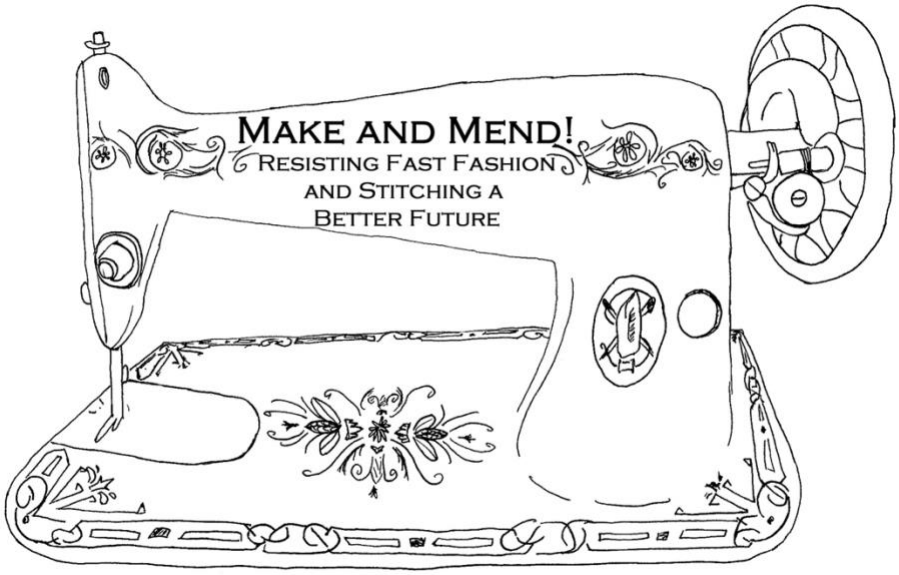
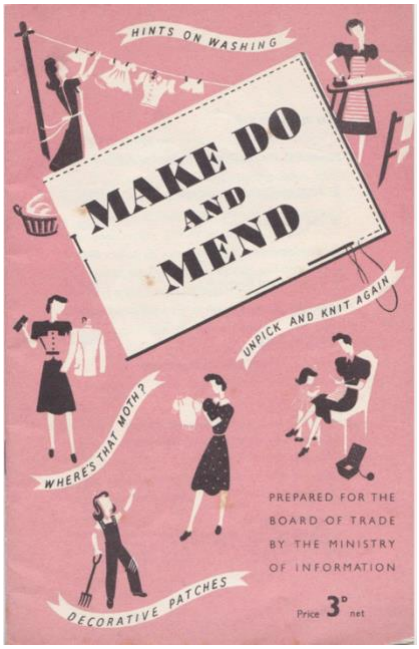

MAKE AND MEND!
RESISTING FAST FASHION
AND STITCHING A
BETTER FUTURE

This zine is dedicated to the anarchists of the world. Their struggle for total liberation, for a world built around care and compassion, is borne of radical love for one another. This love inspires us to work hard and make beautiful things. May the day come where all labor is a labor of love.

1. Make Do and Mend in its historical context

by Rita

The concept of "Make Do and Mend" originated in the 1940s, during WWII. Many people are familiar with the rations imposed on things like food, gas and certain materials, but less familiar is the clothing rationing that occurred in both England and the US.



In England this program was created and promoted by the Board of Trade, with a government-published booklet detailing the ways that individuals could "Repair, reuse and reimagine" their old clothes and find ways to avoid buying new clothing with limited resource coupons.

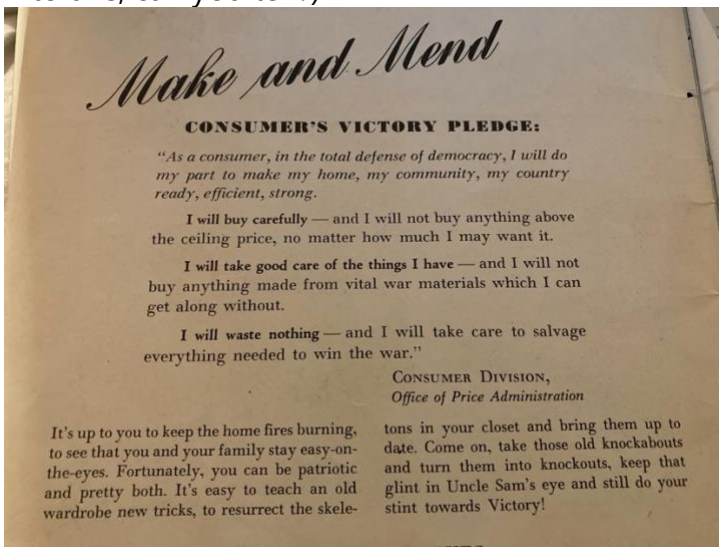
A newsreel introducing the concept was produced in the early 1940s, showing these concepts in (literal) action.[a] This mildly terrifying but simultaneously endearing clip shows sentient clothing talking about how it can be re-made into new garments, and encouraged viewers to seek out or start a "Make do and mend" group with their friends and reminded everyone that "we can all help each other."

[a] Watch it here: film.iwmcollections.org.uk/record/1956

While clothing wasn't as strictly rationed in the US, there were still significant restrictions put in place for new clothing manufacturing and individual access to clothing making-materials was limited.

The restrictions here mostly affected the design of new garments--decorative elements such as ruffles, pockets (a tragedy), hoods and other elements seen as non-essential were not permitted on patterns as part of the goal of reducing overall fabric use. This was also achieved by shortening hemlines, narrowing sleeves and having slimmer skirts and pants widths. Shirt designs couldn't have double cuffs, elastic use was decreased and there were even limits placed on the lengths of sock cuffs!

It is impossible to look into this movement without having to acknowledge the heavily gendered language it was written with. Much of the content in the pamphlets and other advertising was written with the "women at home" as the audience. The idea was that by keeping up appearances at home, the wives and girlfriends at home would keep up the morale of the troops overseas, in all their patriotic misogynist glory. (I don't buy into this, can you tell?)



Make and Mend

CONSUMER'S VICTORY PLEDGE:

"As a consumer, in the total defense of democracy, I will do my part to make my home, my community, my country ready, efficient, strong.

I will buy carefully — and I will not buy anything above the ceiling price, no matter how much I may want it.

I will take good care of the things I have — and I will not buy anything made from vital war materials which I can get along without.

I will waste nothing — and I will take care to salvage everything needed to win the war."

CONSUMER DIVISION,
Office of Price Administration

It's up to you to keep the home fires burning, to see that you and your family stay easy-on-the-eyes. Fortunately, you can be patriotic and pretty both. It's easy to teach an old wardrobe new tricks, to resurrect the skeletons in your closet and bring them up to date. Come on, take those old knockabouts and turn them into knockouts, keep that glint in Uncle Sam's eye and still do your stint towards Victory!

