



Gertie Sews Vintage Casual: A Modern Guide to Sportswear Styles of the 1940s and 1950s

Gretchen Hirsch

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The mid-20th century was an amazing time for American women's fashion! Following the war, women started looking to American designers rather than French couture houses for inspiration and to demand clothing they could move in, even play in. In this follow-up to *Gertie's New Book for Better Sewing*, Gretchen "Gertie" Hirsch celebrates the classic casual styles that icons like Katharine Hepburn, Audrey Hepburn, and Rosie the Riveter made famous—think wide-legged trousers, fitted capri pants, beach rompers, shorts, knit tops, jeans, and day dresses. In Part I, Hirsch introduces key techniques for sportswear construction—from working with knit fabrics to the intricacies of pant-making—and in Part II, she showcases a 30-plus-piece vintage-inspired casual wardrobe.

Gertie Sews Vintage Casual: A Modern Guide to Sportswear Styles of the 1940s and 1950s Details

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From Reader Review Gertie Sews Vintage Casual: A Modern Guide to Sportswear Styles of the 1940s and 1950s for online ebook

Charlotte says

This is a marvelous sewing reference. I loved the history and insight into casual wear and appreciated the thorough and professional examinations of various sewing and patternmaking techniques.

And then there's the patterns themselves! I have at least four garments added to my docket because of this book! Like Gertie's first book, this one is not for the beginning seamstress. If you're looking to increase your sewing know-how and challenge yourself in the process, pick this book up!

Hilary (A Wytch's Book Review) says

This is a wonderful book for any sewers who also like the classics of the '40's and '50's (granted in is US centric but still very good), the best thing about this is the fact that these clothes are designed for women with SHAPE and the first part of the book is a wonderful repository of clothes making information, with the latter part turned over to the patterns (and various "tweaks" thereof!) I cannot wait to lose just a bit more weight so that I can actually MAKE some of these!

Tracey says

nonfiction/sewing (I would classify the level as somewhere between beginner and intermediate--practiced, but not perfected; but this is also good for more seasoned sewists who are just interested in some retro patterns). First impression: Man, I could've used this book three days ago when I was finishing my last knit-fabric project. Gertie answers a lot of questions and offers lots of tips for sewing with BOTH woven and knit fabrics (and how to tell them apart, if you are that lost), and how to adjust your patterns so they fit PERFECTLY.

2nd impression (after further study):

I don't know if this would suit a beginner, but she definitely explains a lot of stuff I'd known when I was starting out... plus I'm finding her knit patterns to be awesome staples (sure beats trying to trace/cut apart my old tees to make my own pattern) I've adapted her "pin-up sweater" pattern as a knit jersey t-shirt with great results.

There are also some cool sailor shorts and cigarette pants that I might attempt if I were more skilled, but I will leave those for someone else.

Heidi says

I liked that this book has sections on working with knits, patternmaking, and fitting pants. I liked that it includes several patterns with ideas and directions for altering each pattern multiple times to achieve different styles and looks.

Kelly says

Her books are well written: clear explanations and instructions. I checked it out of the library to see if I wanted to buy a copy. I'm pretty sure I will. Nice patterns,

Joanne says

How-to-sew book, with lots of practical tips and clear instructions for fitting and adding details. Since I haven't actually done anything but read the book, it feels a little like reading a cookbook without making any of the recipes. Great read; not sure how the projects would turn out.

Lisa says

Good writing and instructions, but the patterns are not quite my style. Worth checking out, though.

Sarah says

Gertie does it again! Great book. Great point that fancy dresses are so much fun but how much do we actually wear them? Making comfortable, easy care, attractive items are important too.

Amy Isham says

I love this book and there are some projects that a beginner to intermediate sewist can tackle. But some techniques are assumed so if you struggle with the spatial aspects of sewing as I do, you may need a simpler book first. I still greatly enjoyed reading the book and enjoy the patterns, which are easy to trace.

Katherine says

I've read Gertie's blog for years but never got around to picking up her books. I passed on her first one, Gertie's New Book for Better Sewing: A Modern Guide to Couture-Style Sewing Using Basic Vintage Techniques because I realized I'm not actually interested in using vintage techniques for their own sake. This one, though, is designed to fit better into a modern wardrobe that you want to have touches of vintage inspiration but still be practical for everyday wear.

