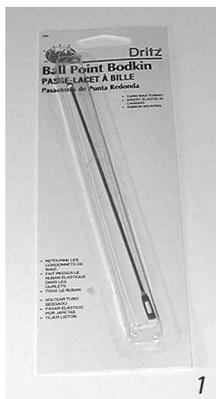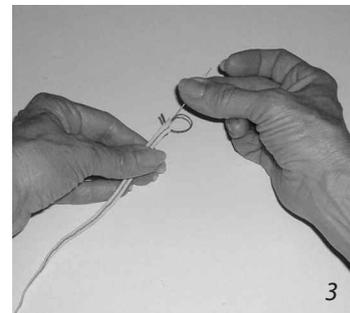Tube Turners You May Already Have in Your Sewing Kit

There are several tools designed specifically for turning tubes. More about those tools can be found in Guideline 1.150. But there are tools common to most sewing kits that may do the job in a pinch. They are the bodkin, a safety pin and a needle. Even chained serger threads can be used to turn tubes.

Bodkin

Place the ball end of the ball-point bodkin (1) at the stitched end of a fabric tube, and push it into the tube. Work the tube down over the bodkin while pushing the bodkin through the tube.

Safety Pin

You can use a safety pin to turn a tube that is wider than the pin. Attach and close the safety pin at the pointed end of the tube. Slowly inch the safety pin down through the fabric tube while adjusting and smoothing the fabric a little at a time (2).

Needle

Use a sewing needle to turn the tiniest of tubes. Thread it with a doubled thread, and knot all ends together. The thread only needs to be a few inches long. Take a stitch through the pointed fold of the tube, catching the knot in the end. If the knot pulls out,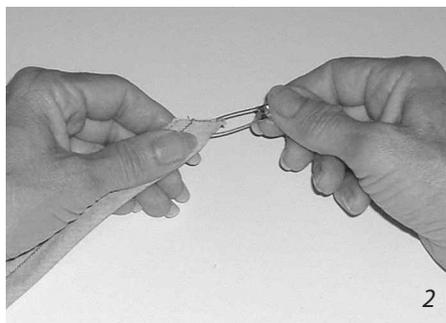 take an additional stitch. Insert the needle—eye first—into the tube, so that the point doesn't pierce the fabric. Work the needle through the tube, while working the opening of the tube to turn inward through itself (3).

Serger Chain

If tubes aren't too skinny, use your serger to turn them. Serge a chain a few inches longer than the tube, and don't cut it off. Swing the connected chain out to the front of the serger. Fold the strip for the tube in half, and place the serged chain inside along the fold so the chain extends the entire length of the tube. Serge the strip edges together, being careful not to catch the enclosed thread chain (4). Clip off the seaming chain, leaving about 6". Gently pull on the chain inside the tube as you work the far end to turn inside. When finished turning the tube, tie knots in the thread chains at each end of the tube, and trim them off.