

Textile Waste: Sew What? Teachers' Guide



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

**KEEP
NORTHERN
IRELAND
BEAUTIFUL**

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Textile Waste: Sew What session notes

These presentation notes have been written to support teachers from all subject areas.

Slide 1

Start the session by explaining that the practical part of the class will be learning to sew a button.

Question: What is the connection between sewing a button and the environment?

Potential answers: repairing your clothes, reducing waste, climate change.

Slide 2

The session starts off with an overview of the problems.

Manufacturing - Carbon emissions will not be a term many pupils will be aware of. Ask them if they have heard of climate change.

Explanation: Carbon dioxide is a naturally occurring gas that is produced when we use energy/electricity. Everything we use will have produced carbon dioxide during the manufacturing process. This gas goes into the atmosphere and creates a warming blanket around the planet. This is leading to global temperatures rising. This is leading to dangerous changes in weather patterns around the world. It helps to link to any climate change news such as droughts, fires or storms.

Reassure them that they have the ability to make a difference and textile waste is an easy place to start.

Waste - this is relatively straight forward. Emphasise that we are wasting perfectly usable items that still have a value and link it back to the environmental impact of producing them in the first place.

People - This can have a real impact. Ask them to think about what they are wearing and consider that someone somewhere has sewn their clothes. Explain that some factories are well run but much of fast fashion depends on exploiting people and making them work long hours with poor working conditions.



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Slide 3

Explain you will go through 3 facts and from those three facts you will come up with solutions.

Slide 4

Extending the life of clothes by an extra nine months reduces its footprint by around 20-30%.

Why do we get rid of clothes before we really need to?

- Rips
- Missing buttons
- Fashions change
- We grow out of it

Slide 5

Solutions:

Replacing buttons and patching tears

Refashioning your clothes

Washing at lower temperatures and line drying will keep clothes from fading

Slide 6

UK adults only wear on average 44% of the clothes they own.

Why do we not wear the clothes we own? Emphasise this is not seasonal changes - these clothes never get worn.

- Fashion and tastes change
- Occasion clothes
- We buy things we don't actually like/need
- We have so many clothes we forget what we have



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Slide 7

This is a great opportunity to bring in the topic of mental health and self esteem. Explain that we are bombarded with images that have been altered/filtered/are not realistic with the purpose of getting us to buy things we don't necessarily need. This can make us feel bad about ourselves and can be bad for our mental health. Wear what makes you happy and try not feel you need to buy fashions you don't like.

Donate or sell what you don't want

Simple alterations such as changing the length of hems

Shop your wardrobe - try looking at your clothes in a different way

Think before you buy - e.g. leaving items in the cart for a day if shopping online

Slide 8

65% of people in Northern Ireland regularly donate items but only 17% shop second hand.

This can be a sensitive subject as there is a negative association between wearing secondhand clothes and family income. It is good to challenge these associations as soon as the pupils raise them rather than waiting for the solutions page.

Why do people think people don't shop second hand?

It is weird to wear someone else's clothes - this can be gently challenged by asking why and what clothes you would be willing to share. Also point out that second hand shops only sell clean clothes and you can always wash anything you buy when you get home.

Only poor people shop in charity shops - you can appeal to the strong social justice of pupils by explaining that charity shops are not a charity for poor people. Charity shops want to sell you something to make money for their cause, be that cancer research, international development or caring for animals. Shopping in a charity shop is not just good for the environment but also for the causes the shops support. You can't find what you want in charity shops.

Slide 9

Essentially the solution is to shop second hand!



Textile Waste: Sew What

Guidelines to running practical session

Aims of session

1. Introduction to sewing skills to reduce textile waste
2. Increased appreciation of what goes into making clothes
3. Improved confidence in practical skills

