

Pillowcase Dress Field Card

One-page reference. Front: prep. Back: build and fix. | Sewing.com

Prerequisite Three — Confirm Before You Cut

If any of these is shaky, drill it on a 10-inch scrap of your dress fabric before you touch the cut pieces.

- Straight machine seam** at ½-inch allowance, with start and end backstitches.
- Folded casing** — press ¼ inch, press ¾ inch, stitch close to the inner fold.
- Double-fold hem** — press ¼ inch, press ½ inch, stitch close to the upper fold.

Machine Pre-Flight — Step Zero

1. **Rethread from scratch.** Raise presser foot, pull top thread out, rewind bobbin, rethread both. Fixes roughly 40% of stitch issues.
2. **New needle, size 80/12 universal.** Bent or dull needles are the second-largest pucker cause.
3. **Tension test on scrap.** 3-by-6-inch strip of dress fabric, straight line down the center. Top and bottom stitch should look identical.
4. **Clean the bobbin case.** Remove bobbin and case, brush out lint with a soft brush.

Measurement Worksheet — Fill Before You Cut

Measure the child, not the pillowcase. Write your numbers in the blanks. A rectangle fits the fabric bolt; measurements fit the kid.

A. Chest circumference Around the fullest point	_____ in	+ 4 in ease (+ 2 extra in for fuller-chested)	= _____ in
B. Length Armpit to desired hem	_____ in	+ 1 in (casing + hem allowance)	= _____ in
C. Shoulder span Collarbone to collarbone	_____ in	+ 2 in (gather allowance)	= _____ in

Cut two rectangles: Width = $(A \div 2) + 4$ in ease · Length = $B + 1$ in · Armhole: in 2 in from side, down 3–4 in from top, cut J-curve.

Safety rule (non-negotiable): For children under age 3, use a ¼-inch elastic casing. No ribbons, no ties. Ribbons are choking hazards for this age group.

Construction Sequence — Eight Steps

Machine pre-flight and measurements complete? Start here.

- 1 Cut two rectangles.** Fold fabric selvage-to-selvage, right sides together. Cut through both layers. Cut J-shaped armholes at top corners. Save scraps for pockets or appliqué.
- 2 Side seams.** Right sides together, pin at armhole base, midpoint, hem. Sew ½-inch seam, backstitch both ends. Finish raw edges with zigzag, pinking, or French seam.
- 3 Armholes — pick a path.**
 - A) Double-fold hem:** clip curve every ½ in, press ¼ in twice, stitch.
 - B) Bias tape:** stay-stitch first, align raw edges right sides together, stitch in first crease, fold to inside, topstitch.
- 4 Neckline casing.** Fold top ¼ in, press. Fold ¾ in, press. Stitch close to lower fold. Leave both side ends open. Repeat on back.
- 5 Closure — choose by age.** Ages 3+: ribbon ties, 18–24 in per side, stitch through casing at center back. Under 3: ¼-in elastic, cut to shoulder span minus 1 in, thread with safety pin, secure both ends.
- 6 Hem.** Fold bottom ¼ in, press. Fold ½ in, press. Stitch close to upper fold. Optional: add 4-in contrast band before hemming for extra length.
- 7 Press everything.** Side seams flat, casings crisp, hem sharp. Use a tailor's ham for curved seams if you have one.
- 8 Evaluate before declaring done.** Armhole stays flat when arms raise? Casing lies smooth? Hem even on a table (not just on the wearer)? If no to any, it needs 10 more minutes.

Fix-It Table — Four Common Failures

Symptom	First thing to check	If that doesn't fix it
Puckered seam	Rethread machine from scratch. Swap in a fresh 80/12 needle.	Reduce top tension by one number. Lengthen stitch to 2.5 mm. Sew slower.
Gaping armhole	Chest ease is too generous. Add a narrow elastic loop under the arm to tighten.	On next dress: reduce ease from 4 in to 3 in; raise armhole ½ in.
Twisted casing / ribbon stuck	Smooth ribbon or elastic from the outside by hand; unstitch 1 in at the center back if needed.	Re-thread with a safety pin attached to the tail; keep the leading end flat as you pull.
Uneven hem	Lay flat on a table, not on the wearer. Measure from folded top edge down.	Unpick, press flat, re-fold in equal ¼-in then ½-in increments, re-stitch.