A Stitch In Time...

...Saves Nine
Darning Mushroom
This is used to stabilise fabric when you are darning. It is particularly good for garments that need to curve, like socks.

Patch Gauge
This is used for measuring patches. Slide the two pieces towards or away from each other, so that the inside is the size of the required patch. Then draw around the outside for a seam allowance.

Needle Case
This is used for storing needles. This one has been designed to allow you to embroider labels for the needles (use back stitch for this).

Leather Thimble
This will protect your fingers whilst sewing which will allow you to sew more easily. Try wearing this on the middle finger of your dominant hand. Hold the needle between your thumb and index finger and push it with the thimble.

Pins
These pins are useful for holding fabric in place whilst you sew. Due to the materials used they won’t melt if ironed.
Sharps are “general purpose” needles that you can use for most sewing tasks. They have small eyes and are available in a wide range of sizes. Betweens are very similar to sharps, but they are shorter which can make sewing quicker.

Curved Needles are used mainly for sewing 3D objects, like upholstery. The curved shape means you don’t need to access both sides of what you are working on.

Darners are long and have elongated eyes making them perfect for darning. Long Darners are even longer and have larger eyes which makes them useful for darning with thicker threads.

Tapestry or Cross Stitch Needles have large eyes, useful for thick thread, and are blunt, enabling them to pass through fabric without damaging the fibres. Chenille Needles are very similar to tapestry needles but are sharp.

Leather Needles have a triangular point which cuts through leather, minimising unnecessary damage.

Easy Threading Needles have a different shaped eye to a traditional needle which makes threading them easier. Instead of threading through the eye, you push the thread down into the eye.
Thread Choice:
The thread you choose to use is mostly down to personal preference, however there are some
factors you may wish to keep in mind, mainly: the type of fibre, what it will be used for, and
what you want the end result to be.

Natural Fibres:
These are generally best for hand sewing, as opposed to machine sewing, because they are
usually not as strong as synthetic fibres. Some of the most common types of natural threads
are cotton, linen, wool, and silk. One of the main advantages of these threads is that you can
match the fibre of the thread to the fabric you are sewing. Natural fibres are generally softer and
more supple than synthetic fibres and pass these qualities into the repair.

Synthetic Fibres:
Synthetic fibres, such as polyester or nylon, are generally much stronger than natural fibres,
this means that they are most commonly used for machine sewing. Synthetic threads are more
hard-wearing than natural threads so can be the best choice for mending textiles that need to
withstand a lot of wear. Synthetic threads are more uniform and consistent than some natural
fibres.

Visible or Invisible:
Before you decide what colour thread you are going to use, you need to decide what kind of
repair you want to do. Do you want it to be invisible or do you want it to become a design
feature? If you want an invisible mend, try to match the colour of the thread to the fabric as
closely as you can, and use small stitches. If you want to go down the visible mending route,
you can choose whatever colour you want. In either case, when you are choosing the thread,
unwind a short length from the spool and lay it on the fabric, this will give you a better idea of
how it will look once sewn.

Thread Weight:
This is essentially the thickness of the thread and in general you want to match this as closely
as you can to the fabric, especially with darning.

Some advice:
When you are hand sewing, try not to use a length of thread longer then your arm, this will help
prevent the thread getting tangled. Sewing will wear down natural fibres leading them to break,
shorter lengths help prevent this.
One of the best ways to secure the end of the thread is with a couple of backstitches (this is
essentially just stitching in the same place two or three times.)
Running Stitch
This is the most basic stitch and is the foundation of all other stitches. It is worked by passing the needle in and out of the fabric at regular intervals.

Back Stitch
This stitch is most commonly used in embroidery but it can also be used to make a very strong seam. Back stitch starts off similar to running stitch, the difference is that each stitch doubles back on the last.

Whip Stitch
This stitch is used to sew one piece of fabric on top of another. In this stitch the thread spirals around the edge of the fabric securing it to the fabric below.

Blanket Stitch
Was traditionally used to bind the edge of blankets but is also very useful for reinforcing worn edges. It is very similar to whip stitch but the needle passes back through the stitch, creating a line of stitches.
Traditional Darning

This technique is traditionally associated with mending socks but it can actually be used to mend most holes. Darning is essentially weaving a small patch into the fabric to cover a hole. This type of darning will not stretch.

