

A Stitch in Time

Have a sweater that's hanging on by a thread? Fix it fast, and **ADD SURPRISING STYLE** with a few simple techniques.

IF YOU NORMALLY take your knits to a tailor to fix small holes or loose buttons, it's time to mend your ways. Making minor repairs to sweaters at home is easier than you might think and can save time as well as money. With some basic stitchery, you can darn a hole, replace a button, reinforce a buttonhole, or fix a pulled thread. While you're at it, you can give the clothes you live in a pop of personality.

You might add some color to a plain cardigan with cheerful contrasting buttons. Or darn a moth-eaten sweater in bright yarn for unexpected charm. Facing frayed buttonholes? Take them from shabby to chic by stitching around the slits with vibrantly hued thread. And fixing a snag is a cinch if you have the right tools and advice (never snip loose threads!). Now is the best time to repair your cozy clothes, since they're close at hand and on your mind. Come spring, you can pack away the fixed (and much more fun) knits and start looking forward to next year. Ready, set, stitch!

THE HOLE STORY

Seeing daylight through your beloved sweater? Don't run and hide. Patch those holes with contrasting thread, and turn them into a statement. We guarantee you'll get compliments on your style, as well as on your skill with a needle.

WORTH DOING WELL *mending knits*

darn good advice

Repair small holes in sweaters and socks by following these simple steps.

1. Place a darning mushroom or egg under hole for support. Create a vertical running stitch, starting $\frac{3}{8}$ inch to the side of hole and extending $\frac{3}{8}$ inch above and below it (fig. 1). Space rows as close as possible, staggering stitches as you work. Once you reach the hole, pass yarn over it and stitch for another $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. Change direction, and continue; repeat until hole is covered vertically and stitches extend $\frac{3}{8}$ inch past it.
2. Repeat horizontally; cover hole by weaving horizontal threads through vertical ones (fig. 2). Finish by weaving the end of thread into garment until hidden, then snip it.



a knitwear first-aid kit

1. A thin mohair yarn blends nicely when used to repair a fuzzy sweater. *Tulips yarn*, 100 percent mohair, in various colors, \$8 for 25 meters, purlsoho.com. 2. It's good to have a sturdy darning yarn, such as this one, meant for sock repairs, in your tool kit. *Laine St. Pierre darning yarn*, wool-nylon blend, in various colors, \$5.50 for 10 meters, purlsoho.com. 3. and 6. Stock up on buttons in a variety of colors and sizes; choose a two- or four-hole style, based on the sweater's previous closures. *Assorted buttons*, from \$5.25 for 6, purlsoho.com. 4. This easy-to-hold tool supports fabric as you darn without stretching it. *Mushroom darter*, \$6, lacis.com. 5. Sewing thread, in cotton or an all-purpose blend, comes in endless colors; you can match your fabric or purposely contrast. *Gütermann thread*, from \$2 for a 110-yd. spool, joann.com. 7. Keep a pair of small pointy scissors to clip threads. *Detail scissors*, \$15, by *Martha Stewart Crafts*, from michaels.com.

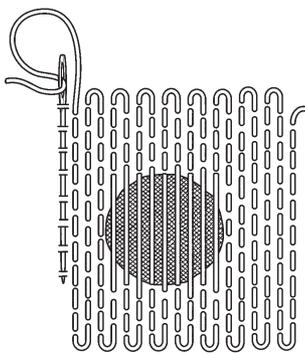


FIG. 1

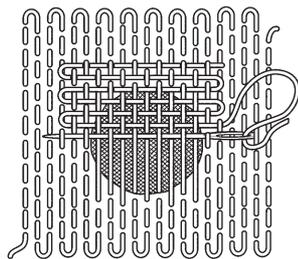
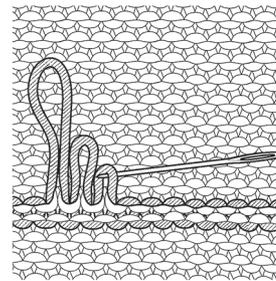


FIG. 2

*pulled thread?
no problem*

Never cut a snagged thread in a sweater; you'll end up with a hole—and more work than simply repairing a pulled thread. Instead, use a large blunt needle to gently work it back into its proper place in the fabric.

