

## Segment Title: Serge and Sew a Simple Broomstick Skirt

Host: Joanne Banko



**Serge and Sew a beautiful broomstick skirt!** Broomstick style skirts are easy to make, especially when you use the serger to speedily gather long lengths of fabric for the multiple tiers. You may be interested to know that this skirt style was popular with Navajo women in the 1870's. They would create the tiers from lightweight cotton and sew skirts to wear with their brightly colored peasant style blouses. In the resource list at the end of these instructions you'll find information about an optional [Folkwear](#) commercial pattern for a traditional Navajo blouse, and a *one size fits most* broomstick skirt.

Today it's common to see broomstick skirts along with trendy "boho" styles in stores and catalogs. This multiple tiered skirt is popular for traveling since the casual pleats or "wrinkles" are characteristic of the style. You can make this skirt using a combination of your serger and sewing machine for a stylish skirt with the look of ready to wear. The instructions presented here are for a skirt customized to your own personal measurements. In an afternoon you can sew this skirt using a three-thread serger stitch along with a simple straight stitch on the sewing machine. As an added bonus you'll have the satisfaction of being able to say you made it yourself! Follow along as I give you a simple formula for the measurements and take you through each step for making this ***boho chic skirt!***

***Are you ready? Let's go sew!***

### **Materials and Supplies featured in this episode:**

- The [Brother XV8500D Dream Machine](#) with the Sew Straight™ Laser guide for sewing the skirt.
- The [Brother 234PRW Serger](#) with differential feed for gathering tiers and serge finishing raw edges.
- [Coats](#) Sewing thread and Serger thread
- Fabric: Choose a lightweight natural fiber fabric for this skirt, selecting a colorfast fabric that wrinkles easily. I used 60-inch wide cotton chambray for my sample skirt. Cotton lawn and rayon challis are also good choices. Yardage will vary based on custom measurements. Figure yardage using custom patterns prepared in Step 1.
- Nylon hose for forming casual pleats. I used one leg of a pair of pantyhose to hold the twisted skirt and the opposite leg to tie and form wrinkles. See complete details at the end of these instructions.
- Basic notions, including 1½-inch wide elastic for waistband, a bodkin or safety pin for inserting elastic, and paper or pattern tracing cloth for making patterns.

## Instructions for Custom Broomstick Skirt with Three Tiers

Steps to create this skirt:

- Create patterns from custom measurements.
- Cut fabric for three tiers plus waistband.
- Use serger to serge finish and gather tiers.
- Use sewing machine to sew tiers, attach waistband, & finish hem.
- Launder skirt, twist, and dry to form pleats.



**Step 1.** For an attractive look the fullness of this three-tiered broomstick skirt increases gradually from waist to hem. At the waistline the first tier equals your hip measurement times two. The second tier is 50 percent wider than the first. The third tier is 50 percent wider than the second. Create your custom patterns based on two personal measurements, desired skirt length, and your full hip measurement. Based on these measurements make patterns to cut strips for the three tiers, cutting one set of strips for the front of the skirt and one set of strips for the back. Use your custom patterns to figure the yardage necessary for your individual skirt by performing a trial layout or by taking the patterns with you when you shop.

Create custom patterns by measuring and recording the following:

**A.) Finished skirt length** – Measure desired finished length and divide by three. Record the number, adding 1/2-inch for seam and hem allowance. **Note:** Traditionally this skirt is worn well below the knee. You may want to check the length of similar skirts in ready-to-wear for an appropriate length. An overly precise length is not important for the overall look and style of this skirt. The casual pleats in the finished skirt will change the length slightly.

**B.) Full Hip Measurement** – Measure Full hip and multiply times two. Record the number and add 2-inches. This measurement needs to be measured accurately.

Use the guidelines below to determine total size for length and width of each tier. Feel free to round numbers up or down to make figuring easier. \*Your waistband pattern is the only pattern that requires a precise measurement.

- **Tier #1** equals measurement **(A)** for length. Use measurement (B) for width.
- **Tier #2** equals measurement **(A)** for length. Increase measurement of tier #1 by 50% for width.
- **Tier #3** equals measurement **(A)** for length. Increase measurement of tier #2 by 50% for width.

Below you will find an example of the custom measurements and patterns I used for my skirt.

**A.) Finished skirt length** - 33-inches divided by three equals 11-inches. 11-inches plus ½-inch equals 11 ½-inches.

**B.) Full Hip Measurement** - Hip equals 36-inches.  $36 \times 2 = 72$ -inches.  $72 + 2 = 74$ -inches.

- **Tier #1** – Length of strip = 11 ½-inches. Total Width = 74-inches. Divide width by two for one full front and one full back pattern piece.
- **Tier #2** – Length of strip = 11 ½-inches. Total Width = 111-inches, rounded to 110-inches. Divide width by two for one full front and one full back pattern piece.
- **Tier #3** – Length of strip = 11 ½-inches. Total Width = 165.00-inches, rounded to 164. Divide width by two for one full front and one full back pattern piece.
- **Waistband** – \*Cut one strip measuring 4½-inches X full hip plus 2-inches. This measurement needs to be measured accurately. Do not round this number up or down.

