

## RE-PURPOSING: WOMEN'S KNIT SHIRT INTO DRESS

<http://www.makeit-loveit.com/2010/08/re-purposing-womens-knit-shirt-into.html>

May 15, 2013

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Aug 27 2010

Posted by [Ashley](#) 75 Comments

Fall is quickly approaching.

(Are you getting excited? I'm thrilled.)

And I really wanted a new dress.

But a Maxi style dress, with some great flow and length.

But more fall-ish.....and not the common spaghetti straps.

Make sense?

So I quickly created one by using one of my knit shirts for the top, similar to the little girl version [here](#).....and turned it into a nice and flowy, fall-ish dress. One that is **gathered along the front and back**.....but not the sides.

Nice slimming effect, right?

*(My mannequin is clearly not as tall as I am. Ha!)*

With a nicely ruched empire waist.....





.....that ties around to the back into a soft bow.

That way you can cinch in as tight or as loose as you'd like.





And we all know that the tops of dresses are the hardest part to make (especially with knit) so using a shirt you already own, plus some knit yardage.....is

a great solution for a really quick dress.

(And it sure cured my desire for a new long dress for fall. Speedy fast.)

**And if you're not sold on the length.....**you can make this any length you want. I went back and forth, trying to decide what length I wanted and I just really wanted a nice Maxi-style length. But try making it more knee length with a nice contrasting strip of fabric around the bottom.

(Like in my case, I almost made it knee length.....with a chunky 3-4 inch strip of brown around the bottom. Would have been cute too. Maybe the next dress.)

Ready to make your own?

First, you'll need a more fitted knit shirt from your closet (start digging) and a few yards of coordinating knit fabric. (Or head on over to store and grab an inexpensive one...) Or try color blocking some nice solids together. That would be cute too.



Then try on your shirt and mark with pins where you'd like the empire-waist-seam to hit on you. Then cut the shirt off a 1/2 inch below that.



Then, decide how long you'd like to make your dress. Measure down from the empire-waist line, down to the length you'd like and then add enough extra to this length for a seam allowance at the top and a hem at the bottom. (So about an extra 1 1/2 inches.)



Now an explanation before we discuss width. I decided to make a gather in the front and the back, but not along the sides. I have a few dresses that are like this and I appreciate eliminating the bulk along the sides of my dresses. (Who wants to add more width to our middle?) Designers probably do this to eliminate the extra ruffle at your side but also for the look and style of the dress. It's just lovely to look at with the little gather in the front. Maybe? I'm just guessing... But then, I actually added more of a gather to the front and less of one in the back. But if you prefer to gather evenly all the way around.....go ahead and do so and adjust the directions accordingly.



So for the front piece, I doubled the width that I need. So if the front of your shirt (from side seam to side seam.....while on your body) is 15 inches, then make the front piece 30 inches wide.

And for the back, I use a little less and 1 1/2 the amount. So since the back of your shirt is the same, 15 inches, you'll need to make the back piece of the skirt 22.5 inches. And then add another inch onto the width for the front and back pieces.....for a seam allowance.

Then sew the front and back piece together along the side seams, using a 1/2 inch seam allowance.

Now open up the skirt section and iron those side seams flat. Ironing will help your knit lay flat and hang a lot better. So take a second and do so.



Then, along the top of the skirt portion, I placed pins a few inches from each side seam.....because I wouldn't be gathering past these pins. Because as I explained above, I'm not gathering all the way around and want the side section of the dress to lay flat against the body. And I pinned in about 3 inches from each side seam, on the front and back pieces.



Then I made 2 separate basting stitches between the two pins, along the front and the back.

Then I removed those pins and placed one pin in the exact center of the front and back piece (to help with attaching to the shirt later on).....and then I gathered in the material.

(Need help with gathering? Click [here](#) for more info.)



Then I placed a pin in the exact center of the front and back of the shirt.

Then, I turned the shirt inside out and upside down and slid it down over the skirt section, matching up the side seams and the center pins on both sections of the dress. Make sure that the front section of the skirt is matched up with front of the shirt and the back with the back.





Then adjust your gathers to fit evenly along the raw edge of the shirt. Pin both pieces together with plenty of pins.

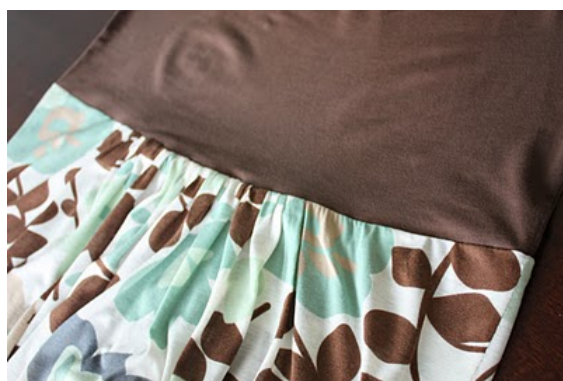


Then sew the 2 pieces together, using a 1/2 inch seam allowance. Be sure to use a zig-zag stitch or an overlock stitch (like I did below), to allow for some stretch when you put the dress on. Then, I made another stitch right next to the first one, just for added strength (but didn't take a picture to show you).



Then I turned the dress right side out and ironed that center seam nice and flat, forcing the raw edges underneath, to point down.

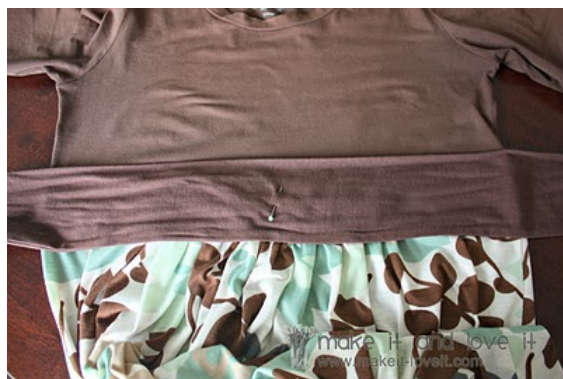
Next I made a nice long tie for the middle from some other brown knit I had in my stash. I cut out a piece of fabric that was 8 x 90 inches, sewed it into tube, turned right side out, and ironed flat. (Need help with sewing a tube? Click [here](#) for more info.)



Then I placed the exact middle of the tie at the center of the dress and pinned it in place.



Then I took the left side of the tie and pulled it over to the side seam of the dress and pinned the top in place, then measured down two inches and pinned the bottom of the tie in places. (And hid the middle seam, where the shirt is attached to the skirt.) Then I just sort of ruched/gathered/scrunched the tie up a bit and pinned it in place.





Then I sewed that ruching in place, making a seam right along the side seam. Pull the tie along the front to the other side (making sure there is no excess) and do the same to the other side.



And at this point, you can hand sew little tacks to hold the tie in place along the front.....or just adjust after you get it on. I didn't hand stitch anything in place because knit isn't slippery at all and the tie should stay in place and all ruched for you without any problem after you have it pulled and tied in the back.

Then, make sure the dress is the length you'd like it and then fold under the bottom hem a 1/2 inch, then another 1/2 inch, sew into place, then iron the hem flat.





And that's it.

A nice new dress.....made from a simple knit shirt and a few yards of knit fabric.

Now, make a few more. You'll want to after you realize how comfy these things are.

Ahhhhh.....



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