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Halter Sundress with Shirred Back.

By StacyCK, http://thelandofka.com/



Description:

This tutorial is for a fitted sundress with lined front bodice and shirred back using elastic thread. I will show you the basic design, and discuss a few different variations that you can tweak as you may want. Home sewing is all about being creative and creating unique to you pieces. Feel free to deviate from the patterns to create your own unique design.

Materials:

1 yard of a quilting cotton with a fabulous design (washed and dried first!)
1 yard of another complimentary quilting cotton with a fabulous design
Matching thread
Elastic thread (You can find elastic thread at any fabric store with a good notions supply. It can be found with the rest of the elastic, not the thread.)
Embellishments (optional but always fun!)

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Lets begin shall we?

First look at your massive stash of fabric and pick your fabrics. It is hard to decide isn't it?

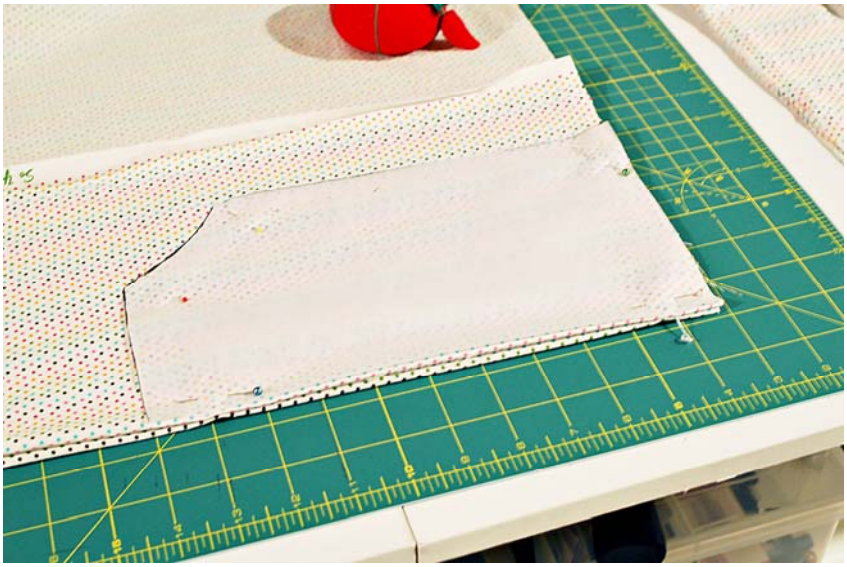
Next, find some candy or gummies to bribe child to stand still for measurements. Find child watching Dora.

Measure:

Upper chest:	_____	
Lower chest:	_____	
Shoulder to waist:	_____	
Desired top height to waist:	_____	A
Desired top height to underarm:	_____	B
Underarm to waist:	_____	C
Waist to desired skirt length:	_____	D

Now go steal some used paper from your child's large art tablet (reduce – reuse – recycle!) or some tracing paper to draw your pattern (if not using the art tablet paper, I use the tissue paper for presents as it is see through).

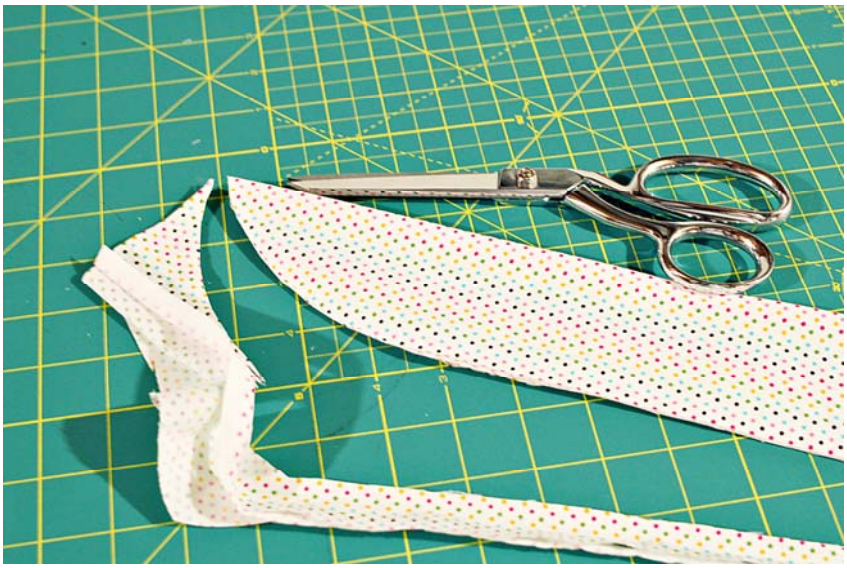
The bodice pieces (cut 2):



- The long side is measurement **A**
- The short side is measurement **C**
- The distance between the top and underarm is measurement **B.** I go in about 1.5- 2 inches.
- The width of the piece is ¼ of the chest measurement. It is cut on the fold.

I am going to give you two options here. This one is straight across, or you could make the top rounded. Drawing the curve is not rocket science; just make sure that you are within the correct measurements. Using a pencil with an eraser would probably help as well.

