

Repair, don't Replace

April's The Get Redressed Challenge focused on simple repair methods to revive, renew and rekindle love for your damaged-but-delightful clothes so as to bring clothes from the back of your wardrobe to the forefront of fashion. Instead of buying new clothes to replace damaged, we want to inspire you to draw needle, harness thread and unleash your inner tailor so as to 'Repair, don't Replace'. Your simple repair efforts will save you money and save clothes from a premature, and unnecessary, end of life in landfill.

How many of us are nifty with needles, or talented with threads? Too few, we think.

Today, in this era of fast and cheap fashion, too often people discard damaged clothes in favour of replacing. Consequently, we are loosing the repair mindset that carried our mothers and grandmothers (and their quality clothes) through their glory years. Repair skills are in such a state of disrepair themselves that a 2012 report by UK's WRAP found that 16 percent of those surveyed cited 'need for repairs' as a reason some items of clothing were unworn in the last year and nearly one third said they would bring more unused clothing back into use if they had the necessary skills or time to repair or alter clothes.

To celebrate repair, our [Instagram](#) was dominated by repair cases to get our followers motivated about bringing their damaged clothes back to life. Joining us was Zoe Robinson from [The Good Wardrobe](#), Agatha Lee from [Green Issues by Agy](#), Polo Cheung, Senior Fashion Editor at [MetroPop](#), Pokai Wei from [GetMore](#) and Olive Wong from [JupYeah](#) and the [I Never Use Foundation Breakfast Club \(INUF\)](#). Plus the whole of [WWF Hong Kong](#) and their enormous consumer network took part too, as part of WWF Hong Kong's One Earth Mission.

Kicking off our repair challenge was Agatha from Singapore. *'Before joining the challenge, I didn't realise repairing would be so rewarding, especially when it came to darning my socks!'*

Polo, a Senior Fashion Editor, followed suit. *'Professionally, I am surrounded by the latest collections, which don't tempt me to dump my damaged clothes. Personally, I think people can be creative in using every fragment of the fabric in their clothes. For example, I used beads as buttons or thick rope as decoration to cover a stain.'*



On day 97, Agatha used a slipstitch to fix her dress' hem. *'Don't pull on the thread too hard or else you might get a dimpled look at the hem,' she says.*



On day 97, Polo showed us her repaired vintage floral cover-up. *She re-used beads (saved from a broken necklace) as buttons to turn the cover-up into a blouse.*



On day 102, Christina reincarnated this peace-silk dress, which previously looked like a tiger had attacked its sleeves. With the help of a tailor, the dress is now as good as new.



On day 112, Zoe repaired this silk top, which she bought from a charity shop with a few small holes in it. Zoe says 'Check out bondaweb and clever stitching on the hole and you should hardly see it from the outside anymore.'

As the co-founder of JupYeah, the Hong Kong based swapping platform that advocates 'consume less, buy better', Olive said, 'I've also mended damaged clothes because it's better for the environment and my wallet. Most of the time, repairs are just a ripped seam or stained area that are easily fixed. Sometimes a little flaw here or there doesn't mean your garment is finished. Be creative! Think about ways to prolong the life of your clothes and remember to Repair, don't Replace.'

As the founder of GetMore, a Taiwan based online secondhand clothing store, Pokai said, 'Ever since cheap and fast fashion dominated the fashion industry, people have increasingly started dumping damaged clothes and buying new instead of repairing. This creates many negative environmental impacts. It's been great to revive repair skills.'



On day 118, Olive found a hole on the pleats around the chest area of this maxi dress. Through a few simple stitches, this beautiful dress was revived.



On day 113, Pokai revived his hoodie. He said 'I didn't want to chuck out this hoodie because the quality is really good compared to cheap fashion and it's still really comfortable.'



You heard it from the repair pundits, and so here are some tips to get you started on your repairs.

1. **Small change: big transformation** - Simply replacing a button or trims is a great first step into repair and an effective way to update older clothing items in order to give your clothing a new style. Replacing buttons is also an easy way to get used to using a needle and thread as you can't go wrong as any repair mess stays on the inside of the garment.
2. **Basic hemming: an essential skill** - Clothes are often discarded due to hems becoming loose. Learning the basic hemming stitch can get your wardrobe smartened up in no time. Search for hemming stitch tutorials online to get you started. Remember, make sure your thread colour matches your clothes and to pin and iron the hem before stitching to ensure it is straight.
3. **Patch it** - Some fabrics, especially delicate ones, are hard to repair as the damage usually occurs in well-worn areas that get lots of tension, like elbows or knees. Take the opportunity to give your well-worn clothes a new style by covering damaged areas up with something beautiful like patches, trims or sequined ribbons.
4. **Loosing your beads** - Beaded or sequined clothes are beautiful but a common problem, especially on cheaper clothes, is that trimmings and threads can unravel, resulting in beads and sequins falling off. So, when you see a bead or sequin start to come loose, find a thread that matches it and re-fasten the loose bead by hand before you lose it - and all the subsequent beads that are likely to be attached to the loose one.
5. **Repairing knits** - Repairing damage to knitwear, known as darning, can be daunting but once you get to grips with the basics, darning is a useful skill to have. Matching your thread's colour and type to the knitwear is important, unless you want to turn your repair into a feature. Look for darning tutorials online for how to get started.
6. **Loose linings** - It is relatively common for a well-worn coat or blazer-lining to become undone. But loose linings are easily mended by hand and the good news is that because linings are on this inside of the clothes no one will see if you make a mistake. This is definitely a repair that anyone can have a go at!



7. **Protecting your shoes and accessories** - Well-made shoes and bags should last for many years and regular maintenance and cleaning are necessary to keep them in tip-top condition. Keep an eye out for heel tips or soles wearing down. Don't leave damaged shoes too long before repairing, otherwise irreversible damage can be caused to the heel itself.
8. **Embrace alterations** - If you are too uneasy or busy to try repairing yourself, remember that there are many tailors who can do repairs and alterations to bring your clothes back to life again.

Remember, your local haberdashery is one of the best resources for materials needed and advice!

Next up... [Reconstruction](#)

In May, we will highlight the swath of creative designers who use the reconstruction design techniques to create a 'new' garment from old. We will prove that there is still plenty of 'want' in textile waste and inspire our followers with innovation happening in this area of reconstruction in the fashion industry today. Join the challenge by #GetRedressed on [Instagram](#).