

MAKING SEWING EASIER

SEWING TOOLS

Buy the best quality equipment that you can. This may mean that you have to use the Internet because local sewing and haberdashery outlets sometimes have very limited ranges. Quilting and hobby shops often have good quality tools.

- Use the finest, best quality **pins with large heads** — these are much easier to hold. Quilting pins with large flower heads are worth a try. Try pinning at right angles to the edge of the material and sewing over the pins.
- If you have difficulty raising and lowering the presser foot, you can buy a sewing machine that has a **knee-operated presser foot** which also raises the needle to top height. Bernina is one brand which make these.
- Use a **magnetic stitch guide** which attaches to the bed of the machine; it will help with guiding the material through the machine.
- There are different '**ergonomic**' **scissors** available — try before you buy if you can.
- Use a **lightweight iron**, for example, a travel iron.
- A '**walking foot**' is a bit expensive but helps to feed the material easily through the machine.



Ergonomic Sewing Scissors



Walking foot attachment

- Don't sew with the free arm, use a **machine with a large bed** to support the material.
- Some machines, for example the more expensive Berninas, have a simple switch for winding the bobbin. You can buy a **bobbin-winding machine** fairly cheaply if you find it difficult to release the wheel for bobbin-winding. Another possibility is pre-wound bobbins, available usually in black, white and 'colourless'.
- If you find it **difficult to thread needles** for hand-sewing, there are devices that make it much easier, as well as needles that don't need threading and work very well — you just pull the thread in over the eye.

TRY DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING THINGS

- Change your old ways of doing things — don't cut everything out, then sew, then iron; instead, cut out the pieces you need to start, sew, iron just the crossover points, cut out the next pieces you need, keep sewing, iron again and finally have the whole thing ironed at a dry cleaner's or by a friend.
- Use as few pins as possible when cutting out.
- Try raising the height of the machine so that you don't have to bend your neck — try putting it on a large telephone book. Use an adjustable office chair and try different heights.
- Cut out small items on an ironing board — you won't need to bend over as much and you can easily make it the right height.
- If there are some tasks that are especially difficult, get a friend to help you with them.

- Relax your arms down onto the machine and let the presser foot guide the material through the needle.
- Think about the operations you find most difficult and choose patterns that minimise or exclude these. For example, gathering can be difficult and can be avoided.
- Experiment with some of the unused attachments in your machine box—for example, an edging foot makes accurate stitching close to an edge much easier.
- For hand-sewing, sit in a chair with supportive arms so that you can rest your forearms while you sew.
- Some of the steps used in standard patterns are both ineffective and time-wasting. Have a look at commercially-produced clothing to get ideas for practical and quick ways of getting good results.



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