How to Begin: Garment Sewing If You Have Never Done it Before

Description

Photo by Benigno Hoyuela

There are some joys we keep to ourselves, and some, once we break their secret code, we want everyone to know it too. To join us in the joy. In my twenties, it was salsa dancing and more than once I was the person at a dinner party counting steps and demonstrating the basics to prove it really is as easy as 1,2,3, tap. Now that joy is sewing and Iâ??m on an unapologetic campaign to convert as many people as I can. I genuinely believe that with practice itâ??s something anyone can get good enough at to make things theyâ??re proud of.

You canâ??t really go wrong if you sit down with some fabric and some plans and a commitment to practice until youâ??re happy with how itâ??s going. But, it can never hurt to hear some doâ??s and donâ??ts from someone who stumbled a fair few times before they really found their flow.

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Donâ??t start with a cushion cover

There are so many â??beginnerâ?? projects that people like to bandy about. Scrunchies. Pillow cases. Simple square things and I get why theyâ??re the ones people tell you to start with, theyâ??re very hard to get truly wrong. But if youâ??re trying to be a garment sewist, itâ??s just not going to spark that joy you need to keep going. The best cushion cover in the world will always stay at home, and youâ??re not going to strut your stuff in a scrunchie and have someone say, wow, where did you get that from?

Do start with something you can see yourself wearing

Find a simple garment patternâ??theyâ??ll be labelled â??easyâ?? or â??beginnerâ??â??and make a practice version, make as many practice versions as you need until youâ??re ready to make the real deal. Tops are a great place to start, some of them have very easy construction methods and then, when you wear them, youâ??ll get that shot of pure happiness that comes from walking out the door in something youâ??ve made. The Named Inari Tee Dress as a tank (omit the sleeves for ease and just turn the edges in for a very simple hemming method) was that for me. Itâ??s a great place to start and youâ??ll cringe one day at the wobbly hems or the unfinished insides, but hey, who cares, youâ??re going!

Photo by Benigno Hoyuela

Donâ??t wait for the good fabric

It seems counter intuitive to spend money on something when youâ??re still in the very early phases. I feel like Iâ??ve been conditioned to wait until Iâ??m â??good enoughâ?? for the good stuff. But itâ??s like cooking, if you donâ??t invest in the ingredients, youâ??re going to taste it in what you end up with. See my post about toiles and get yourself some cheap muslin to practice on, so that when you finally make the real thing, itâ??s worth the time and effort youâ??ve put into it.

Do pick easy to use fabrics

One thing you learn as you go is how different fabrics behave. A lot of my early fails were situations where Iâ??d given myself some truly impossible fabric to work with. Find something stable (by stable I mean, not too drapey, that you can put flat on a surface and itâ??ll stay exactly the shape it started) that doesnâ??t fray too much, or ideally, doesnâ??t fray at all. Linen in a decent mid-weight is an excellent starting fabric, one with a tighter weave as it wonâ??t fray too much as you sew and itâ??s easy to handle. And anything Iâ??ve made in linen has always been a winner for me. When youâ??re just starting out, viscose, satins, silky and stretchy things are not your friend.

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Donâ??t stop

Imagine youâ??re playing a computer game. Every level has a boss. Every boss will almost certainly kill you a couple of times, but it would be crazy to give up right? You know youâ??ll defeat the boss eventually. Sewing is the same. Every time you get better, youâ??ll hit a block, some technique, some type of fabric, some garment you just canâ??t get quite right. And then once day youâ??ll breeze past it without even thinking. Just, whatever you do, donâ??t stop trying.

Do remember to look after yourself

We imagine that hobbies are meant to bring us only peace and joy. I named my Instagram handle â??Peaceonthesideâ?? because I had some notion that it would be this wonderful, peaceful thing that I did to offset my stressful day job. But hobbies are hard. Youâ??re challenging yourself, youâ??re out of your comfort zone, youâ??re learning. Youâ??re probably sitting for hours in a room indoors in a position thatâ??s not amazing for your back. You may have just cut yourself/stuck yourself with a pin/made a mistake for the fifteenth time. Take a break, take a moment, make something easy when you finish something hardâ??we call them palette cleansers in the sewing worldâ??look after yourself.

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Donâ??t expect it to always be wonderful, but let me tell you, the first time I packed a summer suitcase and 90% of it I had made by my own hands, the feeling was indescribable. It made it all worth it. Thatâ??s the joy I want for everyone. Thatâ??s why Iâ??m writing this.

Itâ??s progress and creativity and self expression and so much easier to get into and get good at than I had ever imagined. So tell me, convinced? Are there doâ??s and donâ??ts Iâ??ve missed? Are you ready to give it a try?

CATEGORY

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2. SEWING OUTSIDE THE LINES

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