

How to Sew a Face Mask

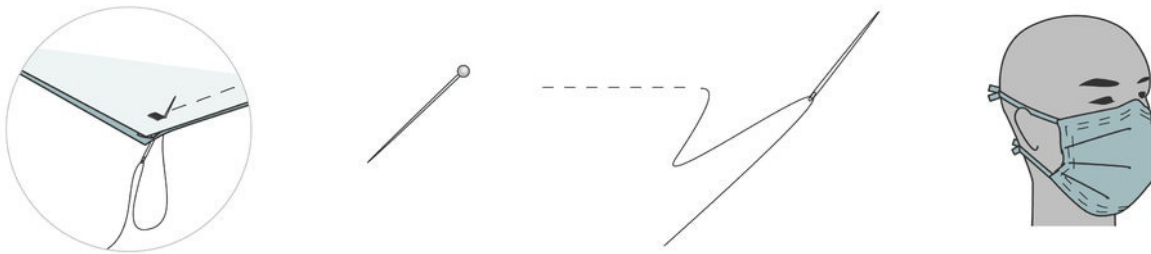
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Make your own fabric face mask from household items



Illustrations by Tracy Ma for The New York Times

Advice on face masks is changing. The first job is to make sure health care workers have face masks. Next, people with symptoms should wear face masks. This will keep the virus from spreading. That leaves many who feel they are healthy right now.

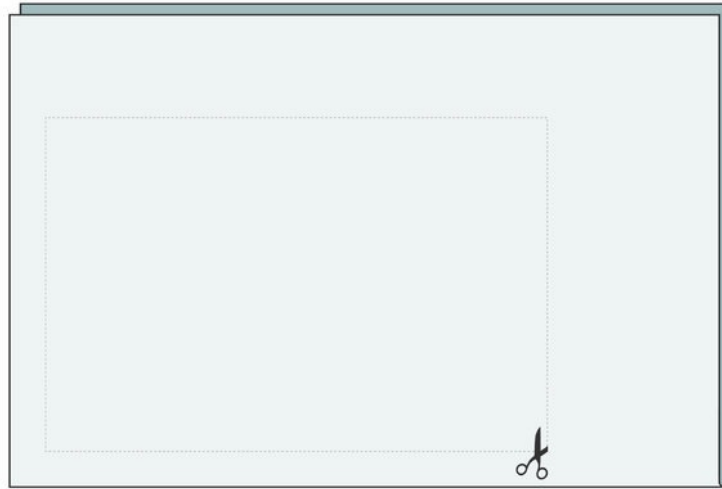
A new view is that when it can be done, face masks should be worn outside the home. It is still most important to limit trips outside the house. Also, wash your hands.

To make your own face mask, you will need:

- A needle and thread (a sewing machine will help).
- Scissors
- Pins or clips to hold fabrics in place. (safety pins and paper clips can work).
- Materials
- At least 20 by 20 inches of 100 percent cotton fabric.
- 4 strips of cotton fabric for ties, about 18" long and 3/4" wide or
- 4 flat, clean shoelaces or
- two flat (1/4") sewing elastics that are 7" long.

PREPARE YOUR MATERIALS

Step 1



Choose your piece of fabric. Prewash it on the warmest setting. Dry it at high heat. (Tea towels are better to use than T-shirts or linens.)

Fold the fabric in half. Measure and cut out a 9.5" by 6.5" rectangle to create two identically sized layers. This is your mask base.

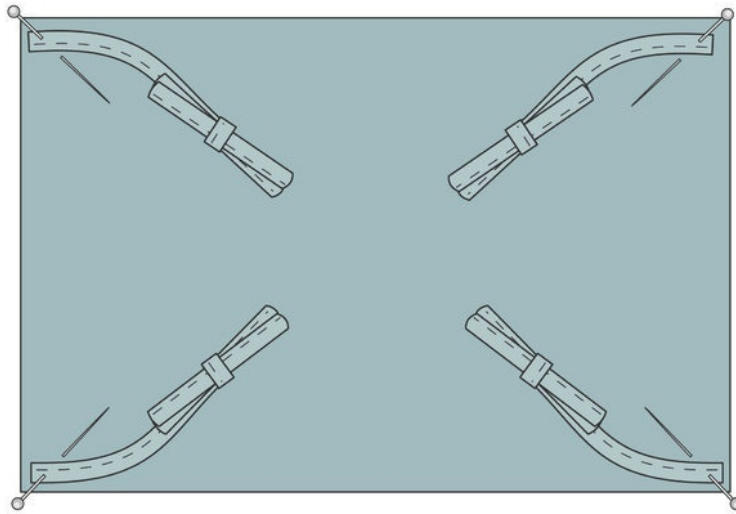
Now it is on to the fabric ties.