However: as uncomfortable and unnecessary as the staying pretty aspect of this movement is, some fantastic innovation still came out of it. People painted their legs to look like they were wearing stockings, since the fabric for silk and nylon stockings ended up rationed. Not the most effective, of course, if you live somewhere like the rainy PNW but it fit into the "look like everything is normal" story very well.

Instructions were given on how to use the fabric you already had and how to remake it into something new. The Make and Mend booklet shows you how to take a men's suit and use conventionally available patterns to make a women's suit from it, showing in detail things like the cutting layouts and how to preserve some of the suit tailoring when reworking it. Suggestions were also given on altering clothing that was wearing out, supplementing it other fabric from a patch collection or how to make clothing completely out of these odds and ends lying around from other projects.

Fabric that wasn't intended as "garment" fabric became the basis for a number of interesting creations. A personal favorite of mine is the escape map fabric. These were maps issued to soldiers, primarily in the RAF, showing the surrounding area they were heading to in case of capture. Many of these maps were printed on silk, as it was a good base for map accuracy, didn't disintegrate if it got wet and was easy to fold up small and conceal in a place it wouldn't be found. Some of these maps were brought back by soldiers, and then eventually the British government released the extra maps after the war as "off coupon" purchases for civilians.

The result was stunning creations using these maps as fabric--most famously, a lingerie set made during the war with maps that were brought back by a returning soldier. Some of the other extant examples in museums today are from this same time period, but others are from the after-war-but-still-in-rationing time. Either way, they show an ingenuity in creation by people who were dedicated to making everything they had last.

2. Make Do And Mend… now?

by Rita

So, how do we bring this idea into the 21st century?

The motivation might come from a different place (no one I know who works on repairing and repurposing clothing is doing it so they look nice for when their husband comes home from the war…), but it turns out we want the same thing: we want our clothes to last, and we want to use what we already have in creative ways so we don't need to spend money on something new.

Repairing the clothes you have means not contributing to the fast fashion industry. Even if that's where the clothes came from in the first place, you're not adding *more* money into the industry. There's a myriad of reasons why divesting from this industry is a positive: sustainability, not contributing to the demand for quickly made garments that pay lower-than-poverty wages, not encouraging the theft of designs from independent artists… whichever way you want to look at it, this is the kind of individual action that can make a difference to the greater whole.

The "make do and mend" mentality, to me, becomes more than just a wartime effort of the past. It's the way I live my life now, and the way I hope to continue living my life in our collective better future.

Bringing new life to my old clothes brings me so much joy. Every time I can fix a tear in a pair of leggings or re-attach the lining of a coat, I am reminded that this is my little rebellion. I believe in the value of these skills, the knowledge of how my garments fit together and how to make them last. Sewing, mending, knitting, darning, all of it is regularly devalued and seen as something non-essential, seen as "women's work" and not a skill or thing to admire. This is something we can change. We can see the value in these skills, both for individuals *and* for the community.

Something that stands out to me from the 1940s promotion of the movement is the fact that it's not just for you. The short clip played in theaters, with the sentient clothing, tells the viewers that they should seek out their local groups doing this work, or start their own with their friends. People are encouraged to share clothing and other items that they no longer need or wear with their community, because there's always someone there who needs it.

It's never just about one individual. It's for all of us, together.

Maybe you don't have a sewing machine, but you have a friend who does. You might be great at darning socks, but not so good at fixing seams. You have another friend who collects fabric for patches and repairs. Someone else is an all-star knitter. Everyone doesn't have to be a genius at all the repair and making skills--we can come together and share what we know, and share the work that needs to be done. This little group of four is already a collective with a wealth of information and skill!

Reader, I hope you can seek out these communities. I hope you can find the same joy I do in knowing that you're defying the capitalistic bulldozer that is fast fashion every time you engage in this work. I hope that you too can find empowerment in fighting in your own ways.

While we're not all star-spangled red white and blue about it like the (mostly) women of the 1940s, we can still take inspiration from their work and their innovation.

I know I do.

3. Repair Guides

A collaborative effort

Here are a variety of hand-sewing stitches, and guidance on when to use them.

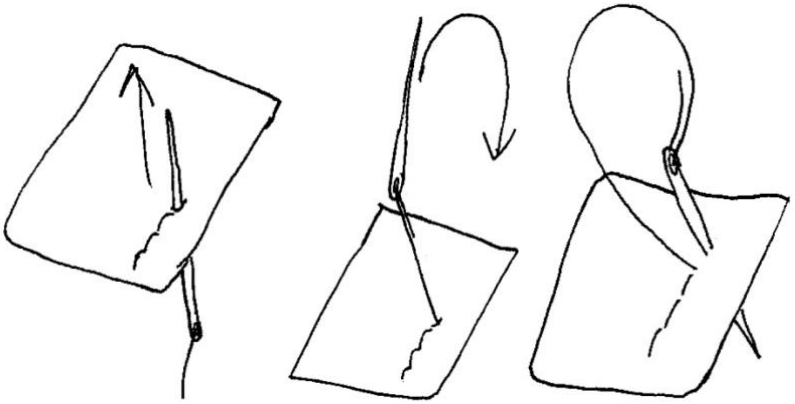
Running stitch

This is your most basic of sewing stitches, but don't underestimate the humble running stitch! The running stitch can be used to baste (loosely or temporarily attach) pieces together before sewing them more securely (like with a backstitch or a sewing machine), or it can be used as the basis of the repair itself

Steps:

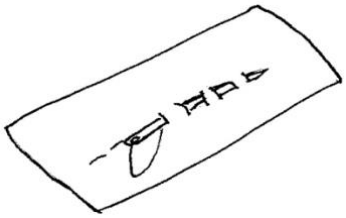
First, secure your thread. If you're using single thread, tying a knot in the end will not actually help much, so it's best to do a few backstitches over the thread to secure it in place.

Bring the thread up through the fabric, and then back down to the other side to complete a stitch.



Running stitches can be whatever length you need them to be--long stitches are best for basting, and small running stitches close together give stability to a patched area.

Once you're comfortable with the basic motions, you can do a bunch of stitches all at once on the needle before pulling the thread through. Make sure that you don't pull too hard on the thread, though, or your fabric will bunch up and not be the shape you intended.



