

## Guide to Using Knits

### Buying your fabric:

- Check the fiber content on the bolt label when purchasing your fabric and record or take a picture of it, taking special note of the care labeling, i.e. warm or cold wash, line dry, machine dry, etc. This is important information.
- Special NOTE: I don't like line drying any fabric that is wet from washing. It has added weight in it from the water it's retained. This can cause your fabric to stretch out of shape. If the label says to line dry, then alternatively, lay the fabric flat on a table or clean surface, smoothing out the fabric as best that you can. If you have a large amount of yardage, then fold the fabric over itself and reposition the whole piece several times as it dries.
- If you have started your sewing journal with the pages provided, then take a sheet with you when buying the fabric and add the care information right on the journal page with your swatch and other information about your pattern and design ideas.
- Buy sufficient amount of yardage to allow for any shrinkage when washed. Rayon fabric is notorious for shrinking, especially when machine dried. Cottons also, but the polyesters and other synthetic fibers don't usually shrink. Better safe than sorry later after your garment has been finished.

### Prewash your fabric:

- This is a must for any blended fibers in your fabric. Some will shrink as noted above, and some of the very stretchy knits are going to "grow" especially in length, so consider this if making a garment that is long like a maxi skirt or pants. Let those garments hang overnight before deciding on your hem length. You can also try hanging the finished garment on 2 hangers side by side, supporting the weight of the fabric. Storing a garment like this folded flat may be another option.
- If your fabric has wrinkles after it's been washed and dried, then take the time to press them out so that your fabric will lay flat when you are ready to cut out the pattern pieces. If you don't, when you press out your garment sections later, those little wrinkles can add up to make your garment larger.

### Stretchability of Knit fabrics:

- You will need to know how stretchy your knits are in order to plan the size of the garment you are going to cut out. Check the "stretch" guide on the **side** of your pattern envelope on the back for help in making this determination. The guide commonly uses a fold of only 4 inches of crosswise fabric. If you can, take a crosswise fold of 10 inches of fabric to see how far it can stretch to determine a better percentage amount, and what it's "recovery" will be (return to its original folded width ). If 10 inches of fabric stretches to be 11 inches, then the 1 inch extra means you have a 10% stretch. If 10 inches stretches to 14 inches, then the 4 inches extra means you have a 40% stretch. I've even seen ones such as the ITY knits stretch as much as 100%. The weight of the fabric can cause the recovery of the stretch to be a problem sometimes, so make sure you plan for it.
- Some patterns will call for a "stable knit". This usually means that the fabric will have a slight stretch and then have good recovery.

Limited stretch: 10%-15%  
Moderate stretch: 15%-30%  
Very stretchy: 30% and over

## Types of Knit fabrics available (check the list where to buy in the resource section):

- **Double Brushed or Single Brushed Polyester:** this is a very popular fabric used in making many garments like LuLaRoe does. Brushed means it has a fuzzy side either on both sides (double brushed), or on one side (single brushed). It's similar to the fuzziness of flannel in my opinion. It is usually quite stretchy (4-way) and works well for making leggings, dresses, robes and other garments. The polyester ones do not breathe as well as natural fibers, though. Can have about a 4% or 5% amount of stretch so you will have to experiment with them to see what amount of stretchiness works best for the tightness you like in your garment. One caution: if the fabric is over-stretched to be very tight, then the fibers may break down with prolonged wear and develop small holes in it.
- **French Terry:** a medium weight knit with 4-way stretch and can be a cotton blend or poly/rayon spandex. It has small loops on the wrong side of the fabric and smooth on the right side. Good for hoodies, cardigans, joggers, some dresses or tops when extra warmth is desired.
- **Rayon/Spandex:** doesn't wrinkle, can pill, has great drape, wash inside out, has 4-way stretch, not so much recovery for long garments but usually goes back when washed.
- **Modal:** semi-synthetic—cotton and beech tree fibers, very soft, breathes well, no pills, 4-way stretch. Used a lot in the Gap body line and Victoria Secret tops.
- **Poly/Spandex Jersey:** polyester and spandex, thicker than Rayon knit, has 4-way stretch; wool jersey, if available, makes very beautiful, soft dresses and tops
- **Cotton/Lycra:** heavier, 4-way stretch, good recovery, very soft, good for leggings, kid's clothes, tops and dresses.
- **Cotton/Lycra Interlock:** some stretch, good recovery, great 2-way stretch, good drape, used a lot in Ready to Wear.
- **Sweater Knit:** Polyester/spandex blend with 2-way stretch, good drape. Other blends like silk or wools available from other suppliers, good for cardigans, infinity scarves and other outer garments.
- **Brushed Hacci:** bigger loops than, French Terry, works well for Hoodies and other outer garments.
- **Double Knits:** Scuba—good for pencil skirts, smooth on both sides, good drape, beautiful colors.
  - Ponte, Ponte Roma—dresses, jackets, skirts, not for leggings, can pill when washed, 2-way stretch, no vertical stretch, rayon blends can shrink but are very soft.
  - Liverpool—texture on the right side similar to a crepe, smooth on the wrong side.
- **ITY:** Interlock Twist Yarn, silky, "bouncy", dressier but very thin, usually polyester, beautiful in prints, try wearing a slip for dresses and skirts instead of lining the knit.
- **Micro Suede:** great 2-way stretch, feels like suede, good for blazers, flutter skirts, pants, pencil skirts, has an interesting texture.
- **Swim/Athletic:** usually a nylon blend, 4-way stretch, used for swim and dance wear.
- **Performance Knit:** can be polyester or nylon, 4-way stretch, good for work out clothes and dance wear.
- **Power Mesh:** very thin, used to support other knits as interlinings.
- **Performance Fleece:** poly/spandex, inside is fleece, slight stretch, good for hoodies but recommend to size "UP" on a pattern because of the extra thickness.

There are many more types of knit fabrics. These are just a few. Your experience with different ones will help you to get a better feel for the result you are looking for when using them. GET CREATIVE !!!

## Needles and Thread to Use:

- Remember to use "Stretch" needles (not Jersey or ball point needles) when sewing the knits. Using others might not give you the best result and you will be frustrated.
- Use twin needles to stitch hems. This will give you an automatic "stretch" to your hem because of the way the stitch is formed. The Cover-Stitch machines are wonderful to have for this purpose, but can be expensive to buy.
- Regular polyester thread can be used and there is a new stretch thread available but may be hard to find.