

## **Patio Party: Sunny Throw Pillows**

Editor: Liz Johnson

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Learn to make these simple pillow coverings, and you can change the look of any décor in a few fast and easy steps. This construction has no pesky buttons, zippers or Velcro to deal with – just a basic 'envelope' closure on the back, which also means you can pull out your pillow and wash the cover when Uncle Mort spills BBQ sauce on it.

You can buy pillow inserts to create a brand new pillow, or you can recover a pillow you already have. We made two 16" and two 20" pillows for our patio party, but you could make lots more in all kinds of sizes. We give you notes below on how to adjust your fabric cuts.

Our sample was made using the beautiful fabrics from Heather Bailey's Freshcut collection. For information on where to buy, read [How to Create a Fabric Palette](#)

### **Sewing Tools You Need**

- Any Sewing Machine (we recommend the [Janome AQS2009](#))

### **Fabric and Other Supplies**

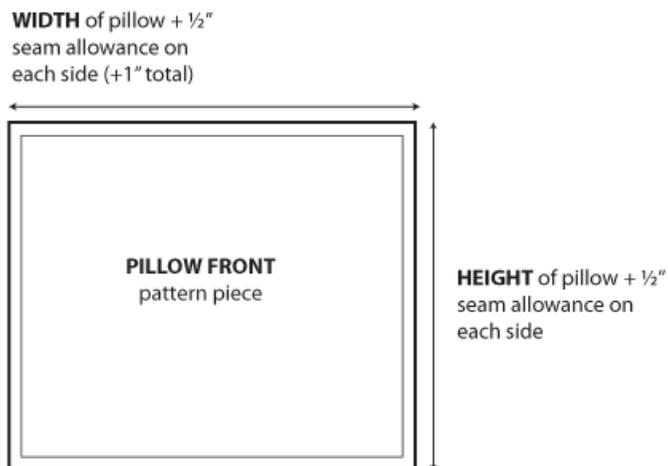


- Fabric for pillow front and back – amount of fabric is based on size of pillow insert you buy or the existing pillow insert you will be recovering (see measuring instructions below): *we used Heather Bailey's Freshcut in Groovy-orange/green and Finery-gold*
- Store bought pillow insert or pillow to be recovered
- All purpose thread
- Lightweight paper for drawing pillow front and pillow back pattern pieces
- Measuring tape
- See-through ruler
- Pencil
- Iron and ironing board
- Scissors
- Straight pins

## Getting Started

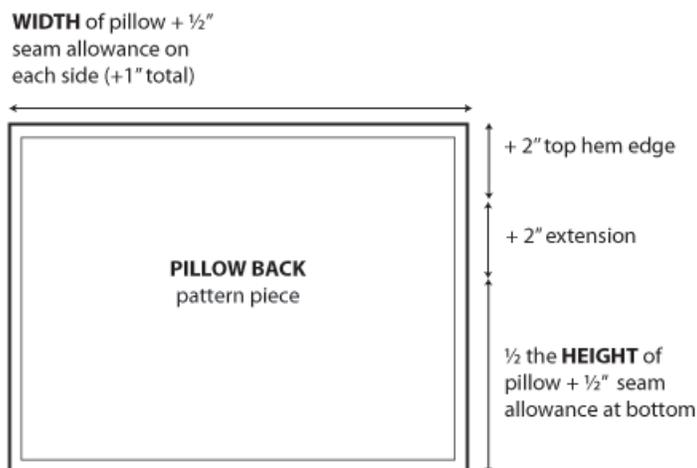
1. Using your measuring tape, measure the length and width of the pillow you will be covering from finished seam to finished seam. For our samples, we made pillow coverings for 20" square pillow inserts and 16" square pillow inserts. For purposes of these instructions, I'm going to focus on one 20" insert.
2. Add a ½" seam allowance around the entire length and width of pillow. In our example, that would result in a 21" square. This 21" square represents the FRONT of the pillow. Remember, your pillow may not be a perfect square; that's okay, just measure length and width accordingly and follow the same directions.
3. Draw the length and width of your pillow front panel, including the ½" seam allowance, onto a sheet of lightweight paper, and cut around the drawn line (21" x 21" in our sample). Label this pattern piece PILLOW FRONT.

