
Sewing Leggings with Cal Patch

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Good leggings are hard to find. So I can think of a lot of reasons why you might want to sew your own. In this workshop, I'm going to show you how to cut some leggings from a pattern and sew them together, finishing the waistband with elastic, hemming the bottom and before you know it you'll be stitching up a whole array of new leggings to wear. (gentle music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- I'm going to show you the supplies you'll need. You will need a sewing pattern for leggings. You might be able to find one commercially, or perhaps you drafted one in our Drafting Leggings Workshop. You'll need some fabric. Ideally a cotton like the Jersey or other knit fabric with stretch in it. You'll need either some Pattern Mates or pins, probably both, for our cutting out the pattern. You'll need good, sharp sewing shears, for cutting our fabric. Some 1/2 inch elastic for the waistband, all-purpose sewing thread, you'll probably want it to match your fabric. I'm just using contrast so that you can see my stitches better. I like to have a little pair of scissors for our snipping threads as I work. And you'll need your good old friendly sewing machine, and just make sure you have some extra needles. People always ask me if you need a special needle for sewing knits, and tradition says that you should use a ballpoint needle; however, I find that a universal needle works fine for everything and that's what I use. That's everything you're going to need. Why don't we get started?

Chapter 3 - Getting Started

Cut fabric

- We're ready to cut out our leggings. So, I've laid out my fabric folded, so that the selvages are matching. Make sure to smooth it out carefully so you don't have any wrinkles, especially lurking on the bottom layer. And, you can take your pattern and lay it on the fabric. You can see mine is a little bit short, but that's okay because I'm going to make some shorter leggings. Lay the pattern so that your green line is parallel to your fold. If you need to measure it and make sure it's really straight, go ahead, but I'm gonna just eyeball it. I like to use pattern weights to hold my pattern down. I find them a little easier to work with for knits than pins, but if you'd rather work with pins, that's fine, too. Just make sure to distribute the weights evenly around the pattern piece, and now you're ready to start cutting. So, you're just going to cut right along the edges. Even though they're not pinned together, the weights will hold them in place. You just be careful to keep everything still as you're working, and carefully work around the pattern. You don't want to start moving your fabric and everything around as you work, or it will all get very distorted. People often ask me if it's a good idea to wash their fabric before they sew something with it. In general, with wovens, that is a good idea. I find if I wash my knits before I cut, they get a little bubbly and twisted, so I usually don't prewash my knits. But, if you find it's something you want to do, that's totally fine. Okay, so I just need to clean up this bottom part where my fabric was a little bit short. And, to do that, I'm going to move the pattern up so that I can use that nice curve that I made at the bottom, and because, yeah, I suspected that the piece underneath might be a little shorter than the one on top. So, I just make

sure I've got both layers there. I should probably put a weight in place, and I can use that bottom edge as a guideline to trim that.

