

Sew 'n' Sew

THE NEWSLETTER FOR DESIGNING WOMEN



FASHION DENIM

Point your sewing machine West and rustle up two of the best wearable wardrobe additions around. These two all-time favorite extensions are the perfect choice when you want to dress up, but still want to be relaxed and casual.

Our suggestion? Lasso yourself a hard working Levi Strauss & Co.'s blue denim vest and spice it with a bit of bias binding and collar-pocket trim that matches the fabric of our delightful knife-pleat cotton miniature plaid skirt.

You will find these lighthearted, one-of-a-kind garments transcend the season and are a rewarding use of valuable sewing time. They are the essence of casual chic.

The crowning detail? No pattern required. Just a roundup of machine bias bindings and straight stitching. So sit back, relax. You're looking good this season!

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SHOP TILL YOU DROP

The challenge: To create a smashing, yet relaxed and casual ensemble using my own "too boring, too conservative, too practical," Levi Strauss and Co.'s blue denim, front zippered vest. Let *Sew 'n' Sew's* styles provide inspiration as you embark on your own great sewing spree to create the same smashing ensemble.

Start by thinking of your purchased vest as a flat canvas, waiting to be captured with your sewing and trimming skills. The lines of your vest should have a front lower yoke with pocket flaps and a collar. Although a buttoned vest will do, it will be worth your while to look for a zipper front opening with a straight hem across the front.

We decided to mate our vest with our own version of a "broomstick skirt," minus two tiers. To determine the width of both sections of our illustrated skirt, we used our own "slimmest of all tiered skirt" formula: The measurement of the hip, plus 6 to 8 inches. For more information, see our July/August, 1997, "Two Color-Blocked Patchwork Styled Skirts," issue, pages 5-7.

As you can see, we also chose to make our skirt length an IFG: Instant figure gratification by letting the hem of this skirt skim the top ankle bones! Too long? Be daring. This length enhances your best features and camouflages the flaws. We'll help you determine the length of each tier and the required skirt yardage.

With purchased vest in hand, turn your shopping attention to fabric for the skirt and vest trim. This task is the easiest of all to accomplish because the fashion industry continues to produce great moments with denim that gears fabric choices to "the blues." Our 45 inch wide, cotton miniature plaid in reds and denim blues is by MUMMS THE WORD™ DEBBIE MUMM FOR SSI™ that sells for around \$7.00 a yard.

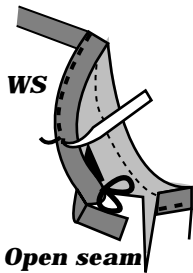
Finally, you are off to purchase a classic, long sleeve, crewneck T-Shirt. Nothing fancy - just a good, comfortable fitting garment. And you'll be surprised to find that the fashion industry is striving to please the customer. Pima cotton in dyed to match blue denim. What a find! L.L. Bean, \$28.00.

TRIMMING THE VEST

MATERIALS

- * Purchased denim vest.
- * Purchase an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ yard skirt fabric for collar, pocket flaps, and bias binding.

BIAS BINDING

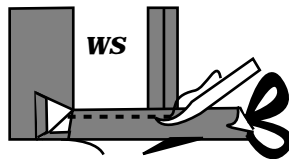


Prepare The Vest: Because a bias binding is stitched to a garment's raw edge as a finish, the turnback or seam that acts as a hem on the vest's armhole and lower edge must be removed. If we ignored this step and applied bias binding over the vest's thick seams, the hem and armhole would stand away from the body and look very bulky.

- * With seam ripper in hand, snip the hem stitches of the armhole in several places and remove all stitches. On the wrong side of the vest, clip the underarm stitches to open the side seam 2 inches.

Carefully trim away the armhole's turnback or seam allowance, so the finished armhole line becomes the new cut edge. Press.

- * The lower front hemline on my vest was enclosed with a front facing. If your vest has the same front opening, clip the stitches and open the enclosed facing/front seam and remove the hem stitches. Trim away the hem allowance.



