

Top 7 Tips for Teen Sewing

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Hopefully, you're reading this article for one of two reasons. Either you know a teen who really wants to start sewing, or you know one you'd like to *inspire* to start sewing. In both cases, you can help them on their way with a little guidance. In this day and age, when young adults seem to be devoted nearly full-time to social media apps, it's easy to think none of them could possibly be interested in something so archaic as sewing. But, while you weren't looking, sewing became cool. Read on for our Top Seven Tips to pave the way to a great experience for a young sewist.

Tip #1 - Don't act surprised when a teen wants to sew.

Don't be fooled by teen stereotypes, even if there's one slumped on your couch right now with their smartphone and a bag of chips. The teenage years are a time for seeking independence, for creating personal style, for wanting to be noticed for what you wear, have and use. "*I made this!*" is a powerful statement for a teen. It's accomplishment, pride, ingenuity, and fun; all rolled up and tied with a bow.



This generation has grown up in a heavily "manufactured" world. Everything they wear, eat, and watch at the movie theater has an overproduced slickness they're more than a little skeptical of. Their real heroes are other young people who actually make things, whether it's music, food, art, or clothing. When everybody can buy the same messenger bag on Amazon, the only way to ensure you're unique is to create your own.

It's 180° from when many of us grew up. Going to school in clothes that looked homemade was a fate worse than death (or so we thought). Now it's the top designers who are trying to look hand crafted.



Tip #2 - Be willing to believe non-sewing teens will like it if they just try it.

Sewing is the perfect fusion of technology and creativity, something ideally suited to today's teenagers. Both sides of your brain are firing when you're sewing. You're designing with the right side, while processing data and operating a machine with the left. Activities that achieve this kind of fusion are great ways to expand overall thought processes and boost problem solving abilities.



Some studies have also shown sewing actually reduces stress. I would agree with this hypothesis, and think it may be because you're so focused. You're thoroughly concentrating on a task that is absorbing all your attention. It can feel like you're in a little bubble when you sew; annoying distractions just bounce off the bubble and don't bother you.

Teens are the ultimate multi-taskers (just observe one texting, watching TV, listening to music, chatting on Facebook, and doing homework – all at the same time); they adapt quickly to the "whole brain" experience of sewing. Plus, many of today's machines have icon-heavy interfaces that, to a teen, look familiar and intuitive.

Tip #3 - Don't assume only the teen girls are interested in sewing.

Teen guys are watching *Project Runway* in almost as large numbers as the girls. And, the left brain components of measuring, assembling components into dimensional results, and interacting with a precision machine are all strong male draws. One of the coolest teens we ever met was a young guy who was bummed at being unable to find shorts that could hold up to his skateboarding antics. So, he figured out how to make his own! Pretty soon, he was making shorts for all his buds. And, they we're pushing him for sewing lessons.



Tip #4 - Make sure they start out on a quality machine.

We've stressed this over and over on Sew4Home, but that's only because *it's so important*. The better the tools, the less frustrated you are, and the more creative you become. Don't drag some funky old machine out of the closet or pick up something at the thrift store. Buy from a reputable independent dealer who can offer support. A quality machine is even more important for a beginner. You don't want them to lose confidence and think it's their fault if something is too hard to accomplish, when it's really a bad machine!



Once you know the ropes (or would that be 'the threads'), you can often figure out how to work around a machine's idiosyncrasies. But, if you're just starting out, you need the basic functions to operate flawlessly, so you can focus on technique. Take a look at our Buying Guide tutorials for what to look for in a machine:

[The Top Five Things to Remember About How to Shop for & Buy a Sewing Machine](#)

[Top Ten Advanced Sewing Machine Features: What to Look for When You're Shopping for Your Dream Machine](#)

Our current favorite beginner machine is [Janome's Magnolia 7330](#). With thirty stitches, including six buttonholes, it has a nice variety. And it has some helpful automatic features like Auto Lock and Needle Up/Down. But what's really great about this machine for teens is that it's electronic. That means when you select a stitch, the machine automatically goes to the optimal default settings. On a mechanical machine, you have to stop and do these settings for each stitch. It's not difficult to figure out, but your teen is going to want to choose a stitch and start going. It's what they're used to with all their smartphones, tablets

and laptops. If you want a few additional features and stitches, check out the [Janome DC2015](#).



