

Craft School: Jasleen's Challenge

Coming Together CPD Stitching Stories with Aya Haidar



Contents

1. Welcome

2. Make First

**3. Craft School: Jasleen's
Challenge**

**4. Stitching Stories with Aya
Haidar**

4.1 Aya Haidar Biography

4.2 Make-Along Activity

4.3 Where to get Materials

1

Welcome

Welcome to Crafts Council Learning!

Crafts Council is the national charity for craft. We inspire making, empower learning and nurture craft businesses. We believe craft skills and knowledge enrich and uplift us as individuals, and, in so doing will change our world for the better.

We work to ensure craft is a key part of everyone's education and work closely with our network of schools, teachers and maker educators to secure the future of craft in the classroom.

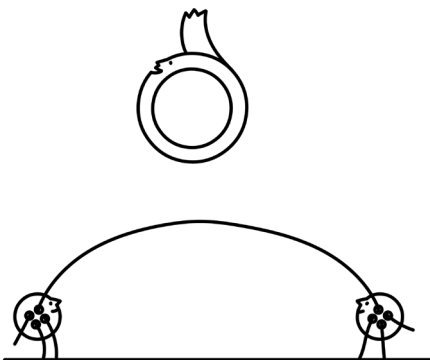
Our education work is underpinned by Make First, our craft education pedagogy.

2

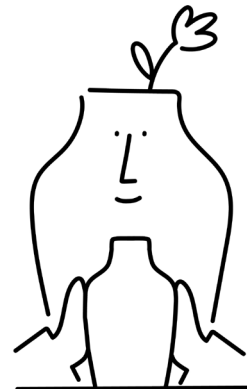
Make First

Make First is the Crafts Council's craft education pedagogy. We've examined our work with learners, teachers and maker educators to pinpoint what's special about craft learning and packed it all into the Make First approach. Make First is an open ended, non linear, playful way of teaching craft in the classroom.

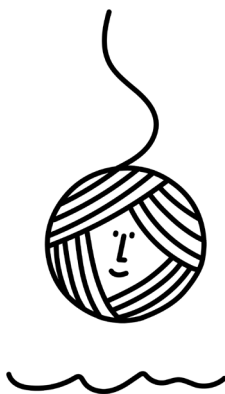
Make First makes use of open ended briefs, extended making time and learner led projects. By asking learners to start with materials and develop their ideas through making we encourage the development of creativity, problem solving and critical thinking. Below are key principles of Make First:



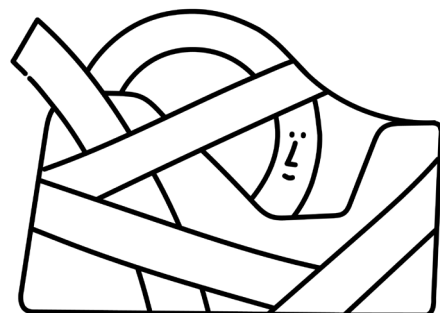
Make First is playful and open-ended; enjoy the making and don't focus on the final outcome.



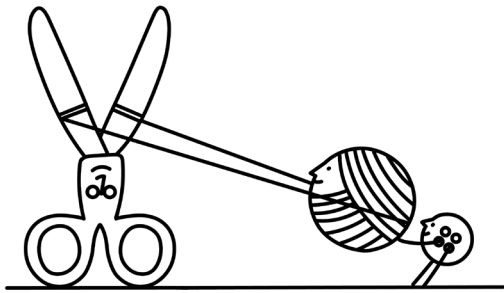
Explore your interests and develop your voice as a maker.



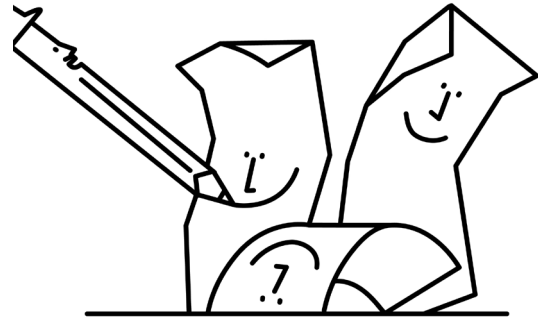
Dive straight into making!
Pick your materials and have a go.



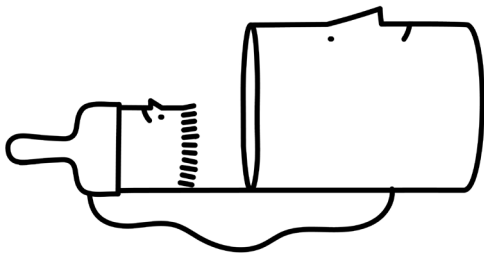
Start again, work on several things at once or repeat the same thing with different materials.



