

Arts

Loved clothes last

RecyCOOL Lessons

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Loved clothes last

Description of the lesson

You start the lesson by considering the condition of the garments in your own wardrobe. Then you will explore mending, the different mending techniques and the philosophy around it. You will try to mend one of your garments – or at least learn how it could be done. You will compare your notes from the beginning and the end of the lesson to see if you discovered new information.

Objective

Objective of this lesson is to discover the main ways of mending clothes. We will begin to learn one of them by fixing one of your own damaged garments in an exercise. You will learn first-hand the benefits of mending your own clothes.

After this lesson you will be able to

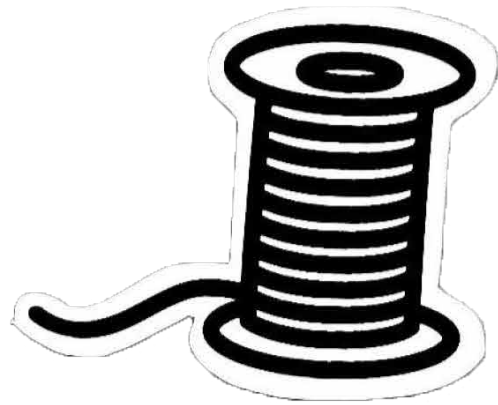
- name the main ways for mending clothes
- name the benefits of this process
- begin to learn a clothes-mending technique or skill

Tools and materials

pen, paper, internet (if you want to do online research), tools to mend clothes (but this can be done after the lesson)

MENDING:

Mending is a way of repairing clothes that have holes, stains, or other signs of wear to make them more useful and beautiful. It's about using what you have, embracing imperfections, fixing what's broken, and rejecting the idea that newer is better.



Our clothing is like any of the other things around us – it is a subject of use and damage. It is worn and sometimes torn, lightly or heavily, until the moment we cannot wear it anymore.

Let's look at your own wardrobe – do you have some damaged or very worn clothes? What kind of damage? And the next question – do you have some clothes that have been fixed or mended before?

Consider the reasons we can choose to mend or repair our clothing, and what the benefits of this might be. Are there any disadvantages of mending your own clothes?

Write both benefits and disadvantages down on paper.

The decision to dispose of our clothing because it's damaged, can be delayed by a simple act – by mending it.

Mending is a way of fixing, repairing our clothes which have holes, stains or are otherwise damaged with the aim to prolong their life.

Additional to this – we can mend our clothing even when it's not damaged, just as a way of simply changing its aesthetics to a design we prefer. This gives the item a 'fresh' or new appearance to how it looked before. This would be called "customisation".

Mending itself has many positives

- **Mending has a calming effect on us** – focusing on hand work brings peace and teaches us patience.
- **By mending we are giving a statement** – we are showing the world how we love and care for our clothes. Even if it's a method of invisible mending.
- **Mending keeps us creatively occupied** – with every mending challenge we need to figure out the solution (we need to figure out the technique, materials, ways of fixing, etc).
- **Mending has a positive impact on the world** by saving clothes and preventing them from a landfill – the more we mend, the less we dispose.
- **Mending is the way of saving money** – the more we mend, the less we need to shop.
- **Mending is also a great way of making a surprise** repair as a gift for your loved ones – nothing beats a gift showing we care.

Mending is a revolutionary act

Making mending visible is a declaration of intent. It's like taking repairing your clothes to the same level as tattooing your skin. The current system we all know is telling us that if an item is broken, we should throw it away – only this time you say: No, I want to keep it; in fact I want to keep it and mend it, and use it again and again.

If we are what we wear, then we should show what we mean; and we mean to mend our trousers as we mend our environment; we will repair our broken clothes and the broken system alike.

– Orsola de Castro

There are many ways of mending our clothes. It is not an innovation – mending clothes has been here since people started to wear clothes. It can be different in different parts of the world, and mending techniques vary according to local traditions and culture.