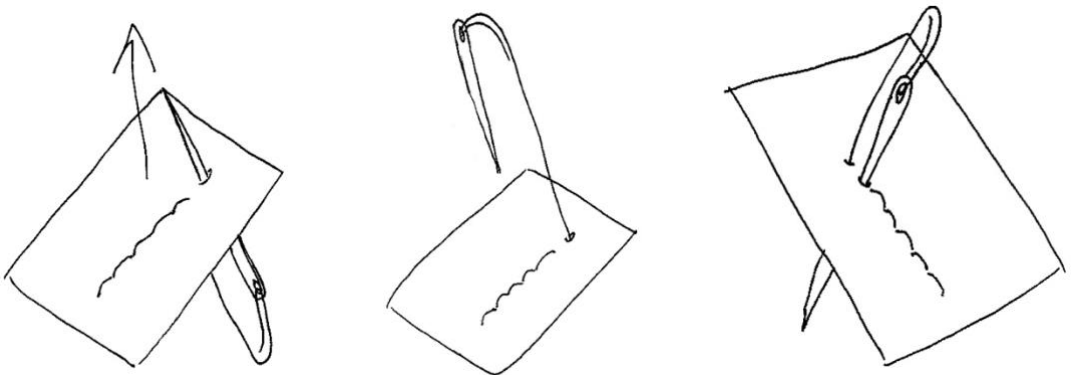
Backstitch

One of the strongest hand stitches, this is a great option for fixing popped seams. It looks like a running stitch on one side, and has looping stitches on the other. Because you're going over the same area (the "back" portion of the backstitch), it gives a lot of stability to the seam.

Backstitching can be done with single or doubled thread. I like to use doubled thread for stability, unless I'm trying to mimic topstitching on the outside of a garment.

Steps:

To secure your thread, if you're using doubled thread you can tie a knot in the end. I like to loop my working thread through itself to secure this knot. You can also use the backstitch method to secure the thread if you don't want to have noticeable knots. Bring the needle up and through the fabric. Unlike the running stitch, this stitch will travel back (away from the remainder of the seam) first. Pass the needle back to the wrong side of the fabric.

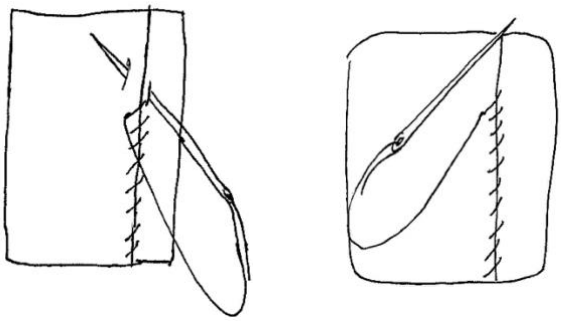


Next stitch: bring the needle up and through the fabric, forward from the last stitch you did. However long you want your stitch to be is how far away you should bring the needle through. Pass the needle back through the fabric at the same point where you brought it up for the last stitch.

Whip stitch

Commonly used for hems and finishing raw edges of fabric, the whip stitch is another solid basic stitch to have in your toolkit. This is also known as a "felling stitch." If you watch or read any historical costuming content, you will often hear people talk about felling stitches and felling seams--they're using whip stitches. Whip stitches are also a great way to attach the edges of a patch!

Steps:
Attach your thread to the fabric



Bring the needle up and through the base layer of the fabric.
Insert the needle into the second layer of fabric, then also through the base layer again at an angle.

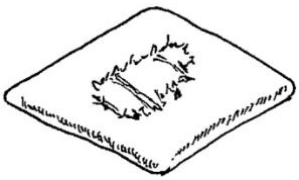
This creates a series of small diagonal stitches on one side, and a small stitch on the other side. The size of the stitch on the other side is directly correlated to the amount of fabric you go through when inserting the needle in diagonally, so be mindful of this if you don't want your stitching to show through on, say, a hem.

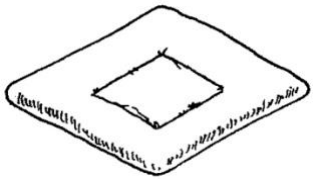
Patching

Patching woven fabrics can be done in a variety of ways. You can choose a contrasting fabric and make a fun visible mend, or you can use fabric that matches (or comes close to matching) the garment.

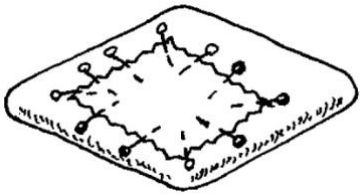
Patching can be done on the inside or the outside of the fabric. If you're stabilizing a worn area so you don't get a hole, this is best done on the inside. Patching over a hole can be done from either side of the garment.

Steps:
First, prepare your patch fabric. Cut a piece larger than the area it is intended to cover, plus your desired seam allowance. Clean up the edges of the patch to stop them from fraying in your preferred manner. If you're patching a hole, make sure to clean up the edges of the hole as well before you pin and baste the patch into place.





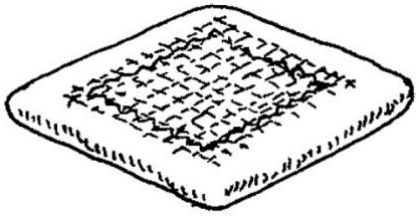
I like to leave ~1/2" seam allowance on the patch and fold this under with an iron. If I'm feeling fancy I'll stitch that down. But you can also use pinking shears, overcast or overlock the edges, or leave them unfinished if you're using a fabric that doesn't tend to fray.

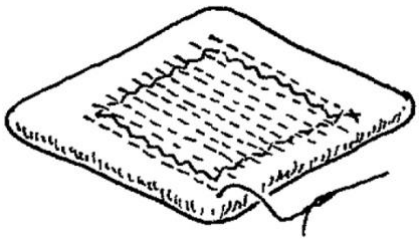


Pin the patch in place, taking care to not create folds or bubbles in the patch or the garment. You can leave the pins in and use them here, but I prefer to baste the patch in place at this point. Basting means the fabric won't slip around, or move out of place if you drop a pin.

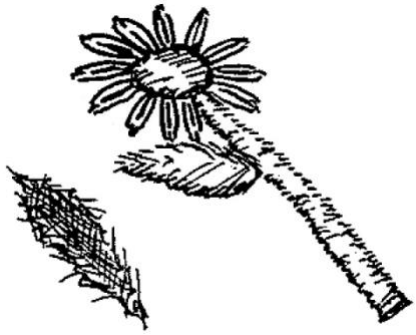
Stitch the patch in place with the method of your choice.

Some Ideas for Patching
Running stitches back and forth across the fabric: this is a repair method used for tears in the fabric, from my 1940s Make and Mend booklet. They suggest





using the running stitches across small tears, or over a patch on a worn spot. This can also be done over patches over a hole, but I find it works best for small tears and stabilizing.

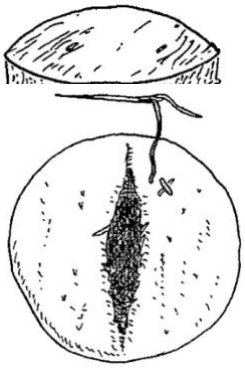


Applique and embroidery: "visible mending" isn't a new concept! These suggestions are also found in my 40s booklet. You can embroider/place the applique directly over the hole, or you can put in a patch and embroider over that.
Whip stitch around the edges of the patch, from either the inside or the outside. You can leave it as is, or add any decorative stitching of your choice.
Sashiko mending techniques are very popular, and they add both decoration and stabilization to the patch and fabric. I love things that are both functional and decorative!

