
MEND & PATCH

A HANDBOOK TO REPAIRING
CLOTHES AND TEXTILES



KERSTIN NEUMÜLLER

MENDING BY HAND

‘Hand sewn’ is a word that is used liberally today and can mean many different things. For me it means sewing without a sewing machine, using a needle and thread. Some might think that this is a more primitive technique, but in fact a hand-sewn seam can often be both stronger and neater than a seam sewn using a sewing machine!



PATCH WITH FOLDED EDGES

When we tried this patching method for the first time, my partner Douglas exclaimed, 'It looks like a cartoon mend!'. The next day there was a customer in the shop who said the exact same thing, so now we call it 'the Donald Duck mend'.

YOU WILL NEED: *Scissors. Thick paper. Fabric for a mending patch. Needle. Thread. Iron. Pressing cloth. Pins (optional).*

Cut out a paper template the same shape you want the finished patch to be and 2 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ in.) larger all around than the hole or worn area. Place the paper template on the wrong side of the fabric you're using for the patch and tack (baste) it in place. Cut out a fabric patch, including a 1.5-cm ($\frac{5}{8}$ -in.) seam allowance; in other words, the patch should be 1.5 cm ($\frac{5}{8}$ in.) larger all around than the paper template.

For a square patch, fold the seam allowance of the patch to the wrong side and press it flat.

For a round patch, gather the fabric by working long (5-mm/ $\frac{1}{4}$ -in.) tacking stitches in the seam allowance and pulling the thread so that the edges of the patch close in over the paper template. Carefully press the edge to keep the rounded shape and continue all the way around the patch until the whole edge has been folded over to the wrong side.

Cut the thread that holds the paper template in place, take out the paper and press the front of the patch again. Tack or pin the patch in place on the garment and then sew the edges by hand or with a sewing machine.

SEWING ON ELBOW PATCHES

To patch the elbows of a knitted garment or jacket, you can use a felted wool fabric. There is a variety called 'broadcloth', which is so tightly felted that it won't fray. Cut out a piece to the required size and shape, tack it onto the garment and sew following the instructions above. You don't need to fold in the edges of the broadcloth; just sew on the patch using small, closely spaced stitches for a neat result.





PATCH WITH DOUBLE FOLDED EDGES

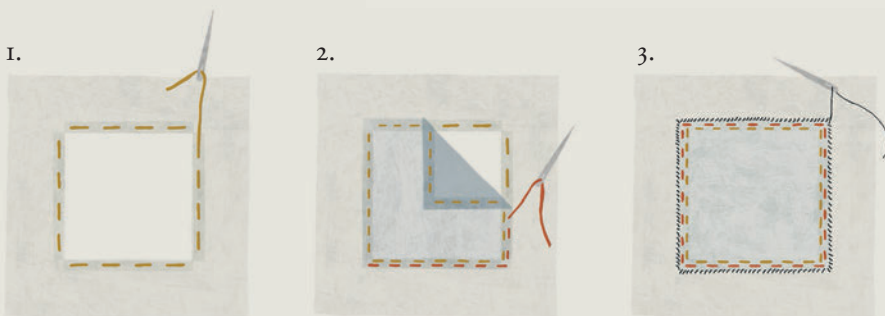
This is a mend that you will often find on older shirts. The advantage of this technique is that it looks just as good from both sides. It's important to keep to the grainline – that is, the direction of the threads in the fabric – for a neat end result.

YOU WILL NEED: *Iron. Pressing cloth. Scissors. Needle. Thread. Tacking thread. Tape measure. Fabric for a mending patch.*

Press the damaged area flat. Cut off all the damaged fabric so that you end up with a square or rectangular hole that follows the grain of the fabric. Make a 5-mm (¼-in.) long diagonal cut in each corner, fold the seam allowance over to the right side of the garment and tack (baste) down the edges (1). Press the edges flat. Measure how large the hole is now. Following the grain of the fabric, cut out a mending patch 1 cm (½ in.) larger all around than the hole. Fold, then tack the mending patch's edges to the wrong side by 5 mm (¼ in.). Press flat.

Now you should have a patch that exactly covers your rectangular hole. Place the patch over the hole on the right side of the garment, so that the tacked seam allowances cover each other, and tack in place (2).

Thread a needle and knot one end. Insert the needle in between the two tacked seam allowances and sew the patch to the garment using blind hem stitch (3). Turn the work over to the wrong side and sew the tacked edge around the hole to the back of the patch, again using blind hem stitch, so that both seam allowances cover each other. Remove the tacking threads and press.