These are basic mending techniques you can use to fix your clothing (but believe me, there are so many more in this world!):

Fixing a hem





Patching

Photo credit: [Domestika](#)



Sewing a button on

Photo credit: [The guardian](#)



Patchwork quilting

Photo credit: [Quilting daily](#)



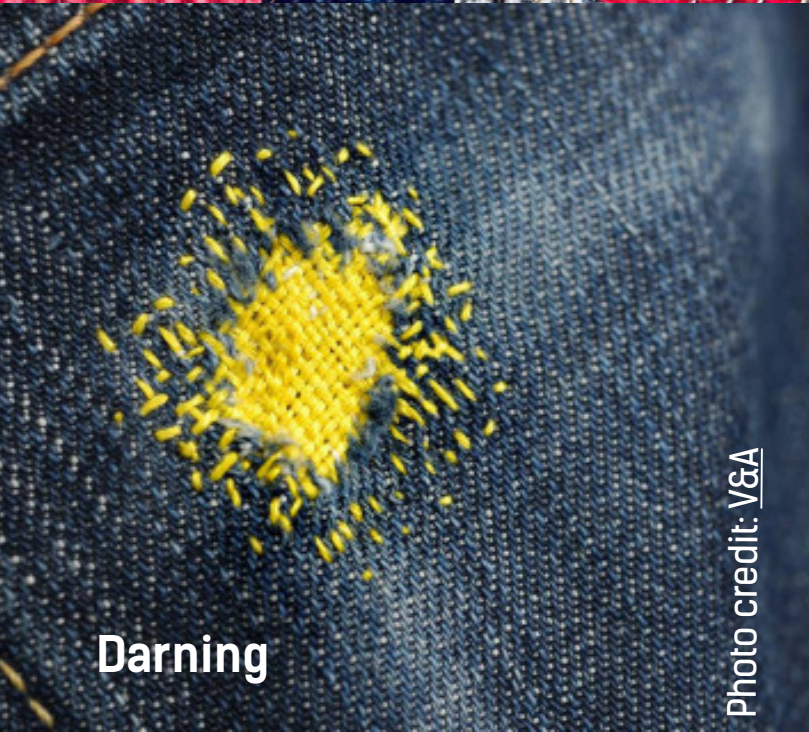
Boro technique

Photo credit: [Indigo Niche](#)



Shortening jeans

Photo credit: [We all sew](#)



Darning

Photo credit: [V&A](#)



Embellishing

Photo credit: [Pinterest](#)

Mending somehow has become more popular and used as a technique to fix our clothing in harder times – such as during wars or, more recently – during the pandemic.

Mending was trending long before the Covid-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place orders changed the way we go about our days. A resurgence of so-called “domestic” handicrafts, reclaimed by feminists in the late 90s and elevated by visual artists from the early 2000s onward, happened concurrently with the sea-change in consumerism known as fast fashion – a global buying frenzy with disastrous human and environmental repercussions.

– Ruth Terry

Mending used to be mostly known as an invisible matter, it used to cover the damages in a subtle and inconspicuous way. But today there are popular ways of mending – visible ones too.

Invisible mending means you mend your clothes the way that the mending cannot be spotted. Visible mending turns your clothes into a statement, showcasing that you mend your clothes, you care for them, you value their worth. **Instead of pointing at flaws in the garment, visible mending tells the story of how unique your garment is and that you care.**

Now we try to explore possibilities of mending our own clothing. Your task is to pick one item from your wardrobe, with a hole or stain, and figure out the best method of fixing it. It can be in an invisible or a visible way – up to your preferences! **If you don't have anything damaged, maybe you would like to spice up one of your garments with some visible mending techniques that we discussed earlier on in this lesson.**

Examples:

Jeans with wrong length – you can shorten them.

