

# DESIGN MENTORING MANUAL

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# AIMS

The aims of this manual are to show young people how to (re)make their own clothes through a design mentoring programme, and to show organisers the theoretical and practical steps necessary to make this programme work.



# OBJECTIVES

**The objectives of this manual are to:**

- Offer organisers a high quality design mentoring resource which they can use as an inspiration for running RecyCOOL program
- Show young people how they can design and create their own clothing through a range of techniques, from basic to advanced
- Provide them with mentoring support and hands-on experience of designing and (re)making clothes
- Introduce qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate changes in mentees attitudes towards the fashion industry (during this program)

It should be made clear that organisers and mentors in this program are not expected to teach the mentees to sew.

The mentees are expected to have gained these skills elsewhere (e.g. in sewing courses, from a family member, local dressmaker or tailor, etc.).



## TOPIC

This manual is about creating your own clothing through remaking, mending and basic upcycling techniques. Students will learn how to create a final outfit by working with already used material, such as clothing from their own or family wardrobe, secondhand or vintage clothing, textile leftovers from garment production or other textile materials and accessories.



## WHO'S THIS MANUAL FOR?

This manual is for everyone who would like to be inspired by, and/or contribute towards the development of, the creative skills of young people. If you've decided to use this manual, you have become what we would call an '**educator**'. An educator can, for example, be:

- A teacher, lecturer or tutor who decides to educate their students
- A student who decides to educate their classmates
- Young person who decides to educate their peers
- A youth centre worker
- Anyone with a connection to young people that includes education or mentoring (e.g school club organiser, NGO volunteer, member of informal group of young people, social media influencer, youtuber, etc.)

One or more **educators** organise the program. They find and select **design mentors** and recruit the young people who join the program as **mentees**.

## Mentees should be:

- between 13 and 30 years old
- interested into making their own clothes or outfits
- motivated to develop their knowledge and skills

Mentees can have different levels of education – this program is for those who know nothing about making clothes as well as for those with experience and practice.

## WHO IS A DESIGN MENTOR?

A **design mentor** is an experienced guide and adviser, who accompanies a participant through the creation process, looks at it critically, and helps the participant. They positively affect participants' development and motivate them throughout the whole process.

The mentors in this program are usually local designers, educators in the field of fashion design, and professionals from the fashion industry. They have knowledge and skills in working with textiles and clothing, but they also need to be able to pass them on to participants. They also have a sensitive yet critical approach to the creation process, patience, and a consistent approach to mentoring.

## WHERE YOU CAN USE THIS MANUAL?

This design mentoring manual is applicable in any environment that is free from geographical, social or educational prejudices towards participants.

**THE PROGRAM IS FOR EVERYBODY!**

## WHERE TO FIND PARTICIPANTS?

- In formal education environments (e.g. primary or secondary schools, universities, school clubs)
- In informal education environments (e.g. after school activities, youth centres, summer camps, festivals, educational activities during various projects, events or workshops)
- In informal groups of young people (e.g. friends, family members, neighbours, social media networks)
- In youth volunteering organisations (e.g. Scouts & Guides, Climate strikers, Fashion Revolution volunteers)

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This design mentoring program consists of four main meetings during which mentees are guided by experienced mentors through a process of creating clothing from unwanted materials (second hand, waste materials, and previously used textiles). This is primarily an inventive and creative process the goal of which is to realise one's own capabilities to create a complete garment or outfit and to appreciate the value of our clothes. The program includes individual tasks which the participants undertake between the meetings according to their needs and demands.



## WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE DESIGN MENTORING PROGRAM?

After finishing RecyCOOL Imperfections design mentoring program mentees will have:

- a basic knowledge of textile materials, clothing creation and alteration procedures (the scope depends on the extent and depth of mentoring).
- basic practical skills in creating a garment from unwanted materials – from choosing the materials to creating and styling the finished garment.
- experience of participating in a creative, collaborative, mentored sustainable fashion project.
- an appreciation of the role that remaking clothes has in environmental, economic and social justice campaigning

By participating in this project, **the educators** will gain experience in organising an event of this nature and **the mentors** will develop their skills in leading and mentoring a creative process from the first idea to the final model.

**All the participants** will get a chance to form a creative group or community which will help them to establish and develop new relationships and connections.

# DESIGN MENTORING

## Chapter 1 Recruitment

Maybe in your surroundings there are some young people who would like to make their own clothes, create, remake, and/or save unwanted garments from their destiny to become a waste. Maybe they do not know it themselves and all they need is just a bit of motivation. So how could you provide it?

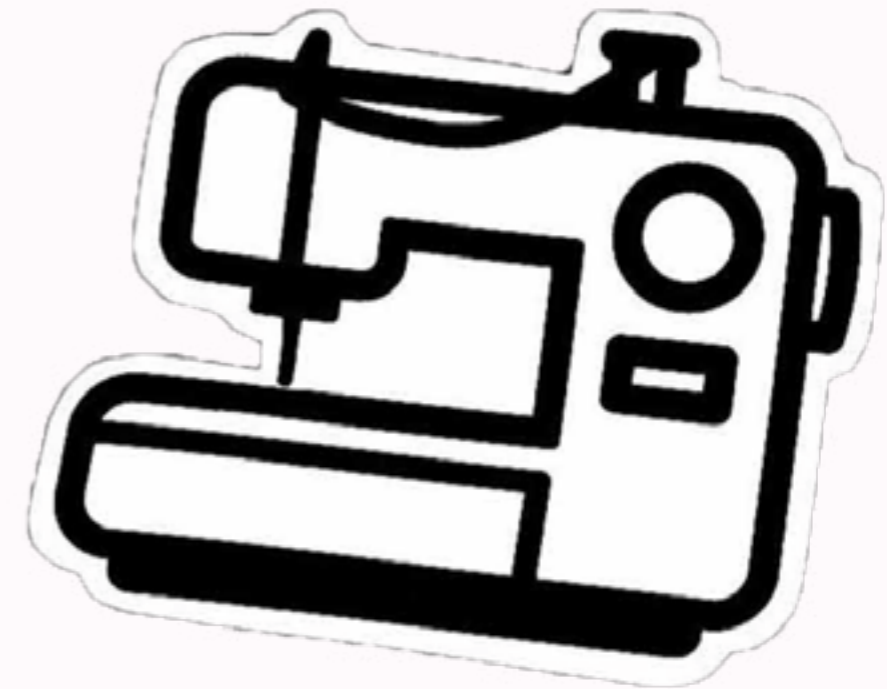
Many young people are talented and committed once they start. Not everyone has the clear idea, though, about what making their own clothes means – that's why it can look difficult, and maybe unrealistic.

This program supports the development of what we already know, the gaining of new knowledge and skills and, overall, having fun. Maybe it will be easy, maybe it will be hard, but in the end there are some amazing fashion statements waiting. Not only environmentally and financially friendly, but made by our own hands.

## Basic information to be provided to mentees

- Everybody can join!
- The level of skill doesn't matter - from complete beginners to advanced - everybody is welcome!
- The design mentoring and its preparation will take a few weeks, so consider carefully your personal and time capacities. You will need to be aware in advance of the amount of time that will be needed to complete the program.
- It is necessary to map and record the work on clothes in the form of a reflective journal. It can be created in online or offline form, written, or as a collection of audio or video recordings. Photos, collages or mind maps can be added too. The result should be a complex and mapped process from initial ideas to final creation. Reflective journal will allow critical analysis and evaluation of the process and outcomes.

- Attending the mentoring sessions is a must. This is where you will get valuable advice and feedback from your mentor, and they will help you to plan your next steps to move forward.
- The most important task will be to make an outfit from, and only from, otherwise wasted materials. Sustainability is what we want!





- Design mentoring is the second part of the three-part RecyCOOL Imperfections project (link to project). Its mentees can be recruited after the first educational part, when all of them are aware of the topic and can discuss whatever they would like to know. However, participation in part one of the project is not a prerequisite for joining the second.

- Talk about mentoring and the program with everybody! Ask for help finding young people to participate.

- Depending on how big a project you want to have, you can reach out directly to schools, school boards, youth centres, children's homes, your community, etc.

- Use the power of social networks. Young people use them on a daily basis and some information about the program might draw their attention and encourage them to take part, or they will share it.

## REGISTER OF PARTICIPANTS

It's necessary to keep a record of the names and contact information of your participants. Be careful with GDPR (always follow the legislation of the country where you're implementing the program).

