

Not Just Petite, it's Petite Plus

By Lorry Berude

Lorry is 5ft 2in tall, middle-aged and has a full-figure. She usually spends a lot of her valuable sewing time altering patterns to fit. She normally purchases a size 14 pattern then each pattern is altered for high rounded back, full round back, sway back, full bust (DD cup), hollow chest (gravity has prevailed), rounded tummy, flat bottom and fuller arms. Whew! Time consuming. Not any more ...



I first came across Petite Plus Patterns® at the Victorian Stitches & Craft show in 2006. Since then I have made up several of the patterns with little or no alteration required. This is because the patterns, designed by Kathleen Cheetham (in Canada), have been especially designed for narrow shoulders, full bust and rounded tummy. Kathleen is a member of the IPCA (Independent Pattern Company Alliance) and has designed over 20 patterns of which I have chosen eight to trial. If you compare Kathleen's patterns to industry standard-sized patterns you will easily see the difference as the alterations have already been done for you. Included in each pattern envelope is 'The Perfect Fit Guide'™ to assist you with alterations such as a larger bust or crotch length.

Having said that I am a full-figure and fairly short still does not mean that I am a true petite. I have longer arms and longer legs with a short torso.

My measurements:

High Bust – 95cm (37½in)

Full Bust – 101cm (39¾in)

Waist – 94cm (37in)

Hip – 107cm (42½in)

Height – 155cm (5ft 2in)

Weight – 72kg (11.8 stone)



◀ **The short and long sleeve T-shirts** – No 102

Fabric: Polyester jersey (2-way stretch) – from personal stash

The T-shirt hangs well, is comfortable and will not ride up your back. When making up the T-shirts I have used two different jersey fabrics. Using a two-way stretch I did not need to

lower the neckline, but with a one-way stretch fabric it required lowering by 1cm (3/8in). I also need to lengthen the long sleeve by 5cm (2in).

Topstitching: the topstitching on both the cardigan and T-shirts was stitched with a 2.5mm stretch twin-needle threaded with a good quality thread in a blending colour and woolly nylon in the bobbin. Woolly nylon stretches with the fabric and can be purchased in a variety of colours. Simply wind it on the bobbin by hand.

Technique: To turn corners when using a twin needle, sew to the corner then stop, leaving the needles in the fabric. Lift the presser foot, pivot the fabric to the new direction, lower the presser foot. Slowly reverse ONE stitch only and then continue sewing forward.

◀ **Tapered pull-on pant** – No 603

Fabric: Regent Stripe suiting, 60% polyester/35% viscose/5% spandex, available from Clegs.

This pant is very comfortable with the elastic waist, and very quick to make so I have sewn two pairs. One pair in a stretch woven (5% spandex) and another pair in a chocolate fleece for tracksuit pants. The pant has a tapered leg which has a slimming effect and no-gape pockets. The instructions provide a different way of inserting side pockets which was easy to follow. The pant leg was lengthened by 5cm (2in).

▼ **Sweater twin set** – No 102

This pattern is such a versatile one to have in your wardrobe and one that I have made many times so far in different styles and fabrics. The side seams have an optional side seam decorative split, which I like, and I found the instructions very easy to follow. This pattern has a different front hemline shape to other pattern companies and is designed to accommodate the rounded tummy so the T-shirt or cardigan falls straight.



▲ **Cardigan** – No 102

Fabric: Knitted fabric – from personal stash.

The cardigan hangs well from the shoulders in a knitted fabric and I have sewn a decorative Chinese ball closure to the front. Special care needs to be taken with knitted fabric ensuring the neckline is staystitched to avoid runs and I decided to sew it up immediately after cutting out for the same reason. When I attached the front band I pieced the fabric at the shoulder seam as it could not be cut out in one length and therefore in this position the seam was not highly visible. Stretch the band tightly across the back between the shoulder seams when attaching and also when topstitching. I am looking forward to making this up in a heavier plain knit fabric for a more tailored look.

Jeans jacket – No 204 ▶

Fabric: Zurich Suede, 100% polyester, available from Spotlight

I am delighted with the finished result of my jacket. It fits well and I did not do any alterations to the pattern at all. It is advisable though to check the arm length and jacket length before cutting out.

I chose to use upholstery suede as it is lightweight with some stretch. I would advise anyone making this jacket to read all the instructions and to follow them step-by-step.

I set up two sewing machines and one overlocker before I started. I threaded one sewing machine with the thread I chose for topstitching as the topstitching on the garment is done in stages. At each stage of the garment, I pressed open each seam first before pressing the seam to the side to be topstitched. This gives a lovely finish to a garment. The only hand-sewing completed on the jacket was stitching the buttons on, however studs could be chosen if desired. The jacket has great vertical panels which incorporate two pockets in the lower front. The breast pockets are false and therefore eliminate extra bulk for the large-breasted woman.

Jeans – No 605 ▶

Fabric: Zurich Suede, 100% polyester, available from Spotlight

These jeans have an adjustable back leg seam which can be found also in the latest pant designs from Vogue and McCall's. This gives you the choice to either increase or decrease fullness in the back leg as desired, all the way from the waistband to the hem.

The only alteration required was to lengthen the leg by 5cm (2in). The jean has a partial elastic waist for comfort, if you tend to suffer with water retention during the day, and have been topstitched throughout to match the jacket. The instructions were very easy to follow, ensuring success. On my next pair I have decided to eliminate some of the bulk at the front by sewing a mock fly front instead of a standard fly front and inserting a pocket stay to minimise gaping.



▼ Shapely shirt – No 104

Fabric: Lightweight moleskin – from personal stash

The entire shirt was sewn by machine and is edgestitched for a professional finish. The collar sits beautifully and is low enough for those who are blessed with shorter necks. I am really pleased that Kathleen has designed this wonderful shirt as it gives shape, drapes well and makes you feel quite feminine. Do check sleeve width before cutting out. The shirt is designed for a stretch woven; however, my fabric had no stretch so I widened the sleeves to accommodate this. The design of the cuffs enables the wearer to fold them up or leave down as desired and they are fastened together with cufflinks which I chose to make. I used the same self-covered buttons as on the front of the shirt and instead of making a French tuck to join them I used black shirring elastic and was thrilled with the result.

Bias skirt with flounce – No 504 ▶

Fabric: 100% Floral polyester, available from Spotlight

This skirt is so flattering and comfortable with a narrow elastic waist. As I have a very flat bottom and my tummy is quite round I wear the skirt back to front and the hemline hangs straight and perfect – no alteration needed for me but you may like to check the pattern for yourself if you have a fuller bottom and tummy. I have sewn the skirt in floral sheer polyester fabric and lined it with georgette, also cut from the same pattern on the bias but without the flounce.





◀ Princess-seamed dress

– No 302, view B

Fabric: Siam, available from Lincraft

The full-length buttoned front, accompanied by the full-length princess seams, give this dress a flattering look. I found the bust point was in the correct place and the front neckline sat close to my body with no gaping. Check the width of the sleeves before cutting out in case you need to widen the sleeve slightly for comfort.

The back of view B is designed for an elastic insertion to give the dress shape however I chose to omit the elastic and inserted the adjustable back belt as in view A. The lower half of the dress could easily be flared more for a different look if desired.

I am extremely thrilled with my new mix-and-match wardrobe and will certainly be sewing up the rest of the Petite Plus Patterns available in the near future.

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