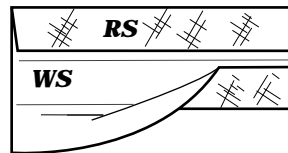
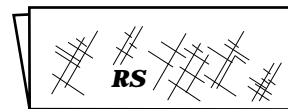
- * Pin front facing to garment at its lower edge and baste. The facing and vest front's lower edge will now act as one layer of fabric. Press.

Bias Binding: When you are sewing with bias, the most important beginning step for success is to cut true bias. The quickest way to establish the true bias line on your fabric is to fold the material back at right angles to itself (lengthwise on crosswise grain). Check the fold by measuring an equal distance along the straight of grain (selvage) and the cross grain. You do not need to have a square of cloth, but you do need to be able to see the warp threads and the filling threads (use a magnifying glass and mark with pins); and you do need to have the fabric straightened and pressed before folding for the bias.



- * Pat the fold gently to form a crease, then open out the fabric and with tailor's chalk draw a line on the crease. If you slit the fold the fabric will stretch out of shape. Then with a see-through ruler mark the depth of the bias strips and draw as many lines as will be needed. Cut with the smoothest possible scissors stroke or apply light pressure on your rotary cutter.

Double Fold Bias Strips:



- * Cut the bias strip four times the desired finished width. For instance, if you want the finished width of the binding on your vest to be $\frac{5}{8}$ inches wide; cut a bias strip $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide.

- * Fold the bias strip in half (lengthwise) and press.

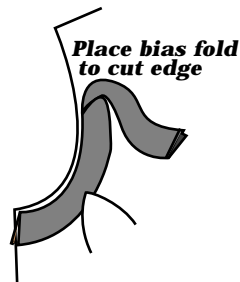
* Fold the strip lengthwise in half again, with raw edges just behind or short of the fold.

* Now you have double fold tape with one fold pressed the wrong way. Unfold the half of strip and make a new fold in the opposite direction. It will fold just to the inside of the wrong-way fold. Press again and you have a double fold bias binding that is a bit narrower on one side.

Applying Bias Binding

Armhole: Although bias easily molds to curves, it will probably be necessary to pre-shape the binding to the deepest curve on the vest's armhole.

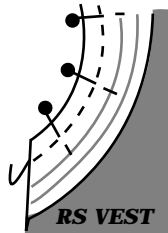
* Before the bias binding is opened, place the **folded center edge of the bias** to the cut edge of the curved armhole. Hold the tape to the curve with one hand and with the other hand, apply



light pressure with steam to shape and mold the bias tape to fit the curve of the armhole. As the tape is shaped, stick a pin through the tape to hold it to the garment as you continue

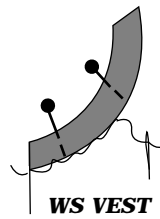
around the armhole. Use the side of the iron parallel with the fold of the binding to shrink the tape. Use the point of the iron to stretch the outside edges of the tape to fit the deepest part of the curve.

* Open out the bias strip and match the cut edge of the bias to the armhole cut edge, right sides together and pin to garment.



* With the bias tape on top, machine stitch the bias in place along the pressed fold line nearest the cut edge.

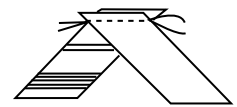
* Press, to blend the stitches. Keep the side of the iron just within the seam allowance, being careful to not touch the bias binding.



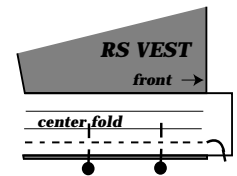
* Fold the bias over and around the raw edge. Check to see that its pressed edge sits precisely on the cut edge of the armhole. If it doesn't, trim the raw edge of the armhole slightly to get the pressed edge of the binding correctly placed. Pin from the wrong side of the garment, catching only a small bite of fabric, so the folded edge of the bias just covers the stitching line. Slipstitch the binding to the garment and press.

* With right sides together, pin the side seams of the garment together and stitch to rejoin the seam. Serge to finish.

