



THE STITCH NICHE



Feeling bored this summer and looking for something to fill those long, leisurely hours while on vacation or around the house? You might want to get started on projects for our Christmas boutique at our December dance. The boutique is always a hit and we need lots of items to stock the sale tables. Laura has agreed to chair the sale again this year, but she has another very time-consuming interest. In the past, Laura has made a number of the items for sale, but no longer has much spare time for crafts. If you are making jams or jellies, please set aside a few extra jars for the Hillbillies. All kinds of ornaments can be made well ahead. Handmade soaps and candles have been great sellers in the past, as well as needlework and sewing items. Now is the time to let your creative juices flow and plan projects at a time when there is little seasonal pressure. We would love to see what you come up with.

We are printing the information about the new Visitation Outfit once again. First, because it is so exciting that it is worth repeating. And, secondly, there is a correction in the amounts of trim and ribbon needed.

For Ladies:

- Black and white gingham apron
- Solid black skirt (of your choice)
- Solid white blouse (of your choice)
- Black or white pouffy

For Men:

The men have their choice of two options:

White man's western shirt with black and white check gingham yoke and tie

Or

White western shirt with black and white gingham vest and tie.

Either option is to be worn with jeans (preferably black).

If you wish to view the outfits, please look at our Sierra Hillbillies website, as Dan has posted a picture.

<http://sierrahillbillies.homestead.com/files/NewSHBOutfits.htm>

A pattern for the apron and tie will be available at the next few dances, with tracing paper available for you to make a copy. Instructions for assembly of the apron will also be available. Ladies may use a 5 or 7 gore apron, based on their needs. The committee feels that the apron looks best when it goes all the way around the skirt. Some ladies may also wish to lengthen the gores for the apron, depending on their height. If you need assistance with this, please see Laura Kelley.

If you wish to make the man's vest, please use a simple vest pattern with rounded corners, such as McCall's pattern #8285.

Here are the estimated lengths of fabric for the pieces:

Five gore apron

- approximately 1 1/3 yards 1/4 inch black and white gingham
- approximately 8 1/6 feet "Radiance" large hole white eyelet trim, pregathered*
- approximately 4 feet each of 1/4 inch satin ribbon, black and white
- interfacing, if desired

Seven gore apron

- approximately 1 2/3 yards 1/4 inch black and white gingham
- approximately 10 1/2 feet "Radiance" large hole white eyelet trim, pregathered*
- approximately 5 1/3 feet each of 1/4 inch satin ribbon, black and white
- interfacing, if desired

*If you are unable to find this particular eyelet lace, please match it as closely as you can. The eyelet is white, 2 1/2 inches wide, gathered and has VERY LARGE (1/4 inch) eyelet holes.

Tie

- 1/3 yard 1/4 inch black and white gingham

Vest

- approximately 1 1/2 yards of 1/4 inch black and white gingham

Western Shirt

- Will depend on the particular shirt you choose. It shouldn't be more than 1/2 to 2/3 yard if you are using a ready made shirt and replacing only the yoke.

The fabric is readily available at both Walmart and Joanns and was recently priced at \$2.99 per yard. The trim is available at Walmart and was recently priced at \$.75 per yard. I am working with the Stevensons Ranch Walmart to see if I can get them to order a large lot of the eyelet trim.

Tips from the 43rd National Convention in Portland, OR, June 1994:

Put the pocket of a square dance dress on the left hand side to avoid spilling contents of the pocket when the skirt is spread with dancing.

Check the evening and bridal dress sections of pattern books for a sleeve, neck and bodice idea.

To duplicate a pattern piece, place wax paper on the pattern tissue and trace with your serrated tracing wheel.

To make fusing stick better, place a sheet of aluminium foil on the ironing board, under all the layers to be fused. It will act as a reflector and intensifier of the heat and steam.

Rub clear wax or a bar of soap on a sticky zipper.

To remove the stubborn center fold in fabric, dampen your press cloth in a solution of white vinegar and water and press. The fabric will not be harmed and the odor does not remain.

Handiwipes, wet or dry, make great press cloths.

A piece of masking tape on the wrong side of your fabric pieces will help identify the wrong and right sides when sewing pieces together.



20 Ways to Improve Your Sewing

*Excerpted from an article in "Threads Magazine"
by Barbara Emodi*



Deal with ambitious seams in sections. For example, when sewing a seam that will involve matching up crossing seams or details (two sides of a waistline, yokes, piping, and so on), stitch only a few inches at the point of intersection. Stop, check to see whether the cross seams line up, adjust if necessary, and then complete the seam.

It's easier to stitch a curved edge than to press a curve. Forget about using those metal corner-shaping templates (unless you can find a way to use them without burning your fingers) or turning up along a stitched line. Instead, simply line and turn all curved pockets, flaps, and similar details. It's faster, simpler, and cleaner.

Sewing is, above all, a sensual and emotional experience. Don't even begin a project if you don't love the color and enjoy the feel of the fabric. Fit may be flawless, design stunning, workmanship impeccable, but if the fabric doesn't appeal to the senses, you'll never wear it.

Learn the difference between topstitching and edgestitching. The side of your presser foot isn't always the best distance to stitch away from an edge.

