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TEXTILE CARE...

Keeping Clothes in Service

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Keeping your family's clothes in service is one way to get the most from your clothing dollar. The service your clothes give largely depends on selection and care. Buying for durability, touching up readymades, and repairing as needed help keep wardrobes in wearing condition. Clothes will be ready as needed.

Buying for DURABILITY often saves time and money later on. That "ounce of prevention" in clothes repair begins as you select clothes. Built-in toughness helps many items withstand active wear. Work clothes and sports clothes especially contain the durability features.

Use determines "life expectancy"

Different clothes receive different wear. So we cannot expect the same length of service from each item. Individuals within the same family wear the same item to different extent. Consider the different amounts of wear given jeans by small children, teenagers and adults. The *life expectancy* of clothes varies from item to item as well as from wearer to wearer.

The National Institute of Drycleaning, which has estimated the rate of wear for many clothing items, reports that the "life expectancy" of a woman's sports blouse is two years; the "life expectancy" of a woman's dress blouse is three years. The "life expectancy" of women's shoes varies from one year for work shoes to two years for dress shoes. The wearing life of a child's coat is rated for two years, play clothes, one year. Although the length of service expected varies in clothes, some features help to withstand the effects of wear.

So consider USE when you buy — what kind of wear will you give this garment? Look for features which will provide durability if strenuous *use* is expected.

Fabric usually indicates strength

Look at the *fabric* itself for indications of strength. A closely woven fabric usually is stronger than a loosely woven one. The greater the number of lengthwise and crosswise yards per inch the stronger the fabric. (Generally speaking, the longest wearing sheet is the one with more yarns per inch.) When all other factors are equal, a balanced weave with yarns of similar size and number is stronger than an unbalanced weave in which heavy yarns have been combined with finer yarns. The heavier or stronger yarns may wear the finer or weaker yarns with which it has been woven. A "slub" weave such as shantung may not be as durable as broadcloth, a balanced weave.

Some fabrics woven with novelty yarns such as bouclé, loop, curl and nub yarns have an unusual texture or appearance. *Will these yarns easily pull out or be snagged by an object?* Usually, the less the novelty effect, the more durable the fabric.

Check label for fiber

Check the *label* for fiber content. Although fiber is but one factor in determining fabric strength, the stronger fiber will produce the stronger fabric when all other factors are equal.

Some fibers such as nylon are noted for their strength; cotton has good wearing properties. A blend of some fibers in certain proportions may have desired durability. Cotton blended with 15 to 30 percent nylon provides good wearing properties such as abrasion resistance. Cotton socks and dungarees are often reinforced with nylon.

Inspect other construction features

Look for these construction features for other types of durability:

— Double stitching for reinforcement at pocket corners of aprons and skirts may mean resistance against pulling.

— A set-in sleeve instead of an all-in-one sleeve for more ease in lifting, reaching. (A *gusset* in an all-in-one sleeve may provide needed ease.)

— Double stitched seams or felled seams for work pants, skirts and jackets.

— Vulcanized double knees (a layer of heavy cotton fused to the underside of the fabric at the knee area) for extending the wearing life of dungarees and jeans.

TOUCH UP RIGHT AWAY

A few stitches which reinforce a new garment often pay dividends in longer wear and an attractive appearance. Also, difficult mending jobs may be eliminated later with this extra precaution. The efficient time to reinforce clothes you buy is *before* wearing. Check these areas:

Seams: Narrow or loosely stitched seams pull out easily with wearing or washing. Strengthen first by machine-stitching a seam about 1/16 inch deeper than the original seam. Use a medium to small stitch or about 14 to 16 stitches per inch. A second row of stitching near the cut edge or zig zag stitching along the edge helps prevent fraying if the fabric tends to fray.

Underarm seams of raglan or kimono sleeves receive strain and should be reinforced. One method is to apply tape by first pressing seam flat and basting narrow tape on top. Stitch tape along the seam line by hand or by machine. The tape used in this way reinforces the seam.

Dangling threads: Fasten thread ends by pulling to the inside and tying securely; if long enough, fasten with a few over-and-over stitches.

Plackets: Overcast, stitch or clip any loose or fraying edges that might become caught in a slide fastener.

Pocket corners: Any pocket that will receive much use should be reinforced at corners where strain is greatest. Reinforce by stitching narrow tape to the underside of the pocket in line with the corners.

Fastenings: Loose buttons should be secured and frayed or weak buttonholes reworked. Eyelets in belts can be reinforced with a buttonhole stitch. Check snaps, hooks and eyes and secure as necessary.

REPAIR FOR LONGER WEAR

Mending Supplies

Keep the supplies you need in a box, basket, or large drawer.

Include in your mending supplies:

— Needles of different sizes
— Different sizes and colors of thread and darning cottons
— Pieces of material for patches, iron-on patches
— Scraps of lining, crepe, net, cotton twill tape and seam tape or ribbon for reinforcements
— Other sewing supplies include pins and pin cushion, thimble, tape measure, razor blade, small ruler and sharp scissors
— Buttons, snaps, hooks and eyes

SUGGESTIONS FOR MENDING

1. Be alert for needed repairs when laundering and ironing clothes. Strengthen weak spots in garments and repair breaks or tears when first noticed.

