
Sew an Artist Smock with Faith Hale

Chapter 1 - Artist Smock

Overview

- Hi, I'm Faith, I'm a staff artist here at Creativebug, and I believe that every artist and crafter needs a smock, particularly one with big, roomy pockets. I'm an avid upcycler, and so I like to make my aprons using an oversized men's shirt. It also features simple rollover hems, so if you can sew a straight line and have some agility with your iron, you can make this apron. I'll show you how to deconstruct a thrifted shirt, how to make the arm holes, and how to attach large patch pockets. This is a really satisfying project that comes together very quickly and will certainly become a studio staple. (gentle pop music)

Materials

- This smock is meant to be a bit oversize so you'll want to choose a shirt that when you try it on, fits you very loosely. I wear an extra large in women's so this is an extra large men's shirt. You want something that doesn't have any large pockets. If it does, remove it with a seam ripper. And long sleeves are necessary for this. Also, you'll want a fabric that has a bit of weight to it. So just a basic dress shirt might be a little bit light. This has two layers of threads, you can tell by the checks. Maybe a corduroy or a denim works best. You'll also need a cutting mat and a rotary cutter. You'll need some marking pencils. I used light ones here because we have a darker shirt. You'll need a sewing machine with corresponding thread. And an iron and an ironing surface.

Deconstructing shirt and sewing armholes

- This part is the most fun when you just start cutting into an entire shirt. You'll lay it out flat on the table with it buttoned up. And make sure the side seams are pulled all the way out and it's nice and smooth and even. You're going to get your ruler, and your chalk, and we'll measure down from the collar, so from this seam here, five inches. Mark at the five. From this point we'll mark 12 inches straight down. So make sure it's parallel with the center seam. (pencil scratching) And then we'll mark it straight out to the side. So we're going to make this a swooping curve following the original arc of the shirt. You don't have to cut down to this point, this works more as the apex, but this'll be our deepest point. So we've roughly followed the original seam, pulling it down a lot. We'll use our scissors to cut it out. And cut through both layers of material. And we'll use this as the template for our other side, making sure the side seam is even, and the sleeve seam is even. Gets a little fluttery here at the underarm, but we can either trace around it, or just cut. I find that a little bit easier. Now if your cutting isn't all that even, and a little bit raggedy, this next step will totally fix that. We're going to sew a single line of stitching one inch from the edge all the way around. Begin with the bottom. To the edge of my presser foot is an inch. Go slowly and be sure not to stretch your fabric, particularly around these curves. Trim your threads and repeat on the other side. We're going to use our stitch line as a guide, so we'll be folding in our hem. So first we'll fold it just to the line, and then we fold it over one more time, so then when we sew the actual seam you don't see this line of stitches, but it does help us create a nicer, crisper edge and makes for this folding part a little bit easier. So I like to fold a couple of inches at a time. And I'm ironing it down. Go just shy of the line. It's all right if it doesn't come all that close, but don't go over the line. If you have any raggedy edges like that, that doesn't make folding all that easy. So you can trim it off now, work your way

around the entire armhole, and when that's all been pressed, you'll fold it over one more time and this time you'll steam and then immediately pin. So we have our first fold, and then the second fold. And we want the line of stitching to be just on the inside. So we'll iron, and then pin down. You can pin every four inches, or so. Pin all the way around, and then repeat on the second armhole, then we'll sew around with a $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch seam. I already have this one prepared. We're gonna start sewing at the bottom of the shirt using our $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch seam. And do a couple of backstitches here, too. Be sure to remove pins as you go. These shoulders can be kind of thicker seams, so if you just go very slowly it'll keep it nice and clean. When you get to the end, overlap your sewing by about a $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch, and then you can trim your threads. Here is our first completed armhole. Repeat on the second side, and then give them both a good press.

Adding pockets and finishing

- Our big, voluminous pockets are actually made out of our sleeves. So get your sleeve pieces and make sure they're rid of all seams. So if you've cut directly along the seam, make sure you've cut off any folds. Most button-down shirts will have this button placket here, so we're going to go ahead and cut that off, and I'll be using a rotary cutter and straight edge just 'cause we want this to be as straight as possible. Repeat with the second sleeve. And then we'll lay them on top of our shirt so we can get a visual of where the pockets will be. So the largest possible pocket we can have, oh, is absolutely enormous. So we will be folding down the top by an inch, so a $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch, and then a $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch again. And we'll be doing that on each side. So really we've given ourselves a lot of fabric to work with. If the pocket goes up this high it's actually going to be hard to get your arm in. Let's measure down 18 inches from the top of our shoulder. So it'll be here. We'll make a mark. I'm going to do that straight across. And now we're going to do all the marking on our pocket to see where we need to cut. We'll be pressing this down in a moment, but we're just doing a loose $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, double fold. And I like to have the pockets go almost to the edge, almost to this button band, and almost here. Now I'm going to begin marking it keeping in mind that wherever I mark it, the pocket will end up being an inch smaller than that. So I want the pocket to be right about here. And then same on this side. I want the pocket to end up just about here. So I'll measure an inch outside of that. And finally, I want this to be as deep as possible, but I don't want it to go below the shirt. So I can feel through, here's where it ends. So I'm actually going to make my line right about there. And this is where the quilting ruler helps us, keeps it nice and square 'cause I can make sure that these lines are going straight. We'll layer the piece with the cutting lines on top of our other sleeve so you can cut two pockets out at once. Now go ahead and press in each edge a $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch, then a $\frac{1}{2}$ and inch again, starting with the top and folding it in a $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch. And a $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch again. Then the bottom. And the sides just get folded right over. We're going to sew along the top edge of the pocket with a $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch seam. This will be a straight stitch and we'll be backstitching at the beginning and end. We'll be stitching it from the front, and a $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch on this machines lines up with the edge of the presser foot. Trim your tails if there's any little fringy bits sticking off. Repeat all these steps with your second pocket. Find that marking you made about 18 inches down from the top, and we're going to pin around the edges. Make sure everything is tucked under. Make sure it's nice and smooth against your garment. I like to pin in the corners, and then in the centers. And before you do any stitching, go ahead and try this on making sure that the height is where you like it. You might have shorter arms than me. I have very long arms. So you might want it a little higher, or a little bit lower. But be sure to check it before you make it permanent, and then once you've decided where is best for you, we're going to take it to the machine and we're going to sew again

with that 1/4 inch seam all the way around, excluding the top, of course, and we'll be backstitching at the beginning and end. Once you've gotten within a 1/4 inch of the end, leave the needle down, raise the presser foot, and pivot it 90 degrees. And then we'll sew across the bottom. Sew all the way to the end, then give it a little bit of a backstitch just to secure. Once you've repeated that on the other side you will have your smock! These big pockets that can hold, gosh, a whole knitting project. They sky's really the limit for these pockets. You can customize them any way you choose. You can paint them, you can embroider on top of them maybe even do some quilting. I love my upcycled studio apron. I wear it all the time. It's big enough that you can wear it over your coat if it's chilly inside, or you can wear it over a white t-shirt!