Seam options

- It's very important when you're sewing with knits to use seams that stretch, otherwise your stitches will break, especially when you're sewing with knits with Lycra, which have the vertical stretch. If this seam doesn't have a lot of stretch in it, you're going to have problems. I like to save my scraps as I'm cutting, so that I have a test swatch of the very same fabric I'm going to use with which to test a few different stitches and find out which seam is going to work best for my fabric. People often think you need a serger to sew knits, but it's not true. The regular sewing machine has a lot of different stitches that will give you some options for good, stretchy seams. One of the stitches I'm going to show you is the stretch straight stitch, which looks like this, has a lot of stretch built into it. On this example, I've finished the edge with a zigzag also, but the stitch I'm talking about is just this part here. What it actually does is go forward two steps, back one step, forward two, back one, which just builds a little bit of stretch right into the seam. Another one I'm going to show you is just a regular zigzag, but very small. So, I've got this set to a 1.5 millimeter length, and a 1.5 millimeter width. And, that also gives you a nice, stretchy seam. Almost every machine has a zigzag stitch, so this might be the one you're likely to use if you don't have a machine with a lot of stitches. It's a good idea to look at them from the front, too, because that's really what's going to show. And, a third stitch I like to use for knits is this one, which is sort of a mock serger stitch. It's a combination of a stretchy straight stitch and a zigzag all in one. So, it gives your fabric edges a little bit of finish. This really has a lot of stretch, and it's one of my favorites. From the front it just looks like a regular seam. So, it's important to test a few different stitches with your machine and your fabric to see which is going to work best. I think I'm going to use this mock serger stitch for my leggings. I'd like to show you how I do my little test swatches. So, I've got two mini scraps. It's important that you're sewing this in the lengthwise direction because that's the direction of all of our main seams. You can pin them together if you want. Knits tend to stick together pretty well. So, you're lining up the edges with this half inch line on your machine. I'm selecting my mock serger stitch. I can go ahead and start sewing. Sometimes with these stretch stitches, you might find because of all the forward and backward motion, you may need to gently tug from behind just to keep it moving. So, just keep an eye on it. Make sure it's moving through the foot, and not getting stuck. Okay, that should be enough for us to get a sense of how this stitch is working. That looks pretty good. I don't see any puckering or bubbling. It's giving me a nice, stretchy seam. It looks great from the front. So, I think this the stitch I'll use.

Start sewing

- I've got my two legging pieces that I've cut out because I cut the pattern with two layers, so now I have two legs and I'm going to sew the inseam of each leg separately. You'll want to take your piece and identify the right side of the fabric. And fold it onto itself so that you're matching up your two inseams, which is the long straight edges on each side of your pattern. I've folded one leg so that the inseam is matching up and I'm going to place just a couple pins because if you're new to sewing knits it might be a good idea for you to use even more pins than I am. I sometimes use them, sometimes I don't. Knits are pretty sticky, so they will kind of stay together, but pins are your friend and they're going to help you. So it might be a good idea. Don't let it bother you that up at the top these parts don't match up. We've got the front and the back there and they're not meant to be the

same. So only the edges you're sewing together are going to match up for now and now I am ready to stitch them up. I already know what stitch I'm using from my practice swatch. I like to always take my pins out before I stitch over them. (rumbling) And I'm just doing exactly what I did on the practice. Get to the end. Seam is sewn. The last thing I can do just to finish this off is maybe trim down the seam allowance just a little bit so I don't have a big piece in there. People often think you have to finish the edges of your knits, but really jersey knits won't unravel. So I don't do any finishing and this stitch kind of is self-finishing anyway. So I'm just trimming off a little bit of this extra. So I'll keep trimming all the way and then I have a nice finished edge which won't be flapping around inside the leggings. I've gone ahead and sewn the other leg, so now I have two completed legs and they're mirror images of each other. Check that they look like this when you lay them together because if you've folded one the wrong way you might have two the same and then they won't fit together. The next step is to sew the rise seam. So to do that, I'm going to take one leg and turn it right side out. Like so. And then I'm going to take the one that I've turned right side out and stuff it inside the one that is still wrong side out. And match up these two edges... Along each side. So I start by matching them up along the two inseams and I'll put a pin there. I like to actually press one set of seam allowances one way and the other one the opposite direction to minimize the bulk, otherwise you'd have six layers of fabric on top of each other and then I can just match up the backs, put a pin at the top there. Maybe one or two more pins along the curve just to keep everything in place. This is one section where even I tend to use a lot of pins because these curvy sections can easily shift around as you're working. And then we have the two fronts together. Okay, that oughta do it. So now I have one big U-shaped seam that I'm just going to sew all in one swoop. I'm going to sew this seam just like I sewed my inseams, using the same stitch. (rumbling) When you get to this curvy section, you might want to just take it slow. The curves tend to shift around a little bit. It can be a good idea to make sure you can see the layer underneath, that way you know that you're catching both layers. Coming to the inseam intersection. So if you pinned your two seam allowances in the opposite directions like I did, just make sure they're still that way. You might even want to hold them flat. You might have noticed I haven't been backstitching my seams. That's because I'm using a stretch stitch, which naturally goes back and forth as it's stitching, so you don't really need to backstitch. In fact, the machine won't even let me do it because it knows that it's not necessary.

