



Reader Review

McCall's 8030 shirt dress

Michelle Rowley, sewing tutor and avid dressmaker, reviews this issue's chic shirt dress pattern

I love all the shirt dresses Meghan Markle wears, a stylish mix of smart, classic and practical, so I was excited to make my own using the new McCall's 8030. I was particularly sold on the style when I saw that I wouldn't have to set in the sleeves! This dress can be worn for a number of occasions: everyday, as work-wear or dressed up for evening, which is something I consider carefully when choosing patterns. I want to sew garments which I will get lots of wear from. So with this in mind, I also try to choose fabrics that I can wear both bare-legged in summer and with black tights in winter. I chose this striking lynx print cotton poplin (Dalston Mills, £6.60 p/m) to make a fun dress that still met all of my requirements.

Preferring a straight hem, I sewed version B. As a petite sewist, I'm only 5ft 1", I always have to make some adjustments to the pattern before I start sewing, and this dress was no exception. I took some length off the yoke pieces instead of the hem because I didn't want my sleeves to be quite as wide as the original design. With body measurements of 32", 29",

40" I am quite an extreme pear and I think the sleeve design of this dress helps to make this less obvious. I also chose to omit the pockets, to avoid adding extra bulk at my widest point. With these measurements I had to grade from the XS size at the bust to size L at the hips. Once I'd made the dress I brought in the side seams below the hips so it wasn't so flared.

To emphasise the interesting yoke feature of the dress and to break up the busy print pattern of the fabric, I decided to add black piped insertion tape at the yoke seams to the front and back of the dress. With clear instructions and no advanced sewing skills required, this dress is not difficult to make. For me the nerve-wracking part was sewing the buttonholes, but the handy buttonhole placement guide made this much less daunting.

I'm really happy with the dress and I can see myself wearing it regularly. I already have a striped and a colour-blocked version in the pipeline!



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