

Three Sewing Short Cuts That Aren't

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We all want to save time and money when we're sewing. But some things that seem like a good idea will really cause you more time and trouble in the long run.

Skimping on seam finishes and hems.

It may seem like a waste of time to have to sew all your seams twice, but the time you spend in finishing off your raw edges will be more than worth it in the long run. Garb is clothing, not costumes, and you want it to stand up to wear and last over time. Raw edges will unravel, weakening your seams and making the inside of your garment look poorly made. It's better to have to spend an extra few hours making sure your seams are strong and neat than to have to completely remake a garment because the seams all tore out. You can finish a seam by folding over the raw edge of the seam allowance and sewing it down, or by a number of special techniques such as French seams, flat-felled seams, Hong Kong seams, or bound seams.

Leaving out layers.

It may seem like it takes a lot of time and money to line and interline and stiffen and pad a garment everywhere it's called for, but these steps can make all the difference between garb that hangs limp and sad and garb that looks like it came straight out of a medieval painting. Similarly, making all the layers of an outfit (rather than, say, making a one-piece dress with false chemise sleeves) will give you both a look you can be proud of and the base to build your garb wardrobe.

Being a skinflint with your supplies.

We've all been tempted by the bargain bins of \$2 scissors and 25 cent thread. But when those scissors have chewed up your \$15-a-yard silk that you saved up to get for that perfect garment, and when the thread has snapped and tangled up in your machine for the umpteenth time, you'll wish you'd let the "bargain" pass you by. That's not to say that you have to spend a fortune on your sewing tools, but don't be fooled; if it looks and feels cheap, you don't want to use it. It's worth a moderate amount of extra money up front to save yourself the time and frustration that working with shoddy tools will cost you. On a similar note, don't wait too long to change your sewing machine needles! Sewing machine needles are inexpensive, but a dull or bent or worn-out needle can make sewing a nightmare. Many people have actually taken their machines to a repair shop, thinking they were broken, when what they really needed was a fresh needle. As a rule of thumb, you should change your needle for every eight hours of sewing, or more often if you are working with many layers of thick fabric (such as when sewing corsets, doublets, and the like.)