
Waistband Finishing Technique with Gretchen Hirsch

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Once you have a pencil skirt pattern that fits you great, you'll probably want to make it in a ton of different fabrics and colors, but you'll also probably want to vary the style a little bit. So, today I'm gonna show you how to do a new waistband technique. In my book, *Gertie's New Book for Better Sewing*, I have a pencil skirt pattern, and it comes with this high waistband. But, it's not a look that I want for every day. So, I decided to do a variation in tweed that doesn't have a waistband. Now, normally for this kind of style with no waistband, you would have a facing on the inside of the skirt, which is made out of the same fabric as the skirt. In the case of a thick wool, like this tweed, you really don't want to add all that extra bulk, especially at the waistline. So, I'm gonna show you a technique where you can use Petersham ribbon in place of a fabric facing that gives you a really clean finish that's also really pretty on the inside. (bright music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- For this technique you're gonna need a skirt that's already constructed up to the point of having put the lining in if you're going to use a lining. You'll also want your zipper inserted, and you'll have everything basted together at the top with the raw edge here. The next thing you're gonna need is your ribbon. For this technique we're making a curved facing out of ribbon. If you look at the top of the skirt, you can see how the shape starts to curve for the hip right at the waist. So, we're gonna curve with the iron this ribbon so that it matches that curve on the skirt. Now, some people don't need a facing that curves quite as much. If you have more of a straight up and down kind of body, and I have one student who does this, she can use any ribbon, any synthetic ribbon and not have to curve it at all, and just put it straight into the skirt. But if you have more of a curvy body type you'll need to add the curve to the ribbon. So, the reason I'm getting through all this is because if you're gonna curve the ribbon it has to be a natural fiber. It has to be either cotton or a mix of cotton and rayon. You're looking for a ribbon, it's usually called Petersham. Some people still call this grosgrain, but it has to have these little scallops on the edge because that's what allows the ribbon to expand and curve. This ribbon I'm using is a millinery ribbon. I got it from a hat supply place, but there are other places where you can order this type of ribbon online and we'll give you those sources. You'll also need thread, I'm using just a regular all-purpose poly thread. You'll need this for your machine to sew on the ribbon and also to do some hand-sewing. You'll need a hand-sewing needle. You'll need your pins, of course, to pin on the ribbon, scissors, a chalk pen for marking or just a piece of chalk. Whatever your favorite marking tool is, I like these little Clover marking pens. They have chalk, and then they have little wheelie that dispenses the chalk. You need some sort of ruler. I would really recommend the 2x18 clear gridded ruler because you can see through it to mark your waistline. Snips I always have on hand just to snip my thread when I'm sewing on the machine. You'll need your sewing machine, and lastly you will need an iron.

Chapter 3 - Prep Ribbon Facing

Prep facing

- We're going to start by measuring the length of the waist of the skirt. So get your skirt out and a

