

GETTING STARTED: TEACH YOURSELF DESIGN

“I never learned everything at once. And I hope that I’m continuing always to learn.” —Marc Jacobs

SUBCHAPTERS

- Understand the Basic Skills
- Look at the Classic Resources
- Be Open to New Ways to Construct and Design
- Study Designers Who Resonate With You
- Find Your Path in Fashion Design
- Find Your Creative Voice

CHAPTER REVIEW

Complete mastery of basic skills of fashion construction—such as sewing and knitting—isn’t necessary, but Marc encourages you to develop an intimate knowledge of the craft involved in producing your designs. Knowing about different fabrics and the properties that make them unique will help you better select the right material for your garments. You can familiarize yourself with the various elements of garment design by touching fabrics, changing the tension of different stitches, and experimenting with embroidery. Take advantage of resources such as technical classes, online tutorials, and craft books that walk you step by step through the construction of a garment.

Yves Saint Laurent was a major influence on Marc’s work. By taking inspiration from the street, collecting art, and surrounding himself with interesting people, Saint Laurent emanated glamour. With his wealth of references, Saint Laurent elevated common articles of clothing, such as a motorcycle jacket, into haute couture. You can build your mental library of references by reading fashion magazines, analyzing the work of your favorite designers, studying art and art history, and observing the world around you.

Marc recommends that you try designing for different market sectors, such as womenswear, menswear, or sportswear, until you find what resonates with you. By focusing on womenswear and building a name for his brand, Marc was then able to break into menswear, childrenswear, and accessories.

LEARN MORE

- Marc believes sewing is a fundamental skill for any fashion designer. Check out *Reader’s Digest’s New Complete Guide to Sewing: Step-by-Step Techniques for Making Clothes and Home Accessories*, or search for online sewing resources to sharpen your skills.
- What resources have you used to learn the fundamentals of fashion design? Share your favorite craft books, magazines, and websites in [The Hub](#).

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LEARN MORE CONT.

- Read up on Marc's list of influential designers:
 - French designer Yves Saint Laurent was a major influence on Marc and is known as one of the foremost fashion designers of the twentieth century. Read more in the *Business of Fashion's* [fashion history series](#).
 - French designer Coco Chanel is known for her timeless designs. Read more about [Chanel's story](#) and review a [timeline](#) of her career.
 - American designer Ralph Lauren is best known for his sportswear line, Polo Ralph Lauren. [Read](#) about Ralph Lauren.
 - Roy Halston Frowick was an American designer known as Halston. His designs for the American woman were minimalist and clean. [Read](#) more about Halston in *People* magazine.
 - Comme des Garçons founder Rei Kawakubo is a Japanese designer known for her avant-garde designs and ability to challenge conventional notions of beauty, good taste, and fashionability. [Watch](#) Andrew Bolton, curator for the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Adrian Joffe, Kawakubo's husband, discuss Kawakubo's work in the *New York Times*.
 - Dame Vivienne Westwood is a British fashion designer and businesswoman. Westwood was one of the architects of the punk fashion phenomenon of the 1970s. [Read](#) about Westwood and the postmodern legacy of punk style.
 - Belgian fashion designer Martin Margiela is the founder of the Maison Margiela fashion house. [Read](#) more about Margiela's work in the *New York Times*.
 - Italian fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli is regarded as one of the most prominent figures in fashion between the two world wars. [Learn](#) about Schiaparelli on NPR's *Weekend Edition Saturday*.

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ASSIGNMENTS

- Here are the essential books that Marc keeps in his design office, which he and his designers often refer to.
 - Derek Ridger, *We're Desperate: The Punk Rock Photography of Jim Joco*, powerHouse Books, 2002.
 - Paul Gorman, *Mr. Freedom: Tommy Roberts: British Design Hero*, Adelita, 2012.
 - Vintage issues of *Stitchcraft* and *Vogue Knitting*.
 - Issues of *Vogue Italia*, *Vogue UK*, and *ELLE* from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Read and study these books and magazines, and begin developing your own personal collection of books that both serve as references and inspiration.

- Teach yourself how to sew or knit. Begin with hand sewing or “arm knitting.” As the term suggests, this is when you use your arms, rather than knitting needles, to create large, loosely knotted scarves, blankets, or other simple products. Share your sewing and knitting tips, tricks, and techniques in [The Hub](#).
- Select an old article of clothing from your closet or a local thrift shop. It’s time to deconstruct it! We suggest trying this first with a button-up shirt. Use a seam ripper (or a similar household tool) to remove the collar and any pockets, then separate each panel. How many pieces of fabric went into constructing your piece of clothing? How were the pieces connected? Was the garment constructed by machine or by hand? What did the seams look like? Understanding how your clothes are constructed will help you design new clothing thoughtfully.