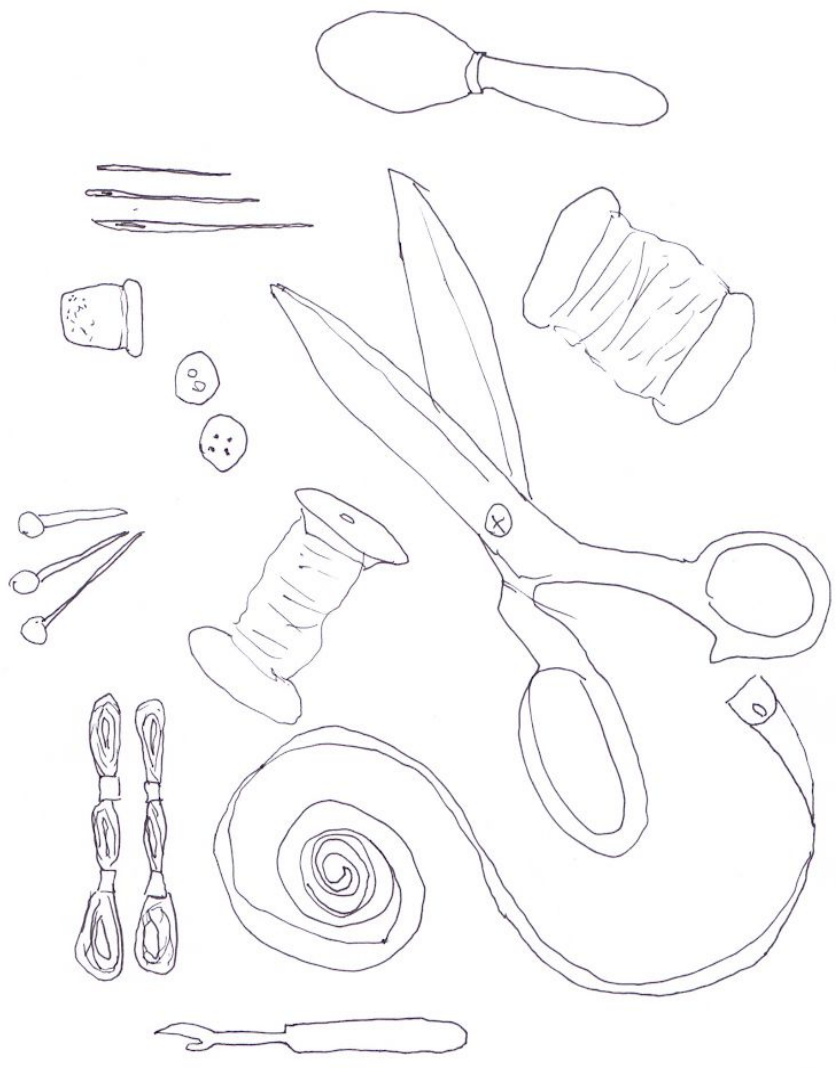


Dare Fo Repair?!

Guide



by Ay Ling Thung

Introduction

The 'stoplap' has inspired me to repair clothing, start this project and create this guidebook and exhibition. Dare to repair?! or Care to repair?! is a guidebook to various repairing techniques, guiding through the basics of clothing repair in an easy to understand manner. It is made to lend a hand in the 'Art of repair'.

Although there are many different repairing methods, this guidebook will touch on a few of those.

The 'Art of visible repair' does not seek to restore, but rather to show repairs intentional and recreate. Repairs as part of the design and as part of the natural life cycle of a product. The 'Art of invisible repair' is more closely related to the 'stoplap'. The 'stoplap' was made by young girls ranging from 12 till 18 years old. In the 17th century till the 19th century girls learned skills to repair in class or by a private teacher. Good teachers were both praised and feared. Many of them had strict rules and anything less than perfect was seen as inferior. When a girl got class from a well know teacher she was more likely to be able to know the skills to repair and embroidery. Samplers (merklappen) and 'stoplappen' were both made during class. Both were made during practice. After a girl finished her 'merkklap' or 'stoplap' she had proof of her skills. Going for a job interview she took her (merk- and) 'stoplap' with her to show her skills.

Labour was cheap compared to fabrics, this is why repairing was important in a time when fabrics were valuable. Making the 'stoplap' darns is a very precise and time consuming practice. By weaving the repair into the original fabric they created a very strong repair. People also tried to make their repairs as invisible as possible. Current day repairing is ranging from visible to invisible and fast fixes to the precise mending techniques used in the 'stoplap'. Repairing has become more easy and repaired clothing is becoming more popular.

