

4-H Sewing/Clothing Project Guidelines for Leaders

The 4-H Sewing/Clothing project is designed to help boys and girls develop as individuals and become responsible adults. By participating in project activities, 4-H members can develop their ability to make decisions, express creativity, and gain knowledge and skills in the areas of sewing, clothing, and personal appearance.

These project guidelines outline four progressive skill levels: Basic Skills—First Year; Basic Skills—Levels 2 and 3; Expanding Skills—Levels 4, 5, and 6; and Advanced Skills—Levels 7, 8, and 9. Each of the skill levels includes activities in the following five learning areas:

1. Planning and evaluation
2. Individual development and outreach
3. Management, consumership, and wardrobe building
4. Textiles
5. Construction

For most learning areas, activities from the leader resource materials are listed to give you possible sources for teaching the topic.

Leaders may choose and/or adjust the activities to meet the needs of their members. To meet individual interests and encourage breadth within the program, there are more activities suggested here than can be accomplished during the project year. Each member with his or her leader can plan the direction that best suits his or her personal interests.

Skill levels are not age-restricted. All members, regardless of age, need to start with basic skills and build toward more advanced skills. Members with no previous sewing experience or who are younger might advance more slowly. Others who have had some experience might advance more quickly. You can help the member determine which skills he or she needs to acquire.

There are leader and some member materials available for each skill level. As member skills expand, commercial resources are highly recommended as a way to stay current with fabrics and appropriate techniques.

You also might want to request a copy of the *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide*. The Advancement guide outlines a series of activities by steps within each skill level. It is a member's tool for planning and keeping records. The member activities correlate to the suggested activities in this leader guide.

Members, along with their leader and parent(s), choose the activities they wish to complete each year. When the member completes an activity, the leader or parent initials the member's record. After all the activities have been accomplished for the year's plan, the member receives an "Advancement Certificate" that shows skill level and step in the project. The Advancement program is optional; it is designed to supplement the 4-H Sewing/Clothing project and 4-H record keeping.

Some project materials are available online, or ask your local OSU Extension office. Be sure to check with local Extension staff to find out what activities—such as workshops, fashion revues, presentations, and other contests—might be scheduled in your area. Your county also may hold project-related leader meetings. They can be a very helpful resource.

If your members plan to exhibit at the County Fair, check the exhibit descriptions for the skill level in which the members are enrolled. The exhibit descriptions are guides for the items members could sew. Local OSU Extension offices have this information.



4-H sewing/clothing publications resource list

- 4-H Clothing Record* (4-H 9200R) (online only)
- Fun with Clothes Leader Guide* Unit 1 (4-H 9201L)
- Clothing Capers Leader Guide* Unit 2 (4-H 9202L)
- Clothes That Click Leader Guide* Unit 3 (4-H 9203L)
- Let's Sew! A Beginner's Sewing Guide* (4-H 9201)
- Measuring Up: Quality Standards for Sewn Items/Projects* (4-H 92011)
- Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide* (4-H 92104R) (also online)
- Sewing Skills Checklist Member Guide* (4-H 9200)

extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/4h

Basic Skills—First Year



Planning and evaluation

Planning

Leaders help members plan their project in cooperation with parent(s). The *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide* and *Sewing Skills Checklist* can provide guides. The plan might include skills to be learned and supplies and materials needed. Younger members will need help making choices within a limited set of possibilities.

Simple, short-term timelines might work better than planning the whole year all at once. It may be worthwhile to help members build short-term calendars to guide their work plan.

Meetings most likely will include both work on individual projects and group activities. Certainly, not all items sewn need to be exhibited, but understanding the exhibit categories as listed in county or state fair premium books is a helpful guide to planning. Be sure the item to be exhibited meets the class description for the skill level for which the member is enrolled.

Keeping records

Help members start the habit of keeping records. These might include the *4-H Clothing Record*, the *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide*, and the *Sewing Skills Checklist*.

Younger members may not enjoy or see a value in record keeping. It might be helpful to spend time at each meeting or monthly to keep records up-to-date.

An option in the *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide* suggests that members start a sewing skills notebook or file where they build a library of samples as a reference for future sewing. Sewing is very much a continual decision-making process matching pattern, fabric, and a variety of possible techniques. These initial samples could include types of fabric and basic sewing techniques that would help members as they attempt sewing on their own.

Revised by Elaine Schrumpp, Extension 4-H youth development specialist, Oregon State University. Original publications prepared by Ardis W. Koester, Extension textiles and clothing specialist emeritus, and Barbara J. Sawyer, Extension specialist emeritus, 4-H youth development, Oregon State University.

Evaluation

Introduce how to evaluate their own work and samples of others' work. This can be an informal discussion of both individual and group progress and accomplishments. Some questions might include the following:

- What did I learn?
- Where do I need improvement?
- How do I feel about what I did?
- What shall I plan to do or learn next?