**Tier #1**

Measurement for Tier #1 is  $(74 \div 2 = 37)$

Cut one pattern for skirt front and one for skirt back 11 ½-inches long X 37-inches wide.

**Tier #2**

Measurement for Tier #2 is  $(110 \div 2 = 55)$

Cut one pattern for skirt front and one for skirt back 11 ½-inches long X 55-inches

**Tier #3**

Measurement for Tier #3 is  $(164 \div 2 = 82)$

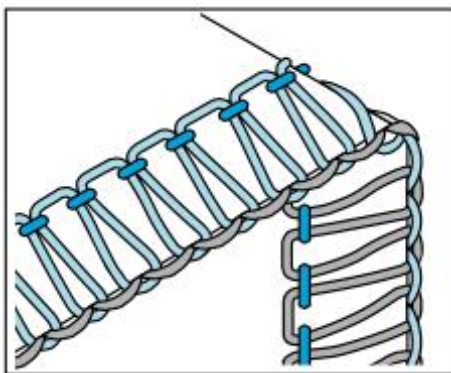
Cut one pattern for skirt front and one for skirt back 11 ½-inches long X 82-inches wide.

Waistband – One strip measuring 4 ½-inches X 38-inches

**Step 2.** Use your custom patterns to cut one set of strips for the skirt front and one set for the skirt back. Cut patterns along lengthwise or crosswise grain of fabric. Piece panels if necessary before proceeding to the next step, dividing any pieced panels evenly to avoid having seams fall in odd places on the skirt. Cut an appropriately sized strip for your waistband.

**Note:** During construction of the skirt you will repeat all steps for gathering and sewing with each set of tiers cut for front and back.

**Step 3.** To start constructing skirt, set up the serger for a standard three thread, balanced overlock stitch, using one needle in the left position. Serge finish the long lower edge of tier #1 and tier #2.



Three thread balanced stitch

Top side of serger stitch

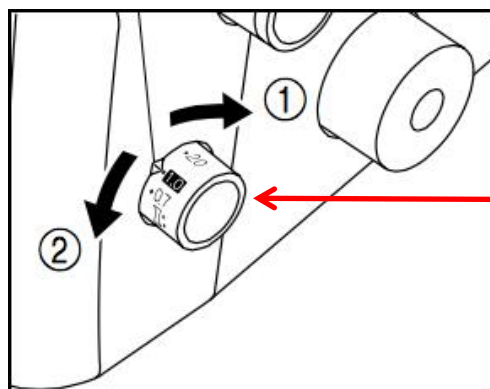


Bottom side of serger stitch



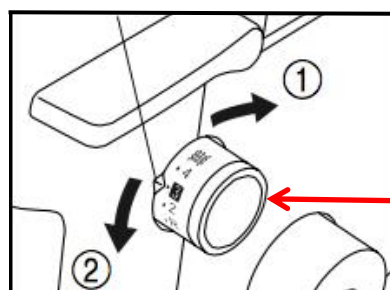
Set up the serger for gathering as follows:

- Turn the differential feed dial to the highest number.



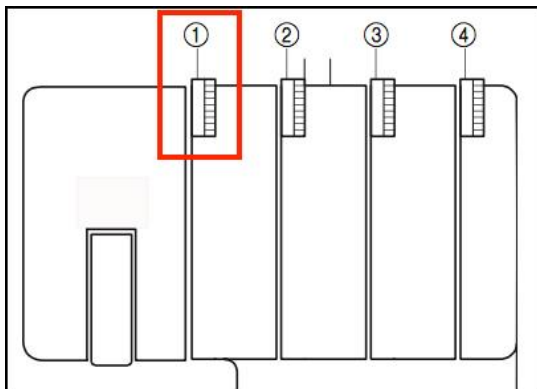
Differential Feed Dial

- Set the stitch length for the longest length possible.



Stitch Length Dial

- Tighten the left needle tension dial until it is close to the maximum amount.