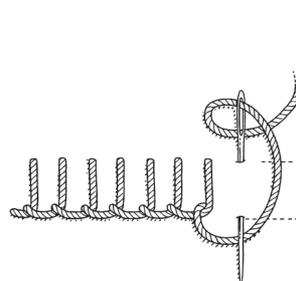
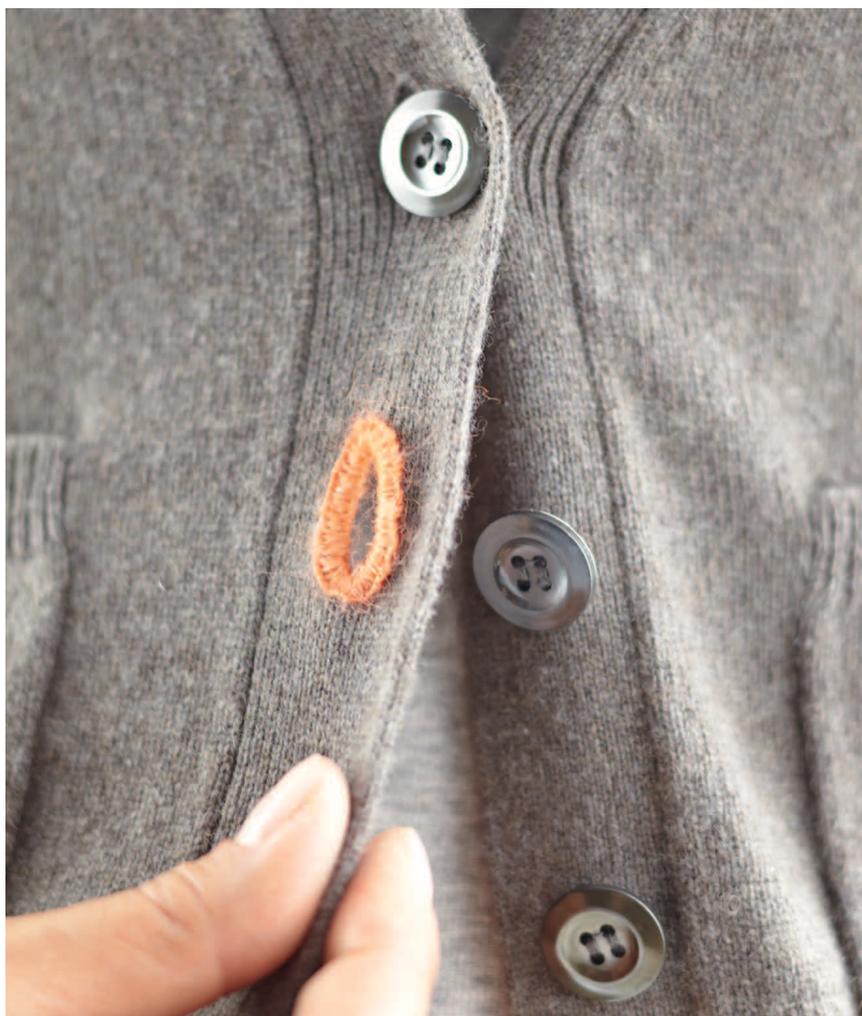


Turn garment inside out. If pulled thread has caused fabric to bunch, gently stretch it back into shape. (Some of the yarn will go back into place.) Use a large blunt needle to tease thread back into position: Pull thread through to the next stitch and then the next, dispersing excess along the row. Repeat on other side of snag. Once thread is in position, smooth pulled area, and steam.



SEW WHAT? Patch a hole, mend a seam, fix a hem. Quick stitches to keep the shirts on your back and more, at marthastewart.com/clothing-fixes.

WORTH DOING WELL *mending knits*



BLANKET STITCH DETAIL

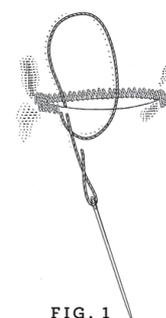


FIG. 1

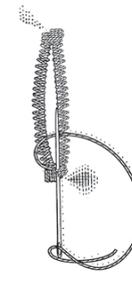


FIG. 2

save a buttonhole from the fray

A tattered buttonhole doesn't hold a button well—or look good. Here's how to reinforce it.

1. Thread a needle with a 9-inch length of double-knotted thread. The stitch we use for this technique is similar to a blanket stitch, shown close-up, above. Just make the stitches right next to one another rather than spacing them out. With the outside of the garment facing you and the buttonhole positioned horizontally, pass the needle from the inside to the outside, just below the original stitching and about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch below the slit. Pass the needle down through the slit and back up next to where you started, keeping the

thread under the tip of the needle and holding it with your thumb as you pull the thread gently until it lies flat (fig. 1). Continue stitching until you reach the end of the buttonhole. **2.** To stitch the ends, shift the garment so the buttonhole is vertical. Create a horizontal stitch (perpendicular to slit) by passing the needle from right to left 3 times. Then stitch vertically until horizontal stitches are completely covered (fig. 2). **3.** Shift the garment so buttonhole is horizontal; repeat steps 1 and 2 to stitch the other side.

sew a button—in no time flat

Use an all-purpose, cotton-wrapped polyester thread to attach a button; it's durable enough for most fabrics.

1. Locate the original placement of the button (you'll likely see the old threads sticking out). With a 9-inch length of double-knotted thread, pass a needle from inside to outside of fabric and through 1 hole in button. Hold button in place, and lay a toothpick across its center to create some space (fig. 1). Bring needle down, over toothpick and through second hole (if using a 4-hole button, continue

back up and down through third and fourth holes). Repeat 4 to 6 times, ending with the needle and thread between the button and the fabric. **2.** Remove toothpick, and lift button to create a shank that will allow room for fabric to close around it (especially important for bulky garments). Wrap thread tightly around shank (fig. 2), then slip needle through 1 of the stitches, and pull tight to secure.

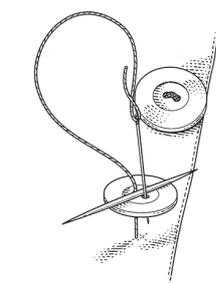


FIG. 1

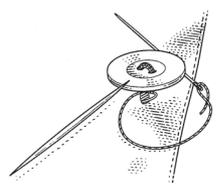
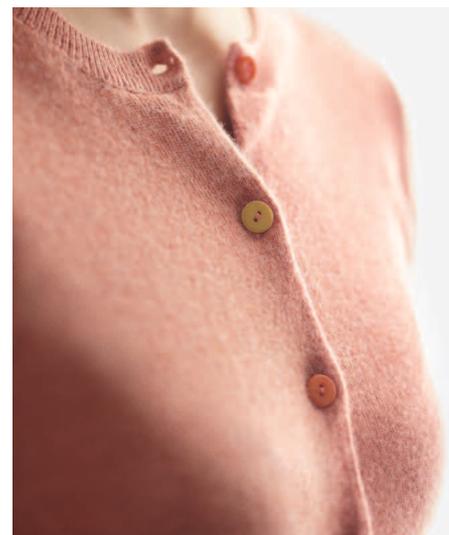


FIG. 2



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARRY BATES