

Sewing

Made



Easy



By Emily Lane



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## Basics



Have you ever seen a shirt or other sewing project at the fair and wondered *How did they do that?* Have you ever wanted to try the simple but fun art of sewing? Here's your chance. In this manual I am going to teach you how to make some projects, choose a sewing machine and tools, and many other necessary skills.

Sewing is for all ages. Some people start when they are five or six. Others learn in their forties. Everyone, no matter what their age is, can learn. Sewing is not just for girls either. Boys too can enjoy many projects that can be made, such as roll-up wrench cases, and pajamas. I would encourage every person who reads this manual to try sewing.

## Tools

Sewing tools are the most important thing to have besides your machine.

Below are some of the tools you will need.

Small sewing scissors (for cutting thread)

8" sewing shears (for cutting fabric)

Seam gauge (6")

Tape measure (60" or 120", should be flexible cloth or plastic)

White, blue and yellow chalk pencils (for fabric marking)

Size 8 long "Sharps" hand sewing needles

Pins (long steel ones with large heads are best)

Pinholder (magnetic type is good)

Seam ripper

Sewing box (to store tools conveniently)

All of these tools are available at craft or sewing or quilting stores.

## Your Machine and Thread

Having a good sewing machine is very important to your success as both a beginner and a more advanced sewer. You should buy the best machine you can afford as your first machine. However, don't buy a machine with too many extra frills. For example, if you have to choose between a machine that does basic stitches, such as zigzag, straight, buttonhole, and one or two decorative stitches, and a machine that specializes in embroidery, but does a straight stitch too, the simpler and less expensive machine is a better buy unless you are very interested in doing embroidery. Otherwise the extra money for fancy stitches that are never used is wasted. Buy a good, but practical, machine. The better quality the machine, the longer it will last and the easier it will probably be to use. Many people have been discouraged by sewing because they use an old or malfunctioning machine. The machine keeps breaking down and frustrating the sewer. Likewise, a cheaply built machine can break down and discourage a beginning sewer. About the least you will pay for a new medium-quality sewing machine is \$300. You may be able to ask around and purchase a very good machine inexpensively from someone who no longer uses it.

Let's say you just bought your brand new sewing machine. It runs well, and is easy to work with. Now you need some thread. And no, don't even think about heading over to the 25 cent rack. Using good thread will not only help you sew better, it will also make straighter seams and better stitches. Cheap thread is also very hard on your machine, and has a tendency to break easily, ensuring that too much of your sewing time is spent rethreading and untangling your thread. Like your tools, you can get decent quality thread at many quilting and sewing stores.

## Ironing

Ironing is necessary in sewing but can be dangerous if you don't know how to do it properly. Ironing is often referred to as *pressing* in a pattern. Later in this manual there are different patterns for some fun projects. I will always refer to ironing as pressing in these directions. Remember to follow basic safety practices and keep your hands away from the front of the iron, and to use the steam with caution. Also be careful of dangling the iron's cord with small children and pets around.

## Ripping Out a Seam

Everyone has to rip out a seam at some time or another. The main thing is not to get upset when you are taking the seam out. To do this activity you need a seam ripper and a seam with a problem (tuck, crooked, etc.). Insert the sharp point of the seam ripper under a stitch and carefully pull out the thread. Repeat this every few stitches. The seam will come apart. Remove all loose threads. When the entire seam is ripped out, pin the sections back together and try again. After about two or three sessions of taking out a seam, it is good idea to put the project down for five minutes or so and go do something else until you are ready to tackle it again.

## The Projects

I will now be teaching you how to make seven simple projects for beginners, although all levels of sewers will enjoy them. The projects are listed below.

Mug Mat

Potholder

Fleece Pillow

Fleece Blanket

Pillowcase

Shorts

Laundry Bag



They will be taught in this order, and are ordered from easiest to hardest.



