Mix-and-Match Magic

by AnneLise Wilhelmsen

A Complete Mix-and-Match Wardrobe for Sasha

Butterick® B6423 (early 1970s).
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As is often the case with trends, the craze for mix-and-match was the short-lived result of a rare alignment of events. The idea was not entirely new when it took the world by storm in the late 1960s, but it coincided with other changes in society which set the stage perfectly for its success. During a few brief years it was all the rage. And then it was gone, disappearing as quickly as it had arrived. It can never happen in quite the same way again. But how it happened the first time is a wonderful example of multiple forces colliding to create what we call fashion. And having a good understanding of these influences helps us to costume our dolls more accurately.

During World War II, everything lovely and good was rationed. So we can forgive women of that time their overwhelming desire for luxury once the war ended. The impact on dress styles was immediate and all-encompassing. Making-do was out. Dior’s New Look, which premiered its scandalous usage of yards-upon-yards of fabric in 1947, was in. After years of living with basic, serviceable clothing, women wanted to celebrate their femininity. They clamored for head-to-toe outfits with perfectly matched accessories; these accessories went only with these particular outfits. Closets and drawers were filled to overflowing with hats, bags, gloves, belts, and shoes in every color and style.

In the early 1950s retailers had brief success with mixable clothing pieces for ladies. But it would not last. Women wanted to express their individuality by creating unique outfits. They quickly rejected the idea of pre-selected coordinates. Moreover, the end of restrictions on fabric purchases, combined with ever-increasing disposable incomes, gave women the freedom to extend this creativity to their daughters. Their small dresses, coats, and hats were also carefully coordinated. In fact, matching had become such an obsession that mother-daughter ensembles made frequent appearances in the fashion literature from this time.

None of this was very practical, of course, especially for children who grew out of their clothes regularly. Separates had been sold for girls and women to “mix about” since at least the 1930s. But following the war, interchangeable tops and bottoms were a sad reminder of rationing and imposed frugality. It would take time before women were willing to embrace mixed and matched wardrobes again.

Betsy McCall was an early proponent of this return to sensibility. In March of 1953 Betsy takes a train to visit her aunt. She boards in a blue skirt, vest, and jacket. When she realizes the vest is reversible she decides to play a joke on her aunt, who’s expecting her to be dressed all in blue. The paper doll continues Betsy’s mixed up fun. There are two skirts (one plaid, one solid), a reversible plaid or solid vest, a jacket which completes either outfit, and a coat which matches everything.

Even so, fashion was in no hurry to change. Although stores continued to offer coordinates, it was clear that matching still ruled over mixing. Early sewing patterns give us real insight into this time. Many of them provided variations...
on one dress, or one blouse with a skirt and a jumper. When separates were offered they were often still pictured as outfits, with no effort to show pieces being interchanged. The goal seemed to be reinforcing the versatility of the pattern by showing numerous fabric and trim options. Little effort was spent convincing buyers of the versatility of the clothing pieces themselves.

Mixing and matching eased its way into the collective consciousness slowly, one step at a time. Elsa Schiaparelli had shown mixed knitwear pieces as early as the 1930s, although it wasn’t her claim to fame and did not cause nearly the stir that her sweaters and hats had. Claire McCardell had been creating American sportswear as tops and bottoms since the 1940s, when she had been inspired by a too-heavy suitcase to break dresses into pieces for an interchangeable travel wardrobe. But as much as America loved her nonsense sensibility about fashion, women wanted dresses. In 1952 Givenchy sent his first collection down Paris runways. It featured separates. Although he was not the first, perhaps he was smarter (or luckier!) about his timing. And it did not hurt that he was French. Not everyone had been ready for separates immediately following the war, but things were changing. Modern conveniences had created a new culture of leisure which was having a powerful influence on women’s fashion. Casual clothing was now needed on a regular basis, including pants. It made good sense to pair them with a blouse which could be worn with a skirt for dressier occasions. Although women still loved to match things, their resistance to mixing was beginning to wane.

