

“I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say any other way—things I had no words for.”

—Georgia O’Keeffe,
American artist



Textile Artist

When you see all the colors and textures of fabrics and yarns, do you dream up a million things to do with them? Get ready to turn those visions into reality as you meet with artists, learn about the world of textile arts, and make two projects in the craft that most inspires you to pick up your needles (or loom or spinning wheel).

Step

1. Choose your textile art
2. Find your tools and materials
3. Learn the basics
4. Make something for everyday use
5. Create a gift or item for a special occasion

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll have learned the basics of a textile art—and I’ll have two fantastic projects to show for it.

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

Tips Before Takeoff

- ▶ **If you don't have a permanent work space**, make a traveling supply box or bag that you can carry to any area.
- ▶ **You might borrow equipment** from family, friends, or other crafters.
- ▶ **Recycle and reuse!** Search for discarded material from a fabric store, or use old T-shirts or scarves. You might even host a party to trade materials with other artists.

STEP

1 Choose your textile art

Find out about the many varieties of textiles, from intricate embroidery to colorful quilts to cozy knitted scarves. Through this step, you'll choose one textile art to learn, so decide if certain materials appeal to you more than others, or if one art's history inspires you to create today.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Look into two different textile arts from other cultures.** In Mexico's Oaxacan lowlands, women weave sarongs using indigo-dyed thread. Among America's Amish, women make the same graphic quilts their grandmothers did. Use these or other examples you discover, and find out: How and when did these arts begin? How have they changed? How do artists today add a modern twist to what they make?

FOR MORE FUN: Try this activity from the 1980 Popular Arts badge: Look for examples of woven materials from other parts of the world. What do the colors and designs tell you about the way of life of the people?



OR

- Interview an artist who works with textiles.** You can find an artist by checking with a store that sells art materials or course catalogs at colleges or community centers. Find out how they started, what they love about their craft, and how their art has changed over the years.

OR

- Visit an art gallery or museum with a textile exhibit.** Study the different patterns, materials, and colors you see. Do any inspire you to create a work of your own?

FOR MORE FUN: Create a "look book" as you tour the exhibit. Sketch patterns you like and add notes about each piece.

The Look Book

Artists create a "look book"—a collection of photos, illustrations, color swatches, and so on—when they're starting a project. They use the images to spark ideas. The term is used mostly in the fashion design world.

Popular Textile Arts

Embroidery

Cross-stitch

Needlework, including patchwork

Knitting, crocheting, or macramé

Weaving and spinning

Quilting

STEP 2 Find your tools and materials

To embroider you need to know about embroidery thread, hoops, needles, types of fabric, and the stitches you might use. Quilters use quilting hoops or frames, and knitting requires different needles and types of yarn. Get inspiration and information for one of the crafts below.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Thread-based craft.** Visit a fabric store and find out about needles and thread. Ask for thread samples, tape them to heavy paperboard or in a journal, and label them with information about texture, weight, and color. Add information on needles and you'll have a handy reference guide to use as you learn more.

OR

- Yarn-based craft.** Visit a yarn or fabric store and explore types of needles and different textures, weights, and colors of yarn. Make a yarn-reference guide as explained in the choice above.

OR

- Quilting project.** Visit a fabric store and explore needles, threads, fabrics, tools, and racks for quilting. Ask for fabric swatches for the reference guide explained in the first choice.

More to Explore

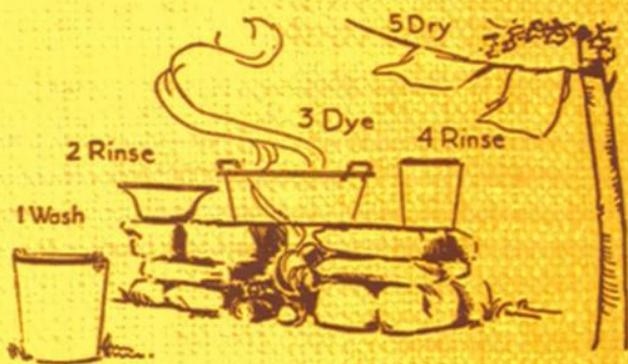
Sketch your own textile design. It could be a quilt design, an embroidery pattern, or even a fun fabric pattern. Think about using your pattern in step 4 or 5!



Tip: When you've finished this step, you should also have gathered your tools and materials. You might buy them at the store you visit, or borrow them from friends or other crafters—get crafty with finding what you need!

Natural Dyeing

Try dyeing your yarns and materials with dyes made from plants. Here are a few common things and the colors they make.