Cut 4 thin pieces of material, about 18" long and $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. Fold each piece of fabric twice lengthwise, then once more to tuck the rough edges inside. Sew a straight line along the middle. This will keep the fabric ties from having frayed edges.

ADDING THE TIES

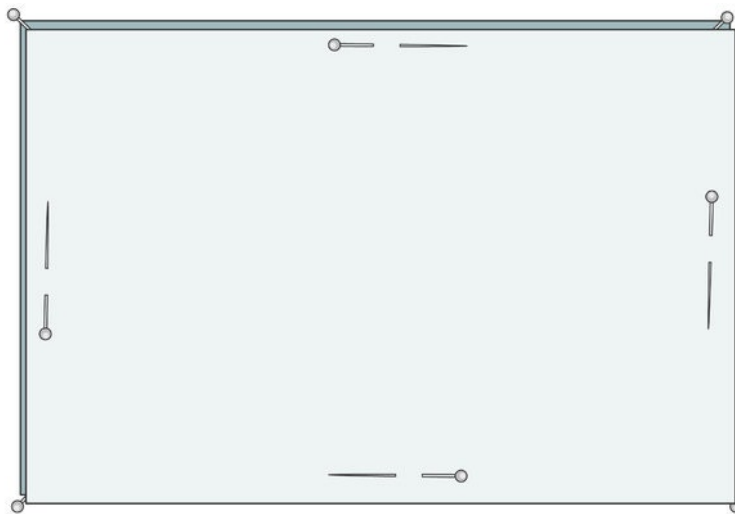
Step 2



Take one of the fabric layers. With the “right side” (or the outer-facing side,) facing you. Pin down the 4 fabric ties, one piece per corner. Make sure that the ties are gathered in the center of the fabric layer.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Step 3

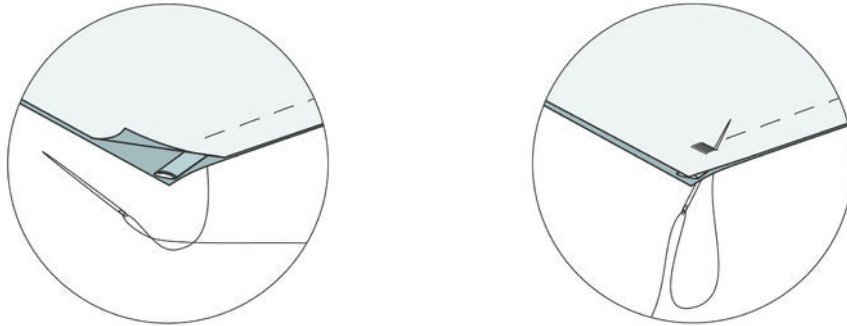


Take the second layer of fabric and line it up with the first. The “right sides” (or patterned sides) of the fabric should be facing each other. Secure the fabric sandwich together with pins.

START STITCHING

Step 4

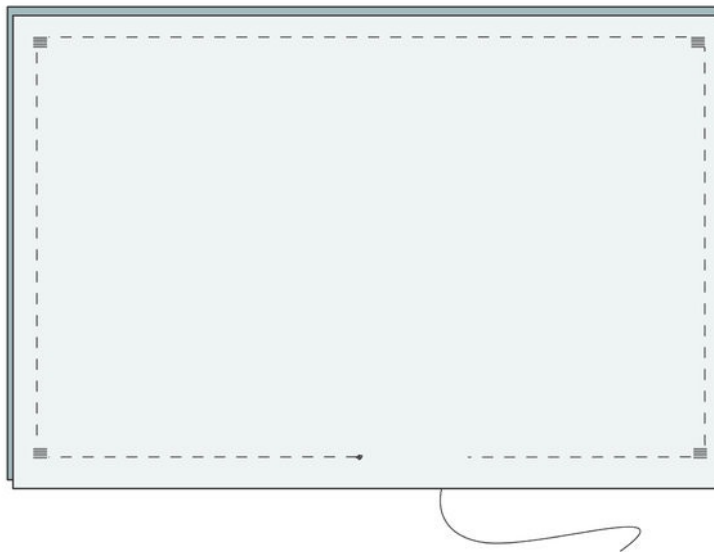
Find a midway point. From the middle, sew a straight line across the mask, about ¼" above the bottom edge of the fabric. That is toward the bottom left-hand corner. Remove any pins as you sew past them.



