



SEW-lutions Guidelines

Your Guide
to
Successful
Sewing

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Unconventional Fabric Sources

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Much as we all love going to the fabric store, there are other sources for fabric and creativity as well—just look around your house, or at your local thrift store. Chances are good that you've got some great opportunities there.

Sweaters

If you've got sweaters you never wear, put them to good use for other things. Wool sweaters are great for felting, which compacts the fibers for added body. Look at sweaters like yardage for new projects, from bags to holiday stockings. Sew on them as you would any knit and use some of the sweater features (collars, cuffs, etc.) in your new project. If you need to add body, fuse interfacing to the underside.

Placemats

Placemats are perfect for many things other than a base for your next meal. With finished edges and often reversible, they're great for purses and totes and stitch up in just a few minutes. Be sure to prewash new mats to avoid color transfer later.

Towels

Need a beach tote or a summer jacket for poolside? Look for last year's beach towel and cut it up. Towels can be less expensive than purchasing terrycloth yardage, and prewashed ones are soft and shrink resistant.

Tablecloths

Easily recyclable into placemats and napkins, even garments, tablecloths provide an expanse of fabric without seaming. Already finished edges can be used to save time. Many tablecloths are pretreated for stain resistance.

Curtains and Drapes

These home dec basics provide a large expanse of fabric. Before reusing, check for any sun damage and fading if they've hung on the windows for a while.



Denim Redesign, Indigo Junction

Jeans

Everybody loves denim, and recycling jeans and other denim items is a natural. Whether the item is well worn or like new, every denim item can have a new life as something else. Use the original seaming, zipper placket, waistband, pockets or other components in your new item. Denim frays well, so take advantage of that for edge finishing.

Bedding

Blankets and sheets are great to harvest for fabric...they're big and seamless. Some quilters use sheets for backing as it doesn't need piecing, but the tight weave can be harder to quilt. Patterned blankets make great winter coats and jackets.

Ties

Old ties are a terrific source of silk. Take them apart and reuse the bias-cut strips for bindings, strip piecing, etc. Keep the interfacings to use for sleeve heads in jackets, and other areas where a firm interfacing might be needed to stabilize an area.

Harvesting Parts

Before you toss away any item, check to see what can be reused. Perhaps it's a great zipper, wonderful buttons, beautiful lace or a terrific trim. While you're watching TV, carefully remove the recyclable portions to save for another project. In many instances, an entire garment can yield the findings and fabrics for something totally new!

Thrift Store Shopping

If shopping secondhand is your passion, follow these tips for savvy selections:

- Look for large and extra-large sizing if you plan to reuse the item for fabric—the larger the size, the more usable fabric. Look in the men's department as well as women's.
- Check for flaws, stains, tears, etc.—Can you cut around them, or will they end up in the middle of your new project? Or can they be fixed or

camouflaged? Moth holes sometimes don't show when something is felted, they just close up in the shrinking process.

- Look for special sales, either on certain color tags or a special grouping of garment types. Most thrift stores have some type of special almost every day. Sign up for store mailing lists to find out about special events.
- Shop when the store offers bag sales (everything you can put in a bag costs a certain amount), or when things are sold by the pound. It's a great way to save money.
- Shop out of season for better deals. No store wants to carry a large fleece or sweater inventory in summer.
- Look for designer and upscale label garments with great detailing. Even if you don't purchase the item, you can use the ideas in your own sewing projects.
- Check the sewing department for patterns, buttons, notions, etc. to add to your stash. Check to be sure all the parts and pieces are there if you need them for your next project. 📌