

Money-Saving Make-Overs



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A limited clothing budget can be extended considerably by sewing clothing for the family, especially children's clothing. Additional savings can be made by using the fabrics in garments that are out of style or outgrown. Many discarded garments may lack eye appeal, but they have a great deal of wear left in them. Old as they may look, if the fabrics are still good, delightful children's garments can be made from them.

It may involve more work to make over a garment than sew one with new fabric, but it can be a challenging and satisfying experience. It is a challenge to transform a used item into an attractive garment. Some make-overs will tax your wits more than others. The satisfactions one derives from creating something from practically nothing are both personal and financial.

The Question: To Alter, Hand-Down, or Make-Over?

Check your family's closets for clothing that was not worn during the past year. Identify those items which are not worn out. Are they not being worn because they are ill-fitting, outgrown, or out of style? Could they be altered slightly or remodelled to make them fashion-right? If the garment is a child's garment, could it be passed down to a younger child? If so, be sure it fits the younger child properly. Perhaps the garment could be changed by adding a new trim, applying decorative stitching by machine or hand embroidery, or writing the child's name on the garment with "liquid embroidery." These would give a feeling of "newness" to the garment and personalize it for the child. However, adding a trimming to change the appearance of a garment will not compensate for a hand-me-down that does not fit. Consider making over those garments that are out of style and cannot be altered or remodeled satisfactorily.

Thrift shops and rummage sales are another excellent source of clothing for make-overs. For a few cents and some of your time and ingenuity you can provide your child with clothing of better quality than it may be possible for you to purchase ready-made.

Are Make-Overs Worthwhile?

It depends on you. Ask yourself the following questions before attempting a make-over project. Your answers should be in the affirmative.

1. Do I have the skill to produce a satisfactory garment—one that the child will enjoy wearing?
 2. Do I have the time? Is my time better spent doing something else for the family?
 3. Do I enjoy doing this kind of work? Even though I prefer to sew on new fabric, will I keep a positive attitude toward this project? (The child's attitude toward the garment may reflect your attitude.)
 4. Is the fabric worth the time and effort involved? The fabric must be sturdy enough to withstand hard wear in order to justify the time and effort spent to construct the garment. Hold the fabric up to the light to determine if worn areas exist. Usually they are localized and you may be able to avoid them or mend them. If the right side shows signs of wear or is faded, perhaps the wrong side could be used for the right side. Good quality fabrics in cast-off garments mean better quality make-overs.
 5. Is the fabric suitable for a child and the type of garment planned or needed? Choose soft, smooth fabric which will not irritate delicate skins. Avoid fabric that is too heavy or bulky for a child to wear. Do not use those that look too old for the child, especially large prints. Dark colors may be brightened by using bright colors, gay plaids or some new trimming to give a bright new youthful look to a made-over garment. If the fabric is worth reusing, it may be worth the small cost of some new trim.
- Select a pattern with several smaller pieces rather than a few large pieces. It is easier to sew a garment having a few large pieces, but designs with several smaller pieces will be easier to layout and cut.
6. Is there enough fabric for the garment planned? Usually this can be determined by

laying the pattern on the garment before ripping it. Examine the garment carefully and plan how you will use each piece. If some pieces are too small, you may be able to piece that section, thereby changing the design line of the garment. For example, you may add a yoke or seam the sleeves in two places. Be sure any change in design harmonizes with the style of the garment. Piecings can also be made in out-of-the-way places such as under the arm, in seams under pleats, or in facings and hems. When piecing it is best to cut the pieces with the lengthwise or crosswise threads matching exactly. This will make the seam less noticeable when it is pressed open. Sometimes it may be better to select the pattern after the garment has been ripped apart, because you can judge the size and shape of each piece better.

If there is not sufficient fabric, you might combine it with another fabric of harmonizing color or texture. If possible, combine two used fabrics. New fabric may make the old look shabby. If the same colors are used, have a contrast in texture. Do not use the same quantity of two colors. Let one color predominate. Also, do not combine a heavy fabric with a light weight one, nor those that require different washing treatment.

7. Will the newly remade garment be used? The make-over should not require too much time or money in proportion to service the child will get from the completed garment.

Recondition the Fabric

Since make-overs are a money-saving idea, keep the cost down as much as possible by reconditioning the fabric at home.

