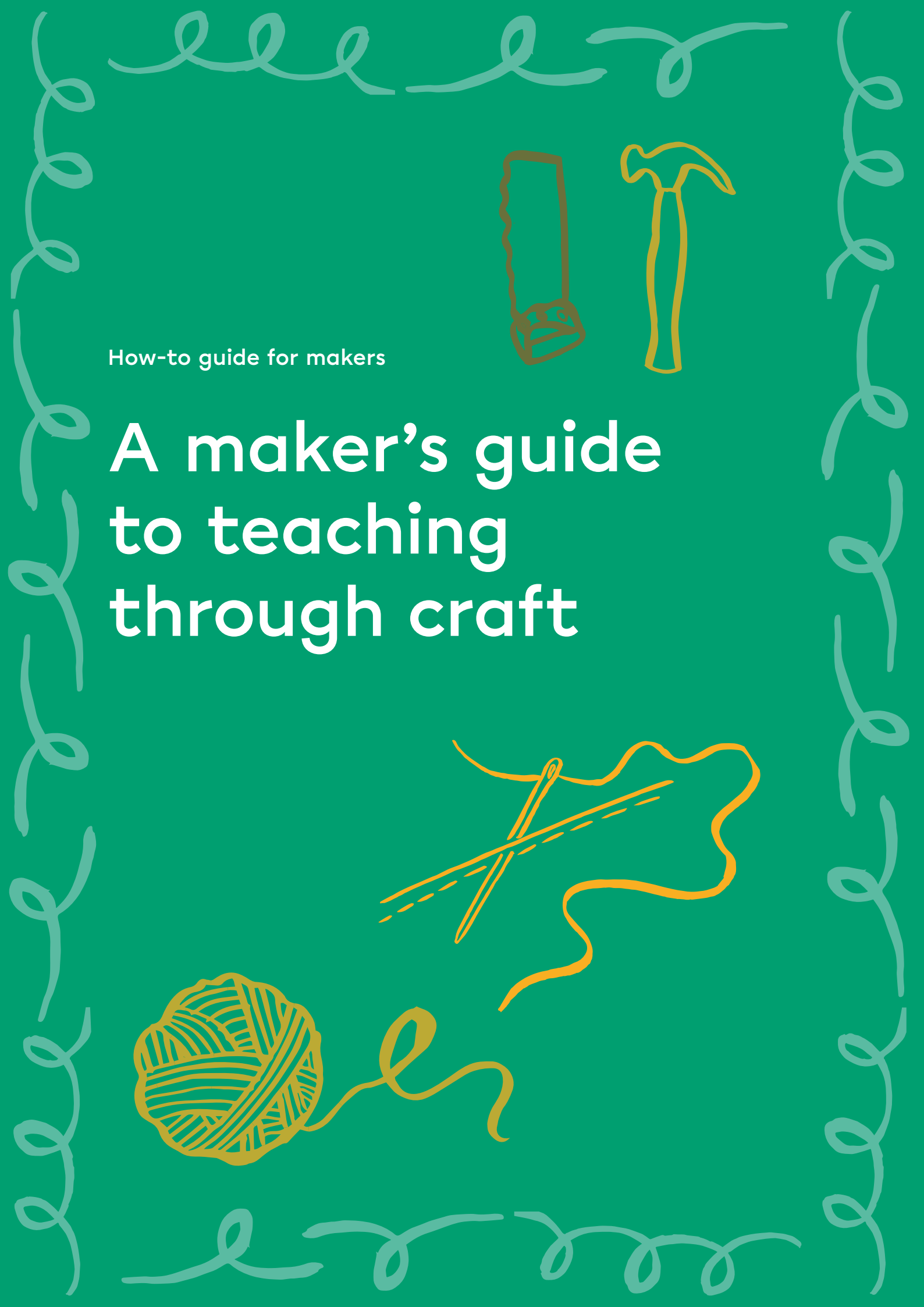




How-to guide for makers

A maker's guide to teaching through craft



Introduction

Working in education settings can be a rewarding extension of your making practice, offering an opportunity to share your skills and experience with curious and enthusiastic learners. At the same time, it can also require thoughtful adaptations to the skills, materials, and processes that you use to ensure they are suitable for both the learners you are working with and the environments you are working in.

This guide includes questions and considerations that encourage reflection to support the planning and delivery of craft-led teaching. It also includes practical examples from other makers, showing how they have adapted their own work for educational settings, and their tips for successful work with learners.

This guide is particularly designed to support makers who are working with children and young people in schools and other learning environments. However, many of the ideas and prompts are also more widely applicable to other learning contexts and for learners of all ages.



Adapting your process

What core ideas, skills, or processes can you share from your practice?

Consider which aspects of your making practice you would like to share. This could include making skills, design processes, or insight into what it is like to work as a maker. Think about which elements of your work may need to be adapted to suit the available time, resources, and learning environment. Keep the task simple with only one or two clear goals for learners to achieve.

