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Jan Saunders Maresh

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by Jan Saunders Maresh



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About the Author

Jan Saunders Maresh is a nationally known sewing journalist, interior redeigner, and certified staging professional. After graduating from Adrian College in Michigan, she became the education director of one of the largest sewing machine companies in the country, and then the director of consumer education for the largest fabric chain in the country. Both professional experiences give her a solid foundation in the home sewing industry, which she continues to serve with her many writing, marketing, and industry consulting projects.

In addition to writing for several home sewing publications, she is a best-selling author for several publishers, with 16 books to her credit. Her most recent title is *Home Staging For Dummies* (Wiley) which she co-authored with Christine Rae. Many of her titles have been chosen as main selections for the *Crafters' Choice Collection*, a division of the Book-of-the-Month Club.

To promote her projects, Jan has been a frequent guest on several PBS television shows. Jan has also made regular appearances on the Home Shopping Network and is the local expert featuring lifestyle tips and decorating techniques in western Massachusetts.

When she's not writing, Jan keeps busy teaching and motivating consumers to create beautiful and sustainable homes. She's also a Certified Trainer for the Live Green Live Smart Institute. Since being transferred to New England, Jan's latest venture has been renovating a 1959 ranch with her husband, using all the green and sustainable renovation products and practices the industry (and their budget) has to offer.

Jan currently resides in Longmeadow, Massachusetts (near Springfield), with her husband, dog, and a collection of books, sewing equipment, fabric, and green building products stashed neatly in every available corner of her home.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my husband, Ted Maresh, and son, Todd Moser. After so many nights of pizza and cereal for dinner, they deserve all the credit for putting up with my crazy writing projects all these years. Thanks, guys.

Author's Acknowledgments

At age 7, I learned to sew under the watchful eye of my grandmother. When I had finished hand-stitching the set-in sleeves of a doll jacket, I cried and cried because it didn't look right. Grandma gently took the jacket from me and turned the sleeves "inside out." It was a miracle — the jacket looked just like the one in the store. From that moment on, I was hooked on sewing. It's been an intimate part of who I am ever since. Thank you, Grandma, for being my first teacher.

A big-time thank you also goes to my parents, Ray and Bernice Saunders. Although I grew up on a strict budget, there was always money for fabric and plenty of praise for my handmade creations. Dad is gone now, but I'm sure the many hours of looking over his civil-engineer shoulders as he reviewed the latest blueprints for the job helped me think three-dimensionally — crucial for what I do today.

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Introduction

I love to sew. Period. First I get the immediate gratification of completing a project using beautiful fabrics and great timesaving tools. Then I can bask in the personal recognition — I get to admire my work and hear praise from my family and friends. On top of that, I save money sewing because I can make things (and make them right) instead of purchase them (and pay to have them altered, if necessary). Wow, what a hobby!

I'm betting that after you have a couple of projects under your belt you'll love to sew as much as I do.

About This Book

Sewing For Dummies, 3rd Edition, is a book for both absolute beginners and experienced sewers. If you're a stone-cold beginner, you may appreciate that I explain everything necessary to sew beginning-level projects and I don't assume that you've ever even picked up a needle and thread before. If you're not a complete stranger to needle and thread (or sewing machine and pedal), *Sewing For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, still has something to offer — I give you tips and tricks that it took me years to pick up. All sewers can enjoy the projects in this book, no matter what their level of experience.

With the “greening” of the world on everyone's mind these days, I've taken a new approach to the projects in this edition. Many of the projects start with a used ready-to-wear garment that, with a little sewing sleight of hand, gets a refreshed new life. The rest of the projects have been redesigned and modernized to reflect the latest fashion trends and our more streamlined, uncluttered lives. The most significant improvement to the edition is the addition of over 100 new instructive illustrations. A picture says a thousand words, so the clearly written, no-nonsense instructions *For Dummies* books are famous for are enhanced with exceptional illustrations to ensure your success. As always, this all-new edition includes my favorite sewing techniques and the innovative shortcuts learned over my career. Remember, I've made every sewing mistake known to man (or woman), so you don't have to!

