

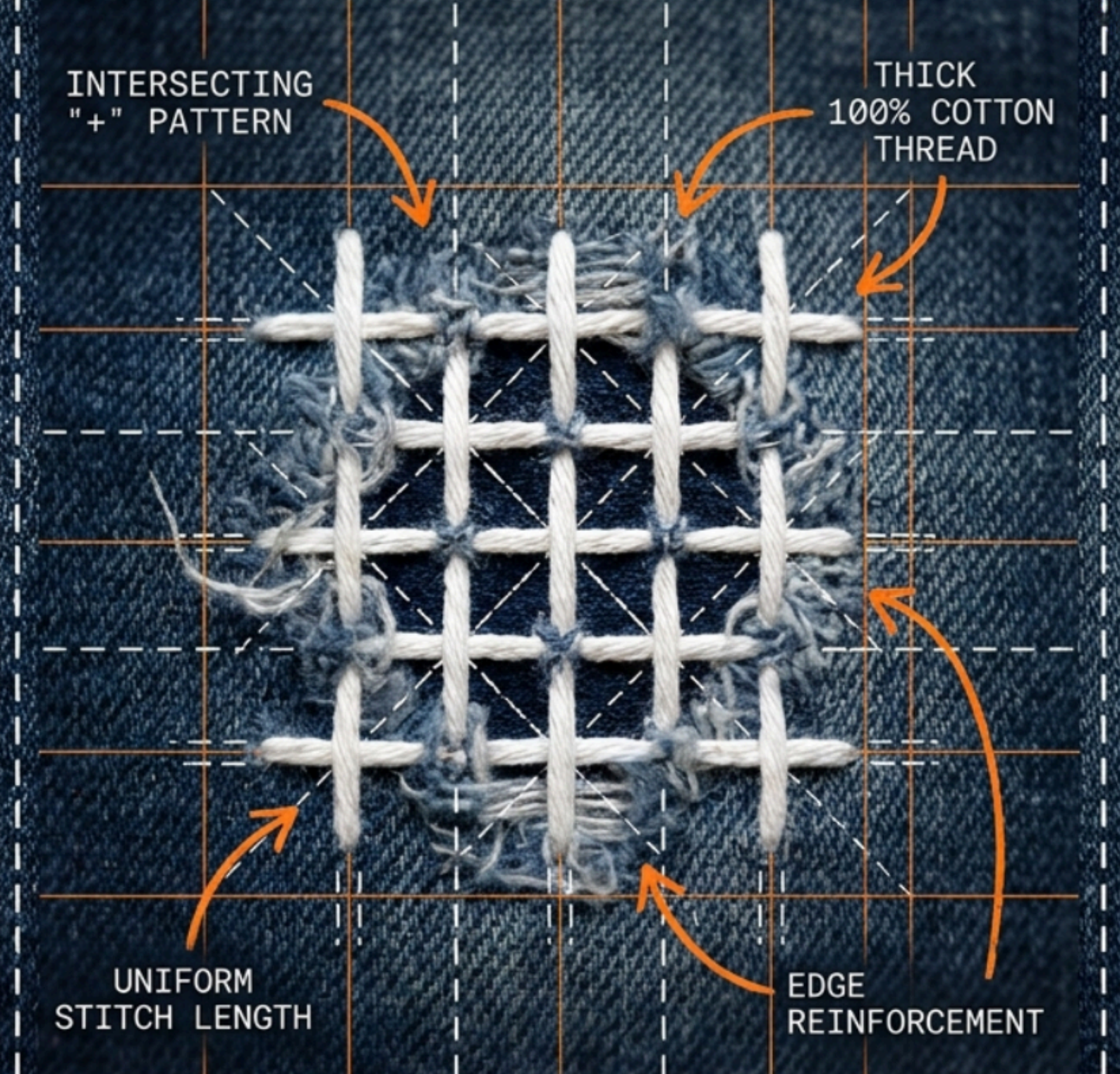


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# Visible Mending

# Sashiko Mend

A Craftsman's Field Guide to Visible Mending Movement



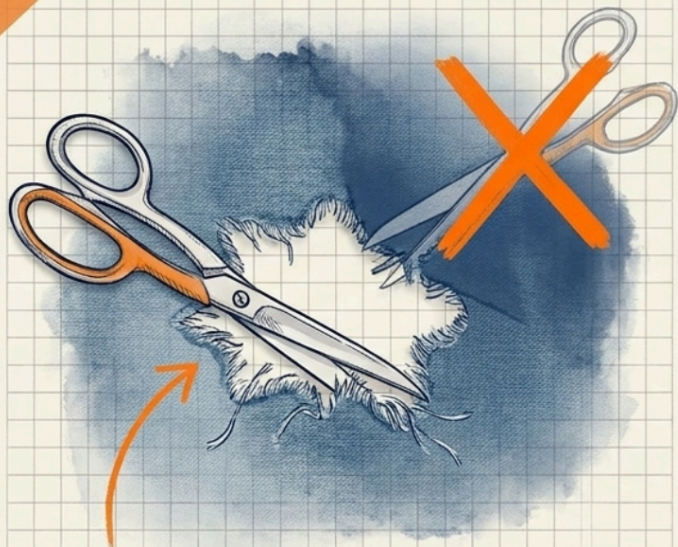
If you can already hand-stitch a button or a running stitch, you have the skills to start. What you might not have yet is the doctrine: which technique fits which garment, what tools earn their place in your basket, and how to pick a first project without ruining something you love. That's what this guide is for.

The materials you need for a sashiko mend can be gathered gradually depending on your experience level, but here are the specific items required to complete the process:

- **Fabric for the patch:** You will need a sturdy backing patch, such as a denim scrap or thick cotton. As you do more mending, it is helpful to keep a stash of patch fabrics in various weights.
- **Needles:** A regular sewing needle is perfectly fine for your first experimental mend, but a dedicated sashiko needle is highly recommended as you continue, because it is longer and sharper than standard needles.
