

Wren ★ Feathers

Summer Sew-Along 2024: Week 4
1950s



Dress pictured on Trendon Sasha

Week 4: Updating the basic dress for the 1950s

The 1950s were all about excess. Excessively full skirts trimmed with yards and yards of the new, less-expensive nylon lace were held out with very full petticoats, also in stiff, new synthetic fibers. A form-fitting bodice was needed on top to balance this out.

Where are the pattern pieces? This week's dress used the bodice with darts and full puffed sleeve from week 2. Either the pointed or peter pan collar from week 1 or 2 can be used, as both were very popular for both children and dolls.

The change for this week is that the skirt for a 1950s dress should be as full as possible. Unlike the fabric-saving 30s and 40s skirts, it was often cut from a rectangle. The one in the pic is a bit narrower, but for a really 50s feel, **I would recommend a skirt width up to about 3 times the waist measurement of the bodice.** So, for example, a 10" waist would have a skirt about 30" wide. To hold all that fullness out, petticoats were often needed. At this doll size and larger, regular petticoat netting, which is much stiffer than tulle, is a better option. You may have to ask for it specifically at the cutting counter. Obviously, it's more economical to make a separate petticoat and use it with all of the dresses, but for dolls or if you're just doing one dress, it's also possible to just add that extra layer in while you're doing the skirt. It also avoids the problem of being outside in the perfect picture-taking light and realizing you didn't have the petticoat!

You can probably easily bring to mind a 1950s palette if you think about it - pastels and strong primaries, right? There was also that specific combination of turquoise/pink/black/white that was iconic and I've echoed it here with the turquoise and pink in this dress.

Because we're mixing things up this week, the button placement on my dress was actually inspired by a Shirley Temple doll dress pattern you can see here:

https://vintagepatterns.fandom.com/wiki/Hollywood_1913

However, should you need more inspiration from different eras, there's a huge collection of old Sears catalogs here: <https://christmas.musetechnical.com/> and you can make many of the dresses by combining the pattern pieces you already have and a little creativity. I can't wait to see what everyone comes up with!

This dress will fit dolls like AGAT, Sasha, Disney Animators, etc. **There is no way to make this fit 18" OG/AG/Maplelea/etc. with just a percentage increase on a copier.** Enlarging to their chest size would mean re-drafting the neckline, collar, armholes, and sleeves.

Note that I'm not providing any sewing or resizing instructions in this week's free pattern. The whole collection will be available in my etsy shop in the next couple of weeks with well-illustrated instructions for sewing all of the basic dresses, more sizes, and maybe some bonus pattern pieces as well!

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Quarter inch seams allowed unless otherwise specified.