



*Sew & Liberated*



*sweet pea  
pilot cap  
tutorial*

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Babies need to be kept warm, and aside from hugging them to your body and smooching their fat cheeks, a good hat provides that extra warmth they need to feel comfortable. The Sweet Pea Pilot Cap is the perfect baby hat, as it is constructed with flat, itch-free seams with cozy knit fabric. The chin ties keep the cap securely on baby's head, and you can customize the cap's colors to fit baby's wardrobe.

The Sweet Pea Baby Cap comes in four sizes - measure around your child's head just above the eyebrows to get the circumference of the head.

Size XS (newborn - 3 months): 15"

Size S (3 - 8 months): 17"

Size M (8 - 14 months): 18"

Size L (14 - 24 months): 19.5"

## Tips For Working With Knits

Before you dig into your fabric, I'll share a few of my tips for working with knits. If you think knits are slippery, slinky, scary monsters – let me assure you that they are not! You just have to have a few tricks up your sleeves to whip them into shape (and whip up a very comfortable hat for your little one in no time!) It's time for a little Q & A:

**Q: Where do I find knits? All of my favorite online fabric stores only carry wovens!**

A: For a cheap source of jersey (t-shirt) and interlock (sweatshirt) knits, look no further than the thrift store. Pick up men's XL tees and sweatshirts made of 100% cotton, wash them well, and add them to your stash.

I'm also partial to some of the organic interlock knit that is sold by individual designers through [www.spoonflower.com](http://www.spoonflower.com). Anybody can draw a design and have it printed through Spoonflower! It's a great source for unique prints. Other sources for jersey and interlock are [www.nearseanaturals.com](http://www.nearseanaturals.com) and [www.purlsoho.com](http://www.purlsoho.com).

You'll also need 1x1 rib knit (shown to the right) - rib knit has ridges and it is super stretchy) for making the Sweet Pea Pilot Cap. This can be more tricky to find. If you see it at your local mega-sewing store, pick it up. The rule for a 1x1 rib in a nice color is – buy it. Don't think twice. A yard will go a long way, and believe me, it is hard to find nice ribbing.



**Q: I don't have a serger. Does that mean I can't work with knits?**

A: No! The Sweet Pea Pilot Cap is made with a regular ol' sewing machine! You will need to set yourself up with a few tools to have the most success sewing knits on your regular machine.

First, you should consult your machine manual and figure out how to lessen the pressure of your sewing machine's foot. This, for me, is a huge key to success, and it's not often talked about. At a normal

pressure, the foot and the feed dogs will stretch out your knit fabric as it's pulled under the foot, resulting in an unbecoming and very frustrating wavy, stretched out seam. To avoid this, set your presser foot to 15 (normal is 45-60).

Next, invest in a walking foot for your machine. A walking foot pulls the top fabric toward the needle at the same rate as the feed dogs are pulling the bottom fabric toward the needle. This "even feed" solves lots of problems in sewing, and isn't just for working with knits (you can also use it to quilt!). A walking foot will help greatly in keeping your knit fabric from stretching out. You can find generic walking feet for your machine at your local sewing store.

Also, don't forget to change your needle! Sewing knits with a regular "universal" needle will result in small holes and frustrating "catching" of knit fabric, as it pierces through the weave. Get some jersey (ball point) needles, which slip in between the fabric's weave. They are much less frustrating to work with.

Next, experiment with your machine's stretch stitch repertoire. To make the Sweet Pea Pilot Cap, you'll need to use a wide stretch stitch. My machine has a special stitch for jersey fabrics. Yours might have a mock overlock stitch. In a pinch, you can always use a wide zigzag stitch. The key here is to experiment – take pieces of your fabric and run it through your machine. Then pull and stretch the fabric – is it supple? Do you like the pattern? Keep on fiddling if not.

