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Tennis-Style Dress Serger Project



By: Stephanie Struckmann using the Courtside Dress Pattern by Greenstyle

Skill Level: Confident Beginner/Intermediate

Description: Serge up this sporty style dress and bike shorts with your Baby Lock 4- or 8-thread Serger and add cute Creative Top Cover Stitches with the Baby Lock Applaud Cover Stitch Machine!

Supplies:

Baby Lock 4- or 8-Thread Serger

Baby Lock Applaud Cover Stitch Machine

[Courtside Dress Pattern by Greenstyle Patterns](#)

Fabric/Notions needed per the pattern





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- The 4-way stretch fabric used for the sample is Sapphire Blue from Greenstyle's Align 2 fabric line

4 Spools of Madeira Aerofil Serger Thread to match fabric

1 Spool All-purpose Sewing Thread

Creative Top Cover Stitch Thread: White (or contrasting), 2 Spools Madeira Decora 12 and 3 spools

Madeira Aerofil

Seam Gauge

Wonder Clips (instead of pins)

Fabric Marking Utensil

If hemming the skirt with a Cover Stitch, HeatnBond Soft Stretch Lite Iron-On **Sewable** Adhesive

Tape, 5/8"

Baby Lock Serger Teflon Foot* (BLE8-TF)

Serger Fabric Guide*

Baby Lock Curve Foot* BLE8-CVF

Compensating Serger Foot* BLES8-COMF

Baby Lock Clear Foot* BLE8-CLF

Applaud Stitch in the Ditch Micro Insert Foot Kit* BLP6-SDFEET

*Optional

Tutorial Instructions:

The instructions written with the purchased pattern are excellent! You will follow the order of the pattern instructions when constructing. This tutorial will give you tips and tricks to stitch most everything with your Baby Lock Serger and Baby Lock Applaud Cover Stitch Machine! Use your Thread Guide to assist in setting up for the different stitches.

1. If you plan on adding Creative Top Cover Stitching with the Baby Lock Applaud, stitch the first seam of the garment with a Chain Stitch (either on your 8-thread Serger or your Applaud/Cover Stitch Machine) or use the lightning Stretch Stitch on your sewing machine (utilizing a stretch/ball point needle for the sewing machine). Stitch a seam in some test fabric also.
2. Press the seam open. Use a pressing block to help the seams lay nice and flat.





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3. To add some Creative Top Cover Stitching to seams (or wherever you would like to place Applaud decorative stitching), set the Baby Lock Applaud up with the two Decora 12 threads in the wipers and standard serger threads in the positions for a Cover Stitch Narrow. Use some test fabric to play with the stitch length to see what you like.



4. You can use the standard insert on the Applaud foot to align the seamline or consider using one of the Stitch in the Ditch feet. They are very helpful when stitching along seam lines! Use the test fabric to see where you want to stitch and practice alignment along a seam. Sometimes I straddled the seam and other times, I stitched right next to the seam.





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5. If following the same decorative stitching as the sample, place the decorative stitching on the seam just under the bust.
6. Next, stitch the vertical front side seams (with the Chain Stitch or Stretch Stitch) as shown in step 2 of the pattern instructions. Press seams outward and then, put the Creative Top Cover Stitch on both of those stitch lines. The creative stitching for the front is complete.



7. I used a Chain Stitch for the shoulder seams so I could press them open and it lay flatter. Alternatively, you can use a 3- or 4-thread Overlock stitch for that and when stitching the shelf bra to the outer layer. Set the stitch length at 2.5mm and the stitch





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width at M. Just make sure to nest seams when lining up two bulky seams (since these seams cannot be pressed open). See tip below for $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam alignment. For the crossover back, the seam has an angle in it. Where there is a slight corner, serge off the fabric completely and then, line back up and serge back on to complete the seam. The inside seam is a little more do-able to continually stitch without having to serge off and on again.



