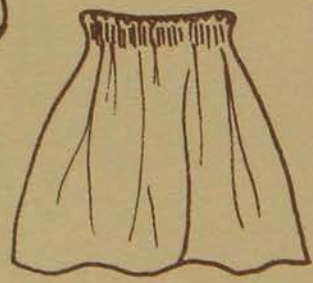
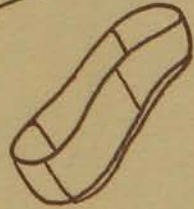
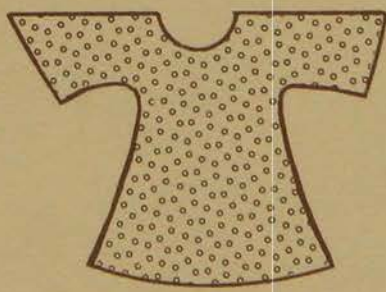
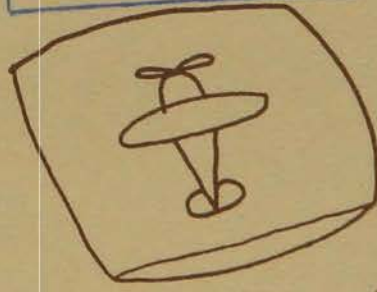
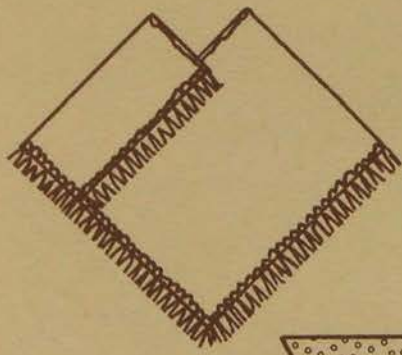


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Helping Children Learn to Sew

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THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE



a guide for group leader and parent



Agricultural Extension Service
University of Minnesota

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SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

The children you are helping will be between 7 and 11 years old. Their abilities, coordination, interest span, and resources may differ greatly, even when at the same age. Accept these differences and start with each of them where they are.

Let them know you care about them and believe they can learn. Use lots of praise and encouragement.

Keep your group small - probably no more than five, unless you have help. An hour and a half is a good meeting length for this age group.

Consider having the mothers (parents) at the meeting when the children are learning how to run the sewing machine.

The first project should be something that can be completed quickly. This helps them have a "first success." Don't worry about ripping something out to do it over again.

Consider having the group do the same project. This will be easier for you. Individuality can still be shown in different fabric and trim.

If you don't have enough sewing machines for each child, get a couple of them started out first so they aren't all on the same step at the same time.

Why do children want to learn to sew? The ones you are helping just want to "learn to sew," - it's a new experience. They can say, "Hey, look what I did." Afterwards they will find out sewing can save money, and help them get more clothes.

A SUGGESTED PLAN

For your project meetings you might want to use these planning ideas:

1. Greet each child by name as they come. Find out some things about them.

What do they want to sew?

What do they like to do?

What's something they're good at doing?

Ask these things in a casual manner, and not necessarily all at the same time or meeting.

2. Have a listening or sharing time. If they have something to tell or report, let them.
3. You will want to spend most of the meeting time in activities that involve the children in actually doing something. Some examples of these kinds of activities could be:

first meeting - running the machine, stitching on paper, and threading the machine.

second meeting - practice stitching, deciding on first project and supplies needed, measuring each other.

third meeting and on - sewing a first project.

4. When you start sewing first projects you will want to show and tell about the new skill or next step to be learned, a step at a time. For example:

pinning - have them watch you put two pieces of fabric together with the edges even and show where to put in the pins.

stitching a 5/8 inch seam - show them at the sewing machine how you place the needle in the fabric, backstitch, stitch the seam, and backstitch again. If they stand behind you or along side of you it will be easier to see.

pressing - show them where to plug in the iron and turn it on; how to use the point of the iron to press open the seam.

