

Visible Mending Workshop Handout by Jannette Porter

Prepared for *Upcycling Mending Session*

at DOUBLE TAKE STORE (310 Gerrard St. E. Toronto)

Saturday, November 27, 2021

Congratulations for being part of the solution – having the commitment to reuse, reduce items in landfills, and giving yourself the chance to be creative!

History:

- Until recently, mending clothes was the norm. In fact, most people wore home-made clothes. It's only in the past few decades that average North Americans had more than a couple of outfits to wear each season. Early settlers often had one set of clothes to wear while the others were being washed plus one to wear to church on Sundays. For them, mending was essential. They had a saying "A stitch in time saves nine". Once clothes were past being mended, they would be turned into quilts, rag rugs, or rags.
- You may remember or have seen photos of the jeans hippies wore in the 1960s and 70s:



<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/228346643593438913/?d=t&mt=login>

- Rather than do a mending job that was unobtrusive, that blended in with the rest of the garment, they used the patches as a chance to be expressive, to show joy and creativity. Aka "embroidered couture"
- Sashiko is a Japanese method of visible mending from the 1600s. This will be covered later in this handout.
- "On average each and every Canadian will purchase 70 new articles of clothing every year. While the diversity and size of wardrobes always increase, closet and dresser space remain the same.

- As a result, material being replaced is increasingly finding its way to disposal: North Americans send more than 12 million tonnes of material to disposal every year, and 95 per cent can be reused or recycled. What's more is that clothing utilization – the average number of times a garment is worn before it ceases to be used – has decreased by 36 per cent compared to 15 years ago.” <https://rco.on.ca/textilewaste/> (Recycling Council of Ontario)

Why do we mend? Patching can mend a tear, a hole, or cover a stain. If a garment is too tattered to mend, maybe it can be used to create another item (e.g. a quilt or a purse) and if it is cotton, it can be torn up for rags. You'll find that saving the buttons can be helpful for further mending projects.

You will be shown a blouse that has torn. What would happen if we just sewed this together? The answer is that it likely will split on either side of the original split, as there is less fabric to go around.

What would you suggest instead?

Options for mending:

1. Darning, which is like weaving stitches to fill in the hole
2. Iron-on patches
3. Sew-on fabric patches that you purchase (many designs, from unicorns to your favourite team's logo)

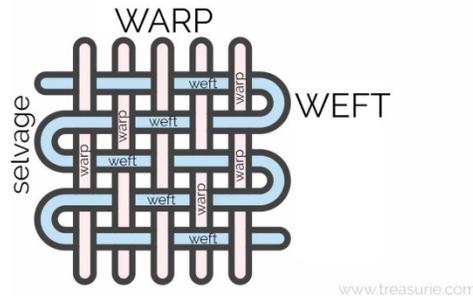


4. Create your own patch from scrap fabric – unlimited number of shapes, the patch can be a complementary or contrasting colour to the garment, as can the thread you use
5. Using decorative stitches on a patch, including Cross-stitch, Crewel Embroidery stitches, and Sashiko mending as shown in the book *Mending Matters* where parallel lines of stitching are used with patches
6. Patch can be on top of the garment and show the whole patch, or be on the underside, so you can only see part of the patch
7. An on-the-top patch can be a pocket
8. Using trim as a patch or to cover a patch. Trim is more durable than ribbon. Ribbon is pretty, but doesn't wash well – only use if garment is going to be worn only

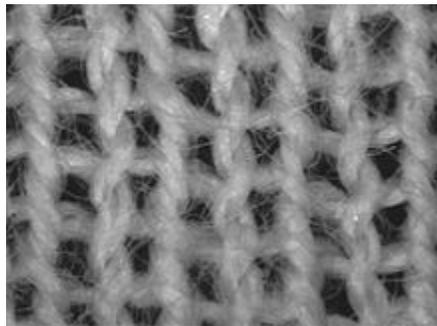
occasionally and/or be hand washed, because it rumples, pills and frays if washed often in the machine.

Types of fabric construction: (woven vs. knitted/crocheted)

Woven material is easy to patch or mend using all of the above methods.



Jersey (knitted) is more specific in mending:



Single jersey front side under microscope
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jersey_\(fabric\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jersey_(fabric))

You have to “catch” all of the loops with your mending thread. Theory of knitting: it’s one long piece of yarn, looped through loops. Consequently, it’s best to start by going all around the perimeter of the hole, then use one of the above mending methods.