Tip for alignment: The pattern author notes that the seam allowance is $\frac{3}{8}$ " (unless otherwise specified) so, you'll need to identify where you'll to line up your fabric when stitching seams with the Overlock Stitch. From the left needle O1 to the blade, it is about a $\frac{1}{4}$ ". If you look at the lines on the tip of the foot, those raised notches align with each needle position. Using a measuring gauge, find placement for a $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam allowance. I found that lining up the fabric with the edge of the plastic in front of the bed of the machine made a $\frac{3}{8}$ " seam allowance, trimming about $\frac{1}{8}$ " off as I stitched. So, for seams that you use an Overlock Stitch to seam with, you'll want to line up at that same spot. The following image



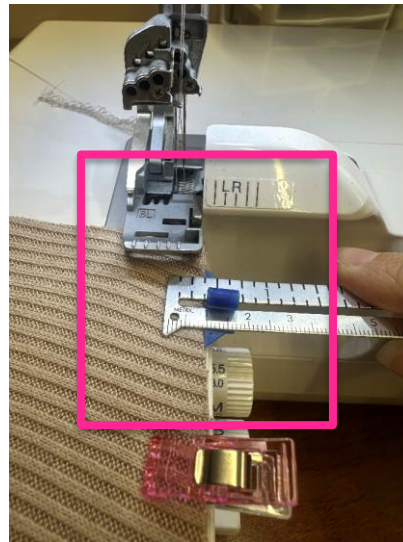


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is using different fabric, but see that you can use a measuring gauge to get the correct seam allowance.



8. Continue to follow the pattern, using the serger Chain Stitch or sewing machine Stretch Stitch. If doing the crossover back, you'll add the Creative Top Cover Stitch after stitching and pressing open the center back seam (step 12 in the [pattern instructions](#)). You'll stitch from the lining to the outer piece. You might have to get creative with how you put it into the machine. The image below shows the lining folded to the inside, but it also has the Applaud stitch on it as well so that it is one continual stitch with how the pattern is stitched together.



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9. When you stitch the side seams of the skirt, you can use a 3- or 4-Thread Wide Overlock Stitch. Set the stitch length at 2.5mm and the stitch width at M. If you plan on adding a decorative Creative Top Cover Stitch on the hem, leave about 2-3" open on the lower edge of one side seam (it's easier later to stitch on and off without having to overlap).
10. If you are wanting to add the Creative Top Cover Stitch at the waist seam, use the Chain Stitch or Stretch Stitch to seam that stitch line. Press the seam upward and then, stitch the Creative Cover Stitch on top from side to side.
11. If you are wanting to add the Creative Top Cover Stitch to the "U" shape in the back, fair warning, this is the trickiest one to achieve because of the intense curve. Stitch the "U" seam with a Chain Stitch or Stretch Stitch (as shown in step 15 of the [pattern instructions](#)). Then, press the seam allowance outward. Finally, stitch the Applaud decorative stitch from one top of the "U" to the other top (starting and ending at the





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edge of the shelf bra lining). You can see the Stitch in the Ditch Micro Insert attachment utilized in the image below.



12. Stitch the elastic onto the shelf bra with your Overlock and Cover Stitch!
13. Then, decide what you want to do for the hem. If the raw cut edge looks good to you, you don't necessarily have to hem it. The sample is not hemmed. However, an additional Applaud Creative Top Cover Stitch was stitched around the lower edge about 1.25" from the raw edge (starting and ending at the lower end of a side seam that was left open)! The lower edge of the side seam that was left open will need to be stitched closed after the decorative stitch is in place. You can indeed hem it with the Standard Cover Stitch (see the below section Cover Hem Perfectly) and then add the Applaud stitching if desired! Or, you can press up the hem and stitch it with the Applaud Creative Top Cover Stitch using the same process discussed in Cover Hem Perfectly (below) with a 5/8" hem allowance (using the hem tape)!
14. Stitch the Bike Shorts to go underneath your adorable dress. They are pretty straightforward when it comes to the stitching. See tips below for hemming and for





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serging the side seams of the waistband. You'll use 3- or 4-thread Overlock stitches for all of the seams, using a 3/8" seam allowance. For the top hem of the pocket and the hem of each leg, you'll use a Cover Hem (you might consider using the same Applaud Creative Top Cover Stitch)!

Additional Tips:

The Teflon Serger Foot

For your serger stitching, consider the Teflon Serger Foot (the image below shows the Teflon coating on the bottom of the foot). The Standard Foot works great, but I do love the way fabric glides under the Teflon Foot. You can stick with the Standard Foot, but if you notice friction/stretching, give the Teflon Foot a whirl!



