A woman with blonde hair in a braid is shown from the waist up, wearing a pink and black athletic top. She is stretching her right arm across her back, holding her hand with her left hand. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The lighting is bright, creating strong shadows.

PATTIE OTTO

it's a stretch

workout-wear shape up

Celebrate the new year with a great exercise wardrobe and get working on a new you!

AS YOU'RE WRITING YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, include revitalizing your exercise wardrobe for triple the benefits. You'll learn (or re-fresh) knit sewing techniques, you'll update your wardrobe and best of all, you'll feel good about yourself as you head to the gym.

The Right Gear

Knits, especially those with Lycra, offer freedom of movement and shape retention, which are key to long-lasting wear and comfort. New “technical” fabrics have moisture-wicking and antibacterial properties. See “No Sweat!” on page 50. The type of workout you're doing will influence fabric and garment choices. Fortunately there are patterns for everyone.

Weight lifters, bikers and circuit trainers need close-fitting garments to avoid catching loose clothing in gears or weights. For high endurance types, such as marathon runners and long distance bikers, moisture-wicking fabrics are a plus. Look to Kwik Sew 2477 for garment ideas.

Walkers and runners may want more coverage while avoiding baggy T-shirts and droopy sweat pants. New Look 6265 offers fashion and functionality with two-toned styling and comfy drawcord-waist pants. Consider moisture-wicking fabrics if you pour your heart and soul into each workout.

Yoga and other relaxation participants need body-skimming styles that allow movement and comfort. Great Copy 2445 Crossover Top and 2450 Comfort Knit Pants allow you to enjoy every session whether you spend them on the mat or lounging on the couch.

Go the Distance

Start with a good quality polyester thread as workout gear is washed and worn countless times. Use textured nylon thread in the loopers when serging to create a soft finish inside the garment, which is especially important on body-hugging styles.

Select a new size 11/75 or 12/80 stretch (ball-point) needle to help eliminate skipped stitches and tiny holes along the seamline. Use sharp pins; discard any that are dull or have catches on the tip or shaft. These snag the fabric and cause holes. Tiny holes grow larger and break down the Lycra fiber causing the fabric along the seams to stretch out of shape.

Select good quality elastic that will stand up to the toughest workouts. Clear elastic is lightweight, has excellent recovery, and helps stabilize seams.

Keep sticky water-soluble stabilizer, temporary-spray adhesive and wash-away basting tape handy to help control curling seams and stabilize fabrics. See “Keep in Shape” on page 53.



no sweat!

With such names as Coolmax, PowerDry, and Dryline, moisture-wicking fabrics work to draw water away from your skin and move it to the fabric surface. This allows you to cool down faster and remain comfortable even during the most strenuous workouts.

What about my favorite cotton T-shirt?

Cotton-knit T-shirts, shorts and pants actually trap moisture and heat next to your skin and prevent your body from cooling properly. Moisture-wicking fabrics are engineered to move the moisture to the outside of the fabric where it evaporates more quickly than with regular fibers. This keeps your skin drier and helps reduce chafing.

How does it work?

Each manufacturer has its own secrets, but many of them use special polyester yarns with channels that draw moisture toward the surface. The fabrics come in a variety of weights and the channels allow the fabric to dry faster.



How do I care for these fabrics?

Generally, air-permeable fabrics are machine washable on the permanent-press cycle. Most manufacturers don't recommend using chlorine bleach or fabric softeners. Since wicking fabrics don't absorb moisture, using the dryer is unnecessary; simply hang and let dry.

How do I sew these specialty fabrics?

Use the same techniques that you would for other knit fabrics.

How do I use these specialty fabrics?

Moisture-wicking mesh-type knits are perfect for lining exercise wear. Lightweight wicking fabrics are the ideal first layer for high endurance and outdoor cool-weather sports. Mid- and heavy-weight fabrics can be used year-round.

What other fabrics are available?

Odor-control fabrics are also available. These fabrics' antibacterial properties help reduce the odor caused by bacteria trapped in the fibers.

Coolmax is a registered trademark of INMISTA

PowerTec PowerDry is a registered trademark of Malden Mills

DryLine is a registered trademark of Milliken

The Cutting Edge

Use sharp scissors or rotary cutters for accurate cutting. It's important not to stretch or distort the fabric or allow it to hang off the edge of the cutting surface. Rotary cutters are ideal for cutting knits because they allow the fabric to lie flat during cutting.

With few exceptions, the fabric stretch goes *around* the body. Check the pattern instructions for suggested layout and be sure to double check the fabric stretch. Most fabrics have stretch with the crossgrain but a few fabrics, especially swimwear, have stretch going with the grain.