- **Thread:** Sashiko thread is preferred because it is a strong, single-twisted strand that does not split. If you don't have sashiko thread, you can substitute embroidery floss, but you must use all six strands together.
- **Beeswax:** A small block of beeswax is an essential tool for smooth stitching. Running your thread through the wax coats it and significantly reduces tangling and fraying.
- **Marking Tools:** To ensure your stitches are even and neat, you need a small ruler and a heat-erase fabric pen to draw a 1 cm grid over the hole. You will also use an iron at the end to erase these pen marks.
- **Cutting Tools:** You need a pair of small scissors to trim away any loose, frayed threads around the hole before you place your patch.
- **Stabilizers (Optional):** An embroidery hoop can be a great addition to your kit to keep the fabric taut and stable while you sew.

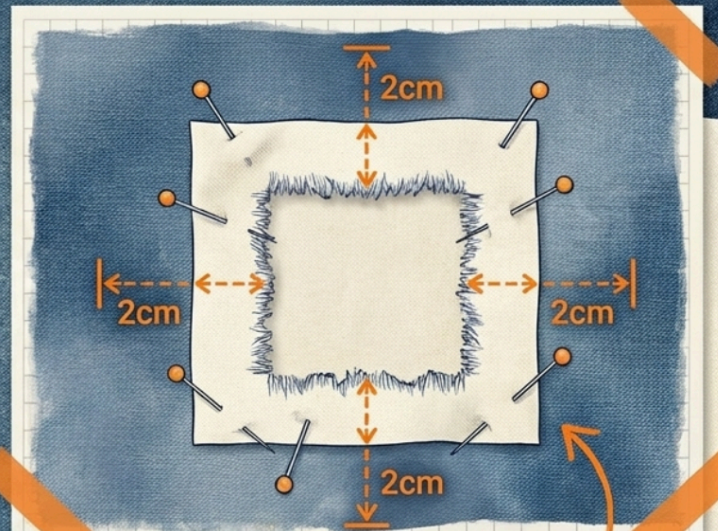
# Mastering the 5-Step Sashiko Method

1. Prep: Keep every cut shallow.



Lay flat. Trim frayed threads only.  
Do not cut into solid fabric.

2. Patch: The 2cm Rule.



The fabric around a worn hole is already weakened. A generous patch anchors your stitches into solid fabric, preventing the hole from spreading. Pin to the inside.