Serging over Bulky Seams

Sometimes, when you serge over a bulky seam, you might notice that it can get stuck at the toe of the serger foot for a second. This can cause stretching or warping at that spot. When you get to a seam, simply serge right up to the bulk and gently lift the toe of the foot to allow for some of the bulk to go under, put the toe back down, take another stitch or two,





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lift the toe again and continue until the bulky seam is evenly on its way under the pressure of the foot. Consider using a stiletto tool, as well, to help push the bulk under the foot (just watch out for the blade obviously). You might also find that the Teflon Foot or the Compensating Foot for smoother transitions over bulky seams!

The Curve Foot

Consider the Curve Foot or the Clear Curve Foot when you need to serge in tight spaces or need to see more clearly through the foot. The curve foot is shorter and comes in handy especially when hemming sleeves or leg hems.



Cover Hem Perfectly!

1. For Cover Hemming on some knit fabrics, it is highly recommended to use HeatnBond Soft Stretch Lite Iron-On Adhesive Tape (make sure it says sewable on the front of the packaging) on these cover stitch hems. This iron-on hem tape makes the finished hem look so good! It prevents any tunneling of fabric between the needles and it will keep the hem in place while stitching (no clips/pins necessary)! It also helps the hem keep its shape after it's stitched.



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2. If you are pressing the hem up the exact amount of the width of the tape (5/8"), simply press the "glue" side down along the raw edge of the hem. Then, peel off the paper backing, fold up the hem, and press it in place. If you are pressing up the hem wider than the tape, press the hem up first, then press the tape along the raw edge (shown in the image).



3. Set up your serger for a Cover Stitch Narrow, using needles C2 and C3 (the center and right cover/chain stitch needles). I like to use a 3.0mm stitch length for stitches that topstitch. If you prefer to do a Wide Cover Stitch instead of Narrow, that is ok too!
4. Next, find the placement line. We will create a standard cover hem, where the parallel straight stitch lines appear on top of the garment. That means, we will need to place the raw edge of the hem underneath while stitching, which means it cannot be seen while stitching. If you prefer, you can stitch it with the raw edge facing up and get the "braided" look of the cover hem on the top of the garment (this is called the Reverse Cover Stitch OR, of course, you can use the Applaud Stitch to get the braided look on top and bottom). Just remember, for the standard Cover Stitch, it will stitch two straight stitch lines on the underside raw edge of the hem. Since knits do not fray, this may not bother you but if you'd like the





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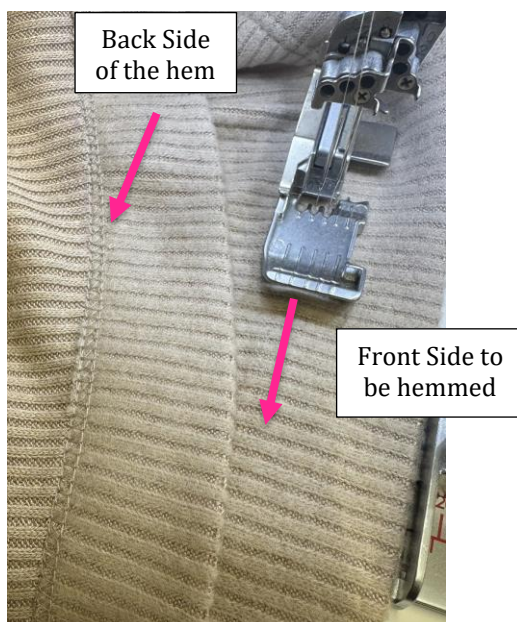
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raw edge covered with the “braiding” of the cover hem, you’ll want to do the standard cover hem with the parallel stitch lines on top.

Take a look at the image on the below. To find where you will need to line the hem up while stitching, place the wrong side of the hem up so that you can find where the raw edge needs to sit in relation to the needles. If doing the Narrow Cover Stitch, align the raw edge of the hem up with the center needle (line it right up with it or just to the right of it). Put the foot down to hold it in place temporarily. This will help you find a place to line the fold of the hem up with while you serge. Mark it with masking tape on the serger table or better yet, use a Fabric Guide for your serger (see your Baby Lock retailer)! Stitch a test piece to assure all looks well. Check the backside also to make sure alignment is proper.