From 2009 onwards, more than 1450 repair cafés have opened world wide. In these café's you can learn to repair or share knowledge by organising public workshops. Repairing anything from electronica to clothing, people view repaired items as unique. "Repair Manifesto also stimulated repair as a creative, innovative and activist activity and not just as a quick fix" (throwingsnowballs.nl). Repairing is about discovery, skill, fun, independence, a creative challenge and part of sustainability. "It is not about money, it is all about mentality" [source](#). You can even buy 'new repaired clothing' in the shops.

Repairing is important in a time when we aim to be more sustainable. The fast-fashion-industry has left its mark on natural resources and environment. Furthermore, textile waste is piling up because the fabric used is from inferior quality lasting only one season. There is another way. Why not repair clothing, upcycle or reuse fabrics that have already been damaged?

This guide aims to inspire you to start repairing. Every repair is different and everything you repair becomes an unique object. Start with something easy and small. As with everything; practice makes perfect.

Other ways to learn stitches or repairing is by consulting guides, books, libraries, workshops, repairing cafes, YouTube, search online or visit your local repair-café.

Tools

There are many different tools you can use while repairing. Every repairing method has its own specific tools.

Essential tools for clothing repair are:

- Needle and many different colour threads
- Spare fabric (to use as patches)
- Washable markers or pencils (the cheapest ones are children markers)
- Scissors
- Ruler and measuring tape
- Swing pins
- Thimble (not essential but it makes life easier and the repairing safer)

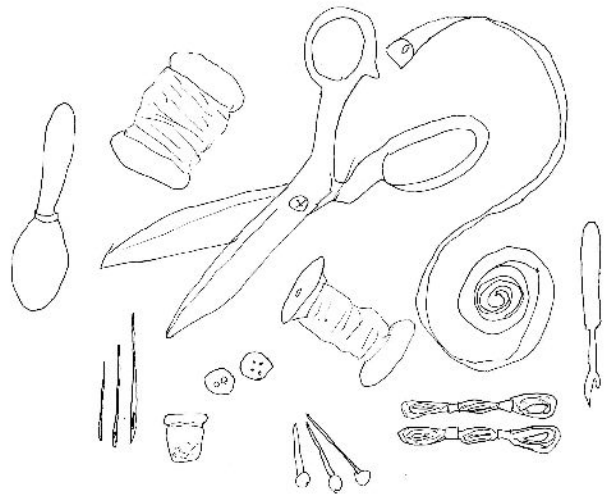


Figure 1 Repair tools

Other tools:

- Embroidery hoop, darning egg or any other things that can help you stretch the fabric. *These make repairing easier, faster, beautiful, and enjoyable. Embroidery hoops for example are easily found for sale online. Alternatively I've found a few embroidery hoops for little money in thrift stores.*
- Darning eggs
Although slightly harder to find, the research and money are worth it if you are serious in darning and repairing. Alternatives to darning eggs are a round stone, an orange, a mug or glass, a doorknob, big cowrie shell, plastic Easter egg, billiard ball, small dried gourd, light bulb (be careful with glass!), etc. Basically anything that is rounded and not too big. Personally I used, a small, solid, glass made for tea lights
- 'Sticky Vlieseline'
Used to attach one piece of fabric to another
- Sewing machine
An indispensable tool for any larger repair job
- Clothing Iron
- Jogger blade or ripper
To undo previous stitches
- Needle threader or tape
Used to push the thread through the eye of the needle

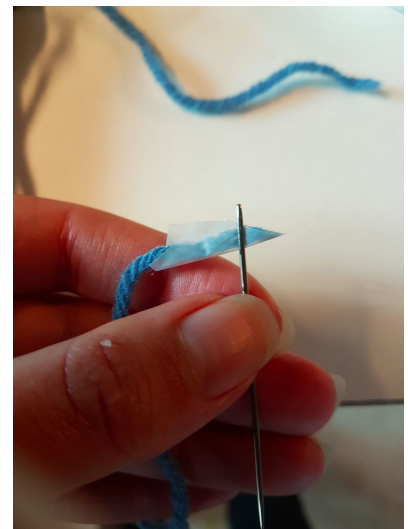


Figure 2 Tape example

Stitches and basic techniques

What is clothing repair without stitches? Made by hand or using a sewing machine, every stitch creates your repair; stitch by stitch. Knowing your stitches is the first step of handmade repairs. An almost infinite amount of different stitching techniques with explanations and examples are easily available online. Ranging from strong to decorative and easy to hard.



Viewed from top till bottom and from left to right, the stitches I've made in figure 3 are: French knot stitch, running stitch, stem stitch, blanket stitch, cross stitch, back stitch, feather stitch, chain stitch, and herringbone stitch.

