

Marcy Tilton's guide to great sewing classes, workshops, retreats, tours and vacations

Learning FROM THE Best

1 Learning to sew was once a standard part of a young girl's training to be a woman (i.e. wife and mother). Home Economics was taught in every high school (and many junior high schools) across the country with an accompanying "Future Homemaker of America" club part of regular after-school activities. In addition, mom and grandma passed down their sewing skills along with their favorite recipes. Then came the sexual revolution of the '60s and women abandoned the homeplace for the work place. Gradually, Home Economics classes became a symbol of women's repression, lost favor, and many were dropped in the budget crises of the '70s. But, lo and behold, in the past few years things have begun to change dramatically, and being a domestic diva is now a good thing. In that 20- to 30-year period in between, there are generations of people who lost out on these valuable lessons and are now craving to find them. And for those who already have the basics under their belt, there's the quest to gain advanced skills. The question is, where to you begin to look?

Researching this article, I Googled "sewing classes" which gave me over two million results. Even narrowing the search by state left far too many choices to deal with. So, once again, I've pull out my personal notes and compiled a list of people and places offering courses in everything from basics to haute couture to surface design and embellishment. There are some excellent learning opportunities here, from neighborhood guilds to sewing vacations to

studying with a sewing celebrity in a retreat atmosphere. Let this be the start of your research. Learn what's out there to take your skills to the next level. And if you know someone who wants to learn how to sew, take them under your wing, or lead them to a reputable instructor—creativity with a needle and thread should never become a lost art. And with these great prospects, it won't.

Schools for Beginners

Two national organizations are helpful starting points. **The American Sewing Guild** (www.asg.org) is made up of 130 Chapters, with over 1000 neighborhood groups all over the country. Local

chapters provide classes and informal learning within the groups. Some guilds sponsor seminars with guest instructors and locally based retreats. Membership in the guild puts you in touch with other local groups as well as with their in-depth annual National Conference where you can take classes from top sewing personalities and share unique experiences with fellow enthusiasts. **PACC**, the Professional Association of Custom Clothiers, offers networking, education and support to its 500 members who are engaged in professional sewing and related businesses. PACC maintains a list of fashion schools and continuing education programs in the United States, Canada, and

