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Let's Sew : Extension Circular 4-31-2

Gerda Petersen

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You have joined a 4-H Club and chosen Clothing as your project. What fun to use Mother's sewing machine! It will be exciting to make something to wear. We will tell you some secrets that every good sewer knows. You will learn many things.

These are the things you will do:

1. Collect small tools needed for sewing in a suitable box.
2. Learn to use a needle and a thimble.
3. Learn to use the sewing machine.
4. Hem a kitchen hand towel on the machine.
5. Make a kitchen apron.
6. Make a pot holder.

You may also do these things:

1. Make a felt needle book.
2. Make a wrist pin cushion.
3. Make something for someone else.
Tools for Sewing

Before you can begin to sew you will need some tools. Carpenters, farmers, artists, all have special tools for their work. You will need special tools for your sewing work too. We will tell you about some tools that will make sewing easy.

SECRET I: BEGIN WITH GOOD TOOLS THEN FOLLOW THE RULES!

SEWING BOX

First, you will need a sewing box or basket that will hold all of your small tools. A good sewing box can be bought at the store or you might enjoy making one. You might use a box of wood, metal or strong cardboard. A doll suitcase might be just the thing you need. Partitions in the sewing box will help to hold the tools in place.

CUTTING TOOLS

Scissors and shears are cutting tools.

Scissors. Scissors are 3 to 6 inches long and have two ring handles the same size for thumb and finger. They are for clipping thread, ripping, and general use.

Shears. Shears are longer than scissors and have a small ring handle for the thumb and a larger loop handle for several fingers. A pair of shears with bent handles makes it easier to cut fabrics as they lie flat on the table. These are sometimes called trimmers.

Your mother may have pinking shears that she will lend you if you need them. These are used for finishing seams, not for cutting out a pattern.

It would be nice for you to have both scissors and shears. Take good care of your cutting tools. Keep them sharp. Do not cut heavy string, paper, cardboard, etc., with them. Use them just for your sewing work.

A drop of oil on the inside of the blades and the screw will improve the cutting edges of shears. Be sure to wipe them carefully before you cut your cloth after you have oiled them. Be careful not to drop your shears.
MARKING AND MEASURING TOOLS

The Tape Measure.
A 60-inch tape measure will be most useful. Choose one that is made of good quality fabric, or plastic coated fabric, so it will not tear or stretch easily. Check to see that number one is at one end of the tape measure. Turn it over and be sure that number one is at the other end too.

The tape measure's secret is, "A good tape measure has numbers on both sides, beginning at opposite ends."

Measuring Gages.
A 6-inch ruler, or a small metal measure you can find in many stores, is a handy tool.

Tailor's Chalk.
You will need something to make marks on the cloth. Tailor's chalk is good for marking. It makes thin lines and will brush off easily. It comes in colors: Red, white, and blue.

SEWING TOOLS

Needles.
The needle is a magic wand! There are several kinds of needles to use for different kinds of sewing. Fine needles like #8 and #9 are for fine cloth and fine stitches. Coarse needles like #3 and #4 are for basting or for sewing heavy cloth. #5, #6 and #7 are for medium work.

You buy needles in packages. Some packages have needles from size 3 to size 9. Size 3 is a long, thick needle. Size 4 is a little shorter and thinner. No. 9 is the shortest, thinnest one. You will find either number 5, 6 or number 7 a good size for your sewing. The needle's secret is, "Match your needle to your cloth."

Pins.
Some day you hope to be able to make beautiful dresses, so buy the pins that are labeled dressmaker or silk pins. They have sharp points and won't make large holes in the fabric.

Pencil.
Keep a pencil in your sewing box. You will often find use for it.
Thimble.

You will need a thimble to push the needle through the cloth. Be sure it fits your middle finger. Silver, nickel, brass or steel makes good thimbles. At first the thimble will seem awkward on your finger. Can you remember when you were learning to write? It was hard to handle your pencil—but you learned! It will be much easier to learn to use a thimble than to learn to write.