2. Choose a method for the result it will give. For places that get hard wear or strain, a durable repair is essential. In some areas, an inconspicuous repair may be important. Sometimes appearance may need to be sacrificed for a strong mend, durability for an invisible repair.

3. Match the repair fabric as closely as possible to the fabric itself in direction of grain, nap, pattern, and length of stitch. Lengthwise yarns in a patch should match crosswise and lengthwise yarns in the material.

4. Use thread that matches or blends in with the material. Thread which appears to be a shade darker than the fabric will blend well. (For hand darning of woolens or other heavy fabrics, pull yarns from the fabric if possible.) Use lengthwise yarns for darning lengthwise, crosswise yarns for crosswise darning. Yarns or threads of different colors give a multi-colored effect especially suitable for mending tweeds.

5. Many repairs can be done with the sewing machine. Tears, holes and thin places in work clothes and household linens can be quickly mended and reinforced in this way.

6. The service of a professional reweaver may be required to repair some garments depending on a person's time, skill and value of garment to be repaired.

MACHINE MENDING

Set-In Patch

The set-in patch is a machine stitched patch suggested for repairing tears in jeans and heavy work clothes. All stitching is done on the wrong side, a helpful feature when patching the inside of pant legs. legs.

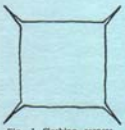

Fig. 1 Slashing corners for set-in patch.

1. Cut away the worn material around the hole, following the straight threads of cloth to make a square or rectangular hole. Cut diagonally ½ inch into each corner. (See Figure 1) Crease seam allowance back against the wrong side of the garment.

2. Turn garment wrong side out.

3. Place a piece of matching material right side up on the machine, with a lengthwise edge next to the presser foot. Do not try to cut the patch the exact size needed, allow at least an inch allowance. The upper right edges of the patch should be on straight grain.

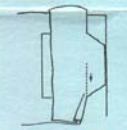

Fig. 2 Machine stitching of set-in patch.

4. Place one side — a lengthwise edge — of the trimmed hole down onto the lengthwise edge of the patch. This brings right side of the garment against right side of patch.

5. Stitch on creased seam line, beginning at center and stitching to corner. (See Figure 2)

6. Leave the needle down in the cloth, raise the presser foot, and swing the garment and patch around to the next side. Push the material well up to the needle at the corner before beginning a new side, in order to avoid weak corners. Match the grain of the seam allowance to that of the patch, lower the presser foot, and stitch on the crease to the next corner. Repeat until all sides are stitched, overlapping stitching at end.

7. Make a second row of stitching near the raw edge of the seam, stitching diagonally across each corner as you come to it. A slight pucker is permissible as you should stitch well in on the corners to make them strong.

8. Trim away the patch except at the corners, which should be left square.

9. Turn garment right side out and press patch flat. For extra reinforcement, topstitch patch on outer side.

Fig. 3 Machine darning for worn spots and tears.

Machine Darning For Worn Spots And Tears

Machine darning is used especially for heavy work clothes, sheets, pillow cases and towels.

Use embroidery hoops around the area of the fabric being repaired. The hoops hold the fabric taut and make it easy for you to guide your work.

Feed dog (teeth under needle of machine) must be put out of operation for this work. Check your instruction book for directions.

Test tension before beginning, loosen if necessary. If the fabric is soft, baste a backing of lawn or organdy on wrong side.

Place fabric in hoops; position under needle. Draw both bobbin and upper threads to the top of the fabric. Lower presser bar.

Hold both thread ends as you begin to stitch. Move the hoops slowly to make short stitch lengths suitable to the fabric. Stitch backward and forward over the area to be darned, following the lengthwise threads. Avoid stiffness by spacing the stitching lines slightly apart. Turn the hoops and stitch crosswise, following the crosswise threads in the same manner. (See Figure 3)

Machine-Darned Patch

A machine-darned patch is durable but is quite noticeable. It may be used on work shirts, overalls and play clothes where an inconspicuous appearance is not important.

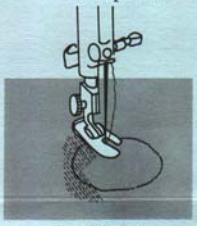

Fig. 4 Machine-darned patch.

Adjust sewing machine for darning.

Cut away all ragged edges to make a round hole. Lay a piece of matched cloth underneath pin and baste in place.

On right side, stich back and forth over the cut edge until it is firm and secure, with no rough ends. Cut away extra material on underside. (See Figure 4)

Catch-Stitch Patch

Fig. 5 Catch-stitched patch.

The catch-stitch or stockenette patch is especially good for knitted underwear such as T-shirts because it will "give" as the garment itself "gives".

Cut away worn and thin section around the hole. Cut a patch from a firm part of a discarded knitted garment. Lay patch underneath hole. Allow at least an inch lap all the way around the opening. Baste matching the ribs of material. Do not turn the edges under.

Using mercerized darning cotton, first catch-stitch the garment to the patch around the edge of the hole, then turn the garment and catch-stitch the patch to the material on the wrong side. (See Figure 5)

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