

15 Sewing Tips

From Sarah:

1. Always press your pattern pieces and refold them with the pattern piece number visible.
2. Test the stitching at the beginning of a project, and **every time** you adjust the stitch setting, change the needle, rethread the machine or change the bobbin, make test stitches on the scrap fabric before going back to your project.
3. At the beginning of any stitching, place the needle down in the fabric. Both threads should be beneath and behind the presser foot. Grasp the needle and the bobbin thread with gently tension as you start stitching, to take up any slack thread and prevent a bird's nest under the fabric.
4. Thread the machine with the presser foot down and "floss" the thread into the tension discs.
5. Keep a pair of sharp scissors and a pin dish at the ironing board and another set by the sewing machine. Don't carry them back and forth.

From Jeannine:

6. Use a rotary cutter, mat, and pattern weights when cutting out a pattern, to improve accuracy and save time.
7. Make a muslin. It gives you a chance to go through many of the construction steps and, most importantly, it gives you the

opportunity to see how the garment will fit and then to make adjustments.

8. Learn to use an iron, and press when needed during garment construction. Pressing is often a crucial step and should not be ignored. Today's irons are lighter than their predecessors and they allow you to control the amount of heat and steam easily.
9. Use pins that are sharp, not too thick, and have heads that are easy to grab. Consider glass-head pins that won't melt under the heat of an iron. Be sure to throw away any pins that have become warped or bent.
10. If you make a mistake, you can start over or you can get creative by camouflaging it or making it "a design element." You can "repeat" the design element elsewhere on the garment to give it the intentional look.

From Carol:

11. Sew the way you like. As you learn new garment construction skills, take note of which techniques you like or don't like. Then feel free to change a pattern's construction so you can use your favorite method.
12. Use fusibles. Fusible interfacing is great for stabilizing and reinforcing in all sorts of places. It really helps when you're working with a tricky fabric. Also, fusible web tape, such as Steam a Seam.
13. Don't match thread. A neutral that blends with the fabric is often just fine—same for serger thread when you're finishing seam allowances. It's nice to match all the thread, but if you don't have the perfect color, don't sweat it—except for topstitching.

14. Use good lighting and magnification. I appreciate a nice, bright light source for every aspect of garment construction, and my hand sewing is definitely better when I use a magnifying device.

15. Challenge yourself: Try a new technique with every garment, even if it's as simple as installing a different presser foot for more accurate stitching. If you're embarking on a piece that is mostly new techniques, give yourself time.