

Considerations for Knit fabrics

There are a number of characteristics of a knit fabric that will influence the pattern used and the sewing techniques chosen. Knits can vary from light weight to bulky weight and from tightly to loosely knit. The amount of stretch can vary from minimal (stable knits) to very stretchy. Knowing the stretch and recovery characteristics of the fabric is a very important first step in making further decisions.

To determine fabric stretch and recovery:

- Fold the yardage on the cross grain in the middle of the fabric (not near the selvage or cut edge).
- Mark a 4 inch section with pins
- Match one pin with the end of a ruler and stretch just as far as the fabric will stretch easily. Note the measurement length at the second pin.

Each additional inch of stretch is equivalent to an additional 25% stretch.

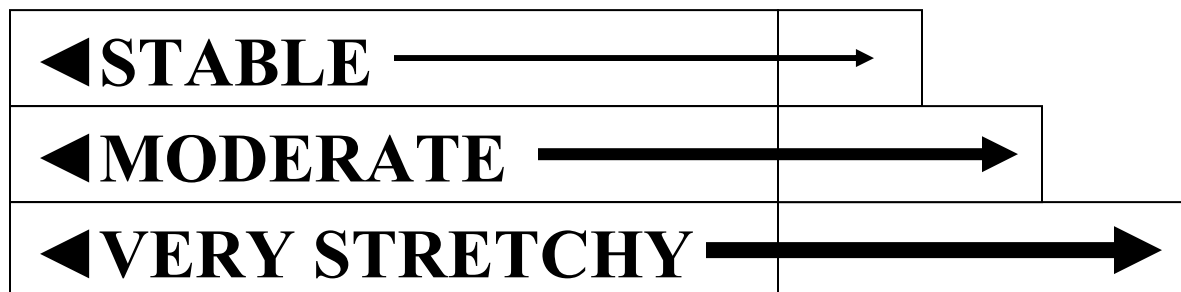
5 inches = 25% stretch

6 inches = 50% stretch

7 inches = 75% stretch

8 inches = 100% stretch

Fabrics stretching to 4 3/4 inches or less are generally considered **stable**; those stretching up to about 5 3/8 inches (35%) are **moderately stretchy**; those stretching to 5 1/2 inches and beyond are **very stretchy**



- While still holding the fold, let the fabric relax to check recovery. It should measure 4 inches. A fabric that does not fully recover may sag or stretch out of shape during wear.

Golden Rules for Knits:

1. Know how you want the final item to appear.
2. Make samples to test techniques with the fabric!

Plain seams for knit fabrics

Well sewn seams have stitching that is secure and even. The seam has:

- Straight line of stitches with balanced tension. Type of stitch suits the stretchiness of the fabric. Fabric layers do not pull apart to show a "ladder" of thread in the seam.
- Stitch length (distance between stitches) which is appropriate for fabric and evenly spaced (except where it has been shortened for reinforcement)
- No puckering, skipped or broken stitches
- No tangles or knots
- Reinforced ends with backstitching or knotting

Some common stitches used for knit seams include straight stitch, narrow zigzag, and serging.

Controlling Bulk or Curling

Since knits do not ravel, seam finish techniques might serve to control bulk or curling.

These might include:

Trimming to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch

Serge

Straight Stitch and trim

Zigzag and trim

Straight Stitch with double needle

Stabilizing Stress areas

Shoulder seams

Buttons and buttonholes

Finishing Techniques

Hems

Necklines and arm edges