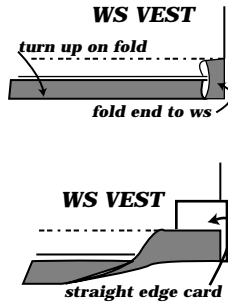
Hem: On hems and some circular edges, it will be necessary to join the ends of the binding. Fold the left end of one strip on the straight grain. Crease along this fold; open fold and cut strip on a lengthwise thread. Lap the right end over the folded one and cut it even with the cut edge of the left end. Pin strips together. Check to see if the design of the fabric is matched; cut off a little if necessary to produce a perfect pattern match. Stitch bias ends together. Trim seam to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and press. Make double fold bias.



* Open bias tape. Extend the bias tape $\frac{3}{8}$ inch past the front openings; match the cut edge of the bias to the hem line cut edge, right sides together. Pin tape to the hemline of the vest, being careful not to stretch tape. With bias tape on top, machine stitch bias tape in place along the hemline exactly along the pressed fold line nearest the cut edge of the vest's hem.



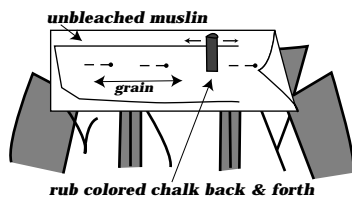
* Turn the pressed fold on the lower edge of the binding up into itself. Fold its extended raw edge back into the tape, matching the edge of each front opening and pin in place. Baste and lightly press.



* Place a small straight edge, such as a button card inside the bias tape, next to its center fold. Wrap the binding over the lower edge, aligning folded edge with the seamline. Hold the card in position and press. The results? A nice sharp, even turn. Look at the binding on the right side and the wrong side to make sure it's straight, with no ripples. Pin bias binding in place. Slipslice binding in place. Press.

Collar And Pocket Flaps

Pattern: The easiest way to take a pattern from an existing garment is to take it apart; lay the piece flat; draw around it; and add seams.



The next easiest way, when you don't want to take the garment apart, is to pin a piece of unbleached muslin, long enough and wide enough to cover each part and copy the outline of the existing piece. The grain of the muslin must match the piece being copied.

Use colored chalk to mark with horizontal strokes the seams of each piece being copied. Rub each seam. The chalk marks register a definite dark seam. Then add seams.

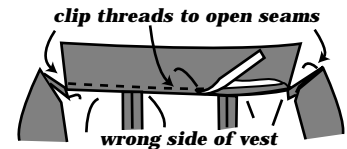
Since we cannot see what collar (a standard camp shirt or one with its own collarband) or what style of pocket flap your vest features, we decided to

illustrate both options. Examine your vest's collar and pocket flaps. Do you want to simply cover each part or would it be easier to remove each part and make a pattern. On my vest, I removed the pocket flap and made a pattern, but elected to leave the original collar on the vest and covered it with fabric.

Covering The Collar: On most denim vests, the front facing encloses the front edges of the collar at the neckline seam. There is not a back neck facing. The upper collar is used to finish the back neckline seam.

* Remove the edge stitching that holds the collar in place on the lower neckline seam.

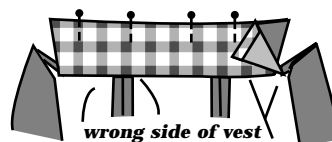
To gain access to the collar's front edge, Remove only the stitches along the neckline that secure the facing to the collar's front edge. These steps must be recalled to put the vest back together.



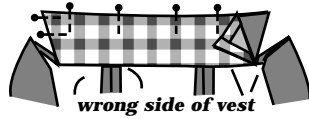
* Follow the directions above to make a copy of the collar. When a clear outline of the collar is made, add seam allowances and check the grainline of the muslin pattern. Use the muslin collar pattern and position it over vest's collar to check for size. If necessary, re-size.

* Cut one collar from the skirt fabric, using the muslin pattern. Interface, if your fabric needs additional support.

