

The Art of Visible Mending

Lesson Inspiration for Teachers

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Our Social Fabric takes pride in helping you make your textile projects sustainable. Using deadstock supplies to create something unique and beautiful is tremendously rewarding. But what about the favourite jeans in your wardrobe that are starting to show wear, or your go-to comfy cardigan with the growing hole in the elbow?

In this guide, we pick two common garments that often become worn and require mending: jeans and knits. We show you how to give your favourite clothing new life through a selection of mending techniques.



Adapting the lesson for different grades

We can learn to make thoughtful fashion decisions in the future so that garments added to our wardrobe can be happily worn and loved for many years. We share ideas of how to adapt your lesson for different student groups:

Grade 10: Visible mending can be used to help students take creative risks; students can work in a team to come up with innovative ideas to repair their clothes.

Grade 11: Students can research companies that claim to recycle their clothes (Zara, Agolde etc). Are garments truly reused/repurposed? What is the environmental impact of the recycling process? What happens to donated clothing that is too damaged to be resold, where does it end up? How do companies like Patagonia and fjällräven run their repair programs?

Grade 12: This project can be adapted for students to learn about the life cycle of clothing. Most people discard items that have holes or wear in them. What is the average lifespan of a garment? Can we improve that lifespan with quality material and craftsmanship? What societal factors drive fashion consumption? How can we encourage consumers to consume less, wear garments for longer, and repair existing clothes when needed? What psychological hurdles must one overcome to be truly sustainable.

All grade levels: Sustainability starts within your own closet. Tell your students to pause and look at what they are already wearing, and take inventory of what they own. Challenge them to a 6 week, or 6 month shopping moratorium. Students will look at how many jeans, shirts, sweaters, etc, they have. What do they wear and why? What do they not wear and why? Ask students to make three piles with their clothes: a "love" pile, a "hate" pile, and a "maybe" pile. With the maybe pile, start experimenting with styling, dying, cutting. With the hate pile, how can we repurpose these garments? The lifecycle of clothes is something everyone should be mindful of.



Supplies

To get started on the techniques in this guide, your students will need a few basic supplies:

- A hole, tear or signs of wear on any garment
- Embroidery thread or sewing thread
- Darning mushroom or embroidery hoop
- Pins
- Fabric scraps to use as patches which can themselves be sourced from old garments

Garment One: The worn pair of jeans



TECHNIQUE 1: Patching a hole on the right side of a garment.

- Trim off excess threads (frayed bits) around the hole.
- Zig zag stitch around the hole edge to stop the hole growing larger and fraying more
- Lay out fabric scraps on top of the hole to decide which size and pieces you want to use.
- Serge or zig-zag patch piece edges.
- Press edges 0.5cm towards the wrong side.
- Pin down the patch over the hole.
- Attach the patch either by hand or sewing machine.
- Press and finish.

Examples of machine-sewn patches are shown above, and hand-sewn patches (using embroidery threads) are on the following page.





TECHNIQUE 2: Patching a hole on the wrong side of garment

- Trim any longer pieces of threads showing but you may choose to keep a few to add to the distressed look.
- Find a patch that is larger than your hole.
- Pin patch on the wrong side of the garment.
- You can either hand sew the patch on or use your sewing machine.
- For the sample above, I did a sewing machine stitch going back and forth to create a layered look on the jeans.



TECHNIQUE 3: Fixing the hem

- Stitch rip hem edge.
- Trim frayed edge.
- Cut piece twice the width you would like, plus seam allowance (SA). And the length of your cuff, plus seam allowance. In our example, the cuff length is 40cm (including SA)
Width 7cm (Including SA)
- Fold and press in half.
- The folded edge will attach to where the original hem was.
- Press cut edges down.
- Pin folded edge under.

Garment Two: Hole-y knits

There are many ways to patch a hole on knits from darning to embroidery stitches.

We share a few examples of how we've mended knits:



The black cashmere sweater

The hole along the collar was first mended with a black thread using hand stitching. But to add structure to the whole collar I blanket stitched the entire collar. The hole on the arm was darned using a speed darner found on Etsy.



Animal t-shirt

Small holes in t-shirts are a common sign of wear often caused during laundering.

This well-loved shirt had many tiny holes so I decided on two colours of threads that complemented the print of the t-shirt. This mend was completed using a darning stitch using an embroidery hoop. I added roses to the tinier holes.



Hoodie with a business name on it

A well-loved hoodie that was about to be donated due to the business name written on the front. First I stitch-ripped the embroidered logo, which left some small holes. I added different flower stitches and stars, creating a fun pattern, and giving this sweater new life.

We hope this guide was helpful. We'd love to hear your feedback. If you have any comments you'd like to share please email them to hello@oursocialfabric.ca

And remember, when fixing a hole the most important part is to have fun and think outside the patch!