

Q&A

WHATEVER YOUR SEWING PROBLEM, OUR EXPERTS HAVE THE ANSWER!

Send your queries to stephanie.durrant@aceville.co.uk



Elisalex De Castro Peake is one third of the trio who set up indie pattern label, *By Hand London*. Based in the Capital, she loves the technical side of sewing and enjoys writing tutorials and sewalongs on the successful blog. Read more at www.byhandlondon.com

There are so many lovely fabrics available, but I have trouble visualising what would work with the patterns I want to make. Any advice please?

Gillian Walsh

Elisalex says

Shopping for fabric can be incredibly overwhelming, especially if you don't have a clear idea as to what you're on the lookout for. First things first, have a look at the technical information on your sewing pattern – you should find a little list of fabric recommendations which will help you to narrow down your options. Secondly, consider the design itself. If you're making a swishy summer maxi dress, chances are you'll get best results with a fairly lightweight fabric that will drape and flow around your body. If your garment has more

“Try to get yourself down to an actual bricks and mortar shop”

structure or is very fitted, you'll need to find a suitably stable cloth. Finally, it's worth having a quick Google of the pattern itself to see what fabrics other people have made it from. This should inspire you as to what colours and prints you do and don't like.

Armed with an idea as to which fabrics are suitable and what colours you're after, hit the shops! Ask the salespeople to point you in the right direction for specific types, and don't be shy to pull out any rolls that catch your eye to get a better idea of the consistency, drape and feel. If you are very new to sewing, do try to get yourself down to an actual bricks and mortar shop and save online fabric shopping for when you're feeling more confident! Remember, the more you make, the more your understanding of fabrics and their various qualities and uses will develop.



Claire-Louise Hardie

trained as a costume designer and has been the sewing producer on all three series of the *Sewing Bee*. She runs workshops at her sewing school *The Thrifty Stitcher* and recently penned her first book *The Great British Sewing Bee: Fashion with Fabric* (£25, Quadrille).

How do I use my measurements to choose the right pattern size for a good fit? What happens if I span different sizes?

Katie Oliver

Claire-Louise says

Unlike buying clothes in the shops, we can't try on our dressmaking projects before we make them, so it's crucial to take our body measurements to decide what size we'll need to make. Ready to wear and sewing pattern sizes are not the same systems, so never assume your pattern size is the same as the off the peg ones you're used to buying.

Measure yourself with the tape measure sitting firmly around your body at the bust, waist and hips. For skirts and trousers, always choose your size by the hip measurement, then adjust the pattern to your waist. For dresses, choose the size by your bust measurement, then alter the waist and hips.

Most of us will span several sizes between these three areas, so don't worry if you're not the same at the waist as you are at the hips. Make a note of the size closest to each of your measurements, so if you're a pattern size 14 at the hip, but an 8 at the waist, you will blend between those two sizes to create a custom fit. This is the beauty of sewing your own clothes, you can tailor the paper pattern to your own unique size and shape. I dream of being able to buy dresses in the high street that were blended between sizes!

There are different sizing systems used across all of the pattern brands, so it's a good idea to make a note of your own body measurements to compare with the pattern size chart each time you make a new garment.

“You can tailor the paper pattern to your own unique size and shape”



Jessica and Millie wearing their handmade fleece ponchos.



I'd like to start an after school sewing club to encourage teens to get into dressmaking and customising. Can you suggest some good projects to get them interested please?

Sylvia Kendall

Amanda says

I started my *Sewing Bee* with some year six children (aged 10) after I was able to source four sewing machines through our Parents and Friends Association. The first thing to consider is what you would like them to learn through the club, but more importantly what they would like to make.

I decided I wanted the children to learn how to use a pattern and some basic skills with the

“There are lots of easy patterns available to buy”

machine. I knew that showing them how to cut out a pattern would generate lots of discussion about cutting skills, seam allowances, pinning techniques and sizing. I also wanted the children to be enthusiastic about their sewing so they would want to make something else.

There are lots of easy patterns available to buy and I decided on a fleece poncho as our first project. This meant that the children did not need to focus on the finishing of the seams and it is an easy fabric to sew together. The poncho also had a hemmed pocket and a hood which needed a curved seam. I also managed to source some fabric school badges so the children are very proud of wearing their garments around school.



Amanda Gledhill

took part in series three of *The Great British Sewing Bee* and is the Deputy Headteacher of a primary school. She passes on her stitching skills by teaching a sewing club. Follow her blog at www.aebgledhill.com

GUEST EXPERT!