

Basic Skills—Levels 2 and 3



Members typically may take 1 or 2 years to gain the following knowledge and skills.

Planning and evaluation



Planning

Members will have more ideas about what they would like to do. Coordinate the plan with parents. Help the member use the *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide* and *Sewing Skills Checklist* to build skills without adding too much complexity at one time. The plan might include skills to be learned and supplies and materials needed.

Simple, short-term timelines might still work better than planning the whole year all at once. Help members build short-term calendars to guide their work plan.

Meetings might include both work on individual projects and group activities.

Keeping records

Continue working on record-keeping skills using the *4-H Clothing Record*, the *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide*, and the *Sewing Skills Checklist*. Spend time at each meeting or monthly to keep records up-to-date. This can help members develop their record-keeping skill.

An option in the *Oregon 4-H Sewing/Clothing Advancement Guide* suggests that members start or keep up a sewing skills notebook or file where they build a library of samples of different types of fabrics and all the sewing techniques that they learn. Encourage members to start or expand these samples.

Evaluation

Continue building the member's ability to evaluate. This may be informal discussion of both individual and group progress and accomplishments. Some questions might include:

- 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. These are appropriate for both ready-to-wear items and those sewn by the members.

Encourage members to practice judging techniques as a way to develop decision-making skills. Simple explanation of the reasons for their decisions is an important step. Packets of classes for previous years of the Sewing/Clothing Judging Contest should be available in local Extension offices.

Individual development and outreach



Personal appearance

Members should become aware of the following factors in personal appearance.

- Unchangeable physical traits (height, build, color, features)
- Changeable physical traits (weight, hair style, length of nails, condition of skin)
- Value (lightness or darkness) of hair, skin, eye coloring
- Wearing appropriate clothes
- Wearing clothes that are clean and in good repair

Encourage poise and confidence by preparing members to model something they have made or bought.

Help members become aware of the relationship between health and personal appearance, including the role of good diet, enough sleep and exercise, and posture. Discuss growth changes (height, strength, uneven rate of growth, changes in color and texture of hair).

Resources

Clothing Capers, Lesson 4: Background basics and Activity 1

Contribute to a group

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

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

- Provide a snack
- Lead a game

The club may have officers, and members can learn the duties of each office. Members can learn the basics of an orderly meeting and group decision-making process. Encourage increased responsibility as the members are ready to assume it.

Share what they have learned

Give members opportunities to:

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

Encourage presentations as a way to develop poise and confidence speaking to a group. As members progress, help them organize more formal presentations. Offer the possibility to speak publicly to other groups or in the county presentation contest.

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

Explore the connection between the clothes people wear and what they do. Discuss the differences between classic, long-term styles and fads.

Resources

Clothing Capers, Lesson 7: Background basics and activities 4 and 5;

Lesson 8: Background basics and activities 1–4

Management, consumership, wardrobe building



Clothing care

Help members learn how to sort clothes for laundering. Decide which prewash steps, if any, should be taken; for example, close zippers to reduce snagging and rubbing; turn permanent press garments inside out to protect finish; use liquid detergent to loosen heavy soil on collars and underarms.

Help members learn about the heat sensitivity of various fibers. Explore iron temperature settings for fabrics of different fibers. Help them learn pressing techniques for seams, flat areas, gathered areas, creases.

Discuss and evaluate ways to mend broken seams and replace buttons, snaps, and hooks and eyes.

Resources

Clothing Capers, Lesson 6: Background basics and activities 3–7

Tools and resources

Help members learn maintenance of the sewing machine, including changing needles, oiling, cleaning, and adjusting tension and pressure.

Introduce the serger, including parts, how it operates, and how it differs from a sewing machine. If members do not have a serger to sew with, you can teach these basics through drawings and samples.

Resources

Sewing machine manual

Tour to a store that sells sewing machines and/or sergers

Consumer decisions

Review things to consider when buying fabric. Discuss coordination of pattern, fabric, and notions.

Help members evaluate ready-to-wear clothing in terms of cost; quality of material; and construction, fit, and appropriateness for intended use.

Resources

Clothing Capers, Lesson 5: Background basics and activities 3–7

Wardrobe planning

Help members learn the following:

- How to describe various fabric textures
- Design lines in clothing and the optical illusion they might create. Relate desirable lines and optical illusions to various body silhouettes.

Introduce some style terminology.

Help members learn to see:

- Silhouette lines on both patterns and ready-to-wear garments (outline shapes resulting from length and shape or fullness of skirts and pants).
- Design lines in patterns and ready-to-wear garments (pockets, yokes, tabs, sleeve shape, and other seam detail).