Different types of mending fibres:

- a. Polyester thread
 - b. Cotton/polyester thread
 - c. Mercerised cotton thread
 - d. Cotton embroidery “floss”
 - e. Darning wool (usually a wool & polyester blend but can be just wool)
 - f. Tapestry wool
 - g. Silk thread
 - h. Specialty threads, e.g. silver or gold, hi-vis., glow-in-the-dark
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- a. Polyester thread: use on woven or jersey on most synthetics (polyester, nylon, acrylic, etc.), can be used on cotton. Double or single strand, depending on weight of garment fabric or wear and tear.

- b. Cotton/polyester thread: use on woven cottons, linen, polyester. Double or single strand, depending on weight of garment fabric or wear and tear.
- c. Mercerised cotton thread: use on woven cottons, linen. Double or single strand, depending on weight of garment fabric or wear and tear.
- d. Cotton embroidery “floss”: use on woven cottons & linen, and on woven polyester if the floss has been preshrunk or if only using cold water wash. Usually use 2 strands at a time. Use an embroidery hoop when embroidering, to keep it flat and tissue paper over an already embroidered section. Stitches that are pulled too tight will buckle the fabric.
- e. Darning wool: (always use cold water wash)
 - use a 100% wool or wool & polyester darning blend on a 100% wool garment
 - or a wool & polyester blend darning wool on a wool and polyester garment,
 - or a wool & polyester blend darning wool on a thick polyester sock
 Double or single strand, depending on weight of garment fabric or wear and tear.
- f. Tapestry wool: use on woven cotton, linen, 100% wool, or wool & polyester garment (always cold water hand wash). Single strand.
- g. Silk thread: use on silk garments, sometimes on cotton garments. Single or double strand, depending on the garment weight. Cold water hand-wash.
- h. Specialty threads, e.g. silver or gold, hi-vis., glow-in-the-dark. Use sparingly for effect. Single or double strand, depending on the garment weight. Cold water hand-wash.

Suitability:

- Using similar “weight” fabric patch with garment to be mended (can sometimes mix fabrics, e.g. leather elbow patches on wool sweater or very heavy cotton sweater)
- Using similar “weight” fibre with garment to be mended (double thread with heavier fabric, or if the garment will have more wear and tear)
- Using similar fibre (e.g. not cotton thread on polyester or wool, not wool on cotton or polyester, not cotton embroidery floss on wool)

Now we’re all going to thread a needle. For some of you, this will be a review, for others it may be new, regardless, I hope everyone learns some tips.

Step 1 Decide how much thread you will need (will it be single or double strand – go over when to use which) and pull it away from the spool

Step 2 Pull it taut with one hand holding the spool and thread with finger and thumb of same hand.

Step 3 With sharp scissors in the other hand, cut the thread.

Step 4 If it is not a clean cut, moisten finger and thumb and run down the thread to the end. Thread the needle by poking the thread through the eye of the needle.

Step 5 Hold up the threaded needle for the thread to naturally unwind (especially if double strand).

Step 6 Run moistened finger and thumb along end to be knotted, twist around finger, slide off finger, run finger and thumb up to end of the thread to create knot. Cut off any excess “tail”. Alternatively, if a knot cannot be hidden in the mend, do not knot the thread, just

make several anchoring stitches, being sure to go over the “tail” to ensure the work doesn’t unravel.

Here’s how to thread a tapestry or darning needle (double the yarn over the needle, pull it off, folded, put the folded yarn through the needle):



<http://www.knittersreview.com/tools-of-the-trade-darning-needles/>

Using buttons in your design:

West Coast Indigenous:



A contemporary button blanket made by Joshua Sherurcij, 2008

A **button blanket** is wool blanket embellished with [mother-of-pearl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother-of-pearl_button) buttons, created by [Northwest Coastal tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Coastal Tribes), that is worn for ceremonial purposes. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Button_blanket

English Cockney:



The Royal Family: The Pearly family of Hoxton before the ceremony, billed as the biggest crowning in 137 years <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2140698/Still-doing-Lambeth-Walk-Pearly-Kings-Queens-Princes-Princesses-crowned-annual-ceremony.html>

Now let's sew on a button. You have 2 types of button – 1 is flat, the other is a shank button. We're going to start with the flat button.

Step 1 Double thread, knotted.

Step 2 Determine location by using a safety pin. Holding both pieces of fabric on a flat surface, put the safety pin through the button hole into the fabric below and fasten it. Now hold up the garment to be sure that's where the button goes.

