

Earth Action: Learn To Mend

By [Gemma Alexander](#)© DEC 9, 2022 [clothing](#), [earth action](#), [mend clothing](#)

Earth911 is honoring the 52 years of Earth Day with 52 Actions for the Earth. Each week through Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to [invest in the Earth](#) and make your own life more sustainable. The [fashion industry](#) has a tremendous environmental impact, and even if you're not a fast fashionista, you might be part of the problem if you don't take care of your clothes. This week, you can take action for the Earth by learning how to mend your clothes.

Action: Learn to Mend

The Environmental Impact of Fashion

Fast fashion is notoriously wasteful – every year, [40 million tons](#) of textiles are disposed, often without having ever been worn. But the fashion industry has a tremendous environmental impact at price point throughout its life cycle. The fashion industry is responsible for more than [8% of total greenhouse gas emissions](#). It takes nearly 3,000 liters of water to make [one cotton T-shirt](#) and 3,781 liters of water to make [a pair of jeans](#). More than half of our clothes are made of [synthetic fibers](#) derived from oil that contribute 35% of all ocean [microplastic](#) pollution. After technology manufacturing, the garment industry is the next leading [cause of modern slavery](#) and child labor.

What Do You Think?

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- Yes
- I'm researching my options to decide
- No

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We all need to [quit fast fashion](#) and invest in a more [sustainable wardrobe](#). But how we shop is only part of the solution. It doesn't matter what you buy if you throw it away over a popped button or loose thread. The other part of a sustainable wardrobe is sustaining your wardrobe. That means [greener laundry](#) habits and learning to repair clothes instead of throwing them away.

Learn to Mend

Nowadays it's easier to replace an item of clothing than to fix it. But you don't have to be a master sewist to extend the life of your clothes. This week, pick a technique to learn based on your current skill level. If you've never picked up a needle before, start by learning to replace a button. Other [simple clothing repairs](#) include fixing torn seams, replacing drawstrings, hemming, patching holes, and if you're very frugal, even darning socks. More advanced sewists can practice alterations that will let you hang onto clothes even if your size changes. And if you're very skilled, consider [upcycling unfashionable](#) thrift store finds into creative new personalized style creations.

Whatever skill you choose to pursue, the internet is filled with how-to wikis and YouTube tutorials to help you master it. And if you become inspired to learn more, you can find in-depth skills books at your public library. Project-based books like [Little Fixes](#) provide step-by-steps guidance for revamping damaged kids' clothes while books like [Stylish Remakes](#) teach you how to make new items out of old t-shirts and sweats. Every new mending skill you learn can save clothes from the landfill and save you the expense of purchasing a replacement.

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[Reading time: 2 mins](#)

[Earth911 Podcast: Beni's Sarah Pinner on Making Shopping for Reused Clothing Fashionable](#)



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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