



Sewing Clothes for Children

Sewing for children can be fun as well as economical. You do not have to be an expert to make a satisfactory child's garment. After all, any sewing "mistakes" you make will not be around very long, since children outgrow their clothes so quickly. If you are a beginner, choose simple patterns. Save the harder ones for later.

You must enjoy sewing to do a good job. If sewing makes you nervous or edgy, you would be better off to purchase your child's clothes ready made. However, if you do like to sew, the possibilities are limitless. You have an advantage in that you can clothe your child at half the ready-to-wear cost.

Fabrics and Trims

Choose durable fabrics that will take a lot of wear and tear. Firm knits and firmly woven fabrics such as denims, poplins, broadcloths, and corduroys are good choices. Avoid loosely woven and knitted fabrics that may snag or catch.

Children prefer soft, absorbent fabrics that do not "scratch." Polyester cotton blends provide comfort, durability, and easy care.

Children like bright colors: red, blue, and yellow. They also like designs. Printed designs, stripes, and plaids should be small and in scale with the child's size so they will not be overpowering.

A touch of trim can make a garment special to a child. In selecting your pattern and fabric, consider the type of trim, also. Decorative machine stitching, embroidery, smocking, ribbons, braid, rickrack, appliques, ruffles, lace, and bias binding are some trimming possibilities. Whatever type of trim you select, be sure the care requirements are compatible with the fabric.

Patterns

Children's pattern types are based on body measurements, not the child's age. Because children grow so rapidly, measurements need to be taken often. Here are the different pattern types designed for children:

- **Babies** - designed for infants who are not yet walking. Patterns for babies are chosen primarily by weight and length. There are two sizes, newborn and six-month.
- **Toddlers** - designed for a figure that is taller than a baby but shorter than a child. Toddler pants have diaper allowance. Choose size closest to chest measurement. Toddler patterns often apply to boys and girls.
- **Children** - has the same chest and waist as toddler but is taller with wider shoulders and back. Many patterns suit boys and girls.
- **Girls** - designed for the young figure without bust development. These patterns have no bustline darts. The height ranges from 4'2" to 5'1".
- **Boys** - designed for the just-developing figure that has outgrown children's sizes. The height ranges from 4' to 4'10".

For children's and girls' patterns choose the size most closely matching the chest and back waist length measurements. See the Body Measurement Chart for exact pattern measurements and sizes.

Growth Features

Children outgrow their clothes rapidly. However, home sewers have an advantage over this problem. They can add "growth features" into children's garments while making them. Growth features allow the garment to expand or grow with the child.

Add growth tucks above the hem line on a child's dress to allow for lengthening. You must add length for tucking before you cut the pattern. For a decorative effect, try three tucks in a row, each 1/2 inch deep. This will allow you to lengthen the garment three inches without redoing the hem. Use machine basting so tucks can be easily removed later.

Growth tucks can also be hidden in the hem. Again, the tuck is made with machine basting to make it easy to remove when lengthening.

If the garment has long sleeves, try adding similar growth tucks on the lower part of the sleeve as a design touch. Make tucks about 1/4 inch deep. Tucks are put in after underarm seams are sewn. You can also add growth tucks at the shoulders to increase shoulder width. Two 1/8-inch tucks on each shoulder can be added to either the inside or outside of the bodice. Alter both the bodice front and back pattern pieces before cutting fabric. Release tucks as the child needs width.

You can make a waistline tuck just above the waistline seam following the same method. Add one or two inches in length to the

bodice before cutting the pattern. If darts are involved, extend length of darts as well. Before attaching bodice to skirt, sew in the growth tuck. Depth of tuck will be one-half the width of the addition. Press the tuck up. To let bodice length grow, release tuck and cover any fade marks with a pretty new sash, belt, or trim.

Some fabrics may show stitch and press lines when let out. If this happens, you can use various types of trims to cover the lines. Be sure to apply the trim elsewhere on the same garment so it will not look tacked on. For boys, you should consider trouser length. You can let down extra-wide hems as length is needed.

Jumpsuits and jumpers made with suspenders have a built-in growth feature. By lowering the buttons on the suspenders you can add length to the garment as the child grows taller.

When making slacks, shorts, or skirts, an elastic waist band is an ideal choice because it will expand and give extra room. Allowing a generous seam allowance on the pants will allow for an adjustment at side seams, provided the fabric does not show the original stitching lines.

