



# HOW TO Be a crafty minx

Kelly Doust, author of *The Crafty Minx: Creative Recycling and Handmade Treasures* and the forthcoming *The Crafty Kit*, is one of those ludicrously creative types that turns trash into treasure with a lick of paint or deft loop of a needle. Check out her top tips: they'll leave you in stitches

**For someone who hasn't dipped a toe into the world of craft since painting pebbles as a child, what's an easy way to get started?**

I'm completely obsessed with recycled fashion, so my first foray into crafts was altering vintage clothes as a teenager. That's probably the easiest way to have some cheap, creative fun and work out whether you enjoy it or have the patience for trickier projects. It's also a great way to ease yourself into sewing. Try chopping up pre-loved pieces, creating new hemlines and adding embellishment here and there, before graduating into making something more complicated from scratch, like a handbag or simple cushion for the sofa. You don't need loads of expensive equipment — scissors, needle and thread are more than enough to construct a ton of stylish and practical things.

**Where are some great places to shop for bits and pieces?**

Flea markets and charity stores are my favourite places to shop, because you can find all the fabric you need in old clothes. The Rozelle Markets in Sydney are my favourite haunt, and Melbourne's Camberwell Markets are awesome also. For years the only fabric ever used was secondhand, but now I buy new material from France and Japan as well. Try [duckcloth.com.au](http://duckcloth.com.au) for quirky Japanese fabrics and [cielila.com.au](http://cielila.com.au) for French deckchair-style stripes. I also love Amy Butler and

Anna Maria Horner fabrics from the US, and homegrown fabric designers Prints Charming and Florence Broadhurst designs from Signature Prints. Spotlight and Lindcraft are all over the country and are your best bet for basic tools. But avoid going the whole hog straight up — I'm still using the sewing machine I bought from a flea market for \$35!

**What are some items in a person's home that might readily be transformed?**

Recycling old jumpers that might be holey or stained into a small throw is easy (just cut out the best bits into squares and patchwork them together) or update a boring-looking chair with a coat of paint or by reupholstering the seat in some bright fabric.

**Do you think some Australian cities (or towns) are more craft-friendly than others?**

I think Melbourne's super crafty, but small towns and colder-climate cities like Hobart also seem to be more conducive to crafting than, say, Sydney. But I think craft is everywhere nowadays — it's going through the biggest revival since the '70s.

**Do you get together with other like-minded crafty types and work on projects together, or is it a solo habit for you?**



I'm big into crafternoons with friends, where we chat and make things at the same time. Once my girlfriends and I used to meet in bars, now we tend to sew, knit and crochet over a glass of wine, champers or afternoon tea. It's more fun than you'd think.

**What project are you most proud of?**

A couple of years ago I had all my wisdom teeth out in one go and didn't really leave the house for weeks. To avoid climbing the walls I milk-painted and beeswaxed an old armoire. It took forever, but it looks gorgeous and I love it to bits.

**And what project of someone else's are you most admiring of?**

I can't knit to save myself, but I love the guerrilla knitters who cover lamp posts and parking meters all over the world with funky-coloured wool.

**Can you recommend any interesting websites?**

My French friend Olivier has set up a fab design site called Dossier37 ([dossier37.tumblr.com](http://dossier37.tumblr.com)), which is excellent for quirky inspiration, but I also like Design Sponge ([designspongeonline.com](http://designspongeonline.com)) for their sneak peeks into other peoples' homes and crafty makeover projects.

**Jenny Valentish**