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... AND SO TO EMBROIDER

BULLETIN 21B · DESIGNING CHILDREN'S DRESSES



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Designing Children's

IN this bulletin we illustrate two attractive dresses to make for a younger sister or a small friend. The white cotton dress is made with an embroidered yoke and the illustrations show alternative ways in which this can be decorated with embroidery or machine stitching. The red cotton sun dress has gathered fullness held in place with smocking and the hemline is decorated with a band of dancing figures.

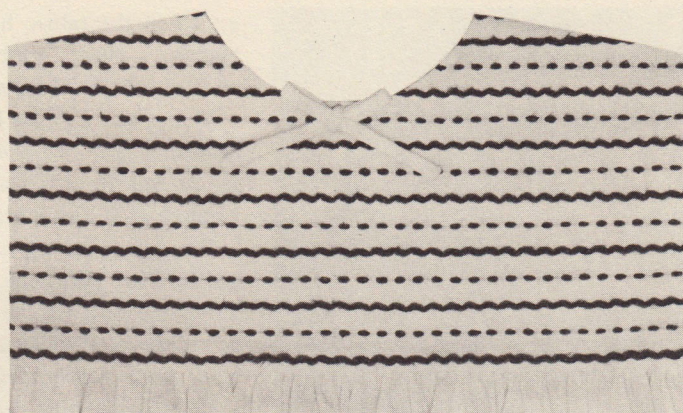
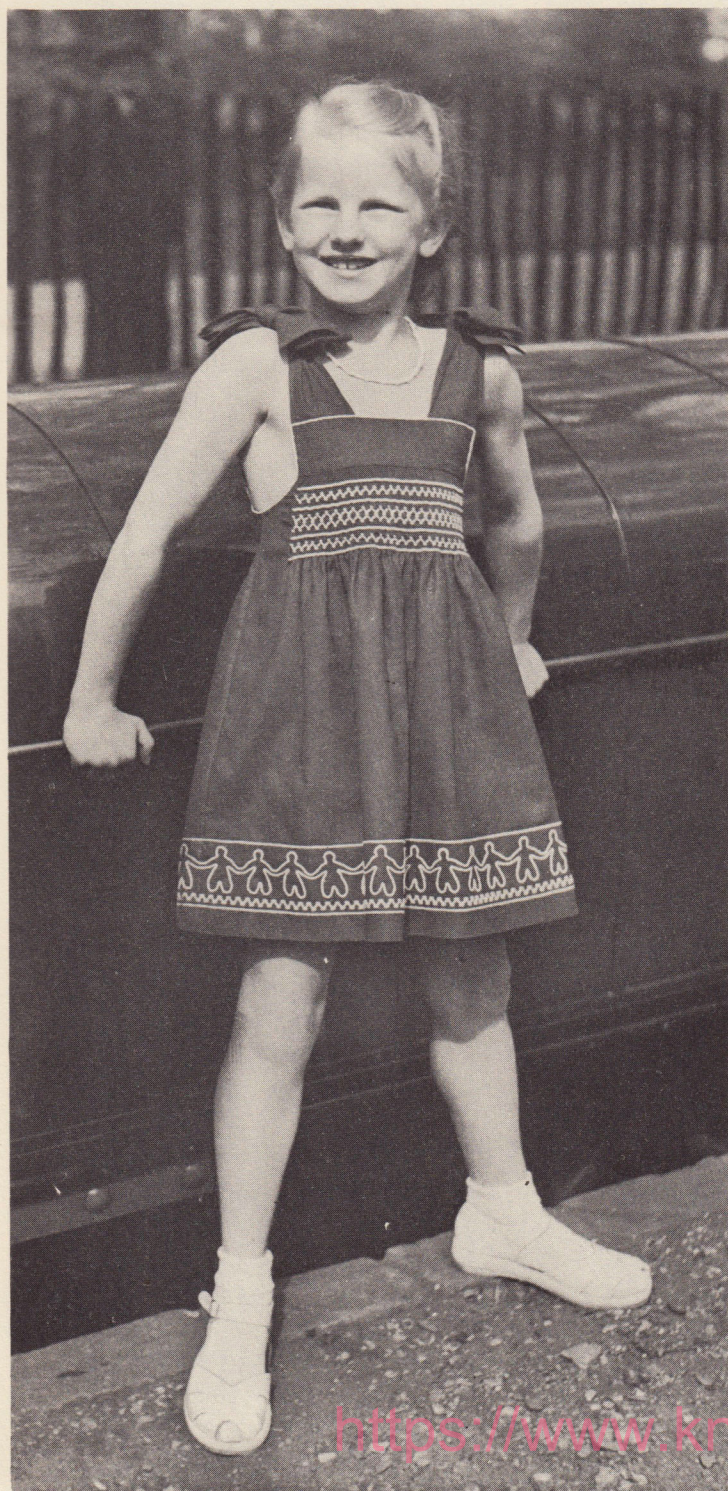
Smocking is an attractive means whereby the folds of gathered fabric can be secured and made decorative. The word "smock" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "smoc", meaning a shift or shirt. In early times this was a loose tunic-like garment worn by countrymen. As the years passed, fullness was added at back and front in order to allow for greater freedom of movement. The stitches used to control the fullness gradually came to be worked in various forms and patterns until, by the 19th century, a smock was a most beautiful and elaborately decorated garment in which evenly gathered fullness was intricately patterned and flanked by panels of embroidery. These panels often indicated the occupation of the wearer—for example leaf motifs might indicate a woodman, wheels a carter, or crooks a shepherd. Although the countryman no longer wears a smock, the craft of smocking has been revived as a decoration for children's dresses, where the elasticity of the stitching adapts itself to expansion and growth.

