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# ***Sewing Cart***

***A Guide From The Creativity Lab***

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## About This Project

This is a guide to creating a mobile Sewing Cart, which can be brought into different classrooms for making activities.

Sewing is a great low bar, high ceiling activity. While students feel successful in a short amount of time, there are also infinite ways to increase complexity and skill level. Sewing activities can be a great way to teach math skills, including patterns, measurement and geometry.

Sewing is also a great skill to teach kids to develop maker empowerment and agency. If they can sew, they can fix buttons or rips on clothing or create a custom cushion to make their life more comfortable.

## Our Story

We bought a Mobile Workbench from Global Industrial, and added plywood on the bottom and back and peg board on the sides. We bought pull out drawers from Ikea and installed shelves for additional bins.

Lower cost options are to re-purpose an existing cart or build your own from scratch. The cart below is not a sewing cart, but shows how one could be made with 2"x2"s and plywood.



## Materials

- Rolling cart
- Plywood
- Peg Board
- Sewing machines (3)
- Scissors
- Fabric
- Felt
- Thread
- Embroidery Floss (DMC Prism)
- Buttons
- Needles
- Seam Rippers
- Pins & Pin Cushions
- Ribbons
- Beads
- Stuffing

For more info:  
[tiny.cc/SewingCartMaterials](http://tiny.cc/SewingCartMaterials)



# How to Use the Cart

## Tips for building a cart

- ◆ To maximize space, build shelves with room for sewing machines
- ◆ Drawers are handy for easy access to materials/supplies
- ◆ Label clear plastic bins front & back
- ◆ Keep the top of the cart clear so it can be used as a working space
- ◆ Mount a power strip to the cart so that the cart can be plugged in order to power multiple sewing machines at once
- ◆ Install peg boards on the sides (attached to the inside of legs, so it's recessed) for storage of thread, etc.
- ◆ Create stitch guides on index cards so students can teach themselves.



In high school classes, students sew cushions for the wood chairs they build. They are in same-sex pairs for both the chair and the pillow, in an effort to push back on traditional gender roles. Everybody does everything, from sawing to sewing.

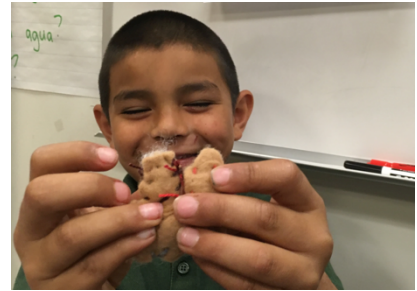
**Maker Empowerment:**  
 In the Creativity Lab, we've noticed that students frequently come to us wanting to put their sewing skills to work when their clothes rip or their backpacks straps wear.  
 Instead of students asking, 'can you fix this,' we love that they come in and ask, 'can I fix this?'



## Tips for Teaching Sewing

We find students can show great persistence in threading needles. When they finally get it, they feel a great sense of accomplishment. Try finding floss that doesn't unravel. Tips for teaching students to thread their own needle:

- Cut off the end with scissors
- Lick the end



After experimenting with different options, we found that felt and crewel needles were easiest to use. The needles' large eyes make them easy to thread. We found burlap and yarn, often recommended for young children, difficult to work with.

Provide a variety of needles & thread for different purposes:

- Blunt vs. Sharp embroidery needles
- Plastic needles
- Yarn, thread, embroidery floss

After they have learned the basics of sewing, K-3<sup>rd</sup> graders make a toy for a friend. They start with interviews:

- What colors do you like?
- What shapes do you like?
- What characters do you like?



Students then create a toy for their classmate based on what they learned.

## Project Ideas

### **Soft Circuits**

<http://tinkering.exploratorium.edu/sewn-circuits>



### **Toy Take Apart**

<http://tinkering.exploratorium.edu/toy-take-apart>



### **Creatures**

<http://www.instructables.com/id/Do-All-Friends-are-easy-to-make/>