Putting It All Together

Lycra, one of the wonder fibers of the 20th century, makes comfortable, tight-fitting, shape-retaining garments possible. With a stretch factor up to 600%, Lycra lends itself to everything from evening dress and casual wear to swim and exercise wear.

The key to Lycra fabrics is its recovery, which allows the garment to return to its original shape and fit. As far as construction is concerned, the most common factor that affects recovery is seaming. Seams that don't stretch with the fabric or don't allow the garment to return to its original shape distort the garment's fit and comfort and influence its wearability.

It's important to test stitch on scrap fabric along both the crosswise and lengthwise grain before constructing the garment. After seaming, stretch the sample to see if the seam returns to normal. If the seam remains stretched or the stitches pop, add a piece of clear elastic to the seam to aid in recovery.

To reduce bulk and control curling seams, trim seam allowances to ¼" as needed. This can be done while serging or after seaming if using a conventional machine.

Serging

Serging is the ideal seaming method when working with stretch knits. Choose three- or four-thread serging for maximum stretch and recovery. If the stitches pucker, engage the dual feed (if available) to 1.25 or 1.5 and test again. Avoid chainstitch combinations that have little or no stretch as the seams will pop.

If using heavier Lycra knits, differential feed is especially important because the thicker fabric is stretched by the presser foot's pressure. If puckering continues, lessen the presser-foot tension. Consult the owner's manual for settings.

Conventional Machine

Stretch seaming can be accomplished with a conventional sewing machine using a built-in overcast, utility, narrow zigzag or even straight stitches if stretch stitches aren't available.

Straight Stitching—Select six to eight stitches per inch (3.0 mm to 3.5 mm). Since a straight stitch has no stretch, you need to stretch the fabric as you sew to prevent stitches from popping during normal wear. As you stretch and sew, you'll notice that the fabric resists recovery and seams tend to remain stretched out. Place a piece of $\frac{1}{4}$ "- or $\frac{3}{8}$ "-wide clear elastic over the seam and stretch both fabric and elastic as you sew. The lightweight elastic helps the seam return to its original shape.

Stretch Stitches—The straight stretch stitch (two stitches forward and one stitch back) with its inherent stretch is helpful in seaming and topstitching. Test this stitch for recovery; add clear elastic if needed.

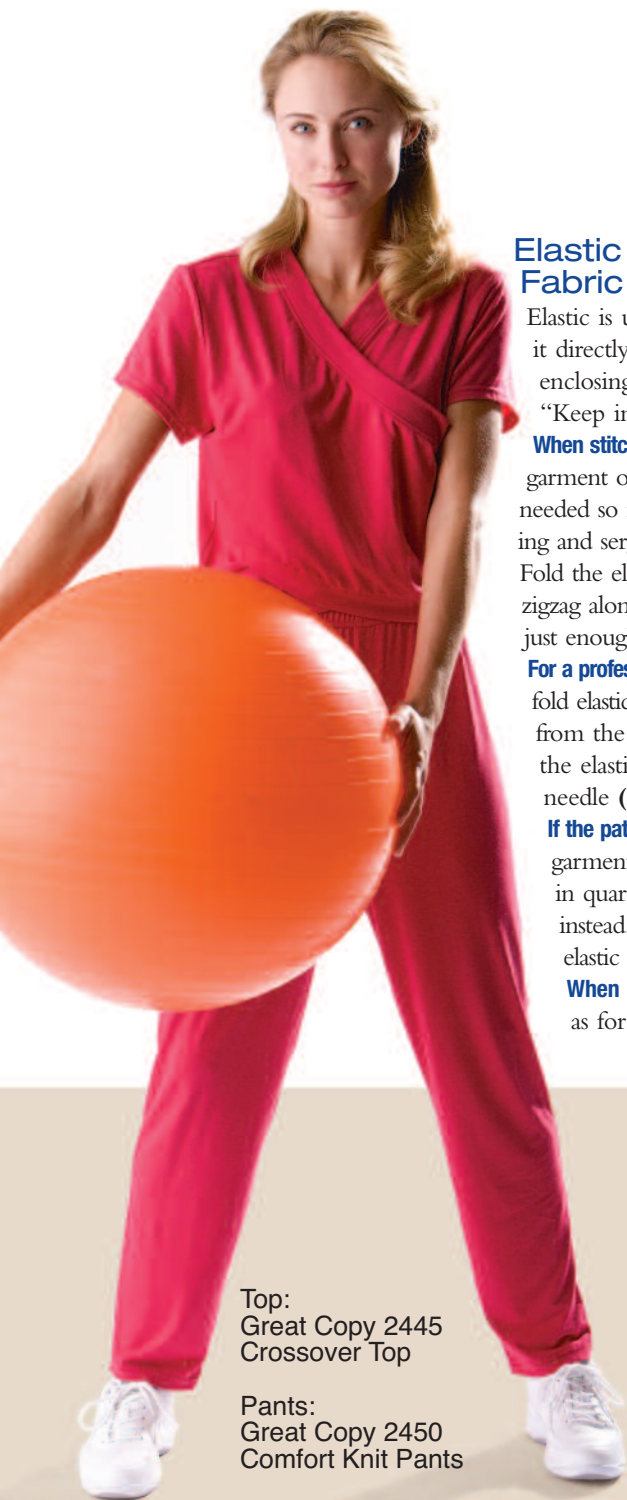
Overcast or Utility Stitches—Most machines today have a variety of stitches designed for sewing stretch knits, which come in a large range of widths, lengths and configurations. Select a stitch with a minimal number of stitches for the stretch you need. The more stitches you put in the fabric, the more you need to remove if a seam is sewn incorrectly. Test utility stitches for recovery and stretchability; use clear elastic and trim the seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ " as needed.