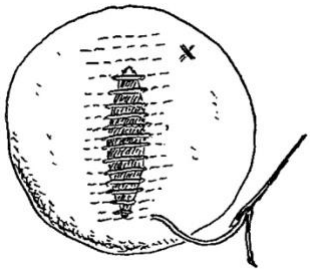
How to Darn

First off, darning isn't as scary as it sounds or seems. It looks like a lot, but once you get into the rhythm of it it can be quite fun!
You will need:

- thread, darning wool or yarn in the color of your choice
- A darning needle--use a thicker darning needle (sold as such) for things with larger stitches, and a smaller tapestry or embroidery needle for tighter weaves
- A darning egg, mushroom, or an object close in size, shape and texture to one of these. In her book Make, Sew and Mend, Bernadette Banner (chaotically) suggests "a piece of firm produce" as a substitute. I have not tried this method, but honestly? A smooth gourd might work pretty well.



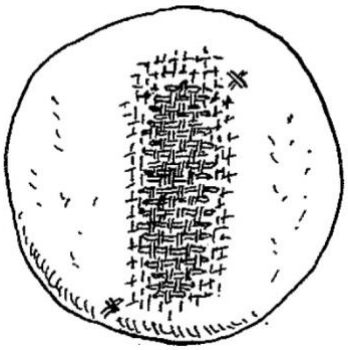
The process: Position your Darning Object under the area to be repaired. Anchor your thread, making sure that it's not in the worn or stressed area that you are intending to darn, as this can further destabilize the worn area.



Make a series of running stitches from one side to the other of the area you intend to darn. When you reach the other side, turn your needle and go back the other way. Make sure you leave some slack here--pulling the thread taut will cause the edges of your darn to pucker and pull on the fabric, once again causing additional stress (a thing that none of us, not even your socks, need.)

Continue making these back and forth running stitches across the entire area of the darn. If you reach an area that is a hole, make a long running stitch across it but do not pull it tight. As you are making these stitches, make sure you're varying where you put the needle on the edges. Creating a darn with a more rounded shape means that, again, less stress is put on the fabric. Sensing a theme here?

When you have completed stitches going in one direction, turn 90 degrees and start going the other way across the hole.
When you reach the areas where you left long threads across the hole, weave your working thread over and under them. Alternate this every row to create a woven patch in this area. Try and make these rows close together so that you are creating a sturdy fabric.
Secure the thread in, as before, an area of stable fabric once you have completed your crosswise stitches.



Hemming a garment

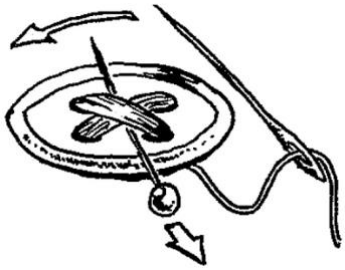
Hems are best done with the help of a friend, but it is possible to do them yourself with a few extra steps.
First, put on the garment. Next, figure out about where you want it to hit and pin the fabric. If you're marking this on yourself, it might take a couple of tries to get it exactly where you want it.
After you have approximated the amount of additional hem, remove the garment and measure this distance. Using a solid ruler and your marking item of choice, mark on the fabric where you want your new hem to be. You can mark it on the inside and fold up to that, or you can mark it on the outside and fold at the mark--whatever works for you.
Iron in your new hem, taking care to use the appropriate iron setting for the fabric you're working with.

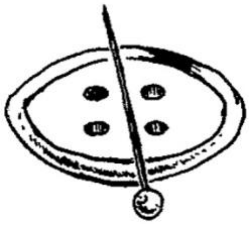
I like to keep the original fabric and make double fold hems, but if you're feeling spicy you can cut the fabric. I'm short, so I try to be considerate of potential future wearers of any of my garments and don't cut them. You may have to futz with the fabric a bit and create some folds in order to get it to lie flat. Do what you must to get a non-bubbly hem.
Attach this new hemline with your stitch of choice. I use a variety of different hem stitches, and pretty much always reference this Seamwork[b] post for what I want to use. A solid choice for most types of hems is the whip/felling stitch. The catch or herringbone stitch is another common choice.
And that's it, you have re-hemmed a garment!

Re-attaching a button

This changes depending on the type of button. Buttons that have a solid piece and a loop on the back have a built-in shank, and these can just be sewn on as is.
Flat buttons, the kind with holes in their surface, need you to create that shank. If you've ever re-sewn a button on completely flush with the fabric and wondered why it popped off again quickly, this is why--there needs to be some space between the button and the fabric to allow the buttonhole and other side of the garment to fit between the two.

After you sew on a lot of buttons you get a feel for it, but a good way to make sure you leave some space is to put a pin over the top of the button and sew over it. After you've adequately secured the button, go through to the underside of the button but don't go through the fabric. Remove the pin and pull the button up to the top of the newly created slack in the threads. Wrap your working thread around the exposed threads between the button and the fabric several times to create your shank, then pass the needle through the fabric and tie off.





If you're attaching a button to something bulky like a coat, you may need more space than one pin will provide. Adjust as needed to make sure your closure is still functional and you're not trying to shove fabric somewhere it doesn't fit.

Altering Clothes (Reversibly!)

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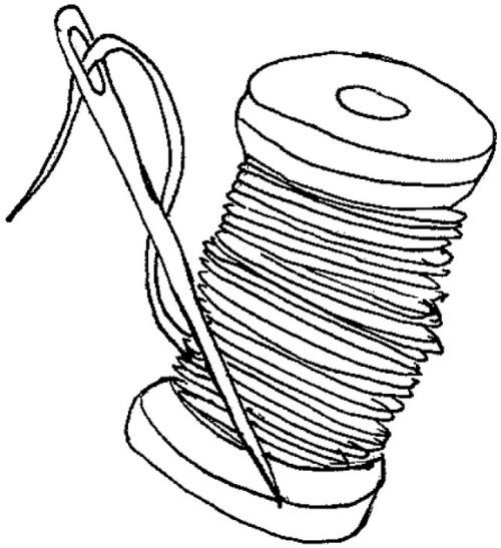
blog.seamwork.com/tutorials/5-ways-to-hand-stitch-a-hems/

Use your seam allowance! If you want to let something out, look for excess seam allowance. If there isn't any, consider adding a gusset or panel to the garment.
When taking something in, don't cut your seam allowance. If you're taking something in at the waist or the sides, find a way to make that seam allowance lie flat without cutting it. It might involve more folding and ironing, but the garment can be let back out in the future by you or another wearer.
Consider using darts and folds to make things fit differently. Instead of cutting and re-attaching fabric at the points you want to make something smaller, add darts to get the garment to fit your body as these can be removed and ironed out at a later date.



