

SEWING  
FOR  
FUN

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Virginia Cooperative Extension Service Extension Division  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

4-H Clothing Construction

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 no. 346-003  
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### 4-H CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION SKILLS CHECKLIST SEWING FOR FUN 1

**Sewing Tools**, identify and use

- Scissors and shears
- Pins and pincushion
- Thimble
- Needles
- Measuring tools, ruler, tape

<i>Skills I Know</i>	<i>Skills To Learn or Improve</i>	<i>New Skills Learned</i>

**Sewing Machine**, be able to

- Name parts of machine
- Thread machine
- Fill and insert bobbin
- Change machine needle
- Recognize good stitching
- Control speed
- Control fabric when stitching
- Regular stitch
- Backstitch
- Baste stitch
- Zigzag stitch (if your machine does this)
- Use seam guide on machine
- Pivot
- Use good habits: bright light, good posture, use wastebasket put away tools

<i>Skills I Know</i>	<i>Skills To Learn or Improve</i>	<i>New Skills Learned</i>

**Fabric Knowledge**, recognize

- Differences between knits and wovens
- Solid fabric
- Print fabric
- Stripe fabric
- Plaid fabric
- Lengthwise grain
- Crosswise grain
- Bias
- Selvage
- Good choice for pattern
- Matching thread

<i>Skills I Know</i>	<i>Skills To Learn or Improve</i>	<i>New Skills Learned</i>

**Construction**, be able to

- Pretreat fabric
- Lay out pattern, if using one
- Press seams
- Final press
- Fringe fabric edge

<i>Skills I Know</i>	<i>Skills To Learn or Improve</i>	<i>New Skills Learned</i>

- Machine sewing: sew straight seams
- sew square corners
- sew curved seams
- use plain finish on seams
- use zigzag finish on seams
- backstitch at the ends
- trim seams
- sew casing for elastic
- machine hem
- Hand sewing: hand baste
- tie a knot
- use a thimble

**Care**

- Sew in care labels
- Replace buttons
- Repair broken seams

**Additional Skills Learned** list:

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<i>Skills I Know</i>	<i>Skills To Learn or Improve</i>	<i>New Skills Learned</i>
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**NOTE:**

Why not "polish off" your sewing skills and develop new ones by constructing more sewing projects than are suggested for Project Requirements?

# SEWING FOR FUN 1

Adapted by Beatrice Kalka, Extension Clothing and Textiles Specialist.

## WHAT YOU'LL DO IN THIS PROJECT

Learning about clothes and yourself can be fun. *Sewing for Fun 1* is the first project in 4-H clothing. In this project you will learn beginning sewing skills. You will:

- Learn about fabrics and how to select them for the items you make.
- Begin to sew:
  - Use sewing tools
  - Use a sewing machine
  - Sew straight and curved seams
  - Use a needle and thread
  - Use an iron for pressing
- Learn how to take care of your clothes:
  - Sew on buttons
  - Mend broken seams
  - Follow directions on care labels
- Begin thinking about yourself and your appearance—hands and nail care.
- Begin to keep 4-H records using the *Clothing Construction Record*, Pub. 346-002.

You can tell or show others what you have learned in your project. Give a demonstration and exhibit at the fair. You may want to show your project items in the fashion revue.

Use this booklet to guide you as you learn to sew. It will tell you about the tools you need and show you how to begin using the sewing machine. It has information about fabric that you should learn before you start to make any item. The section on hand sewing will help you use a needle and thread.

There are a lot of new ideas to learn when you sew. Have fun making things for yourself and others!

## PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

To complete *Sewing for Fun 1* you should:

- Be able to check off 40 of the 50 skills listed on the *4-H Clothing Construction Skills Checklist*, (see Inside Front Cover).
- Make at least two items for yourself or others using those skills.

