

## The A-line Skirt with Fancy Elastic



**Tutorial by Claire Wain**  
[www.designbyclaire.co.uk](http://www.designbyclaire.co.uk)

### **You will need:**

Some fabric (The amount will depend on the length of your skirt)

Some fancy elastic (It doesn't have to be fancy, but it is going to be visible...)

A tape measure

Sewing machine

Fabric scissors

Paper scissors

Dressmaking pins

A large sheet of paper (Any kind you can draw on. Wrapping paper or parcel paper are ideal.)

Long ruler

### **How much fabric and elastic...?**

Measure your waist, at the point where you would like the skirt to sit.

This measurement is how much elastic you will need.

Measure from your waist, at the point where you would like the skirt to sit, to the point where you would like the skirt to end. (You might need some help with this part. Or it might be easier to measure your favourite skirt.)

Multiply this length by two. Add six inches, to give you space for hem allowances and cutting out.

This measurement is how much fabric you'll need.

(I am assuming that your fabric will be 44" wide.) If your fabric is wider than 44", you might need less, but it's always best to be on the safe side!

### **Pre-wash and iron your fabric!**

Yes, I know this is dull, and takes time, and you just want to be making a skirt!

But if you go to all that effort only to find that your fabric shrinks on its first wash, you've completely wasted your time. I know ironing is very dull, but if you cut your fabric when it's wrinkly, your skirt will come out looking terrible. Believe me, these steps are worth it.

### Make the waistband

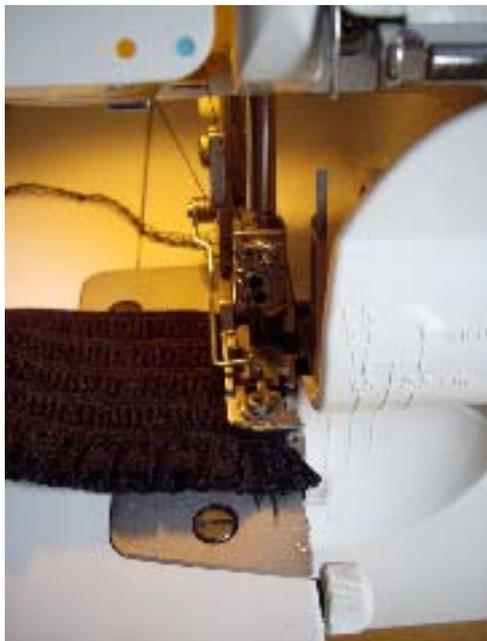
Bring the two ends of your elastic together, making sure they're not twisted. Sew a straight seam close to the edge of the elastic, using the edge of your machine's foot as a guide.



Change to a zig-zag stitch, and sew down the seam allowance. This prevents the ends of the elastic from fraying.



(If you have an overlocker, you can use that to sew and bind the edges in one fell swoop.)



You now have a waistband which is a *little* bit smaller than your waist. This makes sure that your skirt won't fall down!

Keeping the seam on the outside, use pins to mark the quarter points on your waistband.



## Make a pattern for the skirt

If you're very brave, you can skip this step, and draw straight onto your fabric with chalk!

If you think you might want to make more than one skirt, it's always useful to have a pattern. Then you don't have to do all the drawing and measuring next time.

Don't panic - this step doesn't take as long as you might think.

Lay out your paper.

Decide how long you want your skirt to be, and add an inch for the hem.

Mark out this length down one edge of your paper.

This is the centre front and back of your skirt, and will be cut on a fold. (You might want to write "FOLD" along this edge, for future reference.)

My skirt is going to be 27" long, so I mark out a length of 28".

Use a right-angle (t-square, set square, book...) to draw horizontal lines across the paper at these points. These lines mark the waist and hem of your skirt pattern. It's important that they're as straight as possible, otherwise your skirt will come out all wonky!

Now, measure your hips.

Divide this number by 4. (The piece we are drawing represents a quarter of the finished skirt.)

Add one and a quarter inches for seam allowances.

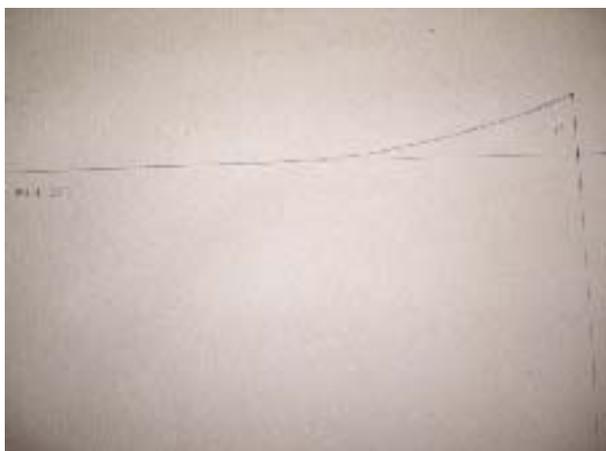
Round up until you have a nice convenient number, if you like. The fabric's going to be gathered into the elastic waistband anyway, and you want to be absolutely sure you can pull the skirt on easily over your hips.

