



Favourite Craft Tools

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It's funny isn't it, how we take our craft tools for granted, until one is lost or needs repairing or replacing? The ACC team lunchtime crafters were recently comparing notes on our favourite tools, so we thought we'd take a timely look at them and see what makes each one so special.

SCISSORS

A good pair of scissors for every purpose is essential for so many crafts. They're used for cutting thread, fabric, paper, plastic templates, ribbon and more. What size scissors you use depends upon what's being cut. For example, a small pair with a sharp point is good for intricate cutting, while long blades are good for straight cuts. All scissors should be kept for their specific purpose: fabric-only, paper-only, gold-thread-only, and so on. Like many crafters, I can still hear my mother's voice berating me, "Not the good scissors!" when, as a child, I grabbed the closest pair of cutters for some obscure task. It's a good idea to have them professionally sharpened when they become dull and store them in their original case or keeper when not in use.

NEEDLES

Selecting the best needle for the job is often a matter of personal choice. Today, there's a great variety of hand and machine needles to choose from. Needles with a large eye and sharp point are essential for embroidery and ones with a smaller eye and shorter shaft are good for quilting and needleturn appliqué. Blanket-stitch appliqué, where fusible webbing is used, is worked best with an embroidery needle. There is a special Applibond needle available which has a shaft that's three-sided near the point then becomes

cylindrical towards the eye – its shape pierces the thick layers more easily.

A strawberry emery is handy for cleaning hand-stitching needles. It's shaped like a pincushion; and by pushing a needle in then pulling it out the shaft is cleaned and the needle is ready for use again.

Needles have a finite life and when one bends or the point goes blunt or burry, it's best to throw it away, safely, and use a new one. An old pill bottle is a good place to put worn-out needles so that they're disposed of safely when the container is full.

Machine needles are made to snap after a few hours' use. If they were made

to bend and not break, then they could cause damage in the workings of the machine. They can snap for many reasons and if it keeps recurring, then a quick, clean bobbin replacement and rethreading of your sewing machine could be all that's needed.

PINS

There are some super pins available today and like many things, you get what you pay for. It's a good idea to buy the best pins you can afford so the points are sharp and the shafts fine.

Glass-head pins are good for patchwork because the heads don't melt

