

Activity 10: Repair Your Clothes: Save Money and Look Great

Caring for My Clothes

Project Outcome: Repair clothing for longer life by sewing on missing buttons and other finding.

Project Indicator: Repair clothes using information learned.

TIPPS OUTCOMES:

- Identify/clearly define a problem or situation.
- Identify the parts, steps and necessary sequence or order to achieve a goal.
- Make the needed effort to carry out a task or a plan.

Many factors influence “garment life.” The life of the garment means the length of time you will use the item and it still look good. All of the following factors influence a garment’s life: storage, wear, cleaning, textile/fabric properties, garment construction and fashionability. In order for your clothes to last longer, it is necessary to make repairs when you have a missing button, a seam comes apart, or there are other repairs that need to be made.

Have you ever had a garment in need of repair? What happened to the garment? Did you or someone in your family repair the garment?

Often, repairing a garment is a chore that is put off indefinitely. You may not have time or have the right tools. However, making that repair as soon as possible will pay off in the long run. By keeping clothing in good repair, your wardrobe will last longer.

Before you begin repairing, you need to examine the garment and ask yourself:

1. How extensive is the damage?
2. Do I have the skill to repair or do I need to ask someone else to do it?
3. Is it worth repairing? (age, fashionability, fit and use)
4. How much time will it take to repair?
5. Can I afford to replace it?
6. Will I wear it after mending?



Basic Repair/Mending Kit:

Portable box or basket
Hand needles — assorted sizes (3/9)
Stainless steel pins
Safety pins
Scissors
Thread — five basic colors: white or beige, navy, brown, black, medium gray

Additional Mending Supplies:

Snap — assorted sizes
Hooks and eyes
Seam ripper
Needle threader
Seam gauge or 6-inch ruler
Pin cushion
Assorted buttons
Fusible bonding web
Iron-on mending tape

TYPES OF MENDING/REPAIRING

Preventive Mending/Repairing:

Sometimes you need to make some initial repairs after buying a garment to give the garment longer life. This may include:

- Clipping and tying loose threads.
- Securing buttons with thread shanks.
- Sewing outerwear buttons with a reinforced button on the underneath side.
- Securing snaps and hooks and eyes with double threads.
- Restitching seams, especially ones that will receive stress or are split/raveling.
- Repairing raveling button holes.
- Checking and resecuring hem.



Basic Mending/Repairing:

Basic repairs may include some of the above as your garment experiences wear and tear. You may also need to do one of the following:

Patching — Suitable for use on areas when damage is large or cannot be darned or mended otherwise.

- Materials that might be considered are similar fabric, contrasting fabric, lace or trim.
- Methods for patching include fusing, gluing, hand or machine stitching, or any combination of the above.



Tips for Applying Patches:

- Clean garment before patching.
- Purchase iron-on patches that are compatible with the fiber color and texture.
- Patches should be at least 1 inch larger than the area to be patched.
- Surface patches look neater and last longer if edges are hand or machine stitched.
- By trimming damaged area to a square or rectangle shape, application and stitching are easier.
- Decorative patches can give the garment a new feel.
- Patches can make your clothes look new. Use brightly colored appliques or quilted patches for a decorative effect. Consider machine stitching if fusing the patch will add too much stiffness to be comfortable. Machine stitching takes longer, but is softer than fusing. Hard-to-reach areas that need patching may have to be handstitched with a backstitch or blanket-stitch.



Replacement:

This requires the removal of a section or part of a garment so a new one can be installed. This includes replacements such as zippers, buttons, elastic, waistbands, etc. This usually requires more time and some skill.

