

Getting Started with Essential Tools & Sewing Notions (1002-1)

The market is full of exciting, new products that claim to be indispensable in your sewing box. But you really only need a few basic tools. Always choose the best quality products you can afford.

What are Sewing Notions?

Notions are all the things you use for sewing such as: needles, thread, buttons, zips, bias tape, lining materials, seam binding, etc. In other words, anything other than the material itself.

1. Scissors

Choose good quality, full-size dressmaking scissors with comfortable handles and strong stainless-steel blades. Even if you don't plan to do any dressmaking, you will get a cleaner cut in any fabric with large scissors. A smaller pair of lace or machine embroidery scissors is also useful to keep next to your machine.

2. A Wide Tape Measure

If you buy one in a bright colour with large inch and centimetre markings, in either a 60 or 90 inch length, you won't spend half the day looking for it. Make sure it has metal-bound ends to prevent fraying.

3. Standard and Long Pins

Choose a pack of standard dressmaking pins and one of long, slim-shank, quilting pins with flat, colourful heads and you'll be ready for anything. There is a huge variety of pins available now but it is not necessary to buy different pins for every different project.

4. Seam Ripper

Make sure it has a sharp point and blade and a close fitting cover which will slide onto the handle when the ripper is in use.

5. Tailor's Chalk

Choose a good quality tailor's chalk in a triangular 'cake' form... if you can find it. These last for ages and can be easily sharpened to an 'edge'. There are chinks available in pencil form but these wear down very quickly. The plastic holders with the slot-in chalk dust capsules are a nifty design but don't leave a very strong line. Try to stick to light or neutral

colours as the darker blues and reds can be waxy and difficult to remove.

6. Pack of Needles

Choose a pack of good quality 'sharps' sewing needles of varying lengths. There are 'easy-thread' needles available now with open eyes to slot the thread in but, unless you use a thimble these are very hard on the fingers.

7. Metal Thimble

These can take a bit of getting used to if you've never used one before but are invaluable for tough hand-sewing jobs.



8. Flexible Curve

Originally devised for dressmaking, this bendy, plastic ruler is great for drawing all sorts of smooth curves.

9. Pincushion

Try and find one that has feet and is filled with sawdust rather than wadding as this won't roll around on your work table and will help keep your pins sharp.

10. Yard/Metre Stick

Choose a solid, wooden yard or metre stick rather than one of those collapsible ones that carpenters seem to carry around. They're invaluable for measuring long lengths of fabric and curtains.

