

Get  
Crafty



# Not Sew Basic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it seemed like everyone and their mother was making masks. Some of us had to turn to our mothers to learn what was once a basic adult skill: using a sewing machine.

Stores ran out of sewing machines as people flocked to make and sell fabric masks to fight off the deadly coronavirus. But now that you know the basics of using a machine, use your new skills to make even more things.

## PICKING FABRICS

While you were making masks, you probably learned to cut and sew basic quilting cotton, one of the most popular fabrics to make masks with. It's a great fabric to learn on, too. You don't have to worry about stretching and it's easy to work through your sewing machine. Also, it's pretty inexpensive and is available in a wide variety of patterns and colors.

## READING A PATTERN

When you open your pattern (or download it), the first thing you should look for are the instructions. This should also tell you recommended fabrics to use and material and tips for how to cut the fabric. For beginners — and even after



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hundreds of masks, you can still be a beginner — look for patterns marked easy. They'll have more instructions on how to walk you through the sewing process.

The instructions will also tell you how much fabric to buy. Remember, though, that's an estimate. So when you buy

your fabric, buy about 10 percent more than you need to make sure (and in case you make a mistake). It'll also tell you what. Notions you'll need, such as bias tape, interfacing, buttons and more. Get everything you'll need before you leave the store.

Next, check the size lines on

the pattern for your chosen size. Each designer uses different sizing, so don't use what normal clothing size you wear, use your measurements. Some handy measurements to take include the chest for tops and dresses, hips for pants and the natural waist for a skirt.

Re-measure yourself often to

make sure your custom clothing always fits.

Also pay attention to the symbols the pattern designer uses for different things such as notches, buttons, button holes and more. Make sure you understand the symbols, their meanings and how you should transfer them to your fabric.



# Knitting it all Together

Starting a new hobby is a lot of fun and it's easy to go overboard at the craft store — especially with crafts like knitting and crocheting.

Aisles of yarn, shiny new needles and tools, and all the possibilities of all the patterns beckon. But hold yourself (and your credit card) back. You can get started with just a few inexpensive tools and work your way up to big bags of fancy yarn.

## HARDWARE

You'll need needles first. Make sure to choose a basic set that's comfortable for you to hold. Choose aluminum or plastic needles and that your chosen set has the size you need for your first pattern. As you get more skilled and know you're going to stick with it, you can choose more expensive (and beautiful) needles in a wide range of materials.

You'll also need a quality pair of scissors that fit your hand well. Make sure to mark them and keep them with your knitting materials so that they aren't used on anything but fabric or yarn to keep them in the best shape. These can be as simple as a pair of school scissors.

Sewing needles are great for weaving in the ends of your project or sewing together pieces of a sweater. Your needles



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will need eyes big enough to hold your yarn. These usually are metal or plastic. Look for yarn needles or tapestry needles in the knitting supplies. And we're knitting, not

crocheting, but a crochet hook can be handy for weaving ends and fixing snags. Look for a size G or H; they're the most versatile for knitting projects.

## SOFTWARE

This is the really, really fun part. And dangerous — for your bank account. For your first project, don't use bargain-basement yarn that's

cheap and scratchy, but also don't pick out the most expensive yarn you can find. Instead consider what weight of yarn your pattern calls for, how much you need.



# Hobbies vs. Hustle

Once you start a new hobby and get pretty good at it, chances are you'll start to hear a lot about selling your wares.

Beware, however, as there are a set of rules and regulations you'll need to go by once you start monetizing your new hobby, and especially if you turn a profit.

## DEALING WITH THE IRS

The IRS, the tax experts at Intuit say, considers something a hobby if you do it for the love of doing it and don't expect to turn a profit. It becomes a business if some or all of your income comes from the hobby or your hobby experiences profits and losses. In 2018, the IRS stopped allowing deductions of hobby expenses from hobby income.

So you have to claim all the profits from your quilt making, but can't deduct any of the expenses. Prior to 2018, you could take off expenses, just not losses. You couldn't deduct more than you sold. This is a change if you've tried this before. If you have any questions, it's best to consult a tax professional before trying to strike out on your own.

## FOR THE LOVE

If you do decide to turn your hobby into a business (and claim those losses), you should also be aware of the mental toll it may take. Running your own



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business, even if it's a business centered around something you love doing, takes a lot of work. There are tax and legal ramifications to consider, as well as demands on your time.

You may find that, after a while, you no longer love your craft and it's become a burden.

It really is OK, despite the pressure of our entrepreneurial society, to do something for

free and just because you love it. The hobby alone is enough, and the fact that you enjoy it is enough. If you don't want to give in to turning your hobby into a hustle, that's fine, too.

“Personal pleasure is what makes a hobby a hobby,” writes Ann Friedman in *The Cut*. “Once you’ve decided to monetize a leisure activity, it can be hard to go back.”



# Get Started with Hand Lettering

Time was when penmanship was a highly valued skill. It's becoming so once again, with the added bonus of being relaxing and fun.

With great-looking greeting cards. There are many types of calligraphy out there, but the most popular right now is a mix of script and print with a rustic flair, executed with pen or brush. Here's how you can get started in the practice of calligraphy or hand lettering.

## THE HARDWARE

You'll need a good set of pens. Some artists use brush tips, some use fine points. It's all up to what's most comfortable for you and easier to use. You'll also need a medium to work on, be it paper or raw wood. As you get more experienced, you may find yourself writing on a variety of surfaces for many applications, such as signage or decor. When you're first starting out, choose pens for their ease of use and cleaning up. You can branch out to other pens and mediums over time.

