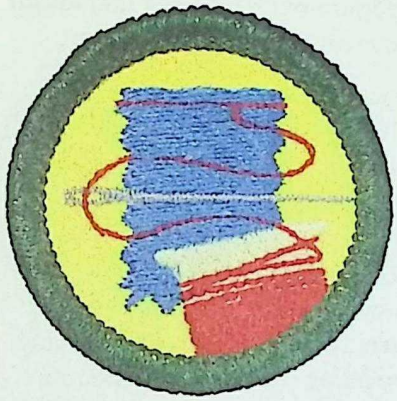
Sew Simple

Improve your wardrobe. Redecorate your room. Make a gift for the holidays. How? By sewing! You can make things for yourself or others when you learn to sew by hand or with the latest technology. It's Sew Simple.



1. Hands Down

Try your hand at hand sewing. Some stitches to try are:

- Running stitch
- Hemming stitch
- Slip stitch
- Catch stitch

Need help? Ask someone who can sew, take classes at a fabric store or community center, or look through sewing books or sewing Web sites.

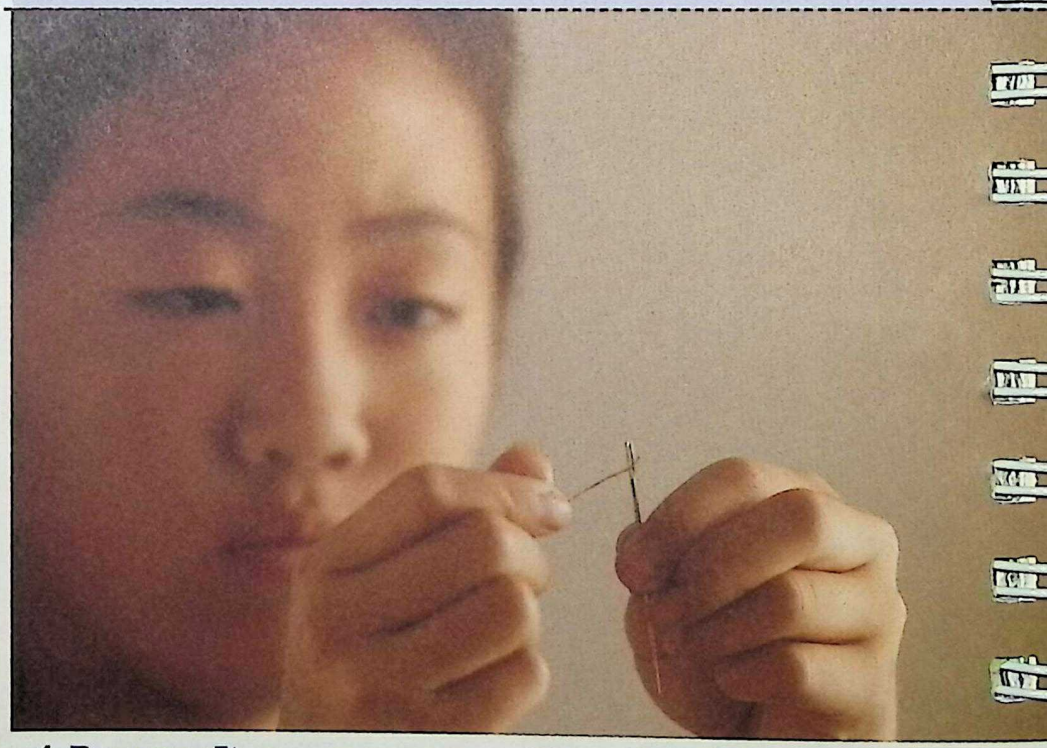
2. A Stitch in Time

Using written instructions and someone to guide you, explore machine stitching on a sewing machine. Try your hand at one or more of the following:

- Basting stitch
- Zig-zag stitch
- Seam stitching

3. Foot Fun

Decorate your socks. You can stitch fabric to the upper cuff of your socks or add lace. You can even embroider a cool design on them.



4. Program It

Many sewing machines contain mini-computers. They can be programmed to sew decorative stitches. Learn how to program a design on the sewing machine, then try to make the design.

5. Pick a Pattern

What do you want to make? Look through a pattern book and pick one out. In addition to style, look at:

- The number of pieces to put together
- Extras like interfacing, zippers, or elastic waists
- The type of fabric recommended by the pattern company
- The amount of fabric needed

These will help you pick patterns that are easy enough to complete, and challenging enough to keep you interested.

* See page 235 for the metric conversion chart.

6. A Perfect Fit

Use the diagram on a pattern envelope to figure out your size. Have a friend or family member measure you every place you see a solid line on the diagram. Figure out your size according to that diagram.

7. Sew for Service

Choose some items to make for people in need. Baby quilts and baby clothing are welcome at women's shelters and some newborn units at hospitals. "Ditty" bags can help residents of a homeless shelter keep their belongings close by. Many sewing clubs work on group service projects. Find out what you can do.

