

Basic Sewing Tools List

Please take note of the one(s) I DO suggest you buy.

Places to purchase most or all of the items are:

[Fabric Corner](#), Mass Ave and Mill St, Arlington

[Joann Fabrics and Crafts](#), Burlington, Saugus, Natick, etc.

[Wawak Sewing Supplies](#) has most items and they are very well priced. They are located in Upstate NY and the Ground Shipping is quite fast.

[Fabric Place Basement](#), Speen St., Natick in the Cloverleaf Mall across from the Natick Mall

I have been sewing for over 40 years. I have tried most sewing tools available. My goal is to steer you to the best brands and styles, to save you from buying notions which are not worth using. I do not receive any recompense for my suggested list. Most of the items are inexpensive. The highest priced one is a good pair of dressmaking shears. Don't skimp on those, they are worth every penny. They are the "good" scissors your mother wouldn't let you use.

Portable Sewing Machine w/ pedal and power cord

Sewing Machine Manual Please bring this, it can help answer questions.

Bobbins to fit your machine. These are not the same size for all machines and may vary in the same brand of machine. If you are not sure what you need, check with a sewing machine dealer or the website for your model of sewing machine.



Machine needles

I recommend Schmetz brand. Universal style, Sizes 10, 12, 14 are the most common sizes. If you plan to hem Denim, buy size 16 or 18 Jeans needles.

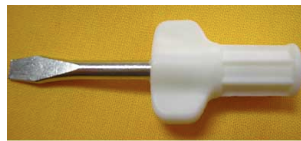
The Universal works on both knits and wovens. Other brands will specify Sharp or Ballpoint needles. You need a Sharp needle for woven fabric and a Ballpoint for knits. What I like about Schmetz is that they are tempered. Just like tempered glass, when they meet a certain resistance, they break rather than damaging your sewing machine. They are very well made all around. The only caveat is that

because they break, I like to suggest that you wear either **safety glasses or regular glasses**, when

you sew, to protect the possibility of a piece of a sewing machine needle getting in your eye when one breaks. Not to scare you! Just good to be prepared. I have simple safety glasses



available. Kids think it's cool to wear them but, many Teens do not like them. One solution: you can buy some fake glasses with clear lenses and cool frames at places like "Claire's." Also, for those of you with more mature eyes, if you forget your magnifying glasses, I do have some in strengths ranging from -1.00 to -2.50.



Small Screwdriver

3 in One oil, or some other oil meant for sewing machines. I like the Dritz zoom spout oiler. It has an extending tube which can snake into tight spaces inside a sewing machine. It can be used around the house, on hinges, creaking knees, squeaky wheels.....



Iron and Ironing board or pad. It comes down to this, if you do not like to iron, take your clothes to the cleaners, wear them wrinkled, or only wear wrinkle-free clothing. But, if you want the best results when you sew, you must find a friendly space in your heart for ironing. Irons are in most households and are absolutely essential to sewing well. You will not need an iron or an ironing board for class as I have several. A good quality iron makes a huge difference in the quality of your results. I recommend Rowenta brand irons. For a good one, you will need to spend over \$50. Bed & Bath, JoAnn's and other stores carry them. Do not buy the cheapest one. You get what you pay for. You can get a good deal at www.smallappliance.com. Sometimes, I find a refurbished Rowenta iron at Home Goods or TJ Maxx. [Black and Decker](#) makes a decent iron which I found recommended on [Pattern Review](#). It

is the [Digital Advantage](#) iron. I bought one at Bed & Bath, by using the 20% off coupon I got in the mail, the price came down to \$40. They carry Rowenta's, too.



tackle not included



Sewing Box

It can be a formal Sewing Basket or a Decorative tin or Plastic lidded container. Something that will hold all your small sewing tools and notions. A small tool or tackle box works really well. Home Depot and Lowes have some plastic ones for \$5. [Playtime](#), just down the street from my shop, has some ArtBin boxes that work well. Recently, one of my students found a good one at A.C. Moore arts and crafts store.

Pencil and notebook (8 1/2 x 11 inches)

Paper cutting scissors, inexpensive scissors from an office supply store. You will use these to keep from dulling your "good" scissors by cutting paper or tape, etc.

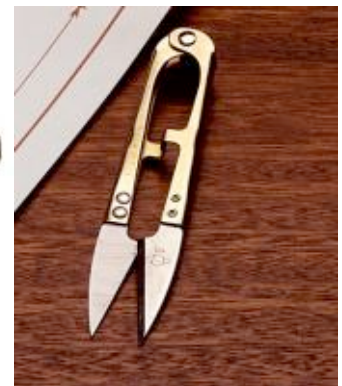


8 inch Dressmaking Shears, Bent Handle, Brands: Gingher Dressmaking Shears (Chrome, do not buy the plastic with the metal blade insets, they are not strong enough to cut through thicker fabric) Marks Mundial Cushion Soft Lightweight Shears. For Kids, I find that the

7 inch chrome dressmaking shear by Gingher works well for them. It is lighter and easier for them to maneuver. Other options available online, are Famore brand at [famorecutlery.com](#) and Kai brand at [kaiscissors.com](#)



Thread Clippers This tool is small and works by squeezing the sides to cut. This makes it very easy to pick up and use. You don't risk cutting the fabric as easily as with the large shears mentioned above. My favorite clipper is made by Clover, they cost about \$13. **Recently, I found a source for some very good clippers for only \$3. I have them for sale if you wish to buy them from me.**

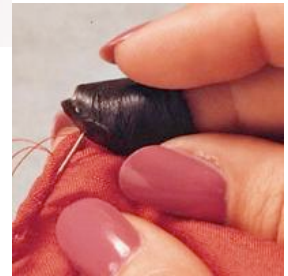


Handsewing Needles, I prefer **John James English Needles**. They are easily available at quilting shops and Fabric Corner carries them since I like them.. (The package is white paper and has Black and Yellow stripes.) There are



many types of hand sewing needles. **The best all-around needle is called a “Sharp.”** But, you may find it handy to buy a variety pack that includes needles for darning, quilting, tapestry, embroidery, etc.

