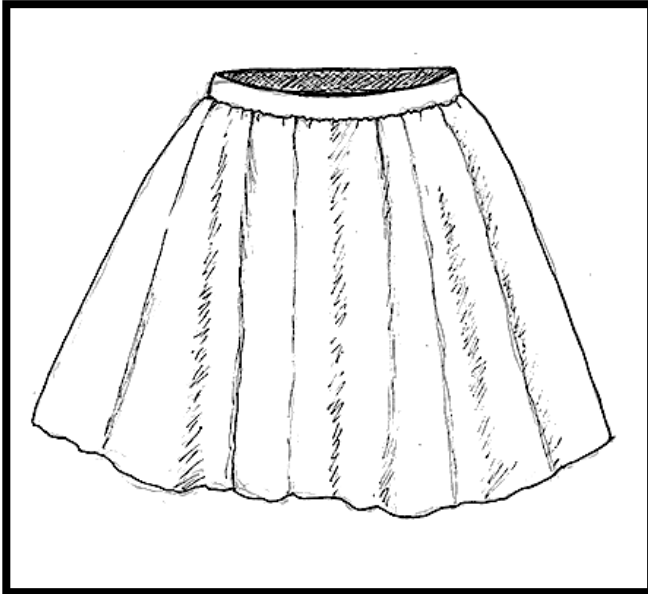




a shell book

How to Make a Skirt



level: intermediate

How to Make a Skirt

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<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Skirt>

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This edition published in the United Kingdom in 2020 by MissionAssist

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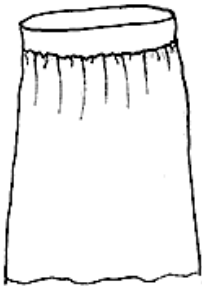


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How to Make a Skirt

What you wear doesn't have to be expensive; nor does it need to be made by a professional dressmaker. Add your own stylish touches to the clothing you wear by making it yourself!

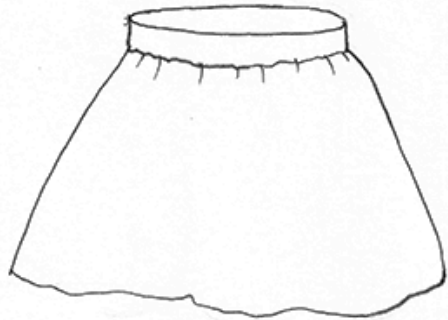
Try one of these 3 simple methods for making a skirt:



a gathered skirt



a maxi skirt



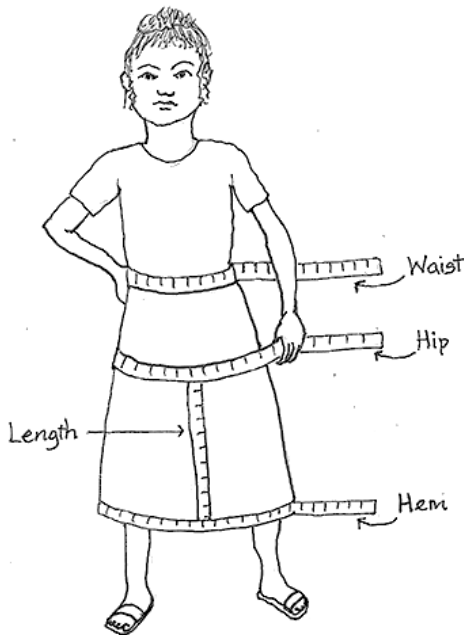
a circle skirt

See page 18 for some helpful hints before you start.

Making a Gathered Skirt

Step 1: Measuring

Ask a friend or a family member to take your measurements. Use a tape measure to measure round your waist and make a note of the measurement. Do the same around your hips at their widest point and make a note of the measurement. Finally, work out how long you want the skirt to be. Measure the length from your hips to the desired level on your legs, then add another 2½ inches to allow for the elastic casing which will form the waistband of your skirt.



Step 2: Choosing the materials

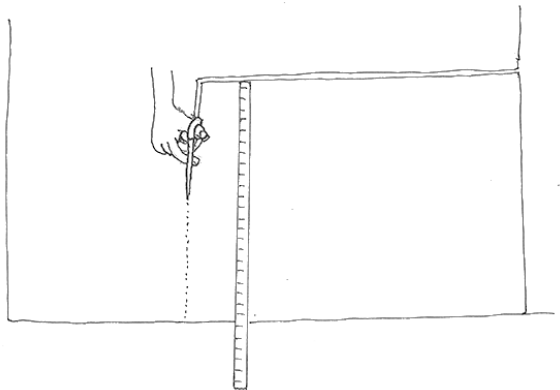
You can use any fabric to make this skirt, and you will also need elastic that measures from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 1 inch deep for the waistband. To create a more structured skirt, use a stiff fabric. If you want to create a looser, more flowing skirt, choose a light, airy material.

When you shop for your materials, tell the vendor your measurements so that he or she can advise you how much fabric to buy. Make sure you buy enough fabric for the whole skirt, including the waistband.

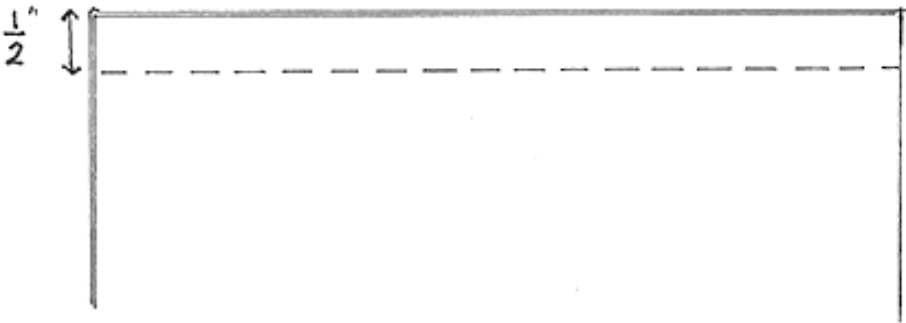
Buy a length of elastic long enough to match the width of your hips, minus one inch (so if your hips measure 40 inches, your elastic should be 39 inches long).

Step 3: Cutting out

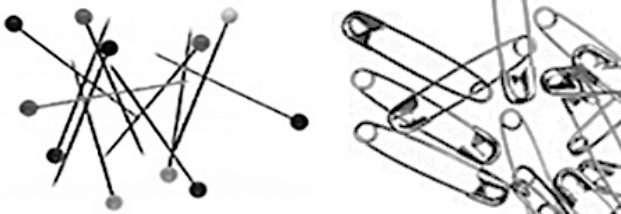
Use your measurements to cut 2 large rectangular pieces of fabric the length of your choice, times the width of your hips.



Step 4: Sewing the side seams



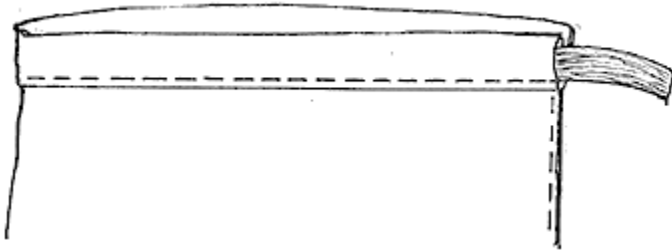
Working on the wrong side of the fabric, lay one piece on top of the other so that they are evenly matched. Using the $\frac{1}{2}$ inch seam allowance on each side, sew the two pieces together on both sides down the length of the skirt. If you have an iron, use it to flatten the seams when you have finished sewing them (or earlier, if you are finding it difficult to keep your fabric flat).



A pin and a safety pin will be helpful for Steps 5 and 6

Step 5: Making the waistband

The elastic of this skirt will be hidden inside a fabric casing. Working on the wrong side of the fabric, fold the top ½ inch over towards you and use an iron to press it. Then, fold the fabric over an additional 2 inches; use a top stitch to secure this section along the pressed area to the body of the skirt. Leave a 4-inch opening near one of the seams to add the elastic.



Step 6: Adding the elastic

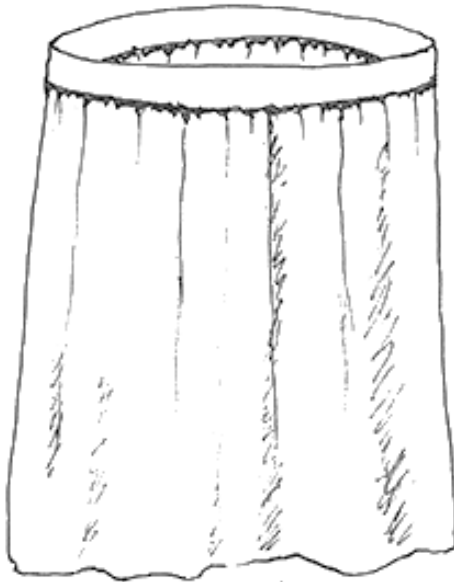
Use a pin to fasten one end of the elastic outside the casing you have created. Now fix a safety pin at the other end of your piece of elastic and use it to pull the elastic through the casing. Make sure that the elastic does not get twisted as you pull it through. When you get back to where you started, use a straight stitch to sew both ends of the elastic together. Then, fan the edges out away from each other and sew them flat onto the elastic. Use a top stitch to close the opening, and a backstitch to reinforce the seam.

Step 7: Finishing the waistband

Adjust the gathers around the top of the waistband so that they are evenly spaced. When the gathers are adjusted to your liking, fix the casing to the elastic. Don't stitch *across* the gathers as this will flatten them out; only stitch in the spaces *between* the gathers.

Step 8: Sewing the hem

Again, working on the wrong side of the fabric, fold the bottom section of the skirt over towards you by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Use your iron to press the fabric and some pins to hold it in place. Use a top stitch to sew the hem.



Making a Circle Skirt

Step 1: Measuring

Use a tape measure to measure round the widest part of your hips (see illustration on page 4). To work out the hip radius for your skirt, take this measurement and add two inches. Then, divide this number by 6.28; the answer is the radius of your circle.

For example, if your hips measure 40 inches, add two additional inches to make 42 inches and divide by 6.28. This will give you a radius of about $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Measure the length of the skirt from your hips to where you want the skirt to finish. Add an extra inch for a seam allowance and make a note of the total.

Step 2: Making a paper pattern

You will only be creating a paper pattern for a quarter of the skirt, but you will still need a large piece of paper. For example, if your hips measure 40 inches and you want your skirt to be 30 inches long, you will need a piece of paper approximately 38 inches square. If paper of the right size is not available, perhaps you could use an old piece of cloth or sacking to make your pattern.

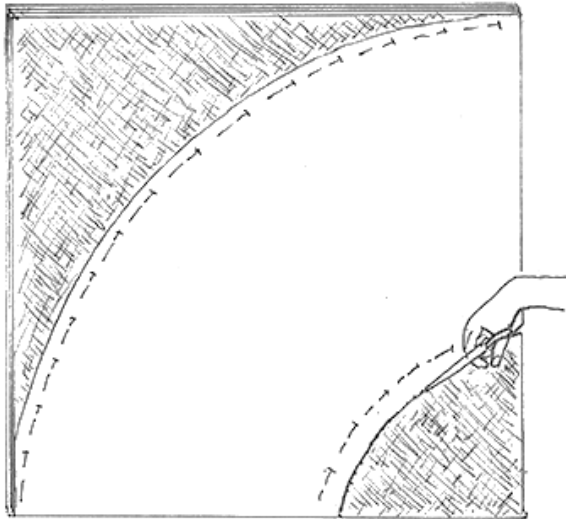
Take your tape measure and place your pencil in the hole at the end. Find the measurement for your hip radius (or as close as you can) and hold this spot on the tape measure to the bottom left corner of your piece of paper. As you hold the tape with your left hand, steer the pencil in the hole with your right hand to mark a curve from edge to edge of the paper. You should end up with a quarter of a circle, with the corner being the centre point.