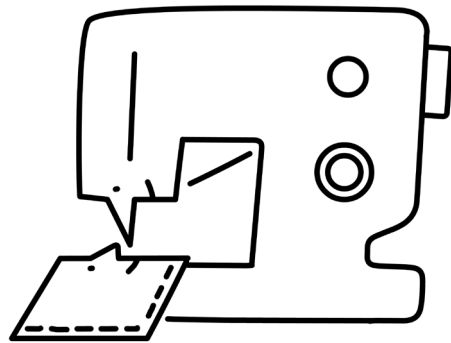
Experiment with materials to develop your ideas.



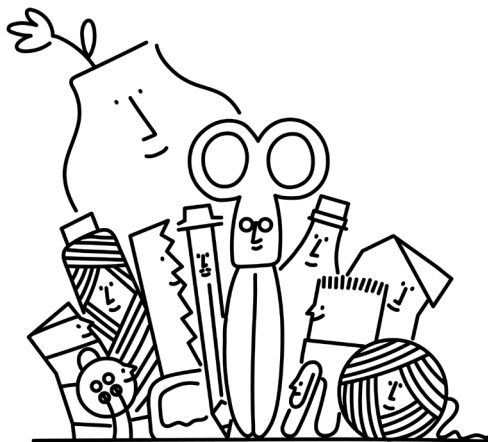
Make First is about the joyfulness and pleasure that comes from making.



Fail and try again to become a braver maker.



Build skills and knowledge from your interactions with materials and the physical world.

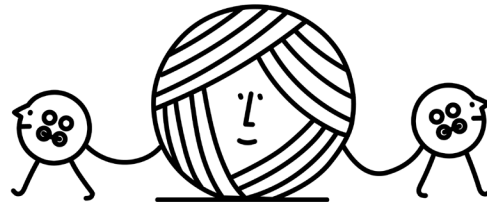


Learn together as a community.

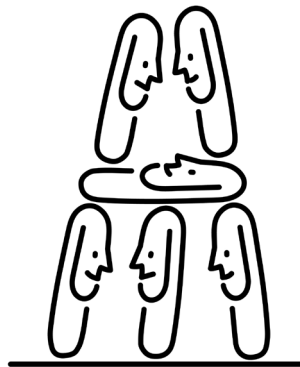
Make First can be flexibly applied to different learning outcomes, it's not a rigid framework and can be adapted to suit the needs of learners and learning outcomes.

Its foundation in exploration, creativity and collaboration allows for Make First to be used in a variety of different contexts and support cross curricular making aims.

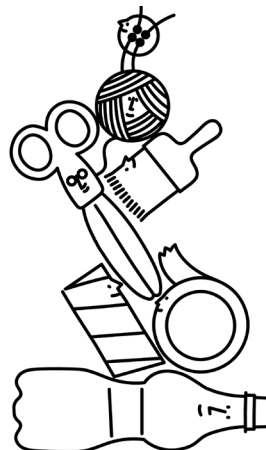
These is how Make First can look in your classrooms:



Make First is supported through a classroom environment that encourages collaboration and supports learners to make their own choices.



Make First can be scaffolded by discovery resources, challenges or technical drawings.



Make First can support a range of learning outcomes across the curriculum.



Maker Champion, Jasleen Kaur's *Tools for Living* series, in Crafts Council Handling Collection
Photo: Elijah Serumaga

3

Craft School: Jasleen's Challenge

Craft School is the nationwide craft challenge, open to all learners from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4 (ages 3-16). Each year, we invite learners to create their own 3D work in response to a creative brief.

Craft School also invests in teachers and educators. It offers a package of resources including practical CPD sessions and online teacher support sessions to help build their craft skills, confidence and networks.

This resource accompanies our CPD session held on 21st January 2026. [You can find the recording here.](#)

For this year's Craft School challenge, Jasleen Kaur invites learners to use craft and making to explore the theme of **Community**.

Educators and learners will be working together to reflect on the communities they are part of, whether personal, local, global, or digital, and express their ideas through craft.

This is because we recognise that exploring identity, culture and the world around us is pivotal for young people. Craft provides a unique space for exploration, meaningful making and collaborative learning. Making together can help us imagine new possibilities, providing the perfect opportunity to think differently about what we see around us.