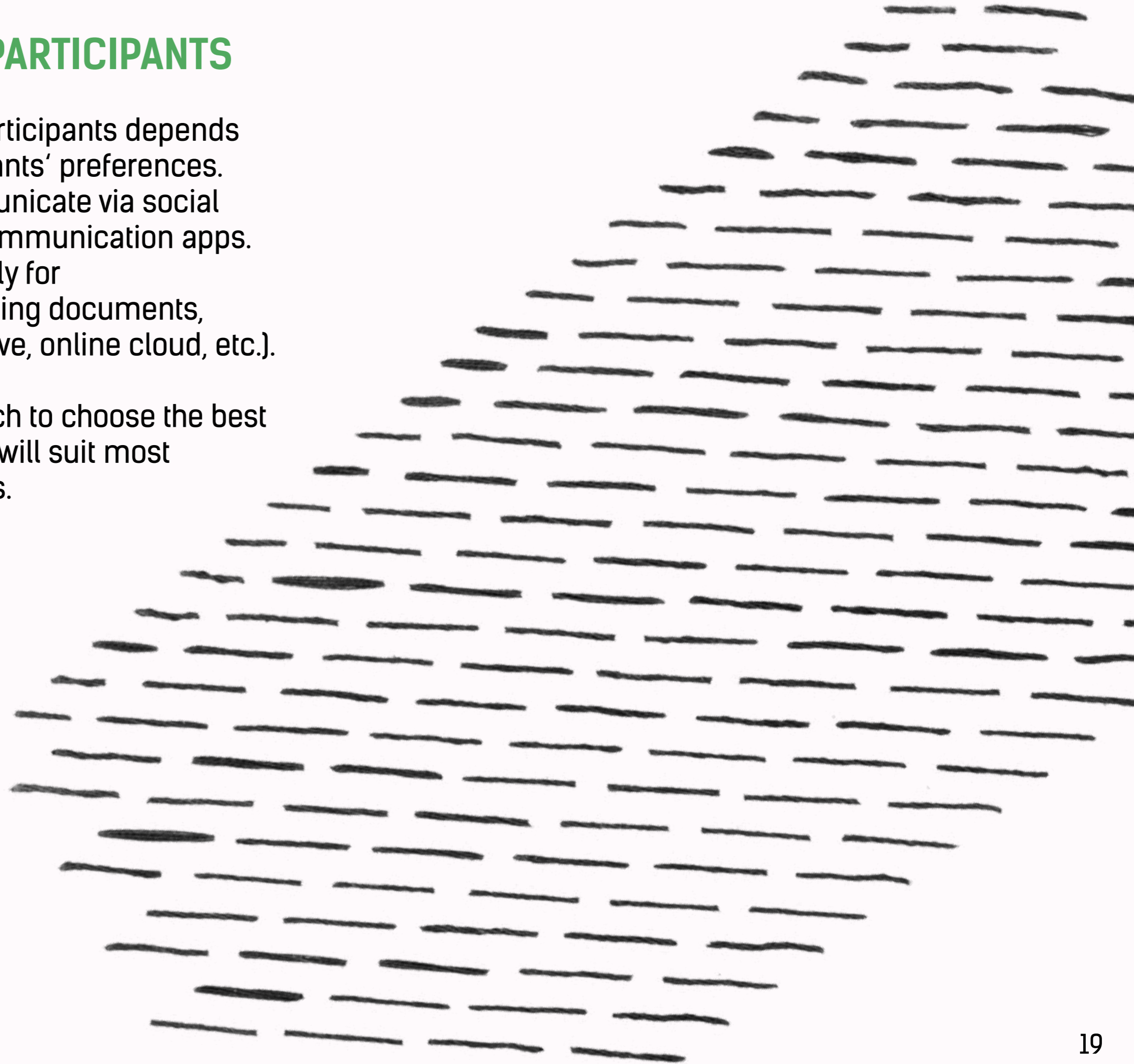
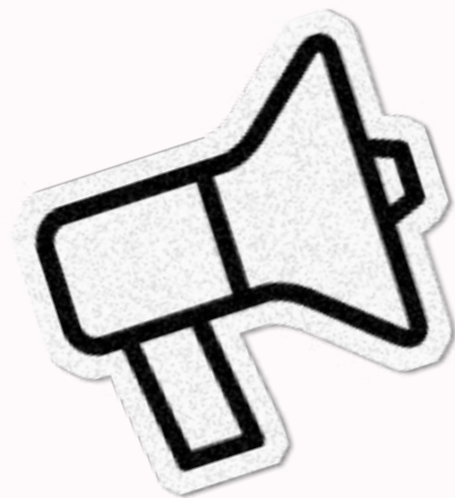
**Never share participants' personal data with third parties!**

It's also necessary to inform the participants that they might be photographed during the program if that's something you plan to do.

## COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

How to communicate with the participants depends on your location and the participants' preferences. Some people don't like to communicate via social networks, some people prefer communication apps. You should create a space not only for communication, but also for sharing documents, ideas, and references (Google Drive, online cloud, etc.).

Before you start, do some research to choose the best communication channels which will suit most of the participants and organisers.



#### Aim

The first design mentoring meeting is about theory rather than practice. It's focused on introducing the mentors and participants as well as the program.

Its aim is for everyone to get to know each other, introduce the program, and establish cooperation and individual work.

The young people who decided to embark on this interesting creative journey will learn about the mentoring process here.

It's also a good idea to show tangible examples of upcycling, or to bring in discarded or vintage material for the participants who don't have any of their own. They can get inspired by some pieces of fabric and materials.

At the same time, try not to overwhelm them by talking about the amount of work waiting for them. They have to stay motivated by new challenges and the opportunity to develop new skills.

#### Place

We recommend holding the meeting in an informal environment, ideally outside of school – in a café, designer's studio, local gallery, co-working centre, etc.

Create a friendly atmosphere where the participants can feel relaxed and where they can get inspired and start to think about the challenge. Don't forget to make sure you meet in a venue which provides barrier-free access and a safe environment for everyone.

#### The structure of the first meeting

At this first meeting, organisers and design mentors should introduce the following points:

- Introducing the RecyCOOL Imperfections project
- Introducing the mentors
- Introducing the participants
- Exchanging contacts and choosing communication channels
- Making a garment
- Starting own brand = business opportunity
- Looking for inspiration
- Making a moodboard
- Writing your garment's story
- Setting the next meeting agenda
- Space for questions and arranging the second meeting

1

## Introducing the RecyCOOL Imperfections project

Use the information provided at the beginning of this manual. Study it and present the project in your own words. Use photos created by participants in previous years of the project, and show them garments from previous events. That is the best way for them to see how they can use waste clothing and fabrics to create something new and fantastic.

Explain the whole program to the participants who haven't participated in the educational part, or remind those who have participated in the

first part and summarise this part for them.

Explain mentees that their work can be presented at the event organised by them. They can use [Manual for Organising a Sustainable Event](#), which is a part of this project. Presentation of the work is voluntary and depends on mentees.

2

## Introducing the mentors

Then, briefly introduce the design mentors and their work.

Talk to mentees about what know-how you would like to share with them, how you would like to inspire them, and what

issues they can come to you with.

3

## Introducing the participants

Give the mentees a chance to introduce themselves in an informal way. Ask them some basic information such as their name, age, and where they study. Ask about their attitudes to remaking clothes and upcycling, creativity, sewing, what they think about fashion and whether it's something they want to do in the future. Ask them why they decided to participate in RecyCOOL Imperfections and what they expect.

4

## Exchanging contacts and choosing communication channels

Don't forget to exchange contacts and make sure that you're all connected to the chosen platform or app. You can do that at the meeting.



## 5 Making a garment

You will then need to provide a thorough explanation of the program's work and tasks so that the participants can efficiently create a good quality garment.

**Simply put, it's about creating a garment (or a collection) inspired by any theme but predominantly from waste and unwanted materials in order to use already existing sources and minimise the use of new components.**

Thoroughly explain the requirements for garment creation:

- The participants don't have to make the garment themselves – even though this would be welcome. If a participant doesn't have necessary skills, their family and friends can help, or they can start taking sewing classes. This program is a creative process of discovering what each person can do with unwanted materials.

- The basic task is to make a new garment from old/**second-hand/waste materials**. Ideally, at least 80% of the garment should be made from waste, dead stock, vintage materials, second-hand clothing, buttons, braids, ribbons, and trims.

- 10–20% of the material can be new, but it should be primarily **functional** (threads, cotton yarns, zippers and other fasteners, metal components, textile dyes, appliqués, and facings).

- Tell the participants that the garment should be **wearable and functional** – although it can also be aesthetic and extravagant.

- The garment should be made in such a way that it can be **repeatedly used**, washed, cleaned, and maintained.

- The garment should meet **basic cut and technological criteria** – however, that depends on the knowledge and skills the participants bring with them and develop during the program.

## For fashion or textile design students:

Their garments can be more elaborate, thought out, time-consuming, and include their own cut solutions. They can draw inspiration from what they have learned at school, in garment construction and technology lessons, etc. If possible, they should make the cut themselves.

## For participants who don't have any craft skills and experience:

The garments they make should be wearable as well, but they have to be forgiven for some technological or cutting imperfections. For that reason, it's better if they come up with some easier remakes. They can also find some inspiration in online videos or tutorials.

## Examples of remade and upcycled garments and technical solution and pattern cutting

We recommend that the mentors show some remade and upcycled garments in order to explain the basics of cut, manipulation techniques (e.g. pleating, embroidery), and quality execution so that the participants can get a better idea of what is expected of them.

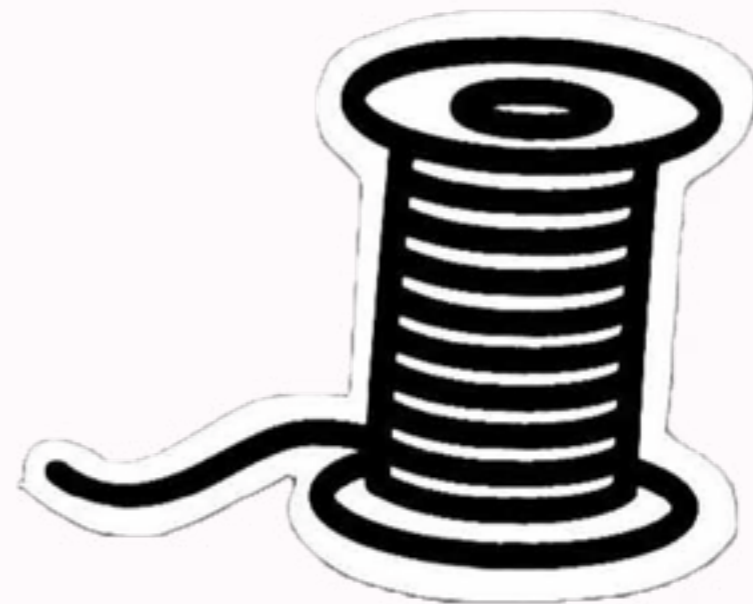
It's not necessary to use a sewing machine, the garments can be sewn by hand, however, they must be of good quality, and made with patience and attention to detail. Advise the participants to ask someone who can sew for help if they can't do this themselves. It's important for them to understand upcycling techniques and philosophy – in the process, they should learn that even from unwanted clothes and fabrics they can make something beautiful and valuable, something they will cherish.

## 6 Starting own brand = business opportunity

Suggest the possibility of creating their own fashion brand concept which can be followed up by a business plan, i.e. the participants could **establish their own brand**. They can imagine that the garment they will create in the program will be part of a successful brand. This means they will think about the brand from a business point of view – the overall idea of the brand, its functioning, management, marketing, finances, creation and production of a collection. To help them do this, you could ask them these questions:

- What do I want to bring to the market? Why this product, design, or style? Is my product already on the market?
- What is its target group? Who will my customers be? How will I get to them, attract them, and keep them?
- What message should my garment convey? What is the idea behind the design I want to offer? Is the design innovative, timeless?
- What inspires me? What is my idea based on and what influenced it?

- What marketing tools will I use to get my garment to the customer? Will I get to my target group through my marketing plan?
- Will my garment's production respect environmental and human rights, or will it be focused solely on success and profit? And if I want to reach both, will such a business model work?
- How big should my brand be, how many employees should I have, and are there enough people in the labour market to employ?



If they think about their own brand, they can go further and think about its financial plan. You could ask them:

- How much will my garment cost to make? (Let them set the price of their garment and calculate whether the price covers their efforts, time, and original idea. Then, they can compare it with prices of other designers on the market. Are they similar? Will they be able to sell their product like well-known designers and brands?)
- How much time will I need to spend on designing, searching for material, sewing? Is it a lot or not enough? How could this work be reflected in the price and could it be optimised?
- Is my garment/design marketable? Does it meet my customers' aesthetic and quality requirements? How do I assess that?



## 7 Looking for inspiration

How and where should your mentees get inspiration? It can be from research into design or local production, a visit to a gallery, learning about the history of fashion design, references to cultural heritage. A great source of inspiration can be a discussion with mentors and sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Let them know that before creating their garment, they should find out whether such a design, idea, or garment has already been created. They should also know some basics of copyright and the importance of intellectual property. So you might want to discuss where they would draw the line between copying and being inspired. Explain that it's OK to say who has inspired your work because this is how you pay tribute to a creator.

They don't have to find inspiration only in the field of fashion, clothing, and design. Inspiration could also come from literature, film, theatre, music, gallery exhibitions, museums, and historical events as well as references to social, political, and environmental issues. Their garment can be related to a story, it can be designed for a specific character, person, or reflect the creator's personality, but they have to explain how.



Show them some mood boards, lookbooks, fashion videos, TikTok videos, and other sources, for example, through an engaging presentation.

## 8 Making a moodboard

The participants should start with a mood board, i.e. visual presentation (collage) showing a general idea or specific feelings. A moodboard consists of pictures, texts, pieces of fabric and other components, and anything that shows their inspirations, feelings, moods, directions. A moodboard should be editable, whether in the physical (usually paper) or online form, and it should ideally be a single area (physical or online noticeboard or a piece of paper).

### What is a moodboard?

A colourful board with materials, colour palette, photos, sources of inspiration (Pinterest, artwork, song lyrics, fashion shows, movies, plays, nature, history, politics, environmentalism, etc.)

## 9 Writing your garment's story

The added value of re-made clothing is the story behind it. The story of how a garment was designed and made, what it was inspired by, who it was meant for, its journey from shapeless materials to something people would love to wear. There are many ways to tell such a story. Mentees could write a reflective journal, starting with your garment's moodboard and including before, during, and after photos. Alternatively, they could tell their garment's story in a short video, a poem, a piece of creative writing, a photo-essay, whatever storytelling format they like.



## 10 Setting the next meeting agenda

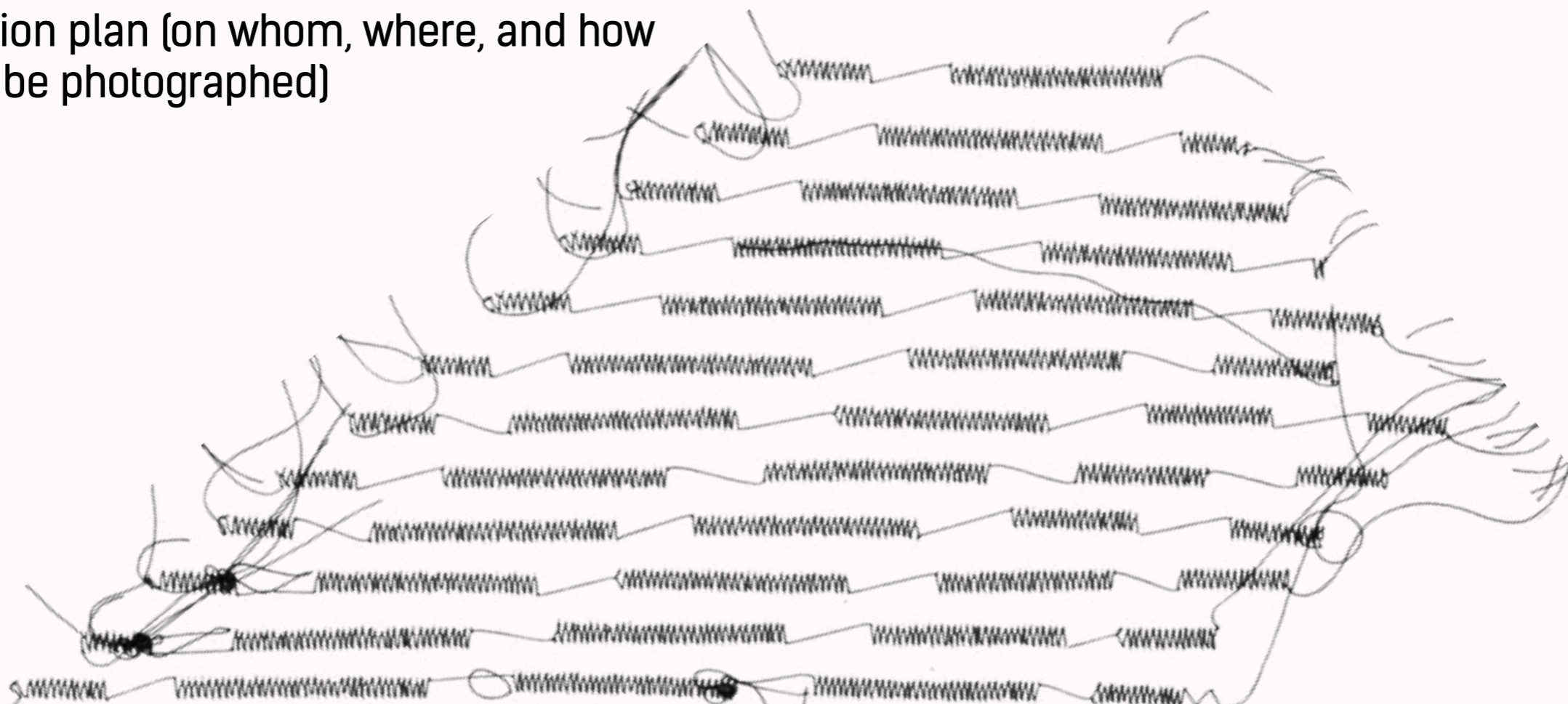
At the end of the first meeting, you should invite the participants to prepare the following for the next one:

- a collection of materials and components they like and basically anything they plan to use to make their garment
- a design for their garment in a simple - or more elaborate - sketch
- a mood board for, or a description of, the final garment, who/what inspired them, and a journal or other record of their process
- a final presentation plan (on whom, where, and how will their garment be photographed)

## 11 Space for questions and arranging the second meeting

Allow some time for questions at the end of this first meeting. You'll find out what the mentees don't understand, what's interesting for them in terms of fashion, design, upcycling, and the fashion industry. This part of the meeting can result in an inspiring discussion – both for the participants and the mentors.

Then discuss the arrangements for arranging the second design mentoring meeting and encourage the mentees to communicate with mentors between the meetings via apps and channels you have agreed on.



## Practical materials for each topic:

### Moodboard

<https://pinterest.com/> – online inspiration moodboard

<https://jamboard.google.com/> – online presentation tool

<https://miro.com/app/dashboard/> – online whiteboard

<https://www.microsoft.com/cs-cz/microsoft-365/microsoft-whiteboard/digital-whiteboard-app>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAzNNyt-6LY&ab\\_channel=CreativeCheatSheet](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAzNNyt-6LY&ab_channel=CreativeCheatSheet) – introduction to moodboards

### Farebná schéma

<https://colors.co/> – colour palette generator

<https://colorhunt.co/> – popular colour palettes

### Materiály

<https://goodonyou.eco/ultimate-clothing-material-guide/> – Ultimate clothing material guide

<https://satynajednicku.cz/blog/poznejte-textilni-materialy-a-nakupujte-lepe/> – blog post about qualities of textiles

<https://www.prosikulky.cz/druhy-latek> – blog post about various materials

## Chapter 3

### The second design mentoring meeting

Here, the mentors' task is to provide the mentees with advice about their garment's creation. They will have to sensitively assess whether it is possible to create the garment in the way the mentees suggest; and whether they have the skills to finish the garment on time. If not, the mentors should help them to find a way to create another fully-fledged piece of work.

Sensitivity is the key – the mentors should approach the mentees' ideas in a way that does not discourage them from continuing the project.

Mentees may come to this meeting full of ideas which would be too complicated even for experienced designers to bring to fruition. Their ideas may combine materials that don't work well together, or are technically impossible to create. They may not think so much about practicality because they are more excited about their artistry and extravagance.

## Possible (and frequent) issues arising during the second meeting include

- A tendency to combine materials that don't work well together (e.g. silk with plastic) or require experience to work with (e.g. leather)
- Designing a garment that is technically impossible to make (e.g. it requires industrial / toxic processes)
- Unrealistic ideas about the amount and size of materials they will need
- Designing a garment that is likely to be much more time-consuming to make than anticipated

Problems in turning a design into a physical garment are usually caused by a combination of mentees' enthusiasm and lack of experience with this type of work. Simply put, they often expect too much, so it's the mentors' job to direct them along a more practical path towards their design idea.

Less is more here. If some mentees decide to create a complete collection which their mentors see as too demanding, mentors should recommend working only on the most interesting garment in it.

Ask participants about their thoughts and ideas. Let them present all prepared materials, samples and sketches, ask them to describe how the garment should look like, what techniques they would like to use, what inspired them, and also what are their initial ideas about how to present the final garments.

## Mentors should:

- talk to each of the mentees and discuss their ideas
- let them present a sketch; show a material or some samples they've prepared
- ask them to describe what they want their garment to look like, the techniques they would like to use, their inspirations, and how they imagine the final garment presentation.

## The mentors should evaluate the potential of each idea, and provide feedback to the participants, according to the following criteria:

- Will the garment be made from waste or unwanted material?
- Will the garment be wearable? Can it be easily maintained and washed?
- Is the idea behind the garment the mentee's own? Is it original, creative, innovative?
- In a technical sense - can the garment be made?
- Will the participant be able to make it in time? If not, what should they focus on?



## Beáta's example

Beáta (a fashion design student) brought a sketch of a bold corset with a transparent chiffon dress underlay. She brought a sample of a material she planned to use for the corset. It consisted of pieces of fabric scraps which she put under a piece of chiffon and sewed to it. That way she created an original and strong material with an interesting structure. It was an ambitious idea. However, since Beáta had prepared the sample, she knew it would work and that she could carry out this difficult task successfully.

As it takes a lot of time to create a material like this, it was a good choice to use it to make a small garment like a corset which didn't need much of it.

The corset was supposed to form the core of the garment and, if it turned out well, it would be breathtaking as it would meet all of the necessary attributes such as using waste materials, being original, extravagant and practical.

## Natalia's example

Natalia decided to work with denim and to the first meeting she brought the collection she had been working on and a mood board in a sketchbook. A mentor helped her select designs from the sketchbook and also create the required silhouette of a garment she didn't know how to work with. Natalia used various shades of denim and paradoxically she found the best pieces in municipal waste.

Natalia wanted to create more than a garment, she proved she was skilled and knew a lot about materials. The mentor and she agreed on finishing the first garment and then starting another one. Finally, the individual garments would be styled with the mentor/stylist.

## Space for questions and third meeting set-up

At the end of this meeting, the participants should be asked to bring the garment they have started to work on at this meeting with initial concept development.

Between this and the next meeting, participants will start to work on remaking their clothes and record this process in their journals. They will then bring their work in progress to the third meeting.

Finally, just as the last time, the organisers should arrange the next meeting and encourage the participants to communicate with mentors through social networks they chose.

Leave some space for questions participants might have.

## Chapter 4 The third design mentoring meeting

This meeting will show how successful the mentoring has been. You will be able to tell by the number of participants who show up with their finished garments. They're the ones who like sewing and creative tasks, although they might be less excited than they were at the beginning. Mentors main task is to motivate participants. At this stage they have already put in a lot of effort to work on their garments and it would be a pity to give up the project. You have to discuss the problems with them, offer solutions, help them with missing technological knowledge, and motivate them to continue.

Remind them that the mentoring can be individual (if there is enough time and staff) and that they can get in touch with you through the chosen communication channels between the design mentoring meetings. Problems and failures form a part of the creation process, so they should record them in their journals and try to solve them. We all move forward by overcoming obstacles and solving problems and this helps to develop our creativity. Once the garment is finished, they can forget about these difficulties and be happy with themselves for overcoming them and achieving their goals.

At this point, the participants should have an idea of how they want to photograph the garment, in what environment, and what concept they want to present. It might be useful to encourage them to develop these ideas further in their reflective journals after this meeting so they can bring their final photography ideas to the last meeting.

### Space for questions and fourth meeting set-up

To finish this meeting, mentors should ask mentees to bring their final garment to the next (and last) meeting for a styling consultation. If they decide to present them at an event organised according to the program's [Manual for Organising Sustainable Event](#), they should bring their final ideas about how they will do this.

Again, leave some space for questions.

### This is the next part of Beáta's story

To this final meeting, Beáta brought one part of the corset, the cut of which she had made according to her bra. Mentees were thrilled with that idea as that is the best way when it comes to making a garment – to use pattern cuts already available at home from clothes which fit. Beata cutted her bra into smaller pieces according to which she created pattern cuts later used to develop her corset. The mentors recommended lining it so that it looked nice from the inside as well. Lining is a difficult task, but seeing the skills Beáta had, the mentors knew she could do that.

### How did Natalia's work continue?

To the meeting, Natalia brought two garments in progress which were based on the mood board and previous consultations with her mentor. The first was a dress created by upcycling different coloured jeans. The second was a cropped blouse and a skirt, which Natalia made from a vintage tablecloth. After a consultation with her mentor, she decided to complete both garments with added draping.



## Chapter 5

### The final meeting

At this last meeting, the participants should show how they will wear or style the final garment if they already decided to present it at the event.