4. Taking Care of Your Clothes

tips from a vintage enthusiast

Washing machines are amazing. I'll be the first to admit that, I'm small and disabled and doing all of my laundry by hand would be an overwhelming nightmare. However. Not everything needs to be thrown in the washer and dryer every time it's worn. (Caveat: please wash your socks and underwear after you wear them. Clean underwear is really important for preventing infection and irritation, and dirty sweaty socks can cause similar issues. Also, clean underwear just feels nice.)

One way to prolong the time between washes is to use underlayers. This used to be incredibly common, but wearing slips and undershirts and the like seems to have fallen out of favor.

Historically, people would have worn cotton or linen underlayers as both of those fabrics can absorb moisture and tend to be pretty hard-wearing and will stand up to the kind of rigorous washing that the clothes closest to your body need. These will prevent quite so much Body Gunk getting to your nice outside clothes, and they can then be re-worn more times.

Another method to add time between washings is simply airing out your clothes. It's as simple as it sounds! Instead of folding up the garment and putting it away (which is apparently a thing people do), turn it inside out and hang it up in the open. This is even more effective if you can hang it outside in the sun. Not the easiest thing to do in Portland, but hanging it in a window near the sun is still an improvement if the weather can't make up its mind if it's going to rain or not.

Odor fighting sprays are also useful. The most common one is vodka. Like, cheap, bottom shelf, I-wouldn't-drink-that-on-pain-of-death kind of vodka. Just put straight vodka in a spray bottle and spritz your clothes, focusing on the areas that may have the most offensive odors.

You can add some nice smelling stuff (like lavender or eucalyptus oil) to your Garbage Vodka if you like, but feel free to skip this. It's not essential to the function of this process at all.

You can also use distilled white vinegar, which has a much stronger odor at first but tends to wear off quickly. Vinegar is also a lot cheaper, and you don't get nearly so many judgmental looks when you buy large quantities of it at 10am.

A less well known aid is underarm shields. While these may seem like a silly concept, they're incredibly useful!

An example: I have a dress that under no circumstances ever can be washed or even dry cleaned. I have to make sure that it doesn't get to a point where it needs to be

washed, and the previous owner was on top of that as well--it came with sewn-in dress shields! (they're, uh, kind of sketchy and old and I removed them because who KNOWS how many years of other people's BO is on there, but the idea is solid)
The wonderful Sultry Vintage has created a pattern and tutorial video[c] for sewing your own underarm shields, if you are so inclined. As with the suggestions for underlayer fabrics, these are best made with fabrics that can stand up to repeated washing. Pin them in, baste them in, attach snaps… however will work best for you!

Stain removal: this is best done BEFORE you wash your clothes. There's a variety of products out there designed for stain removal (even vampires use Tide to Go pens!), but there's also plenty of household products you might already have that will do the trick.
One of the most common methods, that helps for both stains and deodorizing, is a baking soda paste. Mix baking soda and water into a paste and apply it to the affected area. Let it dry, then brush off and wash the garment. You can add a small amount of hydrogen peroxide or lemon juice to this mixture, but be careful as these are both bleaching agents and may cause different damage to the fabric.
Plain old dish soap and water can also be an effective stain remover. Blot the fabric with a clean cloth dipped in a mix of dish soap and water, then wash the garment as normal.

When you do finally need to wash your clothes, just remember that not everything can go in the washing machine on the standard cycle. And please please please I am begging you, do not put anything hand knit in there. And definitely don't put it in the dryer, unless you want a sweater that might fit a small dog.
Many machines have the option to use a cold water wash (either just by changing the temperature), or to run it on a "delicates" cycle, depending on the fanciness(™) of the machine. Washing in lukewarm or cold water can also help prolong the life of your clothes

If you are handwashing: For most clothes (other than knitwear), I use a powder detergent. The one I use currently is Nellie's Laundry Soda. Powder detergents are great for both hand and machine use, so you can save some space and money by only getting powder. Plus, although it seems expensive, there's *so much detergent in there*! I bought my tin of detergent over a year ago and I'm just starting to run out. Plus, the Nellie's products come in a really cute tin, and I'm a sucker for good packaging…

[c]Find the pattern on sultryvintage.com

Like your regular laundry, handwashing should also be separated by lights and darks. If you're uncertain about the dye stability, separate even further and only wash like colors together. To prevent color bleed stains, you can also throw in a color catcher, but if you're washing one garment at a time that is all one color this isn't necessary. Just know that some dye may escape from the fabric, and that's okay.
Fill up your tub, sink, or plastic bin of choice and add detergent. Swish your garment around, scrub at anything that needs it, and then let it hang out in the detergent. Soak your items for up to about 30 minutes, depending on the degree of washing needed and the material.

After swishing and soaking, drain the sink/tub or dump the water. Thoroughly rinse the garments. If you have a removable showerhead or a faucet sprayer, these can come in really handy here.

Next, remove excess water by pressing the item against the edge of the tub or sink. Try not to wring it out like a towel--this can cause damage and warping to the fabric. Wrapping the garment in a towel to absorb excess water can also be very helpful.

Finally, hang the garments up to dry. If something is being hand washed, there's a good chance it can't go in the dryer. (hang-drying is just better for your clothes in general, anyway!) If it's absolutely soaking wet, try and hang it outside or in the shower where it can drip into the drain. Garments with fabrics that warp easily should begin their drying process lying flat, which can be achieved with a drying rack. Standard drying racks can work for this, but there are also ones constructed that have a wire mesh instead of open bars that better allow for flat drying.

For washing knits, I follow mostly this same process, but I use a wool wash. I currently use Soak, but there are other options such as Eucalan. I like the Soak wash as it doesn't require a rinse after the initial 15 minute soak. Just drain and towel burrito, then lay flat to dry!

5. Fast Fashion, Clothing Stewardship, and Escaping the Vimes Boots Cycle

by Arlie

If you want to learn more about what makes fast fashion so evil, and why it seems to cause so much harm for such a mediocre product, read on. You'll also find some information on how to do things differently.

1: History

If you want to dress yourself today, you can go shopping at your local shambling-corpse-of-a-mall, where you'll find a selection of retailers selling poor-quality garments made in South Asia, South America, or sometimes both places. They'll cost you between 15 and 70 dollars, and they'll last for maybe 6 months before they get a massive hole in them and need to be thrown out. You might also choose to shop online, where you can buy even cheaper, worse clothes that will fall apart in half the time from sites like FashionNova or PrettyLittleThing. You may be vaguely aware that these retailers have bad track records of human rights abuses, but justify the purchase along the lines of "well, I can't afford designer clothes, and I've heard even they abuse their workers, so do I even have any options?".