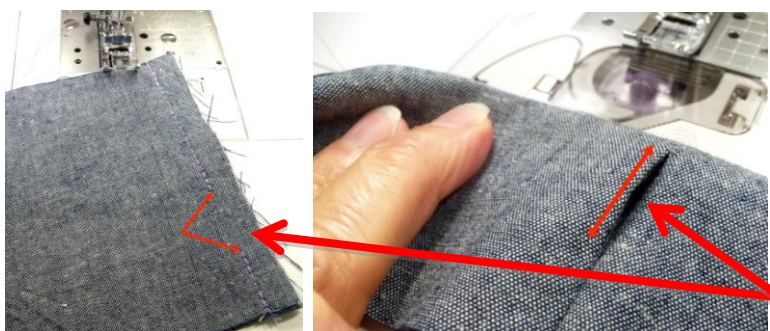
**Note:** By setting all three of these options to the highest setting possible you will gain the maximum amount of gathers. Test your stitching on a sample piece. Sometimes it is necessary to loosen needle tension to avoid thread breakage.

**Step 4.** Gather remaining upper long edge of tier #1 and #2 along with the upper long edge of tier #3.



To gather, begin by running a long (1 – 2 feet) chain of serger thread. Leaving this extra long tail allows you to ease off extra gathers and adjust as you sew the tiers together. Repeat this process at each end of serger stitching to ease off the gathers from both ends. To gather each strip guide raw edge along serger blade, skimming slightly as you stitch. You can hold your index finger at the back of the gathered fabric to “push in” more gathers, releasing your finger periodically as you progress.

**Step 5.** Set up the sewing machine for standard sewing with a straight stitch.



Select the waistband piece. Sew a center back seam by sewing the short ends together using a 1/2-inch seam allowance, leaving 1-inch opening for inserting elastic. Form a waistband circle by folding piece in half with wrong sides together and raw edges matching. Set aside temporarily.

**Step 6.** Prepare to finish skirt. Sew gathered tiers together for the skirt front and the skirt back following steps below:

**Tip:** When gathering tiers, make your adjustments and then tie knots at the end of each serger tail to keep the gathers intact. You can still move the gathers across the fabric but the measurement stays the same since the knot prevents stitches from being eased off gathered fabric at each end.

- Mark the lower center of strip #1 and the upper center of strip #2. Adjust the gathers and sew strip #1 to strip #2.
- Mark the lower center of strip #2 and the upper center of strip #3. Adjust the gathers and sew strip #2 to strip #3.
- Adjust the waistline gathers at the top of strip #1 so that the skirt front and skirt back will fit half of the finished waistband circle. See example of gathered tiers below:



- With right sides together, use a straight stitch to sew the skirt front and back together at the side seams. Serge finish the raw edges of side seams using a three thread balanced serger stitch.
- With right sides together, use a straight stitch to sew the folded waistband to the skirt with the waistband seam at the center of the skirt back and the opening for elastic facing the inside. Serge finish the raw edges of waistband seam using a three thread balanced serger stitch.
- Use a straight stitch to hem the bottom raw edge of the skirt using a double turned ¼-inch hem.
- Insert elastic through the opening, adjust if needed and sew elastic ends together. Close opening with small hand stitches.

**Note:** Seam allowance for sewing skirt seams is approximately ¼-inch. When sewing tiers it's important to sew the seam just beyond the serger stitching so all serger stitches are enclosed in seam allowance.

**Step 7.** Form pleats by scrunching and tying laundered skirt when it is still quite damp. See below.



Place the damp skirt on a flat surface and use your fingers to gather it into small pleats. It is helpful to wrap and tie the waistband to keep the skirt from unfolding as you work your way down to the hem. Rubber bands work well to temporarily hold gathers in place. Tightly twist the skirt and slip it into one leg of the nylon hose. Tie the skirt tightly using the second leg of nylon hose. Air dry by hanging in a warm place or tumble dry in dryer. If using dryer be sure to remove rubber bands first. It's important to know that the drying time for this skirt can be considerable depending upon the environment. I like to toss mine in with a load of towels or air dry in a shady spot on a warm day. Once skirt is dry you can simply twist and wrap the skirt to store it. Unwind when you're ready to get dressed!

**Options and ideas:** You can use your custom patterns to create variations by piecing different fabrics for a patchwork look. Feel free to divide the tiers to create more than the three equal tiers presented in these instructions. Simply add a seam allowance wherever you divide the pieces.

#### Resources:

- Visit [www.brothersews.com](http://www.brothersews.com) for more information and download projects made using Brother Sewing Machines and Sergers.
- Visit your local [Brother sewing machine dealer](#) for Brother Sewing Machines and Sergers featured on this show.
- I invite you to visit me at my sewing and embroidery website [www.letsdosew.com](http://www.letsdosew.com). Sign up for updated sewing ideas and inspiration, download Free Tip sheets, project ideas, and more when you visit [www.letsdosew.com](http://www.letsdosew.com).
- [Folkwear Navajo Blouse & Skirt](#) – This optional pattern includes directions for making a broomstick skirt using a one size fits most formula and includes a pattern for the traditional Navajo blouse. Learn more about pattern #120 Navajo Blouse & Skirt at [www.folkwear.com](http://www.folkwear.com).