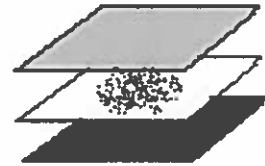
## Mug Mats

For this project you will need:

2 pieces of 6" X 6" fabric(should match or contrast)  
1 piece of 6" X 6" batting  
small amount of dried lavender  
pinking shears  
4 pieces of 6" long ribbon(optional)  
matching thread

1. Layer your fabric, batting and lavender in the following order  
(see diagram at right):

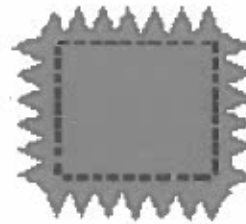
First piece of fabric wrong side up  
Batting  
Lavender  
Second piece of fabric right side up



2. Pin all of the sides to together.

3. Sew  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the edge all the way around  
the mug mat, being careful to not spill the lavender.

4. Use the pinking shears to trim the edge of  
the mug mat to just a little under  $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
(see diagram at right).



5. Hand sew some decorative ribbon around  
the edge if desired.



## Potholders

For this project you will need:

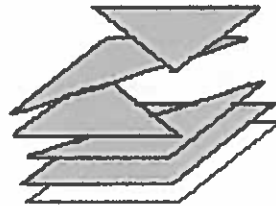
5 squares of fabric 9 ½" X 9 ½" (should match or contrast)  
1 square of batting 9 ½" X 9 ½"  
pinking shears  
matching thread

1. Cut 5 squares of fabric measuring 9 ½" X 9 ½". These should be from coordinating fabric.
2. Cut out 1 square of cotton batting measuring 9 ½" X 9 ½".
3. Fold 4 of the fabric squares in half diagonally with right sides out and press.

4. Layer the piece in this order;

1 layer cotton batting  
1 unfolded piece of fabric face up  
4 diagonally folded fabric square

(go around the square as you place them).

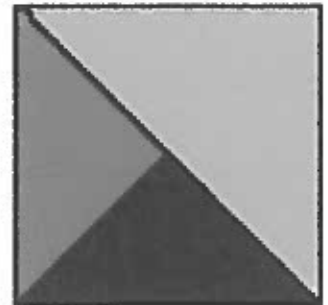


Pin together near the corners.

5. Stitch at ⅜" all around the edges pivoting diagonally at corners.

6. Trim the seam allowance with pinking shears.

7. Turn right side out, poke out corners and press.



## Fleece Pillow

For this project you will need:

a 16" X 16" pillow form  
1 yard of fleece  
12" ruler

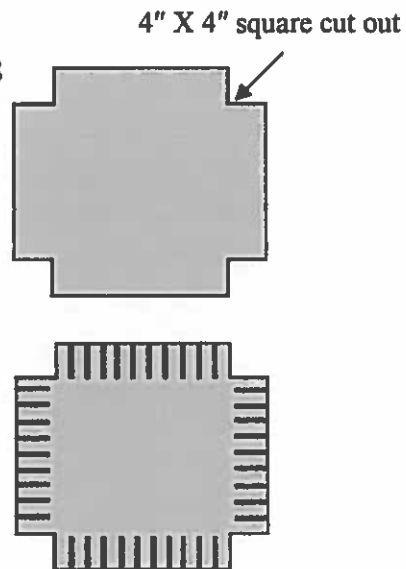
1. Cut two pieces of fleece measuring 25" X 25". If possible, use a rotary mat, a wide plastic quilting ruler and a rotary cutter.