The story is told the thimble was invented in Holland. They called it a 'thumb bell,' because it looked like a bell and was worn on the thumb. Finally they changed the name to "thimble," because it was shorter. The thimble's secret is, "You can sew faster and easier when you wear a thimble."

Emery Bag.

The emery bag is sometimes made to look like a strawberry. It is used to polish the needle. Push the needles back and forth through the emery bag to make them bright and shining. Do not leave your needles in the emery bag as they make small holes in the covering and let the emery dust escape. Dampness may also cause the needles to rust if they are left in the emery bag.

Pincushion.

A pincushion will help you keep your pins where you need them. Would you like to have a pincushion like the ones many experienced sewers use? We will tell you how to make a wrist pincushion.

You will need a 4-inch square of firm material that is of a plain dark color. Velveteen or woolen fabrics are good because pins stick through them easily. Fold the square of fabric diagonally so that the right side is folded inside. Lay the 3 inch strip of elastic inside the fold so that the one end sticks out slightly. Pin in place. Stitch a 1/2 inch seam, as shown in the picture, rounding the corners. Leave an opening of about 1 1/2 inches at the one side for turning.

Turn the pincushion right side out. Stuff it firmly with wool, wool yarn or hair. Pins can be pushed in and out of this kind of stuffing easily. Fasten the other end of the elastic and close the opening with a few hand stitches.
A Needle Book.

When you are buying needles, you will find them in black paper packages. These packages are treated to keep them from rusting. Choose a few needles from the package for your daily use. Leave the rest of them in the paper package. You might like to have a needle book to keep the needles you use every day.

There are many patterns for needle books or needle cases. Make the one you like best. This one is easy to make. If you make it of felt or wool that does not ravel at the edges, the outside may be finished by pinking with a pinking shears.

Use your ruler and carefully draw a rectangle on a piece of paper. Make two smaller rectangles for the leaves. A suggested size is 3 1/2 inches by 5 1/2 inches for the cover; 3 inches by 4 1/2 inches and 2 1/2 inches by 4 inches for the leaves. These rectangles are your patterns. Cut them out of felt or wool. Stitch them together at the center on the machine or tie them together like a booklet.

Would you rather have a needle book that has the 4-H emblem for a pattern.

Cut the two clovers from felt. Then cut one or two clovers of felt or light weight wool for the leaves. With all the edges even, take a long stitch, putting the needle in and out at the two marks. Leave long ends of cord or yarn and tie in a bow or knot.

Your needle books are for you to use and enjoy. They are not for exhibit at fairs.

SECRET II: NEEDLE SHARP! NEEDLE BRIGHT! I'LL KEEP YOU IN THIS BOOK TONIGHT.
The Sewing Machine

What fun! You're going to learn to use a sewing machine. First you should know the names of the parts of this machine that you will use. Look at the illustration and locate the labeled parts on your machine.

Your machine may not be exactly like this. Find the instruction book that came with your machine. Compare the picture of your machine with this illustration.

Find the place in your Sewing Machine Instruction Book that tells where to oil the machine. A machine should be oiled after 8 - 10 hours of use. If your machine has not been used for a week or more, oil it before you begin to sew. Only one drop of oil is needed in each oil hole. Run the machine for a few seconds and the oil will work into the machine parts.

LEARNING TO RUN THE MACHINE

First get seated in a chair at the machine. Be sure the height of the chair is right for you. Sit erect and well back in the chair so you are comfortable. Have your mother remove the thread and needle and lift the presser foot.

Now place both feet on the treadle, one a little ahead of the other. Turn the balance wheel in the proper direction (on some machines the balance wheel turns forward; on others backward).

Notice how the toe of the right foot goes down as the heel of the left foot goes up, and vice versa. Turn the wheel with your hand until you get the feel of the treadle motion in your feet, then practice treadling until you can keep the hand wheel going smoothly in the right direction. Run the machine slowly and smoothly. This takes skill. Now run it more rapidly. To stop the machine, slow your treadling and place your hand on the balance wheel.