## Step 1: Prep the garment.

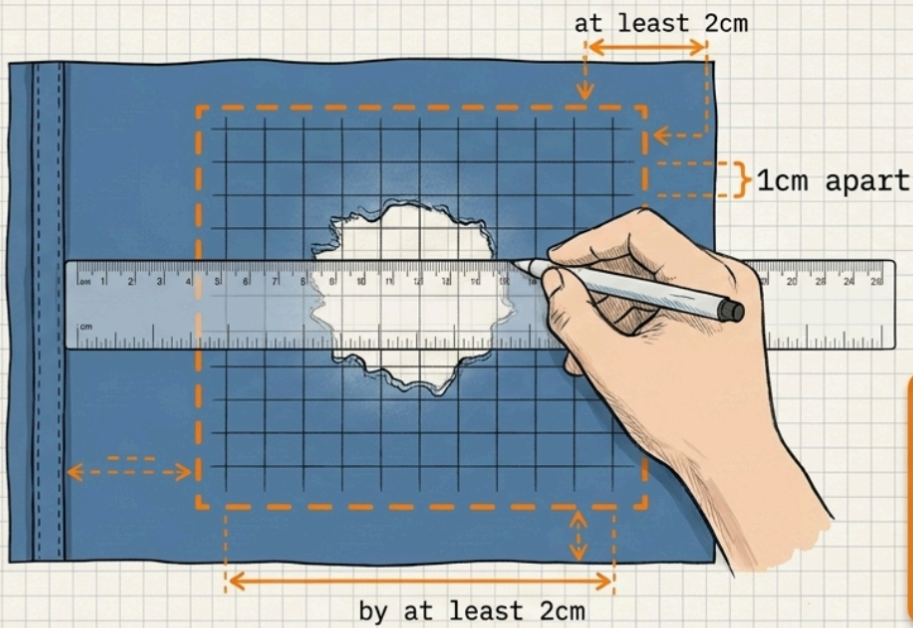
Lay the jeans flat on a clean surface and use small scissors to carefully trim any frayed, loose threads around the hole. Make sure to keep your cuts shallow and avoid cutting into any solid fabric.

## Step 2: Cut a backing patch.

Choose a sturdy patch fabric, like a denim scrap or thick cotton, and cut it so that it is at least 2 cm larger than the hole on every side. Pin this patch to the inside of the garment directly behind the hole.

## Mastering the 5-Step Sashiko Method

### Step 3: Map the grid beyond the damage zone



- Using a small ruler and a heat-erase fabric pen, draw a centered 1cm grid.
- Your stitches will act as rails following these lines.

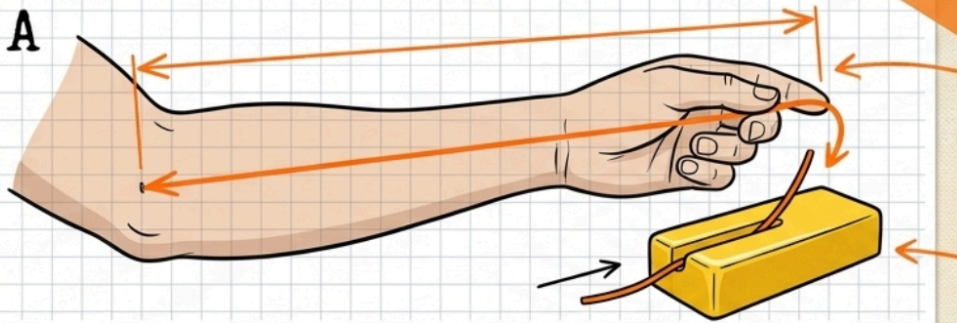
**Key mechanic:** The grid must extend past the weakened fabric to distribute the stress of daily wear across the hidden patch.

#### Step 3: Mark a grid.

Using a small ruler and a heat-erase fabric pen, draw a 1 cm grid centered over the hole. Ensure the grid extends at least 2 cm past the hole on all sides, as your stitches will follow these lines.

