

# Make a Kids' Elastic-Waist Skirt

A complete beginner walkthrough. No commercial pattern needed.

You draft this skirt straight from one measurement, so the pattern is free and it fits the exact child in front of you. This guide walks the whole thing start to finish: measuring, drafting two simple rectangles, sewing, and finishing. Expect about 60 to 90 minutes of active work for a first try.

## SKILL LEVEL

True beginner

## TIME

60-90 min active

## FITS

Ages 2-10 (any size)

## Before You Start: What You Need

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Gather everything first. Stopping mid-step to hunt for a tool is the most common place beginners lose a seam. This is a woven-fabric project, which is far more forgiving for a first make than stretchy knit.

Fabric: about 1/2 to 1 yard of light cotton (quilting cotton, poplin, or a cotton blend). Avoid slippery or stretchy fabric for your first one.

Elastic: 3/4-inch wide braided or knit elastic.

Also: matching thread, sewing machine, scissors or rotary cutter, pins or clips, a ruler or tape measure, a safety pin, and an iron.

Skill check before you begin: you should be able to sew a straight stitch, backstitch to lock a seam, and wind and load a bobbin. If any of those feel shaky, sew a few practice lines on scrap fabric first. That is the whole prerequisite. Nothing here needs zippers, darts, or buttonholes.

## Step 1: Take One Measurement

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You only need two numbers, and the waist is the one that matters most.

### 1 Measure the waist and length

Wrap the tape around the child's waist where the skirt will sit. Write that number down. This is the WAIST measurement.

Hold the tape from the waist down to where you want the hem to land (mid-thigh, knee, whatever you like). Write that number down. This is the LENGTH.

Tip: have the child wear normal clothes while you measure, not a puffy coat, or the skirt will sit loose.

## Step 2: Do the Simple Math (Your Free Pattern)

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There is no paper pattern to print. You are drafting two rectangles from your two numbers. Here is the formula.

Rectangle WIDTH = waist measurement x 1.5, then divide by 2.

You cut two of these (a front and a back), so together they give about 1.5 times the waist in gather. That fullness is what makes it a skirt, not a tube.

Rectangle HEIGHT = your LENGTH number, plus 2.5 inches.

The extra 2.5 inches covers a 1.5-inch casing at the top for the elastic and a 1-inch hem at the bottom. Worked example: a 22-inch waist gives a width of  $(22 \times 1.5) / 2 = 16.5$  inches per rectangle. A 12-inch length gives a height of  $12 + 2.5 = 14.5$  inches. So you cut two rectangles, each 16.5 by 14.5 inches.

## Step 3: Cut Your Two Pieces

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### 2 Cut two matching rectangles

Press the fabric flat first so your cuts are accurate. Wrinkles hide crooked lines.

Measure and mark both rectangles using your width and height numbers. Use a ruler and a fabric pen or chalk.

Cut slowly. If the two pieces are not the same size, the side seams will not line up later. Stack and check them against each other before moving on.

## Step 4: Sew the Side Seams

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### 3 Join the rectangles into a tube

Place the two rectangles right sides together (the printed sides facing each other).

Pin or clip down both short sides. Sew each side with a straight stitch and a 1/2-inch seam allowance. Backstitch at the start and end so the seam locks.

You now have a fabric tube. Finish the raw seam edges with a zigzag stitch or pinking shears so they do not fray in the wash.

Press both seams open or to one side. Pressing as you go is not optional. It is what makes a handmade skirt look bought, not homemade.

## Step 5: Make the Casing for the Elastic

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The casing is just a folded-over tunnel at the top that the elastic slides through. This is the step that feels like real sewing.

### 4 Fold and stitch the top tunnel

At the top edge, fold the fabric down 1/4 inch and press. Then fold down again, this time 1.25 inches, and press again. This double fold hides the raw edge inside.

Pin the fold all the way around.

Stitch close to the bottom edge of the fold, all the way around. Stop about 2 inches before you finish and leave that gap open. You need the opening to feed the elastic through.

## Step 6: Thread the Elastic

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### 5 Pull elastic through the casing

Cut your elastic to the child's waist measurement minus 1 inch, so it hugs gently without digging in.

Pin a safety pin to one end of the elastic. Push the safety pin into the 2-inch gap and scrunch the fabric along the elastic until the pin comes out the other side.

Hold both ends so the elastic does not disappear back inside. Overlap the two ends by 1 inch and sew them together with a square of stitching, back and forth a few times so it holds.

Tuck the joined elastic inside and stitch the 2-inch gap closed.

## Step 7: Hem the Bottom

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### 6 Finish the bottom edge

At the bottom edge, fold up 1/2 inch and press, then fold up another 1/2 inch and press. Pin in place.

Stitch all the way around close to the top of the fold.

Give the whole skirt a final press. Done.

## If Something Goes Wrong (Fix-It First)

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Beginners do not quit because a skirt is hard. They quit because one thing puckered and nobody told them what it meant. Here is the short list.

Puckered seam: your stitch tension is likely too tight, or the fabric was pulled through. Loosen top tension a notch and let the machine feed the fabric on its own. Test on scrap first.

Thread keeps jamming or looping underneath: re-thread the machine from scratch, top and bobbin. Roughly 4 in 10 stitch problems are threading problems, not broken machines.

Elastic twisted inside the casing: it almost always is on the first try. Pull it flat before you sew the ends together, and it stays put.

Waist too loose or too tight: that is the gift of elastic. Open the gap, adjust the elastic length, re-sew. No need to start over.

## You Made a Skirt. Now What?

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That same two-rectangle method scales to any size, so the next one is the exact same steps with bigger numbers. Make it longer for a dress-up twirl skirt, add a contrast hem band, or sew one for yourself.

Save your measurement numbers somewhere. The first draft is the slow one. After that you are reusing a pattern you already own, for free.

### Want more free beginner patterns?

This skirt is one of dozens of free sewing patterns for beginners and kids on Sewing.com. Browse the full beginner library, get the printable cutting card for this skirt, and join the email list for a new free project every week.

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