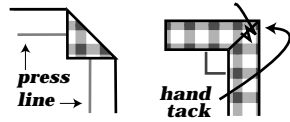
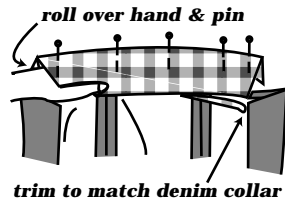
* Begin to fit the fabric collar to the existing vest collar by pressing a 1/4 inch seam allowance to the wrong side on the outside edge of the fabric collar. Match this edge to the existing collar and pin.



* You can now see how deep the seam allowances on the collar ends will be. Remove a few of the pins on the outside edge and fold under the seam allowance on each end of the collar. Finger press and pin.



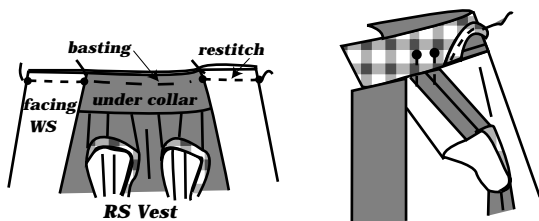
* Let the collar drape over the left hand to form its original roll. Fit the fabric collar to the existing collar and pin together on the roll line. Continue to align the fabric collar to the lower section of the vest collar. You will probably need to trim the fabric collar's neckline seam to match the vest collar. The neckline seam of the two collars should be now be basted together and used later to finish the back neckline seam.



* Trim the seam allowances on the collar ends to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

Make the corners of the collar flat and neat by folding in a miter. Fold a triangle across the inner crease. It will resemble the first drawing. Refold the two pressed seams on the collar and the result will be as shown in the second drawing. The little square of raw edge left extending may be clipped off. Hand tack miter in place. Repin collar ends and slipstitch fabric collar to vest collar.

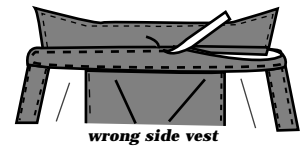
* Follow these steps to restore the vest to its original form: With fabric collar matching the original, turn collar down to the inside of the vest.



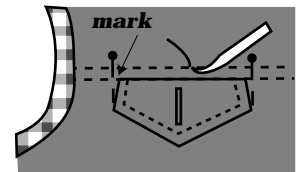
Turn front facing to the wrong side and pin over the collar at the neckline. Re-stitch the facing/neckline seam.

* Turn the remaining upper collar neckline seam under and pin to neckline of vest. Edgestitch and connect stitchline on the front lapels. Topstitch collar, if desired.

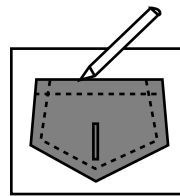
* If your vest collar has its own collarband, remove the stitches on the inside top section of the band just enough to release the collar ends. This step will allow you to see the collar seam attached to the collarband. Then follow the above instructions to make a pattern and to attach the fabric collar to the original vest collar.



Pocket Flap: Clip and remove the double row of stitching on the seam holding the flap to the garment. Before removing the flap, mark its position on the vest. On the garment's wrong side, clip the seam's finishing stitches and remove denim pocket flap from the vest.

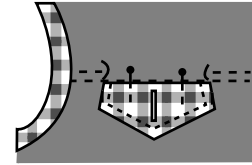


* Pin fabric flap to a pattern making material and trace around its outside edges. True the traced lines. Then, add seam allowances, buttonhole marking, and grainline. Cut four fabric flaps from skirt fabric and two flaps from interfacing.



* Apply interfacing to the wrong side of two fabric flaps. With wrong sides together, pin flaps together and stitch outside edges. Finger press and trim seams. Turn flaps to right side and shape seams. Press. Topstitch and make buttonhole.

* Re-position the pocket flaps onto the vest. Pin the vest seam to the pocket flap and edgestitch, using the original stitching line of the vest as a guide. Before topstitching the second seam, finish the raw seam on the wrong side of the vest by serging or overcasting the seam. Finish by topstitching the second row of seaming on the right side of the garment. Note: Your edgestitching and topstitching should match the denim vests in color and length. Pick up or connect the stitches and pull threads to the wrong side and tie. Do not backstitch.