Remove and save buttons, snaps, zippers, and trimmings. When deciding whether to use the trim, make sure it is suitable for a child's garment and the correct proportion for a small garment. If possible, plan to use the lining and interfacings.

Rip seams and hems. Use a seam ripper or cut a stitch about every two or three inches and pull the stitches out from both sides of the seam. If there is plenty of fabric, save time by cutting close to the seams.

Do not rip buttonholes until you are certain that they can be used.

Brush dirt and lint from the inside of hems.

Use a solvent to remove grease or oil spots.

Machine stitch next to the edge of all the pieces that may fray or ravel. This will also help to retain the shape of the pieces while pressing.

Old clothes are usually neglected in their last days. Carefully wash those you are going to use. Clean fabrics are easier and more pleasant to use. Worn areas are more evident if the garment is clean, too. Wash wool and delicate fabrics by hand. Most other fabrics may be washed in the machine. Wash the garments purchased at thrift shops and sales in a disinfectant after they have been ripped. The disinfectant may be used during the regular washing process. Clean the linings and interfacings in the same manner as the garment fabric.

Press carefully with the grain of the fabric. Refer to OSU Cooperative Extension Service Bulletin, Pressing Pointers, #F-232, for specific information about pressing fabrics of various fiber content.

Laying on the Pattern

There are no set rules for laying on the pattern pieces. Each make-over is an individual problem. This is part of the challenge of make-overs. You must contend with oddly shaped pieces instead of one long piece. However, there are certain general guidelines to follow.

Treat the fabric as if it were new, handling it as little as possible. Locate a lengthwise thread if a selvage is not available to determine the grainline. A prominent yarn in the cloth, a woven stripe or a check are good guides for locating the grainline. When it is located, mark the grainline with chalk on the wrong side and use this line as a guide. Mark holes, weak, worn, and strained areas by basting around them with contrasting thread. Avoid these areas whenever possible, or consider covering or camouflaging them with applique, if appropriate, a pocket or some type of self-fabric trim.

As much as possible, pin corresponding pieces, such as sleeves, together, right sides facing. This will save time when cutting out the pattern.

A pattern layout is like a puzzle. Try several arrangements. It may be necessary to outline the pattern pieces on the garment pieces with chalk or pins as you try various arrangements. If the fabric is napped or has a one-way design, be sure all pieces run in the same direction. Do not cut until all the pieces are placed and you have carefully checked them. This is the time to decide whether to use details such as buttonholes or set-in pockets.

Seam allowances can be narrower than 5/8" if there is limited fabric, but be sure to mark those seamlines where you could not cut a regular seam allowance. Piecing seams can be made to look as though they were meant to be there if emphasized

by decorative stitching as in a lapped slot or top-stitched seam.

Making the Garment

Although the fabric may be old, the garment is going to look like new. Therefore, much depends upon how carefully you tailor it. Follow your unit method of sewing so that you handle each piece as

little as possible. The unit method means that you work on each section of the garment as much as possible before you join it to another section.

Press each unit as you work with it and always press the seams open before joining another section to it. Don't fold the cloth more than necessary. As soon as the shoulders and side seams are made, hang the garment on a hanger while working on the other parts.

Ideas for Creating New Fashions from Old

<i>From these:</i>	<i>Make these:</i>
Man's shirt	shirt or blouse, dresses (sizes 1-4), slip; playclothes, rompers, or sunsuits
Man's suit	girl's or boy's suit, tailored dress, jumper, jacket
Overalls or jeans	child's overalls
Men's pants	boy's pants, skirt, overalls
Woman's suit	dress, jumper, skirt, suit, coat
Woman's skirt	girl's coat, dress, jumper, or skirt (1-4); boy's slacks or jacket
Woman's dress (if design is not too large)	jumper, blouse, dress, skirt
Coats	coat, car coat, jacket
Bathrobes	child's bathrobe
Woman's slip	panties, half slip, slip, gown or robe
Imitation or leather coat	vest, hat, house slippers, purse
Sweater	mittens from the sleeves, dress, weskit, cap, child's sweater
Sweatshirt	bibs
Undershirt	panties, nightgown
Vest	weskit
Terry cloth shirt or bathrobe	bathrobe, sport shirt
Knit dress	child's coat
Shower curtain	poncho, raincoat, rain hat