5. Talk with them about what is to be done next,

Developed by Eileen G. Anderson, urban extension agent

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either at home or at the next meeting. Make a list of any supplies they should bring next time.

FIRST, THE SEWING MACHINE

Learning to sew on the sewing machine is a big thrill. Some basic things such as running the machine, threading it, and stitching need to be experienced before a project can be started. You could use these steps in showing the children how to sew on the machine:

STEP 1 - RUNNING THE MACHINE

Have them sit at the machine and practice running the foot controller (or knee controller). The presser foot can be up. They should learn to use the controller to start, slow down, and stop the machine, rather than the hand wheel.

Help them sit directly in front of the needle, with body slightly forward. Feet should be flat on the floor.

To practice and develop confidence, have them stitch on lined paper. This could also be done at home between meetings. Practice sewing paper is available in quantity from Sears Roebuck & Co. It has straight lines, curved lines, and corners for practicing control. Write to: Sears Roebuck & Co., Sewing School Coordinator, Dept. 620, 925 South Homan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60607. Check with your county extension office to see if these are available before you order.

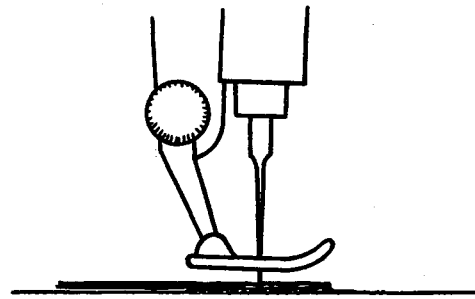
STEP 2 - STITCHING WITH THREAD

Thread the machine and have them stitch on fabric scraps. Because it helps develop confidence and gives a feeling of achievement, this step comes before learning to thread the machine.

To each machine, attach a strip of masking tape 5/8 inch from the needle hole if there is no seam guide.

Each child, when stitching on the machine, should try to get in the habit of doing it this way:

1. Pull the two threads back and to the right.
2. Place fabric under the presser foot.
3. Lower the needle into the fabric where you want to start stitching.
4. Lower the presser foot and stitch, holding the threads for the first few stitches.



Show how to backstitch and how to move the lever to make the machine stitch backward.

STEP 3 - THREADING THE SEWING MACHINE

Sewing machines must be threaded correctly in order to stitch. "It won't sew" is a common problem of beginning stitchers, and the reason is usually incorrect threading. Encourage them to refer to their sewing machine instruction books when threading their machines at home (if they have them).

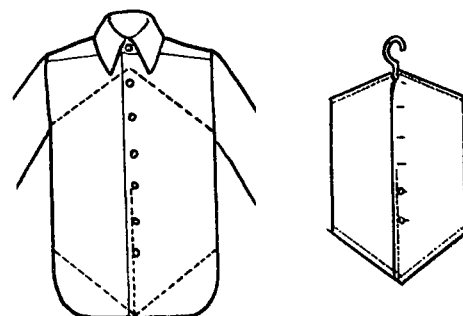
Show and thread the common threading points - spool pin, thread guide, tension, take-up lever, more thread guides, and the needle. The needle is threaded from the side that has the long groove.

The bobbin may need to be wound on the bobbin winder, or it may be wound in the bobbin case with thread directly from the needle. Show how the bobbin thread can be raised through the needle hole by holding the upper thread and turning the hand wheel.

PRACTICE STITCHING

Practice stitch on fabric scraps, or used fabric from old sheets or the backs of old shirts. Be careful that the old fabric isn't too worn, otherwise it will not feed into the presser foot correctly. Start with a piece at least 12 inches by 12 inches or 8 inches by 15 inches. Have them fold it so they are stitching through a double thickness like most of their sewing will be. Then they can fold it again and again into a square or rectangle, stitching along the edges and across it. Soon it will be a potholder!

A laundry bag made from a man's old shirt will be good for practice stitching, too. Stitch the center



front up from the bottom half-way so an opening is left. Stitch from the top center to under the sleeves through both thicknesses. Stitch from the bottom center up toward the sides. Cut off the excess material outside the stitching. Place a hanger inside the shirt (See illustration).

SUGGESTIONS FOR A FIRST PROJECT

Here are several suggestions and instructions for a first project. You and the children you are helping will have other ideas. Keep in mind that the project should be quick to make (preferably done in one session) and involve only straight stitching.

| | |
|---------------|------------|
| Poncho | Ear Warmer |
| Popover Skirt | Pillow |
| Dashiki | |

These projects will provide experiences in measuring fabrics, pinning, stitching on trim, stitching a 5/8 inch seam, backstitching, darts, making a casing, and pressing.

Try to realize that some things, such as pinning two pieces of fabric together with the edge even, may be a very difficult task for small hands, or that cutting fabric feels different than cutting paper.

PONCHO

The poncho is a garment we've adapted from the South American cowboy, the Gaucho. It is a fun project for both fellows and girls.

SUPPLIES EACH WILL NEED:

30 inches of fabric for a small size (8-10) — and 36 inches for a large size (12-14).

The fabric should be 36 inches wide and have an attractive selvage. 3½ yards of trim are needed for the small size and 4 yards for the large size. Matching thread, pins, and scissors.

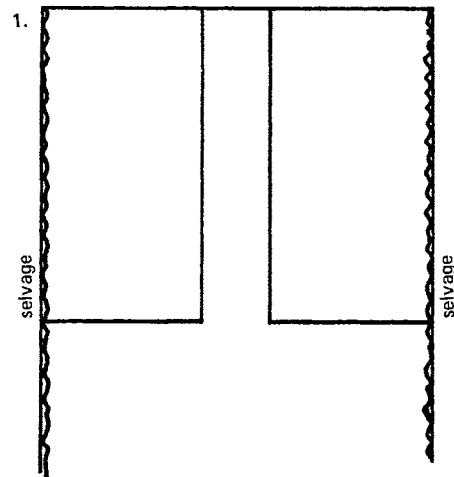
SUPPLIES I WILL NEED:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Sewing machines | Pins |
| Extension cords | Scissors |
| Tape measures | A flat working space |
| Ruler | |

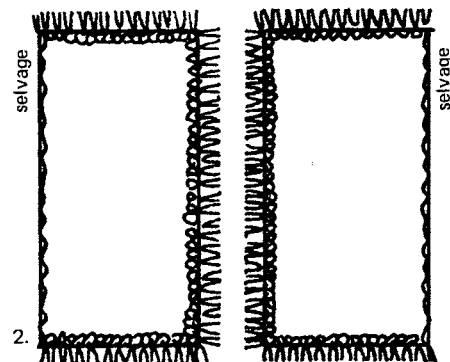
MAKE THE PONCHO

You might want to make a poncho first to become familiar with the steps. (Illustration numbers correspond to step numbers)

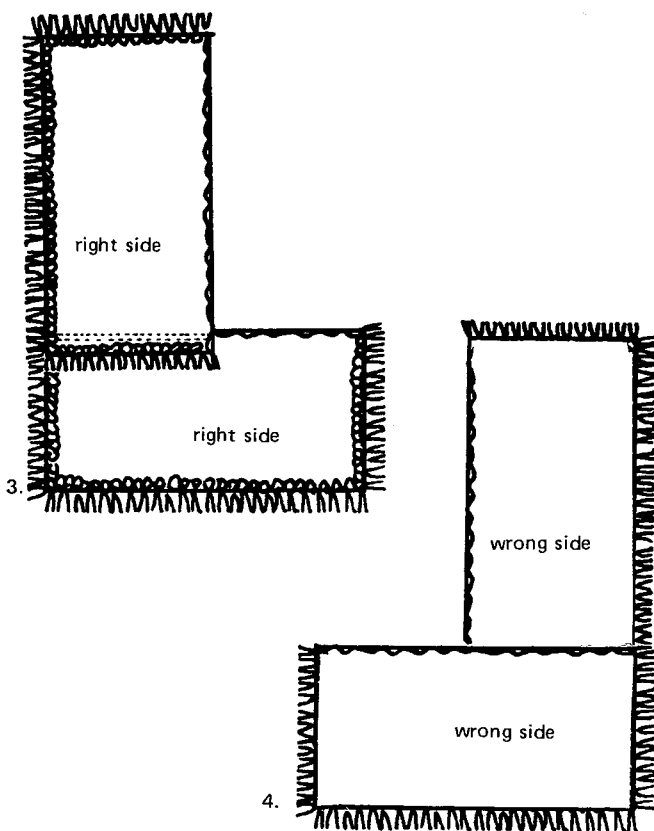
1. Cut the fabric into two lengthwise pieces. For the small size the two pieces should be 14" by 30", for the large size 18" by 36".



