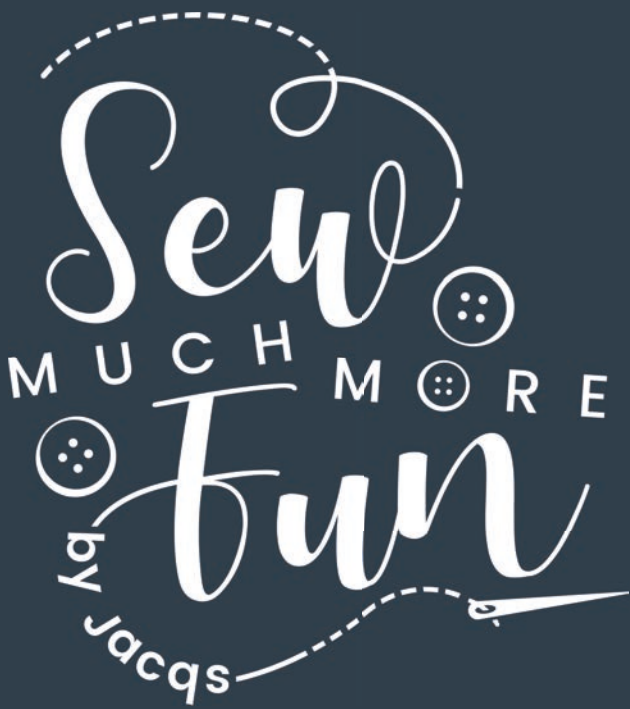


SEW MUCH MORE FUN

Equipment List

Essential tools
to start making
your own clothes



by Jacqui Blakemore



Getting Started

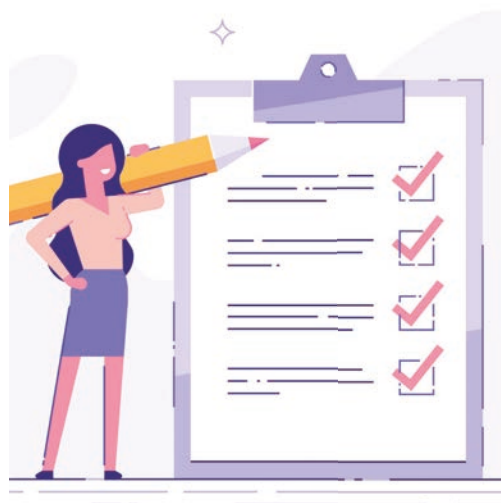
When you wanted to get started dressmaking it can be confusing to know what equipment you are going to need and which tools are nice-to-have options. There is so much choice.

If you are excited to get started then you want to get tools that are going to last but if it's your first time buying this type of equipment how do you know which to spend your money on?

The temptation can be to spend all your time researching and never actually buying which means your dreams of making fabulous clothes drift further and further away.

What do I need?

How helpful would it be to have a list ready made for you? And what if that list contained links to the equipment and tips on what to look for should you want to do your own research faster and more efficiently?



Having been a dressmaker for many years I have accumulated lots of tools but there are just a few that I couldn't live without.

The following list of items are what I consider to be the essentials and I have grouped them together to help explain how and when you would use them.

Disclosure: Some of the links in this document are affiliate links, meaning, at no additional cost to you, I will earn commission if you click through and make a purchase. For more information please see the [Disclaimer](#) on my website.

Dressmaking Tools

Tools fall into 2 main areas - tools for preparation and tools for construction.

Preparation

Measuring

Pattern prep

Markings

Cutting out

Construction

Sewing

Altering

Pressing

Within each area there are tools for particular functions. In each section I will give you a list of essential tools for each function and then suggestions of tools you can invest in at a later stage that make life easier but are nice-to-have.

I don't want you to feel constrained by my suggestions so I have also given pointers on search terms to use in Google to help if you have other brands or suppliers you want to use.

Checklist Summary

Here is a summary of all the items as a quick memory aid. Later in the guide you will find more information and suggested links for key items.