Meanwhile, their daughters were becoming increasingly independent in matters of style. By the later 1950s the new subculture of “teenagers” had developed minds of their own about nearly everything -- music, politics, and of course fashion. Retailers began catering to them, and sewing patterns started featuring simple coordinated separates for both teens and younger girls. Then in 1960 the Oxford English Dictionary made it official by citing the term “mix-and-match” as one of its new words for the year. Mixing was IN, and the mod fashions of British icons such as Mary Quant and Twiggy would soon take mixing and matching to extravagant extremes. By the mid 1960s coordinates had taken over the wardrobes of most girls. Retailers began promoting the mix-and-matchability of their fashions, and schoolgirls across the country enjoyed the fun of combining and re-combining their tops and bottoms into a magical array of outfits. The craze for mix-and-match was in full swing. But the best was yet to come.

As the 1960s drew to a close, schools across the nation capitulated to growing pressure and allowed girls to wear pants. However, in an effort to retain some sense of decorum, many required outfits to be matching “pants suits.” The freedom to wear pants opened the floodgates for mixing and matching girls’ wardrobes by exponentially increasing the number of options. Two skirts with one reversible vest makes four combinations from three pieces. But by adding two pair of pants which also match both sides of the vest, you have eight combinations from
five pieces. Mix-and-match had finally come of age. And as women began making their way into the work force they embraced the idea as well. Sewing companies were also investing heavily in the trend, and would soon be forced to shift to a horizontal layout for their artwork just to fit all the options each pattern could produce onto the front of the envelopes! Together, the evolving needs of girls and women created a perfect storm of mix-and-match mania. The game was on!

The craze came to a head in 1972 with the introduction of Garanimals. This clothing brand allowed even small children to dress themselves by matching pandas with pandas, and so forth. But by this time school districts were further easing their restrictions on pants. By the mid 1970s denim was allowed for both sexes and the need to mix and match tops with bottoms evaporated. For better or worse, jeans went with everything. Separates continued to be sold, of course. But the air had gone out of the balloon.

Luckily for us we have Sasha, a perfect ambassador for 1960s and 1970s fashions. Our costuming project for this issue gives you the chance to experience all the magic of mix-and-match as you create a complete wardrobe for her. And our lovely model, Cora, will happily demonstrate all the ways her tops and bottoms go together. So pull out your stash and let the mixing and matching begin. It is maddeningly addictive and deliciously fun!
BLOUSE AND DRESS

1. Cut one front on the fold, two backs, and two sleeves from your main fabric. For the blouse, cut one collar and one tie from this same fabric. For the Dress, cut two pockets, one collar, and one tie from your contrast fabric.

2. Fold along solid pleat lines at front shoulders and press. Match to dotted lines as indicated on pattern and hand baste in place. Press. Topstitch close to pressed edges as shown. Pull threads to inside, tie off, and clip.


4. Finish center back edges. With right sides together, pin center back from mark to lower edge. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Press seams towards (doll’s) left, continuing to press under 1/4” on the doll’s left side all the way to the neck edge.

5. With right sides together, pin collar to neck edge, leaving 1/4” beyond folded edge on doll’s left center back, and 1/4” beyond the finished edge on the doll’s right center back edge. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Trim to 1/8” and clip curves. Press seams towards collar.

6. Fold under 1/4” along remaining long edge of collar. Press. Turn collar towards outside so right sides are together and stitch along ends as shown. Trim to 1/8”. Turn to inside and slip stitch over seam line. Press.

7. With right sides together, pin sleeves to arm’s eyes, easing cap in without creating folds or tucks. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Trim to 1/8” under arm and clip curves. Finish raw edges and press towards sleeve.


9. Turn under 1/8” along lower sleeve edges and press. Turn up a second 5/16” and pin in place. Stitch close to edge as shown to create a casing, leaving 1/4” to each side of the seam open for inserting elastic. Pull threads to inside.

10. Cut two pieces of elastic each 3 1/4” long. Insert into casing using a safety pin. Join raw edges together by overlapping 1/4” and stitching back and forth through them. Stitch open area of casing closed (I find this is easiest to do by hand rather than machine).
Cora contemplates some of her back-to-school wardrobe options.
11. Turn under 1/4” along lower edge. Press. For blouse, turn up a second 1/4” and baste in place. Machine stitch close to edge. For dress, turn up an additional 1” and slip stitch in place. Press.

