



Pillows

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Pillows can perk up any room and change its entire mood without a major investment in redecorating, and they're simple to sew, even for beginners.

Common Pillow Shapes

Pillows can be any shape--common geometrics include square, rectangle, triangle, circle and cylinder, but don't overlook hearts, flowers and other novelties as well.

Sizes range from very tiny accent and sachet pillows to very large floor pillows and everything in between.

Filling

There are two ways to create the comfy plumpness that makes pillows so enticing. Pre-made covered pillow inserts are available in many shapes and sizes, already stuffed with polyester, cotton, wool or silk fillings.

Select an insert the same size as the finished pillow, or one size larger if a firm, overstuffed look is desired.

Loose stuffing is used in pillows that aren't traditionally shaped or sized to have a pre-made insert. Loose stuffing can be put into a custom-made cover for easier insertion and care.

Fabrics and trims

Pillows can be made from any fabrics, depending on the intended use and decorating scheme. Think denim and poplin for rugged floor pillows for a teen's room to elegant silks and jacquards for a formal living room.

A walk through the home decorating department will put you on overload for fabric options, but don't limit yourself to décor fabrics. Any fabric intended for apparel can be used for pillows as well, just be sure it's durable and easy care if it will be in a high-use area.



Photos courtesy of MoreSplashThanCash.com

It's best to select a fabric without a snaggable surface if the pillow will be actively used--avoid fabrics with long thread floats that can be easily damaged by children and pets.

The world of trims available for use on pillows is endless--from sumptuous cordings to frivolous fringes, bold tassels to beguiling beads. Trims can be used as an edge finish or applied to the pillow surfaces.

Openings

Pillows can be constructed with removable inserts to make them easy care, or they can be stuffed and sewn closed. If the pillow will be well used, it's best to have the stuffing removable to wash or dry clean the outer shell. If it's a showplace pillow, easy care may not be as important.

Pillows can close with zippers, snaps, hook-and-loop tape or buttoned flaps for easy stuffing removal, or they may simply have a generous fabric overlap on the back side. With these types of openings, the pillow is totally finished before the stuffed insert is added.

Other pillows have no permanent opening, and during the construction process a space is left in the perimeter seam for stuffing. Once the pillow is stuffed, the

opening is stitched closed. To remove the filling from this type of pillow, the closure stitching must be removed and the pillow must later be restuffed and restitched after cleaning.

Pillowmaking 101...

A simple square or rectangular pillow is a great first project--simple to make and the fabric choice determines the mood. You can make it any size you want, just adjust the yardage and stuffing accordingly.

Supplies

45"- or 54"-wide fabric for the pillow front and back (see Determining Yardage below)

Pre-made form to match the pillow finished size and/or polyester fiberfill

Thread to match the pillow fabric

Scissors, ruler, hand-sewing needle, removable marker

Determining Yardage

Determine the finished size you want the pillow to be and add 1" (for seams) to the finished size. For example, a 15"x20" finished pillow requires 1/2 yard of 45"-wide fabric to cut the pillow front and back each 16" x 21". If the pillow size is the exact increment of a yard (i.e. 18" = 1/2 yard), round up to the next 1/8 to allow for straightening and squaring the pillow pieces. Remember that you need one front and one back, so double check the fabric width to be sure you can get two pieces across; if not, you'll need more fabric.

Cutting

Cut the pillow front and back the same size. Each piece should be the finished size of the pillow, plus 1" for seam allowances.

Sewing

Place the pillow front and back right sides together, matching the cut edges and pin every 3". If the fabric is slippery, pin more closely. Always place the pins perpendicular to the cut edges (1).

Along the center of one side (away from the corners), mark the ends of a 6" opening with small dots or self-adhesive stickers (2)--this area will be left open to allow for turning and stuffing. Pre-made pillow forms may

require more room for insertion.

Beginning at one of the small dots, stitch the pillow edges together along one side using a 1/2" seam allowance, backstitching as you begin. When you get near the corner, stop stitching 1/2" from the seamline end, leave the needle down in the fabric and lift the presser foot; take two stitches diagonally across the corner. Begin stitching the second pillow side. Remove pins as you come to them.

Repeat to stitch each side and pillow corner.

When you get back to the second dot, backstitch to anchor the seam.

If the pillow fabric is bulky, trim the seam allowance width to 1/4"; if it's not bulky there's no need to trim.

At each corner, trim off the excess fabric at an angle to reduce bulk (3).

Reach into the pillow and turn it right side out. Gently poke out the corners to make them square.

Insert the pillow form or stuffing through the opening, pushing it firmly into the corners.

If the corners don't appear firm and you used a pillow form, stuff bits of polyester fiberfill into the corners around it.

Hand stitch the opening closed, turning the raw edges to the inside.