

## Pillowcase Instructions

### Selecting Fabric:

There are so many wonderful choices out there for fabrics but care does need to be used when selecting it. Remember these pillowcases are intended to be slept upon. This means that they need to be soft. Also they will be washed many times, so they need to be durable. In addition, you will probably be piecing some to make your fabrics go farther; this means that you will want to have similar weights of fabrics.

A good rule of thumb is the Symphony Broadcloth offered by JoAnns. It is probably the minimum weight and the appropriate softness for any pillowcase. It comes in solids and is a full 44-inch width so a collection of colors of this fabric is nice to have on hand. It is also quite reasonable. It can be purchased for as little as \$1.79/yard. Use this fabric as a guideline when evaluating other fabrics.

Pay attention to the width of fabrics when you purchase it. You will want to get either 44-inch fabric or 60-inch fabric in width. Sometimes fabrics are advertised as 44-inch wide but in actuality they are less. Some have wide selvages and this can cause difficulties. Sue incorporates wide selvages into the pillowcase, making an extra stripe. She does not mind having JoAnn's on it, especially since they have been so generous to all of the Heads at Ease crew. If you are not going to incorporate the selvage, remember you will lose anything you cut off.

Some fabrics have a wonderful pattern but the dyes are heavy. If this is the case, you will probably put a softer fabric on the back for sleeping, e.g., the Symphony Broadcloth.

Patriotic fabrics, e.g., stars, flags, etc., are wonderful but regional and seasonal fabrics are nice as well. Remember anything that will remind the person of home will be appreciated. Look for colors that will mix and match. This will allow you to create more different pillowcases.

Cotton is always a great fabric but a blend will work well too. You probably do not want all polyester or some other similar types of fabric. They tend to be stiffer or more scratchy.

One thing to pay attention to is how the fabric was cut before and the pattern of the fabric. Recently I purchased fabric and noticed that it had not been cut straight. This means that you can lose several inches of usable fabric. If you notice this, make sure the cutting person, straightens the fabric before cutting. Even doing this, I frequently buy an additional inch or two to allow for shrinkage and adjustment in cutting. Sometimes the pattern is not printed on the straight of the fabric. If this is going to bother you, you better pass on the fabric. Otherwise you have to just ignore it.

Deciding upon the amount to purchase depends upon your sewing style. If you are going to make pillowcases out of one piece of fabric, then you will not want to purchase more than 31 inches of fabric that is 44 inches in width (allows for shrinkage and loss for not being straight). Otherwise, if you are willing to piece, purchase several yards of a fabric, e.g., three to four yards.

#### Pre-treatment of Fabric prior to Sewing:

Before you cut, wash your fabric in cool to warm water with some vinegar. This will accomplish several things. First if the dyes have a tendency to bleed, they should “set” with the vinegar and cool water. Second, if there is going to be shrinkage, it should happen during this washing. Third, it should remove the sizing, making the fabric softer and showing up problems with fabric being straight.

Please do not use heavy fabric softeners. Many people have problems with those scents.

Once the fabric has been washed and ironed, you can check the actual measurement of the fabric in terms of width and length. You can also check to see if the fabric is straight when you match selvage edges. If you put the selvages together and run your hand towards the fold, the fabric should be smooth. If it is not, then probably you have a problem with the fabric being straight. In this case, you will want to pull the fabric from opposite corners. If you have several yards, you will need to get someone to help you. Even a yard is difficult to manage alone. When I was taught to do it, I pulled a thread and matched the threads together. Then I pulled to make them match. I don’t do this with my pillowcases but I do check for obvious problems.

After you have washed, ironed and straightened the fabric, cut one end to make a straight, even edge from which to work. Now you are ready to begin cutting.

#### Cutting the Pillowcases:

If you are going to create a pillowcase from a single piece of fabric, you will want to cut a piece that is 44” x 30”. When you fold it in half, you will have a piece that is 22” x 30”.

If you are going to put a band on your pillowcase, the width of the band plus the width of your seams will determine the length of the body. Remember, you will want to end up with a piece that is 22” x 30 inches or 44” x 30” to complete the pillowcase.

When you attach a band, press the seam toward the open end (top) and top stitch for a finished look.

So let’s assume that you are going to have a ¼” seam and you are using a six-inch band, left over from a yard of fabric that was used to make a pillowcase. You will

lose  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches of the band and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches of the body, so you will need a piece that is 24- $\frac{1}{2}$  inches long (allows  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches for the body and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches for the band).

### Constructing the Pillowcase,

There are several ways that you can make a pillowcase. The simplest is to have a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam that has a zig-zag seam to protect from raveling. If you have cut a piece of fabric that is 44" x 30" inches, then you will fold it in half so that the selvage edges are together. Sew along the bottom and side, turning the corner at a 90-degree angle. The bottom will need to have a zig-zag to protect from raveling but the selvage edge will protect the side. The top (open end) will be turned down  $\frac{1}{4}$ " and then one inch for finishing. If you wish to turn down more for the hem at the top, you will need to allow for this when cutting. You do not want to leave the top unfinished or not hemmed. Your finished pillowcase will be 21- $\frac{1}{2}$  x 28- $\frac{1}{2}$ ". This is the "ideal."

If you have a serger or overcast machine, you will have a seam that is a little larger than  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Another option is to use French seams, in which case you will probably have seams that are  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". All are acceptable but they will affect the dimensions of some of your cuts.

If you are doing a lot of piecing, be sure to only piece one side of the pillowcase. It looks great on a rack but will it be comfortable for sleeping. With pillowcases that have piecing, place a piece on the back that is plain, i.e., only piece one side. A band may go around but do not make it more than 8 inches wide. And it is best to not make the band several thicknesses of fabric. When packing the boxes, it really does make a difference.

When finished, you want a pillowcase that will fit most standard pillows. You do not want one that is huge nor do you want one that is just too small. A good rule of thumb is 20 inches minimum for width and 32 inches for maximum length.