Sewing Tools List

Portable Sewing Machine w/ pedal and power cord
Sewing Machine Manual Please bring this, it can help answer questions.

Bobbins to fit your machine
Machine needles, I recommend Schmetz Brand
       Universal style, Sizes 10, 12, 14
Small Screwdriver
3 in One oil, or some other oil meant for sewing machines

Iron and Ironing board or pad. These are in most households and are absolutely essential to sewing well. You will not need an iron or an ironing board for class as I have several.

Sewing Box
It can be a formal Sewing Basket or a Decorative tin or Plastic lidded container. Something that will hold all your small sewing tools and notions. A small tool or tackle box works really well. Home Depot and Lowes have some plastic ones for $5. Pearl Arts & Crafts has a very nice craft box you may want to check out. They are located in Central Square.

Pencil, pen and notebook (8 1/2" x 11”)

8” Dressmaking Shears, Bent Handle, Brands: Gingher Dressmaking Shears (Chrome, not the plastic with the metal blade insets) Marks Mundial Cushion Soft Lightweight Shears

Thread Clippers This tool is small and works by squeezing the sides to cut. This makes it very easy to pick up and use. You don’t risk cutting the fabric as easily as with the large shears mentioned above. My favorite clipper is made by Clover. You can buy them at Clotilde for $12.50. Or, I just sent for another brand of clippers at a discount rate, so you can buy one from me for $3)

Paper cutting scissors, inexpensive scissors from an office supply store

Handsewing Needles, I prefer John James English Needles. They are easily available at quilting shops and Fabric Place. (The package is white paper and has Black and Yellow stripes.) There are many types of hand sewing needles. The best all-around needle is called a “Sharp.” But, you may find it handy to buy a variety pack that includes needles for darning, quilting, tapestry, embroidery, etc. You can buy a variety pack of 50 needles for as little as $3 from Clotilde Sewing Notions (they are also available at the Quilter’s Way in West Concord.)

Thimble, a very personal choice. There are many types on the market. Buy one after you have a chance to try a few. I prefer a leather thimble called a Nimble Thimble. It fits comfortably over the tip of your middle finger (not your index or ring finger) and has a space
at the tip for your fingernail to stick out. I take an XL in glove size but find that the Medium thimble fits the best.

**Pins,** I prefer the long (1 3/8”), white glass-headed variety (you can also get them in red, white or multi-colored). They are sharp, easy to use and the iron does not melt the pin head. Usually, you want to buy slender pins referred to as “silk” pins because they will penetrate most types of fabrics easily. You can purchase IBC glass-headed pins from Clotilde. If you buy a “Grabbit,” mentioned below, it usually comes with a set of pins. But, they are of a much inferior quality to the glass-headed. Also, available at most fabric stores, except JoAnn Fabrics.

**Pin Cushion,** **Box or Magnetic Pin Pad,** I prefer the magnetic pad, then the box and lastly the cushion. For fast pin access, the cushion is impossible to use because you have to pull the pins out and stick them back in. A small box makes the pins easy to pick up and drop back in, but if it gets tipped onto the floor, there is a lot of wasted time picking up pins. If you would like to use a box, I find that the best one has a rounded bottom inside. **The best magnetic pin cushion is the “Grabbit.”** Any other brand just does not hold the pins very well. It does come with it’s won set of pins, but they are not very good. So, do buy the glass head pins I mentioned above. (And you can buy a telescoping magnetic wand to help you pick them up when they spill on the floor, from the Home Sew Catalog.)

**My favorite way of storing pins is a Magnetic Pin Pad** (usually known as a “Grabbit”), available for $8 from Clotilde. You can also find them in all fabric stores. They will not work with brass or stainless steel pins. But, the pins I recommend, do work with the “Grabbit.”

**Sewing Gauge,** this is a 6” ruler with a blue or red plastic slider in the middle that can slide up and down most of the length of the ruler. They only cost about $1.50 and can be found at any fabric store. **One of the most essential sewing tools** and one of the cheapest.

**Seam Ripper,** they are inexpensive and are available in 3” or 6” lengths. Get what feels most comfortable in your hand (the 3” length becomes 6” long when you put the cap on the end.) **You will need this tool** and it is less than $2. If you don’t mind spending $5, Clover makes a really nice seam ripper that is strong, fine and sharp.

**6 ft retractable tape measure,** an optional but very handy item that only costs about $3. Not to be confused with a metal tape measure from the hardware store. The one that I am referring to is a flexible, coated fabric, tape measure. The casing is usually plastic.