flexible measuring tape. I'm gonna start at the center back where my zipper is. Probably want to start your zipper opening. You might have a zipper on the side, which is fine. Okay, so we're going to start by measuring right here at the zipper. You want to measure a little bit down. It's gonna be about five, well, it's gonna be precisely five eighths of an inch down because this is our seam allowance. But you can kind of eyeball that. So I'm just gonna keep going around the skirt like this. You want to be careful not to move the tape at all as you're measuring. So keep it nice and steady. All the way back to the other side of the zipper opening. Okay. Now here, I just want to go, this is a lapped zipper, so I don't want to go all the way to the edge. I want to go to the edge of the zipper, which I can see right here. And there we have 31 inches. So now I'm going to add a seam allowance to this measurement. I'm gonna use five eighths of an inch on each side of the zipper. So that would be another inch and a quarter. So our total ribbon measurement will be 32 and a quarter. But let's talk a little bit about a little fit tip that I have. It's a really good idea to try on your skirt right now. If you're experiencing a little extra ease in the waistband and you feel like you want it to be slightly tighter, you can cut your ribbon a little shorter, maybe like half an inch to an inch, and then ease the skirt into a smaller ribbon to create a tighter fit at the waist. But I'm gonna do mine just as it is 'cause I'm really happy with the fit. So let's cut our ribbon. And grab your petersham and measure out 32 and a quarter, or whatever measurement you got. Okay. Make a chalk mark at your point. And cut your ribbon at your chalk mark. Now we're ready to create the curve in the ribbon with the iron. You're gonna take your ribbon. Have your iron on a high setting with some steam. And we're gonna do what's called swirling in the millinery world. I learned this in a millinery class at FIT where I study. And it's very cool. This is an old millinery technique. What we're gonna do is hold the ribbon down here and then you're gonna curve the ribbon at the top. Well, pressing just at the top. And then it's gonna create these little ruffles at the bottom of the ribbon where fullness is created. Now I'm gonna press straight down on those ruffles. So see how I'm getting a curve right there? So just keep repeating, curving at the top, and then pushing the ruffles down like that. You'll probably get some shine created on your ribbon from the pressure of the iron. So this will be the wrong side of your ribbon now 'cause the shiny bits are a little ugly. It's very cool if you see experienced milliners doing this. They do it in two seconds flat. I take a little more time. And this is what you would do to put your grosgrain ribbon in a hat around the headband. And of course you could use a brightly colored ribbon too to get a nice contrast on the inside of your skirt 'cause I just love how the ribbon looks on the inside. So you can play with color too. Okay, so you can see that we have a really nice curve going on here. So that's what we're looking for. If you feel like you're less curvy and you want to just do a subtle curve, don't go quite as crazy with the swirling and just do a more subtle curve. So now we're going to mark our waistline on the skirt, which will indicate our ribbon placement. Grab your skirt and your clear ruler and your chalk. Measure down five eighths of an inch, but I want this to be a scant five eighths of an inch. So I'm gonna kinda cheat it so that I'm kind of between half an inch and five eighths. 'Cause I don't want this mark to show when I'm finished with the skirt. Of course the chalk will come out, but it's nicer not to have to deal with that. So continue all the way around your waistline. There we go. And we're done marking. Now we're going to place the ribbon on our chalk line. And let me show you how it's gonna be done. So remember, you don't want to use the ugly shiny side. So figure out which one that is. This is gonna seem a little weird at first. What's gonna happen is we're gonna place the ribbon here and then turn it into the skirt like that. So this is the top edge of the ribbon. The curvy side is on the bottom. Place the ribbon so that it's just covering that chalk line that we just made. And you also want it to be extending five eighths of an inch past the zipper, 'cause that's our seam allowance. And pin in place. I think I'm gonna pin it like

that. I think that will give. 'Cause we're gonna sew like this so I can pull the pins out like that. I always like to think about how I'm gonna put something into the machine and then plan my pinning from there. It just makes things a lot easier. So here's the chalk line. I'm putting the ribbon so that it just covers the chalk line. Pin all the way around the skirt like this and then you'll have a five eighths of an inch seam allowance on the other side of the zipper as well. If you're easing your skirt into your ribbon because you're trying to make it a little bit smaller, you'll of course have a skirt that's a little bit bigger. So you'll need to, here, this is a good example. When I get to the end here, I'm gonna pin five eighths of an inch over here. Is that five eighths of an inch? There we go. And if I had an excess here, I would smooth out that excess and pin the ribbon in place so that it smoothed out those wrinkles. If you find you're having a lot of excess, you can run a line of long machine basting stitches at the top of your skirt and pull the bobbin threads just slightly so it shrinks the top of the skirt a little bit and then it will fit into the ribbon waistband. It's all pinned on. And next, we'll sew the ribbon on.