Steps in dyeing

ONION SKINS = light brown, yellow, orange

SPINACH = green

BEET = rose

GOLDENROD FLOWERS = gold

COFFEE = brown

RED SUMAC (LEAVES) = black

RED SUMAC (BERRIES) = red

CARROTS = yellow

You will need this equipment: enamel pan, rubber gloves, stirring rods (dowels, or stick), paper towels, cheesecloth. Follow these directions:

1. Chop leaves, grind roots, or crush berries; soak overnight in enough water to cover.
2. Boil slowly for an hour.
3. Strain dye, removing plant material.
4. Add mordant (alum).
5. Dampen material; wring.
6. Put in dye bath to cover.
7. Simmer slowly until material is right color (a little darker when wet than dry).

It is nearly impossible to give exact proportions, as so much depends on what shade you want and what plant material you are using. However, the following proportions should give you an idea of amounts. If you use 1 quart berries, roots, or leaves, 2 quarts water, and 1 ounce of alum, you can dye $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of fabric.

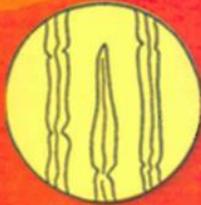
The frontier wife in America had to be a chemist and botanist. She spent long hours over steaming kettles, dipping and wringing fabrics. She had to solve the mysteries of the vegetable and chemical dyes of her day.



COTTON FIBER



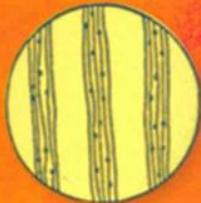
WOOL FIBER



FLAX FIBER



SILK FIBER



RAYON FIBER

STEP 3 Learn the basics

Now that you have your material and tools, it's time to try them out. Get started in one of these ways.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

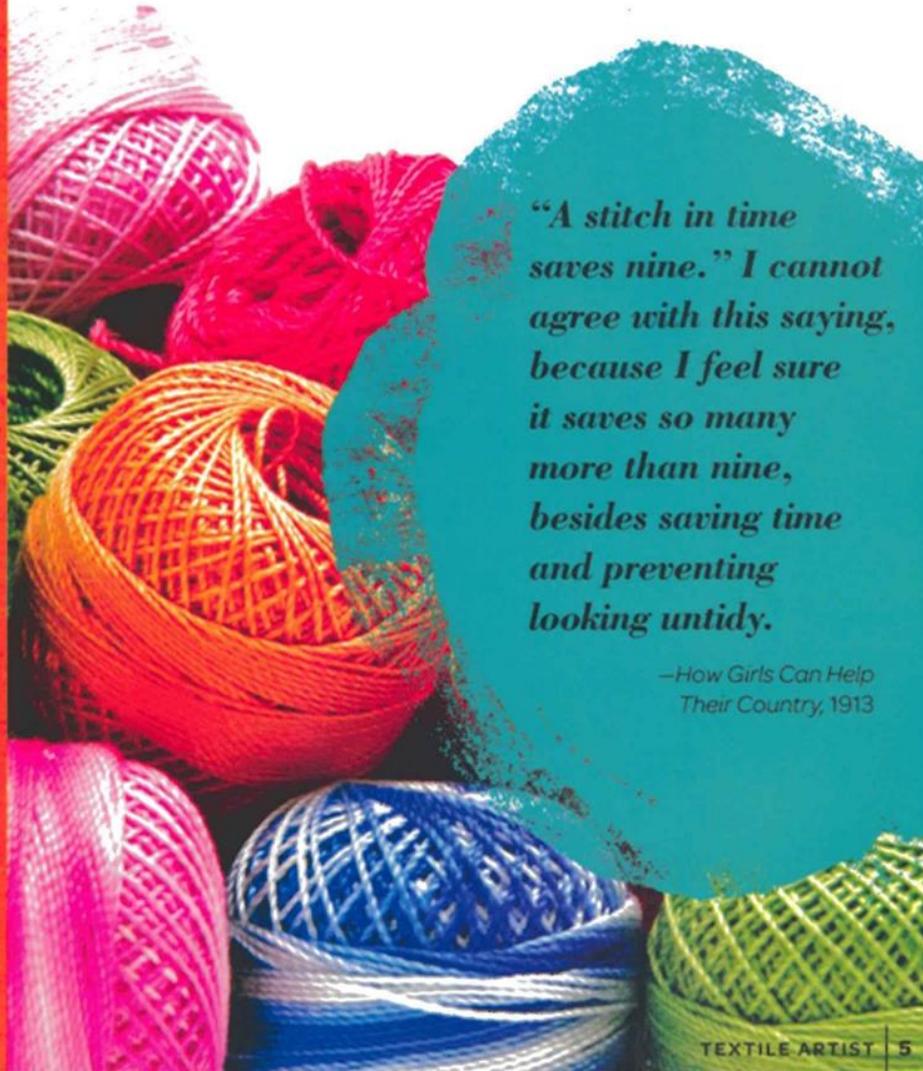
- Find a mentor.** Use your networking skills and find a textile artist willing to teach you the basics — maybe another girl who has already learned the craft, a neighbor, or someone who works at a crafts store.