The styling needs to be adapted not only to the garment but also to the presentation. There are more ways of garment presentation – for example a fashion show, gallery exhibition, art or dance performance, etc. – and each way has a different approach in preparation.

A garment should be styled in a certain way for a fashion show where it should give an almost theatrical vibe and where the audience will see it only for a few seconds in motion. It should be styled in a different way for an exhibition where the audience can admire each detail for several minutes.

#### A garment for a fashion show

- Could be fitted on a model who will present it (fitting). If it fits the participant who created it, it's good when they present it on the runway themselves – this saves time and money and it's authentic.

- Should be wild, almost theatrical, and eye-catching, and express the idea behind it. Accessories such as headbands, hats, trains, large belts, handbags shouldn't be missing. Special attention should be paid to make-up and jewellery.

#### A garment for an exhibition

- Should be well styled on a mannequin with all the necessary accessories.
- Should be accompanied by information, e.g. a board describing the creation process, materials, inspiration, creator's intentions, etc., so that the audience stays longer and understands the idea.

This meeting can be enriched by inviting a stylist who can take over the mentors' job and help the participants. Make sure that the accessories, jewellery, handbags, and shoes are also second-hand. They can be borrowed or bought from a second-hand or thrift shop, and styled to complete the garment. Inspiration can be drawn from Pinterest, Instagram, magazines and books with stylists' work, YouTube videos of fashion shows, and so on.

## Beáta's final look

To the last meeting, Beáta brought her finished corset and a translucent chiffon skirt. The original plan was to make a dress under the corset, but as the corset was a very time-consuming task, completing the outfit with a skirt was sufficient. At the gallery exhibition, Beáta surprised everyone with a handbag which she made in the same way as the corset, however, this time she didn't sew the pieces of fabric to chiffon, but to a translucent plastic material.

The final outfit met all of the RecyCOOL Imperfections program's expectations. It was upcycled, original, authorial, extravagant, and had the potential to become the base of a whole collection the essence of which would be pieces of scrap textiles sewn to translucent materials.

## Natalia's final garment

To the last meeting, Natalia brought her completed upcycled mini collection. Both the dress and the blouse and skirt set were decorated with draping. For the final presentation, Natalia styled her outfits with minimalistic vintage accessories. During the RecyCOOL Imperfections program, she showed great independence, and her mentoring meetings focused only on minor details and styling.

This meeting should conclude the design mentoring process and, by its end, the mentees should have the final garment ready, or they should be working on its finishing touches.

If the participants don't continue in the RecyCOOL Imperfections program – with the presentation of their garments – this will be the moment when the final evaluation of the design mentoring takes place and you say goodbye.

Either way, the end of the design mentoring process doesn't have to mean the end of the cooperation between mentors and mentees. This can continue on an individual level, through projects or internships in mentors' design practices, for example, where mentees can gain working experience.

If the participants do continue in the RecyCOOL Imperfections program with the presentation of their garments, this time can be used to prepare the garments and to present them.

The work can be presented in various ways depending on the participants' choices. To find out more options of presentation, please see the [Manual for Organising Sustainable Event](#).

Design mentors don't take part in the organisation of the event but they can play an important role in its success. They can support their mentees by coming to their presentations, the opening ceremony, or by showing up at some point during the event. They can take part in the program, e.g. by describing and evaluating the participants' work from the perspective of design mentoring. Alternatively, they can be members of a panel of judges who choose the best outfit or whose expertise will be used in another way.

The design mentoring doesn't end with the event. Ideally, the organisers, mentors and mentees meet after a few days to evaluate their work. That doesn't only mean the creation of their garments and their presentations, but also the mentoring itself, the communication, the mentors' approach, and overall impressions and feelings.

This evaluation can be done as a personal interview, in written form, or as a group discussion. Everybody should be given some space for reflection, self-reflection, and to express their opinions if they wish to. However, not everybody wants to express their feelings publicly, so this part can take place in private between a participant and a mentor or mentors.

However it is done, the outcome of this final evaluation should be a comprehensive view of the cooperation. The mentees should leave motivated to continue developing their skills in working with textiles which they can use in their lives.

This section provides tips based on the RecyCOOL Imperfection program in Slovakia and Czech Republic, which was implemented in a pilot and testing year.



**What tips do we have for you about design mentoring? What kind of sustainable approach can the mentees take?**

The mentees' and mentors' excitement and the visual result during the presentation of garments at the end of the program make for a very special experience. Some outfits might stand out more than others, but everyone will see the possibilities of working with textile waste in fashion. There are no boundaries and playing with different materials can produce really impressive results.

## MENTEES CAN:

### Be minimalist

Clothing can be transformed (and its life can be extended) by a very simple process. An unwanted jumpsuit can be complemented by unused sheer scarfs, which create a loose train and transform the jumpsuit into a garment for more formal occasions.

This is a good example of how minimalist ideas can have a maximal effect.



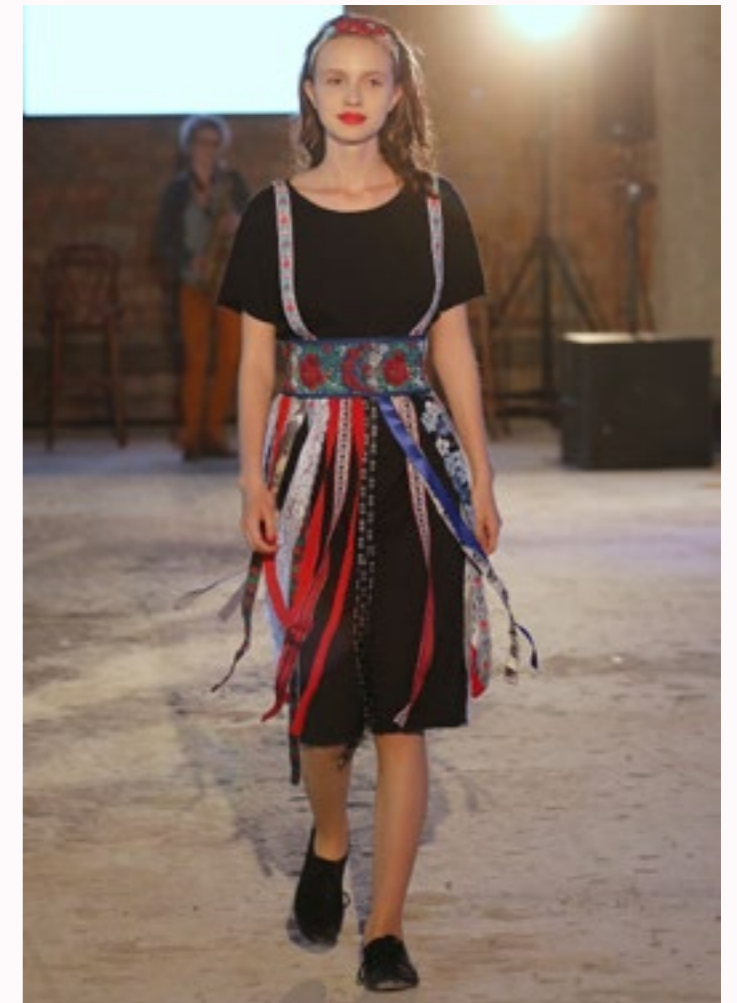
### Be maximalist

Folklore can be used as an inspiration for a new design. This is an excellent example of how we can make good use of something we have plenty of.

Colourful folklore like embroidered ribbons or boxes with vintage buttons from our mothers or grandmothers can be used as applications in the creative process.

They can also be obtained by asking friends, organising a collection at school, and taking them off of second-hand pieces.

Collecting things from everywhere, putting them in a big box, and digging in it to search for the right material for the design can be fun!



## Mix different textiles

Basic materials can be combined with materials which wave while moving, shine, or are transparent or translucent. Textiles with textures, such as fabrics with tassels, hair, frills, imitation leather, or textile with a coarse texture can be mixed together.



