

# To Sew or Not to Sew — Fabric Gifts

## Leader's Information:

Making gifts from fabric is creative and rewarding. By using your creative skills, you can turn fabric scraps and remnants into useful, attractive gifts at a price that won't strain your budget. When you make the gifts yourself, you can select colors, fabrics and combinations that reflect the personality and taste of the recipient.

To make creative gifts, all you need is a place to work, some time, and imagination. Some projects may require simple skills, but you can make many projects by using glue, a staple gun, or fusible webbing. If you have spare time, select a more detailed project. If your time is limited, there are many quick and easy projects from which to choose. Adapt and personalize them to fit your needs.

### Start with the Basics

Careful planning will help you get the best results from your time and money. The following tips will help you make planning and shopping decisions.

- **Shop for ideas.** When you see something that appeals to you, study it carefully.
  - Does it fill a decorative or useful purpose?
  - How hard would it be to make?
  - What design factors do you particularly like?
  - What colors are used?
  - How does one pattern complement and blend with another?
  
- **Helpful Hints**
  - Unless you are making a project that will be laundered often, you probably will not need to pre-shrink the fabric. Simply use as is for extra crispness.
  - If fabric is soiled or needs to be pre-shrunk, launder and then use spray starch when ironing to restore its crispness.
  - If using glue, work with the damp white cloth or towel. Clean off glue smudges as you work to save time later.
  - When gluing fabric onto another surface, start with a clean surface in a light or dark color, depending on the color and weave of your fabric. A surface may show through a light-colored or loosely woven fabric and a dirty surface will soil the fabric.
  - If using a staple gun, paint the staples before using (while they are still glued together in stick form). A quick coat of spray paint in the color nearest the background color of the fabric will hide them after they are stapled onto the fabric.
  - What mood is created by mixing and matching the various colors and patterns?

- **Tools and Supplies**

- Having the right tools makes your work easier, quicker and more enjoyable. When using a commercial product, carefully read and follow the manufacturer's directions. Always test the product on a scrap of the fabric you are using, i.e. test marking pens for bleeding and ease of ink removal.

- Some supplies—

**Fusibles/Pressing Sheets:** Select fusible material compatible to both the Fabric and its intended use. Look for:

- Fusibles with peel-off backings that turn any fabric into fusible fabric.
- Reusable pressing sheets with a non-stick surface that you put over fabric and fusible web and press to make iron-on appliques.
- Fusible web to put between two layers of fabric to hold them together without stitching.

**Marking/Transfer Pens:** Permanent, wash-out and air-soluble (vanishing) Marking pens are available for use with light and dark fabrics. Iron-on transfer marking pens are also available.

**Rotary Cutters and Mats:** Rotary cutters are faster and easier to use than sewing shears or scissors. They will cut through up to 8 layers at the same time. Mats are used to protect the surface underneath from the cutter. Different sizes are available.

**Fabric Glues/Adhesives:** Several choices are available.

- Temporary fabric glue in stick form.
- Liquid fray preventer to stop fabric ravel.
- Fabric glue to use in place of stitching.

**Stabilizers:** Use a backing fabric to prevent puckering when finishing stitching is required i.e. monogramming. Different types and weights are available: soft, stiff, crisp, iron-on, tear-away, and wash-away plastic.

**Decorative Accents:** Look for many new types of products in pen or tube form to write, draw, or create interesting shapes and textures with paint, glitter or plastic.

**LOOK FOR IDEAS IN CRAFT BOOKS AND MAGAZINES AND THEN USE YOUR IMAGINATION TO MAKE ALTERATIONS TO FIT YOUR GIFT RECEIVER.**

## To Sew Or Not To Sew

### A quiz

True      False

1. -----      -----      The first sewing needle was made of bone.
2. -----      -----      The first thread was made of silk.
3. -----      -----      Singer invented the first sewing machine.
4. -----      -----      The first Levi's were made of tent canvas.
5. -----      -----      Buttons were put on men's jacket sleeves as a sign of prosperity.
6. -----      -----      Velcro was invented in 1948 by a Swiss.
7. -----      -----      The zipper as we know it was invented by Levi Strauss.
8. -----      -----      The safety pin was invented in 1849.

## Answers: To Sew or Not To Sew Quiz

1. True: The first needles were made of bone. Knitting needles were first made of Belem or whalebone. They tried to make a comeback a few years ago but I think we modern women must attack our work because most of them were returned for replacements because they broke easily.

