

Toddler Clothing Pattern Guide

Sizes 2T to 5T

Dimensions | Cutting Layout | Fabric Choices

Step-by-Step Assembly with Fix-It Notes

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Before You Start

This guide covers two beginner-friendly toddler garments: elastic-waist pants and a simple A-line dress. Both use flat construction (finish hems and casings while the fabric is flat, close seams last). No zippers, buttonholes, or fitted necklines required.

Skill level: True beginner with a working sewing machine.

Time estimate: 60 to 90 minutes for pants. 2 to 3 hours for the dress.

Toddler Measurement Chart

Measure the child before cutting. If between sizes, cut the larger size. Toddler clothing should have 1 to 2 inches of ease for comfort and movement.

Measurement	2T	3T	4T	5T
Chest	21"	22"	23"	24"
Waist	20"	21"	22"	22.5"
Hips	22"	23"	24"	25"
Outseam (waist to ankle)	16"	18"	20"	22"
Inseam	10"	12"	14"	15.5"
Shoulder to hem (dress)	17"	19"	21"	23"
Back neck width	4"	4.25"	4.5"	4.5"

Note: These measurements include standard ease. The elastic waist on pants adjusts automatically. Cut elastic to the child's actual waist measurement minus 1 inch.

Fabric Recommendations

- Pants: Quilting cotton, cotton poplin, or cotton twill. Medium weight, easy to press, feeds evenly.
- Dress: Quilting cotton or cotton lawn. Lightweight to medium weight for drape and comfort.
- Pajamas: Cotton flannel. Soft, warm, and beginner-friendly. Check CPSC flammability standards for sleepwear.
- Avoid for first project: Silk, chiffon, heavy denim, or slippery polyester lining.

Budget tip: Repurposing an adult cotton shirt or thrift-store fabric is a smart strategy for toddler projects. Toddler garments use so little fabric that one adult garment often yields enough for a full outfit.

Fabric Yardage Chart

Yardage based on 44/45-inch-wide fabric. Add 0.25 yard for test swatches and cutting errors.

Garment	2T	3T	4T	5T
Elastic-waist pants	0.5 yd	0.625 yd	0.75 yd	0.875 yd
Elastic-waist shorts	0.375 yd	0.375 yd	0.5 yd	0.5 yd
Simple A-line dress	0.75 yd	0.875 yd	1 yd	1.125 yd
Elastic (3/4-inch)	18"	19"	20"	20.5"

Cutting Layout: Elastic-Waist Pants (Size 3T)

All pattern pieces include 0.5-inch seam allowance and 1-inch hem allowance unless noted.

You will cut the following pieces:

- 2 pant leg pieces (front and back are identical for this basic pattern)
- Each piece dimensions for 3T: 10 inches wide at hip, 7 inches wide at ankle, 20 inches long (includes 1-inch hem + 1.5-inch waistband casing)

Cutting steps:

- 1. Fold fabric selvage to selvage, right sides together.
- 2. Place the pattern piece with the grainline arrow parallel to the selvage.
- 3. Pin pattern to fabric or use pattern weights.
- 4. Cut with sharp fabric scissors or a rotary cutter. Do not lift the fabric while cutting.

Cutting Layout: Simple A-Line Dress (Size 3T)

You will cut the following pieces:

- 1 front bodice/skirt piece (cut on fold): 12 inches wide at hem, 9 inches wide at chest, 19 inches long
- 1 back bodice/skirt piece (cut on fold, identical to front for this basic pattern)
- 2 bias strips for neckline and armhole finishing: 1.5 inches wide, cut on the bias

Cutting on the fold: Fold fabric right sides together. Place the center-front line of the pattern on the fold. This gives you a symmetrical piece without a center seam.

Assembly: Elastic-Waist Pants

Follow this order exactly. Flat construction means you finish as much as possible before closing the garment into a tube.

Step 1: Hem the legs while flat.

Fold the bottom edge of each leg piece up 0.5 inch, press. Fold again 0.5 inch, press. Stitch close to the inner folded edge. Do this on both pieces while they are still flat rectangles.

Step 2: Create the waistband casing while flat.

At the top edge of each piece, fold down 0.25 inch, press. Fold down again 1.25 inches, press. Stitch close to the inner folded edge, leaving a 2-inch opening on one piece for threading elastic.

Step 3: Sew the inseam.

Place both pieces right sides together. Stitch the curved inseam (the seam that runs between the legs) with a 0.5-inch seam allowance. Backstitch at start and end.

Step 4: Sew the side seams.

With right sides still together, stitch each side seam from waist to hem with a 0.5-inch seam allowance. Press seams open or to one side.

Step 5: Insert elastic.

Attach a safety pin to one end of the elastic. Thread it through the waistband casing opening. Overlap ends by 0.5 inch and stitch with a zigzag stitch. Stitch the casing opening closed.

Step 6: Topstitch to lock elastic.

Stitch through all layers at each side seam to prevent the elastic from twisting during wear and washing.

Fix-It Note

If your seam puckers on lightweight cotton, reduce presser foot pressure (if adjustable) and switch to a new size 80/12 needle. Re-thread the machine completely. Test on a scrap before continuing. 40% of stitch problems are threading errors.

Assembly: Simple A-Line Dress

Step 1: Finish the neckline while flat.

On each piece (front and back), fold the neckline edge down 0.25 inch and press. Fold again 0.5 inch and press. Stitch close to the inner fold. Alternative: apply a bias binding strip for a cleaner finish.

Step 2: Finish the armholes while flat.

Same method as neckline. Fold 0.25 inch, press, fold 0.5 inch, press, stitch. Do this on all four armhole curves before joining any seams.

Step 3: Sew the shoulder seams.

Place front and back right sides together. Stitch each shoulder seam with a 0.5-inch seam allowance. Press seams open.

Step 4: Sew the side seams.

With right sides together, stitch from armhole to hem on each side. Use a 0.5-inch seam allowance. Press seams open or to one side.

Step 5: Hem the dress.

Fold the bottom edge up 0.5 inch, press. Fold again 1 inch, press. Stitch close to the inner fold. Press the finished hem.

Fix-It Note

If your neckline or armhole finish looks bumpy, you pressed after stitching instead of before. Press the fold into the flat fabric first, then stitch. The fabric will remember the crease.

Machine Setup Checklist

- Needle: Universal 80/12 for woven cotton. Ballpoint 80/12 for jersey/knit.
- Thread: All-purpose polyester thread (Gutermann or Coats & Clark).
- Stitch length: 2.5mm for seams. 3.0mm for elastic casing. 4.0mm for basting.
- Tension: Start at your machine's default (usually 4). Test on a scrap of your project fabric.
- Presser foot: Standard zigzag foot for most steps. Walking foot if available for knit fabrics.
- Bobbin: Freshly wound with the same thread as the top spool.

Sizing Up and Down

To adjust the basic pattern for a different size, use the measurement chart on page 2. For each size up, add approximately 0.5 inch to the width at each side seam and 2 inches to the length. For each size down, reduce by the same amounts.

Growth tuck: To extend the life of pants, fold a 1-inch horizontal tuck into each leg above the hem before hemming. When the child grows, release the tuck for an extra inch of length.

Safety Note

For sleepwear, CPSC regulations require either snug-fitting construction or flame-resistant fabric for children's sizes 9 months through 14 years. Check cpsc.gov for current requirements before sewing pajamas. Avoid loose ribbons, buttons, or drawstrings on toddler garments.

You finished the guide.

Now finish the garment.

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