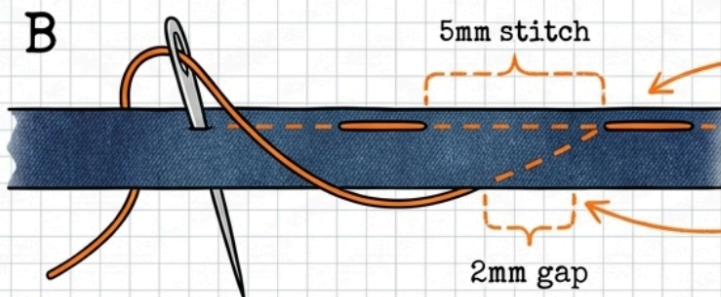
# Mastering the 5-Step Sashiko Method

## Step 4: The stitch ratio and the elbow-to-fingertip rule



**The Measurement:** Cut Sashiko thread roughly 30-35 cm long. Longer threads tangle, fray, and bunch the fabric.

**The Coating:** Run the thread (not the end) through beeswax before threading.



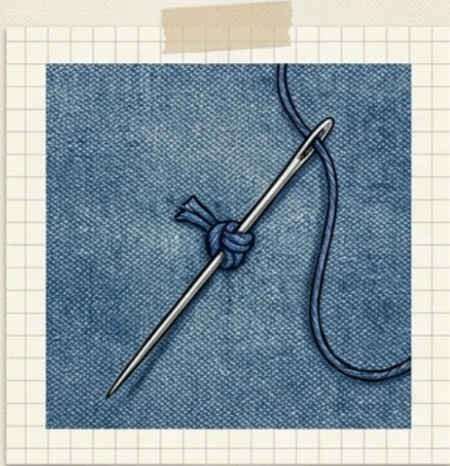
**The Stitch:** Working from the inside out, sew running stitches along the grid lines. Maintain a ratio of 5mm stitches to 2mm gaps.

### Step 4: Stitch the rows.

Cut a piece of sashiko thread roughly 30 to 35 cm long (about the distance from your elbow to your fingertips) and run it through beeswax to prevent tangling. Working from the inside out, follow the grid lines to sew running stitches. You should aim for your stitches to be about 5 mm long with 2 mm gaps between them.

## Mastering the 5-Step Sashiko Method

### Step 5: Secure the mend and erase the blueprint



Knot off cleanly on the inside to prevent unravelling.



Trim the tail closely for a flush interior.



Apply a warm iron to instantly erase the marker grid and press the patch flat.

#### Maker's Note

Short threads finish cleaner. If you need more length partway through a row, knot off on the inside, re-thread, and continue.

### Step 5: Knot off and erase.

When you are finished stitching, knot the thread on the inside of the jeans and trim the tail. Finally, run a warm iron over the grid lines to erase the marker and press the newly sewn patch flat from the inside.

# Sashiko



# Boro



## Sashiko and Boro

are both Japanese visible mending traditions, but they differ in how they approach repairs:

- **Sashiko** involves using small, even running stitches in a decorative grid to secure a single backing patch. It reinforces woven fabrics (like denim, canvas, or linen) by distributing stress and stopping a hole from growing

**Fabric Match:** Woven (denim, canvas, cotton, linen)

**Mechanism:** Reinforces with a running-stitch grid to distribute stress.

**Best First Project:** Knee or seat hole on worn jeans

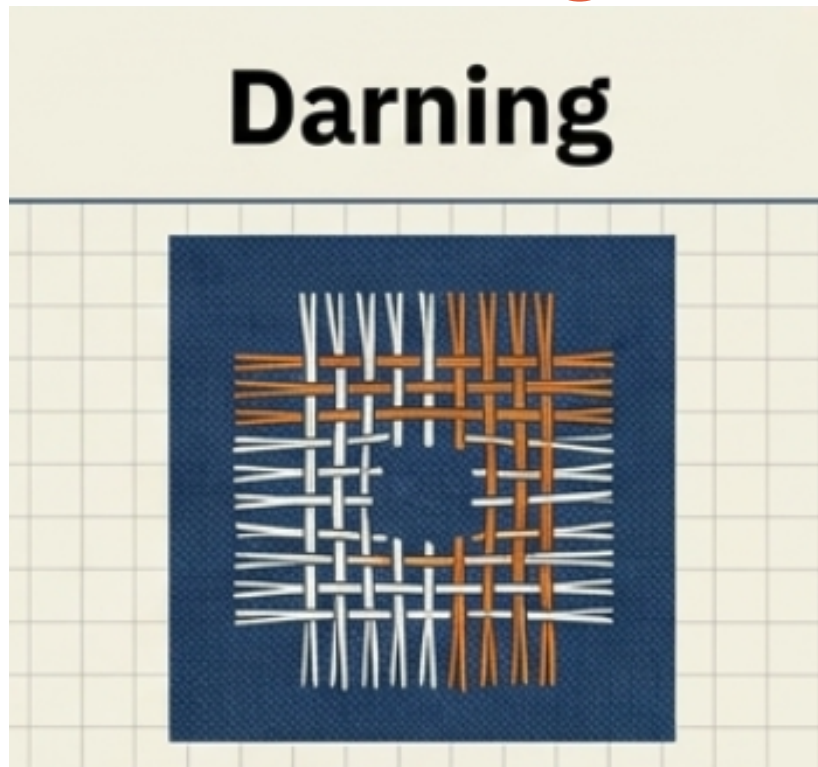
- **Boro** is a continuous process of building layered patchwork over a long period of time. Rather than a single repair, each new patch is added on top of previous ones, creating an evolving record of mends and "sculptural depth." It is best suited for garments you plan to wear and re-mend for years, such as jackets or aprons