Now take the length you have chosen for your skirt and add your length radius to the pattern. Use the tape measure to mark this length from the curve you pencilled in earlier for your hip radius. Draw from edge to edge of the paper again. You should end up with a rainbow-shaped quarter circle outline going from edge to edge of your paper.

Step 3: Buying the materials

Circle skirts are known for their flowing appearance, so it is best to choose a material that isn't too heavy or stiff. When you shop for your material, show the vendor your pattern and explain that the skirt you want to make will be 4 times as big as your pattern.

The elastic of your waistband will be visible when you wear your skirt, so buy it in a size and a colour that you like. A deep waistband measuring 3 inches or more could be a fun way to top off your skirt. You will need enough elastic to cover your hip measurement, plus an extra inch to allow for stitching the ends together.

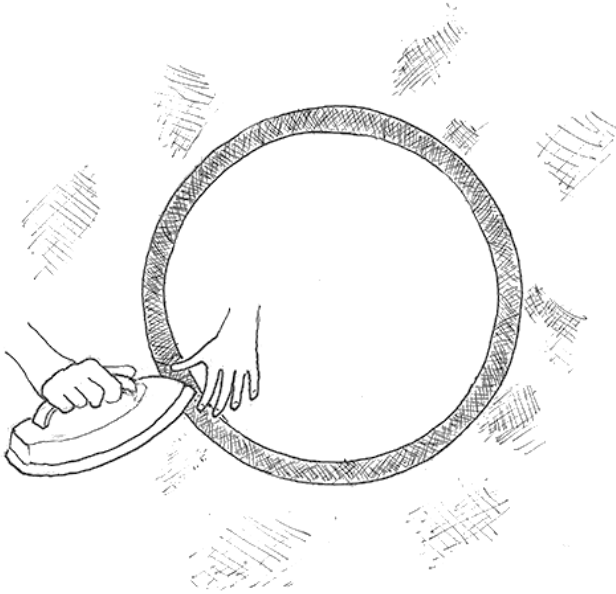


Step 4: Cutting out

Fold your fabric in half and then in half again, giving you four folded sections. Lay the corner of your paper pattern over the corner where all the fabric is connected and pin it firmly in place.

Cut out along both the curved lines on the pattern. When you unfold the fabric, you should have a large ring or doughnut-shaped piece of material.

Step 5: Making the waistband



Working on the wrong side of the fabric, fold it over towards you a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the top of the skirt and, if you have one, use an iron to flatten it out. Then use a zigzag stitch to finish the waist seam.

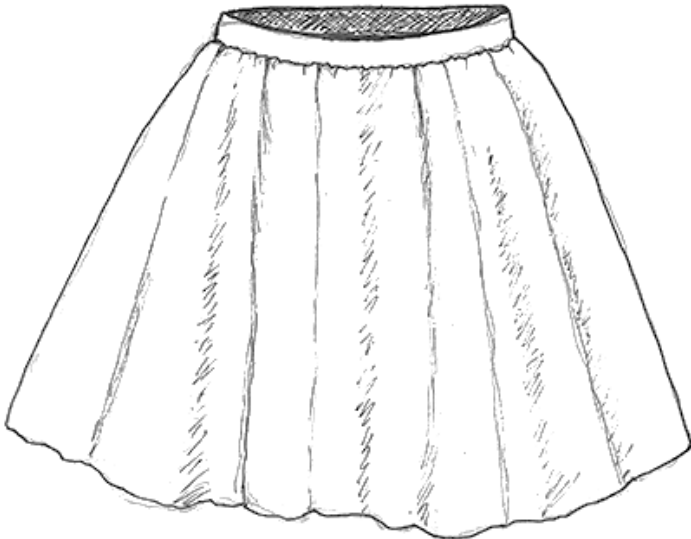
The elastic band will be a bit shorter than the length of the fabric around the waist. Because of that, you need to sew the two ends of elastic together before joining it to the skirt. Fold the length of elastic in half and use a straight stitch to sew the ends together with a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch seam. Then, fan the edges out away from each other and sew them flat onto the elastic, so as to avoid a bump in the seam.

