

## **Ruffles/Gathering** **Londa Rohlring**

**Londa's Creative Threads**  
**<http://www.londas-sewing.com>**

*Gathering has been around for as long as ladies have wanted to look feminine. Gathers are seen everywhere from children's bonnets and clothing, to adults' fashion - whether a little as in a sleeve cap, or at a cuff, as a pretty neckline or in a tiered skirt, and also in home decorating: think pillow ruffles, bed skirts, curtains....*

*Sew.... developing a repertoire of techniques for different situations and fabrics is important. Actually creating nice, full, evenly distributed gathers is a challenging task.*

*Londa discusses amount of fullness desired and then shows her own technique utilizing needle position, a simple self-thread zigzag gathering technique AND use of machine accessories such as the gathering foot. Even the serger can be used to create quick and easy ruffles!*

### **Showcase of garments featuring flounces**

Baby bonnets, pillows, a vintage jumpsuit, a Shirred knit top, even elastic shirring to create a lovely jacket neckline - ruffles have been - and probably always will be...prevalent in our world.

### **Fullness Desired**

1. Fabric weight and desired look determine proportion of ruffle to fabric to which it is attached.

1.5, 2.0, 2.5 and even 3 times fullness are shown.

on a 10" base: 15" = 1.5 fullness

20" = 2.0 fullness

25" = 2.5 fullness

30" = 3.0 fullness

2. ALWAYS use strong 100% polyester thread for gathering stitches as the strength is needed. NEVER use cotton thread, as it WILL break!

### **Londa's Anchored Needle Position Technique**

- NO needle tension adjustments are made.
- Gathering stitches are set with the WRONG side of the ruffle up at the machine.

- Two rows of stitching are set, BOTH started with securing by backstitching to start.
- Needle position capability on the machine is used to easily set the gathering stitch rows while keeping the right hand raw edge at the same 5/8" throat plate marking.
- Set one row 1/8" further in towards the center of the ruffle from the edge.  
Example: for 5/8" seam : set 1st row at 3/4" from the edge
- Set another row 1/8" further towards the cut edge of the ruffle  
Example: for 5/8" seam: set 2nd row at 1/2" from the edge
- Leave LONG excess thread at the end of each gathering stitch row.
- Mark centers (and 1/4's, etc for longer projects) on both base fabric and ruffle for 'keying' up when distributing gathers.
- For long lengths - such as a bed ruffle, or very full skirt on a dress, break up gathering stitches into sections. But, to prevent un-gathered areas, overlap beginning of sequential set of gathers over where previous section ended, but not stitching on top of previous stitches.
- Right sides together, with ruffle up so you can see it, pin gathered section to base at beginning and end and keying up other marks as in center, etc.
- Pull long threads at the right with right hand until the gathering thread length equals that of the base. Do NOT try to equally distribute gathers at this time.
- Figure 8 the threads around the pin at the right hand edge.
- NOW distribute the gathers equally.
- Stitch BETWEEN the gathering rows on the 5/8" seam line. On some fabrics, reducing the pressure on the presser foot may be helpful to keep the gathers in place rather than scootching out in front of the presser foot.
- Carefully rip the innermost row of gathering stitches at the reversed beginning end. Pull out. Thread will fall off on the right side of the ruffle.

### **'ZigZag Over' Technique**

Though commonly utilized, my opinion is that this technique does not produce as nice and regular and fine of gathers as the previous technique.

1. It is a well-known technique to zig zag over top of a heavier thread (eg: buttonhole, topstitching, or even dental floss). Anchor at the beginning and pull the heavier thread to gather.
2. Another technique is to pull the needle thread itself (again, polyester) out of the machine, through the needle, and lay it over the ruffle edge to be gathered along the seam line. Proceed to zigzag over top of this thread. Doing this automatically anchors the thread at the beginning.

### **Gathering Foot Machine Accessory**

*This technique yields gathers that are permanent, and not adjustable. Test to determine machine settings and proportion of ruffle to base needed to achieve the desired result.*

1. Utilize left needle position.
2. Longer stitch lengths will create more fullness.
3. Fabric to be gathered (ruffle) is placed totally UNDER the foot. (The slot is for joining the base to the ruffle simultaneously.)
4. Increasing the Needle Tension drastically increases the amount of gathers created in the ruffle.

### **Shirr with 1/8" Braided Elastic**

1. Pull elastic fully as it is zig zag stitched right next to the seam line in the seam allowance. Stitch length of 3.0, stitch width of 2.5 works well.

### **Gathering with a Serger**

- Use 4 thread overlock: 2 needles, upper looper, lower looper.
- Set stitch length to longest.
- Set differential feed to most positive (highest) setting.
- Be SURE to start with a LONG chain BEFORE stitching onto the fabric, wrong side up. Also END with a LONG chain. This is because the needle threads length is what is needed in order to maintain the stitch formation along the ruffle, as it is lengthened, shortened, adjusted.
- For sergers with chainstitch capability, elastic thread in the chain looper can create industrial-strength shirring.

#### Materials:

Base fabric and ruffle fabric

Polyester thread

Marking Tool

Seam Ripper

Pins

Gathering Foot

Screwdriver to attach gathering foot

[Sensational Shirring](#) and [Londa's Heirloom Bonnet](#) are Londa's creative patterns featuring several variations of this basic technique used to create the garments. FREE directions are available at the FREE INFO section of Londa's website. [3-5 Tiered Skirt](#)

Images