Thimble, a very personal choice. There are many types on the market. Buy one after you have a chance to try a few. **I prefer a leather thimble called a Nimble Thimble. (dk brown one pictured to the right.)** It fits comfortably over the tip of your middle finger (not your index or ring finger) and has a space at the tip for your fingernail to stick out. I take an XL in glove size but find that the Medium thimble fits the best. I know that Fabric Corner in Arlington and Quilter’s Way carry these. Most likely, area quilt shops will, too.



Pins, I prefer the long (1 3/8”), white glass-headed variety (you can also get them in red, white or multi-colored). They are sharp, easy to use and the iron does not melt the pin head. Usually,



you want to buy slender pins referred to as “silk” pins because they will penetrate most types of fabrics easily. You can purchase IBC glass-headed pins from [Clotilde](#). Also, available at most fabric stores. If you buy a “Grabbit,” mentioned below, it usually comes with a set of pins. But, they are of a much inferior quality to the glass-headed. Fabric Corner has these in white or multi-colored. JoAnn’s has them on the quilting notions aisle. **Avoid the very thin, blue pins on the regular notions “pin” display, they are too thin and bend very easily.** Also, you may find a circle of 40 pins, they are too short and thick. The ones I recommend usually have 200 pins per package/box.

Pin Cushion, Box or Magnetic Pin Pad, I prefer the magnetic pad, then the box and lastly the fabric pin cushion. For fast pin access, the fabric cushion is impossible to use because you have to pull the pins out and stick them back in, one at a time. A small box makes the pins easy to pick up and drop back in, but if it gets tipped onto the floor, there is a lot of wasted time picking up pins. If you would like to use a box, I find that the best one has a rounded vs. flat bottom inside. The Tomato is the one familiar to most of us.





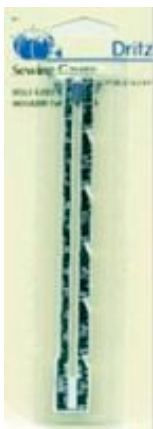
The best magnetic pin cushion is the “Grabbit.” (See round red one, above right.) Any other brand just does not hold the pins very well. It does come with it’s own set of pins, but they are not very good. So, do buy the glass head pins I mentioned above. Brass or stainless steel pins will not work with it. But, the pins I recommend, do work with the “Grabbit.” It comes in a variety of lovely colors. Recently, **Dritz has come out with**

one magnetic pin cushion, the green one pictured above, that is strong enough to hold pins. And **Clover**, has one that is similar and has a cover, as you can see in the pictures of the pink pin cushion, above left. You cannot fit a whole package of glass head pins on the Dritz and Clover cushions, but you might like the fact that they do have covers.



Telescoping Magnetic wand. Cost is \$5 from the hardware store or an auto supply store. This is the size of a pen when collapsed. It even has a clasp at one end that can hook over the edge of a pocket or notebook. It is chrome colored and round and as thin as a pen. It has a very powerful silver-colored magnet at one end. It is approx. 2-3ft long when extended. It works well to pick up dropped pins. I swish it around the floor to pick up pins I may not be able to see, especially before vacuuming. The magnet is strong enough that it can pick up a ring of keys from behind the sofa, or

wherever you may have dropped them. I have seen this kind of wand at the hardware store. **Do not** mistake this for a plastic magnetic wand that is sold in fabric stores, which is **not** what I am suggesting you buy.



Sewing Gauge, this is a 6” ruler with a blue or red plastic slider in the middle that can slide up and down most of the length of the ruler. They only cost about \$1.50 and can be found at any fabric store. **One of the most essential sewing tools** and one of the cheapest. **Do not** buy the blue plastic one with a piece of chalk on the end. I tried to find a picture of one to show you. I couldn’t find one, but they must be available for purchase somewhere because I have had students bring them in.

Seam Ripper, they are inexpensive and are available in 3” or 6” lengths. Get what feels most comfortable in your hand (the 3” length becomes 6” long when you put the cap on the end.) **You will need this tool** and it is less

than \$2. If you don’t mind spending \$5, Clover makes a really nice seam ripper that is strong, fine and sharp. **Do not** purchase the two-tone pink seam ripper from JoAnn’s.

They are very dull. For the most gorgeous seam rippers, check out Cynthia Ellis’ hand



lathed, wooden seam rippers. A bargain at \$22-30. www.woodbyC.com pictured above, to the right.



Chacoliner, this is a marking tool that comes in 4 different colors and can be refilled. It works very smoothly. There is a little wheel at the tip that distributes a fine line of chalk across your fabric, which is easy to remove by brushing it off. I suggest purchasing the white color and then others if you end up liking it. **Do not** buy the one (not pictured here) by Fons & Porter, it does not roll at all well.



6 ft retractable tape measure, an optional but very handy item that only costs about \$3. Not to be confused with a metal tape measure from the hardware store. The one that I am referring to is a flexible, coated fabric, tape measure. The casing is usually plastic. If you purchase one, I recommend the Hoescht brand. If you plan to make clothing, you do need to have one of these.

I just received a box of tape measures with my sewing school logo on them. I will give one to each student until they run out, so no need to purchase one. (July 2013)

PLEASE.....

Before coming to the first session, go through all your sewing items and mark them with your initials or name. This includes your sewing machine, cords, pedal, etc. You'd be surprised how easy it is to mix yours up with someone else's. And if you leave it here, it will help me know whose it is.