Did you have a diary as a kid? I did. I just wasn't ever very good at it: *Dear Diary, School was boring today. When I got home, I ate crackers and watched TV. It was a good day.* "Yep, pretty scintillating stuff. However, if I'd had something as lovely as this Classic Fabric Journal Cover in which to pen my deepest thoughts, I'm sure it would have been much better: *Dearest Diary, Today was an educational minefield. When at last I made it back to the safety of hearth and home, I was able to relax with both sustenance and entertainment at the ready. Stupendous all around.*" Try it for yourself. Turn a plain spiral notebook into your own inspiring journal with our step-by-step instructions. The notebook is removeable so you can fill it up with plans and dreams, then easily slip a refill into the pretty cover – because plans and dreams must be able to continue!
This project has quite a few steps. None of them are particularly difficult, but there is careful measuring to do to keep track of what goes where. Read through the steps a couple times before you start to absorb all the details.

We found our sample spiral at a local chain store. There's nothing unusual about it at all, and we show you how to measure your own notebook to get a perfect fit. We do recommend a spiral as the wrap is really only effective with a notebook that can lay perfectly flat.
The interior pockets for business cards and a pen are optional, but are very nice finishing touches, especially if you're doing the journal cover as a gift and want to include a pen as part of the package.

Similarly, the built-in bookmark is an option. And, a pretty fob or bead at the end adds a lovely bit of embellishment. Consider using an initial or a charm that alludes to the recipient's favorite hobby. Most local craft stores have lots of charms and beads from which to choose.
Why would anyone still keep a journal in this age of all-things-digital? It's better for your brain! A recent study with elementary students showed those who wrote essays with a pen not only wrote more than their keyboard-tapping peers, but also wrote faster and in more complete sentences. And, according to The Wall Street Journal, many physicians claim writing by hand is one of the best cognitive exercises as we age because it engages both our motor-skills and memory. There you go... time to pick up a pen and make yourself a beautiful journal cover.
Our journal finished at approximately 10¼" high x 7½" wide when closed and 10¼" high x 17½" wide when open and flat.

**Sewing Tools You Need**

- Sewing Machine and standard presser foot
- Size 14 sewing machine needle

**Fabric and Other Supplies**

- ⅓ yard of 44"+ wide quilting weight cotton or similar for the journal exterior and both pockets; *we originally used Moda's French General Rouenneries in Turkey Red Josephine from our S4H stash*
- ⅓ yard of 44"+ wide quilting weight cotton or similar for the journal lining; *we originally used Moda's French General Rouenneries in Wovens Pearl Silky from our S4H stash*
- ½ yard of 45"+ mid-weight fusible interfacing; *we used Pellon Décor Bond*
- 1½ yard of ⅛"-⅛" wide soft leather or ribbon for the closure tie and optional bookmark; *we used scraps of moccasin leather*
- ONE ¾"-1" button; *we used a faux stone, two-hole button*
- ONE charm or bead to weight the end of the optional bookmark; *we used a carved bead in the shape of a feather*
- ONE spiral notebook; *we used a 100 sheet 9½" x 6½" Mead notebook*
- Cardboard scrap; *exact size will depend on the size of your notebook – see notes below*
Getting Started

The measuring and rounding up of the measurements is to give the notebook room to open and close within the journal cover. You need to be accurate in your measuring and cutting. We’ve provided the measurements for our sample, but be sure to measure your own and make whatever changes are needed to account for any differences in the actual spiral notebook you are planning to use.

Measuring time

1. Open your notebook on a flat surface. Measure the width and height with your tape measure. Write down these measurements. Ours measured approximately 13⅝" x 9⅝".

2. Close your notebook. Wrap the tape measure around the notebook from the edge of the front cover, over the spirals, to the edge of the back cover. Write down this measurement. Ours measured approximately 14¾", which we rounded up to 15". The height of the notebook will be the same whether it's open or closed. Our height was 9 ¾".
3. Now, we need to get the thickness, or page depth, of the notebook, so we can account for this part of the wrap-around and create a pen pocket within the space. Ours measured a bit over ½”; we rounded up to ¾”.

4. You also need to decide how far over you want the front flap to overlap. This is based on personal taste, but it should come over far enough to lay flat. We used our tape measure to determine this, and decided we liked the look of 3½”.

5. One final thing we need to measure for is the portion of the journal cover that folds over, making the front and back pockets that hold the notebook in place. Using your tape measure, determine how much of the notebook you want to cover. We decided to make ours 5½” because that overlapped most of the cardboard at the front and back of the notebook, but still allowed enough room to slide the cover on the notebook.
Math time

Using the measurements above, you can figure out the cut size of the pieces.