How did we reach this horrible state of affairs? To answer that, we need to understand what things looked like before the advent of industrial society and its consequences. In preindustrial Europe, clothes were made by hand or by a tailor. There were also "slop shops", which were an early iteration of the thrift store. Fabric, thread and yarn were made locally, and made into clothing locally (1), although the turning cogs of Empire were about to change all of that.

As the industrial age sunk its claws into the world, and mass production became feasible, the landscape of textiles changed drastically. American slavery made cheap cotton abundant, and the capitalists in control of textile mills made a fortune off of the backs of enslaved people. This also enriched American slave owners, and during the Civil War, the confederacy relied on running cotton to England through the Union blockade in order to fund their slaveholder's rebellion (2). England's mills employed one sixth of the working population, many of whom were women and children. These mills paid them starvation wages to work in hazardous conditions, all while their profits rocketed skyward. Slavery has always been the cornerstone of capitalist economics, and the industrial production of clothing has deep-seated roots in both slavery and imperialism.

This method of clothing production proliferated around the colonies held by European powers. In India particularly, British colonizers rebuilt the country to produce and export cotton, because the American Civil War made them uncertain about the supply of cotton produced by American slaves (2). This state of affairs ruled into the age of World War II, where the logistical pipelines of Empire were blocked or diverted by blockades and U-boat attacks. This scarcity led to the creation of artificial fibers like nylon, and normalized the supply of standardized, mass-produced clothing as opposed to more limited runs of more specialized pieces (1). This paired well with the US's newfound fiscal hegemony over the world, and white Americans, the exclusive beneficiaries of this hegemony, began to mass-consume clothing.

History may not repeat itself, but it sure as hell rhymes. In the early 90s, the term "fast fashion" was coined to describe clothing retailer Zara's new strategy: They had a design-to-retail cycle of five weeks, and made over 20 collections each year (3). This strategy was made possible by the supply of easily-exploited labor in countries like China, Thailand, India or Bangladesh. Despite the cost of international shipping, it was, and is, cheaper to outsource the cost of cotton farming, textile production, clothing manufacture and finishing to places that had existing infrastructure but no existing workers' protections. Many of these places are former European colonies, and this correlation is no accident.

The advent of fast fashion sparked another dramatic shift in clothing production. To remain competitive, 'affordable' clothing shops shipped more and more of their labor overseas, which drove prices down, which continued the cycle of finding even-more-exploited labor to make even-cheaper clothing. In 1990, 51% of clothing bought in the US was made there. In 2020, it was only 2% (4). This phenomenon is relatively recent, even if it has its roots in the very beginning of imperial capitalism. This cycle of cost-cutting is responsible for the prevalence of worker abuse, safety neglect and environmental mass destruction that defines the modern textile industry.

2: The Climate

The apparel industry is responsible for 2-8% of global carbon emissions. It also uses 6% of all pesticides used annually (5). It takes 1,000 gallons of fresh water to make a pair of jeans, according to Levi Strauss (6). If someone poisoned a 100,000 gallon reservoir in California, they would be sent to prison. Cotton growth and dyeing account for most of the water expended to make clothes. However, fabric finishing creates most of the CO2, as it involves the most use of oil-based polymers and intercontinental cargo shipping. On top of that, 10% of all clothing produced is thrown away. It is made in anticipation of market demand, and when that demand

doesn't materialize, it is not kept as dead stock. Instead, it joins 90% of all clothing donated to charities in being dumped on top of the nearest landfill. The planet is being murdered for the sake of intentionally-crafted garbage. And it's not only the environment that suffers. For the sake of intentionally-produced garbage, human misery is inflicted on an industrial scale.

3: Human Rights Abuses

The fast fashion industry has a reputation for mistreating its workers. That reputation is earned, and if anything it is not nearly damning enough for the scale of the crimes committed in the name of $16 yoga pants. The slavery that buoyed early industrial capitalists into new realms of boundless wealth is back; it's just swapped continents. The Rana Plaza collapse has replaced the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire as the more recent example of capitalist exploitation's deadly consequences. More than a hundred people, mostly women, died needlessly because their bosses would not let them leave the unsafe structure they were employed in, being paid hardly enough to survive. In India, girls ages 14 and younger are taken from their parents with promises of food, educational opportunity, and a large, lump-sum payment at the end of 3 years. None of this is given, at least not regularly, and instead these girls are pressed into work as child slaves, picking and milling the cotton for this month's new business casual collection, 10% of which will be dumped into a landfill before ever being worn.

Businesses do not need to operate this way. There are plenty of companies that source their textiles, labor and raw materials from people who aren't enslaving pre-teens, or paying their workers starvation wages. It is a choice that is actively made by people inside each company, who value low production costs and maximized profit margins over all else, even human life.

4: Prefigurative Change

Living in a way that aligns with your values can be a major source of hope for radicals like myself. It gives me a basic gut-check, that the things I hope for are possible, and really do promise the benefits that I believe them to. Lifestyle choices alone are not enough, but they are a valuable tool in building a movement. Those of us who live with an eye towards a better future can share our vision with the world through our own lives experience. In that light, I would like to present the concept of clothing stewardship.

Clothing stewardship is an idea I was first introduced to by the wonderful clothing historian Bernadette Banner, in her book, *Make, Sew and Mend*. It runs in contrast to clothing consumerism, because clothing, unlike food or soap, is not expressly intended to be consumed. Instead, clothing needs to be taken care of, or stewarded, so it can live a long and well-loved life. To bring a new garment home is to accept responsibility for it, and to treat it as an extension of yourself. When I repair a garment for the first time, I say aloud "this is mine, now." And it is! This moment is the first time that I make good my promise to care for and preserve this garment, and to keep it standing in the face of time and wear. Perhaps, in a more just and long-living world, we might all think of ourselves as stewards, instead of consumers.

5: Divesting from Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is as popular as it is because it's cheap, and a lot of us are goddamn poor. It's hard to justify spending $100 on a pair of jeans when that's a third or more of what you have to live on until the next paycheck. However, because of how craptastically most fast fashion garments are made, you end up spending more money at the end of the day, because you need to replace the clothes that you bought only a few months ago. The Author Terry Pratchett describes this wonderfully, through the perspective of his character Captain Vimes.

> The reason that the rich were so rich, Vimes reasoned, was because they managed to spend less money.
>
> Take boots, for example. He earned thirty-eight dollars a month plus allowances. A really good pair of leather boots cost fifty dollars. But an affordable pair of boots, which were sort of OK for a season or two and then leaked like hell when the cardboard gave out, cost about ten dollars. Those were the kind of boots Vimes always bought, and wore until the soles were so thin that he could tell where he was in Ankh-Morpork on a foggy night by the feel of the cobbles.
>
> But the thing was that good boots lasted for years and years. A man who could afford fifty dollars had a pair of boots that'd still be keeping his feet dry in ten years' time, while the poor man who could only afford cheap boots would have spent a hundred dollars on boots in the same time and would still have wet feet.

