

An illustration of a light blue clipboard with a silver clip at the top. It contains a checklist with three items, each preceded by a checkmark. The first two checkmarks are dark blue, and the third is light blue. The text "10 things a beginner Sewist" is overlaid on the clipboard. The number "10" is large and dark blue. "things a" is in a smaller, dark blue font. "beginner" is in a large, bold, red font. "Sewist" is in a large, dark blue font.

10 things a beginner Sewist

NEEDS TO KNOW





Hello!

I'm Nicki Hibbits. The sewist, quilter, and content creator at [The Ruffled Purse](https://theruffledpurse.com) where it is my goal to support, empower, and inspire busy people to discover the joy of sewing.

When you start out to learn something new there is always a feeling of excitement. There also tends to be a learning curve that includes new vocabulary, knowledge, and skills. As a result, you may quickly realize how much you don't know, find yourself overwhelmed and disappointed in how your project looks, and stop before really getting started.

Sewing should be FUN, not stressful. So to keep up your momentum as you begin your sewing journey, I've put together this checklist of topics all beginners should know. This will help you build a strong foundation no matter what type of sewing you want to do.

You don't need to master all the information at once. Instead, use the checklist as a reference for what you can do to improve your sewing and build confidence one project at a time. With the info included in the checklist, you will be able to move through the learning curve faster and your sewing experiences will be much more fun and enjoyable.

Let your sewing adventures begin!

💖 Nicki

Beginner Sewists Need to Know ...

☐ **How to Use a Sewing Machine**

You want to be super comfortable with your machine. The instructional manual for your machine is invaluable. Use it to help you learn the following:

- ☐ main parts of the sewing machine
- ☐ winding a bobbin
- ☐ inserting a bobbin
- ☐ threading the machine
- ☐ selecting stitches
- ☐ adjusting stitch length and width
- ☐ adjusting tension
- ☐ general cleaning and maintenance

☐ **Basic Sewing Techniques**

There are 4 basic sewing techniques you need to know. These include:

- ☐ reverse stitch (also called the backstitch)
- ☐ sewing a straight line (to maintain an even seam allowance)
- ☐ pivoting corners
- ☐ sewing curves

☐ How to Use a Seam Ripper

It's inevitable. At some point, you'll find yourself needing to rip out stitches. In fact, no matter how much sewing experience you have, the seam ripper is one tool you never want to be without.

To learn more about this tool, check out my article: [Seam Ripping: What You Need to Know](#).

☐ How to Select Fabric That's Right for Your Project

Fabric can make or break your project. Things to consider when you are selecting fabric are:

- ☐ woven vs. knit fabric
- ☐ the fabric weight (light, medium, or heavy)
- ☐ directional print

☐ How to Prepare Fabric for Cutting

There are some things you can do with your fabric before you start cutting that will improve the look of your finished project. These include:

- ☐ prewashing the fabric
- ☐ squaring up the fabric
- ☐ placing the pattern pieces on the fabric to reduce waste

HELPFUL LINKS

[How to Square Up Fabric](#) (article)

[How to Square Fabric](#) (video)

☐ How to Cut Accurately

Whether you're cutting out a pattern or pieces for a quilt, your ability to correctly cut the size and shape of the fabric will affect how your finished project looks.

To secure pattern pieces to fabric you can:

- ☐ use pins
- ☐ use pattern weights
- ☐ trace the pattern pieces

Cutting tools include:

- ☐ scissors for fabric only
- ☐ rotary cutters

HELPFUL LINKS

[Essential Guide: Pins for Sewing](#)

[How to Make Pattern Weights](#)

[How to Use a Rotary Cutter](#)

☐ How to Press Seams

Using an iron to press seams as you sew elevates the look of your project. Pressing makes a project look professional. Seams can be pressed:

- ☐ open
- ☐ to the side
- ☐ to get a crisp edge

☐ Basic Troubleshooting

Troubleshooting is a necessary skill when you sew and often involves problems with your sewing machine. Fortunately, many issues can be solved quickly, and common problems have similar solutions.

Common problems:

- ☐ skipped stitches
- ☐ breaking thread
- ☐ loops on the back of the fabric

What to do:

- ☐ rethread the top thread
- ☐ remove the bobbin and then put it in again
- ☐ change the needle; make sure it's inserted correctly
- ☐ check the instruction manual for specific issues

Tip: When troubleshooting, try one solution at a time. This way you will know exactly how you were able to solve the problem.

Needles & Thread



You can easily fall down the rabbit hole when you start looking at needles and thread. The relationship between the two is important because together they affect the appearance of the stitches. However, as a beginner you can focus on just a few things:

- ☐ Universal needles will work for most beginner projects. (sizes 80/12 or 90/14)
- ☐ An all-purpose cotton or polyester thread will work for most beginner projects.
- ☐ Needles can bend, develop burrs, and become dull. They need to be replaced every so often.

☐ Machine Needles

As your skills and confidence increase, you will want to start looking at how needle and thread combinations can improve your sewing.

- ☐ There are different types of needles for different fabrics as well as for specialty sewing (e.g. quilting, topstitching).
- ☐ Sewing machine needles come in different sizes.
(larger number = bigger diameter = larger hole)
- ☐ Larger needles can accommodate heavier thread. Smaller needles pair well with finer thread.

☐ Thread

Thread is available in a variety of types, fibers, weights, and thicknesses. When selecting thread for a project, consider

- ☐ the thickness, smoothness, and fuzziness of the thread
- ☐ the fabric you're using
- ☐ heat tolerance (from an iron) if using synthetic thread

Questions?

This checklist is just a starting point to help you navigate the learning curve sewing requires. As you work through the list and begin to do projects, I know you will have questions and I want to help.

Email me at nicki@theruffledpurse.com with your questions. You can include photos and short videos too. I read every email and will reply back.

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