Plan the things you want to make. Begin with something simple. The more items you make, the more you will learn. Choose from the list below or use your own ideas. Family magazines and pattern books have ideas for items you can make. Your leader may also have some suggestions.

marble bag	necktie
book bag	slippers
tote bag	belt
tool kit case	purse
pincushion	back pack
needle case	bike bag
eyeglass case	tennis racket cover
potholder	golf club headcover
barbecue or oven mitt	pop-over skirt, any length
placemat	pop-over top
dresser scarf	poncho
simple stuffed toy	halter top
pillow	simple patchwork item
apron	

## SEWING TOOLS

You need good sewing tools to do good work. You will need tools for measuring, cutting, and sewing. You will need to have, or be able to borrow, these tools:

- **Tape measure.** It should bend easily but not stretch. A plastic-coated tape 60 inches long, with metal tips and numbers on both sides will be very useful. Newer tapes are also marked in centimeters.
- **Seam gauge.** A short ruler is helpful for marking and checking widths of seams. One that is 6 inches or 15 centimeters long is a good size.

- **Pins.** They should be fine, sharp, and rust proof so they don't damage the fabric. Dressmaker, silk, or ballpoint pins may be used. Pins with colored ball heads may be easiest for you to work with.
- **Needles** come in many types and sizes. The needle should be small enough to slip through the fabric easily. Crewel needles have a longer eye which makes threading easier.
- **Pincushion.** Used to hold your pins and needles. There are many different kinds.
- **Thimble.** It protects the end of your finger when you push the needle through the fabric. Thimbles come in different sizes to fit the middle finger.
- **Scissors** should be small enough to be handy for snipping threads, cutting corners, and trimming seams.
- **Dressmaker shears** have longer, stronger blades. Be sure they are sharp. There may be some at home you can use.

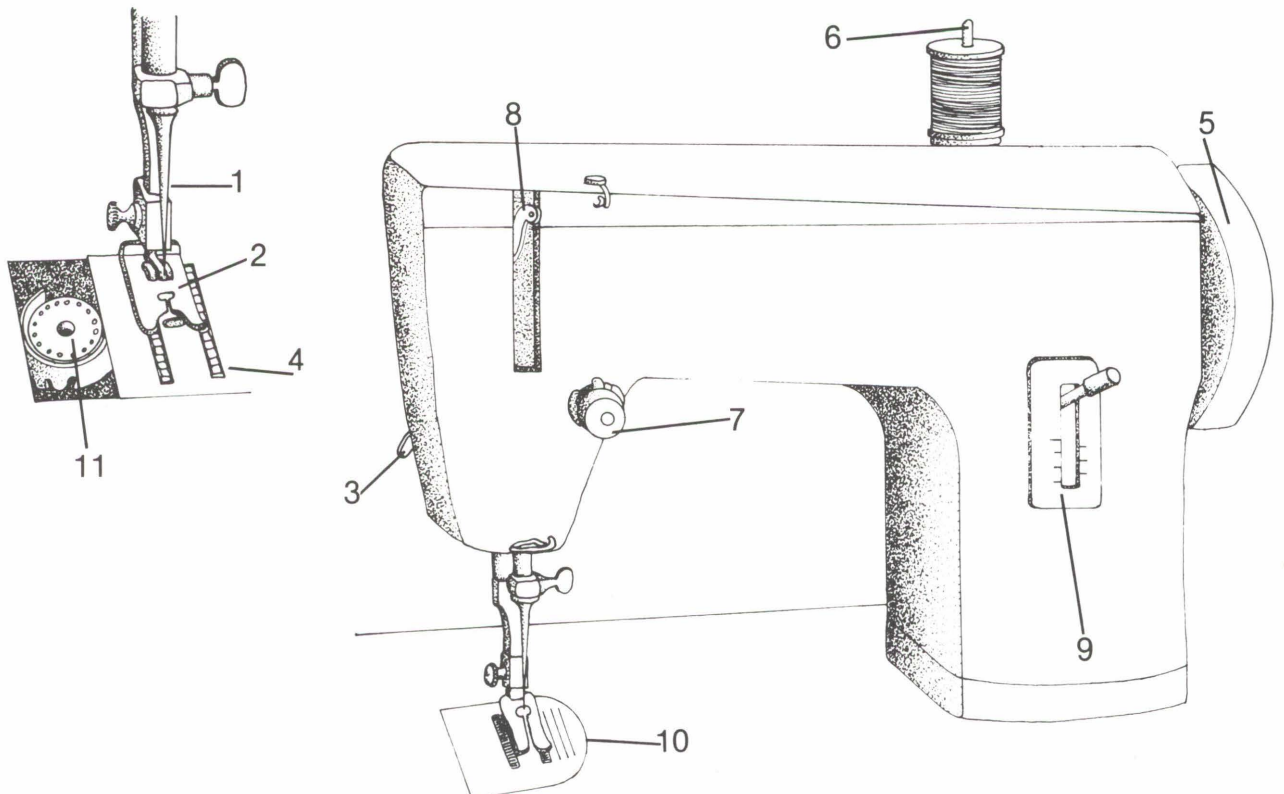
- **Combination steam-and-dry iron.** Your family and your leader will have an iron and ironing board. Handle the iron carefully.
- **Thread.** It should match the color of your fabric. Ask your leader to show you how to match thread.

