Sustainable Living Week 2024

'Stitching for Sustainability'

Practical activity developed with Repair What You Wear

Objective :
To learn or further develop some basic hand skills useful for repairing clothes.

Brief:
We would like to invite pupils to give it a try with the following challenges:

- Learn to thread a needle and do backstitch.
- Using backstitch, write the initials of their names or their first name.
- Learn to sew on a button.
- If there is time and interest to try further, patch something using running stitch or even to mend something!

Resources to support you on teaching sewing:

- On the Sustainable Living Week 2024 webpage you will find an introductory video to the activity prepared by Repair What You Wear.
- The following video tutorials produced by Repair What Your Wear:
  1. How to thread a needle and do backstitch on Binca Right Handed.
  2. How to thread a needle and do backstitch on Binca Left Handed.
  3. How to backstitch letters on Binca Right Handed.
  4. How to backstitch letters on Binca Left Handed.
  5. How to thread a needle and do backstitch on calico Right Handed.
  6. How to thread a needle and do backstitch on calico Left Handed.
  7. How to sew on a button. Right Handed.
  8. How to sew on a button. Left Handed.
  9. How to sew on a patch, using running stitch.

Although you can use many different materials for this activity, it is recommended that you use the following materials for delivery:

- Binca and/or Calico,
- Pearlized cotton thread,
- Needles, pins, scissors/snips,
- Flat button assortment.

Some tips for delivery:

- Group left handers together, as their instructions are slightly different, and they can support each other.
- Emphasize the positions of the hands carefully - this is essential for efficient use of the hands working together and will be covered in the videos.
- Needle always in the dominant hand and held firmly, helping hand bending the material, working horizontally.
- Start with basics and at least two rows of backstitch to develop hand skills. Mastering this and the associated hand movements is core to success.

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Working with Binca:

Binca is a very old-fashioned material but, we have found, is the very best for learning to sew. It is stable, easy to hold, easy to work because the holes are there and can be counted/followed.

Kit required for Binca work:

- Binca strips, bookmark size. Available in lots of places (including Amazon - look up 'Binca Bookmarks').
- DMC threads: threads need to be cut to about an arm's length, approximately 45-50cm max long. While there is a small waste of thread, it is time efficient. Search DMC Pearl Cotton Thread Size 3 15m (available from Hobbycraft and others). Don't buy the balls, as the thread is too thin.
- Snips/scissors for cutting thread.
- Needles with a round tip, so pupils can pass through the holes regularly without hurting themselves.

Working with Calico:

Calico is the cheapest and firmest cotton for learning. Many pupils find holding fabric difficult and this structure helps.

Kit required for Calico work:

- Calico pieces approximately 22 x 25cm. The fabric can be torn to size and the loose threads are an opportunity to show how this textile is woven.
- Strong coloured sewing threads, preferably Gutterman or Coats/Moon. We recommend strong colours so they can be seen. Cheap threads are difficult to thread.
- Needles: We use John James Tapestry number 16 or 18 as they are reliable quality, but any needle would do.
- Some pins (glass head are easier to see). You only need 2-3 per pupil.
- Odd buttons with holes.
- Pencils for marking Calico.
- Snips/scissors for cutting thread and fabric.

We have found that pupils relax once they have started to engage and achieve, and that all sorts of surprises and new talents start emerging. We hope your class enjoys it too!

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