2. Machine stitch the trim onto the three raw edges of both pieces. Overlap the trim and fabric at least ½ inch. At the corners, make a small tuck in the trim to turn the corner.



3. Overlap the two pieces 2 inches, right sides up. Pin and machine stitch these together with two rows of stitching, backstitching each end.
4. Turn the pieces over so the wrong side is up.



7. Turn the poncho inside out and match the trimmed edges. At the neck, draw two darts $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. Pin in each dart, tapering to nothing at the end of the shoulder. Stitch the darts starting at the wide end and backstitching. Tie the threads at the other end.

A POPOVER SKIRT

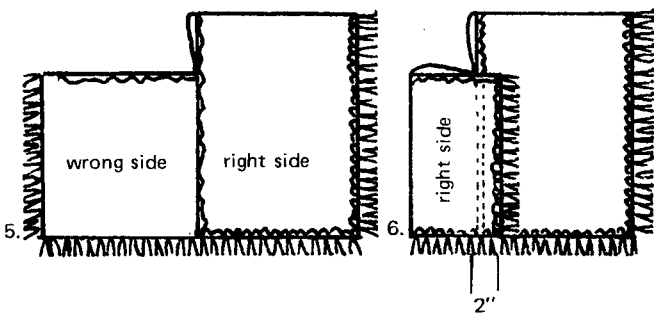
A skirt that's simple and quick to make with an elastic waist and machine stitched hem. It can be short or long.

SUPPLIES EACH WILL NEED:

One or two widths of 45 inch wide fabric, matching thread, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch elastic the length of waist measurement, pins, scissors, and safety pins. Small slim girls will need only one width of fabric. Others may want $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 widths of fabric. The skirt should be at least 4 inches larger than the hip measurement. Avoid fabric that ravel easily or that is quite heavy or bulky.

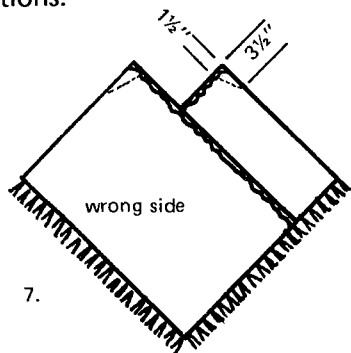
SUPPLIES I WILL NEED:

| | |
|-----------------|------------|
| Sewing machines | Ruler |
| Extension cords | Pins |
| Ironing board | Scissors |
| Iron | Safety pin |
| Tape measures | |



5. Fold the long section so trimmed edges match.

6. Fold the short section over so it overlaps the other by 2 inches. Pin and machine stitch these together with two rows of stitching, backstitching each end. Be careful to stitch only through two sections.



Decide how long the fabric should be by having each girl measure the length of a favorite skirt, add allowances for the casing and hem. For example, if you want a 16 inch skirt, you will need 22 inches of fabric:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| skirt length | 16" |
| allowance for heading | 2" |
| allowance for hem | $\frac{4"}{22}$ |

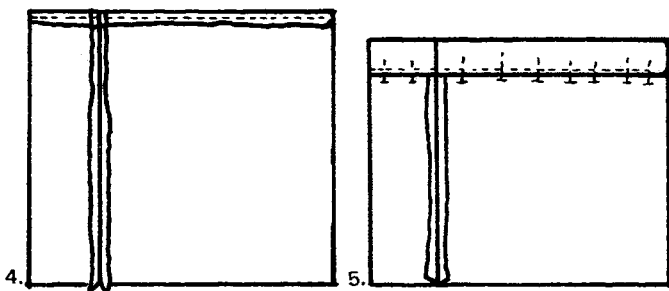
If more than one width is needed, they will have to get twice the length. The fabric should be pre-shrunk before using.