★ **ACTION IDEA.** Find and decorate a box to hold the tools you have collected.

## THE SEWING MACHINE

All sewing machines have the same basic parts even though they don't look the same. The guidebook for the machine you use will tell about its parts. Look at this list of parts and the drawing to see where the parts are. Try and find the same parts on the sewing machine you use.

- The **needle** (1) has an eye near the point for holding the thread. It draws the thread through the fabric and back again.



- The **presser foot** (2) holds the fabric while the needle passes through it.
- The **presser foot lifter** (3) is a lever in the back of the machine. It raises or lowers the presser foot.
- The **feed dog** (4) moves the fabric as you sew.
- The **hand wheel or balance wheel** (5) is used to raise or lower the needle and to help start the machine by hand.
- The **spool pin** (6) holds the spool of thread. The thread is also held in place by thread guides.
- The **tension control** (7) makes the needle thread tighter or looser. If the tension is balanced, stitches will be smooth, even, and look the same on both sides of the fabric.
- The **thread take-up** (8) moves up and down with the needle, preparing thread to be drawn through the fabric.
- The **stitch length regulator** (9) is used to make stitches longer or shorter.
- The **throat plate** (10) has guidelines to help you keep the seams straight.
- The **bobbin** (11) holds the thread for the bottom half of the stitches.

## USING THE SEWING MACHINE

### Sewing without Thread

Begin by running the machine without a needle and with the presser foot up. Try different speeds. Learn to start and stop smoothly.

The next step is to practice with a needle, but without any thread. Sew on paper with lines or draw your own designs to sew on. Put the presser foot down on the paper. Guide the paper gently with both hands as you stitch. DON'T PUSH OR PULL. See how straight you can make your lines. Also try some curves.

Before you sew on fabric, change the sewing machine needle. Sewing on paper will dull it. The needle must be sharp to go through the fabric without pulling any threads.

## Sewing with Thread

Your parents or leader will show you how to thread the machine, wind the bobbin, and put the bobbin in place for sewing. Practice until you can do it by yourself. Practice sewing on two strips of fabric to see how straight and even you can stitch. Stitch slowly so you have good control of the machine.

Find the 5/8 inch mark on your machine throat plate. Practice sewing a 5/8 inch (1.5 centimeters) seam.

Practice sewing straight seams, curved seams, and turning corners.

To keep the threads from pulling loose, backstitch at the beginning and end of each line of stitching. To do this, adjust the stitch regulator for sewing backwards.

Machine stitches can be different sizes or patterns. Practice sewing with regular and long stitches. Try out some of the zigzag or pattern stitches if your machine has them.

## Start Sewing with Good Habits

- Work in good light.
- Sit tall when you sew; don't lean on the machine for support.
- Use a wastebasket for your threads and scraps.
- Put your tools and fabric away when you are finished.