If you choose a pattern with a waistline seam, you can increase the waistline of the bodice and skirt by one inch. Add 1/4 inch to each side seam of bodice and skirt, tapering out from the original seam lines. Omit back darts, if any. Construct the garment as instructed in the pattern. Then make a casing of bias tape along inside back waistline seam and insert narrow elastic. Stitch one end of elastic to side seam. Adjust fullness to fit the child, then fasten the other end of elastic inside the garment. Let the elastic out as the dress needs to grow, or completely remove the elastic.

Reinforcement

Strengthen or reinforce garment areas that will receive a lot of stress and strain by using these techniques:

- **Button and buttonhole areas** - add a strip of interfacing or self fabric to wrong side of garment where buttons and buttonholes are.
 - **Pocket areas** - at top of each pocket on wrong side of garment, place a folded piece of seam binding. Baste in place. Stitch through all thicknesses from right side of garment. Or, extra reinforcement can be done by tacking or stitching pocket ends.
 - **Knee and elbow areas** - use a lightweight knit or woven fusible interfacing. Cut interfacing patch 3 to 4 1/2 inches long for elbows and 4 1/2 to 7 inches long for knees and wide enough for 1/8 inch to be included in each seam allowance. Fuse, following manufacturer's instructions, to elbow and knee areas on wrong side of garment before stitching seams together.
 - **Sleeve caps** - use a double row of stitching around the sleeves to give them extra strength. Stitch at 5/8 inch seam allowance and then again at 4/8 inch.
 - **Seams** - use flat-felled or double-stitched seams on boys and girls pants and other garments for more durability and longer wear.
 - **Seam finishes** - on fabrics that ravel, use a sturdy seam finish to prevent excess and extreme raveling.
-

Body Measurements

Height From top of head, against a wall, without shoes
Chest Around fullest part
Waist Around string marker placed at natural waistline
Hips or Seat Around fullest part: 5 1/2" - 7" below for girls; 4 1/2" - 5 3/8" below for children; 3 1/2" - 4 1/2" for toddlers
Back Waist Length From prominent bone at back of neck to waist

Pattern Figure Types

Body Measurement Chart*					
(Approved by the Measurement Standard Committee of the Pattern Fashion Industry)					
Babies					
Age	Newborn		6 months		
Weight	7-13 lbs.		13-18 lbs.		
Height	17-24 inches		24-26 1/2 inches		
Toddlers					
Size	1/2	1	2	3	4
Chest	19	20	21	22	23
Waist	19	19 1/2	20	20 1/2	21

Hip	20	21	22	23	24	
Back waist length	7 1/2	8	8 1/2	9	9 1/2	
Approximate height	28	31	34	37	40	
Children						
Size	2	3	4	5	6	6X
Chest	21	22	23	24	25	25 1/2
Waist	20	20 1/2	21	21 1/2	22	22 1/2
Hip			24	25	26	26 1/2
Back waist length	8 1/2	9	9 1/2	10	10 1/2	10 3/4
Approximate height	35	38	41	44	47	48
Girls						
Size	7	8	10	12	14	
Chest	26	27	28 1/2	30	32	
Waist	23	23 1/2	24 1/2	25 1/2	26 1/2	
Hip	27	28	30	32	34	
Back waist length	11 1/2	12	12 3/4	13 1/2	14 1/4	
Approximate height	50	52	56	58 1/2	61	
Boys						
Size	7	8	10	12		
Chest	26	27	28	30		
Waist	23	24	25	26		
Hip (seat)	27	28	29 1/2	31		
Neck band size	11 3/4	12	12 1/2	13		

* All measurements are in inches unless otherwise specified.

Children Body Measurements

Height From top of head, against a wall, without shoes	
Chest Around fullest part	
Waist Around string marker placed at natural waistline	
Hips or Seat Around fullest part: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 1/2" - 7" (14 - 18 cm) below for girls • 4 1/2" - 5 3/8" (11.5 - 13.5 cm) below for children • 3 1/2" - 4 1/2" (9 - 11.5 cm) for toddlers 	
Back waist length From prominent bone at back of neck to waist	
Figure Type	Size

References

- "Clothes for Children," Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service
- "New Simplicity Sewing Book," The Simplicity Pattern Co., Inc., 1979
- "Sewing for Children," Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1980

By **Beth T. Duncan**, former Extension Clothing Specialist

[Mississippi State University](#) does not discriminate on grounds of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap.

Publication 1399

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#). Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. Ronald A. Brown, Director

Copyright by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved.

This document may be copied and distributed for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

Visit: [DAFVM](#) || [USDA](#)

[Search our Site](#) || [Need more information about this subject?](#)

Last Modified: Monday, 29-Mar-04 11:01:26

URL: <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p1399.htm>

[Mississippi State University](#) is an equal opportunity institution.

Recommendations on this web site do not endorse any commercial products or trade names.