Now place the waist seam inside the elastic band and pin it to the top edge of the band. Use as many pins as you need in order to distribute the fabric gathers evenly all around your waist.

Stitch the elastic firmly in place. As you sew, stretch the elastic so that there are no loose sections where the fabric and elastic are not attached. Use a straight or zigzag stitch for this.

Step 6: Sewing the hem

Fold over the bottom $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the skirt and, if you have one to hand, use an iron to flatten it out. Then fold this section over again and use a straight or zigzag stitch to hem it all the way around the edge.



Making a Maxi Skirt

Step 1: Measuring

The two measurements you need to make a basic maxi skirt are the width of your hips and the length you want your skirt to be (see illustration on page 4).

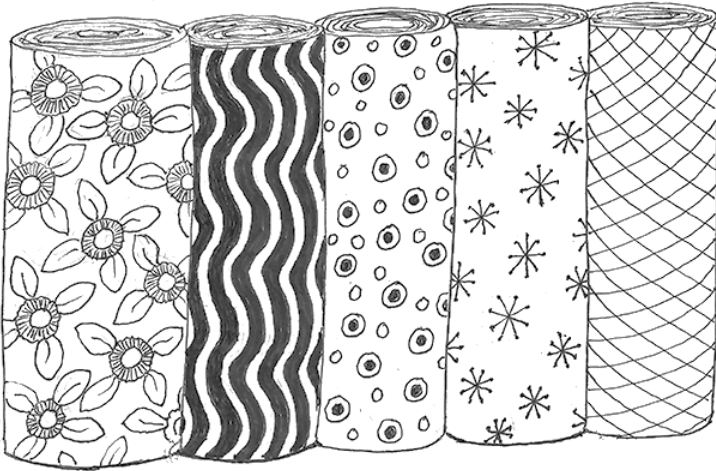
Place the tape measure around the widest part of your hips, where your skirt will sit. Then, measure from that point down to your ankles (or wherever you want the skirt to end). This length measurement will probably range somewhere between 40 and 70 inches, depending on your height and how long you want it to be. Add one inch of extra fabric to both the width and the length for the seam allowances.

To measure the elastic for the waistband, take one inch off your hip measurement. This will mean the elastic is just tight enough to prevent the skirt sliding down.

Step 2: Buying the materials

Maxi skirts are very long and need fabric that is a bit heavier to weigh them down. Find a fabric that will have enough weight to keep the skirt from blowing around. Use a deep band of elastic to create the waistband at the top; the elastic will be exposed, so choose a colour that matches the fabric of your skirt.

Try to buy fabric that is wide enough to be cut as a single piece. The maxi skirt method described here uses a single length of fabric, rather than two (or more) smaller pieces sewn together. This means that the material needs to be as wide as your hip measurement, plus one inch, and as long as the length measurement you have chosen, again plus one inch.



Be sure to choose an interesting fabric for your maxi skirt

Step 3: Making a tube

Working on the wrong side of the material, fold it in half along its length and use the seam allowance to make the seam. Then, if you have an iron, use it to press the sides of the seam flat. Finally, use a zigzag stitch along each edge of the seam to keep it flat when you wear the skirt. You have now made a tube!

Step 4: Making the waistband

Turn the tube of fabric inside out so that you are now working on the right side of the material. If necessary, use a zigzag stitch to stabilize the loose ends along the top edge.

