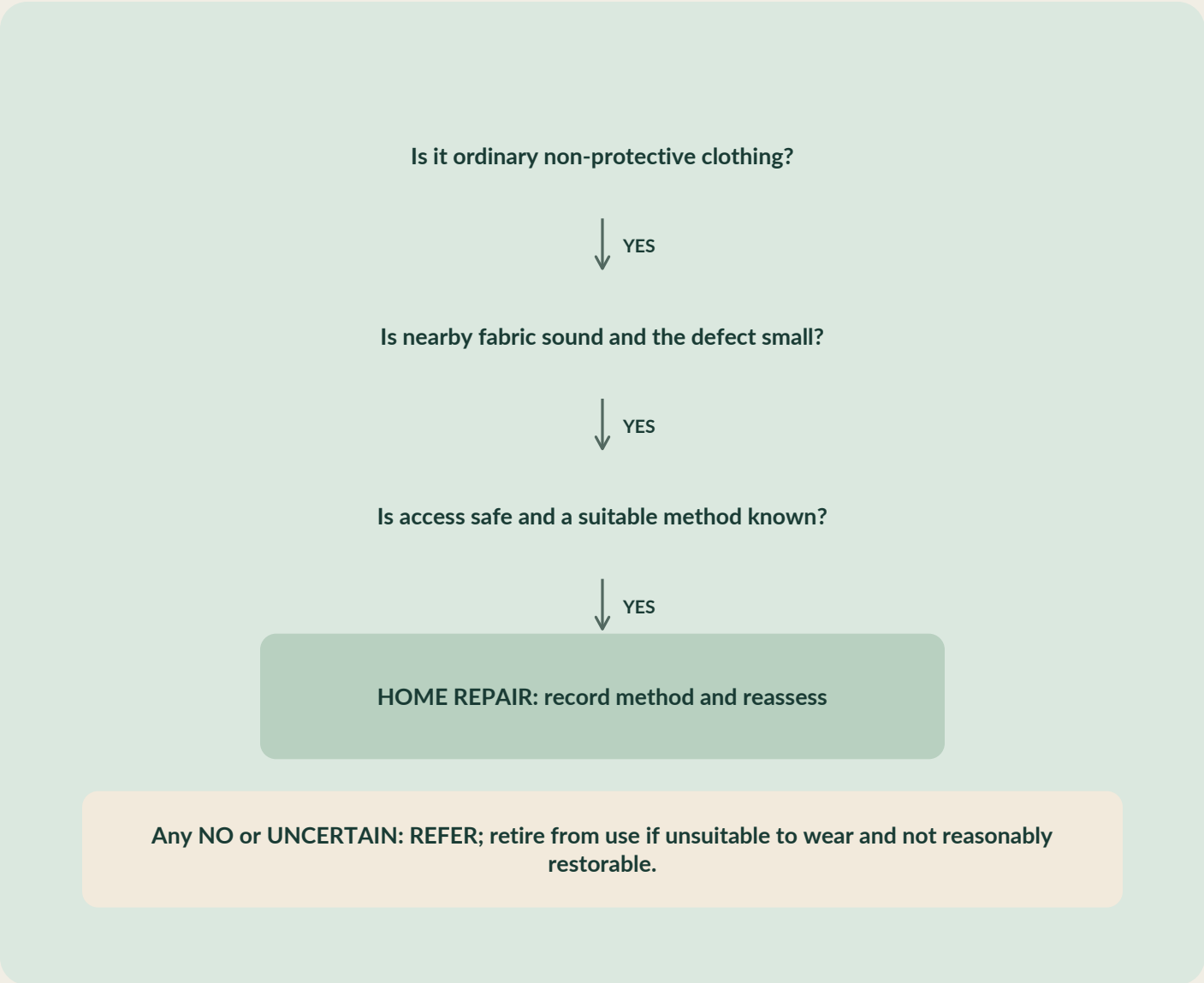
Decide Whether a Garment Is Worth Mending



Use a repair triage sheet to choose a manageable repair, professional help or retirement.

14 practical steps • Original diagrams and repair records

Illustrative repair plans — not physical test results

Before you start

Mending starts with a decision, not a needle. A garment can be worth keeping for its fit, usefulness or personal meaning even when replacing it costs less. This guide helps an adult assess ordinary clothing without making an irreversible change. It is not a strength test, a valuation or a guide to repairing safety-critical equipment.

Materials

Garment, bright diffuse light, flat clean surface, ruler, paper, pencil, magnifier if useful and the printable triage sheet. Check the care label. No cutting, pulling, chemical treatment or machine sewing is needed for this assessment. Keep tools and loose fasteners away from children and pets.