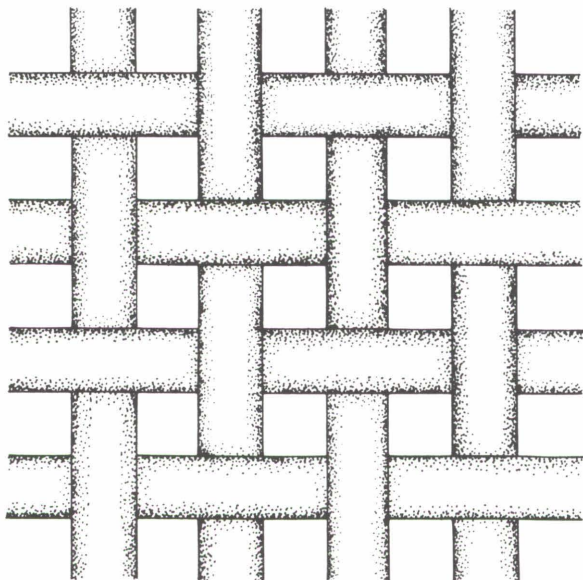
## Learn to Do Each of These Things

- Start and stop the machine.
- Wind the bobbin and place it in its case or shuttle.
- Thread the machine, top and bobbin, and pull up the bobbin thread.
- Run the machine smoothly.
- Adjust the length of stitch.

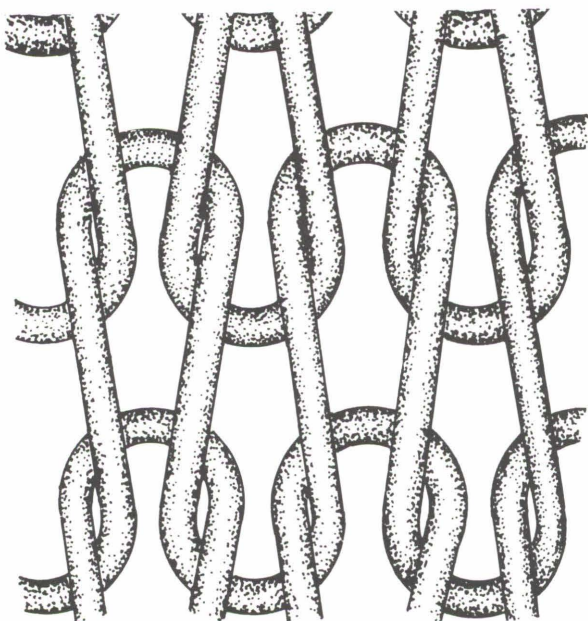
- Stitch on straight lines, curves, and corners.
  - Guide, not force, the fabric.
- ★ **ACTION IDEA.** Start a notebook of samples of your sewing so you can watch your progress.

## FABRIC FACTS

In **woven fabrics**, the yarns go over and under one another, as shown in the drawing.



In **knitted fabrics** the yarns interlock in a series of loops. This is why most knits stretch.



**Fabric designs** add interest to the clothes you wear. There are many different designs. The most common are solids, prints, stripes, and plaids. Clothes made from stripes and plaids look better if the designs match, so these fabrics are harder to work with.

- Solids do not have a design.
- Prints have an all-over design.
- Stripes have a design of parallel lines or bands.
- Plaids are a design of stripes that cross.

## FABRIC TERMS

Here are terms you need to learn. Study them and be able to identify them on a bolt of fabric and on the piece of fabric you use for your project.

- **Selvage (say SELL-vij).** The narrow, tightly woven strip along the long sides of the fabric. The selvage edge is very firm and does not ravel.
- **Grain.** The direction in which fabric yarns are placed.
- **Lengthwise grain.** Yarns that run in the same direction as the selvage.
- **Crosswise grain.** Yarns that run crosswise to the selvage.
- **Bias.** The diagonal direction of the fabric. Yarns do not run in the direction of the bias. True bias is located by folding the crosswise yarns to be on top of the lengthwise yarns. In woven fabric true bias has the greatest amount of stretch or give.

★ **ACTION IDEA.** Collect small pieces of fabric. Decide if they are knit or woven. Look at the design of the fabric and the grain.