To make these bigger purchases feasible, I recommend creating a clothing budget. From 1900-1950, Americans spent 10-15% of their gross annual income on garments and apparel. In 2018, it was only 1.8%. I recommend budgeting 4-6% to start, and setting it aside every paycheck. To calculate that from hourly wage, use this formula:

(hourly wage) x (hours worked in a week) x 52 x (percent) x 0.01 = Annual Clothing Budget

If you are paid biweekly, divide that by 26. If you are paid semi-monthly, divide by 24. That's the amount to save from each of your paychecks. For me, saving 5% is about $67, which is still less expensive than food, or heating bills in winter. Save what is reasonable for you, and feel more confident that you can spend more money on better clothes, since you have money set aside for just that purpose.

When looking for new clothes, I try to find union shops, and/or American manufacturers who aren't cagey about where their factories are located. Thorogood boots are a good example of this. They're made by an employee-owned, unionized shop in Wisconsin. The workers see the full benefit of their labor, and the boots they make are built to last a lifetime.

Thrift stores can be a great option if you need to buy more or spend less. Living in Portland, we're pretty spoiled for choice when it comes to thrift stores, but my advice remains the same no matter where you are: Look around all the shops you can find. See what they tend to sell, and for how much. I got a wool 49er-style coat for $40 in the basement of a thrift shop on the coast, and a pair of Wranglers for $30 at a place 2 minutes from my apartment.

The most direct way to offset the cost of expensive clothes is to wear fewer of them, at least until you can afford to expand your closet. These clothes will last for years, and your closet will grow with you. While you're getting there, it's useful to know how to wear clothes for a few days between washes, so you're not always doing laundry. See page 20 for details on how to wear garments for days between washes while keeping them looking and smelling fresh (crust punks, just keep doing your thing. I won't judge).

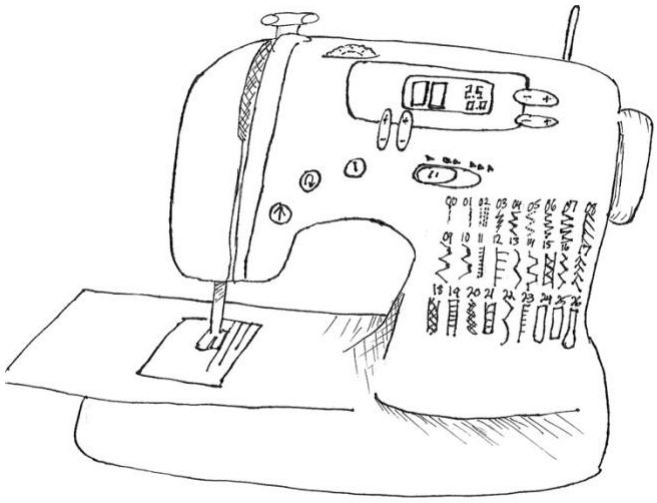
As a final note, clothing swaps are a radical way to build community around clothing stewardship. Find a local one, and if there isn't one, start one. Check out page 36 for details!

6: Collective Action

This is the other half of the movement, and this is the fight that must be fought if we want to bring an end to fast fashion. To start, there are transparency laws that have been implemented in Germany, and some parts of the US, requiring that clothing brands do the basic due diligence of reporting their supply chain infrastructure. It is a small step, but it will make further change possible, and for now it is an achievable goal. This can build awareness, and reduce the harm of the entirely unregulated fashion industry.

There are also more radical approaches (which I am definitely not endorsing, legally speaking). It is possible, for example, to put little leaflets into the pockets of coats while they're still on the rack, which might contain some disturbing facts about that retailer's track record of rampant sexual violence in its production facilities. There is also Buy Nothing Day, which was popularized by Adbusters in the early 2000s to critique the type of mass-consumerism exemplified by Black Friday. Buy Nothing Day occurs on the same day as Black Friday, and it can be a wonderful rallying point for demonstrations, stunts, and other such Actions (See Recipes for Disaster if you want to learn more). Mark your calendars!

Engaging in collective action is a chance to build solidarity with others who want to better the world in the same way you do. Be creative, share ideas, and use the opportunity to make connections. After all, when capitalism crumbles, community will be the bond that carries us through into a better future.



6. Making Your Own Stuff

from Rita

Machine Sewing Basics

Congrats on getting a sewing machine! Mine are some of my most prized possessions.

Did you buy a used machine? See if you can find the manual online. This will have basic instructions for threading your machine, winding bobbins and basic machine troubleshooting. To find this, you'll need the manufacturer (like Singer or Brother) and the model number.

Get (I didn't say buy) extra bobbins and needles. Both of these tend to be fairly inexpensive, and they're not *usually* proprietary for a specific machine model. Try and get a variety pack of needles in different sizes, for different weights of fabric. They'll usually have a recommended size for the type of fabric on the package.

If you have the resources, try and do a basic tune-up on the machine. There's a lot of online guides, or if you're not feeling up to it, look up sewing machine repair shops in your area.

Ready to start sewing? First and foremost, practice! Get some scraps and figure out the rhythm of your machine. How does the pedal feel? How can you control the sewing speed? What's reverse stitching like? Get familiar with the seam guide on the plate of the machine--that'll help you get consistent seam allowance through your stitching.

To start stitching, drop the presser foot and insert the needle into the fabric slightly below where your seam is going to start. Many modern machines have a button that drops the needle for you. Next, reverse stitch a few stitches to the beginning of your seam. Sew until the end of the seam, and then reverse stitch a few stitches again at the end of the seam to secure the thread. And that's it! Things can get more complicated with stretch fabrics and zig zag stitches, but knowing a basic straight stitch is absolutely key.

Once you and your machine are friends, it's time to start making stuff!

Sewing from a pattern

With the availability of print at home PDF patterns, accessing commercial sewing patterns is even easier. You can have them printed at a copy shop if you don't want to tape a bunch of pages together, but you can print them out on a home printer and get much the same result with some piecing and a lot of scotch tape.

Commercial patterns are of course still available from the big four pattern companies at places like Joann fabrics, but I find that a lot of indie pattern makers are much more accommodating to the way that bodies actually ARE. I'm a big fan of Seamwork magazine and their patterns, but that's only the tip of the iceberg for online pattern resources. There are of course multitudes of free patterns available as well--searching "free sewing patterns" brings up SO many results! I like the patterns available on Mood Fabrics' site, as they're more than just tunic dresses and Squares With A Purpose. (Nothing wrong with either of those, of course! But it's fun to branch out.)

Before you start cutting out fabric, make sure to read through the instructions and any guides. This is another place where non-big four patterns shine--the instructions are often much clearer, there are more options for what to do if you (like just about everyone) don't exactly match the measurements for a given size, and the construction information is generally more detailed.
This is where you'll get things like the cutting layout, suggested fabrics, what additional notions you might need, and yardages. It's also where you'll find the given seam allowance--most modern patterns use 5/8" but it's important to check to make sure your garment fits right!

