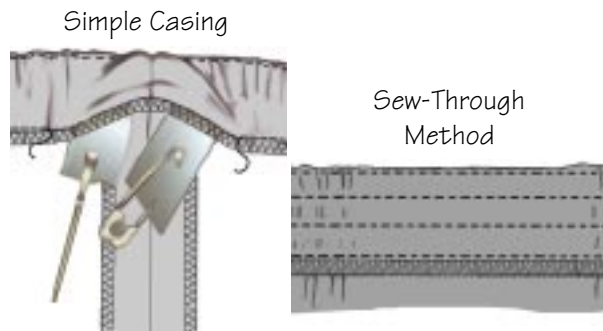


No-Fuss Flexible Waistband Basics



All elastic waistbands fall basically into two categories. Probably the most popular elasticized waistband is one in which the elastic is inserted into a stitched-down casing. The second method of a “no-fuss” flexible band is one in which the elastic is sewn in rows through the casing. Whichever method you select, the overriding issue should always be comfort.

Although I give my favorite choice of elastics in the following examples of waistbands, it’s impossible to name a brand of elastic that’s a perfect choice for everyone that sews. Some may prefer narrow elastic because it doesn’t bring an awareness that something is around the waist, while others may prefer the firmer feel of wider elastic. The only common rule of purchase for suitable waistband elastics is that they do not become narrow (see No-Roll Elastics) when stretched.

Determine Length

Elastic Casing: Judging how loose or tight to make any waistband on pants or skirts is a problem for many that sew. Kathleen Spike’s system (*The Truth About Your Pant Waistbands, Coaching Works*) to finding the right waist measurement is “to give yourself at least 1½-inches of ease in the waistband, even in elastic ones in a casing.” Her theory is that women’s figures expand and contract during a given day at least that much and often it more like 2-inches. Using that theory cut a length of woven elastic

your waist measurement plus 1½ to 2 inches for ease. Or use the following formula and cut the no-roll, woven elastic 2 to 6-inches smaller than your waist measurement. Do safety pin it around your waist and wear it around the house for at least 3 hours to “comfort fit” it. Ideally the best test would be to wear your test elastic morning, noon, and night. By nightfall, you will know exactly how much to tighten or loosen it to a comfortable length. Once you have determined the length, add 1-inch if joining the ends using the overlap method (page 5).

Formula To Cut Elastic:

- Use 2-inches less for waists 18 to 22-inches.
- Use 4-inches less for waists 24 to 30-inches.
- Use 5-inches less for waists 32 to 36-inches.
- Use 6-inches less for waists 38 to 44-inches.

Elastic Flat Method – Row-Stitched Casing:

If you prefer the row method of stitching the elastic through the casing, use Claire Shaeffer’s formula to calculate elastic length. Almost all elastics “grow” when stitched because the needle causes the elastic to lose some ability to recover to its original length. If it’s any support, this is also a predicament in the fashion industry. A sample maker may apply elastic several times before perfecting the length, then the same length is applied to thousands of garments. Here’s how to estimate the elastic length for proper fit.

∞ Make a sample first using a fabric scrap and a 4-inch length of elastic (no-roll). Mark a 2-inch section in the center of the elastic.