Figure 3 Practice stitches on an embroidery hoop

At the exhibition I will provide a 250 different stitches book (250 borduursteken). If you look at this ebook afterwards you can easily look up these stitches online. Hint, Online video's are a great source of inspiration for repairs.

When you find your stitch you can practice with an embroidery hoop or start repairing the product right away. Don't worry if it doesn't turn out as you intended it to be, learning a skill takes patience and practice. As with everything; practice makes perfect.

Before you start your repair by hand, you should have a needle and thread. Use a needle threader or tape to get the thread through the eye of the needle easily. After you have your thread through the eye you will be able to make a knot at the longer end of the thread by making a loop of this end around your thumb, then roll/push this thread to the tip of your finger, then move this twist to the end of the thread. There should be a knot at the end of the string. If there is no knot, try again. Images of making this knot are shown below.

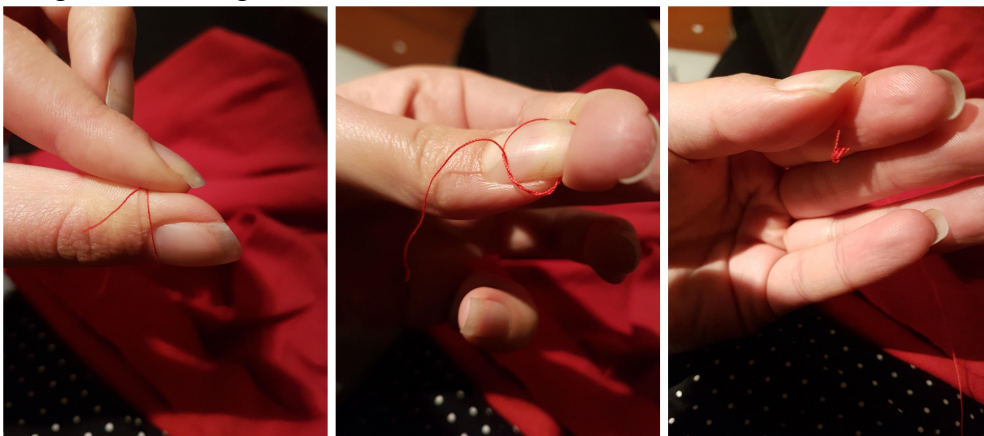
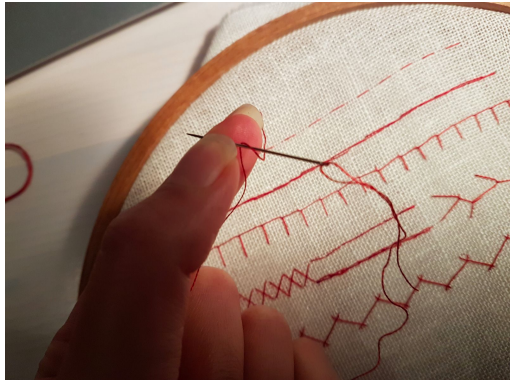


Figure 4 An easy way to create a knot at the end of the thread at the start of your project.

At the end of your repairs, secure the stitches by making a knot, working the needle up and down at one place or stick your needle through the hoops to anchor it.



By mending you should not make a knot. For all other repairs it is recommended to make a knot. The easiest method is the French knot method

French knot

The French knot it is an easy knot which you can use to create a knot (stitch) on your textile as a decoration. Alternatively you can use it to secure and anchor the stitches or darn you've made.

This way the repair will stay in place.

Figure 5 Winding the thread around the needle

You'll make the French knot by winding the thread around the needle. I usually use 5 or 6 times for a nice big knot. The amount differs of course, when you use a thicker thread. After the winding you should slide your needle through, creating a knot. It works best if you have a short thread and the needle right next to the area you want to have a knot.

Other ways to learn stitches or repairing are by consulting guides, books, libraries, workshops, repairing cafes, or just search online.

The first step after learning the stitches would be to find the right colour, material and thickness of the thread desired. If you want to make the repair invisible you will need to use the same colour as the original. If you do not have this colour, try to take a colour that is a little bit darker than the original. A thicker thread means less crossing-overs while weaving and will be less time consuming.

There are many different techniques to repairing. From easy fixes to repairs that would easily take you hours or days to complete. From visible to invisible and everything in-between.

With everything, keep on practicing, vary between techniques and start small. To keep the learning enjoyable, interesting and find the right method that works for the repair and you.

I will show some the repairing methods I've used during my 'True Replica's' project and other techniques that I think are useful to know. This is only a selection, if you become more interested, I would advise you to search online for other examples.