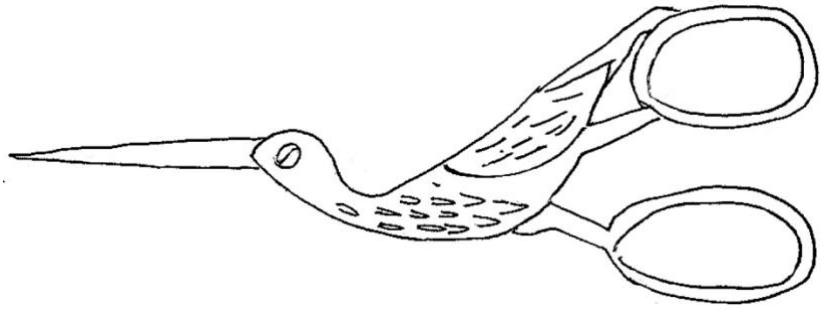
You can pin your pattern pieces to your fabric and cut from there, or you can pin and/or use pattern weights and trace them onto the fabric. There are benefits and drawbacks to each method, so experiment and see what will work best for you. Make sure to get all the little dots and markings and notches, as those are often how you line up pieces and set in sleeves and such. A helpful tool for making these easier to mark is a hole punch--make the hole in your pattern piece, and then instead of having to poke with a pin and draw around on a pin on BOTH sides of your fabric, you can just mark right on the fabric through the hole. And then do some wonky funky pin drawing :P

An indispensable sewing accessory, especially if you're making clothes, is an iron. You don't need anything fancy, just your basic steam iron with adjustable settings. I've had good luck finding decent irons used, so check your local thrift store. An ironing board is nice to have, but you can also use some towels and a Not Plastic surface (like a wooden table) if that's what you've got.

Pressing your seams makes them lie the way they're intended to, and therefore makes the garment lie the way it's supposed to. You can get your cuffs and hems sharp and make sure you don't have any uncomfortable seams poking you in weird places. The humble iron is not to be underestimated!

Most importantly: Have fun! And don't be discouraged by the learning curve here. Your first garment isn't going to be a couture gown. I believe mine was a purple fleece poncho that kind of made me look like Barney. I then made a bunch of skirts with wildly uneven hems that I never wear, but that's okay. They helped me learn the skills I needed to make clothes I *do* want to wear today.

(Also… maybe don't tell your coworkers or your boss that you sew. Check out @canyousewthisforme on Instagram if you want to scream with rage at the undervaluing of the skill and labor of hand crafters.)



7. Hosting a Swap Party: A basic how-to

Do you have a bunch of clothes you don't wear? Do you know other people in this same situation? Great! You have the beginnings of a clothing swap already in place!

You will need:

- A space big enough for all the attendees and the Pile. Preferably also with space for people to try on clothes if they want to as well
- Your friends and community
- That pile of clothes you've forgotten to take to the thrift store for 6 months
- A donation location for everything that doesn't get taken home (try for a local thrift store, a shelter, a queer clothing closet or something that's not the Goodwill if you can! 90% of clothing donated to charity shops goes directly to a landfill and never hits their shelves!)
- Tasty food and drinks are always a fun time for a swap party

Set a time and a place. If you are going for a specific ~vibe~ of clothing, let everyone know in the invitation.

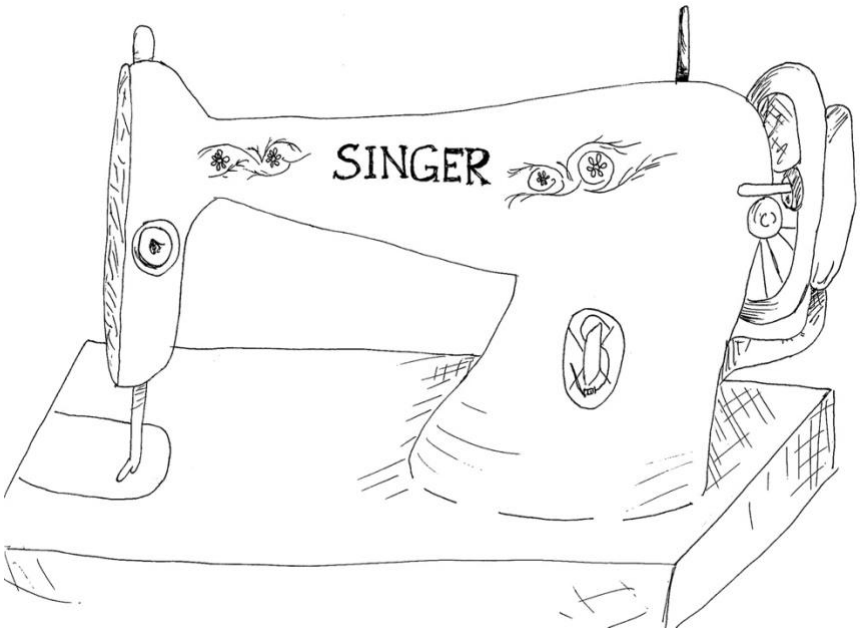
Are you opening this up to your whole community, or is it for a small group of friends? Make sure that's part of your plan as well. If you're planning a bigger event, try inviting local mutual aid groups!

Before everyone arrives with their bags of clothes, figure out how you want to have people organize their items. Some ideas:

- Grouped by size
- Grouped by "kind" of item (pants, accessories, dresses, shirts, etc)
- A big ol pile of fabric treasure

Let everyone go through the piles to their heart's content! When it feels like people are done, a final "fashion show" can be a fun way to make sure that some hidden gems haven't been missed. You can have people model the items, or just hold them up and show them off.

Once everyone has claimed everything they want to claim, it's time to gather the remaining items into donation bags and bring them to your location of choice. You can also choose to hang on to stuff if you have the space, and bring it to the next clothing swap with different people! If you notice the same garment floating around the swap a few times in a row, consider repurposing it! Maybe it's ready for a second life as a crop top, a skirt, or part of a lovingly-made quilt.


SINGER

8. Cool Stuff to Check Out

Mending Bloc
PDX area group
mendingbloc.carrd.co

Mending Life: A Handbook for Repairing Clothes and Hearts, by Nina and Sonya Montenegro

Wrenbird Arts
wrenbirdarts.com
Books and workshops on mending
Also on Instagram at @wrenbirdmends

@bookhou on Instagram
Books on mending and embroidery
Lots of Instagram videos showing mends being worked

Seamwork
seamwork.com
Formerly Seamwork Magazine, they have years of articles and sewing tips, as well as an extensive pattern library.

Make, Sew and Mend: Traditional Techniques to Sustainably Maintain and Refashion Your Clothes, by Bernadette Banner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