

Choosing the right sewing machine for children and beginners.

by Gary Walker, Echidna Sewing

We often host childrens sewing classes where almost always the kids did so well with most completing a simple but practical project. Ages can vary from 6 to 12 years old and while our teachers can sometimes feel a little drained at the end of the class, they all agree that such classes are well worth it.

We think teaching young children how to sew or even simply use a machine is one of the best gifts you can give a child. Our classes allow each child the opportunity to sew on a fully computerized machine that we supply and as you'd expect, they just take to it so easily.

We know first hand through our work with schools that computerized machines engage young students infinitely better than an uninspiring, usually complicated and often worn out mechanical model.

This leads me to the purpose of this letter. It's a plea to anyone who will listen to give a young child the opportunity to try sewing on a computerized machine.

You most likely have one or probably more computerized machines and you might actually cringe at the thought but honestly, with a bit of supervision and a simple yet fun objective, you could very well introduce a young person to a lifetime love of sewing. What a gift!

Why a computer machine?

If your considering teaching a child or even purchasing a machine for a child here is a brief explanation about why we so strongly recommend a computerized model.

Young kids expect everything to be somewhat computerized and to be honest, most modern sewing machines are computerized. Some are simpler than others and of course some work better than others. Then there is the price tag which can vary from a few hundred to thousands of dollars. So what are the key features that you should look for?

10 features that we think are essential

This is a list based on both technical and practical benefits that we consider priorities when teaching a child to sew.



- 1) Modern, attractive and not too heavy** – This may be subjective but if you think about it, kids, like adults, are attracted to nice looking things. Plus a machine that is easy to move and store also translates into more willingness to set it up and start sewing. Be assured that there are some lightweight machines that by design are smooth and do not bounce around the table.
- 2) Easy to use LCD screen with a large selection of stitches** – Naturally this goes without saying but the simplicity of selecting a stitch and a clear concise LCD screen is important. Computer machines usually set the optimum stitch setting automatically with no clunky dials to turn. A backlight or illuminated LCD is also an advantage. A large stitch selection is appealing and sometimes exciting. Simple decorative stitches expose creativity even on the most basic of projects. It's very engaging for children.
- 3) Simple threading** – some models can be just downright difficult and these days an automatic needle threader should be mandatory. A horizontal thread spool and easy bobbin winding should also be on the checklist.

- 4) **Quick Set Bobbin** – This is important. A jam proof drop-in bobbin that does not require the child to draw the bobbin thread and hold both threads when starting to sew is a blessing in disguise. Anything less than this will result in probable thread jams which is the surest way to turn anyone off sewing.
- 5) **Rotary hook system** – this relates to the bobbin system and rules out all the cheap push-in type bobbin machines with what we call an oscillating shuttle. Buying one of these “oscillating shuttle” machines is possibly the biggest mistake that could be made. This type of shuttle is cheap and struggles on light weight and knitted fabrics. They are notorious for jamming and far more difficult for a child or anyone for that matter to load the bobbin. Because of their design they also tend to bounce and jump around the table. Just don't buy anything other than a drop-in bobbin machine. It's really that simple!
- 6) **Automatic Needle Stop Position** – This is a must have and is generally standard on computerized machines. It means that the needle will always stop in the correct needle-up position and ensures that the take-up lever is also in the correct position. This is very important for threading and when you start sewing the next seam. It helps prevent jamming and the thread from coming out of the needle when you start stitching. Automatic needle down is also very good as the child gains experience because needle-down allows for easy pivoting of the work. Best of all the automatic needle stop function means the user does not need to mess with the hand wheel.
- 7) **Speed Regulation Slide Control** – All computer machines have a foot control that regulates the speed but for children this can be one of the biggest difficulties. A twitchy foot on the foot control can not only mess up the stitching but can also create a safety issue with the potential for a needle through the finger. A speed slide control means you can slow the maximum speed right down to a very slow inching speed which is perfect for children and learners of all ages. For us it's a must have feature for a child.
- 8) **Start/Stop Button** – This usually comes with machines that feature a speed slide control and the benefit means that there is no need to use the foot control. Again, this is a huge advantage when learning because the foot control can be a real obstacle for a child who

may lack the eye, hand and foot coordination.

- 9) **Soft touch or electronic reverse** – Some machines can be hard to engage reverse which of course is important for back tacking and locking off seams. Computer machines usually have a simple electronic reverse button with a very soft touch and is a far better option for anyone who sews.
- 10) **Variable stitch width and length settings** – This is more important as the child develops some skills and most computer machines allow for the user to override the automatic settings whereas many cheap mechanical models don't have the option.

Well there you have it, ten very solid reasons why a good computerized sewing machine is the best way to introduce a child to sewing. As mentioned, if you already have such a machine and know a child who may show an interest in sewing then be sure to give them the opportunity.

Even better, if you would like to gift them with a machine but perhaps giving away your Dream Machine is a little extreme, we can help with a model that ticks every box and is very affordable.

The Brother FS155 is perfect for the task and at only \$599 it comes complete with an instructional DVD and a full 5 year computer/electronics warranty. Platinum club members will save \$60 and pay only \$539 including free shipping.

What about reliability?

Computer machines in general are far more reliable than their older designed mechanical cousins and while we can't speak for other brands we can confidently vouch for Brother with reliability and ease of use as perhaps their biggest and best features.

Pay with PugglePay

It's our new extended payment plan and as an example, purchasing a Brother Fs155 requires a \$199 deposit with 8 fortnightly payments of \$50. The machine is shipped once we receive the deposit and there are No Fees, No Interest and No Finance companies.

We hope this information is helpful and if you would like to take advantage of the FS155, please call us on 1800 000 360.



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