White Dress. This dress is made with a deep yoke into which the skirt is gathered. The dress is sleeveless and the armholes are finished with shaped cuffs. The yoke is embroidered with rows of Running Stitch and Whipped Running Stitch in a thick soft embroidery cotton.

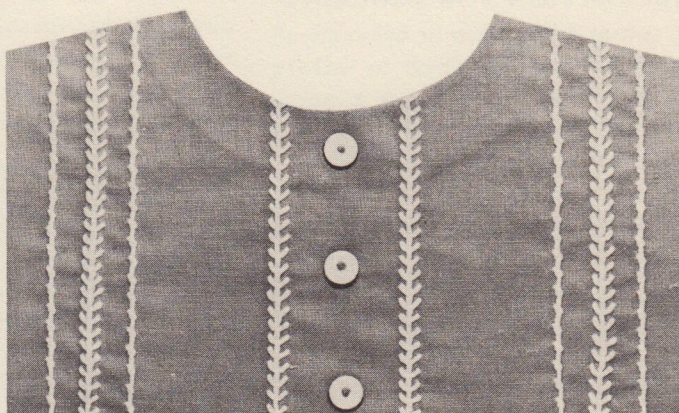
Red Sun Dress. This is made from cotton fabric and the smocking is carried out in a thick soft embroidery cotton in Outline Stitch, Chevron Stitch and Diamond Pattern. The border of little figures decorating the hemline is worked in Couching and Chevron Stitch.



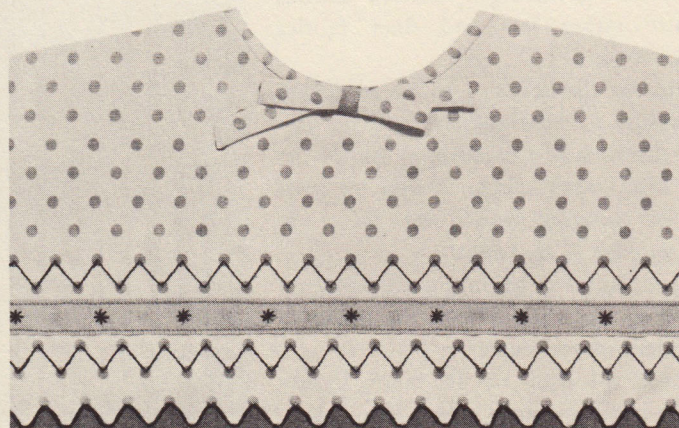
's Dresses



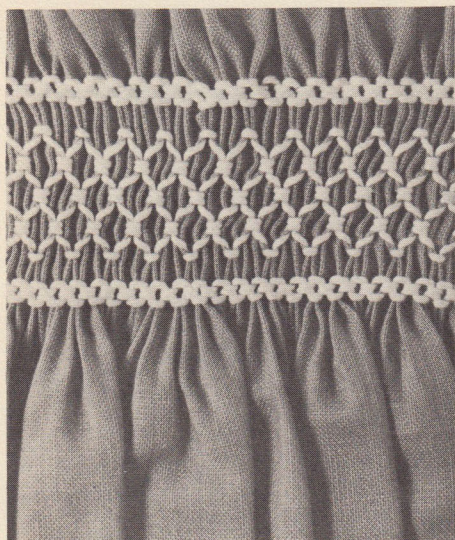
White Yoke. A detail of the embroidery on the white dress, which is worked in rows of Running Stitch and Whipped Running Stitch in a thick soft embroidery cotton.



Blue Yoke. This is made from cotton fabric embroidered in a thick soft embroidery thread. Stitches used are Coral Knot Stitch and Fly Stitch. Small white linen buttons decorated with blue French Knots trim the centre front.



Spotted Yoke. The cotton fabric has a printed pattern of small deep yellow spots. The decoration is carried out with bias binding to match the spots, machine stitching in navy blue and small stars worked in Straight Stitch. The edge of the yoke is finished with points.