2. Place the two fleece squares on top of each other, so they match up at the corners

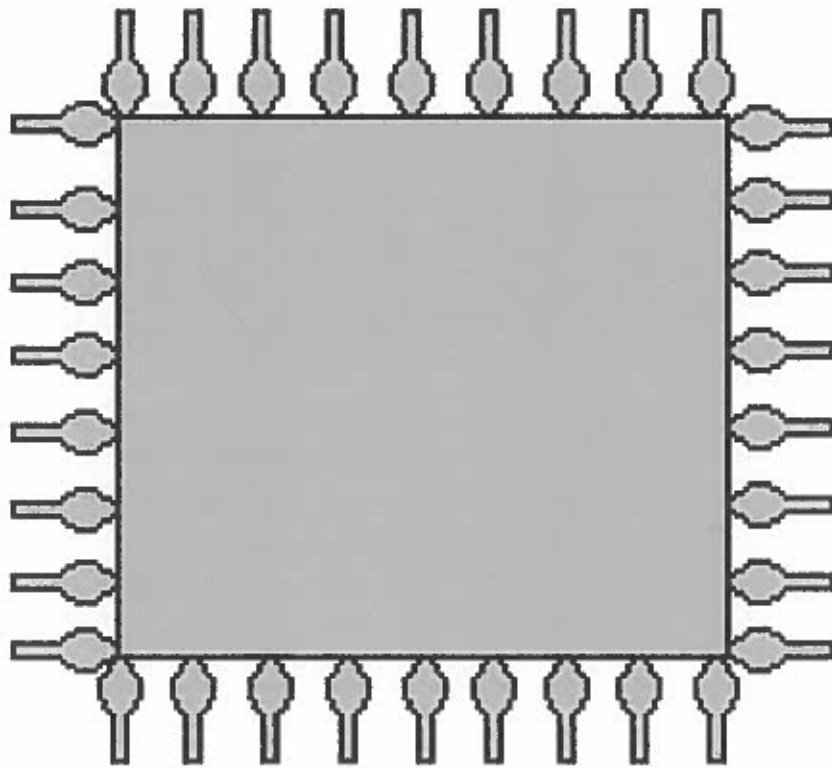
3. Cut a 4 inch square from each corner of the two fleece squares.

4. Using the ruler, cut a 4 inch long fringe all the way around the fleece squares. The fringe should be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch wide. Don't pull the fleece as you are cutting, as fleece stretches easily.

5. Place one of the pieces of fleece on a flat surface. Put the pillow on top, matching the corners and sides up with the edge of the fringe. Then place the other piece of fleece on top of the pillow, matching it up with the bottom piece.



6. Beginning at a corner, start tying a bottom strip of fleece with the coordinating strip on the top. Using a double knot, go all the way around the pillow, tying the top fringe to the bottom fringe. After you have tied the last fringe, carefully go all the way around the pillow, checking that they are all even with each other. Trim off any fringe pieces that are too long.

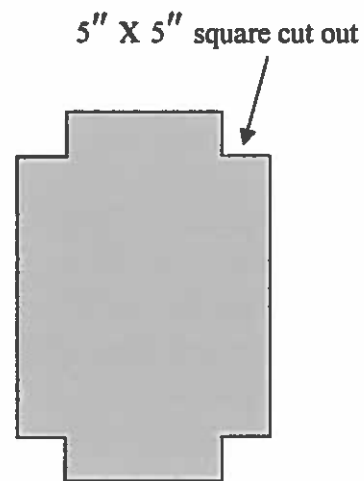


## Fleece Blanket

For this project you will need:

1 ½ yards of 60" wide fleece  
matching thread  
masking tape

1. Put a piece masking tape on your sewing machine so that it is 5 inches to the right of your needle.
2. Even up the cut ends of your fleece fabric, and trim off the selvages with shears or a rotary cutter.
3. Sew all the way around the edge of your blanket with a broad decorative stitch or wide utility zigzag stitch 5 inches from the edge of your fleece. To do this, just match up the edge of the blanket with the edge of the masking tape on your sewing machine.
4. Cut a five inch square out of each corner, being careful not to cut the stitching.
5. Cut ¾" wide strips on all the sides of the blanket, again being careful not to cut the stitching.
6. Tie a knot in each of the strips so that it rests at the top of the fringe.



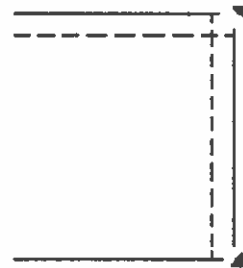
## Pillowcase

For this project you will need:

1 yard cotton fabric  
matching thread

1. Trim the edges of your fabric so that they are even.

2. Fold your fabric in half lengthwise. Pin the bottom and sides, then sew these three edges at  $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Then clip across these bottom edge corners.



3. Use pinking shears to slightly trim the seam allowances.

4. Turn down the top edge  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and press. Then turn down the same edge another 3 inches.

5. Sew  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " from the top edge to make your hem. You may use a decorative stitch, or a contrasting color thread if you want. Then press the entire project.