You will do the same thing with an electric machine. Instead of learning to treadle, learn to use the knee or foot control. If you learn to run an electric machine slowly, you will be able to control it more easily.
Warning: Remember there is a lot of power in a machine!

Keep your foot or knee away from the control when your hands are near the needle. Keep your hands at a safe distance from the needle when you are stitching with either an electric or treadle machine.

Now that you have learned to run the machine smoothly and evenly, you are ready to learn to stitch. Have your mother help you put the needle in place and lower the presser foot. Now practice following the lines on a tablet or note paper. Practice turning with the needle in the paper and make square corners. Practice stitching on curved lines, too. When you stop, always turn the balance wheel until the needle is as high as it will go.

Can you control the machine? Then you are ready to stitch on cloth. Have your mother help you fill the bobbin and thread the machine. Soon you will be able to thread it yourself.

It is important to start with both bobbin and spool thread back of the presser foot if you are to have smooth stitching and no tangled threads. To do this, take the thread that comes from the needle in your left hand. With your right hand turn the balance wheel so that the needle goes down and comes back up once. Be sure to turn the balance wheel in the right direction for your machine. Gently pull the thread. You will see a loop in between the toes of the presser foot. This is the thread from the bobbin.
The presser foot is a good guide for stitching along folded edges. It can also be used in making even spaces between rows of stitching. Practice making rows of stitching using the presser foot as a guide. As you make each new row, let the edge of the presser foot ride along the last row of stitching.

When you have finished sewing again raise the needle as high as you can and pull the material to the back of the machine. Notice that the top thread remains between the toes of the presser foot.

Practice until you are quite sure you know how to stitch and can stitch straight. Then you are ready to make something on the machine.

A seam guide will also help you stitch straight. If you do not have a seam guide, put a piece of adhesive tape on your machine.

Does it look like this?

Then the upper tension is tighter than the lower.

Does it look like this?

Then the lower tension is tighter than the upper. Ask your mother to help you adjust the tensions on the machine.

SECRET III: STOP AND START! REGULATE SPEED! SAFETY WHEN SEWING, CAREFULLY HEED!

Does your machine stitching look like this?

Then the machine tensions are balanced.
Using a Needle and Thimble!

THREADING A NEEDLE

Pull a piece of thread about the length of your arm (from finger tip to elbow) from your spool. Cut it off diagonally with your scissors. Turn the eye of the needle so you can see through it. Slip the pointed end of the thread through. Pull the thread down.

MAKING A KNOT

Hold the end that is cut from the spool between thumb and first finger of one hand. Wrap the end of the thread around the first finger once. Roll the thread from the finger, pushing with the thumb.

Release the first finger as the middle finger takes its place to hold the thread in position. Pull on the long end of the thread with the other hand to tighten the knot.

USING A NEEDLE AND THIMBLE

Place the thimble on the middle finger of the hand that you use for sewing. Hold the needle between thumb and forefinger so that the needle eye is near the thimble finger and the point is in the direction of your work. Brace the needle against the side of the thimble, about in the position of the fingernail.

BASTING

Basting holds edges of fabric together for stitching, pressing or fitting. It is not always necessary to baste, but you will often save time and have more accurate stitching if you learn to baste carefully.

Sit so that you have good light on your work. Lay your material flat on a table in front of you. This will help to keep the material from stretching as you work on it.

Always pin before you baste or stitch. Put the pins in the cloth at right angles to the edge.
Use a single thread of contrasting color so basting can be seen easily. Baste beside the line where you will stitch. If you stitch on the basting thread, the basting is hard to pull out and may break the stitching thread.

Pin two pieces of cloth together and practice basting. Fasten your thread taking three or four small stitches at the end.

SECRET IV: PIN AND BASTE! PIN AND BASTE! GOOD STITCHING CAN'T BE DONE IN HASTE!

The Sewer's Pledge!

You have learned about sewing tools and the sewing machine. Are you ready to take the "Sewer's Pledge"?

