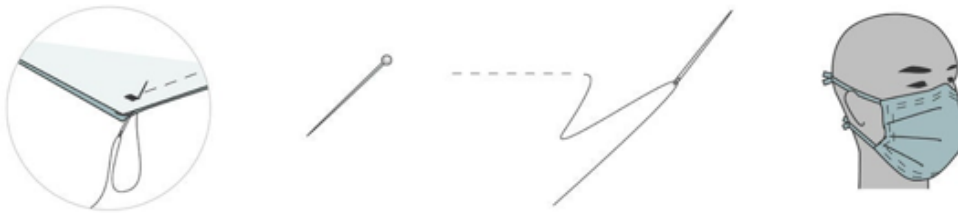


March 31, 2020

How to Sew a Fabric Face Mask

A sewing pattern to use with common household materials

By Tracy Ma and Natalie Shutler



Guidance on whether to wear a face mask varies locally. But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that all Americans, healthy and sick, wear basic cloth masks in public — a result of concerns that as many as 25 percent of people infected with the new coronavirus may not show symptoms.

It is still most important to limit trips outside and wash your hands frequently. Civilians should not use medical-grade masks, which are in short supply and must be reserved for health care workers on the front line.

But wearing a mask can help limit the spread of respiratory droplets, which in turn spread the new coronavirus. The Sewing and Craft Alliance is continuously updating a list of health care facilities that have asked for fabric mask donations.

Here's what you will need for this pattern:

Tools

- Needle and thread (and a sewing machine, if you have one)

- Scissors
- Pins or clips to hold fabrics in place (safety pins and paper clips will also work in a pinch)

Materials

GO

- At least 20 by 20 inches of 100 percent cotton fabric, such as a flat tea towel (scroll to the end for more information about materials)
- 4 strips of cotton fabric for ties, about 18" long and $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide

OR

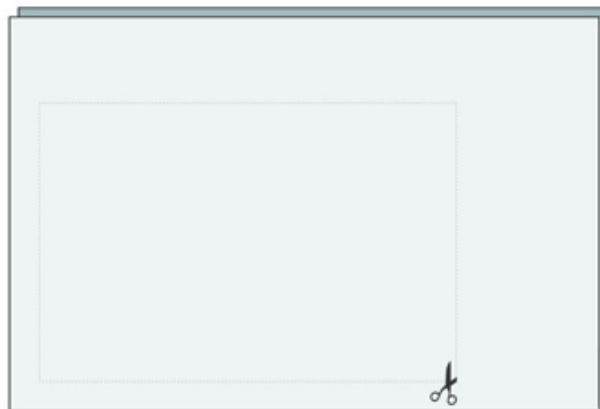
- 4 flat, clean shoelaces

OR

- Two flat ($\frac{1}{4}$ ") sewing elastics that are 7" long each

PREPARE YOUR MATERIALS

Step 1



Choose your piece of cotton fabric, pre-wash it on the warmest setting and dry it on high heat. (Tea towels are better to use than T-shirts or linens, according to the Stanford Anesthesia Informatics and Media Lab.)

Fold the fabric in half. Measure and cut out a 9.5" by 6.5" rectangle to create two identically sized layers. This is your mask base.

Now it's on to the fabric ties.

Cut 4 thin pieces of material, about 18" long and $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. Fold each piece of fabric twice lengthwise, then once more to tuck the rough edges inside. Sew a straight line along the middle. This will prevent the fabric ties from having frayed edges.

Ideas from The Times on what to read, cook, watch, play and listen to while staying safe **At Home**.



ADDING THE TIES

Step 2

Take one of your rectangular fabric layers. With the “right side” (or the outer-facing side, where the pattern might be) facing you, pin down the 4 fabric ties, one piece per corner. Make sure that the ties are gathered in the center of the fabric layer before advancing to the next step.