Finally, take a deep breath before you sew with knits. Your state of mind will show in the fabric. If you're nervous and tight, you're apt to pull and the fabric, stretching it out. If you're relaxed and let the fabric pull through the machine with just a bit of gentle guidance, your seams will be nice and pretty. Oh – and one more tip – when you iron your seams, use a steam setting and don't move the iron back and forth on the fabric. Just place the iron on top of the seam. Any moving of the iron can cause the fabric to stretch.

Without further ado, here's what you'll need to make the Sweet Pea Pilot Cap!

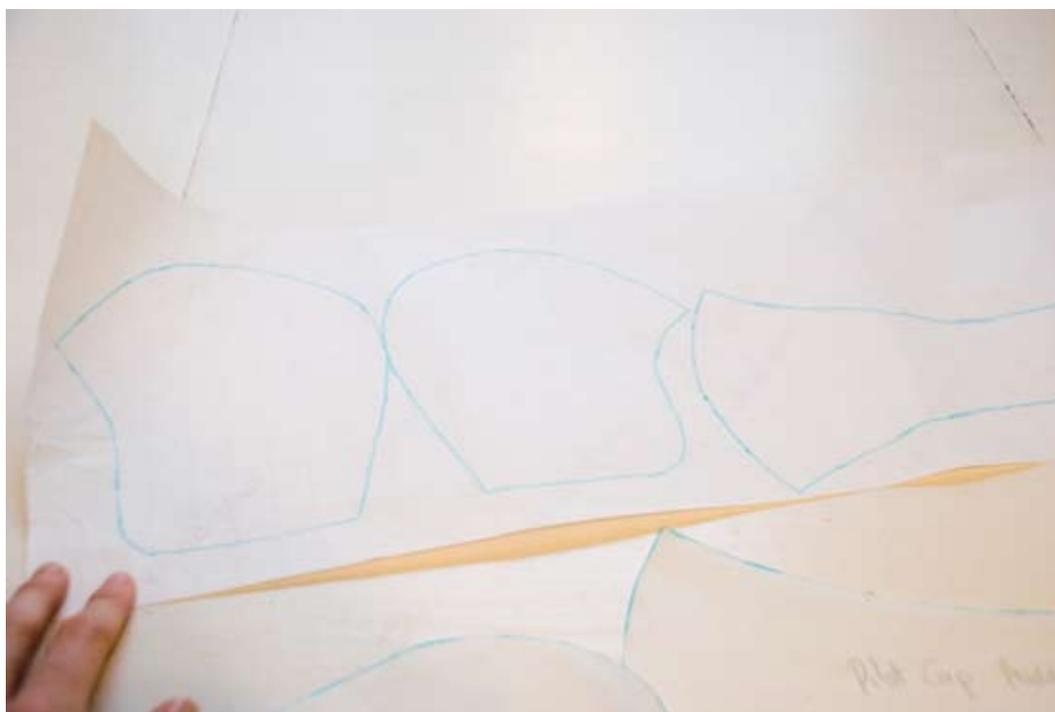


## Instructions

**\*\*Be sure to wash, dry, and press your fabric before you begin!\*\***

### Materials

- 20" square (or thereabouts) of cotton jersey, wool jersey, 1 x 1 rib knit, or cotton interlock for the main hat color
- 36" x 1.75" strip of 1 x 1 rib knit for finishing the edges and making the straps (make sure to cut this with the ridges running perpendicular to the long, 36" edge)
- Sulky Sticky paper-backed stabilizer (available at your local sewing store)
- Coordination poly or cotton poly blend thread (the polyester makes the thread stronger – important for working with knits)
- Pattern pieces (Side and Middle) printed out on cardstock (or regular paper) and cut out.
- Fabric pen
- pins
- embroidery scissors



1. Trace around the Side onto the rough (non-grid) side of the Sulky Sticky stabilizer. Flip it over and trace once again. You should have two Sides that are mirror images if each other. Trace the Middle.

2. Cut out the two Sides and Middle from the stabilizer (use your paper scissors, not your fabric scissors!) Now lay out your main color fabric with its wrong side facing you and pull on a small section to find out which direction has the most stretch. Match the grain line of the most stretchy direction with the grain line on the pattern piece that says "most stretch." Remove the paper backing from the stabilizer and place the two Sides and Middle on the fabric. Press down on the stabilizer to make sure it's properly adhered to the fabric.