Chapter 4 - Waistband

Elastic waistband

- I'm going to show you two different ways to finish the waistband. The first is with elastic and I've cut a piece of half-inch elastic to my waist measurement minus the 10% of ease that I subtracted, and then you might want to just take another inch or so off, just so it's a tiny bit smaller than your actual waist. The first thing I'll need to do is sew the two ends of my elastic together, so I have a closed loop. I've overlapped the two ends by, maybe about three-quarters of an inch. If you feel like you need to, you can put a pin there, but I'm not going to and I have the machine set for just a regular straight stitch. I like to sew a little square to really securely lock these two pieces together. (sewing machine humming) But even if you just zigzagged them they would probably be fine. Here I would give it a backstitch, just to make sure it's really secure. My elastic is now a loop and I can take it and sew it into the waistband of the leggings. I'm going to start at center back, with my overlap section, going to put the pin where there's just one layer of elastic since it's a little bit thick, and I'm placing the elastic on the wrong side of the leggings, the inside, and just a tiny bit under the raw

edge. So I've got about an eighth of an inch extra hanging off the edge. Now to keep pinning the elastic around, I need to find the opposite end of the circle, from center back, which will be center front, I can take that point, lay it on my front rise seam, and pin it in place. So I've got the back and the front in place, now to distribute it evenly around the rest of the waist, I'm going to stretch this whole section, so I can kind of find them middle. I think I can do that by pinning it place with my finger and then grab a pin. Whenever you're sewing something circular to another circle, you always want to take care to distribute everything evenly, that's why I pinned the back and then the front then I went in the middle of one side, I could next go to the middle of the other side, and keep cutting my sections in half until I have enough pins around, otherwise if you started in one place and worked around in a circle, you would tend to have a big bubble at the end. This way You've distributed into many bubbles in each section around. I'm ready to sew the elastic into the waist and there will be two steps to this part. So the first one I'm actually just attaching along the edge of the elastic to the edge of the leggings. I'm going to use a zigzag stitch to attach the elastic and a good wide, but short, zigzag is going to be ideal. I have mine set to five millimeters wide by two millimeters long. I'm catching the edge of the elastic together with the edge of fabric, so that both of them are wrapped together by the zigzag stitch. (sewing machine humming) Also has I sew each of these sections, I need to stretch the elastic a little bit, so that the bubble flattens out. That way the two layers are getting married together and they'll be nice and flat. (sewing machine humming) I stitched all the way around the waistband and I'm about to come back to where I began, and I'll just go a little bit past my beginning stitching, maybe overlapping about half an inch and then backstitch. So now the elastic is attached and then final step will be to fold it down and stitch again from the right side of the leggings. So I'm going to sew the final step of this waistband from the right side, where it will show. I like to use a nice, wide three-step zigzag for this part but you could just use a regular zigzag or your stretch, straight stitch also. Do a little test swatch and see what you like. Starting off at this back seam, there's a lot of layers right here so it might be a little hard for the machine to get through them. You might need to give a little tug from the back and then once your over that hump you can go without pulling it. You'll still need to stretch this elastic as you go around, till it's flat. (sewing machine humming) I have stitched with that nice three-step zigzag all the way around and this is what it looks like finished.

Soft waistband

- I've shown you one way to do the waistband using elastic. Now I'd like to show you a second option, which is a separate fabric casing without elastic. I find it's a little bit more comfortable and not quite as binding as the elastic waistband. You should try both and see which one you like. To make the separate waistband, you'll need to cut a piece of fabric. It's basically just a rectangle in which the width is twice your desired finish waistband width. So let's say you want a one-inch waistband, you'll cut two inches plus seam allowance for a total of three inches if you're using 1/2-inch seam allowance. So that's the width of this rectangle and then the length will be your waist measurement from which we've subtracted the negative ease and then again, just like with the elastic, I would cut another inch or two off so it's just a little bit smaller. Once I sew this together and take away the seam allowance, it will be just a little bit smaller than the top edge of the leggings. Just like with the elastic, I need to first sew my strip into a loop. So I've got the two short sides lined up with my right sides together, 1/2-inch seam allowance and I'm going to use the same stitch I used for all of my seams. (rumbling) Got a little bit stuck there. No big deal. Now I have a nice loop of waistband and I can fold it in half, this time with the wrong sides touching, which is not

