**Let’s Learn to Use a Sewing Machine**Making a decorative square pillow

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**Introduction to Content**Using a sewing machine to make clothes, accessories and decorative items can be both rewarding and save you money. At first, operating the sewing machine may seem awkward, but with a little help, patience, and practice, you will soon be sewing with ease. Today we will learn to use the sewing machine and then make a decorative pillow.

Decorative pillows are the perfect way to add a personal touch to any room. By making a pillow you will learn to select fabric suitable for making a pillow and learn to sew straight lines and turn corners on the machine as well as hand sewing techniques.

**Introduction to Methodology**

Participants use decision making skills to select fabric suitable for making a pillow that will complement room décor. They will learn to sew straight seams and pivot corners and apply this to creating a decorative pillow. Participants will also learn a basic hand stitch and use this to finish their pillow.

**Terms/Concepts**Bobbin - holds the thread for the underside of the seam. Bobbins are located in different positions on

Presser foot - holds your fabric in place as you sew

Thread take-up lever - moves up and down as the stitch is formed and keeps thread at the adjusted tension. Always have this lever at the highest point when you stop sewing

Balance wheel - moves the needle up and down as it turns. Can be moved by hand to move needle out of fabric

Feed Dog - small teeth or bars go up and down to move your fabric as you sew

Reverse stitch lever - used to sew a backstitch at the beginning and end of stitching a seam to lock the stitch in place.

**Authors**

**Skill Level**

Beginner (5-6th grade)

**Learner Outcomes**The learner will be able to:

-Use sewing machine to sew a simple accessory.

-Sew a non-garment item.

**Tag(s)***4-H Clothing and Textiles*

**Impact**Students are successful if they can:

-Sew a non-garment item.

-Use learned skills to sew a finished product.

**Time Needed –** *2-1/2-3 hours* **Materials Needed**

-Woven Fabric: Amount depends on the size of the pillow (if making a 14-inch pillow, buy 1/2 yard of fabric)

-Matching Thread

- Sewing Scissors (Shears)

-Straight pins

- Polyester fiberfill or Pillow form

- Sewing Machine

-Hand-Sewing Needle

-Water-Soluble Marking Pen

**Materials Needed by Leader:**

1. Practice sheets for sewing straight lines and corners

2. Strips of woven fabric for participants to practice sewing on (and leader to demonstrate with):

2-per participants 3”x18”

2-per participants 3”x6” for seam

3. 2-15’ squares of fabric (thread contrasting for demo) to demonstrate first step of making pillow.

**Setting the Stage/Opening Question**

**Strategies to Increase Student Engagement**

Leader may provide various types of woven fabric for participants to examine – different weights, solids, prints, even knits when explaining suitable woven fabric for making a pillow.

Say, “Have you ever wanted to know how a sewing machine works? How many of you have sewn on a sewing machine before and if so, what did you make?” (Give participants an opportunity to share; this will also help you determine their skill levels.)

Say, “Today you will learn to sew on a sewing machine and then make a decorative pillow and, whether you have sewn before, you will learn how the sewing machine operates and begin to master its use.

**OPTIONAL - Teacher Talk:**

Let’s talk about the sewing machine first. As you look at various sewing machines you may think they all look very different. However, most sewing machines are more alike than different. They work by taking two threads and knotting them together through fabric. This looping action forms the stitches that hold the fabric together. All sewing machines use two threads. One is the bottom thread or “bobbin” thread, and the other is the top thread. When you first start sewing, you may get your 4-H leader, project leader or parent to thread the sewing machine, but the sooner you learn to thread the machine for yourself, the easier it will be for you to sew with little supervision.

Notes

Experience

Leader will: 1. Demonstrate parts of sewing machine and how to use (sew straight lines and turn corners).

Participant will practice on unthreaded machine using practice sheets sewing straight lines & turning corners.

Leader will: 2. Demonstrate how to thread a machine.

Participant will thread machine & practice sewing straight stitch & turning corners on 18” long strip of fabric.

Leader will: 3. Demonstrate making a seam and back stitching (show using the throat plate measurement as guide and following marked fabric.

Participant will make a seam using two fabric pieces 3’x6” backstitching at the beginning and end

Leader will: 4. Talk about woven fabric and the selection of fabric suitable for specific projects.

Participants will select from the fabric provided based on what will look good in their bedroom or where they will use it.

Leader will: 5. Demonstrate the first steps of making pillow. Show pillow step- by-step samples and explain steps (and distribute instructions).

Participants will begin process of making pillow using handouts & guidance.

**Share**

Have participants show their finished pillow and explain why they chose the fabric and where they will use their pillow.

**Process**

Ask: “What was the most exciting part of making your pillow?”

“What was the most difficult thing that you did?”

“What would you different next time?”

**Generalize**

Review the processes that the participants learned and talk about how these concepts can be applied to make lots of items then ask.

**Apply**

Ask: “What can/will you make now based on the processes that you learned in making you pillow?”

“How can you use your skills to make gifts for others?”

“How can you use your skills in a community service project?”

“What would you like to learn to make next that will use processes you don’t know yet?”

References

Beginner Level 4-H Clothing and Textiles Project Area Guide: Activity 11 - Know Your Sewing Machine

Activity 12 – Let’s Learn to Use a Sewing Machine

Activity 20 - Developing your Sewing Skills – Let’s Make a Square Decorative Pillow

**Activity**

Ideas for Community Service Projects

Make pillows of difference sizes and give to foster children’s organization, fire station, homeless shelter, senior citizens.

Refer to [Activity 11](https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W885.pdf) in the “Beginner Clothing and Textiles Project Activity Area Guide”

**Supplemental Information**  
*Educational Standards Met*

**Grades 5,6,7 MATH Standard**5.NF.B.6 Solve real-world problems involving multiplication of fractions and mixed numbers by using visual fraction models or equations to represent the problem

**TIPPS  
*Life Skills***

• Identify the parts, steps, and necessary sequence or order to achieve a goal

• Use basic reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematical skills

• Make the needed effort to carry out a task or a plan

LIFE SKILLS

Decision Making- Selecting fabric to use.

Positive Self Esteem- Completing first sewn product

**Grade 4 Science**

4.ETS2: Links Among Engineering, Technology, Science, and Society. 1) Use appropriate tools and measurements to build a model.

**Grade 10 Foundations of Fashion Design**

C22H10 Principles of Construction 16) Demonstrate the appropriate use, selection, and maintenance of equipment, tools, and sewing supplies for the construction of apparel.

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