MAKE THE SKIRT

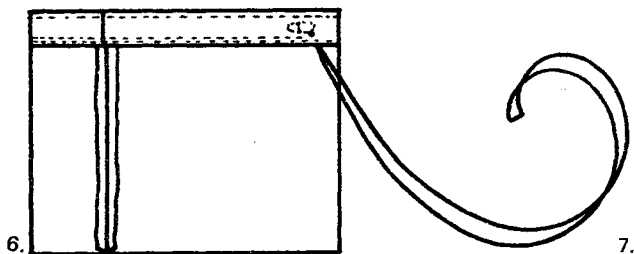
Show and tell how to do one or two steps at a time, then let the girls do it with their own fabric.

(Illustration numbers correspond to the step numbers)

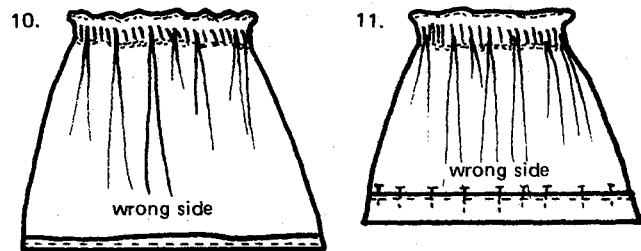
1. Measure, and cut the fabric to the size piece (or pieces) needed.
2. Put the right sides together so the selvage edges meet. Pin and stitch a 5/8 inch seam, securing the seam ends with backstitching. (If more than one width is used, there will be two seams).
3. Press the seam open.
4. To make the casing for the elastic at the top, fold the fabric 1/4 inch toward the inside and stitch around the edge, close to the fold. The girls can first press in or pin this 1/4 inch fold, whichever is easiest for them.



5. Fold the fabric to the inside again - this time making a 1 3/4 inch fold. Press to make a sharp crease. Pin the edge to the skirt. Stitch along the pinned edge all around the skirt leaving a 2-inch opening to put in the elastic. Backstitch at the beginning and the end.
6. To complete the casing, make another row of stitching 5/8 inch from the top of the skirt.



7. Pin a large safety pin to one end of the elastic and slip it through the casing.
8. Lap the ends of the elastic 1 inch and machine stitch an "x" several times to hold the end together.
9. Push the gathers away from the opening and machine stitch the opening shut. You may want to machine stitch across the elastic in a couple of places to keep it from twisting and keep it in place.



10. For the hem, fold under the fabric 1/4 inch and stitch around the edge close to the fold.
11. Try on the skirt and decide on hem length. Turn up the hem and press along the fold. Pin and machine stitch along the edge.

EAR WARMERS

A quick, practical first project - and how we need them in January in Minnesota!

SUPPLIES EACH WILL NEED:

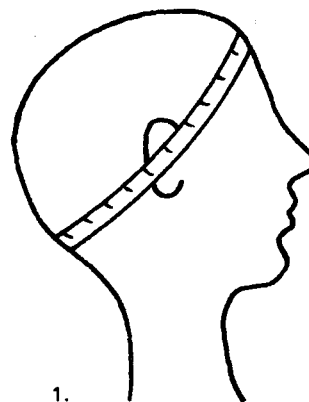
A double knit or sweater knit fabric of wool or wool blend is best because it is warm and stretches. Large size fabric scraps or worn out sweaters can be used. Threads, pins, and scissors are also needed.