**Fabric Match:** Layered woven scraps over time.

**Mechanism:** Builds an evolving, sculptural record of repair; patches are added on top of previous patches.

**Best First Project:** A jacket or apron planned for years of use.

# Darning



- **Darning** is a visible mending technique that involves weaving a new thread across a gap or hole to rebuild the missing fabric. Best for knits and stretchy fabrics: While sashiko is the go-to for woven fabrics like denim, darning is the rule for repairing knit items such as sweaters, socks, and t-shirts

**Fabric Match:** Knit (sweaters, socks, t-shirts).

**Mechanism:** Weaves a new thread across a gap without pulling or puckering.

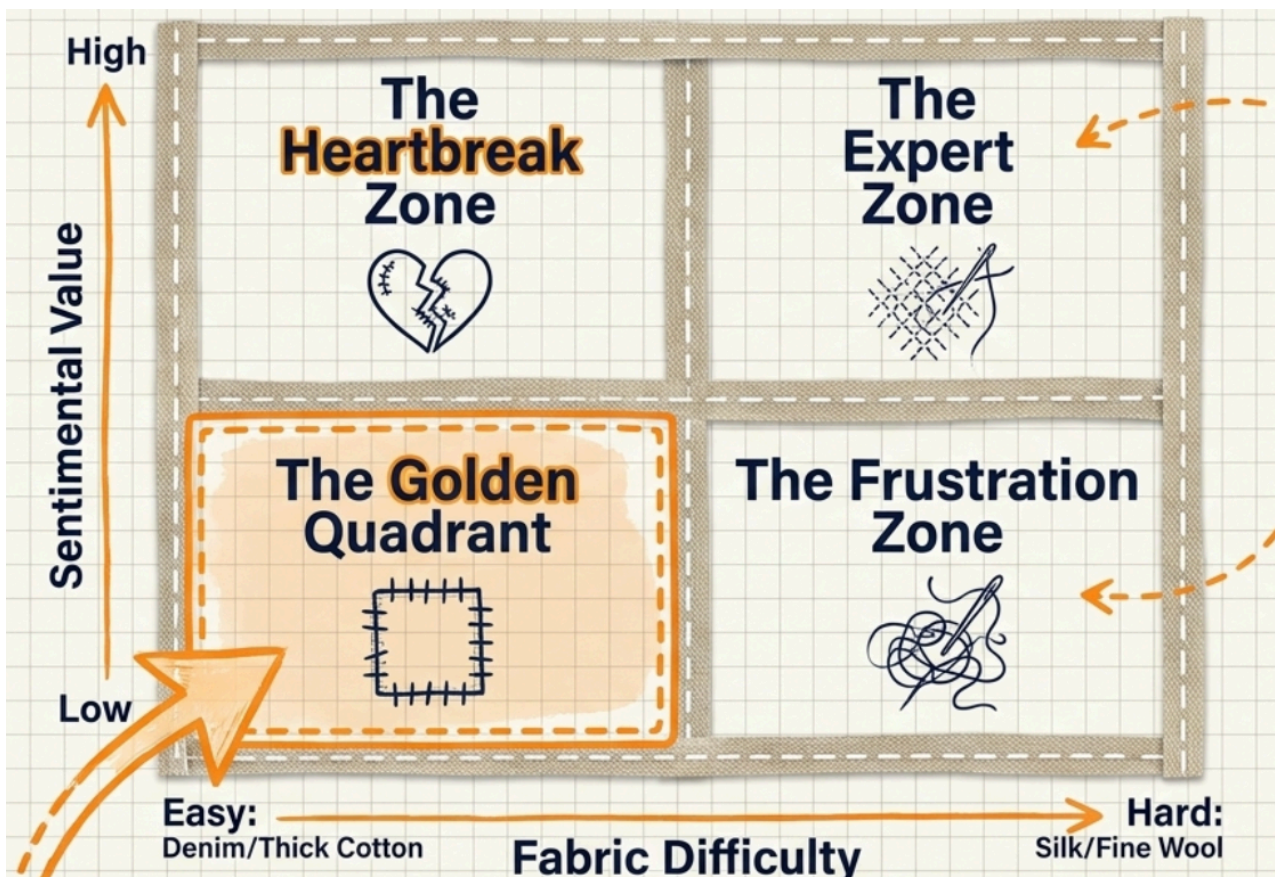
**Best First Project:** A sock with a small heel hole.