Conventions Used in This Book

As you sew, you're going to rely heavily on the tools in your sewing survival kit, which I describe in Chapter 2. Keep it handy and well stocked. You need it for just about every project listed in this book, and I wrote this book assuming that you have and use these tools.

You also see instructions throughout the book that can be completed by using a sewing machine or a serger. A *serger* is a specialized machine that saves a lot of sewing time; it sews the seam, overcasts the edge, and then cuts off the excess fabric from a seam allowance — all at the same time. I think of a serger like the microwave oven of sewing — you don't usually make an entire project on a serger, but it sure speeds up the process.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made some assumptions about you and your needs:

- ✔ You don't yet know how to sew or are looking for a refresher course.
- ✔ You want to master the fundamentals of sewing.
- ✔ You're looking for tips and tricks to make your sewing projects easier and more fun.
- ✔ You want to start sewing as soon as possible.

If this sounds like you, you've come to the right book!

How This Book Is Organized

I organized this book into six parts so it's easy for you to find exactly the information you need.

Part I: Getting Ready to Sew

In this part I run through the tools you need for sewing and tell you how to work with them, including your sewing machine, fabric, thread, needles, pins, iron, and patterns.

Part II: Mastering Basic Sewing Skills

Read the chapters in this part to find out how to do some of the more fundamental tasks involved in sewing, including threading a needle, tying a knot, sewing a seam, and hemming.

Part III: Fashion Sewing Fundamentals

When you sew clothing, you usually start out with a pattern and a set of instructions for putting the project together. For a beginner, these pattern instructions can sometimes be a little intimidating; the instructions may tell you to do something (like sew a dart or apply a zipper) that you don't know how to do. The chapters in this part help you decipher techniques like putting in buttons and zippers, adding sleeves, and sewing pockets that are essential to successful fashion sewing.

Part IV: Sewing for Your Home

Sewing your own home fashions means that you get exactly what you want and save money — a winning combination! This part of the book lets you turn a little sewing knowledge into untold savings for your home. I show you how to sew pillows, a duvet cover, a bed skirt, draperies, napkins, a table runner, tablecloths, and more. Using the chapters in this part, you can quickly and inexpensively create coordinated looks for almost every room in your home.

Part V: Making Alterations and Quick Fixes for a Sustainable Wardrobe

Are you suffering from the *terrible toos* — clothes that are too tight, too loose, too long, or too short? This part is a lifesaver when you need creative solutions to fix what ails your clothing and get a little more wear from them before sending them off to the landfill. I also show you how to do some basic repairs on holes, rips, and other mishaps.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

In this part I share tips for avoiding common mistakes when you start sewing. I include the all-important guidelines for sewing smarter and faster along with tips for mixing fabrics without creating fashion faux pas or home décor havoc. I also include an appendix of resources and popular Web sites to help you find the materials you need.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book I guide you toward important points by using the following icons:



Some sewing tools are essential to sewing, and others aren't essential but are still nice to have as you sew. Try out the tools mentioned next to this icon — you may find one that helps you quite a bit with the sort of projects you like to do.



Next to this icon you find information that you should keep in the back of your mind as you sew. These points are key to creative and efficient sewing.



The information next to this icon tells you how to do something in the quickest and best way possible.



Make sure to read the text next to this icon. It can save you a lot of blood, sweat, and tears.

Where to Go from Here

If you're new to sewing, I suggest that you start by reading the chapters in Parts I and II. You can find some fundamental information on sewing in those parts. After that, you can skip around from chapter to chapter in the book, reading about the types of sewing and the projects that interest you.

I wrote this book to be your sewing companion. Instead of putting it on the bookshelf for future reference after you finish reading it and making the projects, use it actively each time you sew — whether at home or in one of the many sewing classes available at your local sewing machine dealer or fabric store. Keep it handy so that when pattern guide sheet instructions direct you to do something, you can check out this book to find the fastest, most efficient way to accomplish the task.

I've spent my professional lifetime amassing these sewing methods (and more), and they fuel my love affair with the craft every time I sit in front of the machine. My fervent hope is that after spending a little time with this book, a beautiful piece of fabric, and your beloved sewing machine, your own love affair with sewing will blossom. Enjoy!