3. With your fabric scissors, cut out around each Side and the Middle, leaving a 1/4" seam allowance beyond the edge of the stabilizer.



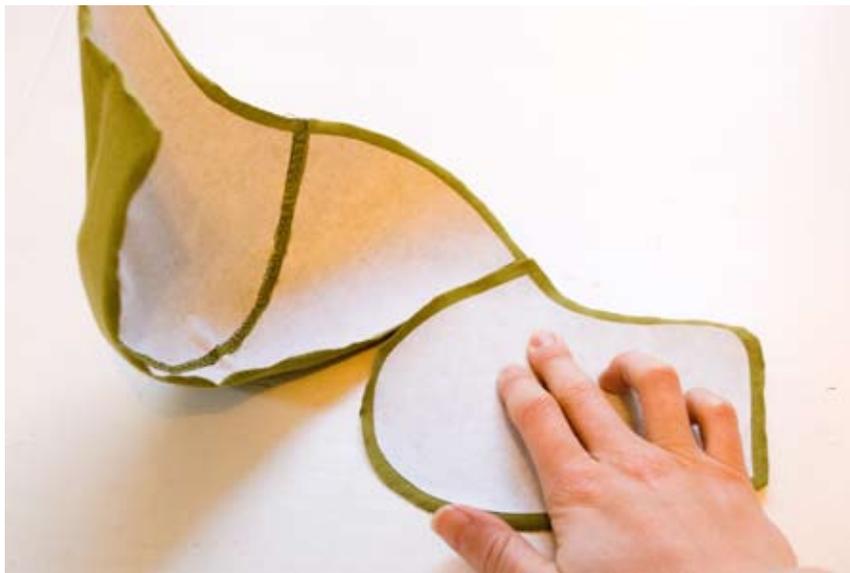
4. Align the left Side with the top edge of the Middle, laying the Side on top of the Middle (there should be a 1/4" overlap – just enough so that the Side edge touches the stabilizer on the Middle).

5. I don't recommend using pins for this step, as they are just unwieldy. Using the edges of the stabilizer as your guides, use a stretch stitch to sew together the left Side and the Middle. Gently guide the left Side over toward the Middle as you sew. It helps me to think of pushing the Middle under the Side. Go slowly – you will probably have to plant your needle in the fabric, lift the presser foot, and readjust the fabric every once in a while along the curves. Just don't pull at the fabric!





The two pieces will look like this.



6. Repeat this process to sew the right Side to the Middle, overlapping the right Side with the Middle by 1/4" as before. Use a pair of embroidery scissors to trim off any overlapping fabric along the stretch seams, being super careful not to cut any of the stitching. This gives the hat a neater finish.





7. Lift up the stabilizer along the neck edge and trim it back by 1/2". This will give you ample room to maneuver the neck binding without getting the stabilizer caught in the seam. Cut off a piece of the rib strip so that you have a strip that measures about 2/3rds the length of the neck edge.