**Decision Rule:** woven + Hole = Sashiko. Knit + Hole = Darning. Layered Over time = Boro. For the first attempt, choose Sashiko as it is the most forgiving.

You can build your mending kit gradually as you gain more experience, so you don't need to buy everything at once. Here is a breakdown of what you need at different stages:

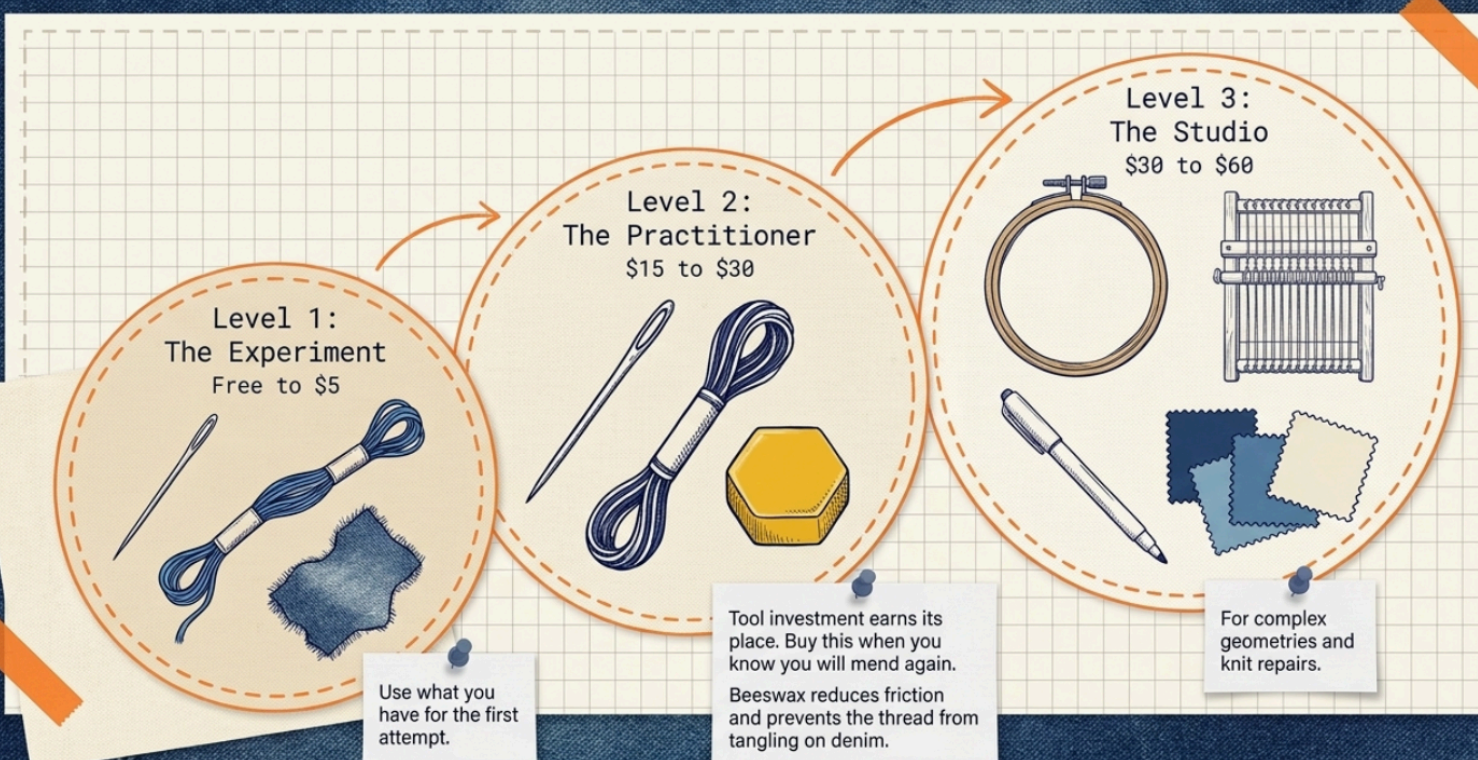
# Golden Rule of First Mend

**DO NOT** start with your favorite garment.



The primary goal of your very first mend is simply to practice the process of finishing, rather than achieving a perfect, beautiful result. Once you have completed your first practice run, your favorite garments can then earn their turn for a repair

