stretch fabric at the same time; check to see if the pattern can be placed on the fabric so that the stretch is in the desired direction.

Fabric Selection

For pants, choose a two-way stretch fabric or one that stretches in the direction most needed. For blouses and jackets, choose fabric that stretches crosswise.

Be sure the fabric is free from distortions or pressed-in wrinkles. If fabric is not preshrunk, steam it while keeping the weight of the steam iron in your hand. Allow the fabric to dry completely.

Placing Pattern and Cutting

Before cutting, lay fabric out at least 24 hours to let it "relax." Place pattern as usual, with pins at least every 6 inches at right angles to direction of stretch. Be careful not to stretch fabric. Use ordinary cutting methods.

Marking

Use ordinary marking methods.

Machine Adjustments

Needle: Size #11
Thread: Taslan nylon. This textured nylon thread is easy to handle and has the necessary "give."
Length stitch: At least 14 stitches to the inch.
Pressure: Light
Tension: Loose

Basting and Stitching

Baste or pin-baste, placing pins as you did in pinning pattern. Test folded fabric scrap before stitching garment. Stretch seams to see if thread breaks. If it does, lighten tension. To prevent raveling of seams, stitch 1/8 to 1/4 inch from edges, or overcast edges with zigzag stitch.

Reinforcements

Use interfacing to reinforce machine-made buttonholes.

Lining

Do not line stretch garments.
PRESSING

Press with steam iron. Protect fabric with cotton press cloth. To press seams, use seam board, rolled magazine, or strips of paper placed under seam allowances to prevent imprint of raw edge on right side. To press darts, first press fold on wrong side.

Fit darted section over a pressing ham, and slip narrow strip of paper under dart to keep fold from making an imprint on right side. It may be necessary to pin garment piece lightly in position while steam pressing. Let piece dry thoroughly before continuing with construction.

To simplify information, trade names of products have been used. No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products which are not mentioned.