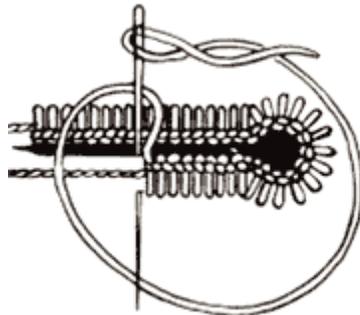
Step 3 Orientation of stitches: parallel to or perpendicular to the buttonhole

Step 4 An anchor stitch

Step 5 Make several stitches. When the button has 4 holes, you can choose to do parallel stitches or make an x. Note that the stitches need to be loose but not floppy, so there's room for the fabric with the buttonhole to fit under the button.

Step 6 With a 4-hole, now make about 3 anchor stitches to finish off. With a shank button, this is when you wrap the thread around the shank several times, especially if it will be on a coat or other heavy garment. Often, a flat button is sewn on the other side of the garment from the shank button for added stability. End off by doing the anchor stitches.

Mending a buttonhole: Using the buttonhole stitch (aka. blanket stitch).



<https://www.nordicneedle.net/guides/stitchology/buttonhole-vs-blanket-stitch/#.YZ8B5tDMKUk>

3 ways to mend frayed edges:

1. Bias tape or trim
2. Zig zag (sewing machine) or blanket stitch (by hand)
3. Turn inside itself

Ideas for mending crotch of pants/trousers:

- Patches (see 1960s jeans)
- Inside, less noticeable patch
- Personally created patch, repeating the design down the leg in an arc – like it was designed to be there

Book: Mending Matters: Stitch, Patch, and Repair Your Favorite Denim & More

As the title suggests, it matters that we keep clothes out of the waste stream & landfills as long as possible.

- One of the writer's influences was the 2013 collapse of a garment factory in Bangladesh that killed or injured thousands. So the writer recommends "slow" fashion, not the current rage for "fast" fashion -- inexpensive clothes made of poor/flimsy quality fabric that are worn for a short time then discarded.

The theory is that if we buy fewer clothes of better quality, we will pay more for them, but the garments will last longer and hopefully the workers will receive a better wage.

The author points out that we often look at other ways to help the environment, like eating local, organic food, or biodegradable cleaning products for our homes, maybe even taking transit or cycling but many people don't consider the environmental impact of their clothing choices. She questions whether we're buying what we need or what we want. She recommends natural fibres (not synthetics) and opting for second hand – DOUBLE TAKE! We can make the best of the clothes we have by mending – go past seeing mending as a chore but as an opportunity to be mindful – she calls it "mendfulness" – and as a chance to transform a garment into something artful, allowing ourselves to be expressive and providing personal satisfaction in the finished product. Her focus is on Sashiko – a type of mending that began in Japan's Edo period (1603 – 1867) as a functional and decorative method of reinforcing the fabric in garments.



Detail of a mid-19th century kimono decorated using sashiko, with white cotton threads on an indigo-dyed plain weave background (Metropolitan Museum of Art) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sashiko>

This book focuses on patches stitched with running stitches.

Making a patch: Fold under ¼ inch and pin. Can do basting stitches. Pin onto fabric to be patched. Since running stitches are 1 long, continuous thread, if it catches on something, it will all pull. A way to prevent this is to do a back-stitch every once in a while. You could alternatively use Blanket Stitch, Cross Stitch, Whip Stitch, or Slip Stitch to attach patch.

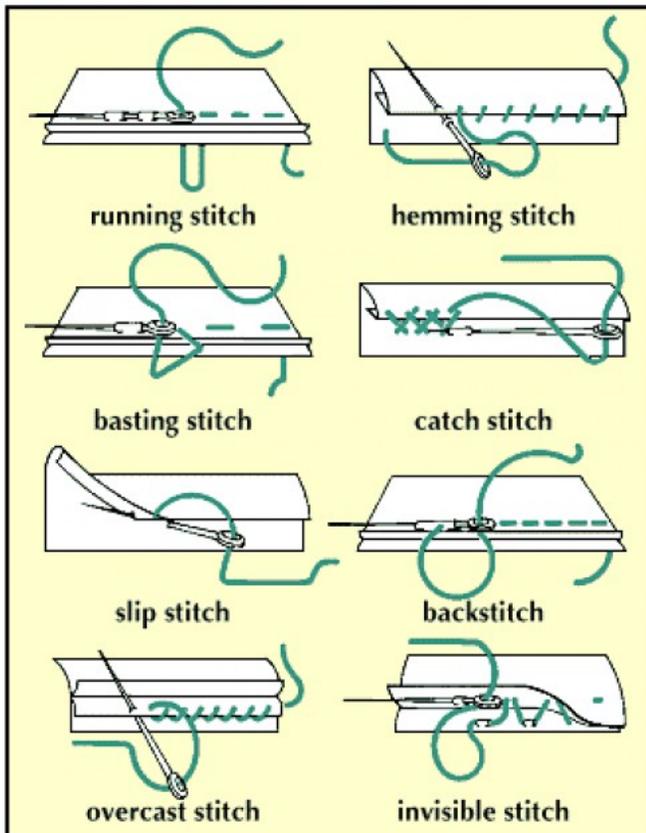
Pictures of stitches that work well with patches:



<https://hellosewing.com/basic-hand-sewing-stitches/>

And how to do them:

SOME BASIC SEWING STITCHES



the picture above from Britannica Online Encyclopedia <https://how-do-it.com/hand-sewing-stitches/>

Running Stitch (just up and down. Shorter stitches than Basting Stitch, but same idea)

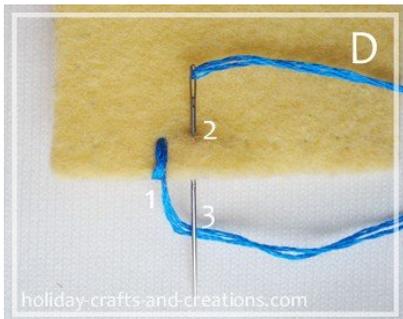
Back Stitch (stitches overlap at the back of fabric but are side by side on top of fabric)

Slip Stitch is also known as Invisible or Ladder Stitch (stitches don't show because they slide into the edge of folded pieces of fabric. Great for applique patches)

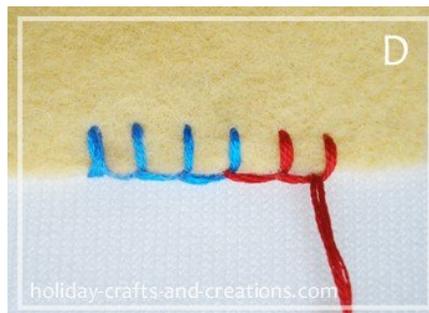
Catch Stitch is also known as Herringbone Stitch (is very similar to Cross Stitch but not as decorative. Catch Stitch just "catches" 2 or 3 threads with each stitch)

Whip Stitch is also known as Hemming Stitch (stitches go over the edge of one piece of fabric to attach to another piece of fabric. Same idea as Overcast Stitch)

Blanket Stitch also known as Buttonhole Stitch (to finish off an edge so it doesn't fray. Each stitch is perpendicular to the fabric as well as going along the edge – parallel to the edge. Start by taking a regular stitch with needle coming up from bottom. Then hold the thread behind the needle with next stitch. After doing your row of stitches, finish off by bringing needle up from bottom and as always doing 3 anchor stitches.)



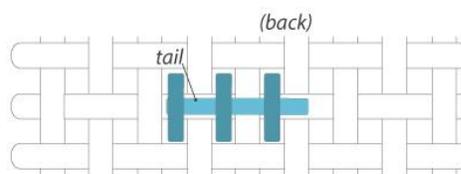
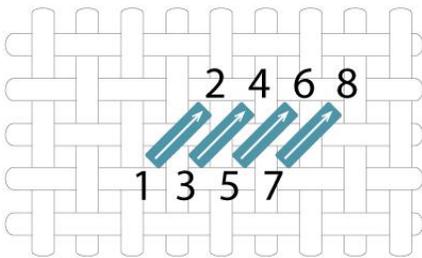
First blanket stitch



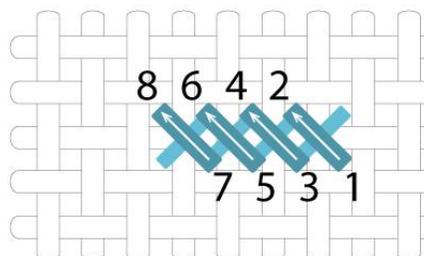
What several stitches look like

Cross Stitch:

1. Leaving a 1 inch "tail" on the underside, make a series of half cross stitches (////) that cover the tail on the underside.



2. Next return across the row making a series of half cross stitches in the other direction (\\).



APPENDIX: More for your reading pleasure

Books:

Mending Matters: Stitch, Patch, and Repair Your Favorite Denim & More by Katrina Rodabaugh, published by Abrams, New York, 2018.

Crewel Embroidery by Erica Wilson, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1962.

Websites:

<https://repaircafetoronto.ca/>

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/waste-wizard/>

<https://www.closettcandy.ca/post/how-to-recycle-clothes-that-can-t-be-repaired-donated-or-resold>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obO1PKfXGpQ>