## Shorts

For this project you will need:

A shorts pattern in your size. Use one that has an elastic waist  
with front and back pieces  
amount of fabric indicated on back of pattern  
matching thread  
1 yard of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " non-roll elastic  
safety pin

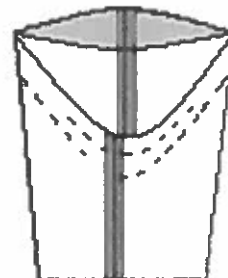
1. Cut out the paper shorts pattern pieces in your size. Then lay out your patterns as indicated in the picture to the right. Cut out the fabric pieces. Mark all dots and triangles with your marking pencil.



2. Pin the side seam together of one shorts front piece and one shorts back piece, right sides together. Stitch this seam with a  $\frac{5}{8}$ " seam allowance. Press the seam open. Use pinking shears to trim the seam. Fold the leg in half, right sides together, matching the inside leg seam. Stitch the inside leg seam at  $\frac{5}{8}$ " seam allowance. Repeat for the second leg, again using pinking shears to trim the seams.



3. Turn one leg right side out and leave the other wrong side out. Slip one leg inside of another, matching the leg in-seams, right sides together.



4. Pin and stitch the crotch seam. To reinforce,

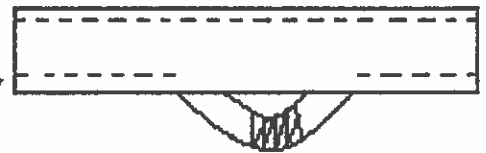
stitch a second row of stitching at  $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance, from notch to notch, along the lower curve. Trim this crotch seam to  $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide using pinking shears. Then press open the upper straight edge, front and back. The lower crotch seam, which is pinked, stays together and is not pressed.

5. Fold the top half of the fabric  $\frac{1}{2}$ " towards the inside of the shorts and press. Fold the fabric again to the inside  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " from the inside and press. Pin and machine stitch  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the last folded edge all the way around the shorts except for a 2" hole left unstitched as an opening for feeding the elastic through.

6. Make another row of stitching all the way around the shorts  $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the top edge for a neat casing.

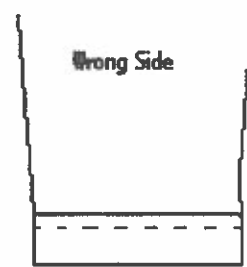
7. Pin a large safety pin to one end of the elastic which has been cut 2" smaller than your waist measurement. Pin the other end of the elastic to your shorts to prevent it from pulling through the casing. Slip the pin, connected to the elastic, inside and between the two rows of stitching, and feed it through the unstitched opening.

8. Overlap the ends of the elastic 1". Zigzag from top to bottom several times over the lap. Pin the opening in the casing closed. Carefully machine stitch the opening closed, making sure not to catch the elastic in your stitching. Then, once the gathers are evenly spaced,



stitch in the seam grooves at the back seam, front seams and side seams, to keep the elastic from twisting.

9. Fold the bottom edge of one leg hem  $\frac{1}{2}$ " toward the wrong side and press. Next fold the fabric again to the inside  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". Press again. Machine stitch your hem close to the upper hem edge from the wrong side being careful to sew in a neat straight line. Repeat with the other hem.



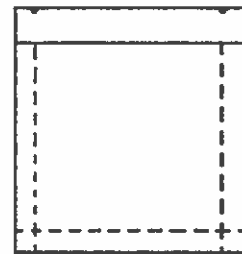
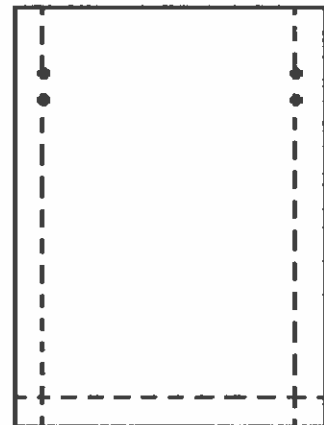


## Laundry Bag

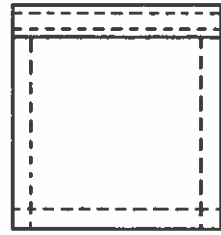
For this project you will need:

1 yard medium weight cotton fabric  
3 yards of  $\frac{1}{4}$ " cording for drawstring  
thread to match  
sewing supplies

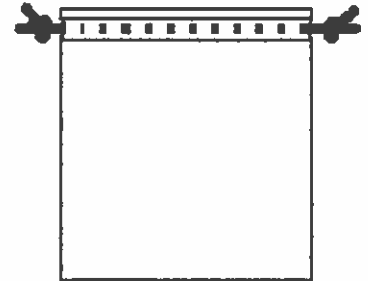
1. Trim the edges of the fabric so that they are straight using shears or a rotary cutter. Then trim off  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of the fold so you have two separate identical pieces of fabric.
2. Lay your two rectangular pieces of fabric with right sides together. Pin the bottom and two sides together. Measure five inches from the top of the right side of the bag and make a small dot with your marking pencil. Then measure another  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " down from your dot and mark the fabric again. This is where the drawstring will go through the casing. Repeat with the left top side of the bag.
3. Straight stitch the three sides that you have pinned together, leaving the area in between the two dots on either side open. Backstitch before and after the  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " opening on the side seams. Press seams open.
4. Turn down the top edge  $\frac{1}{2}$ " and press. Then turn it down another 3 inches and press. Pin this edge fold down.



5. Stitch  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the bottom of the casing all the way around the bag. Then measure 1" above your stitching and make a mark all the way around the inside rim of your bag. Sew on the line in a complete circle around the inside of the bag.

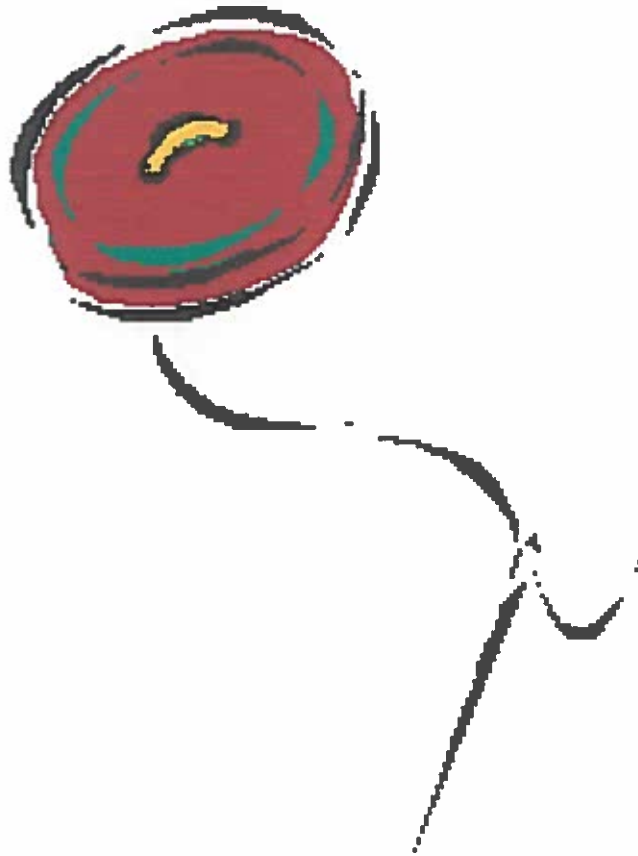


6. Cut the cord for your drawstring in half. Tape or burn the ends to keep them from raveling. Then pin a safety pin in the end of one of the cords. Begin to thread it through the hole that you left earlier. Go all the way around the bag until the cording comes out of the same hole you threaded it into. Then repeat the process with the other hole. You should now have two ends sticking out of each. Tie the ends together.



## Conclusion

So, how have you liked sewing? Was it fun? I think it is! But the end of this booklet does not have to be the end of your sewing experiences. Now that you have the basics down, you can go and pick out patterns for easy clothing, quilts, and many other projects. I hope that I have encouraged everyone who reads this manual to give sewing a try. Some of you may even find it turning it into a life-long hobby. Thank for reading it.



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was created in 2003  
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by 4-H member Emily Lane  
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