
Popover Sundress with Liesl Gibson

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview of Sundress

- The pop-over sundress is a nice second project if you're a new sewer. You're learned a few basic skills with, say, the lazy days skirt. Now we're gonna move on and teach you a few additional techniques. We're going to learn a French seam, bias binding, and we'll also do a narrow hem. This is the pop-over dress itself. It comes in a wide range of sizes. You can do a little embellishment here. It's also a nice project if you're a more advanced sewist, because it's quick. It's something that you can do on a summer day and not feel like you're spending your entire day inside. You can also make it in the doll size so that you've got matching for little girls who like to match their dolls. We also encourage you to make and donate these dresses. There's an organization that we work with called Project HOPE Art that will take these dresses to orphanages, primarily in Haiti. And if you have time to make an extra one or if you wanna have a little sewing party with some friends, it's a nice little project for something like that as well.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials you will need

- For this project you'll need two fabrics. One for the body of your dress, and one for the yoke and for the straps. You can also have a little bit of trim if you wanna use some rick rack or some lace or something like that to put in that yoke seam. Then you'll need scissors, fabric scissors and paper scissors, if you have them. Some tape, a pencil, some pins. Some coordinating thread. And you'll also need to print out the pattern. This is a tiled pattern, so it's going to print out in multiple sheets. And when you're printing it, I'll show you how to put this together shortly, when you're printing it, be sure that you're not scaling it down at all. There's a little test box that's on one of the pages that is a one inch square. It's a good idea to check that square just to make sure everything is printing out at the right size. And also when you send this file to your printer, just be sure that you're printing it out at 100%, you're not scaling down to fit your page or anything like that. You'll also need a sewing machine, and you'll need an iron. Once you have all those, we're ready to begin.

Chapter 3 - Preparation

Print and cut

- Once you have your pattern printed out, you can tape it all together. You'll see the first three pages are some instructions that we'll be coming back to in a little bit. The rest of the pages are all the pieces for the pattern, and I like to start out by getting the lay of the land and figuring out what pieces go where and then once I've got everything sort of established, then I cut them out and tape them together. So these six pieces make the dress portion of the pattern, and now that I can see where everything is going, I'm going to trim off the margins. There's a grid printed on each of these patterns. You can trim off the excess outside of those grid markings, so I'm just gonna cut off this excess and you don't need to do this on all the pieces because it's nice to have some thing to tape onto, so if I cut it off of this one, then I can tape it onto this one, so I'm matching the A's on my pattern and I'm continuing that grid all the way across and I'll do the same thing with this piece, and now I match the B, and you can do this for all of the pieces until everything is assembled, and then cut out the size that you want to make. I've already done that. I'm making a size three today, so here

are my pattern pieces. I've got the main dress here and then I've got the yoke, which is one piece, and there are two pieces of paper that go together for the strap. You'll also notice that the strap actually needs to be cut twice the length of the pattern piece. We just simplified things. We made you not piece together quite so many pieces of paper but you'll cut the strap twice the length of the strip that we give you for that piece. So now we can move over to look at the first page of the instruction, where we have our cutting layouts. There are two cutting layouts. One is for your main fabric, your body fabric, and the other one is for the strap and the yoke, and I'm actually going to cut out the body for you and then you can follow the same process to cut out the straps and the yoke, so I have my fabric ready over here. Okay, so I have my fabric laid out and it's laid out on the fold. Here's the fold, here are the selvages. These are the woven edges together, and it's just like our cutting layout, the selvages, the fold, and now we're just gonna position our pattern piece in the same manner that we did on the cutting layout, so we'll take that piece. First one, we'll go right down here and then we'll move it up again and cut out a second one just above it, just like we did on the cutting layout, so first we wanna pin that down, and you're pinning it on the fold. The reason for doing that is you're cutting two halves of the front or the back. The front and back are the same on this dress. It's the same piece, and by putting each piece on the fold, you're actually cutting the right and left side of the same piece, so you're doing double duty with one cut. You're cutting out the whole thing, but you're only doing half of it at a time if that makes any sense, so I'm just putting a few pins in. I like to pin perpendicular to my cutting line and I like to make sure that the pins are inside of the pattern piece, so that I'm not gonna try to cut through any pins when it comes to that point, and as long as you make sure that you have enough room for your second piece, you can go ahead and cut this out. If you're nervous about that, if you're at all uncomfortable, you can always take a little bit of chalk. I'm looking for just a tailor's chalk and you can trace around it, and then pick it up and move it and pin it down again, and that way, if you don't have quite enough fabric or you're not quite sure whether it's going to fit, you can be absolutely sure that everything's fitting without actually cutting through it. It's a lot easier to remove chalk from your fabric than to remove a cutting mark. So I'm just tracing all the way around, and again, if you're comfortable and wanna just go ahead and cut, that's fine, but I'm showing you just in case. There's my first one. Now I'm going to pick it up and move it to cut the second one, and I can get it right up next to the first one, and I don't have to worry about running out of fabric or mispositioning it. You can pin your pattern piece down if you want. You can also use weights. I sometimes use these little jars of buttons as weights and I'll sometimes use a rotary cutter instead of a scissors; it makes it really nice and fast. It's really a matter of preference and just getting comfortable with your tools, so whatever method you prefer. I'm gonna use scissors today. So now that I know where both of my pattern pieces are, I can go ahead and cut right around the outside edge, as close as you can, being as accurate as possible. Accuracy always counts once you're sewing, especially because if you're off a little bit, we don't have to worry about it too much, but if you're off by a little bit, it can affect the size. If you're more comfortable using more pins, that's perfectly fine; I don't use a lot. There's one of our pieces, and now I'll do the same thing with my chalk outline. I'll cut just inside my chalk marking, and that will get me the same size as I had with the other piece. I like these dressmaking scissors because they have a flat bottom down here, and they'll glide right along without lifting the fabric too much. They'll glide along right underneath your fabric and help you to keep a nice line while you're cutting. So now we have both pieces of our dress cut out and we can do the same thing with a contrast fabric, and I just want to refer to the cutting layout. For the contrast fabric, you're not actually going to fold it like you did with the first fabric. You're gonna lay it flat out and you'll cut the pieces

