

# Fabric Napkins

8.130

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## SEW-lutions Guidelines

Your Guide  
to  
Successful  
Sewing

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Sewing napkins is great fun, and a good way to help the environment as well instead of tossing an endless supply of paper napkins into landfills. When soiled, simply throw cloth napkins in with a full load of laundry.

### Fabric Smart

Napkins can be made from almost any fabric, from silk and brocade for formal affairs, to bandanna prints and calico cottons for everyday use. Specialty fabrics may require dry cleaning, so select wash-and-wear fabrics like cottons, or cotton/polyester blends for everyday use. Prints or solids work well, and seasonal prints make even a family dinner more fun.

Keep in mind the wrong side of the fabric will show on single-layer napkins, but on fabrics that are yarn-dyed or have woven designs, both sides may look the same.

Napkins can be embellished with a variety of trims like bias tape, rickrack, lace and embroideries. Monograms can be added to personalize the linens as well, and make them perfect for bridal or wedding gifts.

### Size Wise

Napkin sizes vary depending on the use, from 10" square for cocktail and beverage size to a generous 22" dinner size. Here are some suggested sizes, but use your own judgment depending on your family's preferences.

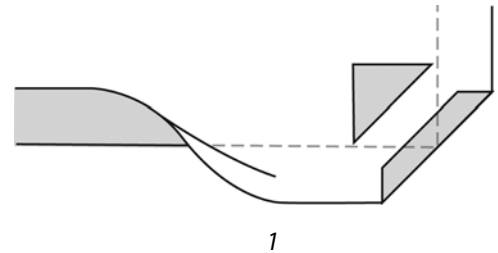
Napkin size (before hemming)	45" yardage
12"	9 per yd.
15"	9 per 1-1/4 yds.*
18"	4 per yd.
20"	4 per 1-1/4 yds.
22"	4 per 1-1/4 yds.*

\*Depending on the fabric, it may be necessary to trim selvages, affecting fabric requirements.

### Narrow Hems

Napkins can be sewn several ways, using either a conventional machine or a serger. The most common way to edge-finish napkins is a turned or narrow hem.

To do this, simply press up 1/8" on all napkin edges. Diagonally fold the corners and clip excess at an angle (1). Repress the fold and turn under the same amount again, forming a double hem with a mitered corner. Stitch hem in place using straight or decorative stitches.

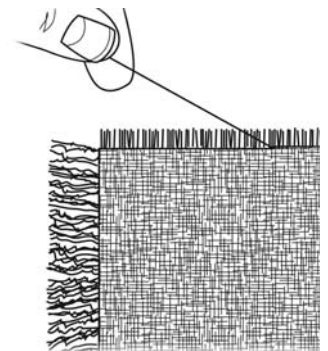


Some machines offer narrow hemming feet that automatically fold the fabric into a hem for you. Check availability for your machine and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

### Fringed Edges

To make fringe-edge napkins it's important that the fabric is cut on grain and not too tightly woven that it won't allow threads to be pulled.

After the napkin has been cut and squared, fringe to the desired width by gently pulling the threads both lengthwise and crosswise (2).



Sew a line of narrow zigzag, straight or decorative stitching next to the fringe to prevent further raveling.

### No-sew Edges

For a quick finish, simply lay a 1/4"-wide strip of fusible web along the wrong side of the napkin edges and press a narrow hem in place. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper fusing. You may stitch the hem in place using straight, zigzag or a decorative stitch or simply leave it.

### Reversible Options

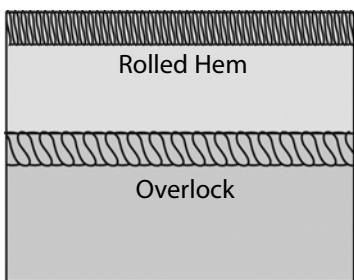
If the underside of your favored fabric leaves something to be desired, think about making the napkins reversible. Simply cut two squares the same size. Place them right sides together matching the cut edges.

Stitch around the outside of the square, leaving a small opening for turning. Trim the corners and turn right side out. Press all edges, fuse or stitch the opening closed, and topstitch if desired.

### Serged Edges

There's nothing as quick as serging up a batch of napkins and they don't even need to be cut first. Simply mark the napkins on the fabric, take it to the serger and stitch on the drawn lines, cutting the napkins apart as you go!

Edges may be serged with a rolled hem setting, forming a narrow, dense edge finish, or they may be sewn with an overlock stitch which is less dense, but still a clean finish (3). Check your serger instruction book for settings. Woolly Nylon thread is ideal for serged napkin edges as it creates a densely stitched edge.



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### Did you know?

Napkins don't have to be square. They can be oblong, oval or circular. When serging edges, many sewers like to round the corners of square napkins for continuous serging and to avoid having to secure threads at the corners.

After all edges are serged, dot seam sealant on each corner front and back prior to cutting off the thread chains.

For added interest, use variegated thread for rolled hemming and you'll have instant striped edges.

### Reversible Serged Napkins

Use temporary spray adhesive to hold two fabric squares back to back, matching the cut edges, or use a large piece of fabric with the napkins marked (see above). Serge-finish the edges and secure corners as above. 🍷

For more information on serger stitches, see SEW-lutions Guideline 2.220 Serger Stitches.