5. Once you have something to line the fold of the hem up with. Place the right side of the garment hem facing up and underneath the foot. Align the fold of the hem up with your marking or fabric guide. Start cover stitching. Check the backside as you go, as well.



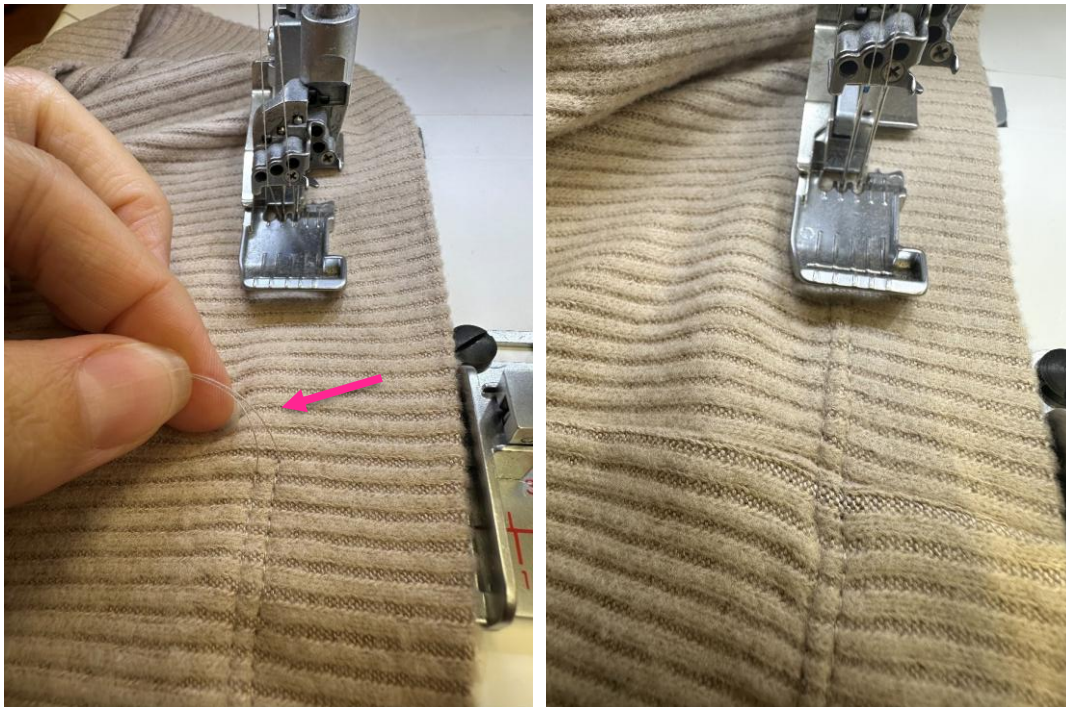


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6. When you get to the beginning, trim the thread tails from the top and bottom of the beginning stitch. Then, use the markings on the toe of the foot to line up the stitch lines with the needles (the optional Clear Foot helps a lot with this task also if you find that you are struggling to line up the beginning to the end). Stitch and overlap about an inch of stitching over the beginning.



