



How to Make the "Best Dress Ever"

This tutorial includes step by step instructions for making the sundress with ties on the shoulders.

Materials you will need:

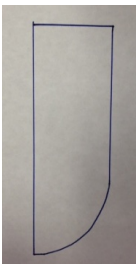
- Sewing machine
- Scissors
- Small ruler
- Pins, and a large safety pin
- 1/2" wide elastic
- coordinating thread
- 1 or more Yards of colorful, sturdy cotton fabric per dress (see fabric notes)
- Lace Hem Tape or other trim such as ricrac to coordinate with your fabric
- Package of **extra wide, double fold** seam binding (for straps) to coordinate with dress fabric

DO NOT USE RIBBON FOR STRAPS

Following is a chart of the finished dress lengths. The exact dress length is not very important - so here is a range. We will "size" the dresses before they're shipped out.

<u>Size/years old</u>	<u>Finished Dress Length</u>
Infant	14-16 inches
1-2 years	16-18 inches
3-4 years	19-25 inches
5-6 years	28-30 inches
7-8 years	32-35 inches
9-10	32-34 inches
11	35-37 inches
12-14	37-40 inches (INCLUDE A SIDE- or BACK-SLIT)

To draw a template for the arm opening, get out a piece of paper or cardboard to draw your template on. The curved line should go straight down for about 3-4 inches and then curve in a J shape. No matter how your curve looks it will work out as long as you have the length and width measured correctly.



Template measurements: (width then length)

Small	1-1/4" x 5-3/4"	to fit infant to size 4 (approx. 17"-27" unfinished length)
Medium	1-1/2" x 6-1/2"	to fit child size 5 to 9 (approx. 29"-34" unfinished length)
Large	1-1/2" x 7"	to fit child 9 to 14 (approx. 36"-42" unfinished length)

Let's get started

FABRIC should be sturdy, colorful cotton – not see through, as we are trying to bring dignity. If you can see the outline of your hand through the fabric—it's too thin for the dark skin of most of the girls we are sewing for. Choose the length of dress that you wish to make and add 3" inches to the length; the width will be whatever the width of the fabric is (usually 42-45") we're going to take advantage of those selvages. Go ahead cut your dress the length you've chosen. Please consider the size dress you are making, and use baby/nursery patterns for smaller sizes.

POCKET fabric should coordinate both in color and fabric with the dress fabric – use the pocket design to make the dress beautiful!! For durability, the pocket should be double fabric – you can use any plain fabric as a liner, if you desire. You may want to sew trim on the pocket (lace, ricrac, lacy hem tape, washable ribbon, etc.) Make sure that the trim is washable and durable – don't use decorative craft ribbon because it won't hold up. Pockets should be at least 6" x 6", and larger (up to approx. 8" x 10") for larger sizes.

Place the pocket slightly below the midpoint of the dress (slightly below the waist.) Sew the pocket onto the dress – you can sew the pocket in the middle, or toward the side. Bring the sides of the pocket in a little at the top – don't make the pocket flat. This will allow for the girl to hold lots of her treasures in the pocket. Sew the pocket on the dress **BEFORE** you sew the sides together – it will be **MUCH** easier!

SEW THE DRESS Put the selvages right sides together and sew the side seam down the length of the dress. If you do not have selvages, you'll need to finish the seam to avoid fraying. Use a serger, zig zag, or French seams from top to bottom to make sure that this seam does not come apart, or fold the seam allowance under and sew to finish the seam. If you are sewing a size 12 or 14 dress, leave 7" unsewn at the bottom, then sew the seams down, which will make a long slit.

Now let's put in a hem. On one end of the fabric tube turn up ½" all the way around the dress, pressing as you fold. After you've completed this go around again folding up another ½". Stitch close to the edge of your hem with your machine. Sew trim at the hem, if desired. (see trim recommendations above.)

You should now have a tube of fabric with a hem on one end. Lay your tube out flat with the seam on the side rather than down the back. It will be much less noticeable and both the front and back will appear seamless. Use the appropriate size **ARMHOLE** template to cut out the armholes.