PREPARATION FOR SMOCKING

Silk, cotton, wool, linen or nylon are all suitable fabrics from which to make a smocked garment, but choose a weave which will hang softly and avoid stiff fabrics such as taffeta and organdie. The sun dress illustrated in this bulletin is made from a medium weight cotton smocked with a thick soft embroidery thread. A finer fabric would require a finer thread such as coton-à-broder or three strands of stranded embroidery cotton. Smocking is worked before the garment is made up on a foundation of evenly arranged folds. When calculating the width of fabric for a smocked section allow approximately three times the finished width. For example a yoke 12 in. wide will require 36 in. of fabric for gathering. Thicker fabrics require rather less and finer fabrics rather more.

Cut out the sections to be smocked. To ensure that the gathers are even prepare the back of the fabric in one of the following ways *always bearing in mind that the gathering threads must follow the straight grain of the fabric.*

1. Space stitches by means of counting the threads of the fabric if the weave is well defined and even.
2. Mark the back of the fabric lightly with evenly spaced dots by using squared paper with a waxed transferring paper between this and the fabric.
3. Use a smocking transfer (this is printed with evenly spaced dots) applied to the fabric by means of a warm iron.

4. When the fabric has an even pattern such as a check, spot or stripe, use this as a guide for the gathering stitches.

The spacing varies from $\frac{1}{4}$ inch on fine fabrics to $\frac{3}{8}$ in. or $\frac{1}{2}$ in. on thick fabrics. Equal spaces are usually left between vertical and horizontal rows of dots.

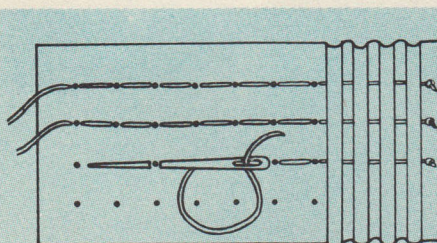
For gathering use a mercerised sewing cotton No. 40. The stitches are taken along the dots on the back of the fabric as shown in the diagram. When all the rows are complete draw up the fabric to the finished width and tie the gathering threads in pairs. The gathers, held securely by rows of thread, now lie in even folds and the smocking stitches are taken through the tops of these on the right side of the work. Three simple stitches are shown in this bulletin and by grouping these in different ways it is possible to create many interesting pattern variations. Begin each row by

taking two or three small oversewing stitches in a fold at the back of the work and finish each row by taking a Back Stitch on the underside of the last fold and then drawing the thread through the loop so formed.

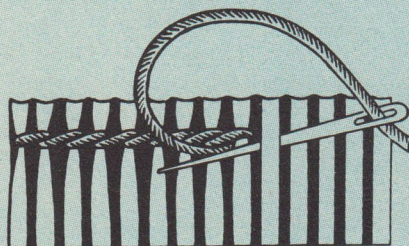
Outline Stitch. This stitch is similar to Stem Stitch and the working is shown clearly in the diagram. The stitch may be worked with the thread lying above or below the needle. Two rows worked closely together, with the threads lying in opposite directions, have the appearance of Chain Stitch.

Cable Stitch. Work as shown in the diagram. The stitch may be used singly or two or more lines may be worked closely together to form a heavier band.

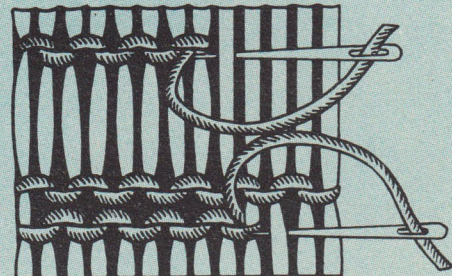
Chevron Stitch. This may be worked as a single row or several rows may be placed together to form Diamond Pattern.



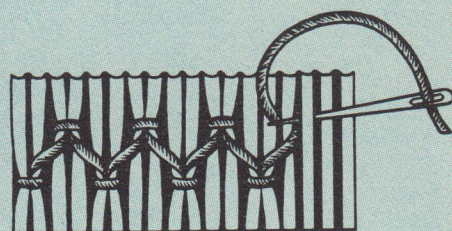
GATHERING



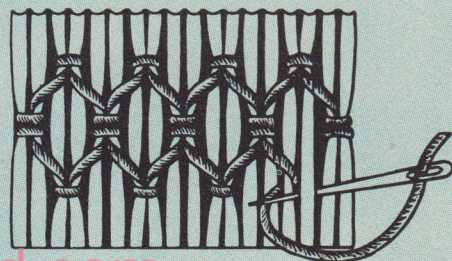
OUTLINE STITCH



CABLE STITCH



CHEVRON STITCH



DIAMOND PATTERN