Topstitching defines an edge or attaches a detail with stitches more than 1/8 inch or so from the edge, and edgestitching (stitching less than 1/8 inch from the edge) often does this job better. Keep your topstitching, like all other elements, in proportion to the scale of the garment and fabric. Consider placing topstitching a distance from the edge of the fabric that reflects the fabric's own body and thickness. Thin, hard fabrics like fine gabardine should be edgestitched close, perhaps 1/16 inch from the edge. A lofty mohair coating, by contrast, would probably look better topstitched ½ inch or more from the garment edges.

Don't use a standard hem measurement. A good hem is one that hangs nicely, which in different fabrics means different hem widths. As a rule, the wider the skirt, the narrower the hem - and vice versa.

Establish priorities when choosing a pattern size.

Few of us are one size all over, so be sure to select a pattern size to best fit the part of your body that will carry the weight of the garment. When buying a pattern for an upper-body garment (jacket, dress, shirt, blouse, or coat), choose the size that fits your shoulders and neckline. When buying a lower-body pattern (pants or skirt), choose a size that fits your waist and upper hip. Shoulders/necklines and waists/upper hips on patterns are very difficult to alter, so it's easiest to start off with the closest possible fit right from the pattern envelope.

When you choose tops, use your chest measurement (above the bust, as high as possible under your arms, and over your shoulder blades – don't worry if the tape isn't perfectly horizontal at all points) and alter for the bust if there's more than a 2-in. difference between your chest and bust measurements. It's always much easier to make a pattern larger than smaller.

Mark the things that matter.

It's important to always mark center front. Thread-trace lines that need to be seen on the right side (pocket placement, roll lines). Color-code your markings – how can you tell a large dot from a small dot if you've tailor-tacked them in the same thread color? This will save time, not waste it. How often have you pulled out the pattern pieces to double-check a marking?

Work with, not against your machine.

Police yourself for bad fabric-handling habits. Look for evidence. Do you have nicks across the top of your bobbin case? These can be caused by broken needles, sewing over pins, or the needle striking the bobbin case in a machine whose timing (the relationship between the needle's downward stroke and the rotation of the bobbin hook) needs adjusting. Breaking your needle on a pin at high speed can be enough to knock a machine's timing off. Do you have scratches on your throat plate running out backward from the needle opening? This is caused when the needle is bent backward, usually by sewers who use their hands to overzealously "help" the fabric feed through the machine. This practice causes deadly wear and tear on machines.

Eliminate internal bulk.

Understand when to simply clip a seam allowance (when a curved seam needs to be straightened, or when turning an inside curve or corner) and when to actually remove fabric from the seam allowances with a notch (when turning an outside curve or corner). Grade seam allowances bravely; don't let your fear of fraying make your sewing lumpy. You can trim as close as 1/8 inch to the seam line without fear, so get a ruler and remind yourself what 1/8 inch looks like. Whenever possible, use a flat finish (for example, serging or zigzagging, then stitching in the ditch to finish a waistband) rather than folding under and slipstitching.

Buy longer zippers.

A good choice is at least 1 inch longer than the pattern suggests. Stitch both waistbands and neck facings right across the top of the zipper tape (use nylon zippers), cutting off the excess at the top. This eliminates that annoying gap between the top of a zipper and the waistband (many fly-front pants deal with the problem this way, so why not skirts?), as well as the need to sew a hook and eye to the top of a dress zipper.

Give gadgets a chance.

Keep up with new notions and accessory feet. A job you hate may turn out to be a snap with the right tool. Learn how to use a loop turner, a bias-tape maker, a narrow hemmer, and a flat-felling foot. But don't stop there; keep on learning.

Respect the "turn of cloth".

Folded fabric layers take up room, so press completed collars before attaching them to a garment, carefully rolling the collar seam to the underside. Expect the undercollar to protrude slightly along the neck edge. Trim away this excess fabric and baste the collar's raw edges together. Also, to allow for fabric thickness when attaching buttons, make sure the shank (thread, plastic or metal) is as long as the fabric layers are thick.

Consider an underlining.

Adding an underlining can supplement or change the weight, hand, or drape of a garment fabric. Duplicate the pattern piece that needs help in a second fabric, and work with the fashion fabric and underlining as one. Underline, for example, to support a limp fabric with a firm fabric, or a loosely woven fabric with an opaque one. Always treat the underlining fabric as the secondary fabric; don't let it outweigh or dominate the primary fabric.

Eliminate back-neck facings in garments with a collar.

Substitute a serged or bound neck edge; you'll never miss the facing, and you won't have to struggle to make it lie flat.

Cross seams, don't pivot, whenever possible, at the junction of two seamlines.

Pivoting can cause twisting and distortion of the grain, which often creates a bubble at the point of an in-set, for example, that no amount of pressing will

eliminate. For the same reason, always stitch both seams away from, rather than toward, the point of intersection.

Keep in mind that shoulders move. If your garment has shoulder pads, you'll need to stitch some mobility into the points of the shoulder pads. Working from the right side, hand-sew a small, invisible backstitch in the ditch of the shoulder seams to attach shoulder pads from sleeve to neck, catching just the pad cover, and use small swing tacks on the inside to anchor the points of the pads to the armhole seam allowances.

Prepare sleeves to fit armholes. Measure the armhole and shape the sleeve cap to fit; don't try to stitch the gathered sleeve in place and then press it into shape. Ease and gather the sleeve seam until the measurements of the sleeve and armhole match. Then hang the sleeve cap over a tailor's ham or the small end of an ironing board and steam-press it until it's smooth, shaped, and all puckers have been eliminated. Only then, pin and stitch the sleeve into the garment.



[Return to the Sierra Hillbillies](#)

Revised 01/01/05