Tip #5 - Create a comfortable workspace

You don't need to dedicate a whole room to the teen sewing experience. In fact, they may feel most at home in their own bedroom or at the kitchen table. Make sure there's a large enough space to spread out the project and good lighting. Gather a few basic notions and tools: a cutting mat, pins, seam gauge, ruler, tape measure, seam ripper, scissors, and they'll need access to the iron and ironing board.



They need to make a bit of a mess when they get started. And be warned – homework, friends, sports, and more will still intrude, so pick an area where it's okay to leave things set up over a day or two.



Tip #6 - Allow them the freedom to make mistakes

Be there to help and pass on your experience and expertise, but don't jump in to solve every problem. Remember those words they screamed as a toddler, "By MYself!!" They're just as true today, and if you let them work through a tough spot, they'll better remember the lesson next time around.

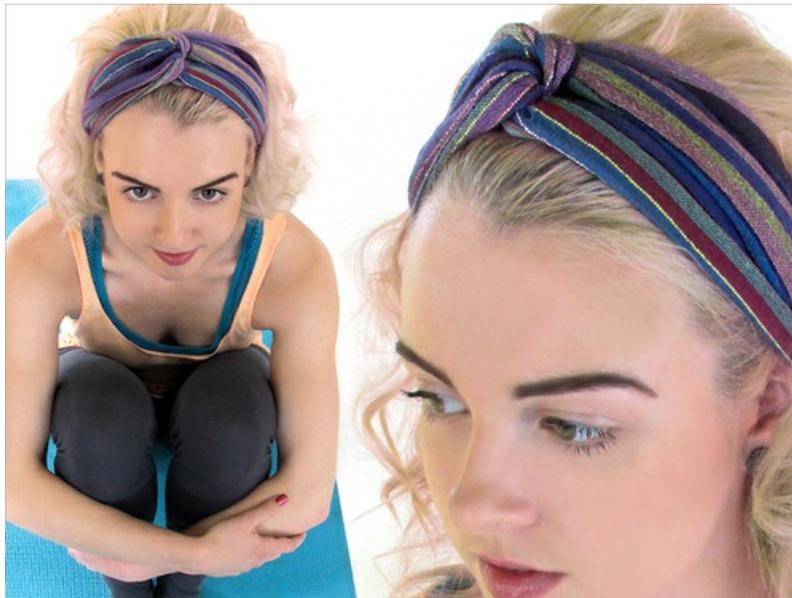
As with everything in teen-world, things are often better with friends. Encourage your teen to invite a friend or two over for a sewing project afternoon. Before the holidays, they'd have great fun making scarves or belts or bags (or skater shorts) for all their other friends.



I've always been a little cynical of that over-used phrase, *"the gift that keeps on giving."* But in the case of sewing and teens, a machine and a couple of lessons really is something they'll build on and benefit from for years to come.

Tip #7: Make sure your teen picks something he or she *really* wants to make.

Let them decide the project, the fabric, and the embellishments. It might not be something that floats your boat, but that doesn't matter. For a project to capture and keep teens' interest from start to finish, it has to be something they envision. Some good beginner projects for teens might be: a pillow or blanket for their beds, pajama pants, a wardrobe accessory, or a carry bag for school.



We asked our own teen panel to select a few projects they thought would be cool to make. Some are super easy, others a bit more challenging, but each of the "sweet sixteen" listed below would be rewarding and fun!

[Wallet Style Gift Card Case](#)

[Vintage Hawaiian Bark Cloth Totes](#)

[Pyramid Bean Bag Chair](#)

[Half Apron & Matching Napkins in Pre-Hemmed Toweling](#)

[Soothing Eye Pillows](#)

[Shower Curtain with Pom Pom Valance](#)

[Big, Soft Sweatshirt Knit Blanket](#)

[Stretchy Yoga Headbands: Pleated & Turban Styles](#)

[Oversize Zippered Clutch](#)

[Messenger Style Brief](#)

[Woven Border Print Pillow with Poms](#)

[Hot Dots Pinwheel Coasters](#)

[Sparkling Knit Infinity Scarf](#)

[Yoga Mat Sling Bag](#)

[Hexagon Pillow with Wraparound Cording Plus Round & Square Companions](#)

[French Market Tote with Chanel Style Chain Handles](#)

[Sewing Tips & Tricks](#)

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