

Are you ready? Let's go sew!

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Segment Title: Sew and Serge Your Own Stylish Swimwear

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Skip the hassle of shopping for a swimsuit and sew your own figure flattering, stylish swimwear. Sewing your own swimwear is very economical and easier than you may think! Here you will find tips for choosing flattering styles, selecting notions and fabrics suitable for swimwear and determining stitch options for a regular sewing machine or serger. You'll see how to sew stretchy seams on the sewing machine and the serger, add elastic, and learn hemming techniques for swimwear fabrics. Note that you can apply many of these same techniques to sewing loungewear, active wear, skating, and dance costumes.

Materials and Supplies featured in this episode:

- [Brother XV8500D Sewing and Embroidery Machine](#)
- The [Brother 234PRW Serger](#)
- Main pattern featured in this episode is Kwik Sew 3609 available at www.sewsassy.com
- [Coats](#) Sewing thread, Dual Duty XP
- [Dritz Extra Fine Ball Point Pins](#)
- [3/8-inch cotton swimwear elastic](#)
- Size 11 stretch needle – essential for sewing the elastic and fabric with spandex blend

Additional notions for swimsuit, optional but recommended:

- Texturized nylon type serger thread for soft seam finishes sewn on the serger.
- Size 11/4.0 stretch twin needle for hemming.

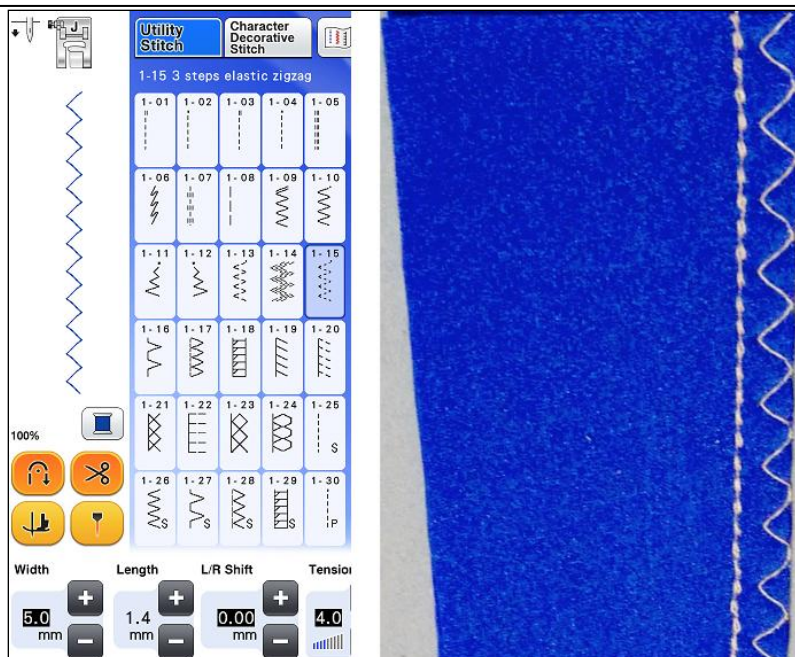
General tips for sewing stylish, high quality swimwear

- Consider style features that will flatter your figure such as ruching details to slim the waist and tummy area.
- Select a swimsuit with a separate or included skirt to provide a little extra coverage over hips and thighs. If you have a ready-made swimsuit you are fond of it's a good idea to measure the length from waist to hem and adjust your pattern for a similar finished length.
- Look for patterns that incorporate bust cups or added foam inserts for added shape and support in the bust area. It's easy to add bust cups to most patterns even if they are not included. It is best to add these to the lining prior to construction of the swimsuit by using a zig zag stitch. You could also hand tack bust cups in place once the suit is finished.
- To imitate the best in ready to wear swimwear you will want to use both the sewing machine and the serger. See more in the tip section below.

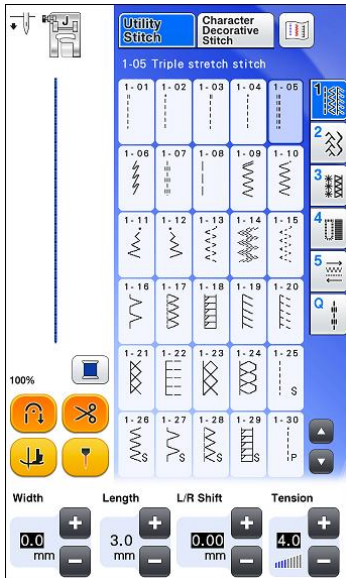
Tips for selecting various stitches on the sewing machine and serger

Sewing seams with the sewing machine - If you want to construct the swimsuit using just a sewing machine, you will find a variety of suitable stitches below. Even if you plan to use a serger there are many seams that are smaller and more intricate on a swimsuit. It is easier to sew these seams on a regular machine. You may consider using the serger to finish off these seams and connect the raw edges. For another option, consider using a two-step or three-step zig zag stitch for this purpose. It is important to note that swimsuit knit will not ravel. However, I think the seams are more durable and more comfortable against the skin if they are connected together with serging or an overcast stitch. Note the optimum settings shown for each of the selected stitches described below:

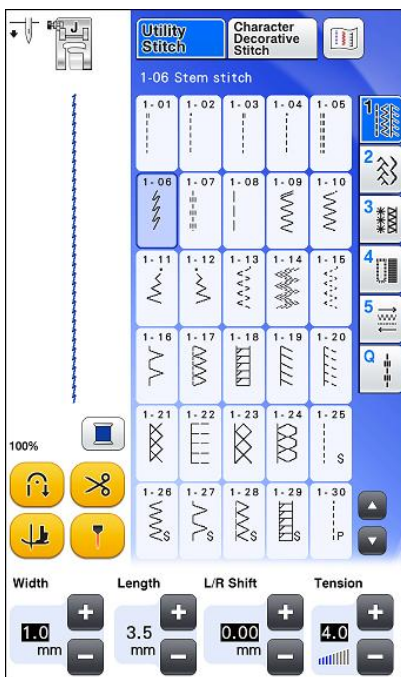
Three Step Elastic Zig Zag Stitch and the Triple Stretch Stitch combined with the Three Step Elastic Zig Zag Stitch



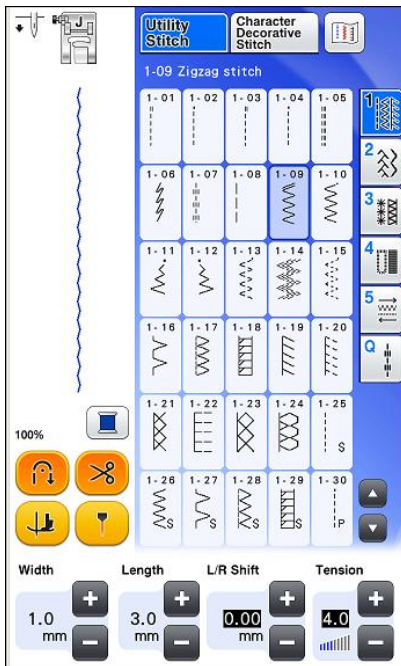
The Triple Stretch Stitch – This basic stitch found on most sewing machines ensures that no seams will pop even when the suit is wet. It is also my preferred stitch for topstitching elastic in place. The main thing to remember with this stitch is that it is very permanent, meaning it is difficult to remove. This is especially true when stitched on knit fabrics so just be sure that you have refined the fit and you are ready to permanently sew your seam.



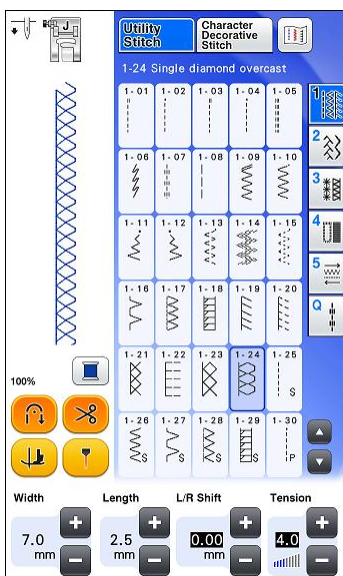
The Stem Stitch, I like to call this the “lightning stitch” – This stitch is not as strong or as stretchy as the one above but it is nice and lightweight. It is good for sewing detailed seams in areas that do not require maximum stretch. Another advantage of this stitch is the fact that it presses very flat when pressed open.



Slight Zig Zag Stitch – If you have no other options you can select a zig zag set for a very narrow width and a medium length and use it to sew stretchy seams. It is helpful to slightly stretch the seam while sewing to build a little more stretch into the seam.

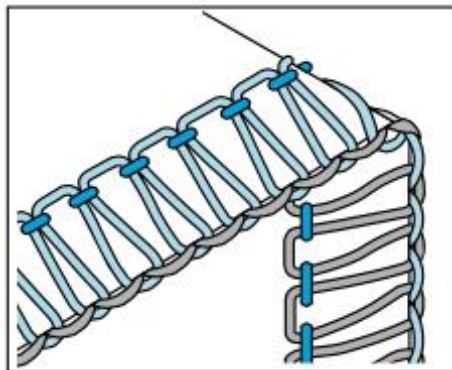


Overcasting Stitch - Chances are you have a variety of stitches similar to this on your own personal machine. These stitches are designed to sew the seam and overcast the raw edges all in one step. This may be the next best choice if you do not have access to a serger for sewing your swimsuit. Just be sure to test each stitch on scrap fabric. Some stitches of this type are too bulky for the swimsuit fabric. You can also experiment with making the stitch wider to accommodate common ¼-inch seam allowance in swimsuit patterns. Often times I will lengthen the stitch a bit as well. When sewing, position the fabric so the overcasting that forms along the right hand side of this stitch encases the raw edges.