## CHOOSING FABRIC

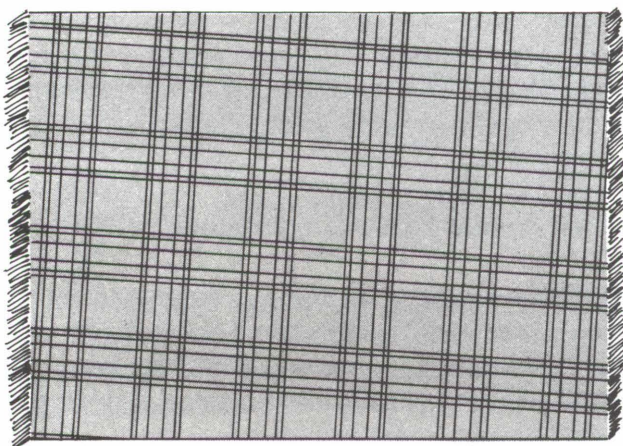
Some fabrics are easier to work with than others. Fabrics such as light-weight denim, gingham, chambray, percale, and many cotton blends are good choices for beginning projects. They are of

medium weight and firm, but not stiff. Plain colors and all-over prints are easier to work with than stripes or plaids.

Before you choose your fabric, look at the label on the end of the bolt. Ask yourself these questions:

- Has the fabric been treated so that it won't shrink more than 1%?
- Is it colorfast?
- Will it require special care?

Check for flaws in the fabric as it is being measured. If you choose a print, look to see if it is printed straight. If you sew with fabric that is not printed straight, your finished work may not look straight. Ask the clerk for the care label for the fabric you buy.



**Off Grain**

★ **ACTION IDEA.** Keep a 3 × 5 card file of information about the fabrics you use. Attach a sample of the fabric to this card.

Price per yard	_____
Fiber content	_____
Width	_____
Care	_____
Shrinkage	_____
Fabric finishes	_____
Where purchased and date	_____
Item made	_____

## SEWING BASICS

### Pretreat Fabric

Pretreat your fabric before you sew. Most fabrics shrink the first time they are washed. Also, fabrics may be stiff because too much finish was used. Washing makes them easier to work with. Wash and dry the fabric according to the directions on the care label. For this project, this means you will machine wash and machine dry the fabric.

### Pressing

Always press as you sew. This makes the next step easier and helps make your item or garment look good. Keep an iron and ironing board set up whenever you sew. Press each seam. Press with the grain of the fabric, so you don't stretch it out of shape.

### What Is a Good Seam?

In this project, you will make plain seams. After you finish sewing a seam, see if it meets these standards:

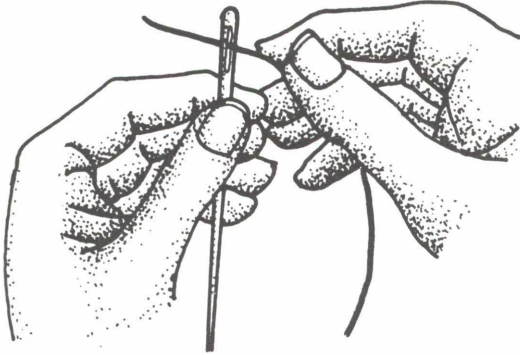
- The **thread** matches the fabric.
- **Machine stitching**
  - Is all the same length
  - Looks the same on both sides (balanced tension)
  - Starts and finishes at the ends of the seam
  - Is backstitched or knotted at the ends
  - Has thread ends clipped
- **Seam allowances**
  - Are even in width
  - Are flat and smooth
  - Are finished if necessary to prevent ravelling

## HAND SEWING

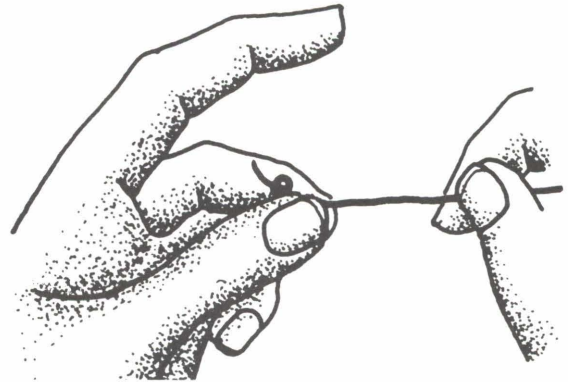
During this project, you will begin to do some hand sewing. Practice threading the needle, tying knots, and doing some of the basic stitches. Use **double** thread when you are sewing on buttons and **single** thread for other hand sewing.

