

CLOTHING FOR ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN, TODDLERS TO PRE-TEENS

The most important consideration when providing clothing for the children is to realize that the item will be the only thing the child will wear until it literally falls apart. It will be worn to play in, work in, and sleep in. It isn't uncommon to find that a child's outfit is sewn on, nor is it uncommon to see a child clutching a filthy piece of rag around the shoulders to serve as a pitiful dress or shirt -- no other clothing or shoes, only the rag. Please know that what you donate with love will be received as a priceless possession. This is why we ask for only new or like new, shirts and dresses, and socks and clean shoes, that are very durable..

If you don't sew, relax! Choose to help a boy, they're easy. Just get a tee shirt or polo shirt in any size from toddler size to size 12. If there is a logo on the shirt, please be sure it's appropriate. (No, we don't want to advertise Coors or Camels, even if the shirts are free. Sorry...) Shirts that have been washed a couple of times or are brand new with a small stain are ok, these kids are grateful, not picky like ours. If you have a color choice, dark and/or patterns are best because they hide the stains and dirt, but this is a suggestion not a requirement. Pullover shirts are best because they don't have buttons to loose.

The tee shirt dress for a little girl takes more time, but not much. Start with a shirt that has sleeves, (not sleeveless or a tank top). Also, don't get one with a wide scoop neck because these children are skinny and the neck will slip off their shoulders. You may want to take a tuck or two, if the neck looks really big. Again, if the shirt has been washed a couple times or has a small stain, it's ok. Plain or patterned darker colors are more practical, but not required. Toddler sizes to size 12 are best. Coordinate the skirt fabric and top. Up to size six, a single strip from 45-inch wide fabric is adequate fullness for a skirt. Somewhere between size six and seven, a single strip becomes skimpy and requires additional inches. (Remember how you liked to twirl in your new dress?) A 2 to 1 ratio, shirt to skirt fabric works well. But shirt lengths vary so judge the length of the skirt as to what looks proportionally right; better a little long than too short.

Seam and zigzag the skirt ruffle edges together and machine hem one of the long edges. (Press under 1/4 inch then fold under about 3/4 inch and top stitch to make a nice hem.) Gather the other long edge by sewing two lines of long stitches then pulling the bobbin threads; or zigzag over dental floss and pull to make gathers. Fit the gathered edge to the bottom of the tee shirt, right sides together and sew gathered edge to bottom of shirt; stitch again about 1/2 inch away to reinforce. Or, top-stitch on outside of tee, catching the seam. (Press seam down toward hem, and pin first, to hold in place.) You may want to serge the seams together instead, or zigzag raw edge to reinforce.

Press the skirt of the dress for a finished look. And now, you have made one sweet little girl feel like a princess in her new dress!