Evaluation also can be in the form of comparison to standards, such as those listed in *Measuring Up: Quality Standards for Sewn Items/Projects*. You also can introduce members to the format for judging a class of similar items, whether they are ready-to-wear garments or samples of specific sewing techniques. Packets of classes for previous years of the Sewing/Clothing Judging Contest should be available in local Extension offices. There is an introductory level specifically for first-year members.

Individual development and outreach

Personal appearance

Members can learn about and become responsible for routine personal care (bathing, shampooing, washing hands and face, caring for nails and teeth). Introduce members to posture and poise. They might use these in basic modeling experiences.

Resources

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 2: Background basics and possibly activities 1, 5, 6, 7, if adapted for age

Clothing Capers, Lesson 2: Background basics and activities 1–5

A tour or guest speaker (for example, a beautician, nail specialist, dental assistant, or older member to teach modeling)

Contribute to a group

Give members a chance to contribute to the group and take some responsibility, such as:

- Help prepare for the meeting
- Put things away
- Participate in discussions

- Serve as host
- Provide a snack
- Lead a game

You might rotate club officer experience so each member gets a turn in each role. Introduce the basics of an orderly meeting and group decision-making process.

Share what they have learned

Give members opportunities to:

- Show how to do something
- Give simple presentations
- Exhibit their project

Resources

Check with the county for workshops or training in giving presentations.

Use county fair premium books for exhibit class descriptions.

Help others

Find ways for members to help family, friends, and community, either individually or with their group. They could collect usable clothing for donation, do some simple mending for others, or make gifts. They can exhibit new items for donation in the Hands for Larger Service exhibit classes.

Careers and cultures

Introduce the connection between some careers and specialized clothing. Explore some connections between clothing and national costume. Choose specific areas according to the member's interests.

Resources

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 7: Background basics and possibly activities 1 and 2, if adapted for age

Lesson 8: Background basics and possibly activities 1 and 2, if adapted for age

Clothing Capers, Lesson 3: Activity 7;

Lesson 7: Background basics and activities 2 and 3; Lesson 8: Background basics and activities 2 and 3

Tours: any place where people wear uniforms or specific dress

Speakers: individuals from other countries

Management, consumership, wardrobe building



Clothing care

Discuss why it's a good idea to fold or hang up clothes after wearing them.

Resources

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 6: Background basics and possibly activities 1–8, if adapted for age
Clothing Capers, Lesson 6: Background basics and activities 1 and 8

Tools and resources

Members should learn to identify and use basic sewing equipment as listed in the *Sewing Skills Checklist*. Determine which tools they will need for each sewing project. Discuss what to consider when buying tools. Make or find a box or container to keep tools organized and all in one place.

Resources

Let's Sew!: Chapters 1 and 2

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 1: Background basics and possibly activities 1–8, if adapted for age
Clothing Capers, Sewing Supplement: word games for sewing equipment

Consumer decisions

Discuss important factors to consider when buying fabric, such as fiber content, care required, whether the yarns are square with each other, and whether a design is printed on grain.

Show what information is given on garment labels and where to find the label in ready-to-wear clothing.

Resources

Let's Sew!: Chapter 1

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 5: Background basics and possibly activities 1 and 2, if adapted for age

Clothing Capers, Lesson 5: Background basics and activities 1 and 2;
Lesson 6: Activity 2

Wardrobe planning

Discuss why people might like or dislike certain clothing.

Introduce primary and secondary colors, warm and cool color families. Explore color likes and dislikes.

Resources

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 2: Background basics and possibly activities 2 and 3, if adapted for age

Clothing Capers, Lesson 4: Background basics and activities 2 and 5

Textiles



Fibers

Help members learn the difference between fiber and fabric. Classify fibers as natural and chemical.

Resources

Let's Sew!: Chapter 5

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 5: Background basics and Activity 3

Clothing Capers, Lesson 5: Background basics and Activity 1

Fabrics

Help members learn to tell the difference between the following:

- Woven fabrics (for example, plain, twill, satin, or pile weaves)
- Nonwoven fabrics (for example, felt and some interfacings)
- Knitted fabrics (for example, single, double, and warp knits). Have members identify stable and stretchy knits.

Help members learn the following:

- Parts of woven fabrics (lengthwise grain, crosswise grain, bias, selvage)
- The information found on the ends of bolts of fabric (fiber content, fabric name, care instructions)
- How and why to prepare fabric before cutting: laundering to preshrink and remove excess finish; checking straight yarn directions (grain)

Resources

Let's Sew!: Chapter 5

Fun with Clothes, Lesson 3: Background basics and activities 1, 2, 3, and 6

Clothing Capers, Lesson 3: Background basics and activities 2–5

Tours to fabric stores

Construction



Beginning sewers may need considerable guidance. Make it easier to be successful through careful selection of fabrics and projects or patterns. Help them avoid complicated steps and details. Keep it simple.

