

Build Your Children's

By Guest Writer Carol Hawkey of Sewing Prose

Whether you want to have children's sewing classes in your store or not, it is a simple matter to agree that teaching children to sew is quite the buzz in the home sewing industry. Maybe you have a classroom, maybe you don't. Regardless of the situation at your store, you can do something to encourage excellent sewing skills in a new generation.

We are talking today about teaching children ages seven to 12 about basic garment construction skills. There are other quilting and crafting things for children to do, but my specialty is garment construction.

The reason more people don't sew clothing is because they don't know how. It is one of the most difficult skills to acquire, although I see it as much easier than water-skiing, which I have yet to master. When you don't know how to do a thing, it is scary and intimidating. When a skill is broken down into building block instructions, it

becomes much easier to learn and understand and, most important, to repeat.

The first thing is to establish, right from the beginning, some kind of consistency. Your customers need to know that they can count on you from year to year. For example, a customer with a six-year-old will be looking forward to your 8-12 year-old children's sewing program. Letting it fall apart in two years will be devastating to that customer.

I have identified six ways to share sewing with the younger members of your community. They are listed in order from the most expensive to the least in terms of storeowner requirement of time and money. One of them is sure to hit your hot button.

Hire A Teacher

Surely this is the most commonly thought of method for introducing children to sewing. Set up a classroom

in your store, and hire a teacher. The stereotypical way is to find a teacher with a degree in family and consumer sciences, and one of the requirements is for them to develop a sewing program.

From my discussions with shop owners, the average thing is for a hired teacher to develop a program, it goes great gang-busters for two years, the teacher moves on because {pick a reason}, and the program fizzles. Now the shop owner is scared to try again. How can you avoid falling into the same situation? It is good to be able to keep your students even if a teacher leaves your employ.

By using a pre-developed program, you gain the ability to hire from a wider pool of applicants and can maintain consistency through many teachers. It also makes it easier for a substitute to teach the class. Back in the day, my office manager, Gina, a truly fabulous right-hand gal, could even take over for me whenever needed—and her sewing skill was limited at the time.

Learning To Sew Kits Showcase

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Simple, basic and easy to use, the PS1000 offers free-arm sewing, drop feed dogs, easy drop-in bobbin and quick, snap-on presser feet. A perfect "first" machine for stitchers or quilters of any age.

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Call 203 270-7744
or visit www.sprayandfix.com.

Pfaff's hobby Line Great for Beginners



Just learning to sew? Try the hobby line of sewing machines from Pfaff, all perfect for the beginner. The hobby¹⁰²² has seven stitch programs, including a buttonhole; the hobby¹⁰³² offers 15 stitch programs, including stretch; and the hobby¹⁰⁴² has 23 stitch programs, including stretch and decorative stitches. All at a beginner's price, too!

Call 1-800-99PFAFF.

Sewing Program

Use One of Your Existing Staff

When you have staff available, it is a simple matter to have them teach a children's class. You can set it up as part of their regular shift or as an add-on of extra hours.

It is best for the children to have the same teacher from week to week. When your employees' schedules change around, using a pre-developed program allows you to have any of your staff teach the class.

Contract With Local Teacher(s)

I am speaking here of the sewing teachers in your area that specialize in teaching children to sew. They are already familiar with the process. You make a deal with them to come to your store and teach the class. Such a teacher will generally want to bring their own program with them. Several of our own DIRECTIONS teachers in Colorado, Washington and New York have contracts at four or more different stores to teach their children's sewing classes.

You will want to arrange advertising and sign up services for this method. The teacher will almost always promote your store's products in her classes. It is up to the two of you if you want to make that a requirement.

Sometimes the teacher will bring machines and all the other supplies; sometimes you will want or need to provide some items. You're both adults, you can work out whatever details make sense to you.

Refer To Local Teacher(s)

All of the above three methods require that you have or are willing and able to provide classroom space in your store. Perhaps you don't want to do that for {pick your reason}.