## PILLOW FRONT Cutting Formula



4. Pin **PILLOW FRONT** pattern piece to the fabric you are using for the front of your pillow, and cut out around pattern edges.
5. Now that you have your pillow front, let's make the back pattern piece for that pillow.

## PILLOW BACK Cutting Formula



6. The envelope opening on the back of the finished pillow should be at the center of the longest side of your pillow. For our example, our pillow is 20" square, so the envelope opening would be at 10" along the height of the pillow. *If your pillow is more of a rectangle shape, you should make the opening at the middle of the longer side, which means you should look at it standing on end in the diagrams above: width being the shorter side and height being the longer side.* Follow the formulas below to create your back pattern piece:

*Height of cut piece =  $\frac{1}{2}$  finished pillow height +  $\frac{1}{2}$ " (bottom edge seam allowance) + 2" (extension amount) + 2" (for double turn hem edge).*

*Width of cut piece = full finished pillow width + 1" ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance on both sides).*

In our example, the formulas would look like this:

*Height of our cut piece =  $10" + \frac{1}{2}" + 2" + 2" = 14\frac{1}{2}"$*

*Width of our cut piece =  $20" + 1" = 21"$*

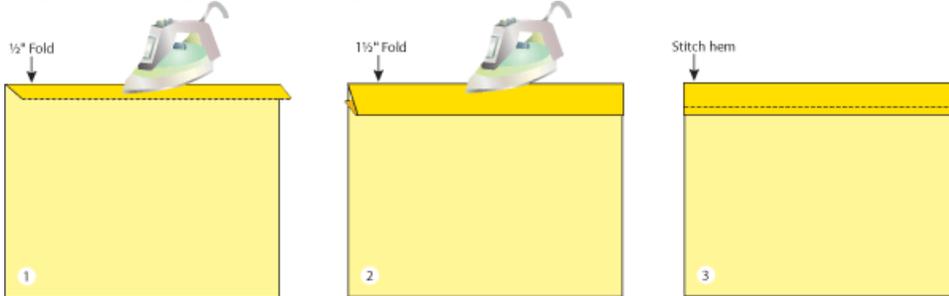
7. Now that you have figured out your back pattern piece, draw it onto a sheet of lightweight paper, and cut around the drawn line (14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 21" in our sample). Label it **PILLOW BACK**. Pin **PILLOW BACK** pattern piece to the fabric you are using for the back of your pillow, and cut out around pattern edges. If you are using a directional print for your pillow (like flowers growing up or stripes), and using the same fabric for both front and back, make sure to cut the two back panels in the same direction you cut the front panel.

I know that looks like a lot of steps for what I promised would be an easy project, but that's just because I'm wordy ... and I

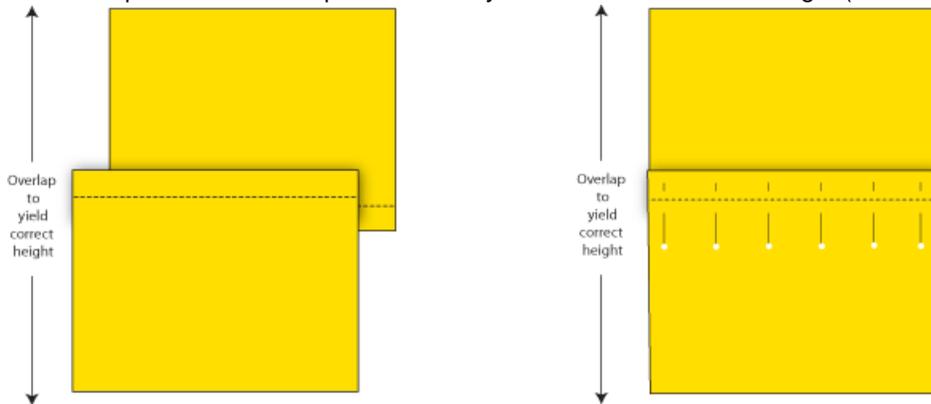
want to make sure you have good formulas to follow so you can use these same instructions for the many, many, many pillows you'll be making. We are finally ready to sew!