Width

1. $15\text{"} (\text{journal width open}) + \frac{3}{4}\text{"} (\text{page depth/pen pocket}) + 3\frac{1}{2}\text{"} (\text{front flap}) + 5\frac{1}{2}\text{"} (\text{front inside cover}) + 5\frac{1}{2}\text{"} (\text{back inside cover}) + 1\text{"} (\text{seam allowance}) = 31\frac{1}{4}\text{"} \text{ wide. But, wait a minute, not so fast ...}$
2. We need to double two measurements where the cover folds over to create the back inside cover, page depth/pen pocket, and flap. (You may not understand this now, but once you make your journal you will!) Those two measurements are the pen pocket and flap. So we need to add another $\frac{3}{4}\text{"} (\text{page depth/pen pocket}) + 3\frac{1}{2}\text{"} (\text{flap}) = 4\frac{1}{4}\text{"}$
3. Our final cut width is $31\frac{1}{4}\text{"} + 4\frac{1}{4}\text{"} = 35\frac{1}{2}\text{"}$

Length

1. The length is simple! We rounded our height measurement of the journal to the next closest $\frac{1}{4}\text{"}$. So, our original $9\frac{3}{8}\text{"}$ measurement was rounded up to $10\text{"}$.
2. $10\text{"} (\text{journal height}) + 1\text{"} (\text{seam allowance}) = 11\text{"}$
3. Cut a $35\frac{1}{2}\text{"} \times 11\text{"}$ piece from the journal fabric, lining fabric, and interfacing.
   NOTE: If your fabric has a directional print, you'll need to pay attention to this. Mark your fabric’s top edge with a fabric marking pencil on the wrong side to keep track of which way is up.

Make the pockets

Pen pocket

1. We determined the size of our pen pocket based on the thickness of the notebook and how we planned to construct the pocket.
   NOTE: We used $\frac{1}{4}\text{"}$ seams for all the pockets.
2. We have $\frac{3}{4}\text{"}$ of width in our journal cover. We need space for the pen to actually fit into the pocket, so we added on another $\frac{1}{4}\text{"}$ for 1" total.
3. $1\text{"} (\text{pen pocket}) + \frac{1}{2}\text{"} (\text{seam allowance - } \frac{1}{4}\text{"} \text{ on either side}) = 1\frac{1}{2}\text{"}$
4. After looking through some of our pens, we decided to make the height of our pen pocket 4". Since we plan on using one strip of fabric to make the pocket, we need to double this measurement. (Again, when you construct your journal cover you'll understand why we're doing this... ya just gotta roll with us for now.)
5. $4\text{"} (\text{pen pocket height}) \times 2 = 8" + 1" (\text{bottom seam allowance - the bottom of the pen pocket is sewn into the } \frac{1}{2}\text{" bottom seam of the cover}) = 9"$
6. Cut one $1\frac{1}{2}\text{"} \times 9\text{"}$ strip from the journal fabric.

Inside front cover business card pocket
1. You can vary the size of this pocket to suit your needs. We decided on a business card size pocket with a finished size of 2½” wide x 4” high.
2. Cut a 3” (finished width plus ½” for the two ¼” seam allowances) x 8½” piece from the journal fabric. (Once again, the height here is determined by how we construct the pockets - double the finished height plus ½” for the two ¼” seam allowances.)
3. Cut one 3” x 8½” strip from the journal fabric.

**Bookmark and Tie**

1. We stitched a length of the leather (you could also use ribbon) into the seam of the journal at the top to be used as a bookmark. Based on our notebook measurements, we cut a 9½” length for this. You could go a little longer if you really want it dangle out.
2. For the tie, you'll need a 28” length of the leather if your notebook is the same size as ours. If you're using a different size notebook, you'll need to use your tape measure to determine the appropriate length. It must go around the entire notebook with enough left to wrap twice around the button to secure and still leave a bit of a tail.

**At Your Sewing Machine & Ironing Board**

1. Following manufacturer's instructions, fuse the interfacing panel to the wrong side of the exterior fabric piece.

**Bookmark**

1. The bookmark and pen pocket are sewn into the seams of the journal cover. You'll need to position these in place PRIOR to sewing the cover together.
2. To help us determine the correct position for the bookmark, we layered and pinned the journal cover and lining together (as if already sewn). We then wrapped it around our journal and marked the position where we wanted the bookmark to be. For our sample, that position was 15” from the left raw edge on the top of the journal lining. We placed a mark at this point with our fabric pencil.

**NOTE:** Don't forget to account for your ½” seam allowance - so our mark was actual at 15½".
3. Pin the bookmark at the marked position. Baste in place.
   NOTE: Since our bookmark is leather, we had to tape it in place instead of pinning.

Pen pocket

1. Fold the pen pocket piece in half (this is why we cut the strip twice as long), right sides together. Pin in place.

2. Using a $\frac{1}{4}$" seam allowance, sew along each long side, backstitching at the top and bottom. Clip corners
3. Turn right side out. Push out the corners. Press flat.
4. Sew $\frac{3}{4}$" from the top folded edge, backstitching at beginning and end of your stitching. We did this as a decorative finish and so it would match the business card pocket.
5. Mark the position of the pen pocket along the bottom edge of the right wraparound piece, following the same method as used for the bookmark above, however, this measurement is more critical than the bookmark because you want to be sure the pen pocket falls in the middle of the page depth wrap around. For our sample, we positioned the pen pocket 6½" from the right raw edge along the bottom. Pin and baste in place.

