

# My *Life* in stitches

This month, we've got a very special My Life In Stitches, as we catch up with Sew Hip's number-one fan, Heidi Isaksen-Loxton. Heidi made 2010 the year of Sew Hip and vowed to make 24 projects before the 12 months were out...



Ever since I found a copy of *Sew Hip* issue two tucked behind some knitting publications at my local newsagent, I've been a huge fan of the magazine. I hadn't actually done very much sewing at that point, so the number of projects designed for someone at beginner level appealed to me.

My idea for the *Sew Hip* Challenge came about in December 2009, after I'd finished watching the wonderful film *Julie & Julia* (starring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams). I was inspired by Julie's discipline and dedication in the film (she vows to cook 524 recipes over the course of a year, blogging about it as she goes) and decided that I needed to take on a similar challenge if I was ever going to sew more than just a paltry napkin!

I chose to use *Sew Hip* for my challenge because I really liked its fresh approach to sewing. Most of the sewing magazines I'd browsed through were a little old-fashioned for my liking (I wanted to make modern-looking projects that I could use or wear) or seemed to be aimed at stitchers with a little more experience.

Interestingly, out of all the things I made, the easiest was the one I thought would be the hardest – the dressing-gown pattern. I honestly believed it would be a nightmare to make and that I'd have to bin it afterwards. However, it was incredibly easy to assemble – it took me only two days – and it looks absolutely fantastic!

In contrast, the trickiest pattern, Henrietta the hippo, had appeared simple to make on the page. But that hippo was hard work! I think it took a good three days to make her – which is a pretty long time considering her size (she's quite small). She was my very first project in the challenge and I still can't believe she came out as great as she did. After that, things could only get better... and luckily, they did!

I love *Sew Hip* patterns for a number of reasons – they're fresh and contemporary, they have clear instructions with great diagrams and they're projects that are realistically doable by any level of stitcher. You never get the sense that you need to have prior

(Left) Heidi loves quilts and has made several. It seems she's got the knack – this one looks beautiful!  
(Below left) We love the funky yellow printed fabric Heidi used to make her slouchy slippers. They look so comfy!  
(Above) We at *Sew Hip* are very pleased to have inspired these gorgeous black and white pumps. They're great!

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knowledge to do a *Sew Hip* pattern – they really are open to all levels, which I think is fantastic!

I have a few favourites among my challenge projects. Henrietta the hippo is one of them (despite all the headaches), and I'm very proud of the blossom clutch and all my quilts. I love my quilts – there's always one on my bed at home! I don't think I'm quite there yet with putting my own personal stamp on each pattern, but the colours I choose and the way I present my work is a reflection of my own personal tastes and interests, and that's important. I love colour and texture, so I focus a lot on showing off those aspects of my projects.

I also really enjoy showing people the details that go into the making of something – for example, by posting photos online of the hinges of a purse frame, or sewing-machine needles penetrating fabric. In my opinion, these aspects are every bit as interesting and important as the finished piece.

Before I got started on the *Sew Hip* Challenge in January 2010, I could barely sew in a straight line, let alone use the

buttonhole maker on my sewing machine! But now, after a year of intense practice, I can insert zippers and mitre corners, and I can even knock out a blossom clutch in an afternoon! So the challenge was definitely worth the effort. Even if you ignore all the wonderful new techniques I've learnt, I think the most valuable thing to come out of the past 12 months is the knowledge that I can sew. I'm no expert by any stretch of the imagination, but at least I've moved on from the napkin stage!

If I could go back in time a year and give myself one piece of advice at the beginning of the challenge, it would be this: If you love it, make it! Oh, and also that enthusiasm counts for a lot when you're sewing!

I don't plan to rest on my laurels. My challenge for 2011 is to teach myself Tunisian crochet, build further on my sewing skills and learn how to say in three languages “I crochet and sew”! Watch this space to find out how I get on.

You can find out more about Heidi's sewing and crochet adventures on her blog at [www.sewingdaisies.com.au](http://www.sewingdaisies.com.au), where you can also see all of her wonderful *Sew Hip* creations!



(Top) A touch of red creates a lovely, eye-catching finish on Heidi's slippers.  
(Above left) Heidi favours fabrics that are packed with colour.  
(Above right) One of her favourites, the blossom-clutch purse, up close so you can see the details!  
(Below) This pretty purse is just one of the *Sew Hip* accessories Heidi has made.