typical, but we're not going to be flipping it right side out. You might want to pin this, but I'm not going to. I'm just going to stitch around, connecting the two long edges so that I have one connected band. For this, I'll just use my regular zig-zag stitch 'cause that'll go nice and quickly. (rumbling) Just make sure you're catching both of your edges. And a little backstitch at the end. Now my edges are joined. And I have one nice long waistband piece that I can now sew onto the leggings. I'm taking the seam of the waistband and lining it up with the back rise seam of the leggings and I have my band on the right side or the outer side of the leggings and I'm matching up these edges exactly. So again, I need to make sure to distribute this circle evenly. So I need to find the opposite end by folding and that's where I'll pin to the front. And then distribute the rest of the band around just like I did with the elastic. Find the middle. Get the edges lined up. And keep pinning. These are situations where you really want to use plenty of pins to keep everything together. Now that the waistband is pinned all around the leggings, you can go to the machine and you're gonna be working right near the edge. I'll use that same mock serger stitch that I've been using for all of my seams, but I'm going to have it wrap right over the edge. Kind of what I did on the zig-zag when I put the two layers together. (rumbling) And again, you might need a little help getting across this back seam. Give it a tug. And be really careful to check that your layers are all together 'cause it would be really easy for the band to come off the top and then you're not actually attaching it. I would even make sure your seeing the layer underneath. And when you flip it up, you've got a nice finished soft waistband that will be a little more comfortable.

Chapter 5 - Finishing

Finish

- The very last step to finishing your leggings is to hem the bottom edges. I've done a few sample test swatches of different stitches so I can figure out the best way on this fabric and with my machine. The first one I tried was a stretch straight stitch, which I think looks a little bit puckery and not so nice. So then I tried just folding it once, but with knits, because the edges don't unravel, once is fine and then I used a zigzag and that seems to work pretty well. You can actually even leave your edges raw if you like, which is something I often do, but we'll go ahead and hem them with a zigzag just so you can see how that works. So to hem these bottom edges, you'll need to turn up that edge and we decided just one time is enough. We have an inch of seam allowance. So I can just turn up that one inch and pin. It's a very small little section, so you won't need many pins. Doing the opposite side and maybe I'll do one more pin on each half. And I will start stitching from the inseam. You always want to start and stop your stitching in the least conspicuous spot. And you're placing the edge right under the needle. We decided we're going to use regular zigzag stitch and I think about a medium, maybe four or five millimeters wide and two or three millimeters long will be good. (rumbling) And I'm trying to catch the raw edge in the middle of my zigzag stitch to enclose it and keep that edge from fraying. It's a small little circle, but if you just keep stretching it out as you work so that you have a straight section in front of the needle, you'll be able to stitch it just fine. (rumbling) Again, I'll overlap about a half inch of my beginning stitching and do a little backstitch. Now that I've finished hemming one leg, I'll go ahead and do the exact same thing on the other and then your leggings will be done. (rumbling) I've shown you how to make your own leggings and you've learned a few different variations, how you can do a soft comfortable waistband, an elastic waistband, a turned hem, you can leave your hem raw. Another way you might finish the bottom is to do a band just like we did at the waist. That's what you often see on thermals, which are basically a form of leggings. So now you can go wild and make all kinds of crazy leggings that suit all your

needs. You can play around with printing on them, you can use different novelty fabrics and printed fabrics, you can even crochet on the edge. Whatever suits your style, customize them every which way and you'll have leggings for every aspect of your wardrobe.