

Cushion-finishing Workshop

Isn't it exciting, when you complete the front for a wonderful cushion? Already you can imagine how it will look on your new sofa or in various comfy armchairs. But first, it must be made into a cushion.

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There are many ways to finish a cushion, and to help all you first-time cushion makers out there, we have listed some simple, no-fuss ways to put your gorgeous creation together.

They can give an immediate decorating revamp or a seasonal change to bring warmth in winter or a cool breeze in summer. Cushions also make very popular gifts and can be as simple or complicated as you wish. Spoil yourself and fill it with a soft feather and down insert. Other good positions for cushions are recessed window seats and benches. Cushions can convert these from a hard place to comfortable nooks – just the spot to read your latest quilting magazine.

PREPARATION



You will need to have on hand your main cushion fabric, the cushion insert and buttons or a zipper 3in shorter than the width of the cushion top.

Measure the insert from seam to seam across the centre adding a 1 1/4in to each measurement for the seam allowances.



Photograph 1. Square-welted cushion.



Cut two squares of the main fabric to this measurement. For a nice plump cushion, make the cover 1in smaller than the insert all the way around. We have listed some methods of closure and finishing trims as follows.

BACK OPENING



This method is suitable only if your fabric is lightweight, otherwise the closing becomes very bulky.

Cut one square of fabric including seam allowances, then cut the second piece 4 1/2in longer. Cut the second piece in half across this added length. Turn a hem under 5/8in to the wrong

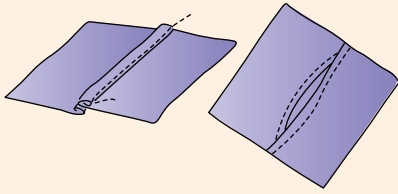


Diagram 1. Turn a hem under $\frac{5}{8}$ in to the wrong side along long the edges and baste them.

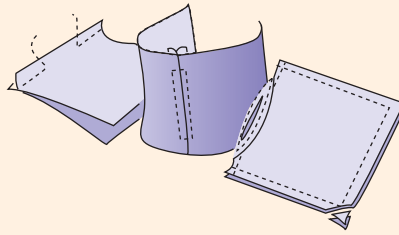


Diagram 2. Sew $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam around the remaining three sides to complete.

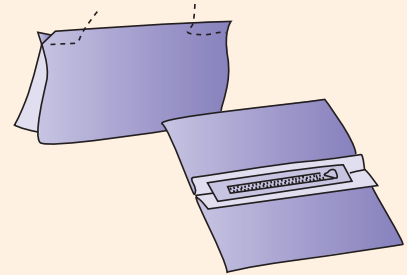


Diagram 3. Place the zipper wrong side up along the tacked seam and sew it from the right side.



side along the long edges of these pieces on each side of the horizontal cut, then turn it under again the same amount. Machine or hand-sew the hems. Overlap the hemmed edges by 2in. Place the cushion pieces right sides together and sew a $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam all the way around. Trim the seams and clip the corners, then turn it right side out and press it, see diagram 1.

BACK OPENING WITH ZIPPER IN SEAM



Cut out two squares of fabric including seam allowances, and place them right sides together matching the edges and corners. On one side, sew 2in in from either edge on the seamline, $\frac{5}{8}$ in in from each end. This is the opening for the zipper. Tack the opening closed along this seamline. Press the seam open, place the zipper wrong side up along the tacked part of the opening and sew it in place from the right side. Undo the tacking and open the zipper. Place the back on the front, right sides together, matching the edges and corners. Sew $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam around the remaining three sides. Trim the seams, clip the corners, turn it right side out and press it, see diagram 2.



BACK OPENING WITH ZIPPER ACROSS CENTRE BACK



Cut one square including seam allowances. For the second square add $1\frac{1}{4}$ in to the length, then cut in half across the length.

Line up the two pieces of the second square along the halfway cut, with right sides together. Sew a 2in-long, $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam



Diagram 4. Measure each side making four equally spaced marks where the fabric will be inverted.

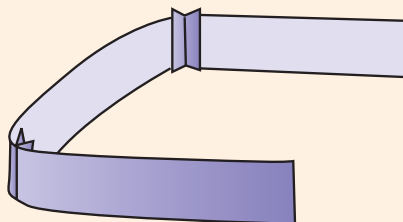


Diagram 5. Join the strips, positioning the seams at the corners if possible.

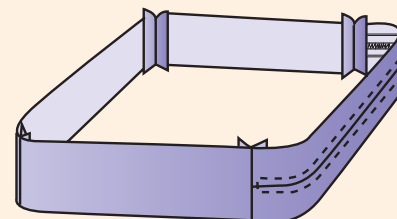


Diagram 6. Stitch the centre strips to form a circle and measure it to ensure correct fit.

in from each end, leaving an opening for the zipper in the centre. Tack the opening closed and carefully press it. Place the zipper wrong side up along the tacked seam and sew it in place from the right side. Take out the tacking and open the zipper. Place the back on the front, right sides together and sew $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam all round. Trim the seams, clip the corners, turn it right side out and press it, see diagram 3.