## At Your Sewing Machine & Ironing Board

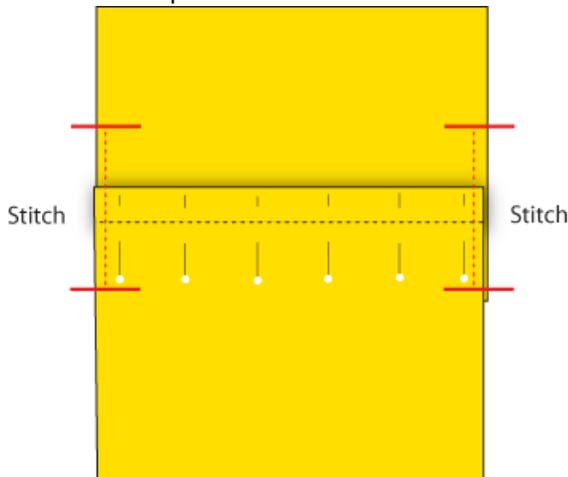
1. Take one piece of your backing fabric, and turn under the right side of the fabric  $\frac{1}{2}$ " along the entire width of the piece (the 21" side in our sample). Press.
2. Fold under an additional  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " and press.
3. Edgestitch along the folded edge to make a clean double turn hem.



4. Repeat steps 1-3 with the other piece of backing fabric.
5. Take both pieces and overlap the hems to yield the correct finished height (21" in our sample). Pin hems together.



6. Working as close to the edge as possible, stitch the sides of hems together to secure and create one piece. It's easier to work with one piece to stitch front to back.



## Finishing the pillow

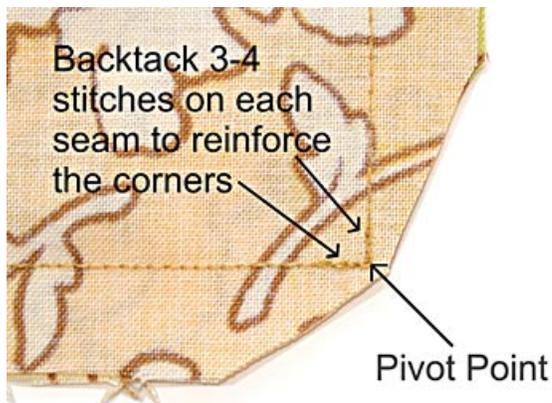
1. Place your newly completed pillow back piece and your pillow front piece right sides together, matching raw edges all around, and stitch a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam around all four edges of the pillow, making sure to back-tack three to four stitches at each corner to reinforce the seam.
2. Trim all four corners of the pillow.

3. Using the envelope opening on the back, turn the pillow covering right side out. Push out the trimmed corners from the inside to make nice, square corners on the outside. Use your finger or a blunt-edge tool, like a large knitting needle.
4. Insert the pillow form through the envelope closure and fluff out the corners of the pillow covering evenly.

## Hints and Tips

### Corner reinforcement

When sewing corners, try backtacking and sewing over a few stitches once you reach the pivot point of the next seam. This way, your corners will be better reinforced when you clip away fabric and turn them inside out.



### Pillow insert options

Depending on the size and stuffing content, pillow inserts can be the most expensive part of your entire pillow project. One great alternative to buying pillow inserts is to keep your eyes peeled for regular pillows on sale at home furnishing stores or discount retailers. They'll likely be in colors or fabric designs you don't like, but who cares? You're going to tear off their ugly cover and replace it with your own spiffy new cover. Read more about [pillows in general](#) and [pillow recycling](#) in particular.

#### Contributors

Project Design: Alicia Thommas

Sample Creation & Instructions: Gregory Dickson

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