The patterns included span a nice range of basics; some are pretty simplistic in the design (or maybe it's just the samples that were made) but there are some cute pieces if you're a little bit beyond a beginner level for apparel sewing. It was really great there was more of a range of models used! (though some of them have

heavy makeup that's rather distracting)

Anyway, with just the patterns, this would've been a 3-star book, but I actually did learn a few tidbits of new-to-me information in the reviews of different fabric types (like what' the difference between chambray and denim) and the fitting/pattern adjustment sections are pretty comprehensive for a book not targeted at advanced sewers. They're done with paper mockups of the adjustments that you'd make, which I think I actually prefer to photographs of fabric samples because with the paper mocks, it's easier to see the line changes pretty clearly.

I think I'd still recommend The Colette Sewing Handbook: Inspired Styles and Classic Techniques for the New Seamstress first because that book's design and patterns are more sophisticated, but this book is very accessible and would be a good gift for a vintage-lover that's just starting to learn to sew clothes.

Heather says

Some truly phenomenal patterns, especially for shirts and pants.

Selby Gunter says

So much great information in this book. Patterns are included in the back. You can read my complete review of this book, and see a sample projects, at my craft blog Wavoki Crafts.

Rachel says

While this book focuses on sewing vintage style clothing it contains loads of information that can be used for any sewing projects. The introductory chapters discuss every aspect of sewing such as choosing the right type of fabric for your garment, tips for various types of fabrics (specifically knits), techniques for finishing seams, tips for getting the best fit, and so on. The later chapters focus on the patterns that come with the book. There are just a few basic patterns but each one has several variations. For example the pants pattern has several variations for different styles of short and also combines with a halter top pattern to make a cute romper.

Age Recommendations: This book is geared toward adults but teens/ tweens interested in sewing and fashion could learn a lot. While it does contain all the knowledge a beginning sewist would need I think that the sheer amount of information could be overwhelming. I think it would be best for someone who has already mastered basic sewing techniques and wants to take their skills to the next level and/or learn to alter patterns for optimum fit.

Dixie says

The writing style is very easy to digest, the illustrations are adorable, and models of all different sizes are

featured in *Gertie Sews Vintage Casual*. I am very much a beginning sewer, and this book is not really for beginning sewers. With that said, there are a few patterns that I still think I can tackle with my limited knowledge.

The book is divided into Skills and Wardrobe, or instructions and patterns. The Skills section includes: a nice history lesson on vintage styles, a chapter on materials and supplies needed for both wovens and knits, a chapter each for woven skills and knit skills, a fitting chapter, and a chapter on pattern adjustments. I longed for more photos to go with the tutorials, but maybe that is the beginning sewer in me talking.

In the Wardrobe section, there are ten basic patterns. Each pattern offers one or more variations, for a total of more than thirty different patterns. I adore the first pattern, the '40s-Style Blouse, but I think it is beyond my skill set right now. Instead, I think I will stick with one of the following patterns: the Flared Skirt, the Boat Neck Top (knit!), or the Easy Knit Pencil Skirt (knit again!). Fortunately, the Skills for Knits chapter is filled with the information needed for tackling knit projects.

Gertie Sews Vintage Casual is a recommended read for all sewers, even beginning sewers with aspirations to enhance their skills. It contains a wealth of technical sewing information, great patterns, and historical context for the patterns.

Kristin says

I came across this book about three months into my obsessive "learn to sew my own clothes or die trying" quest. Raised by a mom who's a skilled sewist, I knew the basics but never really took the time to learn my machine or the more advanced skills required to successfully sew apparel. By the time I read this book, I'd made a lot of headway by plunging in and making things, learning new techniques as I went. This book helped me step up my game, especially in sewing knits.

Early on, I sticky-tabbed all the pattern instruction/illustration pages and some of my favorite technique pages for faster reference. I've kept this book sitting out on my sewing/cutting table for more than a year. I reference it every time I sew with knits (mostly because I can never remember exactly how to do a binding at the neck opening).

I've made several clothing items from the included patterns, and modified several of the patterns for my own use. I own many vintage and reproduction patterns similar to the ones in this book, yet I keep going back to the patterns in this book instead. I love how simple it was to adjust the patterns to fit me, based on the instructions in the book. Typing this review is making me want to go try one of the ones I haven't done yet!