BUTTON - BACK



Cut one square of fabric including seam allowances, then cut the second piece $4\frac{1}{2}$ in longer. Cut it in half across this extra length. Turn under $\frac{5}{8}$ in to the wrong side along the long edges of the two halves on each side of the horizontal cut, then turn under the same again. Machine or hand-sew the hems. Overlap the hemmed edges by 2in. Tack the hemmed edges together and mark the positions for the buttonholes and buttons. Remove the tacking and work buttonholes, either by hand or machine. Make each buttonhole length one-and-a-half times the width of the button. Place the front on the back, right sides together and sew a $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam all around. Trim the seams, clip the corners, then turn it right side out and sew on the buttons. Using some sharp embroidery scissors or a stitch ripper, make a slit in the buttonholes and press them.

VELCRO SPOTS OR PRESS-STUDS



Cut a square of fabric including seam allowances, then another piece $1\frac{1}{4}$ in longer and cut it in half. Turn under $\frac{5}{8}$ in to the

wrong side along the cut edges. Then turn under the same amount again and sew in place. With the right sides together, sew 2in-long seams in from each side beneath the hem, leaving the centre section open. Stitch press-studs or Velcro spots on the right sides of the open edges along the hem. Sew $\frac{5}{8}$ in seams with right sides together around the three sides, sewing over the sides of the hems. Trim the seams, clip the corners, turn it right side out and press it.

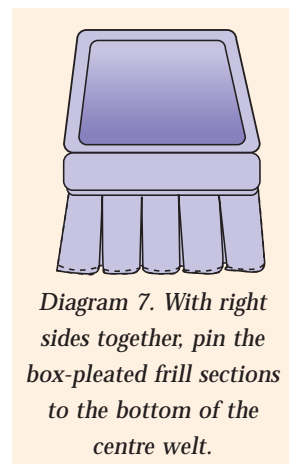


Diagram 7. With right sides together, pin the box-pleated frill sections to the bottom of the centre welt.

SQUARE WELTED CHAIR CUSHIONS



A welt is the strip of material running around the cushion which forms the sides of the box shape. Make a paper pattern the exact size of the seat area of your chair and use it to have the foam for the cushions cut to size.

Cut the fabric tops and linings from this pattern, allowing a 1in seam allowance all the way around.

Calculate the length of the side panels by measuring around the foam cushion and adding a 1in seam allowance. Measure the depth of your cushion and allow seam allowances for either side. For the back of the welt where the opening will be, you need two strips of fabric measuring the opening length by half the cushion depth. Add $\frac{5}{8}$ in seam allowance to each end of the strips.

You can either use ready-made piping, or cut continuous bias to make your own as shown on page 78.

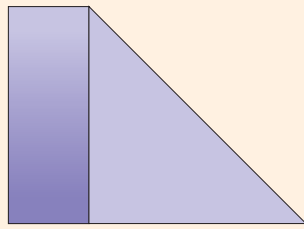


Diagram 8. Fold the upper right-hand corner down to the lower edge forming a 45-degree fold.

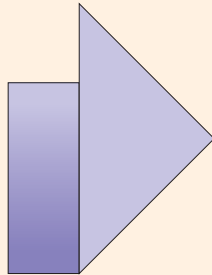


Diagram 9. Fold the lower right-hand point up so that it is slightly higher than the upper edge and with the folds aligned.

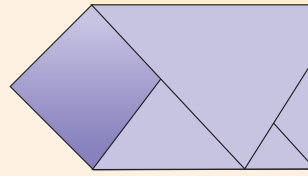


Diagram 10. Rotate it to the right and fold the upper section down, ensuring the folds are aligned on the right-hand side.

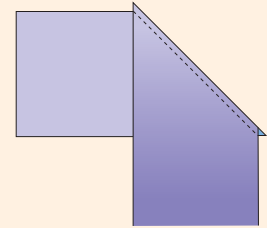


Diagram 11. Bring one strip over the other, offset by the depth of the seam allowance to obtain a perfectly smooth strip.



Photograph 2. Cushion finished with a zipper in the back opening seam.

The lower frills consist of five box pleats, see diagram 4, along the front and both sides of the chair, with a further separate strip of five box pleats at the back. Measure along each of the sides, making four equally spaced marks where the fabric will be inverted to form the pleat. Allow an extra 2³/₈in for each of the inversions plus seam allowances at each end of the long strips and the shorter strips used for the back of the chair. Measure the pleats, fold them in place and baste them.

A zipper is usually fitted in the back of the cushion on the

welted side panel. It is easier to insert the cushion if the opening extends 2in around the adjoining sides, refer to diagrams 5 and 6.

When the zipper is completed, stitch the centre strips to form a circle and with right sides together, pin this to the cushion top, carefully easing the piping between the two. Clip into seam allowances of the welt to make neat corners. Stitch the fabric in place using a zipper foot which will allow you to sew closer to the piping and achieve a neater finish.