Inside cover business card pocket

1. You construct the inside cover business card pocket in the same manner as the pen pocket. Fold the pocket piece in half, right sides together.
2. Using a ¼" seam allowance, sew along each long side, backstitching at the top and bottom. Clip corners.
3. Turn right side out. Push out the corners. Press.
4. Sew ¾" from the top folded edge, backstitching at beginning and end of your stitching to match decorative finish of the pen pocket.
5. Fold in both bottom raw edges ¼" - so they are flush with the sewn seams. Press and pin the bottom to hold the edges together. Set aside.
Journal body

1. Place the journal cover and lining, right sides together. Be sure the pen pocket and bookmark are neatly tucked between the exterior and lining. Also, be sure to pay attention to any directional fabric designs.

2. Using a ½” seam allowance, sew around the journal cover, pivoting at the corners. Leave a 9” opening along the bottom to turn right side out. Lock your seam at either side of this opening.
   
   NOTE: Sew with the lining side down toward the feed dogs. This is because your lining fabric is not stabilized and, depending on the accuracy of your cutting, may seem (or actually be) slightly larger. The feed dogs will help to ease in the excess.

3. Clip the corners on an angle, turn right side out. Push out the corners. Press well.
4. Press in the raw edges along the 9" opening ½" so they are flush with the sewn seam. Pin the raw edges together to hold in place.
   NOTE: Don't forget we've sewn the pen pocket and bookmark into the seam. You'll need to pull these out into position. We recommend pinning the pen pocket to the body of the journal for now (on the outer fabric) to keep it in position.
5. Lay the journal cover flat on your work surface with the lining facing up.
6. Fold in the right side 10" (5½" back cover + 1" pen pocket space + 3½" flap). Press.
7. Fold in the left side 5½" (remember, this is the measurement we determined way back when for the front cover "sleeve"). Press.
8. Decide where you would like your inside cover business card pocket to be placed. We thought ours looked good 1" in from the front folded edge and 1¼ from the bottom. Pin the pocket in place.
9. Re-thread your machine with your contrasting topstitching thread if desired.

10. Using an edgestitch, sew the inside business card pocket in place. Just making sure you’re awake ... BE SURE TO UNFOLD THE COVER BEFORE YOU SEW! You do not want to sew through to the right side of the journal cover.

11. Re-fold and pin the front cover in place. Press again if needed.

12. Using an edgestitch, sew around the outside edge of entire journal cover.

   NOTE: We recommend lengthening your stitch to get through all the layers. You also may need to “walk” the machine by turning the handwheel to get around the corners where the layers are very thick. We’re lucky because the Janome machines we use go right through all the layers.

13. Lay your journal cover flat on your work surface with the inside facing up.

14. You need to take some new measurements so you know what size to cut the cardboard insert that goes into the flap.

15. Measure between your stitches from top to bottom on the right side to determine the length you need to cut the cardboard insert. Ours measured 9¼”. We cut the width 2½” - one inch smaller than our original flap width measurement of 3½”.

16. Cut the cardboard based on your measurements. We cuts ours 9¼” x 2½”.

17. Insert the cardboard strip into the right ‘cover pocket’ and slide it all the way in until it is snug against the right outside
18. Re-pin the pen pocket into its appropriate position. The right edge of the pen pocket should be approximately ¼” from the left edge of the cardboard insert. You should be able to feel the cardboard inside the fabric. Make sure the pocket is straight; it should be perpendicular to the bottom sewn edge.

NOTE: When you pin the pen pocket in place, make sure it is not perfectly flat against the cover or there will be no room for your pen. Pinch it slightly to create a bow.

19. Using a ruler and a fabric marking pencil, draw a straight line along both sides of the pen pocket straight to the top of the journal cover.

20. Using a straight stitch, sew along both marked lines. You will be creating the “page depth edge” of the journal cover,
enclosing the cardboard into the flap and attaching the pen pocket all at the same time. Three things at once .. you are so clever!

NOTE: We switched out to a Zipper foot so we didn't catch the edge of the cardboard when we stitched this vertical line.

**Tie and button closure**

1. Using a curved hand needle, sew the button on the center of the flap about 1" from the sewn edge.

2. Hand sew the leather strap behind button, aligning it with the edgestitching seam.

3. If desired, hand sew a small ornament to the end of the bookmark.
4. Insert the spiral notebook into the cover and write down your innermost thoughts.

5. To close, wrap the tie around the journal and loop once or twice around the button.

**Contributors**

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*Fabric Art & Accents*