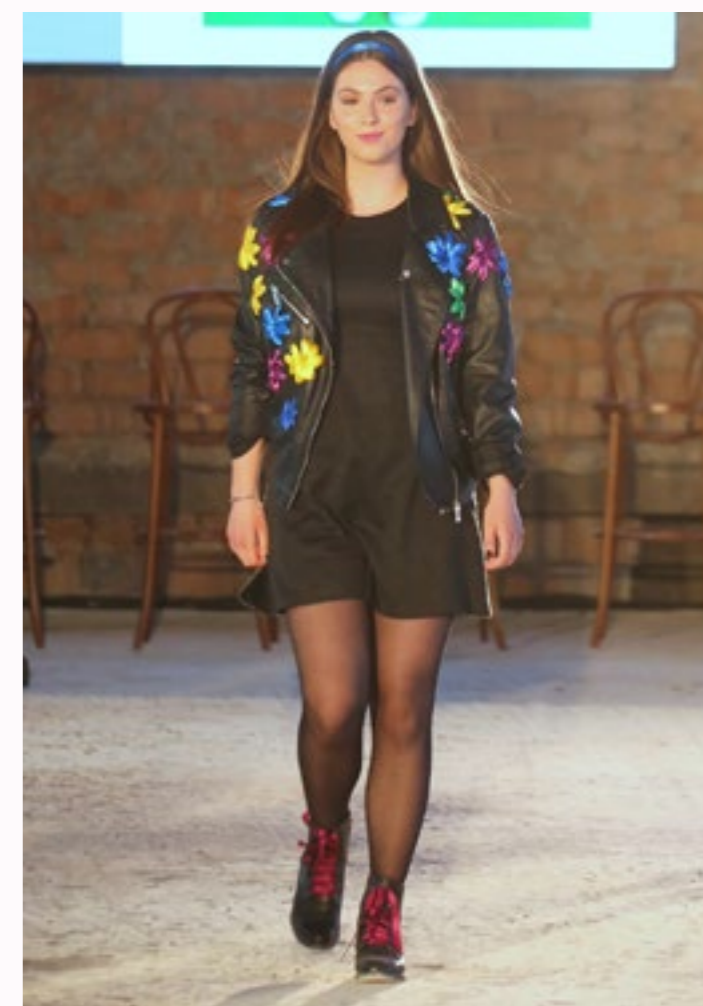
## Don't be limited to textiles

Waste materials which aren't normally associated with clothing can be used too. Everything is possible. From vinyl records to a translucent plastic material filled with cigarette butts – both were used to make handbags.



## Embroider

Not only with cotton yarns and threads, but also with ribbons or strings and so on. Embroidery works like appliqués when it comes to covering minor flaws.



## Layer up

Adding different materials into a design (such as patches of different fabrics and offcuts, ribbons or components like buttons and zippers) can solve the following problems:

- unattractive colours in clothing
- holes, rips, runs, flaws in weaving
- plain designs that need to be livened up



## Paint

With a few brush strokes you can create patterns, works of art, make statements, show your artistic talent. Use tie-dyeing, dyeing with natural materials, stamping, silkscreen printing, and other creative inventions.



## Drape

The technique of draping is an experimental approach to fashion design in which fabric cut in geometric shapes is placed freely on a dressmaking mannequin without using conventional cuts to make them fit. This technique is often used in fashion houses.



## Discover the power of a men's shirt

There are so many of them in the world and the materials they're made of are mostly nice – pleasant cotton in various patterns and colours.

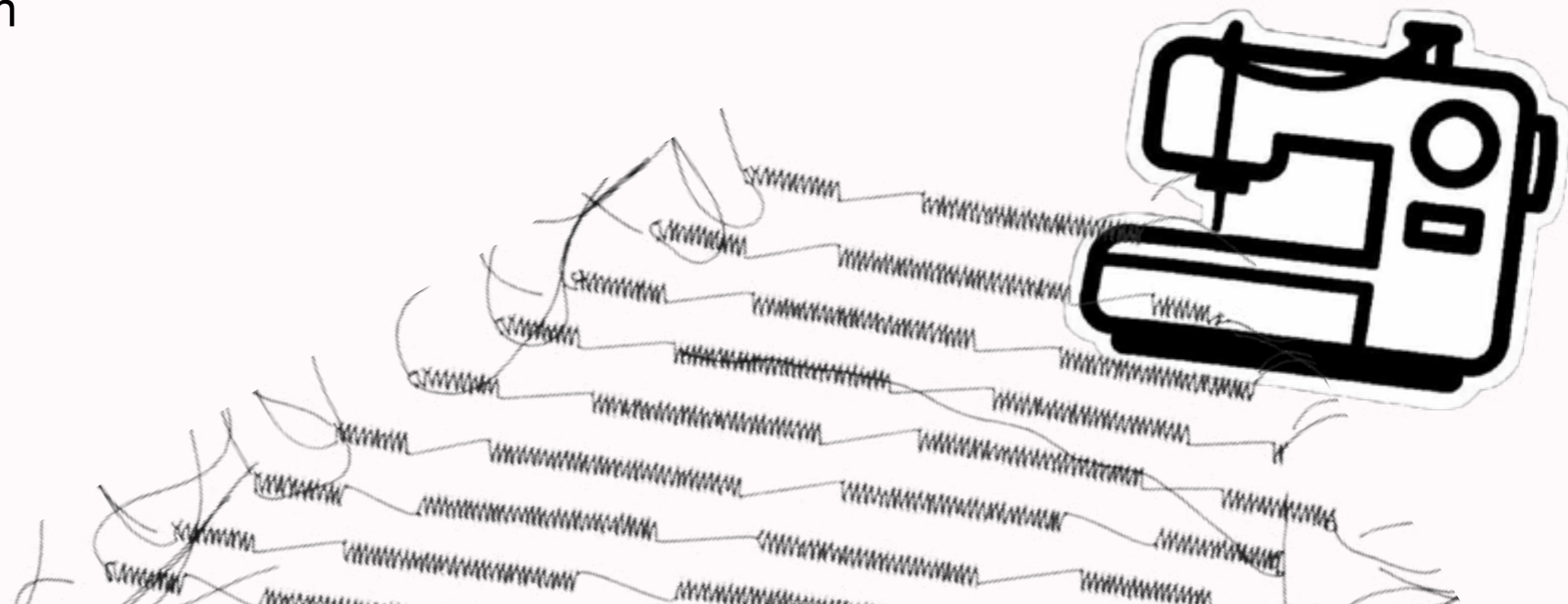
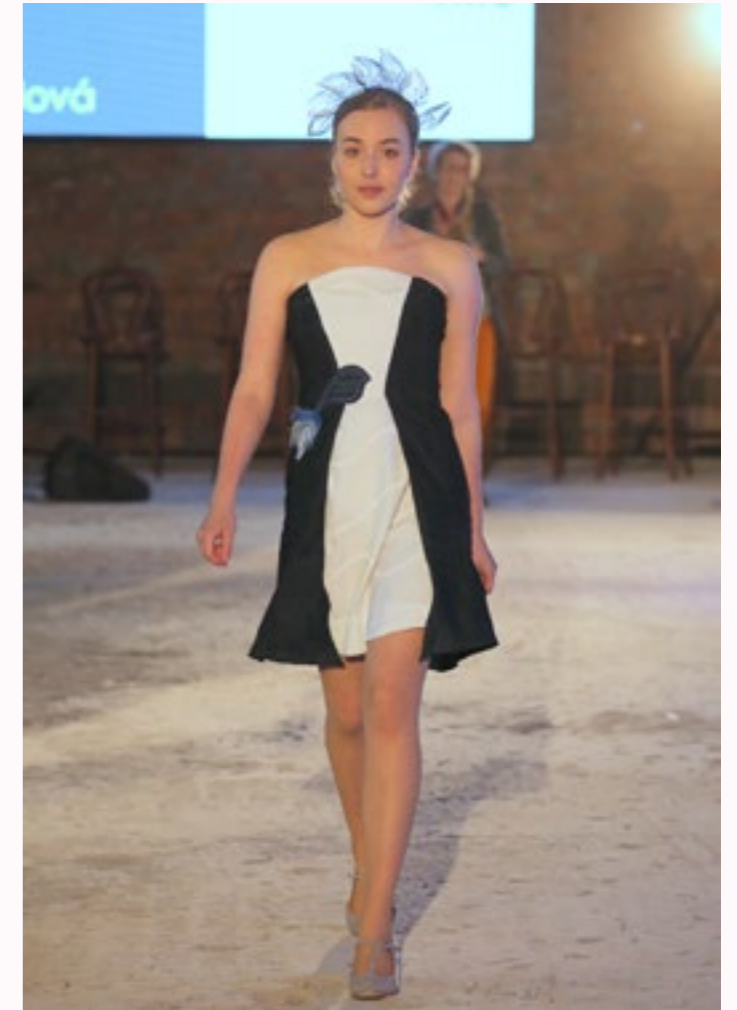
Shirts can be cut, tied, pleated, decorated. They can be processed in a wearable way to elevate them to jazzed-up streetwear. There can be appliqués on them, they can be torn, ripped and sewn back together, tied, turned into dresses, shorts, skirts, or embroidered.



## Learn and develop sewing skills

Remaking clothes is a great way to learn to sew well. This skill can be gradually improved whether sewing by hand or using a sewing machine. Hands-on experience is the best way to learn.

The results can be a quality made-to-measure garment.





