A top for a teenager: an embroidery motif

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A Top for a Teenager

By O. Evans

When a girl shows an interest in sewing, encourage her by allowing her to make something for herself. Choose something simple that can be finished quickly without Mother’s help—a difficult, time-consuming article may cause a flagging of interest.

This pyjama top is one that has been made by many teenagers in metropolitan High Schools. Some choose a plain material and trim the finished garment with embroidery or appliqué, while others use a striped or geometrically patterned fabric with a plain material or material on the cross grain for trimming. The top can also be used as a casual or sports blouse, worn with shorts or “stovepipes.”

Measurements and Material Required.

The only measurements necessary are the bust measurement and the length of the top, measured from the nape of the neck to the desired length.

A straight rectangle of material twice the length of the top plus 1 in. in length, and half the bust measurement plus 4 in. wide, is needed for the top, and a 13 in. square is needed for the neck facing. Machine a narrow hem across each end of the material and machine neaten the two long sides (i.e., fold under ¼ in. and machine down.)

Cutting the Neckline.

Fold the large piece of material in half, lengthwise first, then in half across.

Front Neckline.—(See Fig. 1) from A measure out 3 in. towards C. From A
measure down 3 in. towards B. Connect with a curved line, using pencil or chalk.

Back Neckline.—Turn material over, retaining its folds, and measure ⅛ in. down from A towards D. Curve to 3 in. along A C. Open out the crosswise fold and cut out ⅛ in. inside the line to allow for turnings.

Facing the Neckline.—Invisible finish.

Place material opened out flat on the table with right side upwards, and place the facing material, right side down, over the hole for the neckline. There should be the same amount of material each side of the neckline. Allow 2½ in. to 3 in. above the back neckline. Check that the straight grain of the facing is parallel to that of the garment, then pin corners and tack in place.

Mark machining line as in Fig. 2. Do not cut the neckline slit yet.

Machine around neckline and slit, keeping corners sharp and curve smooth.

After machining, cut out the facing material covering the neckline and nick the seam turnings into the machine line at about half-inch intervals. Place cuts close together at shoulder line where curve is more acute. Cut carefully down the centre of the slit to within ⅛ in. from the end, then cut diagonally to the corners,
right to the machine line. Remove surplus turning at neck point corners by cutting diagonally across (see Fig. 3). Bring facing through to wrong side and tack around neckline to hold machining line on the edge of the fold. Press flat and turn under the edges of the facing. Finish by slip stitching.

**Ornamental Facing.**

Place right side of facing material to wrong side of garment. Proceed as above and finish by machining close to the folded edge on the right side.

**Alternative Neckline Treatments and Trimming.**

The slit could be cut out ½ in. wide and instead of facing the neckline bind it with bias strips or ornamental braid.

A straight mandarin collar could be cut to fit the length of the neckline. Face or bind edges of slit then attach collar so that raw edges of neckline are enclosed.

If a fastening at the neck is desired, hook and eye, buttons with thread loops, rouleau "frogs" or eyelet holes and cord can be used.

If embroidery or applique is being used, apply transfer or draw design at this stage. Chinese characters or pictures can be found on Mah Jong or Chinese Checkers sets, Willow pattern china, Chinese recipes, tourist folders china, pseudo-Chinese treatment of block capital letters could be done.

**Side Seams.**

Fold across in half, right sides together, and pin each side ready for fitting, leaving 8 in. from the shoulder for the armholes and 6 in. from the lower edges for the side slits (Fig 4). Try on, noting depth of armhole and width around body, and adjust as necessary then tack and machine the side seams, double stitching at the ends. The seam line should be straight and on the straight grain. Check that both armholes and both slits are the same length. Remove tacking and press seam open flat. The continuation of the seam turning forms the facing for armhole and slit—simply press, tack and slip-stitch. Reinforce the ends of the side seams with arrowheads or satin stitch bars. The slits can be bound, ornamented with braid or laced as in the neckline slit.

This top could be made for a younger child — make the neck and armhole measurements smaller—and it would also be suitable for selling at fetes. Being perfectly straight and flat it is not suitable for a well-developed figure.

**AN EMBROIDERY MOTIF**

This design is very popular among schoolgirls making the Chinese style pyjama top described. It would also be suitable for tray cloths, cushion covers, guest towels, lamp shade covers, aprons, etc. The plaited pigtail makes an interesting note.

Use bright colours for the figure, using applique or outlining it in chain or stem stitch. Do long and short blanket stitch across the hems of the tunic and trousers to give an impression of a border. Brown satin stitch is suggested for the sandals and fishing rod, blue fading to mauve for the hills in the distance.
Pigtail.—Cut nine lengths of black stranded cotton or rayon thread (the whole six strands) about 6 in. long. Thread these one at a time on a darning needle and make one ¼ in. stitch leaving 3 in. of thread hanging each side of the stitch. Place these stitches in varying positions so that when all nine lengths are attached they appear in a natural-looking bunch. Make a plait, using three strands in each section. Sew a coloured cotton thread at the end to prevent unraveling, then wind it around several times and tie in a small firm bow. Trim ends. Applique or embroider the coolie hat to hide ends of the cotton where attached for pigtail.

If appliqueing the tunic and trousers cover over the slits and embroider them on with stem stitch as it is too difficult to cut around such narrow strips with material. A small motif may be embroidered on the tunic if desired.

HINTS TO SPEED UP YOUR SEWING

Well-made, attractive garments can be made in less time and without sacrificing workmanship and serviceability by simplifying sewing.

In addition to contributing to time-saving by selecting easily handled fabrics, simple but well designed styles, and the right sized pattern, much can be achieved by simplifying construction methods.

Too much attention to detailed neatening and finishing can sometimes spoil the whole effect of line and style of a garment.

The well-illustrated, step-by-step instruction sheet is one of the best aids to the home dressmaker. Each step is planned to ensure ease of handling and quick construction.

It is also a good idea to study one of the dressmaking books published by the various pattern-making companies. These are clearly and well illustrated, are revised frequently and are not too expensive.

Another aid is to observe the methods employed on ready-made garments; some of these can easily be adopted by the home dressmaker.

Eliminating all tacking is not necessarily time saving. At times it can result in a whole section having to be unpicked, reset, tacked and restitched. Experienced dressmakers can, and do, save much time by pinbasting the simpler, more straightforward seamings.

Where time is short it is better to select fabrics, or styles, that require little or no trimming.

Buttons, provided they are washable, can provide a quick and effective trimming—alternatively, accessories can take the place of time-consuming appliqued trimmings. For children’s wear flat trimmings, such as embroidered braids, are quick and easy to attach and are easy to iron.

Novelty embroidery stitches and simple, quick-to-make trims that give a professional look to an otherwise uninteresting garment may be made by many modern machines and attachments. For mothers of a young family this type of machine is a worthwhile investment.

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