Can specialist materials and tools be substituted with more accessible equivalents?

Schools will often not have access to specialist tools and materials, and have limited budgets. Consider how your process might be adapted to using less specialist tools and more easily-available materials.

For example, for [MAKE with the Knit Shop](#), knitwear designer Jolene Guthrie introduced learners to knitting using thick wool and finger knitting. This removed the need for knitting needles and also made the skill acquisition more accessible for younger learners who are still developing fine motor skills. Jolene also demonstrated a technique for making yarn out of old t-shirts or plastic bags, providing inexpensive alternatives for materials and supporting more sustainable practice.



Top Tips

- Keep your activity focused.
- Adapt specialist processes for the classroom setting.

Know your learners

What age and stage are your learners?

The age and learning stage of learners will have a significant impact on what makes a suitable craft activity, from the level of complexity to the tools and materials you use. Younger learners may have less developed fine motor skills, shorter attention spans, and less prior knowledge than older learners, so tasks may need to be simplified, broken into shorter stages, or adapted using more accessible materials.

For example, basketmaker [Malcom Farrow](#) now brings t-shirt yarn to workshops with young learners as an alternative to willow. While he continues to demonstrate core weaving skills, t-shirt yarn is an easier material for younger learners to work with.

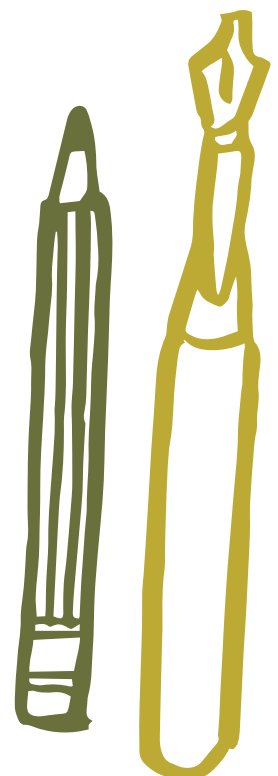
What prior knowledge or experience do learners have with relevant materials and tools?

Where possible, speaking with teachers in advance can provide valuable insight into what learners have already encountered and what foundational skills you may need to introduce or reinforce before moving on to the main activity.

For example, a session on mending clothes may need to begin by showing learners how to thread a needle if they have never done this before. In groups with mixed levels of prior experience, pairing learners to share skills and support one another can help build confidence and encourage collaboration.

Top Tips

- Create adaptable plans for a range of learners.
- Consider learners' manual dexterity levels when selecting materials and tools.



Planning and preparation

Plan for all parts of a session, including set up and tidying

When planning a session, it is important to think beyond the making activity itself and ensure that you consider all stages of delivery. This includes time and space for setting up materials, introducing tools and processes, and cleaning and tidying at the end of the session. Factoring this in at the planning stage will help sessions run smoothly and reduce pressure on learners and staff, as well as yourself.

Do materials need to be prepared in advance?

Using pre-cut or pre-measured supplies can make a session more manageable, allowing you to focus on key skills and techniques. However, an activity that is quick to prepare for one person can become much more time-consuming for a class of 30. When planning, consider if there are simplifications that you can make to reduce preparation. You can also think about tasks that learners could help with as part of the activity, turning preparation into a hands-on element of the session.

Plan for learners of different abilities

What extension activities could you develop for learners who work quickly? What simplifications can you offer to support learners who find the activity more challenging?

For example, silversmith [Bryony Knox](#) describes how tasks can be adapted to offer narrower parameters to learners who are struggling to get started and come up with ideas.

Storage

If you are running an activity over multiple sessions or delivering a making activity that requires time to dry or set, it is important to plan how materials and works in progress will be stored. Discuss this in advance with staff, making sure they understand what is needed so they can advise on how this can be done safely and securely within the space available.

Top Tips

- Include time for setting up and clearing away.
- Ensure materials are accessible and simple to prepare.
- Be ready for different levels of learning.
- Discuss your activity with the class teacher in advance.