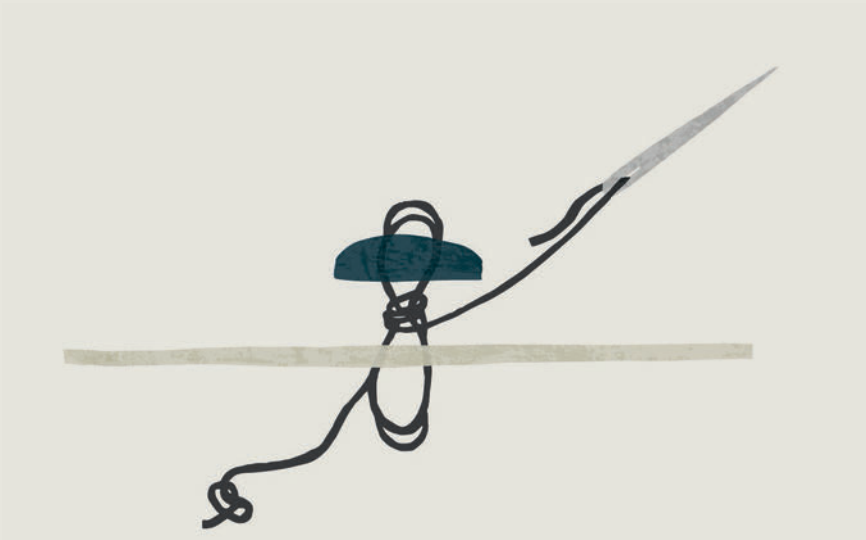
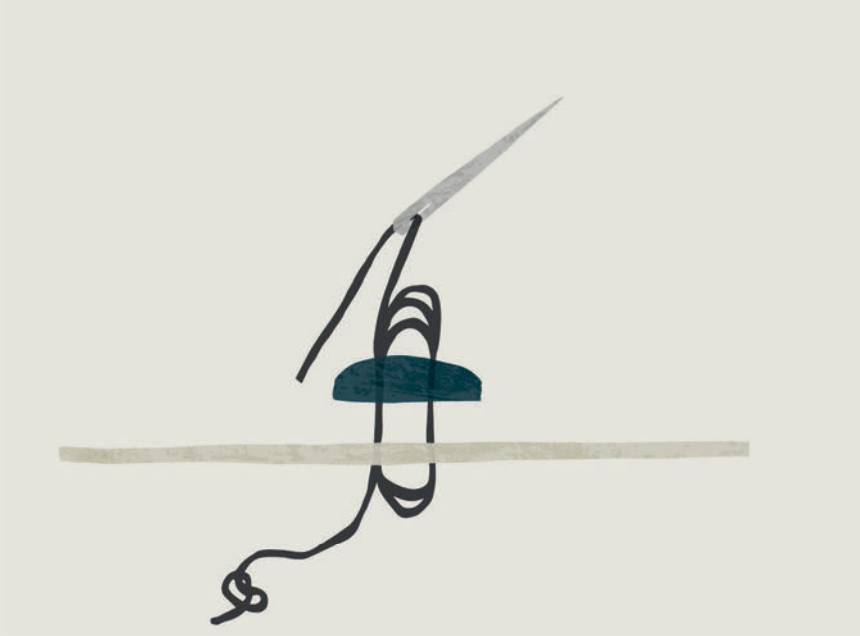


SEWING A BUTTON ONTO A GARMENT WITHOUT A LINING

Unfortunately, the buttons in most of the clothes that we buy today are poorly secured in all respects. This is because there are special sewing machines that are used solely for sewing on buttons, but they're usually not that good at securing the threads at the end. It can be tempting to pull the little thread that protrudes from the button – and if you've ever done it you probably know that it often leads to pulling the whole thread off, resulting in the button coming off. But keep calm: sewing on a button is quick and it's actually really simple. The trick is to create a tiny space in between the button and the fabric, since that's where the fabric that is buttoned needs to fit into. This small space is called the shank, and tailors do it by positioning the button a little bit away from the fabric when sewing it on. If it feels awkward, you can use a standard table fork to create the gap.

YOU WILL NEED: *Thread to match the button, it doesn't have to be a specialist thread; you can use standard sewing thread. Needle. Fork.*

Start by securing the thread with a knot on the wrong side of the fabric. Insert the needle where you want the button to sit and grab hold of a fork. Holding the fork in place in between the button and the fabric, sew the button on. You will need to make several stitches to ensure the button is properly secured. Once it feels like it's secured, make a few extra stitches; around 8–10 is good. Then pull out the fork and wrap the thread you've used to sew with a few times around the shank so that all the threads you've used to sew the button on are pulled together. Secure the thread by sewing a few stitches through the button's shank and then cut off the thread.



SEWING A BUTTON ONTO A LINED GARMENT

In jackets and coats that are lined, you don't really want to sew through all the layers of fabric and end up with an ugly knot on the inside of the garment. The solution is to tie a little knot on the thread and insert the needle about 1 cm (½ in.) away from the point where the button should sit.

YOU WILL NEED: *Needle. Thread to match the button.*

Bring the needle through to the point where the button should sit and then give a hard but firm little tug so that the knot on the thread disappears into the fabric. Then sew the button on, using stitches that pinch the garment's outer fabric but don't go all the way through to the lining. Keep the button about 1 cm (½ in.) away from the fabric as you sew. Wrap the thread around the shank and secure by sewing a couple of stitches through it, in the same way as when sewing a button onto an unlined garment.

If the fabric in the garment is thin or fragile, it can be a good idea to unpick the lining so that you can reach into the inside of the garment. Then you can sew on the button in the same way as for unlined garments, but using the stitches on the wrong side to secure a little button on the inside, meaning that you're sewing on two buttons at the same time! The little button on the inside doesn't need a shank and works as a weight distributor for the thread. In other words, it makes sure that the large button doesn't get torn off together with the thread and a piece of the garment's fabric.