When you're picking paper, go for the inexpensive or moderately priced versions at first. You're going to make mistakes and you don't want those to be expensive ones. Notice how different pens show up on different papers; each type of paper takes the ink a little dif-



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ferently. If you're working with wood or metal, that'll be different from paper, too. Just practice your strokes, if you can, on the same type of material before starting on the final project so you'll know how the ink or paint will interact with it.

## THE SOFTWARE

Here's where it gets a little

tricky. There are myriad lessons out there, both in books and online, that will show you how to get started hand-lettering. The most valuable experience, though, may be to take an in-person class at a local art store. There, you can get one-on-one attention for how to use your pens and tips for working that are suited to

you and you alone. Back that up with books, videos and other practice tools to keep you sharp.

## STAYING IN PRACTICE

There are lots of practical applications for your new skill, beyond just signage and the odd holiday card. You may find it improves your

regular penmanship, making your work life easier. Hand-lettered notes and other creations also make heart-warming gifts. Speaking of gifts, your gift tags will be on point after just a few lessons. It can also be handy if you take up a hobby such as journaling, either for yourself or in a Bible.



# Learning to Paint

Painting looks like an intimidating hobby, but it's easy to get started.

All you have to do is put brush to paint to canvas (or even paper). Let's get started.

## THE HARDWARE

Oh, the aisles and aisles of painting supplies. Here's step one: Find a reputable local art supplies or hobby store and start there. The experts there can walk you through some of the decisions you're about to make in the next steps.

Next, find out what kind of painting you want to do. Here are some examples.

- **Acrylic.** Maybe one of the easiest to work with, acrylic paints generally come ready to use, are washable in water and dry fairly quickly. They're also inexpensive.

- **Watercolor.** These ethereal paints are also water soluble by nature, but it's a different painting technique.

- **Oil.** Oil paints are a mix of pigment powders and oils, usually linseed oil. These paints take longer to dry than other mediums, but they provide rich color and texture in your work.

Once you've decided what paints you want to use, you get to choose brushes. To get started, choose a set that has a variety of brushes. The experts at the art store can help you decide what kinds of bristles to choose (there are many) and give you tips on how to main-



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tain them.

You may also choose to get other accessories, such as easels, palettes, palette knives and more. Also get a few canvases to work on; not the expensive ones, but the low- to

mid-priced variety for practicing on.

## THE SOFTWARE

You can find painting lessons in a variety of mediums at a local art store. If you're looking

to dabble with daubs, get together a group of friends and head to a place that teaches you to paint a certain scene. Visiting a few of those will help you get the hang of painting and the supplies you prefer

before taking the leap yourself.

There are also books, videos and other materials to help you learn. Explore different techniques and remember there's no one right way to create art. Do what works best for you.



# Embroidery and Cross Stitch

Embroidery and cross stitch usually don't actually hold a garment together; they're done more for decoration.

The stitches look different and have different applications. Keep reading to learn more.

## CROSS STITCH

If your grandmother had a framed "home sweet home" made of little x's on fabric, that was cross stitch. The thread is stitched in uniform x patterns on the fabric to create a letter or scene, depending on the pattern you're using. Most cross stitch patterns are counted, meaning you make so many x's, either in full, half or quarter stitches, per line of fabric. There are keys on the pattern to show you how to do each one.

The fabric, usually one with a larger, visible weave to help you keep your stitches evenly spaced and sized, is held tight in a hoop while you work. Some people prefer to work in hand, but it's more difficult to keep the fabric taut. To get started, visit your local craft store and look for cross stitch kits. These come with everything you need, including thread (called floss), fabric, needles and a hoop. They're a great way to learn how to cross stitch.

## EMBROIDERY

This is a more free-form kind



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of needle work that allows you to create off the x's and grids of cross stitch. For embroidery, you can learn different types of stitches that make different shapes and textures. Start out

with straight stitch and experiment with needle sizes, strands of floss and colors to control the appearance of your work. Once you've mastered that, move on to other stitches (the

internet and books are great resources here).

Cross stitch is a great way to get started with needle work, and you can move on to embroidery once you've got

the basics of working with fabric and floss. Once you've got the hang of it, you can give your own touch to anything fabric, including shirts, curtains, pillowcases and more.



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# Working with Vinyl

Making vinyl cutouts with a home machine such as a Cricut or a Silhouette has been popular for a few years now.

They're handy tools for anyone who likes to personalize their things, make tees and gifts, personalized calendars and more.

## THE VINYL

The vinyl to use in these machines comes in sheets or rolls. The thickness of the vinyl depends on the

application; outdoor and long wear vinyls tend to be thicker, as do the ones with glitter and other additives in them. As vinyl crafting becomes more popular, shops that cater specifically to the trade sprang up, but the vinyls are also widely available on the internet.

## THE MACHINES

There are pros and cons to each kind of vinyl machine depending on who you ask and what you use it for. Some people are staunchly brand loyal, for others it comes down to the accompanying accessories and software. For yourself, determine where and how you want to cut.

Some people want to cut a variety of materials, some people are going to just cut vinyl, and some want portability and ease of use. Research each model and, when you go to the store, actually get your hands on one and see how it works. Some stores even offer crafting classes where you can get actual experience with a machine and see how easy it is to use.

These are not inexpensive tools, and many stores won't allow you to use coupons on them. So make sure you're confident in your decision before you purchase.

## HEAT

Many vinyls require heat to set

them to their new material, and it may be more heat than your iron at home can put out. This means you'll need a heat press to make your finished products. Consider the types of things you want to make when you're shopping for a press. If you want to only make shirts, look for one with a wide, flat bed that will accommodate all of the shirts you want to make.

Some cutting machine manufacturers make a small, portable press that works well with their vinyl and machine, but it may not work well on other vinyls. There are also presses with accessories to fit cups, hats and other kinds of goods. It all depends on what you want to make.