SUPPLIES I WILL NEED:

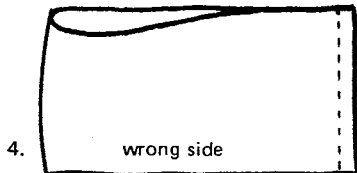
| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Sewing machines | Pins |
| Extension cords | Scissors |
| Tape measure | Ironing board |
| Ruler | Iron |

MAKE THE EAR WARMER

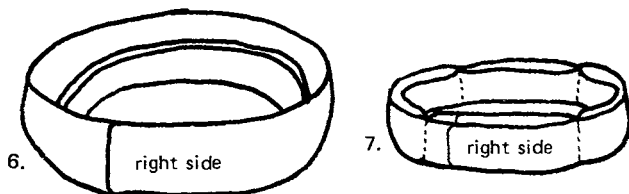
1. Measure the head where the ear warmers are to be worn and subtract at least 1 inch. This will be the length of the fabric needed.



- To determine the width of the fabric needed, allow for 4 thicknesses of 2½ inches or 10 inches wide in all.
- Measure and cut the fabric into the size piece needed.
- Put the right sides of the fabric together so the ends meet. Pin and stitch a 5/8 inch seam, securing the seam ends with backstitching.



- Press the seam open.
- Fold each edge in 2½ inches, and fold in half so the right sides are outside.



- Stitch across the band in four places. This will keep the folds in place, but still let it stretch.

PILLOW FUN

A square pillow with your own fun design.

SUPPLIES EACH WILL NEED:

A firmly woven, washable fabric is best. To make a 14" square pillow, the fabric piece needs to be about 15" by 29". Fabric scraps of felt or double knit wool or polyester can be used to make the design (or any fabric that doesn't ravel). Polyester fiberfill or cut-up nylons, thread, pins, and scissors are also needed.

SUPPLIES I WILL NEED:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Sewing machines | Ruler |
| Extension cords | Pins |
| Ironing board | Scissors |
| Iron | Wrapping paper |
| Tape measure | |

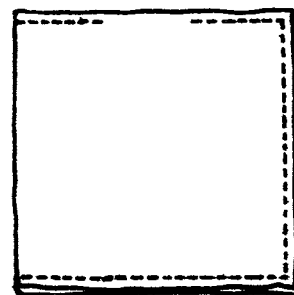
MAKE THE PILLOW

- Measure and cut the fabric into the size piece needed.
- Make a design out of the fabric scraps. Some possibilities are:

geometric shapes
feet or hand shapes (trace yours)
bugs
hearts, stars, diamonds
simple shapes of things

It might be best to first plan the design on a 14" square piece of wrapping paper.

- Pin the design on the right side of half the piece of fabric. Machine stitch the design on to the fabric in back and forth lines, zig zag lines, or use any kind of stitching that you like. Make the stitching part of the design, go off the design, try anything.
- Fold the fabric with the right sides together. Pin and stitch the 3 sides together in a 5/8 inch seam leaving a 4 inch opening in the middle of one side. Secure the seam with backstitching.



- Press one side of the seam open and flat.
- Turn the fabric right side out. Pull out the corners.
- Stuff the pillow with cut-up nylons or polyester fiberfill.
- Hand stitch the opening securely with an over-cast stitch.

A floor pillow can be made from a heavier, firmly woven fabric like denim, corduroy, or ticking. To make a 22" square pillow, the fabric piece needs to be about 23" by 45". The design is optional.

DASHIKI

The dashiki is a colorful, comfortable garment from Africa for fellows or girls. A simple style is given here.

SUPPLIES EACH WILL NEED:

36 inch wide fabric for a small size (8-10) and 45 inch wide fabric for a large size (12-14).

