To Sew or Not to Sew?

Teenagers sew. Fashion-conscious women sew. Children sew. Men are beginning to sew. All sorts of people are sewing for a variety of reasons. As the cost of ready-to-wear increases, home sewers are likely to increase their sewing activity as a means to economize on clothing costs as well as to have clothing that meets their wear expectations.

In times of economic stress the question, "Does it pay to sew?" is often asked. Only the person asking the question can answer it. Both the pros and cons need to be weighed in order to answer whether it pays for you to sew. Here are considerations to think about in making your decision.

The answer may be yes, it pays for you to sew, if:
- The product brings satisfaction in the creating as well as the using.
- You have a positive attitude about the importance of sewing.
- You really enjoy sewing.
- You have proper sewing space, tools, and equipment so that each process can be done efficiently, creating a custom-made look.
- You believe that sewing expresses individuality, while shopping expresses conformity.
- You are aware of the swing to fashion made by manufacturers of sewing machines, over-the-counter fabrics, and patterns.
- You realize the actual cost of sewing. Patterns, fabric, and notions are not the only costs—also, you must figure the cost of electricity, time, and wear and tear on equipment.
- You can reproduce an acceptable cost the creation of a high-style designer.
- The quality of ready-to-wear, suited to your clothing budget, does not meet your standards.
- You are willing to devote the hours necessary to prepare the fabric before you start to cut, to adjust patterns to your measurements, and to rip out seams that aren't right.
- You are more satisfied with the fit of garments you make than with the fit of garments bought ready-made.
- Looks are as important as techniques.

The answer may be no, it does not pay for you to sew if:
- Many of the products made end up as "closet cases"—something that you put in the closet or drawer and never finish, wear, or use.
- You think that sewing is drudgery.
- You don't know how to sew and are not enthusiastic about learning.
- Your interest is such that it would not be wise to invest in the necessary sewing tools and equipment. A rule of thumb is that a sewing machine should pay for itself within two years.
- Work on your hands doesn't appeal to you.
- You think that people who sew are those who can't afford ready-to-wear.
- The time devoted to sewing disturbs the family routine to the point that there is conflict and misunderstanding.
- You think that home sewing is not an "in" activity and is only done by "squares."
- You think that the type of sewing you are capable of doing doesn't meet your taste level.

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