TWO-LAYER STYLE SKIRT

Can you remember a time, especially in the last decade, when there wasn't some version of the broomstick skirt? Although broomsticks never really make runway news, we love them -- simply because they are a fit - not only in comfort but in our busy schedules! What style do you grab for football games, tailgate parties and in your search for wonderful fabric buys? Our signature look for this new season has a quiet self-assurance of fitting all the occasions in your schedule that call for a relaxed agenda but "better than blue jeans" attire.

Start with the easy part: A two-layer skirt so simple it requires no pattern. For the thinnest image in broomstick skirts consider only "soft fabrics." To make the skirt:

▲ Determine the skirt length. We think you should consider this season's must-have longer skirt. We planned our skirt to just touch the ankle bone - a 36 inch, slimmed down version of a broomstick made with two rectangular pieces, sewn together horizontally.

▲ **To determine the height of the top tier,** divide the skirt length by three. That answer, usually reserved for the height of the middle tier, is 12 inches. Subtract three inches from this measurement to obtain a pleasing proportioned skirt. Of course, the height for the second layer is 27 inches.

▲ Cut the two tiers as follows, **adding $\frac{5}{8}$ inch** to each cut edge for seam allowances:

▲ Cut the top tier 9 inches deep. For the slimmest of all tiered skirts, use our circumference formula: Your hip measurement plus 6 inches.

▲ Cut the second tier 27 inches deep; cut its circumference one and one-half times the first tier.

▲ Cut a waistband length approximately 4 inches less than hip measurement (just so, with a wiggle, wiggle, it barely skims the hips) to fit 1 inch wide elastic. Why 1 inch wide elastic? One inch wide, no-roll elastic is strong enough to hold the weight of our skirt fabric. Plus, it's easier to find a belt that covers the skirt band.

You will need:

For sizes 6 to 12, approximately 2 yards of 45 inch wide fabric will be ample for skirt and vest trim.

Sizes 14 and larger should purchase approximately $3\frac{1}{4}$ yards of 45 inch wide fabric.

▲ **Try Pleats.** Instead of gathering the upper edge of each tier to fit the joining tier's lower edge, **use this pleating technique:**

Use a 9 to 10 stitch length and begin by placing the upper end of the tier under the presser foot. Although a

$\frac{5}{8}$ inch seam is planned, drop down on the edge of the tier and stitch a 1 inch deep seem, using bright colored thread. The one inch basted line allows stretching or bunching the regular $\frac{5}{8}$ inch seam to fit its joining seam. The ends of the rectangles are not stitched together to form a circle. Leave them open or flat until the pleating is done.

As the machine is started, begin to push the upper edge of the fabric under the presser foot with both index fingers. Wait - one, two, three, push a fold of fabric under the presser foot and repeat. The tip of the presser foot will hold and stitch the pleat, as you move your fingers to form another one. It's a practice thing! Remember the pleats do not have to be perfectly placed. When the skirt is broomsticked, who can tell where the pleats are! For more detailed information, see our May/June 1997 and February 1993 issues.

When the two tiers are pleated, with wrong sides together, pin the longer tier to the bottom of the first tier and stitch. Serge the seam. Pin the open ends of the side seams together matching tier line and stitch. Serge to finish this seam.

® Pin the waistband ends together and stitch. Fold the waistband in half, lengthwise and press. Serge to finish one long edge of the band.

The pleating on the upper edge of the top tier should match the length of the waistband. Pin the top, pleated tier to the unseamed, lengthwise edge of the waistband and stitch. Trim this seam to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch and press toward band. Using the pressed fold of the band as a guide, turn the band to the wrong side of the skirt and pin the serged band

seam to the waist seam. Stitch-in-the-ditch, the band to the skirt; leaving an opening to insert the elastic.

▲ Cut a length of 1 inch wide elastic, the waist measurement, plus 1 inch for end overlapping. Insert elastic. Overlap elastic and sew together. Stitch to close band opening.

