

Making Everything Easier!™

3rd Edition

# Sewing

FOR

# DUMMIES®

## Learn to:

- Choose the right tools and supplies for your projects
- Master sewing techniques with how-to illustrations
- Sew fun projects for your home and wardrobe
- Stretch your budget by repairing and remaking clothing

**Jan Saunders Maresh**

*Bestselling author and television personality*



# Sewing For Dummies<sup>®</sup>, 3rd Edition

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# ***Sewing For Dummies<sup>®</sup>, 3rd Edition***

**by Jan Saunders  
Maresh**



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# About the Author

**Jan Saunders Maresh** is a nationally known sewing journalist, interior redesigner, 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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Thank you, Lisa Reed, for your tremendously talented hand and critical eye in illustrating this 3rd Edition. And thank you, Mike Lewis, Elizabeth Rea, and Caitie Copple, the team of incredible editors at Wiley Publishing who helped my words sound brilliant and encouraged my sense of humor about this craft I love so much. You are all truly amazing at what you do and how you do it.

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# Introduction

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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.