Make sure that the elastic or fabric ties are secured in the corners, sandwiched by your two layers of fabric. You want to make sure your needle goes through the three pieces: the top layer, the end of the fabric tie, and the bottom layer. Add a couple stitches forward and backward (in both directions) to secure your ties in place.

STITCH ALL AROUND

Step 5

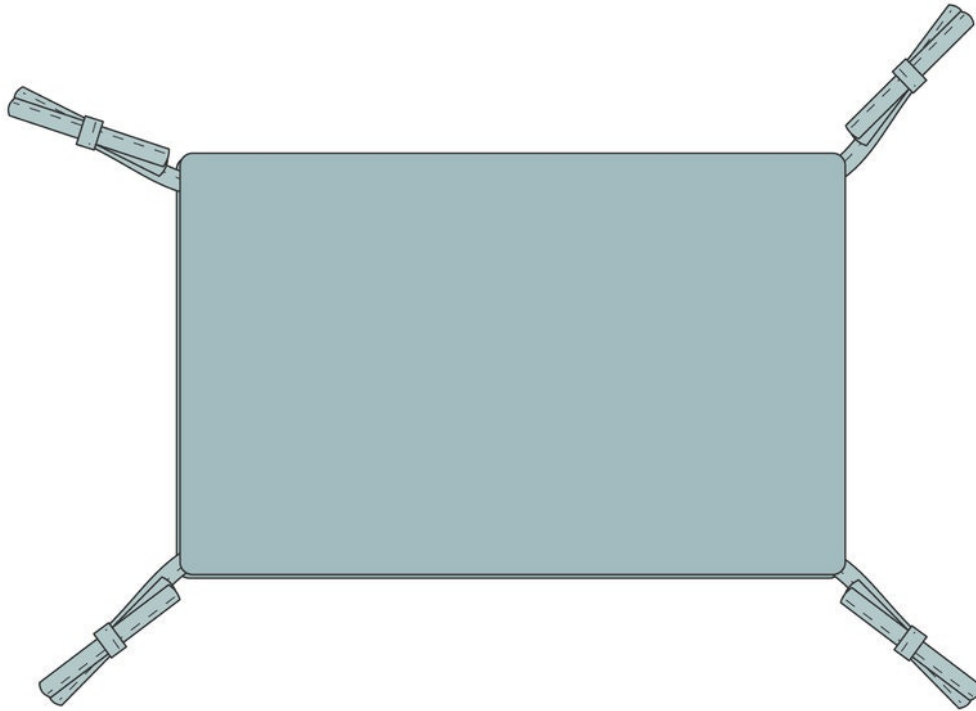


Stitch all around the edge of the fabric layers. Repeat the forward and backward motion at each corner to secure all the elastic ends or fabric ties.

Continue to stitch your way toward the starting point, but stop to allow for a 1 ½" gap.