▲ Use your favorite method to hem the skirt. We like ours with a rolled hem, but you may prefer to turn the hem and baste close to the fold and trim close to the basting. Then turn up along the basting and pin; stitch close to the first fold in the same direction as basting stitches.

ACHIEVING THE LOOK TINY, IRREGULAR VERTICAL PLEATS

The history of the broomstick skirt is as colorful as the fabric. Details of how they achieved accordion pleats on a three-tiered skirt are, to say the least, very murky. Some say the skirts were finger-pleated and lined up against a broomstick. Then they wrapped a piece of twine around the skirt and let it dry in the sun.

Ever since we spilled the beans (February, 1993) to achieve tiny, vertical pleating on a broomstick skirt, my “class sewing bag” is always packed to include a pail full of clothes pins, a leg of pantyhose, some 1 inch wide ribbon, a wire hanger, and two safety pins. In truth, I’ve learned to expect the question, “How do you make those tiny pleats?” Use the following “Broomsticking My Way” tips to make your skirts an art all its own!

❖ Begin by dipping light colored skirts into a weak solution of cooked old-fashioned starch. Note: A diluted cooked starch used on dark colors will often dry as “white splotches,” spray these fabrics on the wrong with sizing or spray starch.

Pin the wet, dripping skirt to the wire hanger. Hang skirt on a low ceiling hook or on a cabinet pull. By all means, let it drip into a large pan.

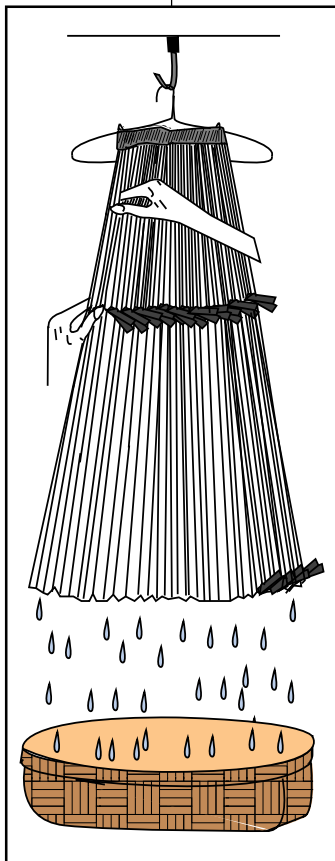
❖ Begin to hand pleat, forming tiny $\frac{1}{4}$ inch pleats from the waistband to the first tier: On the left side of the skirt, hold the seam of the first tier firmly with the left hand. At the same time, just above the left hand, reach with the right hand, to the top of the waistband and pick up enough fabric for a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide pleat .

❖ With tiny pleat between thumb and pointing finger, slide down the length of the tier, forming a sharp crease. Hold formed pleat with left hand and repeat process. Form 4 tiny pleats and secure by snapping a clothes pin over that section of pleats. Continue around tier, forming creased pleats, and holding them with clothes pins. If the skirt has several layers, continue the above process on each horizontal seam. The pleating process continues around the hem of the skirt in the same manner as above.

The pins will fan around the skirt and look rather strange. The skirt will drip, drip, and drip. Water will often run from your hands to your elbow and drip into the pan.

❖ When finished, bunch the waistband of the skirt into a small circle. Slip the pleated skirt into a leg of pantyhose. Hold the skirt with the left hand encased in the hose, and pull hose to the first row of pins; remove pin, and continue to second row of clothes pin and remove. Continue to bottom of skirt. When complete, pull hose down over skirt very tight. Tie the skirt’s waistband with a wide ribbon. Do not let the ribbon slip onto the skirt (it will show a crease there), and tie to a hanger. Hang the skirt in the hot water closet for quick drying. You can sneak a peek, but try not to remove the skirt from the hose until completely dry.

❖ Under normal conditions, these skirts keep their pleats indefinitely. Enjoy!



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<http://www.lubbockmetro.com/sewnsew>