1. Start by preparing the fabric. Either wrap it around a darning mushroom or hold it in an embroidery hoop. Trim any loose threads.

2. First secure the thread with a couple of backstitches, and then sew around the hole with a running stitch.

3. Now, using running stitch again, start sewing your vertical rows of stitches. When you reach the end of the row, turn around and sew back the other way.

4. Carry on sewing the rows back and forth. When you reach the hole, cover it in long stitches that reach from one side to the other. Be careful not to pull too tight.

5. Once you have finished the vertical stitches, start stitching the horizontal rows just like you did before. When you reach the hole weave in and out of your previous stitches.

6. Once you have covered the whole area, secure the end of your thread with a couple of back stitches, and you’re done!
“Stretchy” Darning

This technique is very similar to traditional darning and starts in the same way, however this type of darning has some stretch to it which makes it useful for mending garments where this is needed.

1. Start by preparing the fabric. Either wrap it around a darning mushroom or hold it in an embroidery hoop. Trim any loose threads.

2. First secure the thread with a couple of backstitches, and then sew around the hole with a running stitch.

3. Now, using running stitch again, start sewing your vertical rows of stitches. When you reach the end of the row, turn around and sew back the other way.

4. Carry on sewing the rows back and forth. When you reach the hole, cover it in long stitches that reach from one side to the other. Be careful not to pull too tight.

5. Now, instead of stitching horizontal rows you are going to stitch diagonally so that the angle between the two rows of stitches is roughly 45 degrees.

6. Once you have covered the whole area, secure the end of your thread with a couple of back stitches, and you’re done!

You will need:
- A darning needle
- Thread or yarn in a similar weight to the fabric
- A darning mushroom or an embroidery hoop

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Patching

The simplest form of using a patch to repair a garment is essentially just sewing another piece of fabric over the top of the hole to cover it. When you get more comfortable with this technique you can experiment with different styles of patch.

You will need:
- Patch gauge
- A needle and thread
- Fabric for the patch
- Marking tool
- Pins

1. Start by preparing the fabric. Trim any loose threads and neaten the edges of the hole. Use your patch measuring tool to measure the size of the patch.

2. Transfer your measurements to the patch fabric, mark the size of the patch (inside) and 1.5cm border.

3. Cut out the patch and fold down the 1.5cm border, pin this in place. This will be the size of the finished patch.

4. Pin the patch to the fabric, covering over the hole. Make sure that the hole is centred under the patch.

5. Use a whip stitch around all four sides to secure the patch in place (see the stitch guide for this).

6. Once the patch is sewn into place, check that it is secure and you’re done!
In addition to using patches for covering holes, you can also use patches to reinforce fabric that is wearing out.

This will prevent further damage to the garment.

You do this in a very similar way to patching a hole, but this time, the patch goes on the inside, so that it cannot be seen from the outside.

You can either match the thread you use and use small, almost invisible stitches. Or you can use visible, decorative stitches.

Sashiko - meaning “little stabs” - is a Japanese embroidery technique which uses small running stitches to create geometric patterns. You can use this as inspiration for your embroidery for visible mending.
A stitch in time saves nine...

It is always best to mend clothing as soon as it is damaged to prevent it getting any worse. If you notice wear on an item of clothing, you can use many of the techniques you would use to mend a hole to reinforce the fabric and prevent further damage.

Preventing damage to your clothes is better for their longevity and negates the need to repair them. Try to be conscious of your clothing and how you are treating it.

Most wear and damage occurs during washing and drying clothing. Try to wash at lower temperatures and air dry when possible, this is better for the clothing and more sustainable. Additionally, following the correct washing routines (e.g. hand washing if necessary) and reducing how often you wash an item will increase its longevity.

Synthetic fabrics like polyester shed micro-plastic fibres in the wash which pollute water. When washing these it is important to use a micro-plastic filter to stop these fibres entering the water system.

If you can, try to invest in clothes from more sustainable brands that produce better made clothes than mainstream fast fashion brands, these will last longer and cost you less in the long term.
If you need any help with the stitches you could ask someone you know who sews to help you, or you could follow this link for more support.