The easiest and fastest way to build a

sewing program is to refer interested students to your local teachers. It is much better if you can find several people teaching children to sew in their homes or as a private establishment. Get to know them, and find out what ages they like to work with, what (if any) program or system they are using, and their approximate fee range. You will be able to make better referrals by matching up the interested party with the right teacher(s).

Sweeten the pot if you like by offering to include information about the classes in your store's newsletter, putting up a poster, or other joint marketing efforts.

Coordinate With Local Groups

The 4-H, Girl Scouts/Guides, Campfire, Boy Scouts, Youth Groups, and others offer another way to have a class. The leaders are already there to act as teacher. You provide what you

can, machines or products or notions or fabric. These can be loaned to the group, sold to them, or given as a donation, whatever makes you happiest. Even something as simple as a list of needed supplies will be welcomed by a newcomer to sewing with an excited group of youngsters to work with.

Here is where it is of greatest benefit to have a pre-developed program for them. Many leaders of such groups have little sewing skill. You can combine this with offering your own teacher or staff member to accompany the leader at a Group Meeting.

Coordinate With Public, Private, Or Home Schools

There is a great need for an established sewing curriculum in these venues. Not all sewing classes are

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PS1250



Create perfect buttonholes every time with the one-step buttonholer on the PS1250. The automatic needle threader, dual LED lamps and attractive price make sewing easy, fun and affordable.

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Sewing enthusiasts love the security they feel when using totes from Canvas Collectible's. Sturdy, durable, with firm sides and weight balanced wheels, these totes are roomy enough for machines and organizing inserts. CCI's variety of totes accommodate featherweights, basic sewing machines, embroidery machines, and the new, larger sergers.

For more information, call
1-208-378-0569

Children's Sewing Program

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taught by people who know how to sew. One Junior High here in Wyoming had their sewing program taught by a nutrition specialist. By providing access to curriculum and materials you can greatly enhance their sewing classroom and make the teachers look great.

Many schools have requirements they have to meet. You will need to see what you can do to help them. Sometimes most anything will do. Sometimes they are looking for a very specific thing.

For the home schoolers, you can provide a complete home-study curriculum. You'll also have other things they will need, whether you are at the sewing machine end or the fabric end. Find out what they need and put together a package deal.

One Student At A Time

What if you don't have a classroom in your store and there are no children's sewing teachers in your community?

There are parents who like to work with their own children at home. It might be Mother or Dad; it might be Grandma. It might even be someone who knows nothing about sewing.

Having a program or product available at your store for them to use at home means you make the sale and you make their day. You will make such a person very happy simply by having the right product at the right time.

What To Do Next

Back in the day, children were exposed to sewing in the home whether or not they ever learned. Now we are finding that children don't even know it can be done. They have no concept of how the clothing in the Mega-Mart-Mall came to exist. They are missing out on the insight and personal satisfaction of watching fabric turn into a garment under their very own hands. You can do something about it.

You could start a children's sewing program to make money, or because you are worried about the future of the

industry, or you want to help build tomorrow's customers. How about just teaching children to sew because it makes you happy to do so? ❖



Carol Hawkey
is the owner of Sewing Prose in Casper, WY. She has developed the "DIRECTIONS" Learn To Sew progressive sewing program from her own

experiences in a sewing classroom for 7 to 12 year olds starting in 1988. Anyone can teach sewing with DIRECTIONS regardless of personal sewing skill level or experience. You can reach Carol at 1-800-729-7182 or 1-307-265-7182 (mountain time); or pop into www.TeachKidsToSew.com

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"DIRECTIONS" Beginner's Learn to Sew Set by Sewing Prose is the

perfect way for ages 7 and up to learn garment construction. Each Lesson Module includes books, patterns and



instructional materials for two sewing machine projects.

"DIRECTIONS" works best for in-store sewing classes, private classrooms, and self-paced home study. Regular program and catalog at www.KidsLearnToSew.com.

Discount program at www.TeachKidsToSew.com/lesson_discounts.html. Secure online shopping at both. 1-800-729-7182

NX200



The touch-pad operation panel makes it easy to select one of the 50 stitches available on this computerized machine. A lot of machine for not a lot of money, the NX200 also features a one-step buttonholer, automatic needle-threader and sliding speed control.

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