**PLEASE,........**

Before coming to the first session, go through all your sewing items and mark them with your initials or name. This includes your sewing machine, cords, pedal, etc. You’d be surprised how easy it is to mix yours up with someone elses’. And if you leave it here, it will help me know whose it is.
Quilter’s Tools Addendum

**Olfa Rotary Cutter** I prefer the Olfa brand and the size known as the Heavy Duty. Olfa makes multiple sizes from very small blade to a Jumbo size. The one I recommend is in the middle (45 mm). The blades are literally razor sharp. But, this is the most essential tool of quilting. It is the most accurate and fast way possible to cut the many pieces needed to make a quilt. Olfa now makes an ergonomic cutter with two safety features, an automatic blade guard and a locking mechanism to keep the blade covered when stored. I recommend ergonomic one for first –time users. These are expensive, especially the blade replacements (get the 5pk from Atlanta for the best price.) The best thing to do, is to order any rotary supplies from tailoring supply catalogs like Solo Slide Fastener and Atlanta Thread & Supply. Get their print catalogs. The online for both is terrible. Ordering by phone is fine and their customer service is excellent.

**Self-healing Cutting Mat** Again, I recommend the Olfa brand mat. I have never used the Omnigrid Brand, but I love their rulers, so they are probably just as good to use. These mats are essential to protect both the cutter and cutting surface. It can be used on either side and the grid is nice to have available. Though, when it comes to accurate cutting for quilting, you have to rely on a good ruler (which is accurate within .005”) rather than the grid on the mat, which is not accurate enough for quilting. For quilting, 18” x 24” is adequate. But, if you plan to do any clothing or Home decorating, the larger 23” x 35” is far more useful. As with the rotary cutters, you can pay half of retail by ordering from Atlanta or Solo.

**Ruler(s)** I love the Omnigrid ruler. It has both yellow and black markings that show up well on light or dark fabrics. I would recommend the 6” x 24” and the 6” x 12” rulers to start and maybe a 12.5” sq. size. There are so many to choose from for shape and size. It really depends on what you want to cut. But, these sizes I have found to be the most useful. Recently, Omnigrid has come out with the “Omnigrip” ruler. It has an integrated, non-slip back. The markings are slightly different than the original Omnigrid. So, you would have to try them to see which you prefer. I prefer the yellow Omnigrid as it is marked in even inches. What I mean is that the ruler is 6” wide whereas the Omnigrip ruler is 6.5” wide, confusing.

**Invisigrip** The rulers must be clear to be able to see the fabric to cut, but they tend to slip easily unless they have something on the back to stop that from happening. Omnigrid came out with this clear plastic which adheres to to back of the ruler with static cling rather than adhesive. You can’t even see it once it is on the ruler. The package has a sheet 12” x 36”, so you can do several rulers with one $7 package.

**Flower Head Pins** There are some times when it is helpful to secure several layers of fabric before cutting. These pins have long shafts and flat heads that allow you to place the ruler on top of them without the ruler shifting out of place.

**Freezer Paper** I have found this to be an invaluable aid in both applique and precise piecing, as in the Mariner’s compass. It is paper that is coated with plastic on one side. It can be ironed onto the fabric and used as a template that is easy to remove later. I have even used it for paper foundation piecing. It is made by Reynolds wrap. You will find it in the wrap section of the grocery store or in quilting shops. I like to get the widest available.
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Aluminum Rulers  You can get this type of ruler at sewing suppliers ($34 + S/H,) but if you go to your neighborhood hardware store the price is much, much less and there is no shipping charge and you will pay closer to $13 for the same item. Usually the 72” ruler is 2” wide and made of a smooth aluminum with inches marked on both edges. They also have other sizes that come in handy. I would definitely recommend a 36” x 1.5” ruler and a 48” x 2” ruler. I use all of them constantly. (I finally bought a 2” x 60” ruler for home dec but could only find it at a sewing supply house.)

Zipper/Cording Foot  Most sewing machines have a zipper/cording foot included. Make sure that you have one because it is essential when sewing welting (piping or cording) and zippers. If your machine has a snap on zipper foot, it most likely will not work to do cording. I only know of the upper priced Pfaff brand machines as having a snap-on foot that will work. I will show you in class what foot I mean.

Retractable Metal Tape Measure  Again, the hardware store is the best place to shop for this item. Get a minimum of 10 ft or as much as a 16 ft long tape. If you are serious about doing a lot of window treatments, I just discovered a “Center Finding tape,” put out by Lee Valley tools. The top edge of the tape has normal graduations, while the opposite edge has 1/2 scale graduations. To divide 57-5/8” in half, just read 57-5/8” from the bottom scale – it's that simple. It was only $12.00 for a 16ft size. Very helpful when you feel math impaired.