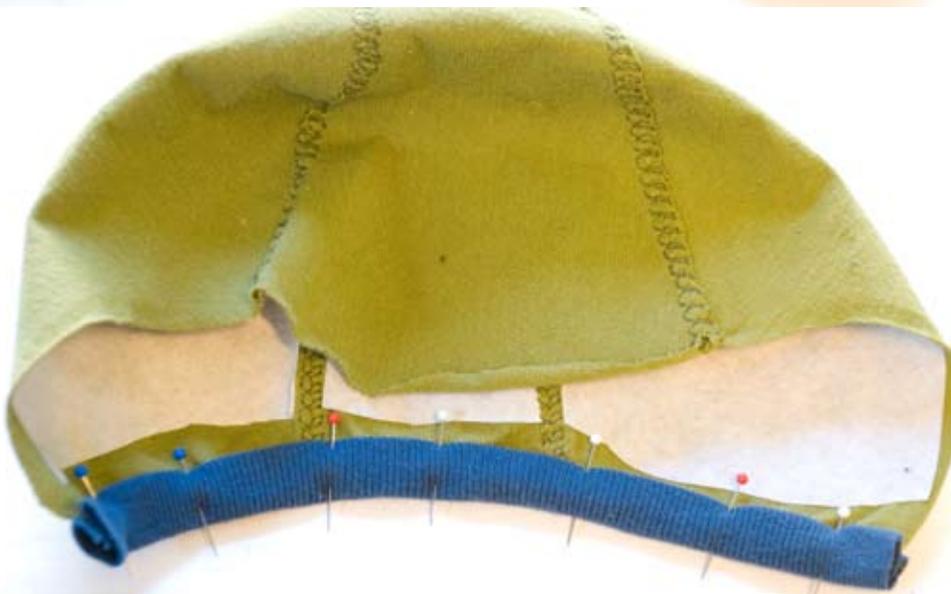


8. Switch to a straight stitch with a 3mm length. Use a 1/4" seam to sew the long edge of the binding to the neck edge. The bottom edge of the neck will be flush with the longer edge of the open binding. You will be sewing this seam with the right side of the hat facing up. Here's the important part – you need to pull the rib knit strip as you sew it down (but don't pull the jersey underneath it!)

Don't pull it too much, but you'll need to put steady pressure on it as you sew along. For this reason, I choose not to use pins to attach the rib to the jersey at the neck. Just go slowly.



9. Press the seam down, away from the hat and toward the rib binding. Fold the unfinished edge up by 1/4" and press again.



10. Now bring the folded edge up to just past the seam line, press, and pin in place. (Pin on the right side of the fabric, since you will be sewing while looking at the right side – I pinned incorrectly at first in the photo, but switched my pins later, as you can see in the photo with the sewing machine.) You will be encasing the raw neck edge in the rib binding.





11. Use a 3 mm long straight stitch to sew along the the ribbing on the right side of the hat, a mere 1/8" from the seam that joined the ribbing to the jersey. Trim off any extra binding that is hanging off the edge of the hat.



12. Trim the stabilizer back 1/2" from the unfinished edge of the front of the hat to make room for your binding, as you did before you attached the neck binding in step 7.



13. With hat right side out, place the remaining strip of 1x1 rib binding so that the unfinished edge of the hat is flush with the longer edge of the rib binding. Make sure that you leave about 8" of binding hanging off the right edge of the hat – this will form one of the straps. Begin sewing where the "strap" fabric meets the hat, with a 1/4" seam allowance and using a 3 mm straight stitch. Gently pull on

the rib binding as you sew, attaching it in the same way you attached the neck binding. Continue sewing until you come to the edge of the hat, where the other "strap" fabric extends beyond the hat. Remember to backtack at the beginning and end of this seam – you wouldn't want a weak spot where you'll be tugging at the straps. Cut the other strap so that both are the same length from the hat.





14. Press the seam toward the binding and continue to press the top edge of the binding over by 1/4" on the strap extensions. Press up the bottom edge of the binding 1/4" and press. Press over the short ends of each strap by 1/2".

15. Press and pin the long, folded edge of the binding just past the seam line, as you did for the neck binding in step 10. Continue to press and pin along the straps – the long edges of the straps should be flush, and the raw, short edges of the straps should be sandwiched between the folds.



16. With the right side of the hat facing up, sew a 3mm straight stitch seam on the ribbed binding, just 1/8" below the original seam. Begin sewing this seam at the short edge of the right strap, sew up and over the hat, and down the left strap. Backtrack to assure the edges of your straps don't come undone.