Preparation

Measuring	1 - Measuring Tape 2 - Straight Ruler (30cm/12in) 3 - Pen/Pencil 4 - Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Pattern Prep	5 - Printer & paper OR print shop (PDF patterns) 6 - Sellotape 7 - Paper scissors	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Markings	8 - Hand sewing needle & thread 9 - Tailors chalk / Frixion pen 10 - Pins	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Cutting Out	11 - Fabric Scissors	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checklist Summary

Construction

Sewing

12 - Sewing Machine & zipper foot

13 - Machine needles

14 - Thread

15 - Bobbin



Altering

16 - Seam ripper/unpicker



Pressing

17 - Iron & Ironing board




Checklist Details

Whilst there are often tempting low cost kits and sets available my experience of these is that they aren't really made to last so they can be a false economy.

If you invest in good equipment and look after it then it will last you. I have had my fabric scissors for many years and they are still going strong even after daily use.

Preparation

Measuring Essentials

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
1. Measuring Tape 	<p>Also known as a tailor's tape measure this is a soft tape measure that usually has measurement in centimetres and inches. The standard length is 150cm but you can also get longer ones (up to 250cm).</p> <p>Use To take body measurements and can also be used to measure dimensions on pattern pieces or to help line up grainlines when pinning pattern pieces to fabric.</p>	<p>Recommend brand - Prym</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prym Standard 150cm tape measure *• Prym 254 cm/ 100-inch Tape Measure * - longer tape measure <p>Search term: "sewing tape measure"</p>	£2.50 - £10

* contains affiliate link

Preparation - Cont'd

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
2. Straight Ruler (30cm/12in)	A straight ruler is really helpful if you are making alterations to lengthen or shorten a pattern. Any stationery ruler will do.	-	-
3. Pen/Pencil	You'll need to write down your measurements and may also need to make alterations to your pattern	-	-
4. Paper	Something to write your measurements down on and any notes on alterations you want to make.	-	-



Preparation - Cont'd

Pattern Prep Essentials			
Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
5. Printer & Paper OR print shop (PDF patterns only)	<p>If you are using a PDF pattern (not a pre-printed pattern) then you will need to either print it at home or send it to a print shop.</p> <p>For home printing you'll need a printer that connects to your computer and paper (usually between 20 and 40 sheets). Your local print shop may be able to print A0 copies of patterns for you. There are also online sites that print and send the patterns on A0 to you.</p>	<p>Pattern printing services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NetPrinter • Plan Printing • The FoldLine <p>Search term: "print A0 patterns"</p>	From £1.50 per sheet plus postage
6. Sellotape	<p>You will need this if you are printing your PDF patterns at home but also if you need to make modifications to your patterns e.g. lengthen/shorten. Any sellotape will do but I like the Scotch Magic tape as you can write on that.</p>	<p>Search term: "scotch magic tape" "invisible tape"</p>	50p - £2

Preparation - Cont'd

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
7. Paper scissors	Any household scissors will do but the reason for differentiating between these and fabric scissors is that I would recommend keeping your fabric scissors just for fabric. This is because cutting paper and card can make them go blunt more quickly.	<p>8 inch Easy Grip Soft Grip Scissor *</p> <p>Search term: "paper scissors" or "household scissors"</p> 	£3



Markings Essentials

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
8. Hand-sewing needle & thread	Another way to transfer key points from the pattern to the fabric is to use tailor's tacks which is a hand-sewing marking method. For this you will need a hand-sewing needle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Korbond sewing needle set * <p>Search term: "hand sewing needle"</p>	£2



* contains affiliate link

Preparation - Cont'd

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
<p>9. Tailor's chalk or Frixion Pen</p> <p><i>Note that when using any marking tool you should test on a scrap of fabric first.</i></p>	<p>There are some places where we need to mark the fabric, usually on the wrong side to indicate placement of darts or seam lines etc.</p> <p>Tailor's chalk is designed to brush or wash out of fabric and comes in a range of colours. An alternative is a chaco pen which contains ground chalk and gives a finer line.</p> <p>Another alternative is a Frixion pen. The ink disappears when heat or water is applied.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kleiber Tailors chalk set * • Pilot Frixion pen - set of 3 black * • Clover Chaco liner pen - blue * • Chaco Pen Set * <p>Search terms: "Tailors chalk" "Frixion pen" "Chaco pen"</p> 	<p>From £5.50</p>
<p>10. Pins</p> 	<p>Pins help to secure the paper pattern to the fabric and also during construction to hold the fabric pieces together before sewing. There are specialist pins for different types of fabric but initially I would recommend pearl or glass head pins as they are easy to hold/see.</p>	<p>Recommended brand Prym - 0.6 x 30mm is a good size for general use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prym glass head pins * <p>Search term: "glass head pins"</p>	<p>£4.50</p>