## Play with cuts, deconstruct

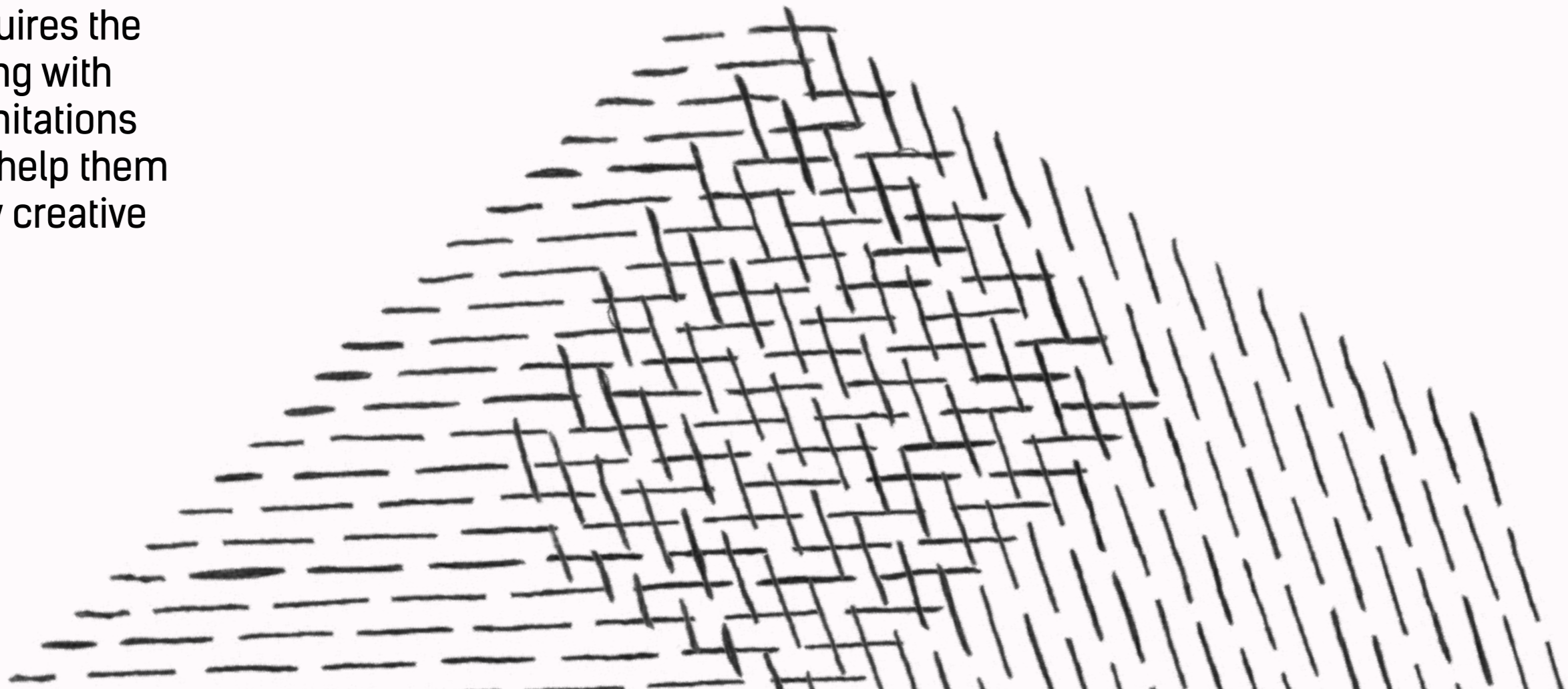
If mentees know the magic of pattern cutting or deconstruction – they can use these skills to remake clothes. Start with large garments such as coats, jackets, large men's trousers etc.

The process of constructing or deconstructing requires the skill of working with materials' limitations and this can help them discover new creative solutions.



## Play with materials, decompose

Even the most eccentric ideas can be worth exploring. If a mentee wants to find out how materials decompose when buried in the ground, let them think about the outfits that could be made with what they dig up.



## For sources of inspiration, mentees can:

### Identify a problem

A wedding dress made to draw attention to the ocean pollution. This was made with the model's white T-shirt and a sumptuous, eye-catching skirt. This was made of a sheer curtain (the ocean) decorated with plastic bottle tops, straws, cartons and other waste.



### Pay tribute to cultural heritage

A grandma's skirt adjusted to the model's measurements complemented with folk costume pieces. This combines various cultures and eras in one garment. This is an example of minimal upcycling with emphasis on the fact that styling can be sustainable by using already existing clothing.



## Go to the world of fairy tales

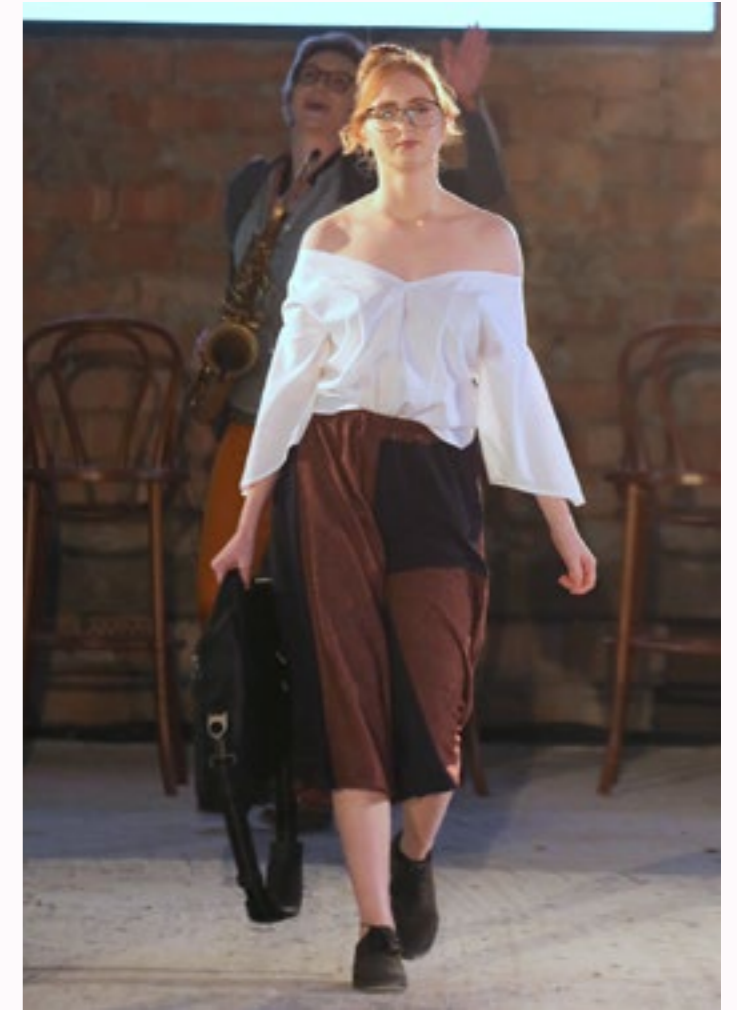
A teenager's fairytale character brought to life through dressmaking with tablecloths and bedsheets.

Fairy tales can help us to rest, relax, wind down, and escape the world in which we live. Hand sewing can draw us into a world where there are no sewing machines and every detail is handmade.



## Go to school or work

A garment that fits the life that you lead. Making a work or school outfit from old clothes is a challenge. A forgotten shirt turned into a smart blouse and pants into a skirt shows that remaking clothes can be a common practice in our lives.



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## Style it

A basic black T-shirt combined with a vintage fabric skirt and a collar from other pieces of clothing. A plain t-shirt can be used as a neutral base for a maximalist accessory which will catch the eye and draw attention to the philosophy of up-cycling.



## Make it intergenerational

An oversize blazer, track pants, and a waist bag.

Fashion magazines, social media, the street, elderly relatives' houses - inspiration is anywhere to connect, combine and celebrate the fashions of different generations.



## Go to unexpected places

A corset made from denim found in a trash can!