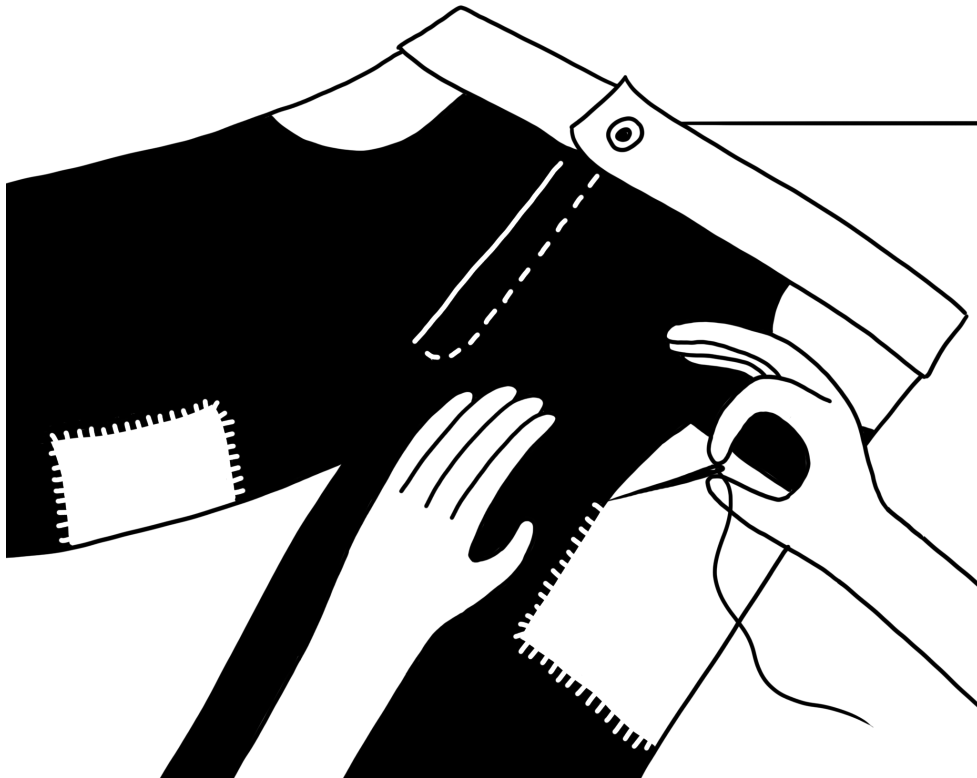
Missing button on shirt or coat? Sew it back on... Or sew on a completely different button to make it stand out.

Hole on your t-shirt or jumper? How about trying some darning?

Loose strap on your top? You can stitch it in 5 minutes.

Let your mind run free...You are a creator, the sky's the limit!

Feel free to continue this task even after this lesson – you can also do more research on social media to explore mending in different parts of the world.



Reflection

This lesson was to open a door to further skill development of mending clothes and it is entirely up to you to decide if you want to explore it more and apply it to your wardrobe.

For now – can you name benefits that you could have from mending and fixing your own clothes? Write them down and compare with the list you wrote down at the beginning.

And the final question – was the fixing of your own garment you picked during this lesson worth doing, did it bring any value to your life? Is your garment wearable now?

If you would like to know more about mending, maybe you can read [this article](#) which gives you basic tutorials on mending.

If you like some more reading, you can explore the topic of mending our clothes, with a book by Orsola de Castro – “[Loved Clothes Last](#)” ...or, a fanzine – [LOVED CLOTHES LAST](#) by Fashion Revolution.

[FASHION CRAFT REVOLUTION](#) by Fashion Revolution



If you fancy some mending tutorials, why not check these?

Sewing the button on (you can watch a video on [how to sew buttons](#) by Wilson Oryema)

Mending the hole on a jumper (you can watch [a video](#) on how to do so by Orsola de Castro)

Darning the hole (you can watch [video](#) on how to do it by Maddie Williams & Lauren McCrostie)

Add an embellishment, like a pom pom with [Aunt Bet](#)

To see that people were really fixing clothes in past, watch [this video](#).

And while exploring the world of mending, maybe you will find a repair cafe in the place where you live – these places are becoming more popular and are popping up almost everywhere.

You can check through social media if there is a local community which likes mending clothes – just reach out and it is certain you will explore much more about your local mending culture!

There are increasingly more apps which indicate where clothing repairs are available near you. So, it's important to do some research on what is accessible in your community.

Resources

Ruth Terry. Mending: An Ancient Craft for Modern Times. 2020.

Available at: <https://craftsmanship.net/field-notes/mending-an-ancient-craft-for-modern-times/>

More on mending:

Eransford. Make Do And Mend. 2009. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4RpJcVs1VI>

Further reading:

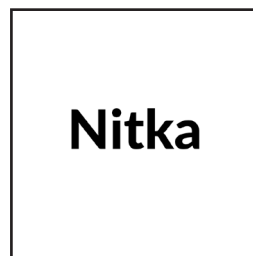
Millie Scott. Beginners Guide to Mending Your Jeans. 2021. Available at: <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/a-beginners-guide-to-mending-your-jeans/>



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