* contains affiliate link

Preparation - Cont'd

Cutting Out Essentials

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
11. Fabric Scissors	<p>As mentioned above, to cut fabric neatly you need sharp scissors. There is also a lot of cutting out in dressmaking so whichever scissors you choose need to be comfortable. Whilst tailors shears look great and do last a long time, they are heavy and can be uncomfortable to hold. To start with I would recommend getting a pair of plastic handled scissors that are at least 8" (21cm). They also ideally need to be 'side bent' to make them most comfortable for cutting along the table. The longer the scissors the better as it gives a smooth long cutting line - my favourite scissors are 10".</p>	<p>Recommended brands: Fiskar, Prym</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fiskars Classic Dressmaking Scissors, Length: 25 cm, For right-handed Users *• Prym Tailors shears 21cm for left handed users * <p>Search term: "fabric scissors"</p>	From £20



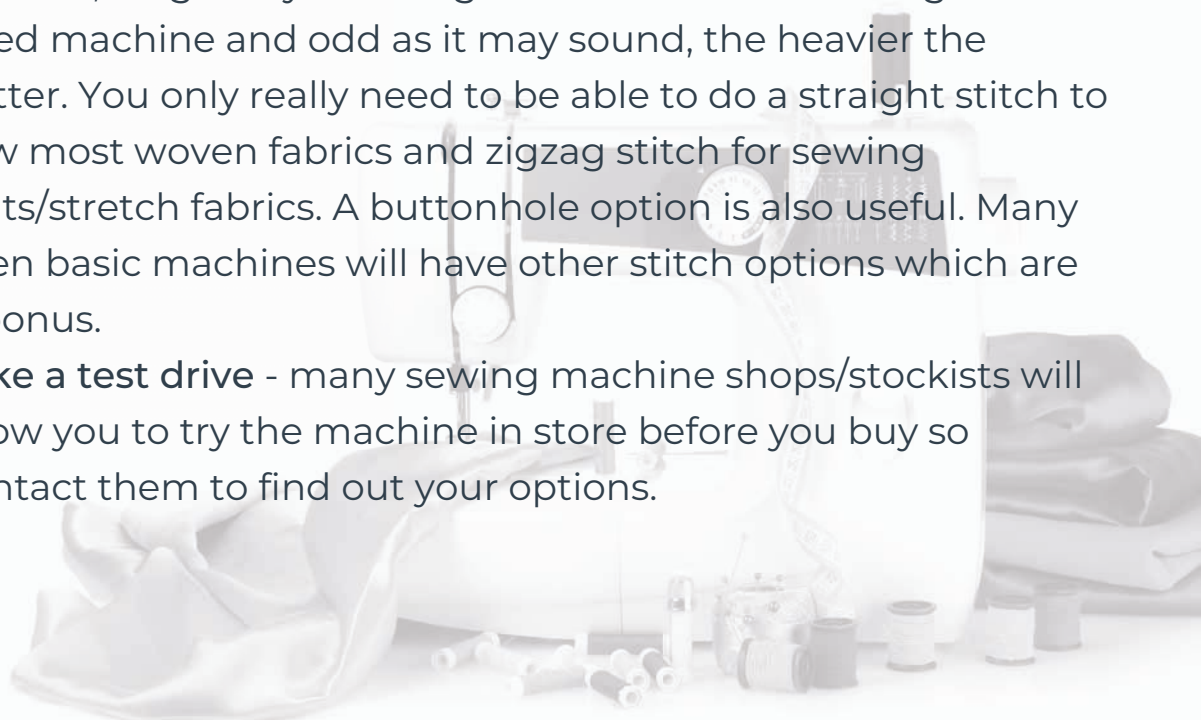
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Construction

Sewing Machines



A sewing machine is key to making your own clothes and whilst you can make them using hand sewing it is quicker and easier to make them using a machine. Picking a machine can seem like a minefield if you are a beginner but here are a few things to consider:

- **Budget** - set yourself a budget. New sewing machines range from £90 up to several thousand. You do get what you pay for but a beginner Brother or Singer machine from Amazon or Lidl is a great starting point. Look for deals and special offers as they do come up regularly from each manufacturer.
- **Consider borrowing or second hand machines** - while you try out dressmaking it might serve you to borrow a machine initially to see if you enjoy it and also understand what you want from a machine. You'll be surprised when you start telling people you want to learn to sew just how many of them have a machine at home currently not being used.
- **Stick to solid brands** - for your first machine I'd recommend picking one of the bigger brands e.g. Janome, Brother, Bernina, Singer. If your budget will stretch to it then get a full sized machine and odd as it may sound, the heavier the better. You only really need to be able to do a straight stitch to sew most woven fabrics and zigzag stitch for sewing knits/stretch fabrics. A buttonhole option is also useful. Many even basic machines will have other stitch options which are a bonus.
- **Take a test drive** - many sewing machine shops/stockists will allow you to try the machine in store before you buy so contact them to find out your options.




Construction

Sewing Essentials

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
12. Sewing Machine  Zipper foot	<p>Try not to stress too much about which machine - the key here is to get a machine and get started.</p> <p>Pick a reputable brand whether buying new or second hand.</p> <p>For most stitches you can use the universal foot on the machine but it can also be helpful to have a zipper foot to allow you to sew close to the zipper teeth when inserting zips.</p>	<p>Recommended brands: Janome, Brother, Singer, Bernina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brother L14s Sewing Machine • Frank Nutt - Brother Sewing machines • Frank Nutt - Janome Sewing Machines • Jaycotts Sewing Machines <p>Search term: "Brother L14S Sewing Machine" "Beginner Sewing Machine"</p>	From £89
13. Sewing Machine Needles 	<p>It is important to get the right needle for your machine and the right type/size for the fabric you are working with.</p> <p>Check the manual of your sewing machine for details.</p> <p>Change your needle regularly (ideally after completing each garment)</p>	<p>Recommended brands: Schmetz</p> <p>Universal needles (80/12) are ideal for general sewing. Jersey/ballpoint/stretch needles are used for knit/stretch fabrics. Other specialist needles are available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schmetz needles 	From £2


Construction - Cont'd

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
<p>14. Thread</p>	<p>For most projects a good quality all purpose polyester thread will be the best. Cotton thread is available but it tends not to be as strong or last as long as polyester. Many fabric websites also offer a 'buy matching thread' option when buying fabric.</p>	<p>Recommended brands: Gutermann</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnyarns Thread • Gutermanns white thread 1000m* <p>Search terms: "gutermanns sew all polyester thread" For colours you use often like white or black it can be more economic to buy in larger reels e.g. 1000m</p>	<p>From £1.60</p>
<p>15. Bobbins/ spools</p> 	<p>Each machine is designed with a particular type of bobbin. Whilst other bobbins may fit, it is best to stick to the bobbins for your make and model of machine to get consistent stitch quality. Machines are usually supplied with at least one but it is great to have spares for different colour threads.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>


* contains affiliate link

Construction

Altering essentials

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
16. Seam ripper/ unpicker 	<p>Of all the tools listed so far this is the hero of the group.</p> <p>The trusty seam ripper is the tool that says you've given something a go and now get chance to try it again.</p> <p>They are relatively low cost but make sure that you do replace them as they do blunt over time and they are most effective when they are sharp.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prym ergonomic seam ripper * • Seam ripper set * <p><i>(I like the ones with a longer handle as they are easier to hold)</i></p> <p>Search term: "seam ripper" "quick unpicker"</p>	From £3.75

Pressing essentials

Item	Description	Suggestion	Budget
17. Iron & ironing board <small>* contains affiliate link</small>	<p>The key to a professional finish is pressing at each stage of construction. A good household steam iron and padded ironing board are ideal.</p> <p>More advanced: pressing cloth, tailors ham/seam roll and clapper.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prym tailors ham * • Point presser and clapper * • Hemline Press cloth * <p>Steam Iron reviews: Top 20 in UK</p> 	-

What next?

Congratulations you are now set up and ready to go!



The fun is just beginning and here are some ways you can continue to get help and support.



Join our Facebook group: [SewMuchMoreFun](#) for more tips and advice



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