# The Mender's Toolkit scales with your commitment



## Level 1 (Free or under \$5)

For your very first experimental mend, you only need basics you might already have around the house: a regular sewing needle, embroidery floss, and a scrap of fabric to use as a backing patch.

## Level 2 (\$15 to \$30)

Once you finish your first mend and decide you want to continue the practice, you can invest in a sashiko needle (which is longer and sharper than a regular sewing needle), a skein of sashiko thread, and a small block of beeswax to coat the thread and prevent it from tangling.

## Level 3 (\$30 to \$60)

For a more comprehensive toolkit, you can add an embroidery hoop to keep your fabric stable, a heat-erase fabric marker (which is highly useful for drawing grids), a small stash of patch fabrics in various weights, and a mending loom or speedweve for repairing holes in knitted sweaters.

*The sources recommend sticking to the Level 1 basics first, and only investing in Level 2 tools once you know you are going to tackle a second project*

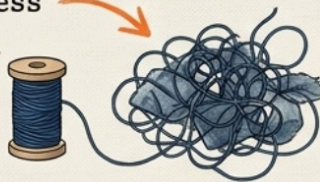
### Hazard 1: The Emotional Trap

**Mistake:** Tackling the favorite garment first.



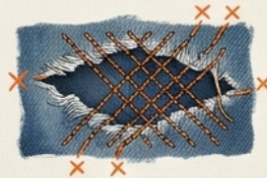
### Hazard 2: The Tangled Mess

**Mistake:** Using an excessively long thread to avoid re-threading.



### Hazard 3: The Premature Decoration

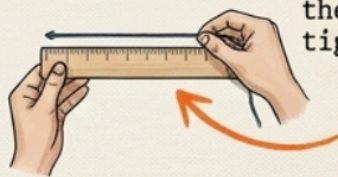
**Mistake:** Stitching a decorative grid over an unstabilized hole.



**Correction:** Use a write-off piece for your first practice.

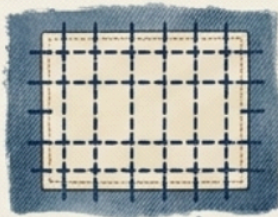
**Maker's Note:** Build confidence without risk.

**Correction:** Limit thread to 30-35cm. Long threads scrunch up the material as you tighten stitches.



Elbow-to-fingertip length (30-35cm) prevents frustration.

**Correction:** Always secure a backing patch first. A pretty stitch on a raw hole tears within five wears.



Structure first, decoration second.

## Three common mistakes that frequently trip up first-time menders, along with how to avoid them:

**01** Tackling a favorite garment first: Many beginners reach for an item of clothing they love and cannot bear to lose, which often leads to panicking halfway through.

**The fix:** Start with a garment that has a low sentimental score and is made from an easy-to-work-with fabric like denim or thick cotton.

**02** Choose something you wouldn't mind writing off, as the primary goal of your first mend is simply to practice the process of finishing. Using a thread that is too long: Working with a long piece of thread can be a nightmare because it is prone to tangling, getting caught, and bunching up the fabric as you tighten your stitches.

**The fix:** Keep your thread length between 30 and 40 cm (roughly the distance from your elbow to your fingertips), and run it through beeswax before threading your needle.

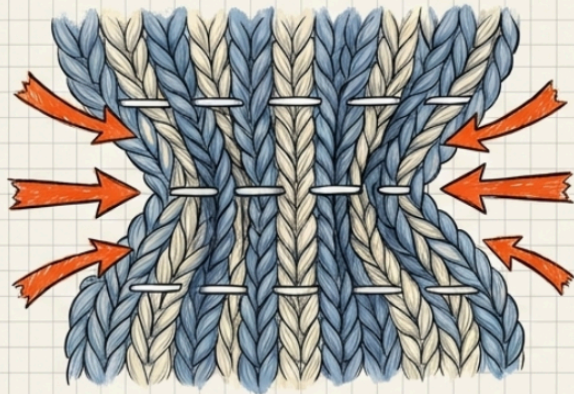
**03** If you run out of thread, simply knot it off on the inside and re-thread. Focusing on decoration before reinforcement: Sewing a pretty stitch directly over an unstabilized hole will usually result in a tear within just five wears.

