

Your Days for Girls Sewing Event

Welcome to Days for Girls! We are thrilled to have you on the team. Sewing kits for Days for Girls is very fulfilling work and the kits are greatly needed. Group sewing is also a lot of fun.

WHERE SHOULD I START? Our kits are not difficult to sew; however, it can be a bit daunting in the beginning to plan a group sewing event. Equipment, supplies, preparations, organization and more – all must be considered. It is also important to assess the skill set of your group. We offer this document to assist you: the leader, the teacher, the encourager, the organizer. This document is intended to help you plan for and set realistic goals for your initial project. Our Days for Girls Sewing Specialist wrote this based on her many experiences organizing sewing events. This reflects what has worked for us. However, we recognize that situations vary for each sewing group and we think it is best for each group to identify the details as best fits their group. Please use this document to work through the planning stages. Have fun!

The BEST FIRST TIP: Read all the instructions on the website and make several liners, shields and bags yourself -- this is invaluable experience as you organize supplies and look ahead to instructing others. The sewing page of the Days for Girls website has patterns, instructions and videos to make and assemble our kits. The FAQ page has important tips and considerations as well. (The sewing page is found at [VOLUNTEER/ Make Kits.](#))

The BEST SECOND TIP: Sewing for Days for Girls does not require you to make entire kits. It is very acceptable to pick one or two items in the kit and concentrate on that. This allows you to match the skills and resources of your group with the appropriate sewing tasks. The completed items can be sent to DfGI headquarters or a DfG Chapter near you who will combine your donations with the other necessary elements to put together the completed kits. That said, we are always overjoyed to receive entire kits; please consider doing so if you have the resources for it. Choose the option that is the best fit for you and your group.



“A Days for Girls Sewing Event can be rewarding, fun and change lives.”

Our TOP TEN LIST of things to consider when thinking about organizing a group sewing event and project:

First. Is your group committed to an ongoing project, or is this a one-time event? If this is a one-time event, set your goals appropriately. If you are planning an ongoing project, we recommend you start small and work up to the level of production you desire. Regardless of duration, the planning steps are similar.

Second. Do you know the knowledge and skill set of your group? Beneficial qualities for the group are: detail-oriented individuals, a focus on quality versus speed, careful sewers (can be either experienced or beginners), familiarity with the purpose and need for Days for Girls kits, and an appreciation for beautiful and well-made kits. Encourage each member to view the videos and instruction sets on the Days for Girls website. Remember, the written instructions are the official instructions; they include the most up-to-date instructions. The videos are helpful, however, it is more difficult to re-do them with every slight change in design or procedure, thus, please use the written instructions as the official specification.

Third. What equipment do you have available? How many sewing machines? How many sergers? Rotary cutting boards and rotary blades? Irons and ironing boards, etc.

Fourth. How will you manage quality control issues? How many in the group have made some of the items? Who will supervise and explain the proper sewing methods for each item? There are very detailed instruction sets on the DfG website; please verify you have the most recent instruction set in hand. Quality control, use of proper fabrics and proper prints and colors -- these things are incredibly important. These topics are covered well in the instruction documents. If you have any questions, please write to SewingSpecialist@DaysForGirls.org for answers.

Fifth. How much time does the group have available? Do some want to sew at home rather than at a group meeting? It may be wise to discourage sewing at home until a volunteer has been at a minimum of 3 sessions and you have had ample opportunity to see their work and be convinced they will do quality work 'on their own'. Down the road, once the group gets rolling, there may be some who cannot come and will be involved only if allowed to sew at home -- including them in your project will be a blessing to them and will add to the production of your group. A word of caution is advisable here: for a volunteer unable to attend even an initial meeting or two, consider reviewing the instructions with her, tell her to download a copy of same, make a few items, and show you the result. This is to ensure her time and resources are used well, and ensure the finished items will be usable by Days for Girls. It is important for all volunteers to know that items made incorrectly CANNOT be used by Days for Girls; the health of the girls and longevity of the kits is paramount. Please do everything you can to avoid improperly made items; inability to utilize something which has been lovingly but incorrectly made is such a shame. We desire everyone's time and resources to be well-spent.

Sixth. Where will the materials come from? Donated or purchased? See specifications for each item in the applicable instruction set. Who will assess appropriateness and quality of the materials?

Seventh. Who will prepare materials? Minimum to do: wash and dry the fabrics. For a new group, it REALLY HELPS to pre-cut all items and bring them to the event 'ready to sew'. Much could be said on this topic but it is best for you to determine what works well for your group. Items cut properly and accurately enables proper sewing which yields professional results. Wise cutting enables best use of fabrics and minimizes waste. Bringing items pre-cut keeps the focus on sewing and minimizes confusion (ie,: 'too many things going on'). Most importantly, eliminating cutting activities at the group event eliminates one additional activity that must be closely supervised.