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Newspapers | Scissors |
| Matching thread | Trim, optional |
| Pins | |

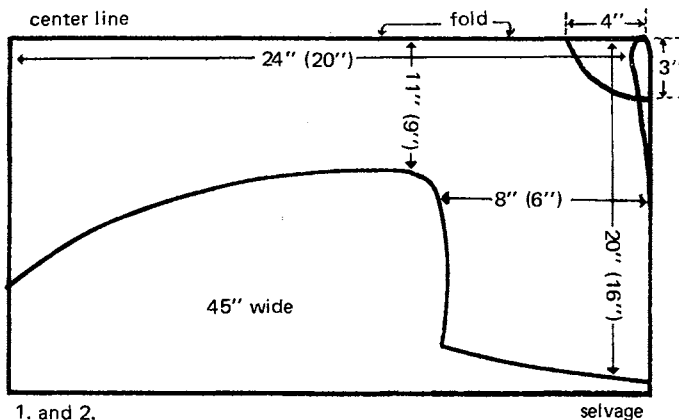
SUPPLIES I WILL NEED:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Sewing machines | Crayons or marking pens |
| Extension cords | Pins |
| Extra newspaper | Scissors |
| Tape measures | A flat working space |
| Ruler or yardstick | |

MAKE THE DASHIKI

You might want to make a dashiki for yourself first to become familiar with the steps. (Illustration numbers correspond to step numbers)

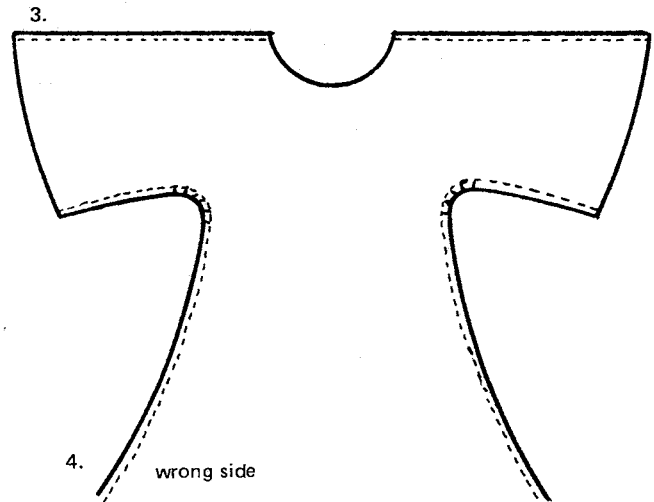
1. Cut a pattern from newspaper. Use the measurements on the patterns shown here for a large (or small) size. The length can be to the hip, to the floor, or anywhere in between. Measure and draw the pattern with a crayon or marking pen. Tape sections of newspaper together to make the large size.



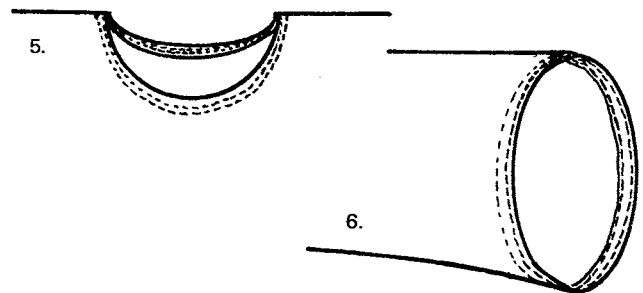
1. and 2.

2. The back and front of the dashiki are cut from the same pattern. Place the center line of the pattern on the fold of the fabric, and pin it in place. Cut. Do not cut along the fold. Place and cut the second pattern the same way.

3. Put the right sides together so all edges are even. Pin and stitch the shoulder seams in 5/8 inch seams, securing ends with backstitching. Press seam open.



4. Pin and stitch the entire underarm seams, in 5/8 inch seams, securing ends with backstitching. Stitch the underarm curve again for reinforcement. Press seam open. Underarm curve may have to be clipped to the seam to lay flat.
5. Fold the neckline edge 1/4 inch toward the inside. Fold 1/4 inch again. Taper the folds to nothing at each shoulder seam. Press or pin the folds, whichever is easiest. Stitch around the neckline twice, along both folded edges.



6. The sleeve and bottom hems can both be finished alike. Fold the edges 1/2 inch toward the inside. Fold 1/2 inch again. Press or pin the folds, whichever is easiest. Stitch around the hems twice, along both folded edges.
7. Purchased trim can be stitched to the neckline, sleeve, or bottom edge.

● Information and pattern instructions for the dashiki were provided by Mrs. Beatrice Evans of St. Paul.