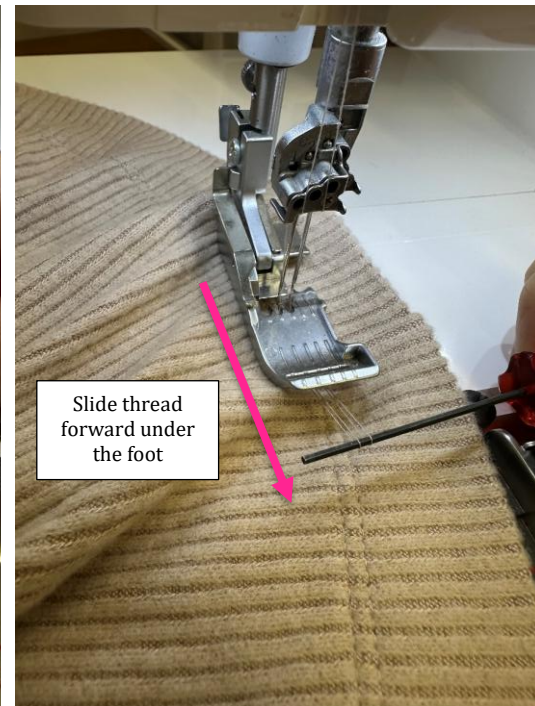
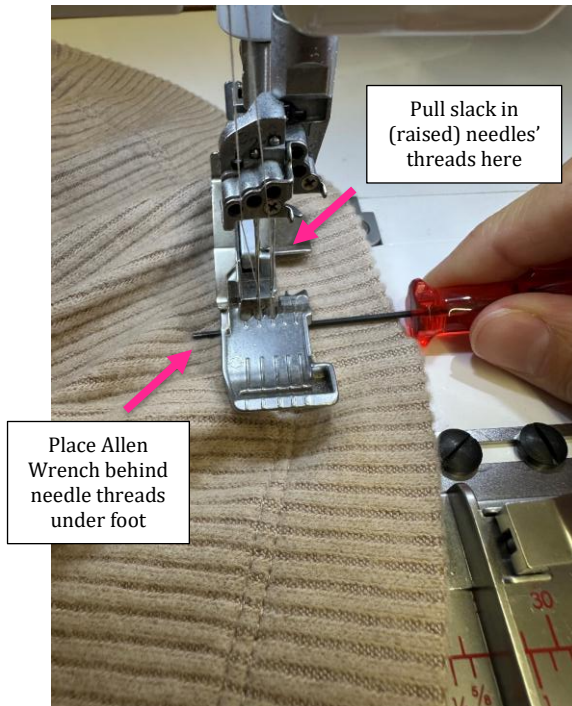
7. A great way to lock the stitches is to raise the foot (to release the tensions), grab the Allen Wrench and place it under the foot and behind the needle threads. Pull some ease in the thread by gently pulling excess in the threads right in front of the needles. Then, slide the Allen Wrench forward, creating slack in the needle threads under and in front of the foot.





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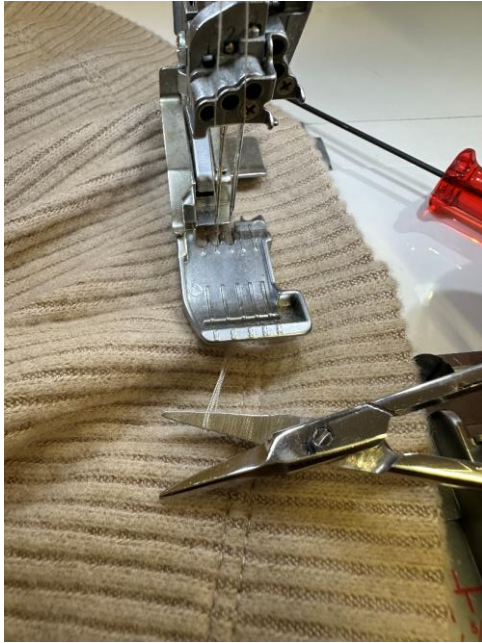


8. Cut those needle threads and jerk the fabric quickly forward and towards you, tugging on the hem. This will pull all of the threads to the back. Some will trim the threads off completely right there. I like to put a knot in these 3 threads to ensure it's locked.



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9. This is how the hem will look, top and inside (for a standard Narrow Cover Hem).



Serging Pieces with an Inward Angle

The Side Seams of the Waistband of the bike shorts are angled. To run this seam through the serger, simply place a little notch at the fold (as shown below). Serge the first half and slow down as you approach the notch. When the notch gets to the blade, move the remaining angled fabric to the left, straightening it out and lining it up with your placement mark to create that 3/8" seam allowance. The notch will allow the fabric to straighten out and remain flat.





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When Differential Feed Comes to the Rescue

Most fabrics will feed through the machine beautifully and you won't need to mess with Differential Feed (shown below). Some fabrics have a lot of movement and a lot of stretch. Some fabrics tend to stretch through the machine, even when being serged. Some fabric textures can cause stretching when stitching also. The Teflon Foot is a huge help and for some stitching (like 4-Thread Overlocking a single layer of fabric for a hem) to avoid a "lettuced" or stretched hem, try bumping the Differential Feed up to 1.3 to help it feed normally. You really don't have to adjust the Differential Feed much when doing general serging with a Baby Lock Serger, but it is so nice to have when a fabric doesn't play in the same way most fabrics do! Happy stitching!

