We love the simple clean lines of these microwavable neck and lap/back heating pads. After under a minute in the microwave, you'll get up to an hour of safe, warm heat without the dangers inherent in electric heating pads: burns, fires, and electrical shock. Electric heating pad cautions actually read: *Never use in a situation where you could fall asleep* Hmmm... often falling asleep is my goal. These pads are not difficult to make and are a useful gift for most any adult. They're good for muscle aches or when you feel a chill and don't want to turn up the thermostat. You can also freeze them for a pleasant cooling effect. Although, just typing that made me shiver. Add a drop of essential oil if you'd like a little aromatherapy.
Before you begin, measure the interior of your microwave oven just to be sure the lap/back pad will fit when folded in half (about 8” x 12”). Most microwaves can easily accommodate something of this size, but there are a few older and space-saver models that may require you to slightly reduce the size of the pad.

We show you dimensions and supplies for both a neck pad (22” x 8” flat) and a slightly larger lap/back pad (16” x 12” flat).

To give your heating pads as a gift, fold them up and tie them with a piece of natural twill tape. Pretty and practical!

Our sample pads used rice, but you can also check out our article on other filler options: Organic Fillers for Warming Pads.
**Sewing Tools You Need**

- Sewing machine and standard presser foot

**Fabric and Other Supplies**

This project is great for fabric scraps. You can use flannel, as well as quilting or décor-weight cotton. Just don't use anything with metal threads (unless you want a fireworks display in your microwave). We chose cotton ticking for its clean, fresh look and tight weave. Ticking is an old time fabric that was historically used for covering pillows and mattresses because its tight weave kept feathers, horse hair, and other fillers in place. Today, ticking has once again become trendy for design accessories like throw pillows, as well as for upholstery. There is something classically soothing about those woven stripes. Ticking is available almost everywhere fabric is sold. We found a nice selection at [Fabric.com](http://Fabric.com). The ticking we used is not the industrial-strength mattress variety, but a décor-weight that has a soft drape after washing. As we always suggest, pre-wash and press your fabric and rick rack trim before beginning this project.

The back of our samples is a low nap fleece. Although a polyester based substrate, because the time in the microwave is low, we had no problems with it melting nor have we heard of problems from others... and this particular project is one of the most popular ever, with thousands of downloads to its credit.

However, many people prefer to only use 100% cotton for anything in the microwave. No worries there, other good options for the back of the pads would be to a) repeat the ticking or use a similar cotton décor weight fabric, b) pick out a solid 100% cotton quilting solid or quilting flannel, or c) try cotton terry cloth. You can also switch to cotton thread and cotton rick rack. The trim is, of course, optional.
Neck Pad

5½”  5½”  5½”  5½”

8”

22”
¼ yard of 44”+ wide cotton ticking or similar; we used a red stripe
¼ yard of 45”+ wide, low nap fleece or similar; we used winter white
One package of jumbo rick rack in red: this is optional, as is the size of rick rack you use
7 cups of uncooked rice for filler

NOTE: Corn is another option for a filler, just don’t use the popcorn variety… feed corn is an economical option. As mentioned above, you can check out our article on other filler options: Organic Fillers for Warming Pads: We Compare Rice, Corn, and Flaxseed.

All purpose thread to match fabric; we used natural
See-through ruler
Fabric pen or pencil
Iron and ironing board
Scissors or rotary cutter and mat
Seam gauge
Seam ripper
Straight pins
Optional: Essential oil (we added a drop of vanilla spice or you can add a few lavender buds). You should be able to easily find a selection of essential oils in the organic section of most grocery stores.

Lap/Back Pad

Getting Started
Neck Pad

1. Cut ONE 9" x 23" rectangle from the front fabric.
2. Cut ONE 9" x 23" rectangle from the back fabric.
3. Cut TWO 25" lengths of the trim.

Lap/Back Pad

1. Cut ONE 13" x 17" rectangle from the from the front fabric.
2. Cut ONE 13" x 17" rectangle from the back fabric.
3. Cut TWO 18" lengths of the trim.

At Your Sewing Machine & Ironing Board

From here on, the instructions are the same for both the neck pad and the lap/back pads (except as noted). We use ½" seams throughout.

1. If you want to add a label as we did, add that first to the center of one of the compartments. It should be about 2" up from the bottom at a minimum.
2. Pin the rick rack to the two long sides, centering it on the ½" seam line (ie. the center of the rick rack should be ½" from the raw edge). Machine baste in place.
3. Pin the ticking and fleece rectangles right sides together. Sew all the way around the perimeter, leaving an approximate 3" opening along one end for turning and adding rice. Remember to pivot at the corners and to lock your seam at either side of the 3" opening.
4. Trim back the seam allowance to about ¼” along the two long sides and the one short side without the opening, and clip all the corners.

5. Turn right-side out and press, folding in the raw edges of the opening so they are flush with the sewn seam. Your rick rack should pop out evenly along each long edge.

6. Find the center of the neck pad and mark with a pin. From the center, measure 5½” to either side and mark both of these points with a pin. These are the marks for the seams that will form the four rice compartments.
   **NOTE:** For the lap/back pad, measure just 4” to either side of the center pin.

7. Adding the essential oil is an option, but if you want to add it, now is the time. We used ONE drop for each pad and our whole sewing room smells wonderfully like vanilla spice. If you’re using essential oils, put the rice in a large bowl, add
the oil and stir. One drop goes a loooooog way.

8. Add rice to fill the first compartment. You want to be able to conform the pad to your neck, so don't overfill. We used about 1¾ cup for each neck pad compartment and 1½ cup for each lap/back compartment. We made a simple paper funnel to make pouring rice easier (a regular plastic funnel tends to clog). Hold the pad up vertically so the rice falls to the back of the first compartment you marked earlier, giving you a clear path to sew the compartment closed without sewing through any grains of rice.

9. Sew a vertical line of stitching at the first compartment line. If you used ticking, you have a line to follow from pin point to pin point. If not, you can use an erasable fabric pen to draw a straight line between the two points. Pin through both layers along the line and sew. Stop from time to time, with the needle in the down position, and shift the rice towards its compartment to keep the presser foot area clear. It's a bit time-consuming, but not difficult.
10. The first compartment should look about like this:

11. Repeat for the next three compartments.

12. When the last compartment is filled with rice, hand sew the opening closed with a tightly-spaced slip stitch.
Using Your Pads

Since microwaves vary in how quickly they heat, start with ONE minute and see how it feels. The microwave we tested required about 2 minutes to achieve the desired toasty warmth. DO NOT overheat, you can scorch the rice. Once you know how long it takes your microwave to heat your pad, you can set that time for future uses. Do not attempt heat the pad in a conventional oven.

You can also use this tutorial to make a simple cover for a heating pad. To do this, measure the heating pad and cut two rectangles from flannel or quilting cotton. Cut the rectangles two inches wider and five inches longer than the finished outside dimensions of the pad. With right sides together, use a ½" seam allowance to sew along both long sides and across the bottom. Serge or zig zag the raw edges. On the top end, fold under ½” and press. Fold under an additional 1” to form a hem. Edgestitch the hem in place. You can add a ribbon tie or two if you’d like to hold the cover closed on the end after you slip the heating pad into place.

Contributors

Project Design, Sample Creation and Instructional Outline: Alicia Thommas