Language and instruction

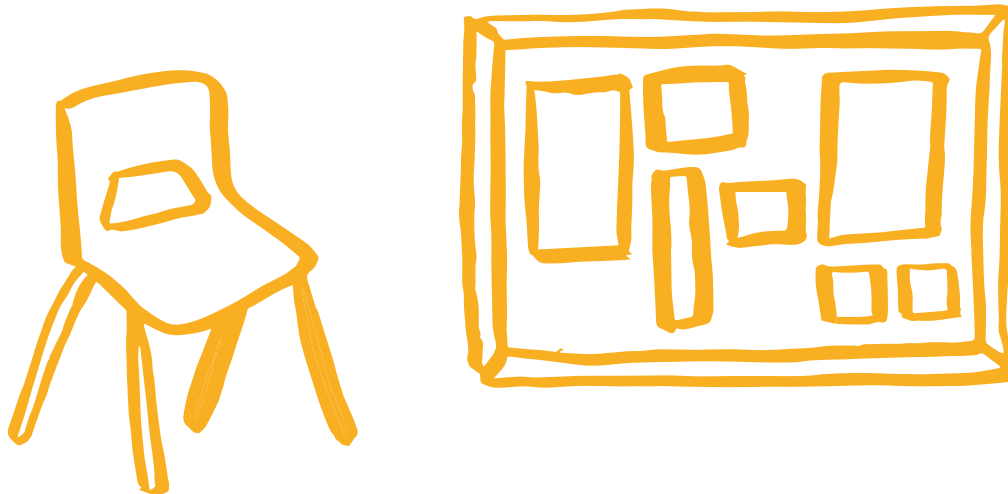
Sharing key terms

Developing an understanding of key terms is an important part of learning. Ensure that you provide definitions for unfamiliar terminology using accessible language and hands-on examples where appropriate. Repeat key terms throughout the session to reinforce learning and help learners use them correctly and with confidence.

Demonstrating techniques

When introducing new skills, demonstrate techniques slowly and clearly. Think about visibility: in a large group, learners at the back may struggle to see with enough detail. Consider how you can make your demonstration accessible to all learners, such as positioning yourself centrally, using raised work surfaces, or sharing multiple angles.

For example, in [MAKE with the Knit Shop](#), makers recorded videos of key techniques that could be shown on a large screen. Printable instruction sheets for key skills were also provided to support learners.



Top Tips

- Define key terminology for learners.
- Consider and prepare your demonstrations of techniques and examples for a classroom setting.

Curriculum connections

Simply sharing your craft practice and skills with learners is valuable in and of itself. Through hands-on making, learners can develop their creativity and practical skills while gaining insight into processes of making and potential creative careers. However, if you are working in partnership with a teacher, it can be helpful to talk through possible curriculum connections together. Teachers can share knowledge of learners' prior experiences and current areas of learning, and can help identify connections between your activity and learners' work elsewhere in the curriculum.

Your practice may also lend itself naturally to cross-curricular learning – especially if you explore wider themes, ideas, or issues in your work. Developing activities which make these wider connections visible can help learners situate making within a broader context, and offer new ways of exploring and understanding other areas of the curriculum.

For example, textile and printmaking artist [Renuka Ramanujam](#) delivered a printmaking workshop for P6 and P7 learners as part of Our Plastic Oceans. This project aimed to raise awareness of the impact of microplastic pollution in marine environments, drawing on her own work on and research into this issue.



Top Tips

- Discuss your activity with the class teacher in advance.
- Consider preparing an activity that links to a curricular theme.

Safeguarding and compliance

Protecting Vulnerable Groups membership

It's a legal requirement to join Disclosure Scotland's Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme if you are undertaking a regulated role with vulnerable groups, including children. If you are delivering craft learning activities for a school or other organisation, you should seek their advice as to whether your role would be considered a regulated one for the purposes of the scheme.

If you are running a workshop on behalf of an organisation and PVG membership is necessary for the work you are doing, the organisation must start the PVG application on your behalf. If you are organising craft-learning activities independently, you can apply for a PVG as a self-employed individual.

Further information and guidance is available from [Disclosure Scotland](#).

Public liability insurance

Public liability insurance protects against costs arising from third-party claims. If someone is injured in a workshop or has their property damaged, public liability insurance can cover these claims. Whilst it is not a legal requirement, some organisations may require freelance workers to hold public liability insurance, and it is generally considered best practice to be insured against such claims. It also provides peace of mind that you will have protection if things don't go to plan.

Top Tips

- Discuss PVG and insurance requirements with organisations before starting work.
- Clarify who is responsible for any costs.
- Keep documents up-to-date and accessible.

Documentation and evaluation

Consider documentation

Good documentation of your work with learners provides useful material to support reflection and can also act as evidence in future applications for employment or funding. However, when working with children and young people, it is essential to be mindful of issues around safeguarding and consent. Always check with the school or host organisation, and follow their policies and guidance around photography.

If photography is permitted, there are many ways to document your work without photographing identifiable learners. These include:

- Taking pictures without identifiable features such as by focusing on hands, materials, or tools in use.
- Capturing stages of the making process, like materials laid out before the session starts or works in progress on tables during a break.
- Photographing finished objects made by learners.

Make time for reflection

Making time to reflect on each session can help you develop and refine your approach. Consider what worked well, what felt challenging, and what you might adapt in any future sessions. Where possible, make time after the session to speak with any supporting staff – even a few minutes reflecting whilst packing away materials can be useful. Their perspectives can highlight aspects of learner engagement, behaviour, or learning that you may not have noticed but which can provide valuable insight for future planning.

Encourage learner reflection

Creating opportunities for learners to reflect on their own experiences is also really important. Using questions to prompt reflection can work well: Why did you choose these colours? How did you solve a problem? What would you do differently next time? Teachers will often have established methods for reflective practice, so check in with them in advance and integrate these approaches where possible.

Top Tips

- Check restrictions around documentation and follow guidance.
- Make time for reflection for learners and for yourself.



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