



Introduction to Sewing

An Introduction to Our Course

by *Cindy Owen*

I grew up in an environment of sewing. My grandmother sewed, and my mother sewed all of my sister's and my clothes for all our growing-up years.

I always assumed that I would sew too, but my formal education didn't begin until I took home economics at school when I was in the eighth grade. Each girl made a garment that took three months to complete, because the garment was also our practice. It had to be perfect, so we each sewed and ripped out repeatedly until we all decided that we hated sewing.

But I soon learned that sewing my own clothes was necessary because I'm tall. Once I had my own home, I found that sewing things myself made decorating affordable, so I kept on sewing. It came almost as a surprise to me that I discovered that I loved to sew when I made my first quilt.

When my daughter, Crissa, was little, she wanted to sit in my lap while I sewed and I usually ended up stopping my sewing to help her sew something, too. I must have re-threaded her needle hundreds of times, but sewing became something fun that we did together. By the time she was 10, she had already sewn miles by hand and quilted a baby quilt for her little brother.



When I began teaching her to sew on the machine we made a deal – I would rip out her mistakes and she would rip out mine. It wasn't long before she could "out sew" me and then she began to sew *for* me.

I wanted to share with others what we had learned. Along with a few other seamstresses, I began to write a hand sewing curriculum on learning how to sew and at the same time, stay inspired while you increased skills.

I'd often ask Crissa to work out a pattern or an idea for one of the projects. She started working out her own ideas and eventually drafted garment patterns and learned to custom sew. Now she's sewing for her own home and children and teaching them to sew as well. Things really have a way of coming around full circle.

So in this course, I will be teaching you the foundational skills of sewing and the basics of using a sewing machine. From there, I'll hand it over to my daughter, Crissa, and she will guide you step-by-step through 12 projects using these skills.

So lets get started!

* See *Sewing Suppliers List* at end of document.

The Curriculum

We developed this curriculum over the past twenty-something years as different ladies in our community began to impart sewing skills to our children. At first we just thought of things that they could sew for our community's annual Fair, but we soon realized that we needed to order the projects in such a way that the projects would build their skills as well as be fun for them.

I for one knew I that did *not* want to teach how I learned to sew – on a first, big project that took months to complete and had hard techniques that had to be ripped out repeatedly until I got them perfect. I wanted to keep the projects small and fun – something the girls would enjoy making, finish quickly and do something with to inspire them to sew more – because I knew practice was the only way to master skills.

Our annual Fair helped give us a focus and the girls learned and excelled. Some of them are now sewing extensively for themselves as well as others, and are currently teaching sewing classes to others and continuing to develop patterns and our curriculum.

Understanding This Sewing Course

In this course we will first discuss the most basic, important skills and habits to develop in learning to sew on a machine. We'll talk about how to best learn to sew and how *not* to learn to sew. We'll go over the basic parts of the sewing machine and how to use it. Then we'll practice using sewing machine techniques and functions to get comfortable with the machine before we go on to sew actual projects.

Gaining any skill requires a commitment of time. If you want to learn a musical instrument, you don't begin by playing a complicated piece – you begin to practice regularly on simpler



pieces that increase in difficulty. Sewing is also a skill that must be developed over time. Although there are some shortcuts that can be taken when sewing on some specific projects, there is no shortcut for gaining the skill of “sewing.”

There are many facets involved in this skill, and it is impossible to master all of them at the same time on just one project. This difficulty is what many people encounter when they attempt to sew a dress or shirt as their beginning project. They usually end up not finishing it, or never wearing it because it didn't turn out well. Some even proclaim, “Sewing just isn't for me; I'm not good at it.” This isn't a fair assessment, for you wouldn't expect to play “Clair de Lune” on the piano after your first lesson, and then reject music when you found that you couldn't do it well the first time. All skills, including sewing, are gained by repetition. The shorter the interval between practice sessions, the more quickly the skill is acquired and the better it's retained.

This curriculum provides an abundance of projects ordered in a way to increase skills step by step, but the most important factor in acquiring the skill of sewing is the time you invest in gaining it by practice, practice, practice!

Review this video: [Introduction To Sewing](#)

Watch the next video: [Introducing the Projects](#)

Questions about Sewing?

Submit any questions for Cindy or Crissa in the Q&A section on the course homepage or post it to our blog at www.sustainlife.org/blog/category/sewing/

Sewing Suppliers

Simply Fabrics

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Additional Videos

Beginning Sewing

- Introducing the Projects
- Notions & Fabrics
- The Sewing Machine
- Cutting Methods
- Foundational Practice Sampler

Project Videos

- 1 Lined Tissue Holder
- 2 Shoe Bag
- 3 Gift Bag
- 4 Double Drawstring Bag
- 5 Bag Caddie
- 6 Bread Cloth
- 7 Basic Pillowcase
- 8 Lined Drawstring Bag
- 9 Pillowcase with Contrasting Band
- 10 Flange Pillow
- 11 Tote Bag
- 12 Lined Apron