Plan the repair

Record one garment at a time. First exclude protective clothing, fall-arrest items, flotation equipment, medical compression garments, load-bearing straps and other equipment whose failure could injure someone. Refer these to the manufacturer or an appropriately qualified professional. For ordinary clothing, look at the defect and at least 20 mm around it where accessible; compare against an undamaged area of the same fabric. The 20 mm zone is an inspection aid, not an assurance of strength. Choose one action: HOME REPAIR for a small accessible defect with sound surrounding fabric and a known method; REFER for complex, valuable, extensively damaged or uncertain items; RETIRE FROM USE for an item that is unsuitable to wear and cannot reasonably be restored. A sentimental item may be retained separately as a keepsake. Reassess after any repair.

Steps 1–2

1. Identify the garment

Write the garment type, its usual use and why you want to keep it. A rarely worn formal jacket and an everyday shirt have different requirements. Do not use this worksheet to certify safety equipment or clothing with a protective function.

2. Read care and construction information

Look for fibre content, care instructions, stretch panels, linings and special finishes. If the label is missing, record UNKNOWN rather than guessing. Avoid applying heat or water until you know the material can tolerate it.

Steps 3–4

3. Set up an inspection area

Lay the garment flat in bright indirect light, with the affected section relaxed. Empty pockets and remove loose accessories if safe. Do not inspect by wearing a damaged garment under tension.

4. Locate the primary defect

Mark the location on a paper sketch, not on the garment. Identify whether it is a loose button, separated seam, fabric hole, worn area or another defect. Look at both sides where accessible without dismantling.

Steps 5–6

5. Measure and describe

Measure the relaxed visible length and width of the affected area. Use a ruler beside the fabric rather than pushing it into a tear. Record the shape, fraying and missing material; a small opening can hide a wider worn region.

6. Inspect surrounding cloth

Observe a margin of at least 20 mm where access allows and compare it with matching undamaged cloth. Look for thinning, holes, broken yarns, distortion and discoloration. Do not deliberately stretch or rip questionable material.

Steps 7–8

7. Identify the underlying cause

Consider ordinary abrasion, a caught seam, a sharp fastener, a tight fit or previous repair. Record likely causes as possibilities, not facts. If the cause remains, a neat-looking mend may fail again.

8. Classify the repair location

Distinguish a low-stress area from a frequently strained seam, closure or knee. If a failure could cause injury, stop and seek suitable specialist advice. Avoid using a basic household mend for a critical structural or protective part.

Steps 9–10

9. Check accessibility

See whether both sides can be reached without cutting a lining or removing complicated hardware. Identify any hidden layers. If safe access requires unfamiliar dismantling, refer the job rather than opening it experimentally.

10. Select a plausible method

A loose button in sound fabric may need re-sewing; a clean open seam may need matching stitches; a small hole may require a patch if fabric is missing. Choose only a method appropriate for the garment and your skills.

Steps 11–12

11. Estimate effort and resources

List the materials already available, approximate time and likely professional cost if known. Compare with the garment's usefulness, fit and personal value. Avoid treating a price alone as the deciding factor.

12. Make the triage decision

Use Pattern 1 to choose HOME REPAIR, REFER or RETIRE FROM USE. A home repair requires sound surrounding cloth, a suitable known method and safe access. If any of these is uncertain, pause rather than promising a repair.

Steps 13–14

13. Plan the next action

For a home repair, write the specific method, materials and an observable completion check. For a referral, note the defect and questions for the repairer. For retirement, keep a sentimental item separately or use an appropriate textile collection if accepted.

14. Document the outcome

After the selected action, record what actually happened, including any unresolved damage. An item that looks repaired is not automatically suitable for wear. If normal gentle handling reveals opening, discomfort or instability, stop using it and reassess.

Fix, care and preserve

The fabric looks thin

Treat surrounding weakness as a separate problem; do not sew repeatedly into fragile cloth.

Two defects overlap

Record both and seek advice if one repair would obstruct the other.

The value is hard to judge

Separate financial cost from fit, usefulness and sentimental value.

The method is unfamiliar

Refer or practise on comparable scrap before committing the garment.

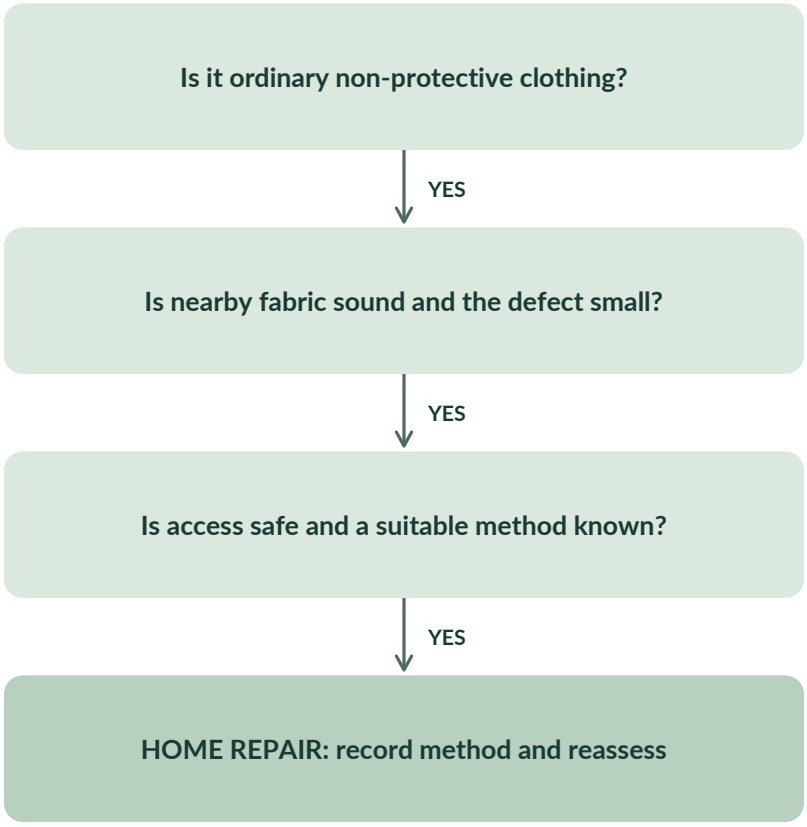
Originality and evidence boundary

Original Steadleaf English prose, design, dimensions, artwork, diagrams and repair records. Follow actual material and tool instructions. No physical sewing, washing, durability, strength or safety testing was performed by the publisher. Adult ordinary-clothing mending only; no safety or performance certification.

Print the following pages separately if desired. For any actual-size template, disable fit-to-page scaling and check the printed calibration bar. Measured schematics are not full-size cutting patterns.

Pattern 1

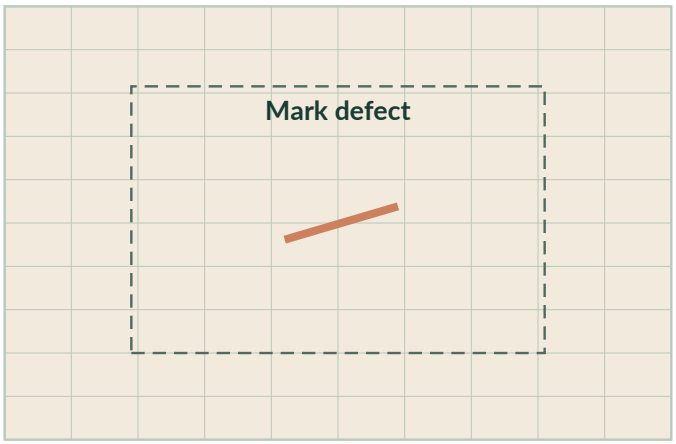
Repair triage flow: screen excluded safety-critical items; then check fabric condition, access and method. Choose HOME REPAIR only when all ordinary-clothing checks support it; otherwise REFER or RETIRE FROM USE. Decision aid, not certification.



Any NO or UNCERTAIN: REFER; retire from use if unsuitable to wear and not reasonably restorable.

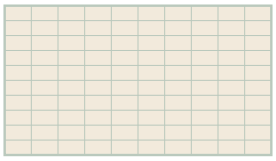
Pattern 2

Damage mapping sheet: draw the defect and note its relaxed length and width, the accessible surrounding inspection zone and a matching undamaged comparison area. The suggested 20 mm margin is only an observation aid.



Observe surrounding cloth

20 mm suggested margin where accessible



Length: _____ Width: _____

Condition / possible cause: _____

Comparison area

Record 1 — Materials and repair plan

Record actual observations only. Use UNKNOWN or NOT CHECKED for anything you have not established.

Garment / ordinary intended use

Fibre / care information / hidden layers

Damage location / length / width

Nearby cloth condition / comparison area

Possible cause / fit or strain concern

Access / available method / skill

Estimated effort / value / resources

Triage decision: HOME REPAIR / REFER / RETIRE

Record 2 — Finish and follow-up

Record actual observations only. Use UNKNOWN or NOT CHECKED for anything you have not established.

Action actually taken / date

Materials or referral details

Observed repair or assessment result

Remaining damage / unresolved cause

Normal gentle handling observations

Wear or care restrictions / next check

Decision: RESUME ORDINARY USE / REFER / RETIRE

Notes / keepsake or textile collection