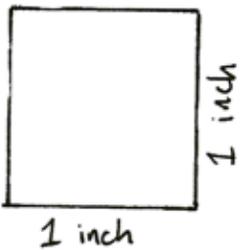
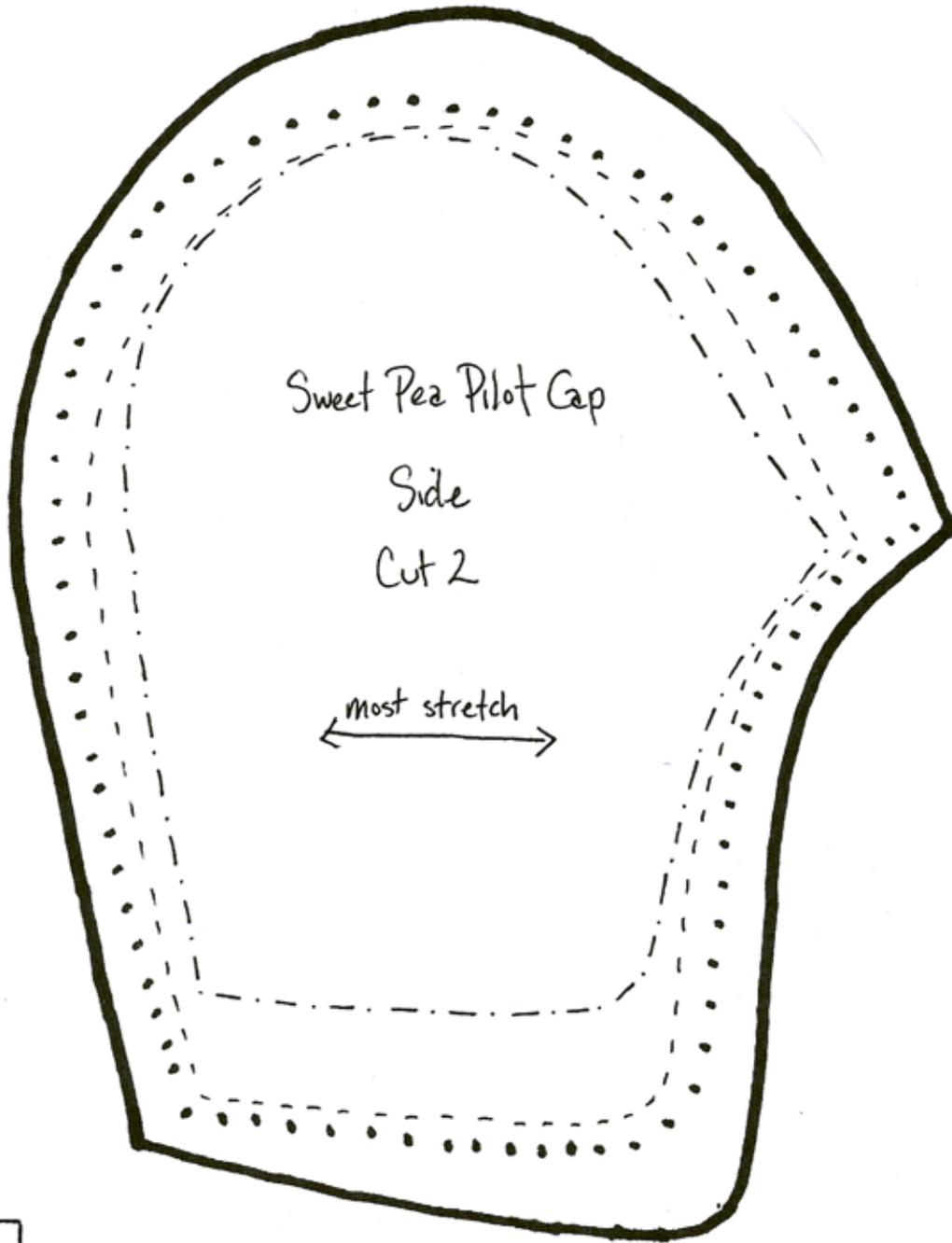
17. Remove the rest of the stabilizer, give the hat one final steam press, and find a cute baby who needs a cozy, warm head!

# Sweet Pea Pilot Cap Pattern

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