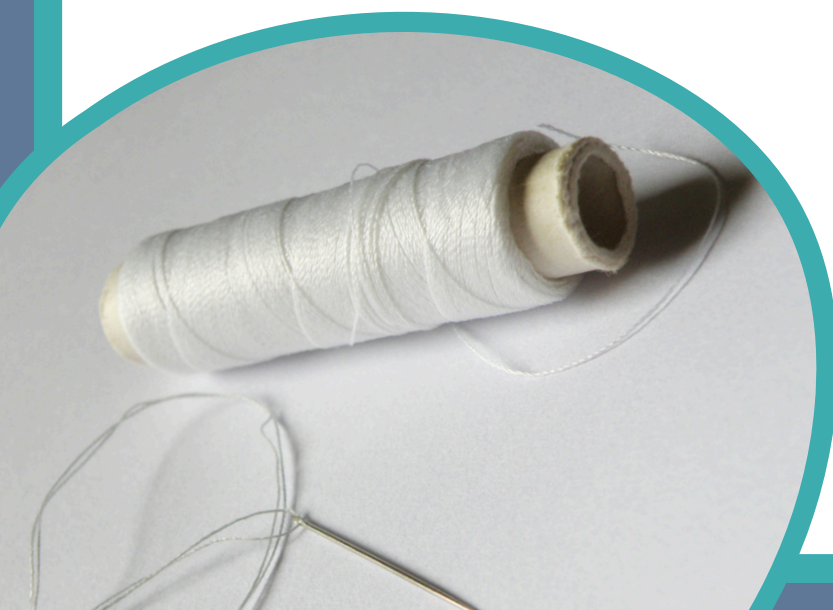
Equipment needed

- Needles - Embroidery needles have a large eye and are not as sharp as some but any needles will work. Avoid child friendly needles as they will struggle to go through fabric and button holes.
- Thread - Any all purpose thread will work for this.
- Buttons - Two hole buttons are the best to start with but often bulk buttons come mixed with 4 hole buttons. 4 hole buttons can be used as an extension activity for early finishers.
- Scissors - Before the session check if the school scissors will cut thread but most should do.
- Fabric - A square of fabric, bigger than 10cm² per pupil. Denim works well as it is easier to handle than a lightweight cotton. Speak to your local charity shop - they will often have jeans that they can not sell which they will be willing to give for free.

Pre-session

This is the type of task that becomes easier with practice. Spending time sewing buttons yourself will be time well spent.

It is helpful to have at least two adults in the class. If there are no Classroom Assistants available for your class, you could consider parent helpers.



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Guidelines to running practical session

Session delivery

Start the session with a demonstration of what you will be doing before handing out the equipment to reduce distractions.

It is helpful to reassure pupils that everyone has different strengths to reduce frustration if a pupil does struggle. I explain that there will be some people who run on ahead and sew a perfect button and I will be impressed that they are a natural at this, there will be some people who run on ahead doing and will make a mess of it and that is ok because we learn more by our mistakes and then there will be people who genuinely find this difficult and that is ok as well. Reassure them that there will be help on hand.

If you feel comfortable you can demonstrate it yourself or talk through the video provided.

Hand out equipment.

For more able pupils you can let them go on ahead of the pace you set with the class. Otherwise take it one step at a time with everyone.

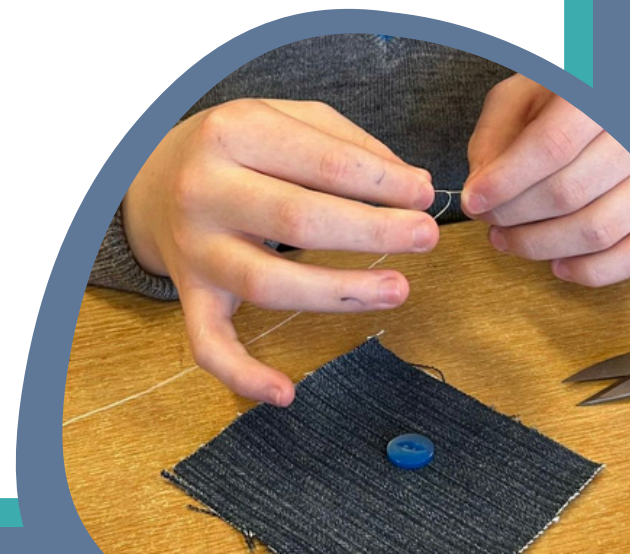
Some students will struggle with the fine motor skills of this and for them this can be an exercise in building confidence. If they can't figure out the knots, allow them to try on their own and then do that step for them. You might find with some students you end up doing most of it yourself but they will still feel a sense of accomplishment.

There will be some students who are naturally good at this and once they are finished they can either do more buttons or help out fellow students.

Some pupils will pleasantly surprise you and this is a great opportunity to build confidence and self esteem.

Points to emphasise

- Practice makes improvements
- It does not need to be perfect, as long as it is functional
- Pick up on anyone saying this is harder than they thought and bring this back to textile waste and increasing appreciation of the work that goes into making clothes.



Sewing a button

As well as replacing missing buttons, you can also change your buttons or add statement buttons to update your clothes. You can usually find replacement buttons sewn into the labels of your clothes.

- ✦ Cut an arm's length of thread.
- ✦ Thread your needle.
- ✦ Double the thread and tie a knot about 7cm from the end.
- ✦ Create an anchor stitch. Insert your needle from the front to back and bring it back close to where you started, making sure you have pulled your thread through, up to the knot, leaving a 7cm of thread. Tie a double knot.
- ✦ Thread on your button.
- ✦ Stitch to secure the button - Front to back and then back to front - 3 times. Don't stitch it too tightly!
- ✦ Bring the needle through to the front of the fabric, but not through the button hole. Wrap the thread around stitching 3 times.
- ✦ Tie both ends together twice.
- ✦ Trim your thread ends.

Materials

- Needle
- Thread
- A button, the same size as the one being replaced