Part I

Getting Ready to Sew

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"It's a beginner's sewing kit I put together for you. There's scissors, needles, bandaids, gauze, antiseptic..."

In this part . . .

To end up with a successful sewing project, you need to start out with good materials. These materials include your sewing machine, needles, thread, fabric, and pattern, among other things. I tell you about the very best tools for your sewing projects in this part. In addition, I tell you how to work with those tools after you have them, including how to navigate a sewing machine and how to lay out a pattern.

Chapter 1

The World of Sewing

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering why you should sew
 - ▶ Taking a look at the sewing process, seaming, and adding details
 - ▶ Understanding how sewing can save money and resources
-

Why sew? Simply put, it's fun. You also get the gratification of making something useful and beautiful and the personal recognition from friends and family who are in awe of your raw, natural talent. Not to mention that what you learn about fabrics, fibers, and fashion helps you in other areas of your life.

You may think of sewing as a hobby in which you make clothes. But as you move from place to place in your busy life, start paying attention to how much fabric is used everywhere. You can sew Halloween costumes, teddy bears, prom dresses, and purses. Think of the fashions in home décor. A tablescape isn't complete without some great-looking linens — that you can make, of course. You can update your house by making a wardrobe of pillows with a set of covers for every season or by sewing a new duvet cover. Need a gift? Make a throw or fill a basket with a set of napkins. It's all possible when you sew. My friend and editor, Robbie Fanning, called this collection of possibilities “the world of sewing.”

Because the topic of sewing is so extensive and I have only so many pages in this book, I thoughtfully organized the world of sewing for you. I first walk you through the sewing process used in making clothing and then move on to ways to sew for your home and repair and remake existing clothing for a more sustainable wardrobe. My hope is that after you get to know more about this creative endeavor and have some success with the projects in this book, you'll spread your wings and investigate the larger world of sewing.

Figuring Out What Comes First: The Idea or the Tools?

My family was on a strict budget when I was growing up, so I'd read my *Seventeen* magazine and head off to the mall to see what all the kids were wearing. After seeing just what I wanted and knowing it was too expensive, I'd pore over the pattern catalogs for the latest junior fashions that I could "knock off."

Next stop — the fabric store. There I combed through the bolts for just the right fabric, color, and texture, and went on to the notions wall to find the right-sized buttons. Little did I know that I was shaping the skills I now use to create something trendy for myself, my family members, and my home.

So to answer the question of whether the idea or the tools come first, for me the idea or inspiration is first, and then the adventure of hunting for just the right project pattern and fabric starts me on my journey. After I find everything, I take it all home and put it together with tools — but not just any tools; tools that are a pleasure to use. Read on to understand what I mean.

The pleasure of using good tools

You can cook a five-course gourmet meal for eight by using nasty old pots and pans and cooking over an open fire, but it's not a lot of fun. The same is true for sewing — you can make a project by sewing everything together with a hand needle and thread, but it takes a lot of time and patience and you may not like the results. For me, the joy of sewing is having quality tools at my fingertips. No scurrying around the house to find a pair of shears that haven't been used in my husband's workshop or pins that have been pulled off packaged dress shirts. Sure, good tools are an investment, but if you're serious about learning to sew, nothing gets you closer to success than the pleasure of using a quality tool that works perfectly every time you use it. Not sure if you'll like sewing but still want to try it? Take a sewing class at your local fabric store or sewing machine dealer where you can use great tools and quality equipment.

I spend some time in Chapter 2 sharing my favorite tools with you, so check it out. Besides the fabric and pattern, here's what will make your sewing experience a real pleasure:

- ✓ **Measuring tools for small and large areas of a project.** I love my 6-inch adjustable sewing gauge, my flexible vinyl tape measure, and the see-through O'Lipfa ruler with ¼-inch increments.
- ✓ **Cutting tools for cutting out your project.** I use 8-inch bent-handle dressmaking shears, 5-inch scissors for trimming smaller areas, and embroidery scissors for clipping and ripping out unwanted stitches. For long straight cutting, the pizza cutter-type rotary cutter is the best.