Take your piece of elastic and fold it in half, with the two cut ends lying on top of each other. Use a straight stitch to make a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch seam. Then, fan the edges out away from each other and use a zigzag stitch to attach them back onto the elastic. This will enable the seam to lie flat and be more comfortable and attractive when you wear the skirt.

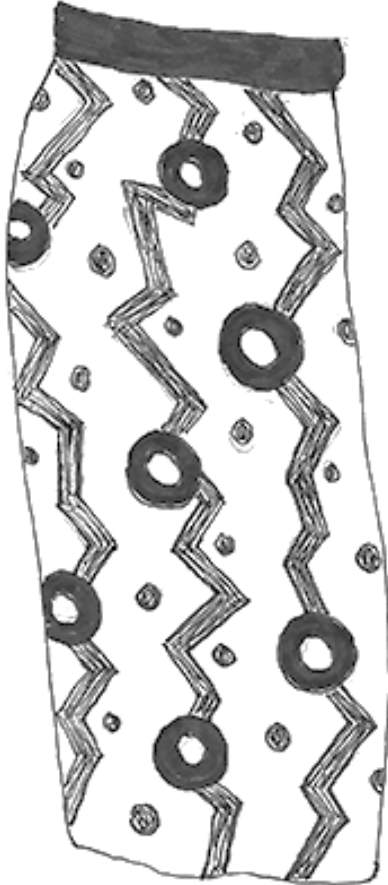
Place the top of the skirt inside the elastic and pin it in place. Even out any gathers that may form in the fabric so that they are equidistant from each other.

Now sew the elastic to the skirt. Use a straight stitch around the width of the skirt $\frac{1}{4}$ inch up from the bottom of the elastic.

Remove the pins as you go, making sure to keep a straight line so that your waistband is even.

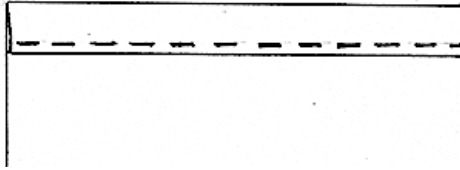
Step 5: Sewing the hem

Fold the bottom $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the skirt up and iron it to create the hem. Use a zigzag stitch to keep the bottom edge of the fabric from fraying. Then, use a straight stitch to attach it to the body of the skirt.

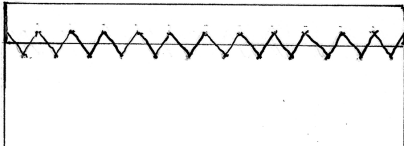


How to prevent fraying

If your material has a firm, close weave, you may not need to secure the edges. But if your fabric is likely to fray, here are three ways to secure the raw edges:



fold over $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and fix with a running stitch



zigzag stitch



overcasting

A good solution, if you have access to a pair, is to use pinking shears for cutting out as they leave a notched edge which is less likely to fray.



Measurements throughout this book
are given in inches, but you can easily
convert these to centimetres in the ratio
1 inch = 2.5 centimetres.

Key words used in this book:

adjust	material
ankles	notched
attractive	paper pattern
casing	pin
close weave	professional
cloth	quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$)
comfortable	radius
curve, curved	rainbow-shaped
divide (\div)	raw edges
doughnut-shaped	rectangular
dressmaker	sacking
elastic	safety pin
equidistant	seam allowance
even, evenly	secure
exposed	sew, sewn
fabric	stabilize
fan out	steer
firm, firmly	stiff
flat, flatten	stretch
flowing	structured
fray, fraying	stylish
gathers, gathered	times (\times)
heavy, heavier	tube
height	vendor
helpful hints	visible
iron (for pressing)	waistband
length	weigh, weight
loose, looser	wide, widest, width

Summary

This book comprises a step-by-step guide to making skirts in 3 different styles: gathered, circle and maxi.