2. False: The first thread was animal sinew

3. False: Charles Weisenthal had the first patent for a sewing machine. He was from Germany. It didn't work too well. An Elias Howell patented one in 1849 that worked a little better. Singer improved on it but his changes were not so different that Howell sued and got royalties from the Machines Singer sold.

4. True: Levi came to California during the gold rush with tents but the men needed sturdy pants so he used some of his tents to make some. They were so stiff the men complained of chaffing so he imported some fabric from France called "serge de Nimes" for the town from which it was imported. The name was corrupted to denim.

5. False: Napoleon had buttons put on the sleeves of his army's uniforms to keep them from wiping their noses on their sleeves.

6. True: He got the idea after taking his dog for a walk through some burrs. He decided to see if he could make something that would stick as good. The word Velcro is a combination of the words velvet and crochet.

7. False: Zippers as we know them was invented by a man named Gideon Sundback in 1913. A man by the name of Howe had made one 44 years earlier but failed to patent it. Sundback and a Whitcomb Judson had worked on one earlier but after the death of his wife Sundback put all his time into developing the zipper we use today.

8. True: Walter Hunt invented the safety pin in 1849 after trying to keep his clothes together by twisting a piece of wire around them

**Member's Handout #1**

**Picnic Table Cloth Weight (make one for each corner)**

- Supplies: One 3-5" basket
- Four washers
- 1 plastic clothes pin
- Two pieces 18" ribbon
- Nylon net/tulle 10-12" square
- Cluster of plastic flowers
- Glue gun and glue sticks

Center washers in the nylon net. Tie with one piece of ribbon. Glue to inside bottom of the basket. Glue flowers in middle of net. Tie other ribbon to handle of basket then thread through hole in plastic clothes pin. Secure with a knot at a length you like.

**Another Picnic Table Cloth Weight (for each corner)**

- Supplies: 4 bandana handkerchiefs
- Rocks or zip locks filled with beans

Tie the opposite corners of each bandana. Insert the rocks and/or zip lock bags filled with beans. Then tie the other corner opposite corners together. Fasten each one to a corner of the picnic table cloth with a pin or clothespin.

**Quick Pillow**

- Supplies: 2 pieces of fabric 18" square, or 2 bandanna handkerchiefs
- rubber bands
- pillow form (12-14" round or square)

Place fabric pieces together, wrong side out. Rubber band each corner about 4" in from the corner. Turn fabric to right side out and insert the pillow form.

**Finishing Tablecloths and Cloth Napkins**

You can machine hem the edges or surge them. You can also just use a "pinked" edge and leave it unfinished. The last idea is "steam a seam (fusible) materials."

## **Member's Handout #2**

### **Coat Hanger #1**

Supplies: One decorative pillow case  
 One wooden or plastic coat hanger  
 Padding to wrap around hanger  
 Needle & thread or glue  
 Ribbon and flowers

Lay hanger on a pillow case (turned wrong side out) about 6" from the decorated edge. Trace the top of the hanger. Stitch leave an opening for the hanger to insert at the top middle. Sew, trim, and turn right side out. Slip hanger inside. Trim with ribbon and flowers as desired.

### **Coat Hanger #2**

Supplies: One wooden coat hanger  
 Padding to wrap around hanger  
 Fabric of your choice  
 Ribbon or flowers of your choice

Wrap padding around the hanger. Make two sleeves large enough to cover each end of the wooden hanger by turning the fabric inside out and sewing a long "U" shape piece. Turn the pieces right side out and sew or glue together in the middle after they have been slipped onto each end of the hanger. Decorate with ribbon and flowers as desired.

### **Little Mouse Tea Cozy**

Supplies: One quilted oval place mat  
 Bias trim to match colors in place mat  
 Two pieces 3x4" gray or brown felt (mouse's ears)  
 Two black buttons for eyes  
 Black embroidery thread or plastic whiskers  
 If using glue, use "OK to Wash It" type.

Fold place mat in half and cut along fold. Trim bottom of each piece along fold. Sew two mats together along the top (rounded edge) of the mat. Add ears made of grey or brown felt and sew into place. Sew on black buttons for eyes and sew or glue whiskers in place. The mouse's tail may be made by using a piece of the bottom trim sewed or glued together.