**The fix:** Remember that structure comes first, and beauty comes second. Always secure a backing patch into solid fabric before you begin sewing your decorative grid.

# Demistifying Knits:

## Why Sashiko Destroys Sweaters

The Failure: Sashiko on Knits



**Sashiko** relies on the structural integrity of woven fabrics (denim, canvas). Its rigid running stitches will cause stretchy knits (sweaters, t-shirts) to pucker and distort during wear.

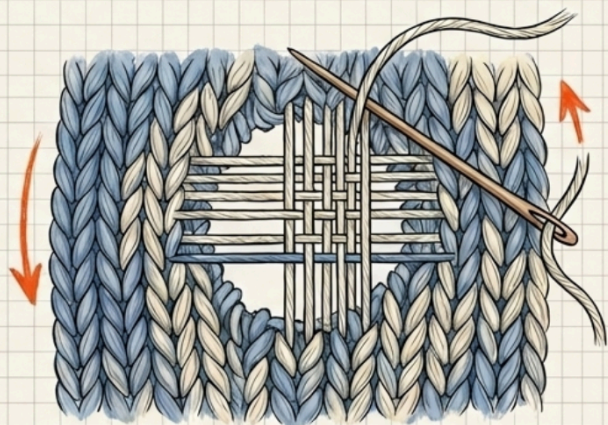
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### The Solution: Darning on Knits

The Rule: For Knits, use the darning technique and a mending loom to literally weave replacement fabric across the gap.

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**The Rule:** For knits, use a darning technique and a mending loom to literally weave replacement fabric across the gap.

# 2 to 3 Hours

80%

20%

## 1.5 to 2.25 hours: Preparation

Trimming, pinning the backing patch, marking the grid, threading, and re-threading.

## 30 to 45 minutes: Execution

The actual running stitches.

- First mends always run longer than expected. That is part of the practice.
- The meditation is in the process. Many menders start for sustainability and stay for the calming, focused rhythm of slow stitching.

## Time Expectations: Speed is not the Goal

### 1.5 to 2.25 hours: Preparation

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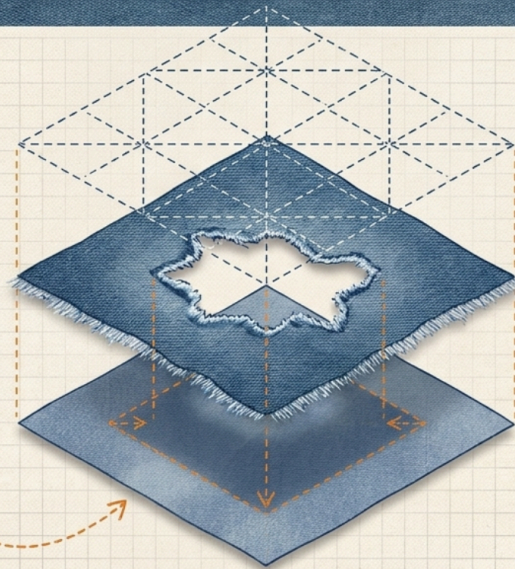
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# Mend before you Make

## Anatomy of a Sashiko mend: structure first, beauty second

A pretty stitch on an unstabilized hole tears within five wears.

The decorative grid only works because it anchors the frayed garment to the hidden structural patch beneath.



Layer 1:  
The Sashiko Grid

Layer 2:  
The Frayed Garment

Layer 3:  
The Structural  
Backing Patch

## Visible Mending Philosophy

"The lady who gave it to me didn't care how much it cost her or how long it took, for her it was irreplaceable."

-TOAST Member, on repairing a cardigan with 136 moth holes.

The practice is not about technique mastery. It is about a different relationship with what you already own. A mended garment is sustainable, personal, and visually distinct.

Find the garment in your closet you've been avoiding. Grab your toolkit, accept imperfection, and begin your first mend this weekend.