SEWER'S PLEDGE

I pledge myself:

to sew with clean hands

to wear a thimble when I do hand sewing

to maintain good posture by sitting well back in a comfortable chair

to keep my work on a table instead of in my lap

to protect my eyes by sitting where good light comes over my left shoulder (left shoulder for right-handed people and right shoulder for left-handed)

to keep my work neat and to put my scraps in a paper sack or waste basket

to protect my teeth by using a scissors to cut thread instead of biting it

to accept advice but to do all my work myself

I pledge myself to do these things because I wish to become a skillful sewer.
Sometime you will want to enroll in a 4-H foods project. Wouldn't it be nice to have an outfit to wear as you work in the kitchen? You can easily make one since you have learned to use the sewing machine. For your work in the kitchen you will need an apron to protect your dress. A pot holder will be handy when you take pans of golden brown cookies from the oven. A hand towel will be useful for drying your hands at the kitchen sink. You will want to choose colors for your kitchen outfit that go well together. You might make your pot holder from the same material as your apron.

For your kitchen hand towel choose a material that will absorb water readily. The material should wash easily and be strong, because it will be washed many times. Linen crash is one kind of material. There may be suitable materials in your stores. A "No. 50" thread will be about right for your machine stitching.

The length of a hand towel may vary from three-fourths to one yard in length, depending on the width of the towel and the place where you will hang it in your kitchen.

Look closely at your fabric. Notice how it is woven.

It has a selvedge, or "self edge" on two sides so it does not ravel.

Look at the other ends. Was the piece of material torn from the bolt? If it was, then it is straight. If it does not have torn ends, pull out one of the crosswise threads. This will be straight. Cut along this line.
Press the material so it is smooth. A smooth material is much easier to sew.

Now you are ready to make the hem. You will need your measuring gauge. You can also make one out of cardboard like this one. You will also need your iron and ironing board.

Turn the edge of your material one-fourth inch wide. Crease with a hot iron. Make a second turn one half to one inch wide, depending on the size of the towel. Crease this with your iron. Place pins at right angles to the edge of your hem. If you can stitch well, you may not need to baste the hems. Most girls will need to baste the corners to keep them even. When stitching the hem, stitch near the edge and close the corners.

Stitching threads should be fastened securely. The top thread may be pulled to the wrong side. Then both threads may be tied and the ends clipped. Sometimes you might like to make a tack stitch to fasten your thread. You can do this by raising the presser foot slightly. Let the needle go up and down a couple of times in the same place to form a small knot.

When the towel is finished, press it carefully. Fold it in thirds lengthwise and again through the center. If the towel is soiled, wash and iron it before you use it.

SECRET V: PRESS AND SEW! PRESS AND SEW! FOR SMOOTH AND EVEN HEMS, YOU KNOW!

Your Kitchen Apron!

Materials for an Apron and Pot Holder. Choose a material for your apron that is heavy enough to protect your dress. Your apron will need to be washed many times, so be sure you choose a material that will wash and wear well. The material should be fast color. A cotton material will be best. The names of some materials that make nice aprons are: plain or printed percale, broadcloth, check or small plaid gingham, plain or striped chambray, denim.

If you are choosing a printed material for your apron, a small design is usually best. The design should be printed straight on the material. Choose a color that is becoming to you and that will look nice over your dresses.
Pattern for your Apron:

For your first apron let's choose a simple pattern. A drawstring apron will be fun to make. A waist clamp might be used instead of a drawstring. You may be able to buy a waist clamp for aprons in your dry goods store.

First, how much material shall we buy? Why not plan for your pot holder at the same time. The diagram below is a plan for an apron using a waist clamp.

The diagram below is a layout plan for a drawstring apron with pockets at the bottom of the apron.

If you are 10 years old, this apron will probably be the right length for you. Make the skirt longer or shorter, according to your height. The drawstrings may be too long. Measure the length you need before you stitch the drawstrings.

The first step in making your apron is to straighten your material as you did for your towel. Then shrink your material if the label didn't tell you that it had been preshrunk.

