



SEW-lutions Guidelines

Your Guide
to
Successful
Sewing

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Sewing Tools for Professional Results

As with any profession or hobby, using the right tools can make all the difference in the world and can make the difference between amateur or professional results. Even if you've only sewn a few projects and collected some basic sewing tools, it may be time to learn about some of the advanced sewing tools designed to give your project that professional edge.

Most sewing projects can be completed without the following tools, but as you improve and fine-tune your skills and develop an affinity for quilting, home decorating or clothing construction, you'll find these tools indispensable for saving time, increasing accuracy and simplifying tasks.

Cutting Tools

Needlework Scissors and Snips

Small, 3"- to 5"-long needlework scissors or snips are indispensable for clipping close to the stitching line or trimming intricate areas of a project. They can be used wherever your large bent-handled shears can't reach. Snips have spring-loaded handles. Keep a pair alongside the sewing machine, at-the-ready to cut stray threads.

Rotary Cutter

Used with a self-healing mat and a clear plastic ruler, rotary cutters are ideal for straight cuts in one or more fabric layers. Look for blades that can be easily removed and replaced and a handle that is comfortable. Rotary mats and rulers are made specifically for rotary-blade cutting, and the materials don't dull rotary blades as other products might. Both the mat and the ruler feature gridlines and angles for cutting accuracy. See more about: rotary cutters, Guideline 1.133; mats, 1.125; and rulers 9.205.

Measuring & Altering Tools

Grid Board

Use a large grid board under the fabric and pattern to align the fabric grain while pinning and cutting. A padded grid board

allows you to pin into it when stretching or blocking fabric. Some have ironing surfaces that are also helpful for fusing large fabric sections. Consider a rotating grid board if your space is limited. Mats and wide rulers used for rotary cutting are actually modified grid boards used both underneath and on top of the fabric. See "Rotary Cutter" above.

French Curve or Fashion Ruler

These rulers have a variety of curves to mimic the body's curves and are used when altering patterns. It's helpful for the simplest length adjustment and indispensable when actually changing the style of a garment. Depending on how you turn the ruler and what segment you use, one ruler gives you all the curves necessary to complete pattern lines when altering or drafting patterns.

Marking Tools

Fabric Marking Pens

The space-age chemicals used to make these clever pens become more high-tech every day. The disappearing ink allows you to mark most projects at the exact location needed—even on the fabric right side—without fear of staining or discoloration. Look for an ink color that is in high contrast to your fabric, and for accuracy select a fine tip. Choose a water-soluble pen for long-

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term projects, when you want the markings to remain until you remove them with water. Air-soluble pen inks disappear within a few hours and are ideal for fabrics that can't be washed or dampened. Some air- and water-soluble pen manufacturers caution against exposing marked fabrics to sunlight or the heat of the iron because heat may set the ink permanently. Always test the pen on a scrap of the fabric before using it on your project.

Sewing Tools

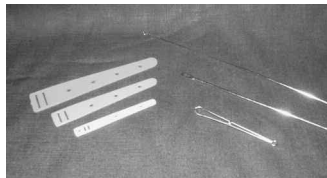
Sewing Machine Needles

Sewing needles are designed for the type of fabric, thread and stitches you're using. Using the right size and type of needle will greatly improve your sewing success. For more information on choosing the best needle for your project see Guideline 6.125.

Tip: A stitching problem, such as skipped stitches or looping or shredding threads, at first may appear to be a problem with the machine when actually it's a call for a new or better-suited needle.

Bodkin

Used for drawing elastic, cord or ribbon through a fabric casing, bodkins are available in several different styles. The pincer is usually the shortest with teeth at one end designed to clamp down firmly on ribbon or elastic and pull it through a tubular casing. Longer versions have a safety pin style closure at one end, and the slimmest version, designed like a large sewing needle, has a large eye for feeding narrow cord in narrow casings. A bodkin's ball-point end comes in handy for turning fabric tubes right side out.



Point Turner

A point turner is a hand-held, pointed plastic tool designed to poke into tight corners. For crisp, sharp corners and points, use this tool to push out the corners of collars and cuffs before pressing. The opposite end is flat or rounded; use it to hold open seam allowances while pressing, so you don't burn your fingers.

Basting Tape

Much faster than hand basting with needle and thread, use narrow, paper backed basting tape to hold zippers, bias tapes and trims in place while stitching.

Fray Preventer

A drop of this liquid on the cut edge of a woven fabric will bond the edges and prevent the fabric from raveling. Before using, test the product on a scrap of the actual fabric, or in an inconspicuous area of the project. Allow the test piece to dry thoroughly. Then wash, dry and press it as you would the finished project, to be sure the product doesn't discolor the fabric.

Pressing Tools

Tailor's Ham

Resembling a ham, this pressing tool is used as a base or a mold when pressing curved or shaped seams. It's available in several sizes and should be covered on one side in cotton and the other in wool. The ham's curves are designed to mimic garment curves and are used to set the shape of collars, lapels, sleeve caps and more. See more about pressing tools in Guideline 1.140.



Point Presser & Pounding Block

The raised points of this wooden tool allow you to press deep into a corner without creasing the surrounding fabric. The base is used as a pounding block, or clapper, to flatten seams.

Needle Board

A flat, flexible board with a bed of short needles placed very close together, a velvet board or needle board is used for pressing napped fabrics, such as velvet and corduroy, without crushing the fabric's pile. A less-expensive, and less-effective, version of a needle board features a canvas backed fabric with a raised pile front that takes the place of the needles. ■