### To Thread a Needle

Cut the thread at a slant. Hold a needle and thread as shown. Bring the thread toward the needle.

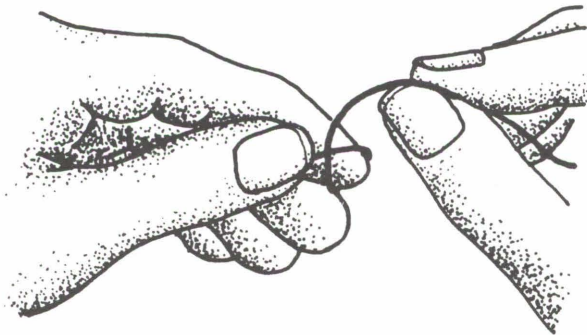


3. Pull the loop into a knot with your thumb and middle finger. As you do so, pull the knot down to the end of the thread.

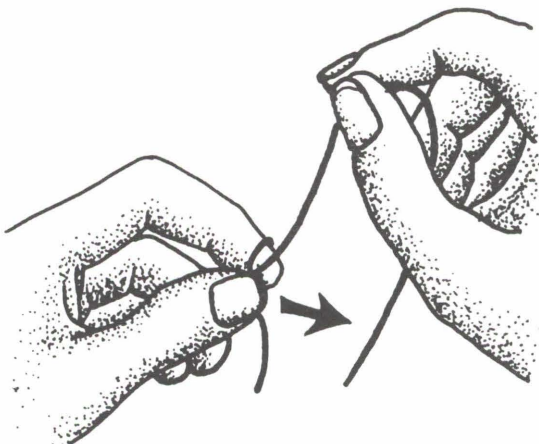


### To Tie a Knot

1. Wrap the end of the thread around the end of your first finger.



2. Tightly roll the crossed end into a loop as you push the loop off the end of your finger with your thumb.



### Sewing by Hand with a Thimble

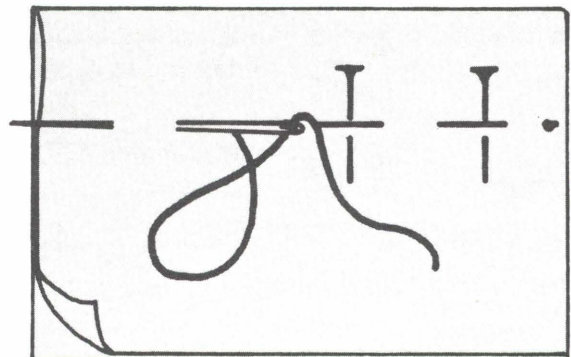
Put a thimble on your middle finger. Hold the needle between the thumb and first finger. Let the end of the needle rest against the end or the side of the thimble. Push the needle through your fingers with the thimble until you get the "feel" of it.

### Why Should You Use a Thimble?

It seems awkward at first but, with practice, it can be a friend. Using it for all hand sewing will protect your finger and make sewing easier. It will keep the needle from punching your finger when you sew thick fabrics.

### BASIC HAND STITCHES

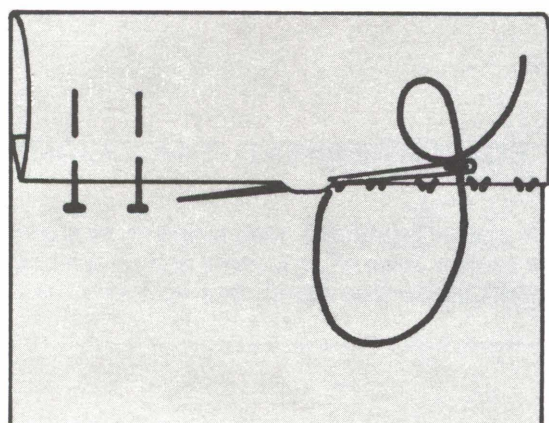
The **running stitch** is used for basting, easing, gathering, and mending where there will be no pull. Take several stitches forward, weaving the