Turn up the sides and bottoms of both the front and back sections of the box-pleated frill and stitch round it. With right sides together, pin the frill sections to the bottom of the welt strips, carefully easing the piping between the two and baste them together. Making sure the zipper is open, flip the frill towards the centre of the cushion and with this side facing, pin the lining wrong side up along the outer edge. Stitch them firmly together with the zipper foot, turn the cover through the zipper opening and press it, refer to diagram 7.

PIPING



Polyester piping cord is recommended, as it does not shrink when you wash it and never shows through the fabric.

If using cotton cord, it should be pre-shrunk by boiling it for five minutes tied into a loose band. Dry it out on a wire tray in a medium oven for about 30 minutes.

As with all patchwork pieces, it is important to cut the piping strips accurately as it makes the process much quicker

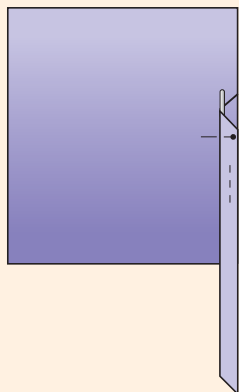


Diagram 12. Start halfway along one side and leave 2in of the cord and fabric strip free.

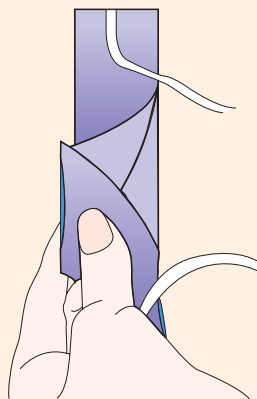


Diagram 13. Place the two ends flat, mark where they overlap and trim them with a 1/2in seam allowance.

and easier. Where possible avoid using very short lengths for the bias strips as it looks less professional. As the edges of the cushion covers tend to wear most, make sure you use a substantial, good quality fabric and a strong sewing thread.

The strips are usually cut 2in wide for average-weight cotton fabric, but should be wider if you are using a heavier fabric.

They should be cut on the bias, except for velvet, which is usually cut on the straight of grain.

Using a rotary cutter and mat is the easiest, quickest and most accurate method of cutting the fabric.

When larger quantities of long bias strips are required, it is necessary to fold the fabric so that it will fit on your cutting mat.

Fold the upper right-hand corner down to the lower edge, see diagram 8, then fold the lower right-hand point up so that it is slightly higher than the upper edge and the folds are aligned, see diagram 9.

Next, carefully rotate the fabric to the right so that the double fold is vertical. Fold the upper section down, ensuring the folds are aligned on the right-hand side, see diagram 10.

Trim the folded edges on the right-hand side with the cut perpendicular to the lower fold. Gently check that the folds underneath have also been removed and re-cut if necessary. Then pivot the cutting mat so that the cut edge is on the left-hand side and cut the required quantity of strips parallel it.

Try stitching the cord in position on the cushion at the same time as you sew on the piping. This saves you trying to hide the previous line of stitching.

To make neat, smooth piping it is important to join the strips carefully. Lay out the strips to make sure both ends are cut with matching angles.

If they are angled in opposite directions, you will have to re-cut one end the other way before you can join them together.

For a perfectly smooth strip of piping, keep the two angled edges together, then bring one over the other with the piping strips offset by the depth of the seam allowance, see diagram 11.

ATTACHING THE PIPING



Fold the strip in half over the cord so that the raw edges are even, and with a small length of cord protruding from the end of the strip.

Pin through the fabric and the cord to prevent the cord from moving during attachment.

Machine-stitch the piping to the main fabric using a cording foot, which is the appropriate tool for the job. If you do not have a cording foot, use the zipper foot and adjust it so that it will stitch at the correct distance from the cord. Use thread that matches the fabric strip. Do not stitch too close to the cord or you may have a problem hiding your stitching later.

Starting halfway along the right side of the cushion front and leaving 2in of the cord and fabric free, machine-stitch it in place.

To join the piping, finish stitching about 4in away from the starting point, remove your work from the machine and place the two ends of the piping strip flat. Mark where they overlap, draw an angled line on both pieces and trim them with a 1/2in seam allowance.

Bring the two ends of the piping strips together with right sides facing and pin them together, see diagram 13. Fold the strip back over the cord and position it on the edge of the cushion to check the fit. The strip should be a little tight, so test it by pulling it gently and the gathering should disappear. If it doesn't, make the seam allowance smaller. If the piping fits without pulling, make the seam allowance larger.

The fit is important as the fabric stretches a little when it is machine-stitched in place. Sew the ends together and finger-press the seam open. Place your work back under the machine and bring the needle down just ahead of where you stopped stitching previously. Pull both the cushion and piping strip taut and trim both ends of the piping cord so that they abut together. Pull the layers taut and check that the cord is in position, then stitch across the join.

When attaching the piping cord to curves – especially very sharp curves – the bias strip seam allowance should be snipped at suitable intervals. On a very pronounced curve these can be as close as 1/4in. ■