Cut off the pieces for pocket, holders and ties. Cut straight with the crosswise thread.

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The next step is to hem the sides. If the selvedge in the sides of the material seems tightly woven or thick, trim it off. Using your measuring gauge, turn the trimmed or selvedge edge about 1/4 inch to the wrong side and press with an iron.

Make another turnover this one and crease with the iron. Place pins perpendicular to this hem.

Baste, then stitch the hem near the edge. Use a No. 50 or No. 60 thread with 12 to 14 stitches to the inch. Clip threads near the edge. These do not need to be tied since there will be a row of stitches crossing them. Always keep threads clipped—or tied and clipped—as you work, so that your sewing will look neat.

To make the heading, turn under 1/4 to 1/2 inch and crease with an iron. Make the next turn about 2 1/4 inch and crease. Pin and baste if you need to. Stitch this hem on the machine. Stitch back at the end and tie the threads on the wrong side. Make a row of stitching 1/2 to 3/4 inch from the top fold of the hem to make a heading.

If you are making the apron without the pockets, turn 1/4 to 1/2 inch on the bottom hem and crease. Make the next turn 3 to 3 1/2 inches and press with the iron. Pin and baste. Close the ends of the hem. Be careful to get it basted even. Stitch on the machine.

If you are making the apron with the pockets, turn and stitch a hem that is about 1 inch wide at the top of the pocket. Seam the bottom of the pocket to the bottom of the apron. Press this seam so the wrong side of the apron material does not show below the pocket. Stitch as shown.

To make the draw strings, seam the two pieces together and press. Fold the two edges together the full length and baste. Stitch as shown about 1/4 inch from edge. At corners A, take one machine stitch across the point instead of making a sharp turn with the machine. Leave an opening as shown (B) so the drawstring belt can be turned. Trim the material at the corner as shown (C).

Turn the belt right side out. Turn the edges of the opening to the inside and baste. Press the belt for a more finished look. Stitch with the machine 1/16 to 1/8 inch from the edge around all sides of the belt.

Use a large safety pin to run the drawstring in the apron.

Press your apron carefully with the grain of the material. It may be necessary to use a damp cloth to press it well.

If you have done some sewing before taking this project, you may prefer to make a peasant apron. Instructions for making peasant aprons are given in E. C. 4-01-2A, "The Peasant Apron."
Your Pot-holder

POT HOLDER

Now for your pot holder! The material you had left after making your apron will make a nice pot holder. You will also need some material for padding. Flannel or a piece of an old blanket might be used. Press your material so that it is smooth. A piece of material 7 inches by 13 inches will be a nice size. You may make it larger or smaller if you wish. Cut 1 or 2 pieces of padding 6 inches by 12 inches. Pin the layers of padding and the cover together and baste. Keep the padding as smooth as possible.

To make a loop for the holder, cut a strip of material about 1 1/2 inches by 3 inches. Fold the edges together and stitch 1/4 inch from the edge. Turn to the right side and press. Edge-stitch both sides. Fold the loop as shown and baste to the center of one side of your holder.

You may use a plastic ring instead of a loop if you prefer.

Fold the pot holder together across the center so that all edges meet evenly. Pin, then baste together.

Press. Machine stitch 1/8 and 1/4 inch from the edge. Be sure to catch both sides in the stitching. You will probably need to set your machine for a longer stitch. Quilt a design on your hot pad. Tie your threads each time you stop stitching.
"YOUR HANDS TO LARGER SERVICE"

Wouldn't you like to make something for someone else? Does your mother need some new kitchen hand towels? You could hem them for her. Will it soon be Grandmother's birthday? I'm sure she would like some pot holders or an apron that her granddaughter has made. When you give a gift that you have made, you give more than a gift. You give your time, your skill, and most important of all, your thoughtfulness in planning something for another person.

FINISHING YOUR PROJECT

You have finished your project when you have:

1. Collected tools needed for sewing in a suitable box.
2. Hemmed a kitchen hand towel.
3. Made an apron.
5. Completed your record book and given it to your leader.