Resources

Clothing Capers, Lesson 4: Background basics and activities 3, 4, 6, and 7

Textiles



Fibers

Help members learn the characteristics of natural fibers.

Resources

Clothing Capers, Lesson 3: Background basics and Activity 1

Fabrics

Help members learn the behavior of the following three fabric constructions.

- Wovens—lengthwise yarn, little or no stretch; crosswise yarn, some stretch; bias, most stretch; tendency to ravel. Stretch may vary depending on fiber of yarns.
- Nonwovens—Stretch may vary with individual products.
- Knits—wales (vertical rows of knit loops), courses (horizontal rows of loops); vary in stretchiness, ability to run

Members should learn to identify the following characteristics in fabrics. Relate these qualities to decisions about suitable use of a fabric.

- Weight—lightweight wovens and knits; medium-weight wovens and knits; heavy-weight wovens and knits
- Hand (the way a fabric feels)—crisp, soft, smooth, bulky, rough; drapability
- Look—shiny, dull, sheer

- Stretchiness—stable wovens and knits, stretchy wovens and knits. Help members learn to measure the stretchability of knits and some wovens by comparing a section of fabric with a stretch gauge such as those on patterns designed for knits.
- Colorfastness

Help members learn to distinguish among the different types of knits.

- Single knit—Some examples include sweater knits and jersey fabrics.
- Rib knit—An example is the banding at edges of sweaters.
- Double knit—Many dresses, pants, skirts, and jackets are double knit.
- Tricot—This is a warp knit used for lingerie, shirts, and blouses.
- Warp knit—Raschel, a lacy pattern knit that resembles crocheting

Review fabric preparation before cutting.

- Launder to preshrink and remove excess finish.
- Check for straight grain.
- Determine if a printed design is on grain.

Explore techniques for creating or manipulating fabric.

Resources

Let's Sew!: pages 27 and 28

Clothing Capers, Lesson 3: activities 2–5 and the workbook page 14

Lesson 7: activities 4 and 5

Construction



Level 2

Help members evaluate their beginning skills and improve those that need practice. Gradually add new skills that they haven't tried yet. Avoid unexpected difficulties through careful selection of fabrics and simple patterns with uncomplicated sewing techniques.

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—minimal stretch (4 inches of fabric stretches only to 4¾ inches or less)
- Knits—stable and non-bulky (4 inches of fabric stretches to 4¾ inches or less except for ribbing or binding)
- Felt



Avoid fabrics that require more advanced knowledge or techniques:

- Plaids, stripes, or directional prints that should be matched in the garment or item
- Knit or woven fabrics with more than minimal stretch (except for ribbing/binding)
- Napped fabrics except for flannel (e.g., corduroy, velveteen, velour)
- Slippery or sheer fabrics

Guide members to choose fairly simple commercial patterns. Members may choose patterns from pictures or drawings of the finished item and probably will need guidance to determine whether the detail of the garment construction is simple or more complicated.

Simple pattern alterations that members need should be done with adult assistance.

Members also might be interested in showing their creativity by embellishing simple garments or items.

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. These steps may not be included with pattern instructions.

The following list is a guide to the range of beginning sewing skills. Use the *Sewing Skills Checklist* to help members identify new skills or those that they need to practice more. Members should complete the skills listed in the “Fun with Clothes” section and may start on skills and knowledge listed in the “Clothing Capers” section.

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.

Garments or articles with zippers and/or set-in sleeves are more difficult. There might be less frustration if members reserve these for later skill levels.

Use of fabrics or skills that are beyond the recommendations for these levels 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.

Suggested skills—Level 2

Continue to practice and improve any previously tried construction skills.

Pattern selection and use

- Reading and understanding pattern envelopes, symbols, and construction guides
- Layout, cutting, marking, and using a pattern

Sewing by machine

- Stay stitching
- Simple seam finishes: pinking, straight stitch, zigzag, serge
- Reinforce seams where appropriate (crotch seams, some underarm seams)

Pressing skills

- Pressing during construction
- Fusing
- Pressing a fold an even width for casings or hems

Cutting skills to remove bulk

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

Casings

- Even width with stitching close to folded edge
- Insertion of drawstring or elastic

Hemming skills

- Grading seam allowances within hem
- Invisible hand stitching
- Machine hems
- Fusible hems

Facings

- Interfacing
- Grading, clipping, notching, understitching

Sleeves

- Cut-on, kimono, or raglan sleeves

Patch pockets

- Smoothly turned edges and corners
- Even top stitching

Closures

- Snaps, hooks and eyes
- Hook and loop tape
- Zippers in flat items (no neck or waist openings)