Button Repairs:

To prevent the loss of a loose button, resew it as soon as you notice threads that are starting to loosen. Check all other buttons at this time. If you lose a button and cannot find a perfect match, you can take a button from the bottom and place an “odd” button near the hem, where it will be less noticeable. This will keep you from having to replace all the buttons. Check the inside of your garment. Sometimes there will be an extra button sewn inside in case one is needed for replacement. Always select buttons the same size and type as the original buttons, so they will fit the buttonholes. When a button is torn off, it may leave a hole in the fabric. If this happens, put a patch on the fabric before sewing the button back on. Buttons should be sewn on with a shank. The shank raises the button away from the garment to allow for the thickness of the buttonhole. The shank should be 1/8-inch longer than the thickness of the fabric to allow the buttonhole to lie smoothly when the garment is closed.



METHODS TO USE WHEN MENDING/REPAIRING

Split Seam Repairs:

One of the most common mending tasks is to repair a split seam. Of course the easiest remedy is to repair with machine straight stitching. However, a sewing machine may not be available when you need to make the repair.

Try to determine the cause of the split seam and repair the garment so the seam is strengthened.

- Some stress seams in garments wear out and split before others. These include seams in the crotch, underarm and pockets. As a preventative measure, these seams should be reinforced.
- Some seams may split because the garment is too tight. The seam may need to be let out a bit to add extra space.
- The thread in seams may wear out and break if the thread is all cotton and the fabric is long-wearing polyester.



When repairing, check the fiber content on the label and use the same fiber thread. Seams in knits often split because they were sewn with a straight stitch instead of a stretch or tiny zigzag stitch, or with thread that was not strong enough to “give” with the fabric.

After you have determined the cause of the split seam, there are two methods of repair:

Machine stitch: First remove loose threads from the seam. Overlap stitching about 1/2 inch at each end of the broken seam. If the seam needs reinforcing, stitch another seam 1/8 inch from the original seam, inside the seam allowance.

Hand stitch: Using needle and thread, secure 1/2 inch from broken thread and use a backstitch to repair. The backstitch is one of the strongest hand stitches. It is especially useful for repairing hard-to-reach seams that have ripped. It has the appearance of a machine stitch on the right side, but the stitches overlap on the wrong side.

To do a backstitch: With right sides together, following the seamline, bring the needle through the fabric to the upper side. Take a stitchback about 1/16 to 1/8 inch, bringing the needle out again 1/16 to 1/8 inch forward on the seamline. Keep inserting the needle in the end of the last stitch and bringing it out one stitch ahead. The stitches on the underside will be twice as long as those on the upper side.



Hemming Repairs:

Repairing a hem that has pulled out only takes minutes. Use one of the following techniques to make this repair:

- Make temporary emergency repairs with double-faced mending tape.
- Non-sewing repairs can be made with fusible web strips. A hem repaired with fusible web can be washed and dry-cleaned.
- Hems can be permanently repaired by hand stitching or machine stitching.
- When hand stitching, use a blind stitch for woven, ravelly fabrics finished with seam binding or an overcast edge; a catch stitch for flat hems in pants, knits and heavy fabrics; or a slip stitch for woven fabrics with a turned-over edge.
- Machine stitching takes less time and is sturdier than hand stitching. A machine blind stitch provides an invisible hem. Follow your sewing machine manual for instructions. A straight-stitched hem shows on the right side. It is used to hem and finish the raw edge in one step or to add decorative detail.

Tears, Cuts, and Holes:

- Repair rips, tears, cuts and holes as soon as possible. What starts as a worn spot or small tear may become a hole. The longer it is ignored, the larger it becomes.

Repair techniques for tears, cuts and holes:

- Repair rips, tears, cuts and holes without sewing by using fusible interfacing, iron-on mending tapes or fabric, or fusible web using a patch of matching fabric. This prevents further tearing or raveling and will barely be noticeable on most fabrics.



CLOTHING REPAIR INVENTORY

Use the information you have learned to take an inventory of the clothes in your closets and drawers to discover if you have repairs to do. Make a plan to repair the items you find with dates you will do the repair. Implement your plan.

Repair needs found	Name of item(s)	Repair technique to be used	Date item will be mended	Date repair is made
Split seam (hole in seam)				
Button missing or loose				
Hem has come loose				
Hole, ripe or tear in garment				



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