TURN OUT

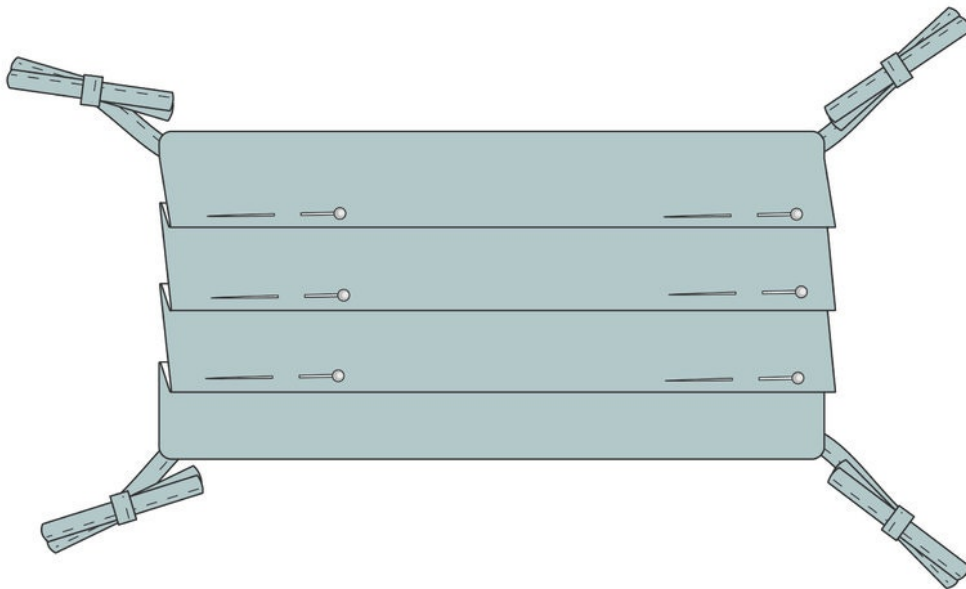
Step 6



Turn your project right-side out from the little 1 ½" gap. Your fabric ties should now stick out, like little legs.

PLEATS PLEASE

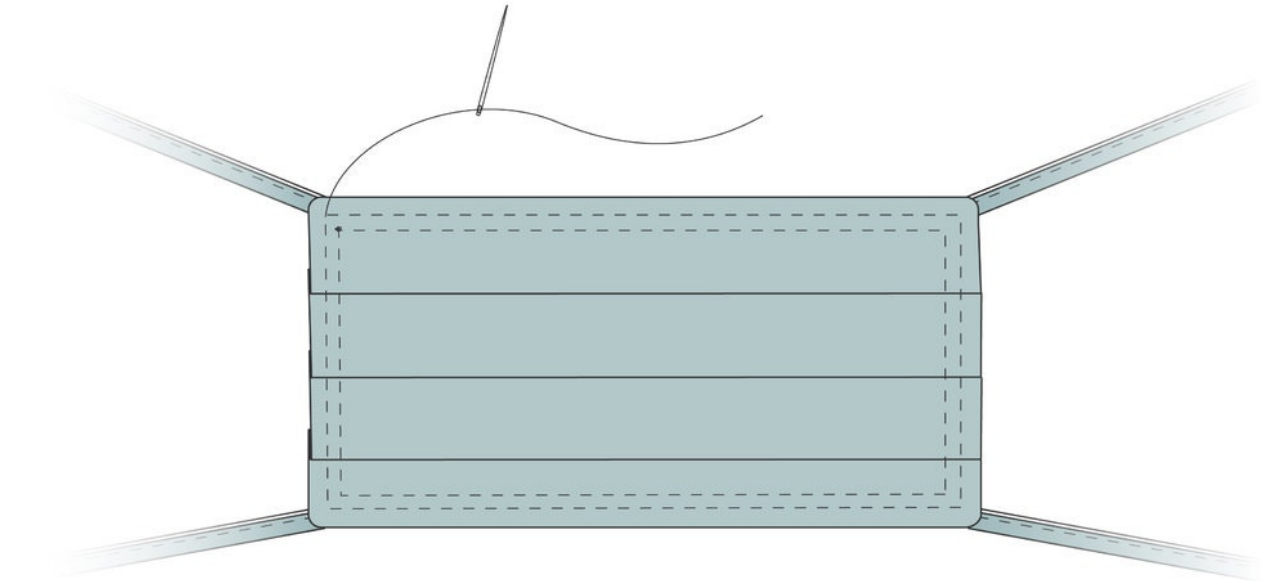
Step 7



Make three staggered pleats lengthwise on the mask, as if folding a paper fan. This helps the mask conform to the wearer's face. Secure each pleat with pins.

FINISHING UP

Step 8



With your pleats held in place by pins, stitch around the perimeter of the mask That will be $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the edge of the seam. This is called a top stitch. Take care when stitching over the pleats as the fabric may be quite thick.

Top stitch a second time around, about $\frac{1}{4}$ " in from the first round of stitching. Now you have a completed mask.

Learning to wear a mask correctly is important. Many people pull them aside, hampering their effect, and also air can get in easily around the edges.

Download and print these instructions.

Source: The New York Times March 31, 2020