Sewing seams with the serger – I prefer to use a three thread wide balanced stitch for the long straight seams on my swimsuits. For a three-thread stitch you will want to use the leftmost needle in the machine. I like to use standard serger thread in the needle and “woolly” texturized nylon thread in both loopers. Be aware that texturized thread does require a looser tension. Adjust the stitch by testing on long strips of scrap fabric, making slight adjustments until you achieve the look of a balanced stitch. This stitch is also ideal for finishing edges before hemming, and for securing the lining layer to the swimsuit fabric.

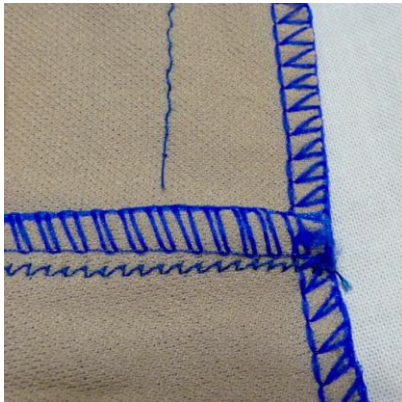
Three thread balanced serger stitch



Tips for sewing elastic:

- Always choose elastic that is specifically designed for swimwear.
- Pay attention to the pattern directions when sewing elastic. Note that elastic is not evenly distributed on a swimsuit. You will find that curved areas of the body require a different ratio of elastic than areas like the front of the leg. Most of the stretch goes along the fullest part of the body to ease in the fullness and hold snug to the body.
- I like to stitch my elastic using a three-step process:
Step 1. Begin with edges that are secured together with a machine or serger stitch, machine basting, or both.
Step 2. Stitch the elastic to the edge using a three-step zig zag stitch, stretching elastic as per the pattern instructions.
Step 3. Turn the elastic to the inside of the garment. Topstitch from the topside using the Triple Stretch Stitch.

Step 1.



Step 2.



Step 3.



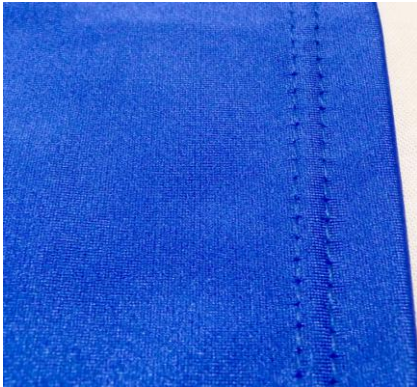
Example of finished leg opening with elastic:



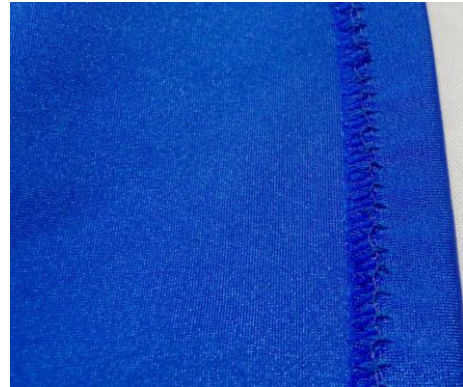
Additional tips:

- Follow these steps for a stretchy, professional looking hem: Serge finish the raw edge of the hem with wooly type thread. Thread the machine for twin needle sewing with a size 11/4.0 Stretch Twin needle. Turn up the hem and hem from the right side, taking care to stitch slowly without stretching the hemline.

Right side of hem stitched with twin needle



Wrong side of hem stitched with twin needle



- Swimsuit fabric is very heat sensitive. If you need to iron use a low temperature and a press cloth, testing first on a remnant of fabric. For most seams it is better to leave them unpressed.
- Choose high quality swimsuit fabric from a quality resource such as Sewsassy.com for fabric that is easy to sew and long lasting.
- Consider fully lining the major areas of your swimsuit with quality swimsuit lining.

Additional Resources:

- Visit Sewsassy.com for high quality swimwear fabrics, swimsuit patterns, and specialty notions for sewing stylish swimwear that rivals the best in ready to wear. Sewsassy.com carries Kwik Sew swimsuit patterns. These patterns have excellent instructions and great styling. They are my personal favorite for sewing swimwear. You will also find a selection of patterns for young girls. [CLICK HERE](#) for girls swimwear patterns.
- Visit the Brother web site at www.brother-usa.com for Free embroidery designs, project instructions, and tutorials for sewing many different types of fabrics.
- Visit your local [Brother sewing machine dealer](#) for Brother Machines, Brother software programs, and special machine accessories to help you create custom items that rival the best in ready to wear.
- Please visit me at my Sewing and Embroidery website, www.letsdosew.com for more tips, techniques, videos, and free downloads. Sign up for updated sewing ideas and inspiration, free project ideas, and more when you visit www.letsdosew.com.
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Happy Sewing!