Choose fabrics that work well for beginning sewers:

- Woven—medium weight, firmly woven fabrics including cotton, cotton/polyester blends, wool, or wool blends
- Polar fleece—lighter weights with minimal stretch (4 inches of fabric stretches only to 4¾ inches or less)
- Felt

Avoid fabrics that require more advanced knowledge or techniques:

- Plaids, stripes, or directional prints that should be matched in the garment or item
- Stretch woven fabrics (usually contain some Lycra)
- Napped fabrics except for flannel
- Slippery or sheer fabrics

Simple patterns with matching shapes and few details are best. If you pre-select several items or patterns for the members to choose from, it may simplify teaching the initial skills. Members may individualize their project through fabric selection or possible embellishment. Garments with gathers, zippers, and/or set-in sleeves are more difficult. It's best to reserve them for later projects. Take body measurements and help members determine correct pattern size. The leader may need to make simple alterations for fit.

If a member chooses a garment with crotch seam construction, help him or her learn the order of constructing the crotch area by sewing the inside leg side seams first, followed by the crotch seam. Include appropriate seam trimming and reinforcement. Alternate crotch seam constructions usually involve more advanced seaming techniques.

It's a good idea to help members work on several small projects rather than start with a large one. This way, members experience the satisfaction of completing a project rather quickly and using the item right away. Working on several small projects also allows members to gain more expertise by repeating basic skills several times.

The following list is a guide to the range of beginning sewing skills that might be used in



beginning projects. A more detailed list of individual knowledge and skills is in the *Sewing Skills Checklist* (4-H 9200), “Fun with Clothes” section. Use it to help members chart their progress.

Members should learn to tell the difference between just trying a skill and mastering a skill. Help them evaluate how well they did the skill and whether they need more practice.

Use of fabrics or skills that are beyond the recommendations for this level are expected to be done well according to the standards, but will neither be given extra consideration for increased difficulty nor disqualified during judging. It is in the best interest of the member to stay within the suggested guidelines.

First-year construction skills

Hand sewing skills

- Threading a needle
- Knotting or securing a thread
- Sewing an even running stitch, blanket stitch, hand basting stitch, or others
- Sewing on fasteners: buttons, snaps, hooks and eyes

RESOURCE: *Clothing Capers*, Lesson 6: Activity 1

Pattern selection and use

- Laying out a pattern
- Cutting smoothly along straight and curved lines
- Marking fabric using a pattern
- Following directions from a pattern instruction sheet

RESOURCE: *Let's Sew*, Chapters 3 & 6

Cutting skills to remove bulk

- Grading an enclosed seam
- Trimming for enclosed corners
- Clipping an inward curve
- Notching an outward curve

RESOURCE: *Let's Sew*, Chapter 6

Pressing skills

- Selecting iron temperature
- Pressing seams open
- Pressing a fold an even width for casings or hems
- Fusing interfacing

RESOURCE: *Let's Sew*, Chapter 6

Sewing by machine

- Identifying major parts of the sewing machine and their function
- Threading the machine
- Starting, stopping, and reverse stitching
- Matching edges or similar shapes for sewing
- Straight seams an even distance from an edge
- Pivoting for square corners
- Curved seams an even distance from an edge
- Sewing along a fold (as in clean finished edges, casings, and some machine-sewn hems)

RESOURCES: *Let's Sew*, Chapters 2 and 6

Clothing Capers, Lesson 1: Background basics and activities 1-3; Sewing supplement: more stitching practice, word games

Spanish language resources

OSU leaflets available from the state 4-H office:

La Máquina de Coser (The Sewing Machine)

Métodos de Planchar (Methods of Pressing)

Principios Básicos del Coser a Mano (Basic Principles of Sewing by Hand)

Principios de Corte (Principles of Cutting)

Costuras Sencillas y sus Remates (Plain Seams and their Finishes)

First-year project ideas

Cutting skills

Cut-and-tie fleece blankets, pillows, ponchos, or scarves

Hand sewn

Pin cushion, needle holder, eyeglasses holder, bean bags, and ornaments

Machine sewn

Integrate pattern selection and use, cutting techniques, pressing skills, and sewing by machine into the construction of two or three articles

Straight seams and square corners: apron, poncho, potholder, pin cushion, book cover, tote bag, pillow, pillow case, simple patchwork, placemats, receiving blankets or lap robes; simple vests

Curved seams: simple vests, simple stuffed toy with matching front and back shapes, bean bags, holiday ornaments or decorations

Casings and/or hems: pullover top, dress, or jumper with neck facings and arm facings; cut-on or raglan sleeves; pull-on pants, shorts, or skirt; sleepwear; aprons; drawstring bags