Knit techniques

- Attach ribbing or stretch binding
- Seam techniques (seams with stretch; trimming; controlling curl)



Project ideas—Level 2

Aprons: waist apron with casing and ties; chef style with shaped casing or facing
Pillow, pillow case, pot holder, placemats, baby blanket, lap robe
Tote bag, drawstring bag, garment bag, sports bag, fabric wallet or purse, hat
Tops, jumpers, or dresses with cut-on or raglan sleeves and neck facing; vests (may be lined or reversible using recommended fabric)
Bottoms: pull-on with casings (skirts, shorts, pants, pajama bottoms)—zippers not recommended
Simple flat, stuffed toys with matching shapes; holiday ornaments

Level 3

Encourage members to begin to work more independently and to find resources for methods and details beyond those that might come with the pattern.

Members can explore different types of fabrics than they have sewn before. Help them evaluate and select quality materials that suit the purpose of their project. If members choose a plaid or print fabric that requires matching, help them learn the techniques and standards for doing those skills well. Recommended fabrics include:

- Knit fabrics, stable to moderately stretchy (4 inches of fabric stretches to no more than 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches)
- Firmly woven fabrics including rayon blends, denims, wools, etc.
- Woven fabrics with moderate stretch (4 inches of fabric stretches to no more than 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches)
- Fleece with moderate stretch (4 inches of fabric stretches to no more than 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches)

Avoid fabrics that require more advanced knowledge or techniques:

- Slippery fabrics
- Uneven plaids

It is recommended to reserve set-in sleeves until the member has more experience with controlling gathers and ease.

Sewing garments with a serger is not necessary, but members should be aware of how it works. A demonstration at a sewing store might provide this experience. If members do have access to a serger, skills are listed in *Sewing Skills Checklist*.

Suggested skills—Level 3

Members should continue practicing the basic skills and trying those from previous levels not yet completed or mastered.

Use the *Sewing Skills Checklist* to help members identify new skills or those that they need to practice more. Members should complete the skills listed in the “Fun with Clothes” section and may start on skills and knowledge listed in the “Clothing Capers” section.

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.

Pattern and fabric coordination

- Consider color, stretch, texture (soft, stiff, etc.), and design (plain, print, plaid, etc.) of fabric with the design lines of the pattern

Darts

- Shaping darts
- Finishing point of dart

Controlling and joining uneven lengths

- Gathers
- Easing

Waistband

Closures

- Zippers—lapped, centered, exposed, invisible
- Machine buttonholes (zigzag)

Stretch fabric techniques

- Stitching to retain stretch in a seam
- Techniques to retain stability in a seam including shoulder or zipper areas
- Ribbing or stretch binding application
- “Stitching in a ditch”
- Suitable hems including double needle

Project ideas—Level 3

Dress; shirt, blouse, or top; sweat suit; coordinating separates; skirt, pants, or shorts with waistband; garment bag; sports bag; backpack; fabric wallet or purse; hat; stuffed animal with darts



Resources

Let's Sew!: Chapters 6 and 7

Clothing Capers: Lesson 1, activities 3 and 4;
Sewing Supplement

Additional commercial sewing resource books are available at libraries or for purchase. Following are some suggestions:

General sewing

Readers Digest Complete Guide to Sewing

Singer Complete Photo Guide to Sewing

Mother Pletsch's Painless Sewing by Pati Palmer and Susan Pletsch

The New Sewing Essentials (Singer Sewing Reference Library) by the editors of Creative Publishing International

Sergers

Creative Serging: The Complete Handbook for Decorative Overlock Sewing by Pati Palmer, Gail Brown, and Sue Green

The Ultimate Serger Answer Guide (Creative Machine Arts Series) by Naomi Baker, Gail Brown, and Cindy Kacynski

The New Sewing with a Serger (Singer Sewing Reference Library)

Knits

The Stretch & Sew Guide to Sewing on Knits by Ann Person

Sewing with Knits by Connie Long

Knits—Easy Fit, Easy Sew by Nancy Zieman

Easy Sewing the KWIK SEW Way by Kerstin Martensson

Polar Fleece

Adventures With Polarfleece: A Sewing Expedition by Nancy Cornwell

More Polarfleece Adventures: The Journey Continues by Nancy Cornwell

Nancy Cornwell's More Polar Magic: Expanded Fleece Techniques by Nancy Cornwell

Sew the New Fleece: Techniques with Synthetic Fleece and Pile by Rochelle Harper