Eighth. Assuming the group will meet repeatedly, we recommend focusing each meeting on a different item. For example, first meeting(s), do drawstring bags. Next meeting or two, do liners. (There are two methods to do liners. Some in your group may not have a serger and will do the T&T liner. Others may have sergers and want to do the serged liner. The serged liner takes a bit more organization and teamwork. Both methods make great liners, and both are equally efficient and effective.) For the next series of meetings, work on shields. Shields are the most intricate item to sew, but they are NOT difficult. Anyone who sews carefully and attentively can sew shields. (Generally quilters do very well with shields, as they are familiar with detailed work.) After 5-6 sessions, it will be apparent 'who should do what' and the volunteers will identify for themselves which piece of the action they enjoy the most and are best suited for.

Ninth. In thinking of your first project, we recommend setting a LOW goal, for example, 10 kits to start. For 10 kits, you need 20 shields, 80 liners, and 10 drawstring bags. This should come together quite quickly. You can then celebrate the sewing accomplishment with an assembly party (packing the kits). The website has the details for 'what is in a kit' and how many of each. There is an instructional on the website for how to pack a kit to make it look nice and pack it properly for cost-effective shipping.

Tenth. Phew! You are now all experts!!! You won't need us to tell you how to proceed from here. WOW and CONGRATS!! Thanks for making 10 kits! You are so appreciated. We hope you have really enjoyed the process and have been watching our Facebook page for current news and stories... and hopefully you feel totally blessed by your efforts to help the girls who need menstruation supplies. You have given new life and hope and days of education, health, and dignity to 10 girls. **Well...** that was the 'top ten' list. Since there are a few other things to say, we have added a few comments below. You are invited to send an email if there are questions. We are happy to relay what has worked for us.

Other Comments:

Comment 1. The FAQ page on the website provides an estimated fabric list for 50 kits. Down-scale it appropriately for 10 kits. I advise you to set a small and reasonable goal for your project. It is nice to COMPLETE SOME - if the numbers are too high, it takes too long and you will have more supplies to manage and store throughout the process.

Comment 2. Our patterns and instructions have developed over time with input from many sewers AND with feedback from the girls themselves. It is important to follow our guidelines as they accommodate cultural sensitivities and have been developed with a focus on health and hygiene. Our kits are intended to last three full years – using quality materials and good sewing techniques are important for longevity of the kits.

Comment 3. Include some non-sewers for ironing, folding, snapping, prepping, etc.

Comment 4. Consider bringing all items prepped and pre-cut to the sewing event. This requires some prep work at home prior to the event, but enables precise cutting in a quieter atmosphere at home. It also enables best utilization of fabric, a valuable resource. (Some volunteers have elaborate cutting tables in their home and will be happy to do some prep work where they can work easily and efficiently.) Eliminating the cutting activity at the

event saves time in the group setting, eliminates possible confusion, and allows the sewers to start sewing immediately. I find many ladies would rather sew than cut; they are happiest to bring their machine and carefully do the sewing. Identify some helpers to transport the equipment and supplies; arrive an hour ahead of time to setup the work tables, power strips, and supplies. Organize the room/people so they are grouped by what they are sewing. This is easiest to supervise (that is, to give instruction and talk about quality issues etc). It also enables 'assembly line' sewing, when appropriate, to best use people's skills and mitigate inabilities. Organize liner workers together, shield workers together, etc. It is helpful if the sergers can be set apart as they can be noisy.

Comment 5. Make and bring some visual aids to use when showing instructions to a group. A good technique is to create a sample of each step of the construction process attached to a sheet of paper/ cardstock. You could think of these as large-print versions of the instructions, just a small amount of text with a sample of the construction method for each step. This is really useful at the outset when many of the workers require instruction. (Even accomplished sewers must be taught the proper construction method. When all is made consistently, quality control is easier). At subsequent meetings, there may be new workers and the visual aids will be used again. Some of the workers will ask to review them if they have missed for a while and want to do a self-refresher.

Comment 6. Supervision is a continual process. As organizer-teacher-supervisor you will most likely stay busy answering questions and monitoring all of the work in process. Be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and cheerful. The team will appreciate your leadership as you coach them toward a successful finish.

Thank you for your important efforts. Here's to the many lives you are about to change.

Sincerely,

Jan Bode

Days for Girls Lynden Chapter Leader