

Learn to use a sewing machine

Being able to use a sewing machine opens up a whole new area for scouts - from clothing repair to being able to make a range of goods from scratch.

Section: Cubs, Scouts, Ventures, Rovers
Time: 1 hour
Where: Home, Den

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



PLAN

In your wider scouting community, there are likely to be many people who are adept at using sewing machines. Put out a call to find people who can help to share their knowledge. Get the scouts on board by explaining the dual benefits of being able to sew; it is a useful skill for being able to look after your own gear but also be creative, and it is a way of tackling a whole range of environmental and climate concerns through reducing waste and promoting recycling. It is also worth mentioning that for people in some parts of the world, having a sewing machine and being able to use it provides them with an income that they might not otherwise have.

Materials

A sewing machine, thread and some scrap material will be needed. Other bits of kit which would be useful include pins, material scissors and maybe even tailors chalk.

DO

Learning to use sewing machines could be done at the den in small groups, or at home with the help of family. Focus on helping the scouts to learn the basics:-How to thread and set up the sewing machine; Getting started Sewing in a straight line; Sewing along a curved line; Using pins to hold two pieces of material together for sewing; Sewing two pieces of material together along the edges (three out of four sides) then turning it inside out to see what the finish looks like.

Make some basic, but attractive, or useful item, that scouts can use. This could be a small chapstick holder for on a keyring, a washup pad (made using a coarse and a soft material using the method mentioned in the last point), or a reusable shopping bag.

REVIEW

When scouts have learned the basics, a whole range of possibilities will open up for them. Help them to set challenges for themselves and check back with them to see how they are getting on.

- Fixing garments for themselves and others by stitching up split seams.
- Shortening or lengthening garments by changing hems.
- Recycling old garments or materials to make new clothes
- Using scraps or old clothes to make useful items like shopping bags or cushion covers



In a nutshell...

- Scouts find someone in their community who can teach them to sew
- They get on and learn the basics of setting up the machine and simple stitching
- They make some small item to put their new skills into action



Follow-on

Once scouts get a taste for the potential that comes with being able to use a sewing machine, they might not need encouragement to keep going. Over time you could return to this activity and ask the scouts to make items for activities, such as bean bags, or maybe curtains for the den. Shopping bags could be made as a fundraiser, or peg bags with a drawstring prepared for annual camp.



SDG 4 Quality Education

SDG 4 seeks to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. Sometimes people think of education as being purely for getting a job and career, often based on academic ideas or technology. Scouts learning to sew can broaden their perspective on education.



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