Darning

My project is inspired by the skills and craftsmanship of the traditional Dutch 'stoplap'. This is why we start of with the darning techniques; showing the easiest ones here. The people that made a traditional 'stoplap' (mainly girls) learned to make invisible repairs on various fabrics using several colours and patterns. This is a very difficult and time consuming process.

A more simple darning method would be to repair the fabric by weaving in a new tread. First you'll need to understand how the fabric works. It is important to understand the weave you are dealing with to make the repair as invisible as possible while using 'stoplap' mending techniques. There are many different weaves. For example: the threads go one up, one down, one up again, etc. Another weave is two up and two down. After you notice the difference between weaving techniques you can try to recreate the same weave for the most invisible repair.

Don't worry when you miss a stitch, weaving will create a strong repair even if you miss a few stitches.

The first step is to find the right colour, material and thickness of the thread. If you want to make the repair invisible you will need to use the same colour. If you do not have this colour, try to use a colour that is slightly darker than the original. A thicker thread means less crossing-overs while weaving and will be less time consuming.

Tools: darning egg (or alternative), thread and mid-sized needle
Approx: 30 minutes till a few hours

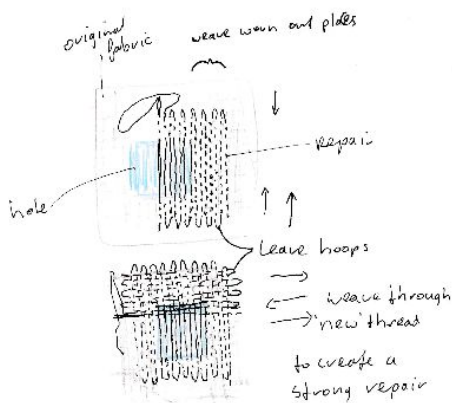


Figure 6 Darning

Start stitching back and forth, weaving on the worn out areas and the damaged surface. This is to repair the damage and strengthen the worn out areas. Go one thread up, one tread down, one thread up again, etc. continue until you are on the other side. Than leave a hoop and go to the other side. You complete this stage, when you arrive at the other side of the damaged surface. It is easiest to turn the work around 180 degrees every time you complete one way or shift your hand with the needle 180 degrees. See what works best for you.

Start

Take the thread and connect it to the needle. Don't make a knot at the end of the thread (this is important; as otherwise the repairs could be too stiff and not flexible, furthermore the knot can cause uncomfot). Turn the fabric inside out and start at one edge of the damaged surface. You can work the needle in and out of the material to anchor the thread without using a knot. Use the darning egg to stretch the fabric. This way the repair will be easier and more precise. Without stretching the repair could become stiff, inflexible and pulling inside.



Figure 6 Mending in progress, several different examples

Now, for the next stage turn the work 90 degrees and continue to weave through the fabric, one tread up and one tread down. You should also weave through the new thread you've laid down. Continue to weave and turn the work (or your hand) 180 degrees every time you complete one way. When you arrive at the end, see if the damaged surface is filled up significantly. If not; continue the weave diagonal until the damage is filled up.

You can finish up again by working the needle in and out of the material at one part to anchor the thread. Turn the fabric inside out again and ... you are done 😊
 Congratulations!

Repairing a hem

Tools: Needle, thread and scissor or sewing machine.
 approx: 15 minutes

An easy task is to repair a hem. Tie a knot and start from the inside. This way the knot won't be visible to the outside world. Anchor the loose and damaged stitch by going over the thread several times. Try to stay at the same time, so you will not see this that clearly. Then start to repair the stitch, by recreating the stitch as well as possible, every hem / stitch will be different, it is a great way to learn new stitches or practice ones you already know. When you arrive at the end of the damaged area you can anchor the other side of the tread again. Then you can make a knot using the French knot stitch, this way your repair will be sturdy and anchored. Continue this process till all the stitches are repaired.

Of course you can also use a sewing machine. Both options are relatively fast and easy.

stitching

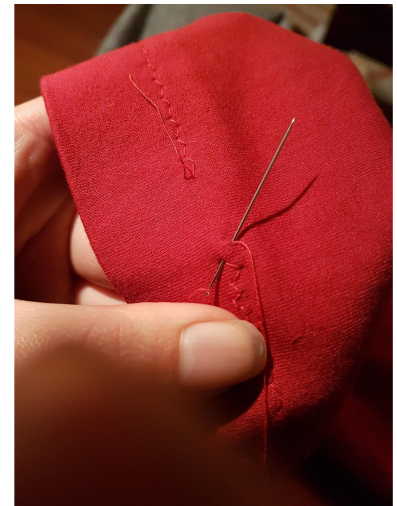


Figure 7 Recreate the original

Repair wool using needle felting

Approx: 30 minutes

Tools: wool fibres, felting needle and sponge as a soft surface for the needle.