according to the layout. The straps are cut on the bias and so they're at an angle. You'll see they're at a 45 degree angle, and you'll see why that's important later on when we come to sew that piece, so we're all set once we get those pieces cut out.

Chapter 4 - Sewing

Sew the yoke

- So we're gonna start out by sewing the yoke, and to do that, we're gonna pin the yoke, the right side of the yoke, to the wrong side of the top of the dress. So you can match the edges. This is the armhole, this little curve right here, and that seam should match just perfectly. And then, I like to go right to the other side and match that, as well, and you'll notice the top of the yoke is straight, but the top of the dress is actually a little bit curved, and that's intentional. That allows the dress to stand out a bit. It gives it more of an A-line shape. So you'll just need to straighten out the top of the dress a bit in order to match the yoke, but when it's worn, it will have a nice little flair to it. So I put a few pins in. Now, we're gonna move over to the sewing machine. And, again, this is right side of the yoke to the wrong side of the dress, just to make sure everything is lined up. And we're going to sew this with a half inch seam allowance, and we're going right across the top of that yoke. I'm going to back stitch just a couple stitches to knot my thread. (sewing machine whirs) And we'll end up exactly the way we started, just back stitching your lock stitching, and that's our first seam. You can't really see it from the right side, but everything's on the wrong side. Now, we're gonna move over to the ironing board, and I'm going to press that yoke up away from the dress. In the process, we're going to press the seam allowances also up away from the dress. When you press, you want to use lots of steam. That will give you a nice crease, and just be gentle with it. Once you've got the yoke pressed up and the seam allowances along with it, then, you can turn it over and press the other half of the yoke, the other edge of the yoke. Press this down by a half inch. Now, if you need a little guide here, you can also, with your sewing machine, you can run a basting stitch, a really long stitch, a half inch from the edge. So I know approximately what a half inch looks like. I'm just going to skip that basting stitch, and I'm just going to press it, just sort of eyeballing it. The reason we sewed to the wrong side first is so that now, when it comes time to sew the other end of the yoke down to the front of it, we can slip a little bit of trim in here to make a little embellishment. So I'm going to get my rick rack and my pins, and we'll be pinning the folded edge of this yoke to cover our first stitching line. So we want to bring it right down on top of this, and this will finish the yoke. But we have the benefit here at being able to slip a little bit of embellishment right in between those two layers before we do that. So I'm going to take my rick rack, and I'm going to position it right on top of that seam. So half of it is on one side of the seam, and half of it is on the other. Trim that down so it fits a little bit better, and just laying it down there, now, I can take that top of my yoke, put it right down over it, and I'll pin it in place. And you want to pin all the layers here. If this gets a little tricky, you can always baste that rick rack back into position before you pin the top of the yoke, and that will just be a little added a surety that everything is in place. So I've got all my layers pinned together. Now, I can move back over to the sewing machine. I'm going to edge stitch that fold right along there, and that's going to finish my yoke. So an edge stitch, you'll remember, is just stitching really close to the edge, to the fold right there. I back stitch just a couple of stitches, and I'm going to remove my pins as I come to them. I put my needle down so that I can lift the presser foot when I need to. That's a nice little help. (sewing machine whirs) And I'm just making sure the rick rack is even in my seam. And lift your presser foot when you need to if you need to adjust anything. And if you are a little uncomfortable sewing this, you can always baste this and then come