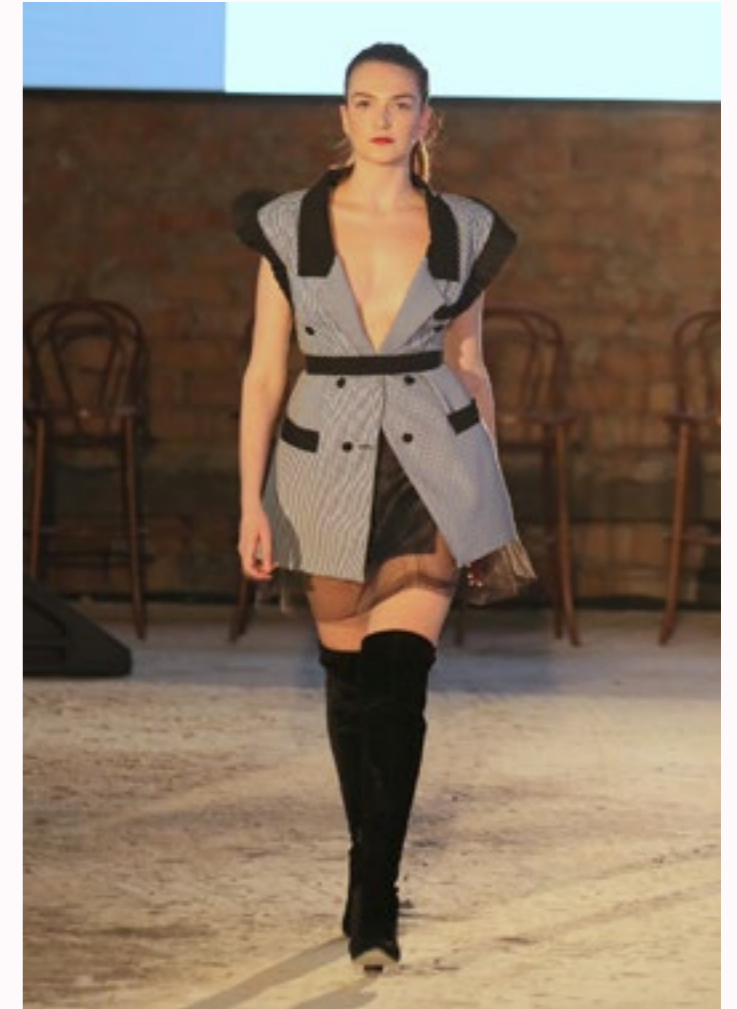
When you are looking for materials and accessories to work with, second-hand stores, or textile collection points can be great places to go. But you can find these items anywhere that people discard them, even in trash cans (where the jeans used to make this corset were found).



## Become a fashion designer

A remade jacket that kickstarted a small fashion brand by the mentee.

If your mentee wants to start their own brand, why not do it here? They can think about how they might build a brand, a name, design a logo or develop a design concept and make a signature piece that puts everything about their brand on show.



## Chapter 9

### Examples of good practice

#### Design mentoring of mentees from schools in Bratislava, Slovakia

The first year of the design mentoring programme involved around 50 mentees. They were students from different secondary schools in Bratislava, so their mentoring had to be planned and timed to make sure that everyone had adequate and effective support.

The recruitment of mentees had taken place at the end of the first education part of RecyCOOL Imperfections programme. Here, its educators explained to students how they could continue what they had learned by trying to (re)make their own clothing. Students were told that they could sign up straight away, or later, via an online form.

The mentors were Martina Mareková, Katarina Peterová and Veronika Szalai. The organisational work was done by Fashion Revolution's Youth Ambassador for Slovakia, Nina Hegyiová.

The first meeting took place in the Nova Cvernovka (cultural centre) where the mentees were introduced to mentoring and the mentors, and the details of the (re)making task to be done was explained.

The mentees had different levels of knowledge (about materials, processes, etc.) and skills (remaking, sewing, handwork, etc.), so the mentors had to estimate the kind and amount of support that each would need. Mentees ranged from absolute beginners to accomplished experts which reflected their life experiences so far. Creative work was, for many, a new experience and some of them decided to work in groups.

Many mentees already had an idea what they wanted to (re)make and brought with them the materials they wanted to use. Mentors considered their ideas, anticipated possible difficulties they could face during the making process and suggested ideal ways of working.

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The second meeting was organised in a similar way. Most of the design ideas and making were already in progress, but a few mentees completely changed their minds and had to start again. Two students had decided to take sewing classes, and many others worked with the support of family members, friends or neighbours.

At the third meeting the mentees' (re)made clothing was taking its final shape.

At the fourth, and last, meeting the mentees showed their final (or almost final) outfits and were thinking about the styling for their fashion show. All of them decided to present their work during a public event and to plan it together. Their process of planning and organising this event is described in our [Manual for Organising a Sustainable Event](#).

At the fashion show, the mentors visited the backstage area before it started to support their mentees' preparation.

The evaluation of this design mentoring program took place a few days later and involved everyone.

## Design mentoring of fashion design students in Bratislava, Slovakia

The second year of the design mentoring programme took place during a pandemic with very strict conditions. Since design mentoring is most effective in person, the number of mentees was reduced to ten. These were students of fashion design (16–18 years old), which meant higher creative and technical requirements for their mentors.

The mentors this year were Martina Mareková, Katarina Peterová and Veronika Szalai. The organisational work was done by Fashion Revolution's Youth Ambassador for Slovakia, Nina Hegyiová.

The mentors decided to approach the mentees differently this time. Mentoring took place in open spaces, including a park near the Nova Cvernovka (cultural centre) in Bratislava.

Since this was a smaller group of mentees, who were studying fashion design together and had access to sewing workshops, they worked closely and supported each other. In between the meetings some worked in these workshops and others worked at home.

This year mentees kept reflective journals with details of their work. The stories of the garments they (re)made were presented with their final outfits during an exhibition they organised within Bratislava city's walls. The process they used to plan and organise this event is described in our [Manual for Organising a Sustainable Event](#).

The final meeting was at the exhibition, where mentors came to support mentees.

The evaluation of this design mentoring programme was done through an online form after this event, as the mentees had travelled abroad on school internships.



## Design mentoring of young participants and professionals (Brno, Czech Republic)

The third design mentoring programme took place in Brno, also during the pandemic. Its 5 mentees were graduates from an art and design high school who were taking architecture and marketing courses. These students required different creative and technical support from their mentors.

The mentors this time were Leisan Mukhametzova (stylist), Eva Prokopová (designer) and David Severa (designer). The organisational work was done by the member of Fashion Revolution Czech Republic, Romana Tomášková.

General information and instructions were initially shared via email, after which mentors and mentees communicated via chat on social networks. They shared information on google docs, which served as a gathering place for mentees' presentations, mood boards and private folders where they could upload their photo diaries to enable their mentors to follow their progress.



The mentors and mentees also met once a week to discuss the design and (re)making of their garments and the preparation of their final presentations, and to adjust these designs and plans as necessary as they took shape.

These meetings were organised to fit the schedules of both mentors and mentees. Different places were chosen for these meetings as appropriate, for example:

- at the Nadace Veronika foundation shop, which donated clothing for this project
- in the KUMST creative co-working hub where mentors led presentations in rooms equipped with appropriate audio-visual setups
- at the SESTRY fashion design house, where mentees could ask to use sewing machines

Thanks to a set date for the final presentation, the mentees had a hard deadline by which they had to complete their garments and outfits. The majority of the clothing design and assembly was done in between mentor meetings, when mentees worked according to their own rhythms and commitments.

## GLOSSARY

**Educator** – person providing education in a formal or non-formal environment, such as a young person, youth worker or teacher.

**Organisers / organising team / production team:**

- people working together to plan and staff an event (including educators, mentors, mentees and assistants working on the on the day e.g. as DJs, bar staff)
- implementer of the [Design Mentoring Manual](#) and organiser of its program
- implementer of the [Manual for Organising a Sustainable Event](#)

**Mentor** – mentoring provider

**Mentee** – participant in the mentoring

**Event** – fashion show, exhibition, performance or any other activity organised by the Organiser and their team to showcase the work of the mentees

**Visitors** – members of the public attending the events

**Model** – person on whom the garments and outfits are displayed on a catwalk

**Mannequin** – a dummy that can be used to display clothes

**Remade / upcycled garment** – item of clothing created by mentees during this program, sourced, designed, made and shown according to the guidelines set out in this manual

**Final outfit** – the mentee's garment displayed during the program's final event, fashion show or exhibition.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

**Martina Mareková** is the Fashion Revolution coordinator for Slovakia. She runs her own slow-fashion brand Bartinki, and is active in educating young people about the fashion industry.

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**Veronika Szalai** is a Slovak fashion designer who creates under the Vivien Mihalish brand. Her work incorporates the principles of slow and sustainable fashion d in professional design.

**Romana Tomášková** is a core member of Fashion Revolution in the Czech Republic. She works in PR at an ecologic institute Nadace Partnerstvi, organises regular swap parties and education activities for youth.



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These education materials were created in an Erasmus+ project devoted to today's fashion industry and its impacts on environments and societies worldwide. This project offers a program which includes a free online course and a series of 'how to' manuals showing how you can create its component parts where you live.

These materials were created for, and tested with, young people in Slovakia and the Czech republic. They are trilingual, open-source and available for adaptation for different groups in other places.

More on [imperfections.recycool.academy](https://imperfections.recycool.academy).

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