This is an easy and fast method to repair moth holes or other tears in a woolen fabric. Wool has special characteristics. When you felt them, they will stick together. You can use this characteristic to attach different pieces of wool together seen at the woolfiller example on the left side of figure 8. The patches of wool, seen here, were easily attached with the needles. On the right side of the example, you can see that the hole is being repaired with loose fibers of wool and the felting needles. You can quite easily make wool patches out of loose fibers. You just move up and down with the needle till the wool patch or fibers are nicely attached. There are many videos and tutorials online about needle felting holes.

There is also a possibility to darn these holes as an alternative.



Figure 8 Woolfiller



Figure 9 Needle felt process from bicitoro.com, source

Improving a former repair

Tools: needle, thread and embroidery hoop

Approx 2 hours

This scarf had been repaired before I received it, the repair was sturdy but was very visible because of the difference in texture of the fabric. I decided to make the repair even more visible by embroidering a ladybug on top of the repair. Now it looks as if it was part of a rich design instead of a poor repair. Just be creative and dare to show repairs in several different ways. To keep the fabric nicely stretched out it is recommended to use an embroidery hoop or darning egg.



Figure 10 Ladybug as a visible repair

Repairing holes in the sleeve of a shirts

Tools: Needle and thread or sewing machine

Approx: 5 minutes

Shirts are very sturdy but thin and they easily wear down in the neck area and next to the hems. The hems located on the lower arm where the buttons are can tear quite easily because of pressure and friction. I've repaired several shirts and all of them were torn in the same area on the lower arm. You can repair this by using the stoplap mending technique or use a sewing machine for a fast repair.



Figure 11 Repairing torn shirts with the machine.

Repair holes in jeans

Tools: Needle and thread, washable marker, fabric for patches, and/or sewing machine

There are many ways to repair tears. You can patch the tears by ironing ready made patches on the fabric. This is a fast method but the patch will become loose quite soon. Another method is to sew on the patches. I used beautiful patterns, Paisley pattern and several sashiko patterns. I started off by making lines with a washable marker to make the stitching more neat. You can create your own patch by using



Figure 12 Repairing big holes using self made patches and paisley patterns

Another method is to mend the smaller holes, this will be time consuming if done by hand, you can use a sewing machine for this repair. Or you can use the sewing machine in combination with a patch to strengthen and anchor your repair.

For the bigger holes I used a piece of jeans as a patch and used sashiko patterns to stitch the two together.

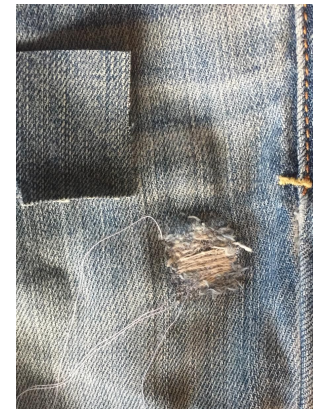


Figure 13 with the machine and a patch



Figure 14 Sashiko by hand and a patch

Repairing big holes in T-shirt

Approx: 1 hour

Tools: Needle, thread and a patch

I've made this patch myself from a piece of badly stained bed linen. I used a herringbone stitch to attach the patch to the T-shirt. A very simple repair.



Figure 16 Repaired flamingo T-shirt



Figure 15 Fluff

Clean up pieces with fluff, lint or dust

This is an easy way to make the fabrics appear to be neat. The fluff gives a shabby appearance. By the simple act of cleaning it will be a joy to wear this jumper again.

There are different ways to get rid of this fluff, you can try to pluck it off by hand, you can use small scissors or a (electric) razor knife. Some use a stone, duck tape or a comb to remove it.

For this jumper I just used my hands, it might take a little longer but the end result is great.

Conclusion

Repairing and sustainability are becoming more important. Repairing is becoming very popular with 1450 different repairing cafés around the world and many DIY books and tutorials online. There are many ways to repairing clothing.

You might have a piece of clothing that you love but can't wear anymore because of damage? Start with something small and learn while doing. Remember; you can't go wrong. The piece of clothing has been already been damaged and you can only improve on it. There are so many ways to repair and every piece has the potential to become something beautiful again. Not just repaired, it might become a beautiful and unique item.



J. Howard Miller 1943: We Can Do It!

Use it Up
Wear it Out
Make it Do
or
Do without



source

Acknowledgements

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