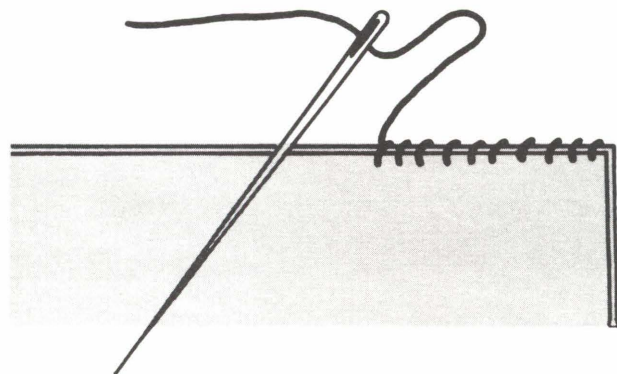


needle in and out of the fabric. The size of the stitch depends on the purpose of the stitching—longer stitches for basting or temporary stitching and shorter stitches where sewing will be permanent.

The **slip stitch** is used when you don't want the stitches to show. It might be used for hemming or for closing the opening of a stuffed toy. Slip the needle through the edge of the fold of the top fabric. Then pick up a thread of the under fabric. Space the stitches evenly. Be sure the thread does not show or pull on the right side.



The **overhand** and **whip stitches** hold two edges together. For the **overhand** stitch, put the needle in at a diagonal (/) through the back and front edges so the stitch itself is straight. For the **whip stitch** put the needle into the fabric square with the edge so the stitches are slanted. Either stitch can be used to attach lace or trim or to close openings of stuffed toys or pillows. The overhand stitch is less easily seen.



## YOU AND YOUR APPEARANCE

Your hands are the first tools you use in sewing. How do they look?

- Keep hands clean; wash them often.
- Keep fingernails clean.
- File or clip nails into a nicely rounded shape.
- Give your nails a manicure once a week.
- Keep all your nails the same length.

Develop good personal cleanliness habits.

- Take a bath or shower every day.
- Brush your teeth regularly.
- Shampoo your hair often.

Remember to wear a smile. A smile is a funny thing. You can give it away as often as you like and still have one left.

## CLOTHING CARE

When you spend a lot of time sewing clothes, you also want to take good care of them. This will keep your clothes looking new and ready to wear.

- Always hang up your clothes after wearing.
- Empty your pockets before you put the clothes in the wash.
- Wash your clothes before they get too dirty.
- Sew on the buttons when they fall off so you don't lose them.
- Repair broken seams before wearing again.
- Fold and put away clean clothes.

## FOR MORE HELP WITH YOUR PROJECT

- Ask your parents.
- Ask your leader.
- Look at your sewing machine use and care manual.
- Look at any commercial sewing book.

## **Project Notes**

Use this page for information you want to record about your project. Cost of project materials—Dates—Questions that you need to ask your leader—or other notations.



# CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION RECORD

CHECK PROJECT NAME:

- Sewing for Fun, Unit I
- Sewing for Fun, Unit II
- Sewing for Fun, Unit III

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF 4-H CLUB OR GROUP \_\_\_\_\_

## ARTICLES AND GARMENTS MADE THIS YEAR

Write a story about your Clothing Project. You can include some **FACTS**: Name and number of articles and garments, fabrics and supplies used, money spent and value if purchased; the **FUN** you had; the **SKILLS** that you are proud of and things you would **CHANGE** if the project could be done again.

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## **SHARING PROJECT EXPERIENCE**

Write a story telling how you shared the experience of this project with others. Did you tell someone how to do something that you learned to do? Did you plan and present a demonstration or exhibit your project? Were you presented an award — ribbon, medal, money, etc.?

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## **CARE OF CLOTHING**

Write a story telling what you learned about the care of clothing and how you cared for your clothes so that they would be ready to go when you were.

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**PLEASE NOTE: Additional copies of the record are available from the Extension Agent.**



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More boys and girls belong to 4-H than any other youth group.