

HOW TO SEW YOUR OWN CLOTHES



WHY WOULD YOU SEW YOUR OWN CLOTHES?

Most people have heard about the dire effects of fast fashion on the planet. At the same time as concern for the environment has grown, interest in sewing is booming. They're linked, of course – because making your own (especially from upcycled fabric or op shop finds) has much less impact on the planet.

Sewing your own is also all about inclusion, gender and body diversity. Making your own means you can express yourself – and literally, suit yourself. You look fantastic!

WHAT?

Learn to make your own clothes that fit your body type, express your personal style and are one-of-a-kind. Super-satisfying skills – and greener than fast fashion.

IT'S OKAY TO...

- > not know what you want to do
- > get knocked into the pit
- > move faster or go slower
- > fail (as long as you tried)

WHAT YOU NEED

Learning to sew takes patience. If you have never tried it before, set your sights on something simple, like a boxy top or a pair of PJ pants.

With the surge in sewists hitting the web, there are tons of free patterns and video channels about sewing. We've put just a few of them below to get you started until you find your own space in the sewing world.

You will need:

- > A sewing machine (not absolutely necessary; you can make clothes by hand, it just takes longer) and a couple of bobbins to fit it
- > A hand-sewing needle, thread, seam-ripper, chalk pencil, scissors and pins or sewing clips
- > Fabric (see below) OR a garment to thrift flip
- > A pattern
- > A measuring tape (great if you get one with both metric and imperial on it)

WHAT TO DO

01

What do you want to make? Choose a garment. A simple top, a pair of trousers, a skirt or a dress? Search for 'simple top sewing pattern' or 'simple dress sewing pattern' to start (include the quote marks). You'll get loads of inspo.

- > 20+ Free Simple Top Patterns (Women's):
www.applegreencottage.com/free-sewing-patterns-womens-tops/
- > 10 Free Men's Sewing Patterns:
www.onthecuttingfloor.com/free-pattern-alert-10-free-mens-patterns/

WHAT TO DO CONT:

- Pattern Emporium – Women's and unisex, and lots of videos for beginners: <https://patternemporium.com/>
- Sewing Therapy – for inspiration and encouragement: <https://sewingtherapy.net/>
The simplest item of all to make is a scarf. (Grab some minky, lightweight linen or cotton voile fabric for this.)
- Missouri Star Minky Scarf: <https://youtu.be/lcdhXZkJFqw>

02

Assemble the tools. You don't need to buy a new sewing machine – in fact, lots of experienced sewists suggest that a second-hand machine that once was top quality is going to be more robust than a cheap new machine that will bounce all over the place and tangle its own threads. Get a little box and put in it: scissors, thread, bobbins to fit your machine, etc – see our list above. Op shops often have these items for nearly nothing.

03

Decide on a pattern. There are SO MANY cool independent designers out there making patterns and hacks. Not all patterns are equal: some have more helpful instructions than others (and whole YouTube channels to show you how to do it).

You can either get a paper pattern or a PDF that you print out A4 and tape together or get printed A0 at a copy shop.

Here are five indie pattern companies with patterns for all sorts of people:

- Sew Liberated: <https://sewliberated.com/products>
- Twig and Tale: www.twigandtale.com
- Tilly and the Buttons: <https://shop.tillyandthebuttons.com/collections/sewingpatterns>
- Peppermint FREE patterns: <https://peppermintmag.com/sewing-school/>
- Helen's Closet: <https://helensclosetpatterns.com/shop/>

04

Choose your fabric. Whole books have been written on fabric, but let's just start with a crucial decision: knit versus woven. Check the pattern – is it for a knit or a woven?

Knit fabrics are stretchy, they are used to make things like t-shirts and stretchy dresses.

Woven fabrics are flat and don't stretch around your body as you move. Classic wovens like linen and cotton are used to make dress shirts, crisp (not stretchy) dresses, skirts and linen trousers. It's not just tradition – patterns for knits are smaller and sit closer to the body because they'll stretch as you move. Patterns for wovens are crisper but you need to measure well (or choose a boxy/oversized style) when you're starting out.

Once you know if you want knit or woven, off to a fabric shop or hop online and hunt. Reuse fabric from the op shop or an old sheet (woven) for a test run.

05

Measure up! Guess what? You won't fit the same size as clothes from the shop. Don't put in hours of work on something you can't wear. It takes 5 minutes to measure yourself. Less.

Here's how to do it from The Foldline:

<https://thefoldline.com/2018/12/08/the-sewing-pattern-tutorials-9-measuring-yourself/>

06

Read the deets. Open the packet or PDF instructions and read the booklet all the way through. If you're feeling intimidated, search online for video sew-alongs by the name of the pattern, e.g. 'Wiksten shift sewalong' gets you this super useful video from Sewing Therapy:

<https://youtu.be/8MGhryvA-Z0>

07

Cut and sew! Relax and take it slowly, read the instructions all the way through and then again before you start. It's a recipe. If you're scared you'll mess it up, why not make a version of the

WHAT TO DO CONT:

- pattern first from an old sheet (hellooo op shop!) That way you're sure of what you are doing before you cut your exciting new fabric.

08

Stuck? Consult the Sewing Aunties. Okay, we didn't make up the name 'Sewing Mom' or 'Sewing Aunty', but it's a thing. Lots of experienced sewists are sharing their skills on video. If you're struggling, DO hunt online using the name of the pattern, or the technique (e.g. 'neckline interfacing') for help.



GOT IT?

- You've made something! Wear it with pride! You. Look. Marvellous. Whatcha gonna make next?



TRY THIS

If you feel like you've nailed it but you want to level up, try this:

- Try a thrift flip, op shop hack or similar. Here's one by Wendy that might get you inspired: With Wendy - Thrift flip: <https://youtu.be/9EuqN85tAhl>
- To get real power from a pattern, make it again. Not only are you saving money, you get to do things differently (different sleeves, add a hood, make it longer) and play with the look.

SO WHAT?

- Yes, you can buy clothes. But when you learn to make clothes you have ultimate power – it will fit YOU and your unique body, your style, your flair, your personality.
- Sewing is relaxing – it's like a big puzzle, but you get to be creative too.

WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

- Check out some of the links above
- Make a shortlist of pattern ideas
- Gather the tools and start looking for fabric – or an old sheet for a trial run
- Stop watching videos and just get started...



IF YOU LIKED THIS ONE YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY...

- How to Grow Your Own Food
- How to Make a Dress
- How to Relax with Mindfulness Drawing
- How to Plan a Meal for Friends