



Morgann McCoy Biz Column: Essential Tools for Sewing

Description



Essential tools with A Well Worn Story waist apron

In my ten years of sewing, the most common question I have been asked by fellow seamstresses is, "Which tools do you use every day?" So today, I'm tackling that question with some reflection on those ten years and a little peek into my workspace.

As a beginner, I remember feeling overwhelmed by the amount of product options while shopping for sewing tools. This is probably true when pursuing any sort of creative outlet. Whether a musician, a writer, an entrepreneur, a gardener, or anything in between, as a beginner you often wonder, "Which tools do I actually need to begin?" or "How much money do I really need to invest to advance my skills?"

Here are the tools I recommend for any seamstress, from beginner to professional. These are tools I picked up years ago and still use every day in the studio.

Shears

Every seamstress needs a trusty pair of shears to cut through all types of fabric. I have two pairs: one [Fiskars](#) and one [Gingher](#). Pro tip: dedicate your shears to fabric only, using a separate pair for paper, crafting, etc. I also have a scissor sharpener from Fiskars that pairs well with their dressmaking shears.

Rotary Cutter + Mat

Another great option for cutting, especially for heavyweight materials like canvas and leather. I always use a [rotary blade](#) for cutting into large leather hides. The [cutting mat](#) is a great resource for ensuring your edges are straight and square. Pro tip: keep a couple [extra blades](#) in stock. There's nothing worse than a dull blade.



Essential Tools Rotary Cutter

Wide Ruler

I personally love my clear [2 inch wide ruler](#) for cutting leather straps and trimming fabric. Quilters might prefer the 4 inch wide version for cutting squares.

Snips

Spoiler alert: at some point in your sewing journey, you will have to rip out a seam. Or possibly 20 during one project. It's normal and part of the learning process. These [snips](#) work well for trimming threads and double as a seam ripper.

Weights / Pins

I learned how to sew in college and my professors were anti-pins, mostly because students would forget to pull the pin, sew into it, and break a needle. So, I personally use [weights](#) to trace my patterns onto the fabric, then sew without any pins. Depending on your preference, you will need weights or pins or both.

Chalk

You will need [chalk](#) to trace your patterns onto fabric. I also use it for marking pocket placements, holes for rivets, etc. It washes off by spot cleaning with a little water, but I always recommend testing it on a small piece of fabric before marking your project pieces, just to be safe.

Although I have linked to a new version of each tool on Amazon, I highly suggest looking for these at garage/estate sales, flea markets, and antique/thrift stores. Many of our grandmothers were seamstress and took great care of their tools. Two generations ago, tools (and sewing machines) were made to last. Back when I was starting college, I went to an estate sale with \$50.00 and walked away with a bag full of tools and yards upon yards of high quality cotton fabrics. Bonus points for a really fun Saturday chatting with a woman who quilted for 40+ years. Buy secondhand if you can.

Of course, these are just my personal favorites. I always love to hear which tools are working well for fellow seamstresses.

Let's turn the comment section into a resource for everyone to use. Tell me about your favorite tools below!

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