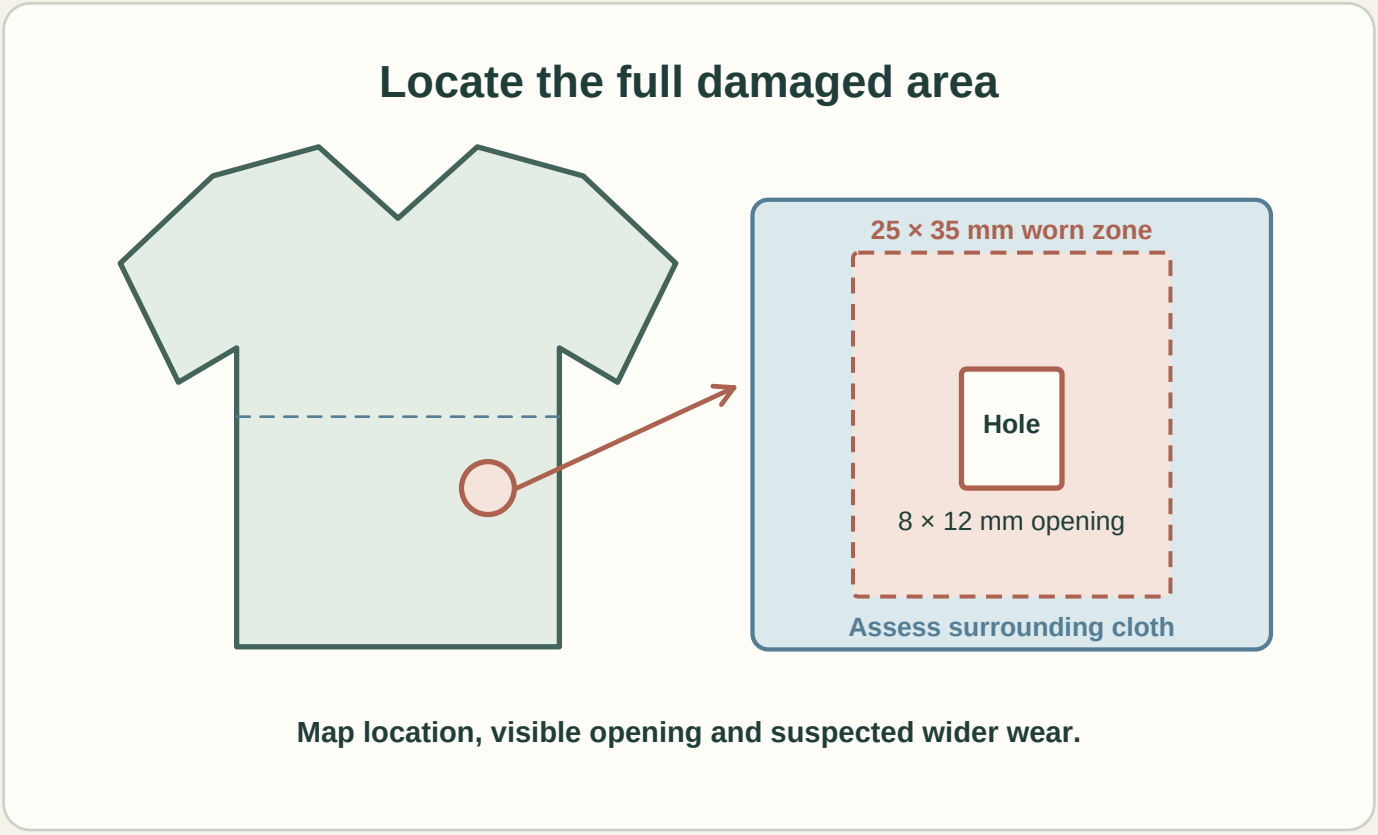
Inspect a Garment Under Good Light Before Repair



Map location, visible opening and suspected wider wear.

Map the entire damaged area and assess surrounding fabric before choosing a repair.

14 practical steps • Original diagrams and repair records

Illustrative repair plans — not physical test results

Before you start

A visible hole may be smaller than the area of weak cloth around it. Inspection before choosing a repair can prevent stitching into worn fabric or changing a garment unnecessarily. This guide is for ordinary adult clothing with accessible fabric. It is a damage-location and condition worksheet, not a quantitative fabric-strength test or a repair decision based on forced pulling. Exclude medical, protective, load-bearing and specialist garments from home assessment.

Materials

Garment off the body, clean dry flat surface, bright diffuse daylight or a suitable cool task lamp, paper outline, ruler, pencil, removable fabric-safe marker if appropriate, optional magnifier and camera. Avoid a hot lamp, chemical spot treatments, sharp probes, or deliberately stretching a weak area. No force gauge is required.

Plan the repair

Inspect the whole item first, then both faces of the affected panel. Use diffuse light from above and, if appropriate, light behind a single layer to reveal thinning; compare with a similar sound section of the same fabric, because loose weave or texture may naturally transmit light. Map visible defect and wider suspected weak zone separately. Example: an 8 × 12 mm visible opening sits in a 25 × 35 mm worn region. Record both; any later repair must be planned around actual sound cloth beyond the wider region, not just the opening. Observe construction, grain, seam allowance, access, care and fit. Do not pull worn cloth to measure strength. Mark condition as SOUND APPEARING, WEAK APPEARING or UNKNOWN and refer if the required anchoring area is uncertain.

Steps 1–2

1. Identify the garment and its use

Note fabric type if known, ordinary purpose and the damaged location. Exclude safety, medical and protective garments; seek appropriate professional advice rather than judging their performance visually.

2. Read care and construction labels

Record stated fibre and care, and note the original construction if known. Do not infer fibre from colour or feel. Leave unknown values explicit and avoid unverified treatments.

Steps 3–4

3. Prepare the inspection space

Lay the item flat on a clean dry surface with sufficient room to unfold without strain. Use a bright diffuse lamp positioned to avoid glare and heat. Inspect off the body.

4. Look at the whole garment

Examine the front and back, seams, hems, pockets, cuffs, elbows, knees and other relevant wear points. Note repeated damage or areas that may need a separate assessment. Do not focus only on the first obvious hole.

Steps 5–6

5. Locate the exact defect

Sketch its position relative to a stable reference such as a seam, hem or cuff. Distinguish broken stitches, missing yarns, surface abrasion, snags or a loose edge without pulling them open.

6. Compare both faces

Turn the garment or accessible panel gently and look for backing, lining, seam allowances and trapped layers. Do not dismantle bonded or inaccessible construction to inspect it.

Steps 7–8

7. Use light to reveal thinning

For a suitable single layer, observe diffuse light through the fabric without stretching it or holding it against a hot lamp. Compare an equivalent sound area, not a different weave or layered panel. Note differences rather than assigning a strength value.

8. Map the visible opening

Measure the relaxed opening with the ruler beside the fabric. In the example record 8 × 12 mm. Do not insert the ruler into the hole or enlarge the opening to read it.

Steps 9–10

9. Map the wider worn zone

Outline visible thinning, abrasion, fraying or distortion on the paper sketch. In the example the suspected worn zone is 25 × 35 mm. Record an uncertain boundary rather than pretending it is exact.

10. Assess surrounding anchoring cloth

Observe the fabric outside the wider zone for intact yarns, consistent texture and sound-looking weave. Note UNKNOWN if the margin cannot be inspected. Do not deliberately pull, tear or pierce it to determine strength.

Steps 11–12

11. Identify constraints

Record grain, stretch needs, original seam line, available allowance, and access to the reverse. Note a pocket, lining or seam that could block a repair. A tight garment or repeated strain may require fit advice.

12. Classify the observations

Use SOUND APPEARING, WEAK APPEARING or UNKNOWN for each region. These are visual descriptions, not measured strength. If the wider area is fragile or the support is uncertain, defer the repair and seek advice.

Steps 13–14

13. Plan an appropriate next step

Choose a relevant repair guide or referral only after recording the damage extent, accessible sound margin and care constraints. A small visible opening does not justify a small patch if the wider region is worn.

14. Keep the inspection record

Date your sketch and measurements, preserve photos if useful and note decisions and uncertainties. Reinspect if the fabric changes before work begins; do not claim strength or durability from this visual examination.

Fix, care and preserve

Light makes every part appear thin

Compare with an equivalent sound area of the same construction and layer count; change angle to reduce glare.

Visible damage is near a seam

Record the actual allowance and accessible sound cloth; defer if repair would compromise the seam.

You cannot see the reverse

Record UNKNOWN and avoid dismantling or stitching through unidentified layers.

The weak zone is much larger than the hole

Plan around the whole damaged area or refer; do not anchor a repair in thin fabric.

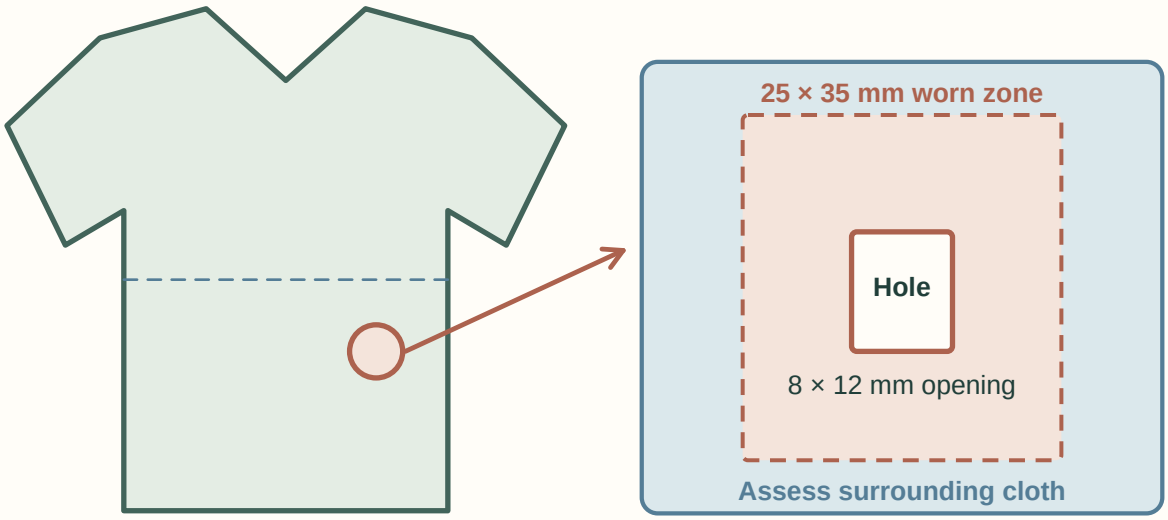
Originality and evidence boundary

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

Print the following pages separately if desired. Measured schematics are not full-size cutting patterns. Record only actual observations.

Pattern 1

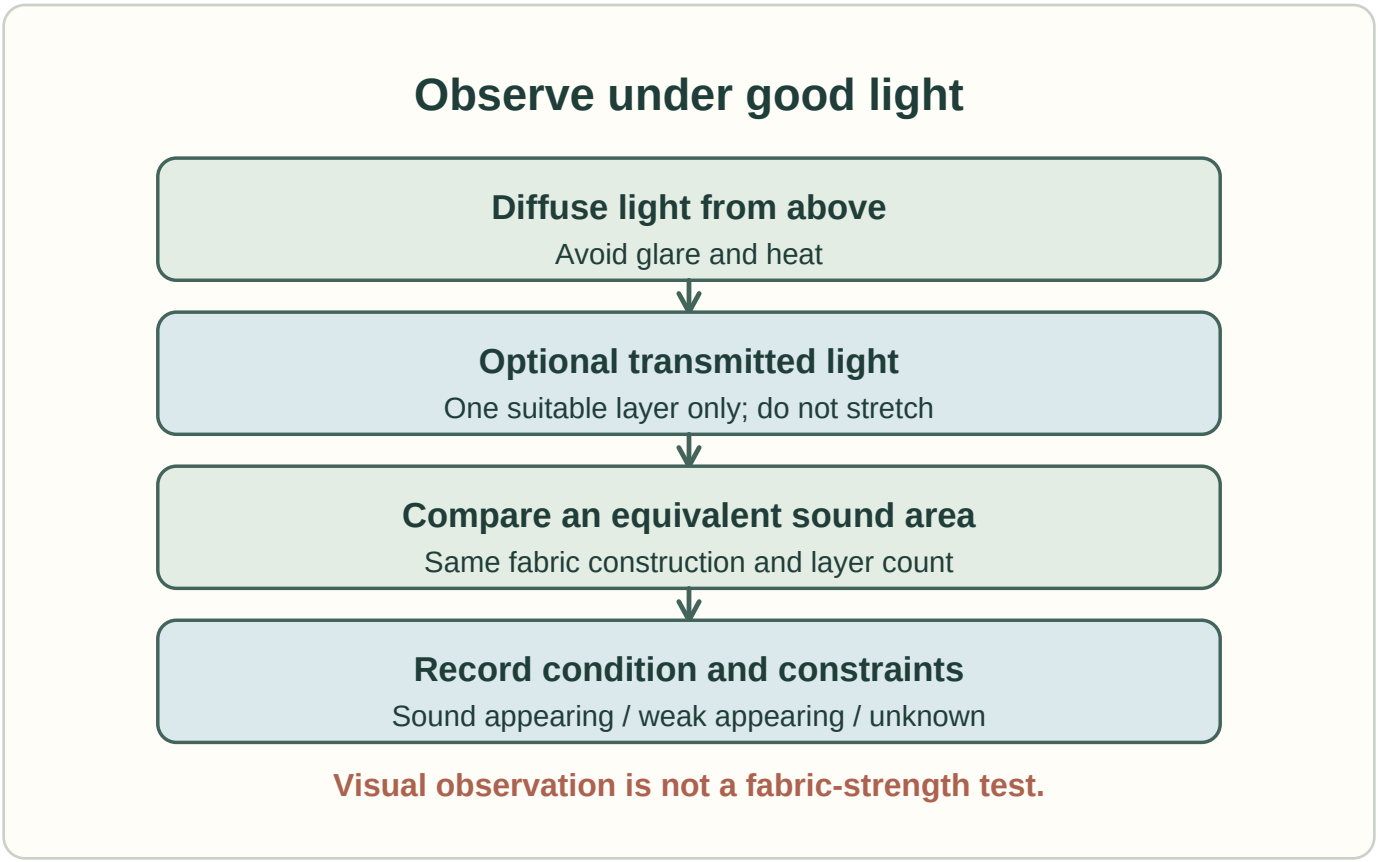
Damage-location worksheet: garment outline with repair location relative to seam, and enlarged nested zones (8 × 12 mm opening, 25 × 35 mm suspected worn region, surrounding area for assessment). Schematic.



Map location, visible opening and suspected wider wear.

Pattern 2

Good-light inspection sequence: diffuse light from above, optional backlighting a single suitable layer, comparison to equivalent sound fabric. Record SOUND APPEARING / WEAK APPEARING / UNKNOWN; no deliberate pull test.



Record 1 — Materials and repair plan

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

Garment / intended ordinary use

Fibre / care / construction

Damage location relative to seam

Visible opening / dimensions

Wider suspected worn zone

Reverse access and layer count

Sound-looking reference area

Initial concerns / unknowns

Record 2 — Finish and follow-up

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

Lighting method / comparison observation

Surrounding cloth condition

Grain / movement constraints

Seam allowance / available access

Other damage zones

Chosen repair method or referral

Decision: PLAN / DEFER / REFER

Date / next inspection