

That was a t-shirt!!!

We need tops! While cotton tops are easy to make, knit tops are the most versatile due to the forgiving stretch. Because of the challenges in working with knit fabric, updating a t-shirt is the perfect compromise. Our goal is to have someone look at our top and say "that was a t-shirt?!" All hemlines need to be removed and restyled and the neckline needs to be either ruffled (size small and some medium) or trimmed. Here are some guidelines that we are looking for.

Simply sewing a decorative stitch or zigzag over the existing hemline (sleeves and bottom hem) does not make visual changes to the t-shirt. Please cut off the existing hemline and if you like, you can make it shorter. If you have a serger, you can finish the edge prior to hemming but because the knit does not ravel it is not necessary. You also do not need to turn over the edge prior to hemming.

Sleeves

Match the sleeves and cut off both hems at the same time. You can cut straight or at an angle and make it a cap sleeve

Use a decorative stitch for the hemming, variegated thread looks great! Use either white or black thread in the bottom as variegated thread is expensive. Remember to sew on the right side with your finger on the bottom feeling for the fabric edge. Watch for those sales and coupons!! Sulky blendables, 30 weight, 100% cotton is very nice to use.

If you hem with a straight stitch, make it a little longer perhaps 3.0 and add some elastic to make it gathered at the hem edge. Make a wider hem and stitch again $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the bottom edge and after inserting the elastic, it will leave a ruffle.

Stitch a short piece of elastic vertical down the center of the sleeve to give it a gathered look.

Hemlines

Cut off the front and back at the same time. After cutting off the existing hem, there are a variety of styles you can use, oval (scoop), high-low, shark bite or fringe. To make sure you are consistent with both sides, make sure you have pulled out the side seams (you will need to adjust). You can trim off the tag but make sure you do not cut the side seams.

To make the oval (scoop), fold in half and start cutting (both layers of t-shirts) about 2-2 1/2 inches up on the seam and cut a soft curve to the center of the shirt.

If you are making a high low, open the shirt and refold the t-shirt matching the side seams and DOUBLE CHECK to make sure you are cutting the front. Even up the front, cutting from middle to the side seam.

If you are doing the shark bite, after opening the t-shirt and matching the side seams, fold in half again and starting about 2-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches on the center front/back cut at a soft curve to about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches of side seam fold. Don't be too drastic with your curve as you do not have much fabric to play with. When you make a shark bite from knit fabric, more fabric is used when cutting out so there is a much more shark bite appearance.

To fringe, just cut up about 2-3 inches all the way around. Pull on each strand to create a great look!

When hemming around the curve, go slow and adjust the hem often so it doesn't pucker.

Neckline

You can either ruffle, trim or create a jewel neckline.

To ruffle the neckline, you will need to use a tight, small zigzag and **tightly** pull the ribbing while sewing. Please be aware that this is hard on your finger joints!! Practice on the fabric you have cut off to view the size of your zigzag. Since this is a ruffle, it is best to use this mainly on the small size (6-8) of t-shirts. Please limit the amount you do on the medium size as they are sizes 10-12 and no ruffling on large size which is 14-16.

To trim the neckline, use small sharp scissors to cut just the back side of the ribbing, very close to the bottom edge of the ribbing---not the folded side. Be very careful not to cut the front side of the ribbing or you will be making a jewel neckline! Please do not just fold over the ribbing and sew as it is bulky and has a tendency to stick out. Tightly fold the ribbing to the back and use pin or clips to hold. If you would like, you can lightly press the ribbing to help hold it in place while sewing. I find it easier to sew on the front side using a longer stitch 3-3.5 and sew on the bottom row of existing stitching. If you like, you can also sew on the top row of existing stitching. Do not stretch the ribbing or t-shirt when sewing. Instead of regular stitching, you can also use a decorative stitch sewing on the seam between those 2 existing stitch lines. The neckline will not be lying flat, so you will need to trim the excess ribbing on the inside. Trim close to the new stitching making sure you do not cut the t-shirt! Ask me how I know this!!

In making the jewel neckline, you will completely cut off the ribbing, just below the bottom seam line and turn the knit edge about 3/8 inch and hem. Be careful not to stretch the t-shirt while sewing.

Body of the t-shirt

Using what we have learned in other workshops, you can put an age appropriate applique on the front of the t-shirt or perhaps on one shoulder-be creative! Unless you are using an intricate design on the applique it is not necessary to place backing on the inside of the t-shirt. We have appliques already cut out ready to sew and templates you can take home and cut out yourself. We have precut heat 'n' bond for you to take home. If you would rather not applique a t-shirt, then attach at least a 6X6 piece of fabric to your completed skirt and we will have someone create a matching t-shirt. You can also add elastic to the sides and gather the body of the t-shirt. Add a bit of lace to the shoulders, across the high front or back (be careful not to expose too much) or down the back. Carefully cut out the t-shirt leaving the lace to be show thru. . Remember the girls get to pick out a dress or top and bottom, so we do want outfits in the small and medium sizes from them to pick from.