You can also substitute sewing elastic for fabric ties, but note that elastic cannot be bleached (and therefore, is not as easy to clean) and that anyone with a latex allergy cannot wear it. (Elastic is also increasingly in short supply.) Attach elastics to the first layer of fabric by securing the ends at the corners, forming little hoops. Make sure the elastic lies inside the perimeter of your fabric.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Step 3

Take the second layer of fabric and line it up with the first. The “right sides” (or patterned sides) of the fabric should be facing each other, sandwiching the fabric ties or elastics. Secure the fabric sandwich together with pins.

START STITCHING

Step 4

Eyeball a midway point. From the middle, sew a straight line across the mask, about $\frac{1}{4}$ ” above the bottom edge of the fabric, toward the bottom left-hand corner. Remove any pins as you sew past them.

Make sure that the elastic or fabric ties are secured in the corners, sandwiched by your two layers of fabric, as you sew over their ends. You want to make sure your needle goes through the three pieces: the top layer, the end of the fabric tie, and the bottom layer. Add a couple stitches forward and backward (in both directions) to secure your ties in place.

STITCH ALL AROUND

Step 5

Stitch all around the perimeter of the fabric layers, repeating the forward and backward motion at each corner to secure all the elastic ends or fabric ties.

Continue to stitch your way toward the starting point, but stop to allow for a $1\frac{1}{2}$ ” gap.

TURN OUT

Step 6

Turn your project right-side out from the little $1\frac{1}{2}$ ” gap. Your fabric ties or elastics should now stick out, like little legs.

PLEATS PLEASE

Step 7

Make three staggered pleats lengthwise on the mask, as if folding a paper fan. This helps the mask conform to the wearer's face. Secure each pleat with pins.

FINISHING UP

Step 8

With your pleats held in place by pins, stitch around the perimeter of the mask, $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the edge of the seam. This is called a top stitch. Take care when stitching over the pleats as the fabric may be quite thick.

Top stitch a second time around, about $\frac{1}{4}$ " in from the first round of stitching. Now you have a completed mask.

Next up? Learning to wear a mask correctly is important. Many people pull them aside, hampering their effect, and also air can get in easily around the edges.

Download a printable face mask tutorial here

(PDF, 3 pages, 0.16 MB)



How to Sew a Face Mask

A tutorial on how to make your own fabric face mask from common household materials.

TOOLS

- Needle and thread (and a sewing machine, if you have one)
- Scissors
- Pins or clips to hold fabrics in place (safety pins and paper clips will also work in a pinch)

MATERIALS

- At least 20 by 20 inches of 100 percent cotton fabric, such as a flat tea towel
- 4 strips of cotton fabric for ties, about 18" long and $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide
OR 4 flat, clean shoelaces
OR Two flat ($\frac{1}{4}$ ") sewing elastics that are 7" long

STEP 3

Putting It Together



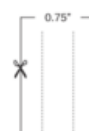
Take the second layer of fabric and line it up with the

STEP 5

Stitch Around



Stitch around the perimeter of the fabric layers, repeating



TOTAL 1

STEP 1

Prepare Your Materials

Choose your fabric, wash it on the warmest setting, and dry it on high heat. (Tea towels are better to use than T-shirts or linens, according to the Stanford Anesthesia Informatics and Media Lab.)

Fold the fabric in half. Measure and cut out a 9.5" x 6.5" rectangle to create two identically sized layers **using the sewing pattern below**. This is your mask base.

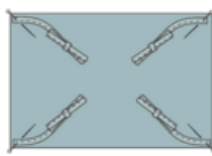
Now it's on to the fabric ties:



Cut 4 thin pieces of material, about 18" long and 3/4" wide **using the sewing pattern on the right-hand side of the page**. Fold each piece of fabric twice lengthwise, then once more to tuck the rough edges inside. Sew a straight line along the middle. This will prevent the fabric ties from having frayed edges.

