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Sewing Equipment

4-H Clothing, Skill Level 1

There are many kinds of sewing equipment in stores. You probably already have some at home. Choose equipment that will help you do the job in the best way. When you need to buy equipment, get the best quality you can afford.

Needles come in many types and sizes. A needle should go with the kind of fabric and thread you will be using. The needles should be small enough to slip through the fabric easily and fill the hole with thread. *Sharps* and *embroidery* needles are two kinds of needles used for handsewing. Embroidery needles are sometimes called *crewels*. Sharps have round eyes to keep the thread from slipping out.



Embroidery or *crewels* have long slender eyes for easy threading.



A *thimble* is used to protect the end of your finger when you're pushing the needle through the fabric. Thimbles come in different sizes to fit the middle finger. They are not easy to learn to use, but very helpful later if you are sewing on heavy fabrics or doing tailoring.

Pins should be fine, sharp, and rustproof so they don't damage the fabric. They may be made of nickel-plated brass or stainless steel. Some have flat heads and some have heads with colored balls. *Dressmaker pins* are medium-sized pins with sharp points. *Silk pins* are slender with thin points. Ball point pins have tiny ball-shaped points. *Ball point pins* are used with knits and woven fabrics of fine manufactured fibers.



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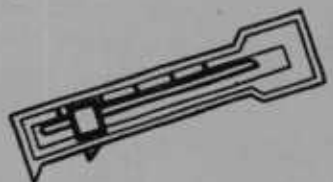
Bent-handled shears are shaped to help you cut better. They have longer, stronger blades than scissors. Shears should be sharp. They should open and close easily in your hand and be comfortable to use. The blades of better quality shears will be joined with a screw. Always keep shears closed when you are not using them. Wipe the lint off the blades with a clean cloth. Sometimes put a drop of sewing machine oil near the screw, then wipe away the extra oil. Use shears for sewing only. Use other shears or scissors for cutting paper, plastic, or other things.



A *seam ripper* looks a little like a pen. It has a handle and a curved blade with a sharp point. It's used to cut every second or third stitch when ripping a seam.



Tape measures should bend easily, but not stretch. They often are made of glass fiber or plastic-coated cloth and have metal tips on the ends. Many tape measures have both inches and centimeters. The numbers should be on both sides. It's helpful if the numbers on one side begin at one end while the numbers on the other side begin at the other end.



A *seam gauge* is a small tool used to check widths of seams and hems. Seam gauges are available with both inches and centimeters.



Dressmaker carbon is used for tracing pattern marks onto the wrong side of the fabric. Select a color close to that of the fabric, one that will barely show. Test the carbon on a scrap of fabric to be sure you can see it. Wash the scrap to be sure you can remove the marks. Carbon is hard to remove from some light-colored fabrics.



A *tracing wheel* is used with dressmaker carbon to transfer the pattern markings to the fabric. It may have a round blade with teeth like a saw, or a smooth round blade.

An *iron* with dry and steam settings is needed for pressing a variety of fabrics. Test the iron temperature first by pressing on a small scrap of fabric. If the iron is too hot it may melt the fabric, leave marks, or make the fabric shiny. Handle the iron carefully. The owner's manual will tell you how to use and care for your iron. Don't press over pins as they will scratch the bottom of the iron. Always turn the iron off when you are finished using it.

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