8. Hospital Helpers

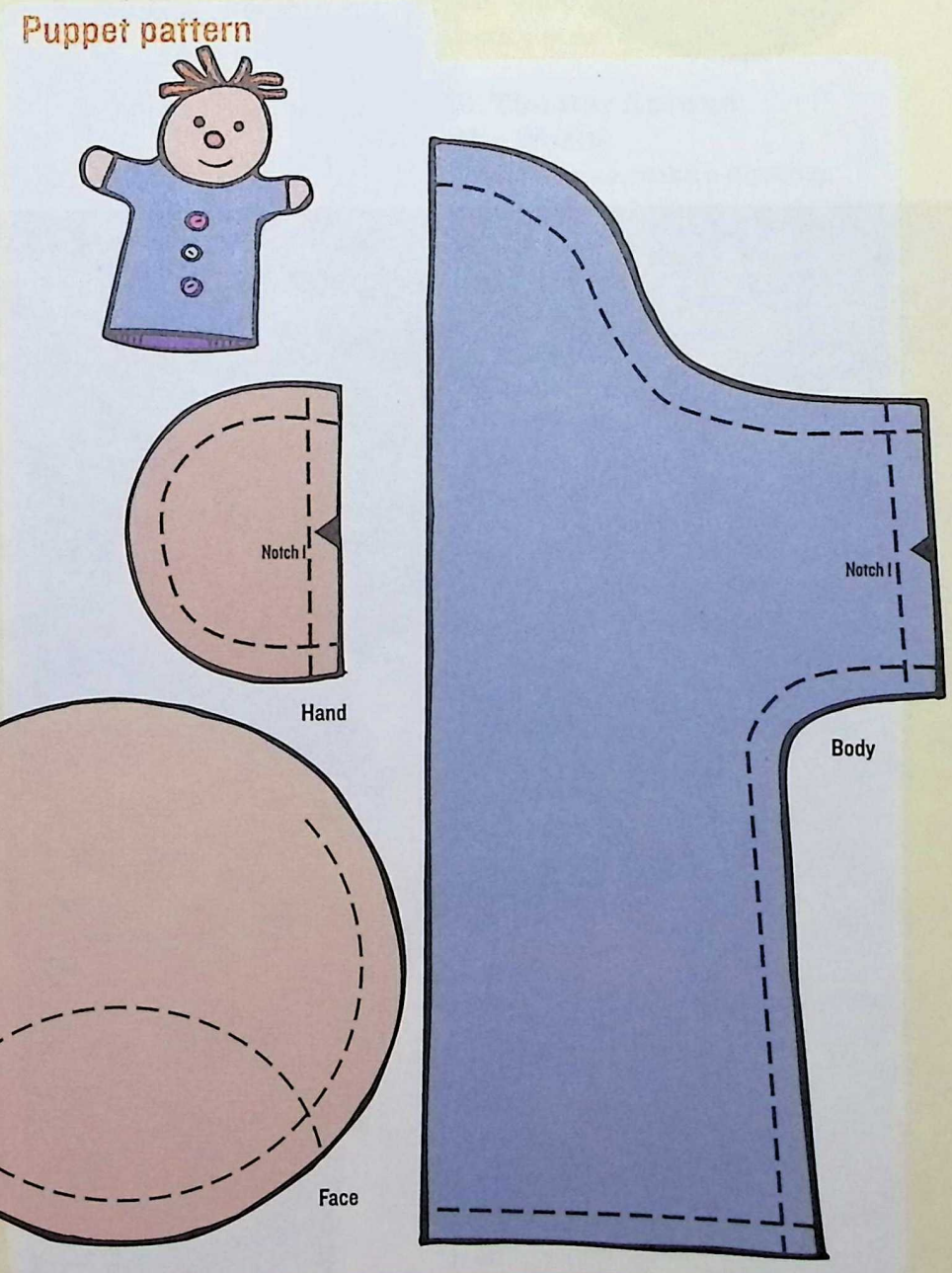
Children going through radiation treatment or chemotherapy often lose their hair. With a group, make "cancer caps" for them to wear until their hair grows back. Be sure to use really soft fabric. Designs are available online or at sewing stores around the country. Donate your caps to a hospital in your area. You can make and sign cards to go with the caps.

9. Find the Fabric

Fabrics have difference widths, textures, colors, and designs. Visit a fabric store to see the differences. What fabrics do you like? How much fabric will you need to make a particular item? What's the cost?

10. Sew a Puppet

1. Trace the puppet pattern pieces onto tracing paper. Then cut out four hands and two faces. Fold the tracing paper and place the straight side of the body pattern even with the fold of the tracing paper. Cut two folded bodies.
2. To make the puppet out of fabric, use the tracing paper as a pattern and make the same cuts on fabric around the tracing paper pattern. You may need to pin the paper pattern in place.
3. Match notch 1 on each hand piece to notch 1 on each arm and sew them together along the dotted line. Put the right sides of the body and hands together and sew, leaving the bottom edge open. Turn the body right side out so that the seams are on the inside of the puppet body.
4. For facial features, paint or sew on buttons or pieces of fabric onto the face, being careful not to sew through to the back of the head.
5. Sew the head along the dotted line, leaving 2 inches* open
6. Sew the front part of the head to the front of the puppet's body using a backstitch or running stitch. Do the same with the back side. Leave an opening for your fingers to come from the body into the neck opening.
7. Add lace, rickrack, ribbons, and applique as decoration.



You might want to use your puppet to help a Brownie Girl Scout earn her "Puppets, Dolls and Plays" Try-It.