back and stitch it when you're a little bit more comfortable, too. I'm sewing right up to the edge there. And that's our yoke seam. Now, I'll press this fletch at the iron, and then, you can do the same thing with the back yoke. You can include the rick rack if you want to or just put the rick rack in the front, whichever you prefer, and then, you can also trim off any extra that's sticking out there. So I have a little bit of excess sticking out there. I'll just trim that to be even, and that gives us a nice continuous curve when it comes time to attach the strap later on.

Sew the side seams

- Now we're going to sew the side seams, and usually if we were sewing an ordinary side seam, we would position our two fabrics with the right sides together, like this, and that's because then we would stitch our seam, we'd finish the seam allowances and press the seams open, and then the seams are all nice and hidden on the inside of the garment, but since this is a nice straight seam and it's quite simple, I think a fun way to finish this would actually be to use French seams, and to do French seams, you do exactly the opposite. You start with the wrong sides of the fabric together, and we're going to sew with a smaller seam allowance. Instead of our half inch seam allowance, we're going to sew half of that, we're going to sew a quarter inch seam allowance and I'll show you the magic of the French seam. So I'm going to start out by pinning my two layers together at the side seam. Again, this is wrong sides together, and I'm going to take this over to the sewing machine. We're going to sew this seam allowance at a quarter inch instead of a half inch, half of our regular. I'll do just a couple of backstitches there. And there's our seam. Now I'm going to take this over to the ironing board and I'm going to press my seam allowances open. So first I'm going to press my seam flat to set it, and then I'll open it up and it's easier to press this when it's a quarter inch. We're going to trim this down in just a minute, but I always find that it's easiest to press it when it's larger so you don't burn your fingers quite so much. Okay. So now I'm going to trim this down, and the reason I'm trimming it is because we're going to enclose that seam allowance in another seam and we want this to be quite small. I'm going to trim it down to a half of what it is, so I'm going down from a quarter inch to about an eighth of an inch. This is tiny. Just trim this very close to your stitching line. There we go. So now we have this teeny tiny seam allowance. I missed a little bit down here, just trim that off. Now we're going to turn this around and we're going to press this so that the right sides of the fabric are together, just like you would ordinarily sew with a seam. This way when we sew it, the seam allowances will be on the wrong side of the fabric, on the wrong side of the dress, and they won't show, but we've trimmed them way down because now we're going to press, we're going to stitch with a quarter inch seam again and it's going to hide the seam allowances. It's right inside the second seam. I'm going to take it right over here. And you could use pins if you want. I don't think we need them. I think we'll be okay without any pins on this one. So again I'm stitching this with a quarter inch seam, just backstitching a couple to get started. And all the way down to the bottom. Backstitch again just to hold it. We're finished. Now I'm going to take this back over to the ironing board and the general rule of thumb, when you're pressing seam allowances together as you do with a French seam allowance, is to press towards the back. No particular reason, it just, I guess it just looks best from the front, so I've chosen my front has the embellishment. My back does not have the embellishment, so I'm just going to press everything towards the back, and now if you take a look, we have a nicely finished seam allowance on the inside and it's nicely finished on the outside as well. So that's a really nice way of doing seams, especially if something was relatively straight and a lightweight fabric. It doesn't work with all fabrics, it doesn't really work with curves, but it works for lightweight fabrics that are relatively

straight seams. You'll do the same thing with the other side of the dress to sew the opposite side seam, and then we'll move on to do the straps.