12. For pockets, finish upper raw edges. Machine stitch 1/4” from all raw edges, then trim sides and bottom to 1/8”. Turn top edge to inside along stitching and blind stitch in place. Turn remaining raw edges to inside along stitching and hand baste. Press.

13. Pin pockets to positions marked on pattern. Machine stitch close to told along sides and bottom edges. Press. Sew decorative button to center.

14. For dress, fold tie in half horizontally, having right sides together, and pin. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance, leaving section between marks open as shown. Trim seams to 1/8”. Turn to right side and press. Slip stitch opening together. Other options for the neckline are ribbon, small scarves, or pieces of lace attached with a pin or decorative button.

15. Stitch snaps to center back closure. If you like, finish by sewing decorative buttons to the outside over the snaps.

**SKIRT**

1. Cut two skirt pieces.

2. With right sides together, pin front to back at sides. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Finish seams. Press towards back.

3. Turn under 1/8” along upper edge and hand baste. Press. Turn under a second 3/8” and baste. Stitch close to edge to create a casing, leaving 1” open at the center back to insert elastic.

4. Cut your elastic 7 3/4” long. Insert into casing using a safety pin and join raw edges together by overlapping 1/4” and stitching back and forth through them. Stitch open area of casing closed.

5. Turn up 1 1/4” along lower edge and pin. Hand baste about halfway up, easing in the fullness.

6. Baste your hem tape over the raw edge as shown, having the raw edge about 1/8” below the top edge of the tape. Machine stitch close to the lower tape edge. Press.


**PANTS**

1. Cut four pants pieces.

2. With right sides together, pin one front to one back at sides and inner leg. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Finish seams. Press open flat. Repeat for second leg.
3. Leave one pant leg inside-out, and turn the other right-side-out. Slide the right-side-out leg into the other as shown, matching the crotch seam. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Stitch crotch seam. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Finish seams and press open flat. NOTE: It’s much easier to get this under your sewing machine if you pin from the inside as shown.

4. Follow skirt instructions for creating a casing and inserting elastic.

5. Turn up 1/2” at the lower edge of each leg, following skirt instructions for applying hem tape and completing the hem.

**VEST AND JUMPER**

1. Cut two fronts and one back on the fold from your main fabric. Repeat for lining.

2. With right sides together, pin vest fronts to back at sides. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. Press seams open flat. Repeat for lining.

3. Turn under 1/4” at shoulder edges of lining as shown and hand baste in place. Press.

4. With right sides together, pin lining to vest along all edges except the shoulder seams. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance, leaving a 2” opening at the lower center back for turning. Trim seams to 1/8” and clip curves. Turn to right side and press.

5. With right sides together, pin fronts to back at shoulders, keeping lining free. Stitch using a 1/4” seam allowance. You may find this easier to do by hand than by machine.

6. Open shoulder seam out flat and tuck seam allowances beneath the lining. Slip stitch lining edges together. Press.

7. Sew decorative buttons to right front as indicated on pattern. On inside, sew snaps to same marks. For the jumper there is an additional mark where a snap should be placed without a corresponding decorative button.
Requirements

**Blouse**
- Fabric - 16" L, 24" W
- 1/4" Elastic - 7" L
- 3 Small Snaps, Optional Small Buttons

**Dress**
- Main Fabric - 20" L, 24" W
- Contrast Fabric - 18" L, 9" W
- 1/4" Elastic - 7" L
- 1/2" Decorative Buttons - 2
- 3 Small Snaps, Optional Small Buttons

**Skirt**
- Fabric - 7" L, 16" W
- 1/4" Elastic - 8" L
- 3/8" Hem Tape - 15" L

**Pants**
- Fabric - 12" L, 22" W
- 1/4" Elastic - 8" L
- 3/8" Hem Tape - 20" L

**Vest**
- Fabric - 8" L, 16" W
- Lining - 8" L, 18" W
- 1/2" Buttons - 4
- 4 Small Snaps

**Jumper**
- Fabric - 10" L, 18" W
- Lining - 10" L, 18" W
- 1/2" Buttons - 6
- 7 Small Snaps