A Mother's Sacrifice, 2019, Embroidery on Shoe sole

5

Stitching Stories with Aya Haidar

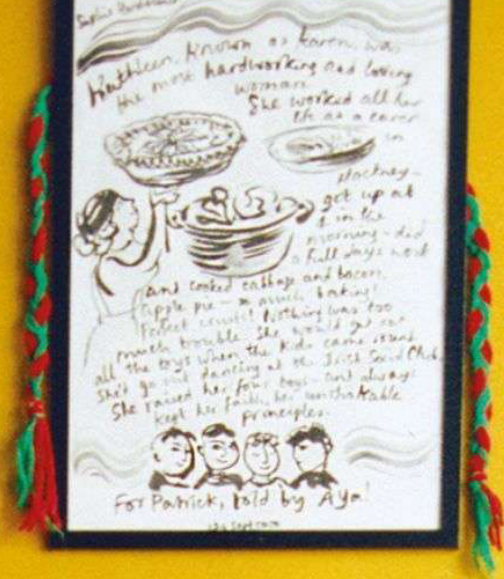
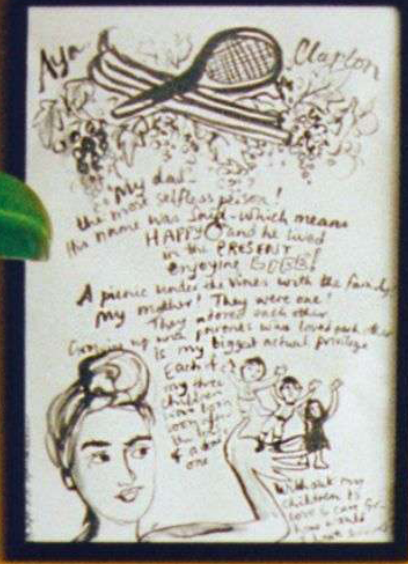
Aya Haidar graduated with a BA in Fine Art from the Slade School of Fine Art, during which she completed an exchange program at School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). She then went on to graduate with an MSc in NGOs and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Her current work focuses on the recycling of found and disposable objects making poetic works that explore labour, displacement, domesticity, womanhood and memory, with a particular focus on the Middle East through the histories contained within aged, and culturally specific objects.

Aya further develops this aspect of re-using objects to re-create narratives, to explore memory with a focus on older objects from previous generations. This idea of the development of a generational craft work that spans time, at once explores hand me down skills, stories and community, and by extension, cultural specificity and intercultural nature of British society.

International solo and group exhibitions include The V&A (UK), Somerset House (UK), The Whitworth (Manchester), Art Berlin Contemporary (Germany), Athr Gallery (Jeddah), Beirut Art Week (Beirut), FIAC (Paris), Frieze Art Fair (London), Art Dubai (UAE), Abu Dhabi Art (UAE), Art Istanbul (Turkey). Aya has also been involved in numerous social engagement projects, including UP Projects, Kettle's Yard, PEER, The Camden Arts Center, *Mosaic Rooms' Together Apart: Lockdown Diaries*, V&A's *Stitching Borders and Record*.

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Portrait of Aya Haidar
Photographed by Suleika Mueller

5.2

Make-Along Activity

This activity uses upcycling and embellishing clothing as a way to engage in mutual exchange and unpack topics of conversation. The focus is not on learning sewing skills, though some will be shared, but on what emerges through making: stories, memories, values, and questions about community, belonging, and care.

The garment becomes a shared starting point for conversation. Making supports thinking, listening, and reflection, particularly for learners who may struggle to express ideas verbally.

Why Make While Talking?

Making with the hands:

- reduces pressure to “perform” verbally
- allows reflection to emerge naturally
- creates pauses, silences, and moments of care
- supports inclusive and accessible discussion

Upcycling adds another layer: encouraging learners to think about value, repair, sustainability, and responsibility, both personal and collective.

Activity:

Participants bring an item of clothing they already own. The garment is not a blank surface, but something with:

- a history
- signs of wear or use
- emotional or social meaning

Before any making begins, invite time to look, hold, and consider. Conversation prompts:

- Where has this garment been?
- When do you choose to wear it — or avoid it?
- What does it say about belonging, identity, or rules?



Making as a Thinking Tool

Learners begin to alter, decorate, or repair their garment in small ways. The act of making is intentionally open-ended.

There is:

- no set outcome
- no expectation to finish
- no emphasis on neatness or skill

The purpose of making is to:

- anchor attention
- slow the pace of discussion
- allow ideas to surface without forcing answers

Conversation prompts:

Rather than structured tasks, offer gentle prompts that can be engaged with at their own pace.

Examples:

- What parts of yourself feel visible or hidden in this garment?
- Who feels represented — and who doesn't?
- What does community look like in your setting?
- What holds it together? What puts it under strain?
- How does it feel to spend time repairing or changing something?
- What does this say about how we value people, objects, or labour?

Liberatory Practice in This Activity

This approach reflects liberatory practice by:

- centring lived experience
- allowing learners to decide what and how much to share
- removing hierarchy between facilitator and participants
- recognising making as a form of thinking

The focus is on agency, voice, and care, rather than technical mastery.

Bringing This Into the Classroom

This activity can be adapted across Key Stages by:

- Using garments, fabric pieces, or symbolic materials
- Working individually or collectively
- Allowing conversation to emerge through shared making

If clothing is not appropriate, work with:

- fabric squares
- paper templates
- found or recycled materials

The key principle remains the same: making supports conversation, not the other way around.



Wedding Photo, Phone Charger, 2018, Embroidery on Plastic Bag