STEP 2

Adding the Ties



Take one of your rectangular fabric layers. With the "right side" (or the outer-facing side, where the pattern might be) facing you, pin down the 4 fabric ties, one piece per corner. Make sure that the ties are gathered in the center of the fabric layer before advancing to the next step.

You can also substitute sewing elastic for fabric ties, but note that elastic cannot be bleached (and therefore, is not as easy to clean) and that anyone with a latex allergy cannot wear it. (Elastic is also increasingly in short supply.) Attach elastics to the first layer of fabric by securing the ends at the corners, forming little hoops. Make sure the elastic lies inside the perimeter of your fabric.

first, the "right" sides (or patterned sides) of the fabric should be facing each other, sandwiching the fabric ties or elastics.

Secure the fabric sandwich together with pins.

STEP 4

Start Stitching



Eyeball a midway point. From the middle, sew a straight line across the mask, about 1/4" above the bottom edge of the fabric, toward the bottom left-hand corner. Remove any pins as you sew past them.

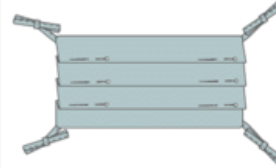
Make sure that the elastic or fabric ties are secured in the corners, sandwiched by your two layers of fabric, as you sew over their ends. You want to make sure your needle goes through the three pieces: the top layer, the end of the fabric tie, and the bottom layer. Add a couple stitches forward and backward (in both directions) to secure your ties in place.

the forward and backward motion at each corner to secure all the elastic ends or fabric ties.

Continue to stitch your way toward the starting point, but stop to allow for a 1 1/2" gap.

STEP 6

Turn Out

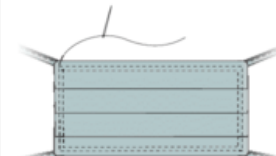


Turn your project right-side out from the little 1 1/2" gap. Your fabric ties or elastics should now stick out, like little legs.

Make three staggered pleats lengthwise on the mask, as if folding a paper fan. This helps the mask conform to the wearer's face. Secure each pleat with pins.

STEP 7

Finishing Up



With your pleats held in place by pins, stitch around the perimeter of the mask, 1/4" away from the edge of the seam. This is called a top stitch. Take care when stitching over the pleats as the fabric may be quite thick.

Top stitch a second time around, about 1/4" in from the first round of stitching. Now you have a completed mask.



A LITTLE MORE
F.A.Q.

What is a tea towel?

A tea towel is just a flat kitchen towel. Use one made of 100 percent cotton if you can; avoid using a terry cloth towel, as the loops of thread that make terry cloth absorbent could also trap bacteria and other harmful particles.

Are there any other materials I can use to make a mask?

Definitely! The C.D.C. says its fine to use an old T-shirt to make a face covering for yourself. Scientists who are currently working to identify which everyday materials best filter microscopic particles have found that high-thread-count cotton used for quilts, as well as pillowcases, bed linens and flannel fabrics seem to work well, too. You can layer these materials to increase the filtration efficiency of your mask, but remember: You'll still need to be able to breathe through it.

Are there any rules for mask wearing I should know?

The mask should fit snugly over the bridge of your nose and under your chin. Do your best to tighten the loops or ties so there are no gaps. Once you put it on, try not to fidget with it. In particular, don't touch the front of it, and don't pull it under your nose or rest it under your mouth or chin. When you take it off, put it in a plastic bag or Ziploc until it can be laundered, then wash your hands immediately. (Apartment dwellers should put their masks on and remove them while inside their homes. Elevators and stairwells can be high-contamination areas.)

How should I wash my mask and keep it clean?

Wash it separately from your other laundry if you can; use the hottest water available and regular detergent. Putting bleach on your personal face mask is not recommended.

When should I wear it?

The C.D.C. recommends that everyone wear nonmedical face coverings in public settings. In New York City, officials have advised residents to shield their faces with a scarf, bandanna or other covering anytime they leave their homes.

How often can I reuse it?

As often as you wash it.