Sew the ties

- Now we're going to prepare the straps and attach those to the dress. You'll remember we cut these on the bias. The reason for that is because we need to go around this nice curved armhole. It can actually contour as it goes around that curve. It will also stretch a bit then you're wearing it so that it's comfortable and it's not too tight. So we cut two stapes, both on the bias and now we're going to fold and press those. There are two ways of doing that. You can either take your iron and simply fold the strap in half with the wrong sides together and then press a crease right down the center. Be careful as you're doing this that you don't stretch the fabric too much. Because it is biased and it will stretch. You don't wanna stretch it and distort it. Once you have a nice crease down the center then you can open it back up again and press and fold each of the outside edges, the long edges in to meet that crease. Again be careful not to stretch that too much. It's really hot, I'm trying not to burn my fingers here. There. Then once you've got those two creases on the outside, you fold it back together. That's enclosing all of those cut edges. So you have a nice strap like that. Now there's another way to do that if you have one of these nifty little bias makers. You can actually feed the strip into the bias strip maker. I use a pin to feed it through. It's always a little tricky to get this started but once it's going you're all set. There we go. There. This will fold it for you all in one go. So you don't need the center crease. It does everything for you all at once. So I'm gonna pin it just to hold it in place. I can press it as it comes out of the bias strip maker. So it's doing all three folds at the same time. There we go. This little handle helps to keep your fingers away from the steam too which is another little added bonus 'cause this does get pretty hot. There we go. So you can use either method, whatever is more convenient for you. When you're done with this you'll have the same result. The goal here is to get everything folded and pressed nicely so that it's ready for you to attach to the dress. Once you've got both of your straps folded and pressed then you just wanna find the center of it, of each one. I'm just going to use a little bit of chalk to mark that. So I folded it in half to find approximately the middle. And I'll just mark it like that. Now we can start applying it to the dress itself. Now we're gonna take that center marking, we're gonna unfold one edge of the strap and pin the center mark right to the side seam of the dress. We're pinning it to the wrong side of the dress. Then we can continue to pin that that edge of the bias to the armhole of the dress, we're pinning it to the curve. Again don't stretch too much as you do this. You can stretch a little bit. All the way until we reach the top edge of the yoke there. The same thing on the other side. Here again is where this bias is great because it's actually contouring to the armhole curve. It allows us to take that rounded shape without puckering and without getting any sort of gathers or anything like that. So there we are pinned to the arm hole. Now I'm gonna take this over to the sewing machine and I'm going to sew right in that first crease there, the very first one of our three creases. I'm gonna sew that bias strap right to the armhole along that. I'm actually watching the edge less than I'm watching that center crease just to keep everything really consistent. Keep an eye on the armhole fabric itself here, you don't want it to start puckering. You might need to raise and lower the presser foot every once in awhile just to adjust the fabric and get it out of your way. Again if you're uncomfortable with this, if this is feeling a little complicated, feel free to baste it the first time around to just to get comfortable with it, just to get familiar. You can always come back and just stitch right on top of that basting. That way you don't have to worry about taking the pins out of your way either. Again I just want to adjust that a little bit to make sure I don't get any

puckers in the armhole. And backstitch a couple of stitches at the end. And there we go. It's a good idea once you've sewn this to just check it to make sure you don't have any puckers in the armhole. If everything looks okay, then you're fine. If you do find any puckers, you can always use a seam ripper to take that out and restitch just that section right there. So now we're just gonna finish pinning this and getting ready to stitch the rest of the strap. The first thing to do is to open up that strap halfway so the ends are still folded, the long ends are still folded towards the center. Now we're gonna fold the cut short end to the wrong side towards the center by about a half an inch. Then we can refold at that center crease and pin that in place. That's just gonna give the end of the strap a nice finish. Then I can continue to fold and pin the entire length of the strap to get ready for edge stitching. When you come to the armhole, now you're simply folding and pinning the outer most folded edge, the other side of the bias strip so that it covers your stitching line. Very much how we did with the yoke. Now you can also apply bias in the opposite manner. In other words you could initially sew it to the right side of the dress and then fold it around to the wrong side. I like to do it this way because I feel like I get a nice finish on the outside. I can edge stitch nice and close to the outside edge. I also know that I've caught the inside edge. Sometimes if you apply bias from that outside first and then you're catching the inside when you edge stitch, you can miss it and then you have to go back in and hand stitch it or stitch it again. It just seems a little bit more I don't know, more messy to me and less accurate. I find that this is a better way at least for my preferences. You can do it the other way if you want if you prefer. Then we'll just continue pinning the other end of the strap. Again don't forget to fold that short end to the wrong side so that we've hidden that cut edge underneath. Just fold it like that. Just try this once. If you open it all that way, and then fold it that might even be a better finish. I think I like that better, let's do that on both of them. I'm just going to redo this one a minute. Instead of opening it part way, I'm opening it all the way, folding it by about a half an inch and then refolding the edges to the center and the center. That way you really don't see any of those cut edges. Now we're gonna take it back over to the sewing machine. I'm going to start stitching at the very end, that end that we had pinned under. I'm going to start stitching from that center fold, right up there, across the top, pivot and then stitch along the length of the strap. And continue all the way around the armhole to the other end. Your machine is going to have a tendency to want to get, the stitches are going to get a little bit stuck underneath, it's not gonna want to go anywhere. It helps to grab the tails of your sewing machine threads. Just hold onto those as you stitch especially for the first couple of stitches. There we go. I backstitched a few and now as I come down here again I've got my needle, my needle is going to stay down so that I can lift the presser foot and pivot to continue along the strap. I'm stitching as close to the edge as I can. Stay consistent. If you're not comfortable getting really, really close, within an eighth of an inch is fine. Keep an eye on those two folded edges. You want those to be matching as much as they can. You can stretch this a little bit as you sew it because the bias already has some stretch to it. So if you're stretching as you sew, your stitches will have a little bit of stretch as well. That'll help to prevent any threads from breaking when the dress is worn or when the ties are tied. So we're just continuing along. As we get to the yoke, we'll just continue our stitching right onto the yoke. Again we're just edge stitching that fold. So you want to be sure as you're sewing this that you're covering your initial stitching line and everything is smooth. And you're staying as close to the edge as you can comfortably stitch. Watch any puckers that might be developing there. Again if you keep your needle down, that will help. You can lift and adjust as necessary. I'm going to lift and move things around right there. So you'll continue sewing all the way until you reach the other end of the strap and finish the strap in the same way that you did with the beginning of the