Chapter 4 - Sew Ribbon Facing

Machine Sewing

- I'm on a straight stitch. My length is 2.5. I'm using a light thread so that you can see it show up on the ribbon. We're gonna be edge stitching, which means right next to the edge of the ribbon. So, start and then backstitch back to the zipper. There we go. If you have an edge stitch foot, now would be a great time to use it. I have one for my machine at home and I love it. It helps you get a perfect edge stitch every time. You can also substitute a blind hem foot for an edge stitch foot. Keep going all the way around the waistband. And when I get to the zipper over here, I'm just checking that I'm not gonna stitch on the metal zipper stuff, 'cause that will break your needle. I'm gonna stop right where my lap zipper begins, where that top stitching is, and then backstitch. Okay, so of course you want to snip your threads. And now I'm gonna press the ribbon to the inside of the skirt. Actually, you know what I wanna do first is cut down the seam allowance underneath the ribbon. I'm going to hold my scissors on a slight angle so they're turned towards me, which will create a graded effect on the seam allowance, meaning that the back seam allowance will be slightly higher than the front seam allowance, which will reduce the possibility of seeing a ridge from the seam allowance on the other side of the skirt. So this is just gonna cut down any bulk underneath the ribbon, which is of course, the whole point of having this waist treatment. And especially these are darts right here, you're gonna get a lot of bulk in there. So just reduce as much as you can. Keep holding your scissors on the angle. I'm cutting down to about 1/4 inch on the seam allowance. Okay. Now I'm going to press the ribbon to the inside of the skirt. And see how lovely that looks? Especially with a bright colored lining, it really creates a nice effect. Now would be a good time to use a press cloth, if you have one on hand, so that you don't get any shine on your ribbon. There's gonna be a bit of a turn of cloth at the top of the waistband, which means that the fabric will roll slightly in, which is what you want. Don't worry if it's not staying down perfectly after pressing, because we're going to secure it with hand sewing next.

Hand Sewing

- We're all pressed in, and now let's move on to hand sewing ribbon down. At the zipper seam allowance, you'll want to turn in those ribbon seam allowances at the zipper opening, and then flip the ribbon down the way you pressed it. We're gonna pin the ribbon in place so that it's to the side of the zipper teeth. I'm gonna do the same thing on the other zipper side. It's a little easier on this

side 'cause this is the underlap, there's not as much bulk there. There we go. And, I'm also going to pin down at the side seams. We're not gonna stitch the entire ribbon down, we're just gonna tack it down at certain places. The darts are a good place to position tacks as well. Side seams, darts, and zipper tape is where we're pinning. Alright, grab your hand sewing needle and some thread. Tie a knot. Thread your needle. Now we're gonna stitch to the zipper tape. Bring your needle up through the fold of the ribbon, which will hide your knot in there and we can cut that thread down at the end. And now you're gonna take a little bite out of the zipper tape, and then insert the needle diagonally into the ribbon to form one slip stitch. So to show you that slip stitch again, I'm moving slightly left, about an eighth of an inch to the left, taking a little bite out of the zipper tape, and then going directly into the ribbon diagonally, and then pulling tight. Again this is a slip stitch, it's used a lot to sew down facings. You can use it as an invisible hemming stitch. Really versatile stitch. Okay. Tie your thread off, knot your thread off. Gonna do one more little stitch just to be really secure. There we go. You're gonna do the same thing on the other side of the zipper opening. And now let me show you how to do a tack by hand. All the other places where we pinned the ribbon down, the darts, the side seams, this is where you're gonna tack the ribbon in place. Knot your thread again, come up through the bottom of the Petersham ribbon. I'm right on top of the body of a dart below it, so I have a little bit of extra fabric. Now I'm just gonna take a few running stitches on top of each other. Of course it's nice to do this in a thread that matches your ribbon so that these little tacks disappear. About four or five little stitches. And it's not showing on the outside, because it's stitched down to the body of the dart, not to the skirt itself. So come out in between the layers and then knot off. And now you can cut your thread. And now the ribbon is held down at that dart. So you're gonna do the same thing at the other dart placements, as well as the side seams, so when you tack at the side seams, you're gonna be stitching to the seam allowance of the skirt below. So then when you're finished, the ribbon waistband will be held completely down and will stay inside the skirt, and then when we turn it around to see the finish on the outside, you see a really nice, clean finish at the top of your skirt. So there's our technique for a ribbon facing. I think this is just such a lovely technique, because it uses these beautiful old school materials, I love the Petersham ribbon and silk linings, and the hand sewing is so satisfying and it provides something that you don't see in factory-made clothing. So this is gonna be a great versatile technique that you can use on any pencil skirt pattern.