On the top line, which is the waist of your skirt, mark this measurement.

Mark the same measurement on the bottom line, and draw a vertical line between them.

At the top of this vertical line, add an extra inch above the waist line.

Draw a curve from this line, down to your waist line.



(You can draw the curve freehand, you can use the edge of a dinner plate, a french curve or a special pattern-drafting curve. The exact shape of the curve doesn't matter too much, as long as it's nice and gentle. We're just adding a little shaping. Your body isn't a rectangle, so your skirt shouldn't be one either.)

Now we need to make the a-line shape. This can be as narrow as you like, or as wide as your fabric will allow!

6" is a nice amount to add, so I'm extending the hem line horizontally by that measurement.

Draw a line joining the top of your waist line to the new point you've just marked at the hem. (If your ruler isn't long enough, you can use your tape measure as a guide. Just make sure you're pulling it taught, so the line is definitely straight.)

At the hem, mark a point 1" up from the bottom of this new line.

Now draw in a curve, just as you did at the waist. (The two curves don't have to match exactly, but they should be roughly the same shape.)

Now, using your paper scissors (you know not to use fabric shears on paper, right?), cut out your carefully crafted pattern piece!



## Cutting out the fabric pieces

Fold your fabric in half lengthways, with the selvages together.

Place your pattern piece on the fabric, with the edge marked "FOLD" lined up with the fold in the fabric.



Make sure that the pattern on your fabric is the right way up!  
Carefully cut out the fabric, around your pattern.

Repeat the process for your second piece of fabric.

(Don't be tempted to cheat and cut out both pieces at once, by folding the fabric in half! This is an excellent way to end up with the pattern on one of the pieces upside down.)

## Sewing the skirt

Unfold your two fabric pieces.

Placing them right sides together, pin each of the side seams.

Using a straight stitch and a half inch seam allowance, stitch down each side seam.

Next you need to go over to the ironing board, and press open your seam allowances.



(This might seem like a step you could skip, but details like these really make a difference to the professional look of your finished skirt.)

Now neaten your seam allowances, to prevent them from fraying.

You can do this by using a zig-zag stitch close to the edge of the seam allowances, or you can use an overlocker if you have one.

The waist edge of the skirt now needs to be neat as well.

If you have an overlocker, you can use it here.

If you don't have access to an overlocker, simply iron down a small hem. The hem should measure no more than about a quarter of an inch", and it should be turned to the *outside*. This hem will be hidden by the elastic, so both the inside and the outside will be neat.



## Attaching the waistband

Now that the top edge of the skirt is neat, we can attach the waistband! Have the skirt inside out, and mark the centre front and back of the waist with pins. (The side seams mark the two sides.)

Your skirt and your waistband are now marked into quarters.

Both the waistband and the skirt should have the seams showing on the outside. Starting at the centre back, line up the seam of the waistband with the centre back pin of the skirt.

Set your sewing machine to a zig-zag stitch.

Place the elastic underneath the skirt, and line them up underneath the foot of your sewing machine.

Sew a couple of stitches to hold the two together.

(My fancy elastic conveniently has lines running through it, that I can use as a guide. If your elastic doesn't have this, you'll need to make sure that you're sewing the skirt at a constant distance away from the edge of the elastic.)

Now, line up the side seam of the skirt with the first pin in the elastic waistband.



With your right hand, stretch out the elastic, so that the seam and the pin still match up.



As you sew, keep stretching the elastic with your right hand. With your left hand, gently pull on the fabric as it emerges from under the foot of your sewing machine. This keeps the fabric and the elastic taught, and makes sure that you have nice even gathers at the top of your skirt.

(If this step makes you nervous, you can practice first with scrap fabric and elastic.)

Continue matching up the seams and pins, and sewing with the elastic stretched, until you've made it all the way around the waistband.

## Turning up the hem

Now is the time to iron your almost-completed skirt, and try it on!

Don't be tempted to skip the ironing - it's bound to have gathered a few wrinkles while you've been sewing, and you won't be able to tell how much hem to turn up if your skirt's all wrinkly.

Double-check that the length is good, and then it's back to the ironing board to turn up the hem.

We allowed an extra inch for the hem, so you'll need to turn the skirt inside out, and press up a neat hem of *half an inch*



Once you've done this all the way round, turn this hem over, and press it up by half an inch again.



You now have a nice neat hem, with no raw edges showing.

If you want the hem to be invisible from the right side of the skirt, you can slip-stitch the folded edge into place by hand.

If you don't mind having a line of stitching running around the bottom edge of your skirt, you can simply machine the hem into place.

Iron the whole skirt again for good measure, and you're done!