Trace and cut your arm openings. Your fabric should look like this.

It's starting to look a little like a dress isn't it? 😊 To sew the casing, fold over the top front ¼" and press. Now fold over ¾" and press firmly. Flip the dress over and do the same thing on the top of the back of the dress.



Stitch close to the top edge along the fold on the front and the back. Stitch close to the bottom edge of the facing. After you finish, press the casing one more time.

<u>Dress Size</u>	<u>Front Elastic Length</u>	<u>Back Elastic Length</u>	<u>Bias Tape Length (cut 2)</u>
Baby	6"	6"	27"
1 to 4	6-1/2"	6-1/2"	36"
5 to 7	7"	7"	36"
8 to 10	8"	9"	44" (fabric width)
12-14	9"	10"	44" (fabric width)

Cut two pieces of ½ inch elastic based on the size chart above. (If you prefer you can leave the elastic in one piece, for example if you are making a size 6 dress you will cut the elastic 14 inches and mark the center with a pin or marker. (I like to do this because it is easy for short pieces of elastic to get away).



Put a safety pin on the end of the elastic and push it through the casing. When the center of your elastic reaches one end, pin or secure with a few stitches, clip the end of the elastic and continue across.

While the safety pin is still attached fasten the end securely with a stitch or pin. Do not stretch out to distribute the gathers...we'll do that later. Turn the dress over and repeat on the other side.

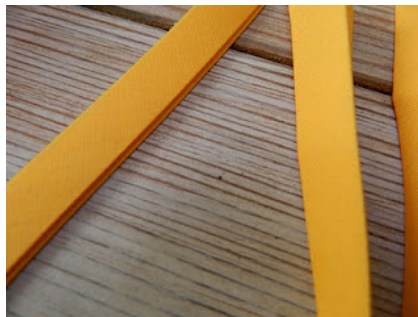


If you used pins to hold the elastic tuck all four of the elastic ends using a zig zag stitch. Make sure that you can see the ends of elastic so they will be well secured.

This is what your dress should look like!



Now for the straps/ties – you will need **extra wide double-fold bias tape**. Find the length of ties that correspond to the size dress that you are making and cut two. If you buy 2 packages you will usually have enough tape to make 3 dresses, with the exception of the larger dresses – you will only get one dress per package. You may use home-made bias tape, making sure that it is made from sturdy fabric. **DO NOT USE RIBBON FOR TIES.**



If you look very closely at most bias tape while it is folded, one edge will appear to be a little wider. You can see it pretty well on the tape edge on the left. The wider side will go to the inside of the dress - that way when you sew the tape around the arm opening you won't have to worry about catching the edge of the tape that is out of sight.



Fold in and press the ends of the ties.

Fold your ties in half and mark with a pin.



With the right side of the fabric facing out pin the center of the bias tape to the center of the underarm. Remember the widest edge of the bias tape needs to go on the inside of arm opening. Make sure the dress fabric is all the way in to the fold. Pin every inch or so to make sure that the fabric doesn't slip out.



Lay your dress out with ties laid up like this. You start sewing on the top of the left tie. Sew the edges together with a straight stitch. When you get to the dress fabric keep sewing, back-stitching over the section with elastic, and then continue sewing up to the end of the tie. You will be sewing a giant U. Repeat on the other side. *If it's easier you can sew around the U with a zig zag stitch.



Look on the inside of the arm opening and make sure that you caught all of the edges.



Turn your dress inside out and clip all the threads, check your seams and the hem.

Flip your dress right side out. Now it is time to add any additional embellishments if you desire. (buttons on pockets, appliques, etc.) Embellishments should be sewn on, not glued. If using ribbon as decoration please use FABRIC ribbon (ie grosgrain) NOT craft ribbon, which is not washable.

GOOD JOB! YOU ARE BLESSING A GIRL WITH A DRESS THAT PROVIDES DIGNITY AND PROTECTION FROM SEX TRAFFICKING.



Modified from, and with thanks!!! <http://dressgirlaroundtheworld-va.blogspot.com/>