You will also need to cut your halter ties. I think 10 inches is a good length, and I generally round the corners on them.



The shirred back (cut 1):

Cut your fabric with at least a 2:1 ratio for the size you need. You will take the width from the front of the bodice, which is the underarm to waist length (including the seam allowance)

For my daughter I cut a piece 11"x22" for the back of her dress.

The skirt (cut 2):

I usually cut a piece 45" x the amount of drop I want. The length measurement on this will be ***Measurement D*** *minus* ***bottom banding*** *(net of seam allowance) plus seam allowance.* For the 3T dress I am making here, I like to have a nice full skirt. This means that I generally will have each side be the length of the fabric (usually 45 inches). For this example, I cut 2 pieces 12" x 45".

Bottom banding (cut 2):
I like the banding to be about 2 inches long. I also double up the banding so I don't need to hem it and it just looks cleaner this way. This means that the banding needs to be cut at 5 inches wide (this includes the seam allowance) and the width should be the same length of the skirt pieces.

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Whew! This is why is it good to be a CPA. I hope that was clear! Now cut out your pieces…and remember if you have a pretty toile or a one directional pattern that you cut it the right direction (experience talking here folks!)

A note on edge finishes: It is really best to not have raw edges exposed as they may unravel. If you have a serger life is much easier for you, but if you have a regular sewing machine you can still have nice edges. Learn how to do a French Seam (it encloses the raw edges), a Hong Kong Finish, or just do a tight wide zigzag stitch over the raw edge. You want the garment to hold up to wearings and washings, so take the extra time to finish it well.

Now let's start on assemblage:

Shirred back:

1. Hand wind the bobbin with the elastic thread and don't pull it. Fill it up all the way, especially for pieces that take up the entire back of the dress. I usually use a whole bobbin for that.

2. Use thread to match the fabric for your top thread.

3. Set your stitch length to the longest stitch (4 for me) and I usually set the tension around 8-9.

4. Hem the top of the piece first. It is difficult to do afterwards when it is all bunched up.

5. Start sewing in long straight lines – back and forth across the piece. You can trace your guidelines if you want or just go slowly. I use the sewing lines as a guide for distance. I go down three stitches in between each line, and pull the fabric straight as I stitch.

6. When you are done sewing your lines, tie the two threads together. Although I do use an anchoring stitch, it is necessary to also tie the threads.

7. Now if it didn't shirr enough while you were sewing, you can use a steam iron to bring it out. It usually shirrs more when I put the outfit in the dryer, too.

Front bodice:

Begin by sewing up your halter top straps along the sides. When all sewed up – clip the corners, turn right sides out and press. I usually go over it again and top-stitch. I do a lot of top stitching on my garments. I find they hold their shape better after laundering and they just look better. I also press everything as I go. It makes it much easier and neater to sew up seams that have been pressed first.

Next, the front of the bodice – do you want to embellish it? Of course you do! Here are a few ideas for embellishing:

- Sew a matching ribbon(s) either horizontally, vertically or diagonally across the bodice. Remember to heat seal the ends, if possible.
- If using multiple fabrics for the dress, sew one of the other fabrics in a strip across the bodice – add buttons or bows to embellish this piece.
- Add buttons, bows, purchased appliqués, rick rack trim, etc.

Here is what I chose to do with this one, chenille rick rack trim and a circle applique:



Here are a few other examples:

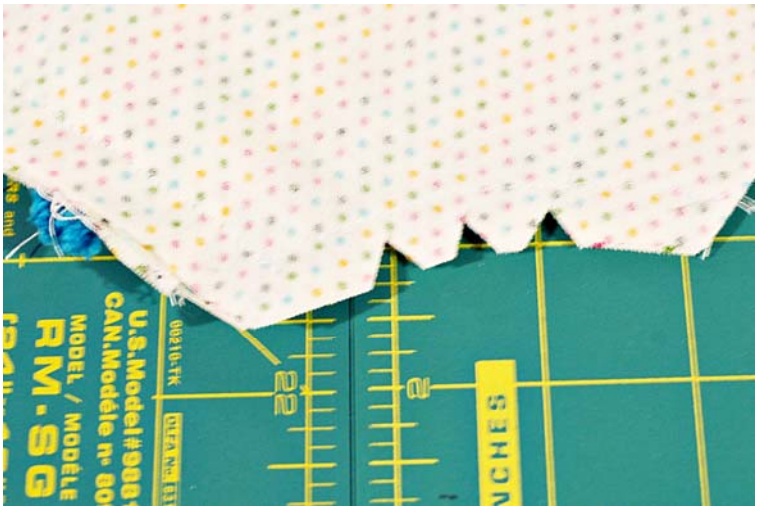






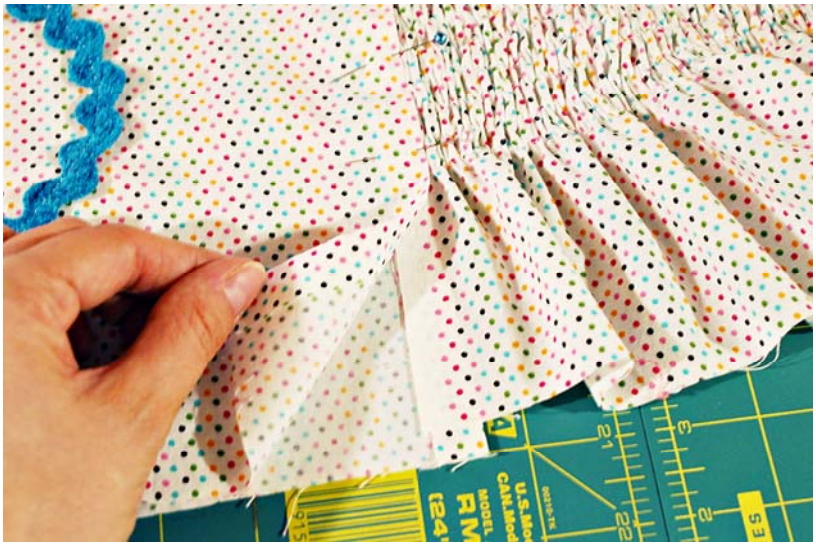
Now, set the straps close to the edge and put the lining piece over, so you will be sandwiching the straps in between. Sew along the top edge and the underarm, clip the corners and curves. Turn right sides out and press. Turn the side seams in ½ inch and press.







Pin one side of the shirred back piece in between the pressed side seams. Make sure the front and back seams line up so they will both be caught by the stitching. Also make sure you are pinning it together so the back piece will face the correct direction.



Sew this side together, top down. I sew top down since if there is any bunching that will occur as you sew you can let it out as the bottom is open. If you sew the other direction the seams won't be equal length on the front and the back and it won't look as clean.

Pin the other side up and sew. This takes a bit of negotiating with your machine, so go slowly.



The skirt and attaching to bodice:

Sew the side pieces up, right sides together. I gather the back side of the dress less than the front side, but try to keep the same amount of fabric on each side, so the side seams match up.



How to gather:

If you don't have a gathering foot for your machine, just set the stitch length to the longest stitch. Then stitch the length to be gathered, and pull the gathers using one of the threads. This is time consuming, but what I used to do all the time.

Now, I have a serger, and there are some settings that will create gathers without a gathering foot. I set the stitch length to 5 and needle thread tensions between 8-9. This has made my life much easier, as it serges the edges and gathers at the same time. Make sure you leave a long tail of thread as you may need it to adjust the gathers.



Pin the gathered skirt to the bodice, right sides together and making sure the ruffles are evenly spaced. I will usually straight stitch this on and then go back over it and serge the two pieces together. Make sure the skirt is laying straight out when you are stitching as the gathers can get caught up in the needles as you sew.





Next press the seam and topstitch.



Bottom banding:

Sew the side pieces up, right sides together. Make sure the width matches up to the skirt width, and adjust as needed. Now fold the banding in half and press. If you don't have a serger, zigzag the edges together. Now pin them to the bottom of the skirt (again if you don't have a serger, zigzag the skirt edge) and sew them together. Press the seam toward the top and topstitch the seam flat.

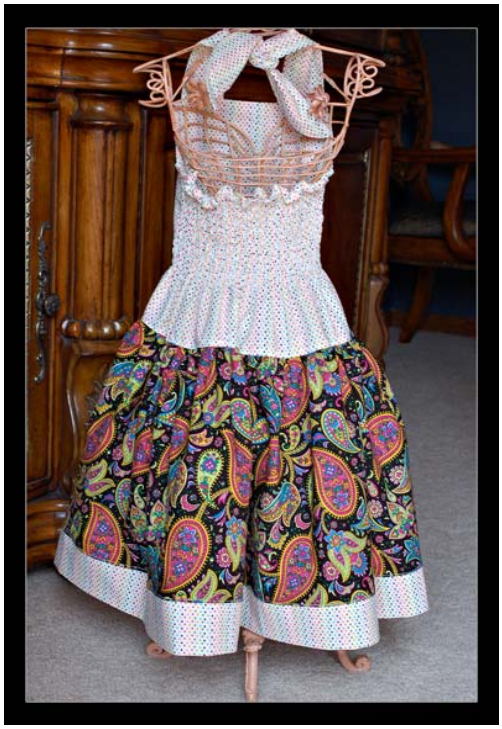




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Finished product:





Now, go forth and sew and customize. You can use these instructions and modify the pattern by:

- Shorten the bodice to be a princess seam.
- Make the skirt a tiered skirt with a ruffle hem.
- Add a ruffle in-between the bodice and skirt(s) for added cuteness.
- Create two skirts for more fullness.

Just let your imagination be your guide!

*if anyone has any suggestions to improve the pattern, please let me know. You can e-mail me at stacy@thelandofka.com.

Pattern compliments of SewingMamas, www.sewingmamas.com