strap. Here we're just reaching the end. Again I'm going to pivot and stitch that short end and backstitch just a couple of stitches to lock it. There we go. Now we finished one strap. I'll turn the dress right side out so you can see it. There are two straps going all the way around the armhole. The we'll do the same thing to the other strap on the other side to attach it in the same way.

Chapter 5 - Finishing

Hem and finish

- Our sundress is almost finished. We have both straps attached. We have a front and back yoke. All that's left is to hem the dress. And the way that I like to do that is to sew a basting stitch 5/8 inch from the cut edge. And then I fold the fabric to meet that basting stitch, the cut edge of the fabric to meet the basting stitch. And I fold again on basting stitch. And that encloses the cut edge. And I simply edge stitch that innermost fold. So I'm going to start out here at the machine with the basting stitch. And remember, a basting stitch is a really long stitch so I'm going to adjust my machine to the longest stitch that it will do. And then I'll stitch 5/8 inch away from the cut edge all the way around the hem. A lot of the time, this basting stitch won't even show in the finished hem and you can just leave it in place. So I often use a coordinating thread because chances are that you won't have to remove it. But if it does show when the dress is finished, you can always remove it easily because it's a long stitch so it's very easy to take it out. And you can do this without a basting stitch, but I just find that it really helps to have that folding guide. So there we go. I haven't back stitched or anything. It's just the basting that goes all the way around. Now I'm going to take it over to the ironing board. And like I said, I'm going to first press that cut edge to meet the basting. And I'll do that all the way around. And this is curved, but it's small enough, it's a short enough area that you shouldn't have any trouble easing the fabric in. If it was a very wide hem, then you might have some issues with the widest portion, the cut portion puckering a bit, but because this is a really narrow hem, it should just fold right up and meet nicely. I'm just trying to keep from burning my fingers here. All right, so that's the first fold and pressed. Now I'm going to fold and press a second time. And this time I'll fold right on that basting stitch. And if the basting gets pressed a little bit to the inside, all the better because it won't show. But at least we're getting a really consistent folded edge this way. There, okay. I'm going to take it back over to the sewing machine and I'm going to edge stitch that innermost fold, the first fold that we did. Don't forget to reset your machine to a regular straight stitch instead of a basting stitch. So I'm stitching the innermost fold and you'll notice that I'm sewing from the inside of the dress because it allows me to see just where that fold is and it lets me get right up close to it. And this is a really easy, quick hem. It's lightweight. It's not going to weigh down the dress at all. I got stuck on my side seam again. There we go. Those French seams can be a little bulky. And we've come right back around to where we started. I'm just going to lock stitch a couple of stitches, cut my thread, and there we go. We have one finished popover sundress. If you want to make the doll dress, it's the same process. Just keep in mind that these are 1/4 inch seam allowances instead of 1/2 inch seam allowances, so you might want to avoid the French seams on the side. Just use the standard side seams as we've wrote in the instructions. And you can use all of these seam skills that you've learned by sewing this dress in your other sewing projects going forward.