OR

- Find a class.** Check your local community center, fabric store, art center, or school to see if they offer a beginner's class in the textile art you want to learn.

OR

- Learn the basics on your own.** Find out all you can by delving into books, magazines, or online communities that specialize in your craft.



“A stitch in time saves nine.” I cannot agree with this saying, because I feel sure it saves so many more than nine, besides saving time and preventing looking untidy.

—How Girls Can Help Their Country, 1913

STEP 4 Make something for everyday use

In this step, make a functional, useful item that serves an everyday purpose. Perhaps knitted mittens to keep your hands warm, a phone holder to attach to your backpack, or patchwork curtains to shade a window?

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Make something to wear.** Check magazines, online sites, or clothing stores for inspiration. Try making a hat or scarf, or “knit either a muffler, sweater, or baby’s jacket and cap” like a girl earning her Needlewoman badge in 1925 might have done.

OR

- Create something useful for your home or meeting place.** You might make a patchwork tablecloth, embroider napkins, cross-stitch a pillow cover, macramé a plant hanger, or a make a quilt.

FOR MORE FUN: Make a T-shirt quilt. Use old T-shirts that meant a lot to you but that you can’t wear anymore—the memories will keep you warm in more ways than one!

OR

- Make an accessory.** Create a phone holder, purse, or reusable tote bag. If you want to decorate like a Girl Scout from 1947, you might add an embroidery design “suitable for a needlepoint bag.”



**Careers
to Explore**

- Fashion designer
- Tapestry artist
- Embroiderer
- Knitwear designer
- Clothing/textile technologist
- Furniture designer
- Illustrator
- Industrial textile buyer
- Retail fashion merchandiser
- Costume designer
- Pattern creator
- Graphic artist
- Fabric nanotechnologist
- Fashion market analyst and forecaster
- Style reporter
- Textile lab manager
- Textile dyer/colorist

The Quilting Bee

Quilting bees started in colonial and pioneer days, when women would get together and socialize after long winters—often the only time they would see one another for months at a time. Today, crafters of all kinds use their art as an opportunity to get together and share tips and talk. You might put together a crafting bee with a group of friends or Girl Scout sisters.



STEP 5 Create a gift or item for a special occasion

Put your new crafting skills to good use and create something lovely for someone else. You'll learn more if you make something different than what you made in step 4.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Make a gift for an anniversary, baby shower, birthday—or as a thank-you.** If the gift recipient loves a particular place, you might try this from the 1947 Needlecraft badge: “In cross-stitch, make a picture map of some familiar locale, such as your camp, community, home, or school grounds.” Or you might make a special thank-you for adults who help you in Girl Scouts.



OR

- Create something to mark a special occasion.** For example, you might embroider napkins for a holiday or family event.

OR

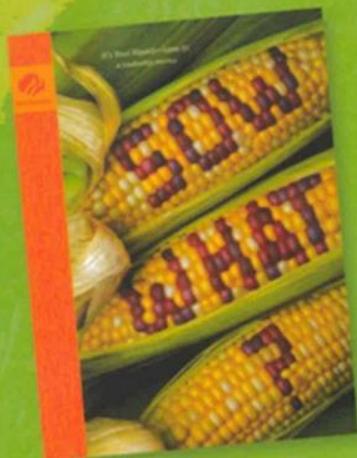
- Make something to give to a charity.** You might donate a raffle prize or something for a specific need—caps for cancer patients or blankets for homeless animals. You could create a quilt or panel for an organization that raises awareness about breast cancer or AIDS—and make it at a quilting bee with family and friends!

Tip: Check out websites like Etsy and other places where textile crafters are earning their livings from their art. Is such a career in your future? What could you even start now?

Charity Crafting

This concept can be traced back to Martha Washington, who spearheaded knitting efforts to make socks and scarves for the soldiers of the Revolutionary War. Today, Knitting for Peace is one charity crafting organization that meets to knit blankets for refugees, mittens for homeless people, and socks for soldiers.





Add the Badge to Your Journey

As you do step 1, remember that textile materials (like cotton and wool) come from farming, herding, and working the Earth—just like food does. Find out as much as you can about these raw materials, where they come from, who produces them, and the innovations that are leading to greener practices. When you get to step 5, you might even create a “sew what” item to thank someone who’s helped you on your Journey.

Now that I’ve earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Donating a project to a charity crafting organization
- Blogging to pass on what I’ve learned
- Starting a monthly crafting bee to reach out to new friends I’d like to make



I’m inspired to: