

SEW MUCH BETTER

Listen up for the pitter-patter of indie patterns

SEWING USED TO mean sitting in the back of a fabric store with one of the big pattern company's books, trying to decide which of the nearly identical designs was closest to the brilliant thing in your head. Today, some creative needle-savvy women are designing and selling—or giving away—their own patterns online.

Sewing newbies and anyone looking to whip up something quickly should investigate Betsy Ross Patterns. The patterns have few pieces and simple shapes, so they're perfect for showcasing special fabrics, embroidery, or fun embellishments. Each design's sassy little instruction book has an encouraging tone and clear illustrations for every step.

There are only a handful of patterns in the line right now, but they are so versatile, you'll be glad they are printed on heavy paper that will hold up to

multiple uses. One skirt goes up to a size 20, and more plus sizes are promised in the near future—good news for the curvy among us, as the current size chart tops out at size 12. Each pattern is \$13 and is available from www.sewbetsyross.com.

Retro/fit's four vintage-inspired dress patterns are not for the novice. The most flattering details from the past have been adapted into dresses for modern bodies, sizes 4–18. I am smitten with Ava, an A-line gown with a pleated drape at the top of the strapless neckline and a little matching bolero jacket. The construction includes an inner foundation for the bodice, a couture detail that ensures a smooth line. The patterns are printed on tissue paper and are \$20 each from www.retrofitpattern.com.

Purchasing patterns online is great, but instant gratification is even more fun. Australia-based Fitz Patterns offers a

collection of free patterns for download (www.fitzpatterns.com). Their Debbie minidress has '80s style and takes only two hours to make. Other options include simple tops, dresses, skirts, and shorts, plus a pair of knickerbockers for the adventurous. The patterns are in PDF format, so you can print them at home and tape the pages together, or slip in after hours and take advantage of your office's large-format printer or copier.

The only thing better than being complimented on your outfit is being able to respond, "I made it myself!" Crafty babes, start your scissors.

[SARA COOK]



"Blouse with Tie" from Betsy Ross



The "Debbie" minidress from Fitz Patterns



The "Ava" dress with bolero jacket from Retro/fit