Chafing Seams—Finger-press seam allowances to one side. Working from the right side, topstitch through all seam allowances with a straight stretch stitch, zigzag or other stretch stitch from the right side to hold seam allowance in place and to prevent chafing.

To easily stretch elastic and fabric at the same time, stitch several stitches at the beginning of the seam, leaving a 1" thread tail. Grip the thread tail to help stretch. Leave a 1" tail at the end of the seam to help maintain stretch to the end of the seam. Trim the tails after seaming.

New Look 6265
Views B & F





Top:
Great Copy 2445
Crossover Top

Pants:
Great Copy 2450
Comfort Knit Pants

Elastic & Fabric Bands

Elastic is usually applied by stitching it directly to the garment opening or enclosing it in a casing or band. See “Keep in Shape” at right.

When stitching elastic directly to the garment opening, stretch the elastic as needed so it's the same size as the opening and serge or zigzag to the raw edge. Fold the elastic to the wrong side and zigzag along the inner edge, stretching it just enough so the fabric is flat (1).

For a professional-looking stretch finish, fold elastic to the wrong side. Working from the right side, stitch through the elastic with a coverstitch or twin needle (2).

If the pattern instructs you to divide the garment opening and elastic or band in quarters, divide it into eighths instead. This makes stitching the elastic easier with more even results.

When stitching wider elastic, such as for a waistband, fold the elastic

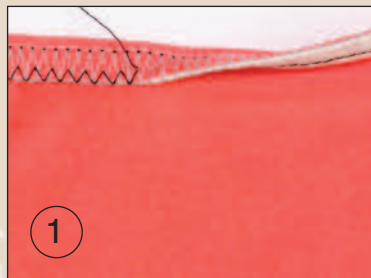
to the wrong side, and baste through the fabric and elastic at the seams and at several points in between. The result is a smooth waistband finish with no puckering.

The Finish Line: Hemming

Coverstitch serging is ideal for hemming all stretch knits. With the hem in place, stitch from the fabric right or wrong side depending on the desired effect (3). See “Keep in Shape” at right for hemming tips.

A wide flatlock hem is another durable option. Set the serger for a wide flatlock; disengage the knife if possible. Fold up and press the hem to the fabric wrong side. Fold back the hem toward the right side, aligning the raw edge with the fold. Flatlock the edge, placing the fold just slightly to the left of the stitch finger edge. After serging, open the hem to form the flatlock (4).

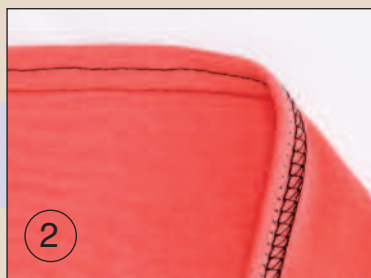
Stretch Stitches—Stretch and utility stitches as well as a twin needle can be used to hem stretch knits. Fold up the hem and stitch from the right side. See “Keep in Shape” at right for stitching tips. ➤



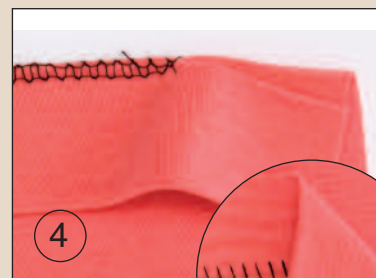
1



3



2



4

See “The Source” on page 76
for fabric and pattern information.