



# Maker's Guide

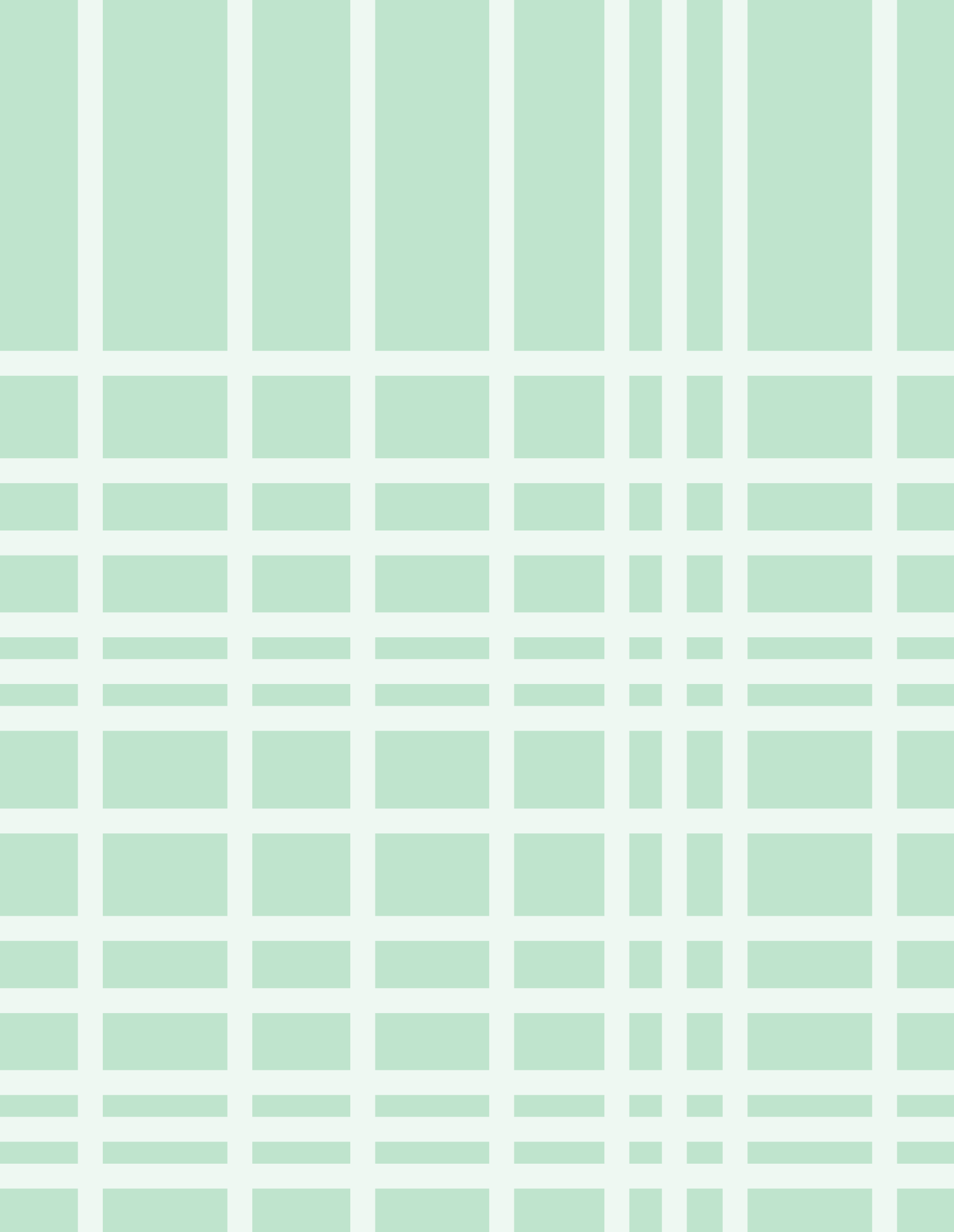
to sewing stuff



**N** |   
**EXTENSION**

  
**YOUTH  
REVIEWED**

STEAM Clothing



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The Nebraska 4-H Statewide Youth Curriculum Committee was formed in 2007 to provide a youth perspective to all aspects of the curriculum development and promotion process. When you see the "Youth Reviewed" logo on the cover of a Nebraska 4-H curriculum, you are reading a publication that has included youth input from this specially selected team of 4-H members.

# What is Inside?

## Making Kitchen Stuff

- 6 A Mate for Your Plate ★
- 10 Amazing Apron ★★
- 16 Awesome Oven Mitt ★★★

## Making Play Stuff

- 22 Baggy Beans Game ★★
- 26 Cool Crayon Roll ★★

## Making Stuff for Me

- 30 Binding Book Cover ★★
- 34 Snoozy Pillowcase ★
- 38 Mighty Wallet ★★
- 42 Llama's Pajamas ★★

## Making Useful Stuff

- 46 Sweet Sewing Supplies ★★
- 50 Big, Bad Bag ★★
- 54 Zippy Zipper Pouch ★★

## Making Fashion Accessories

- 58 Stretchy Scrunchie ★★
- 62 Handy Headband ★★
- 66 Basic Belt x 2 ★★★

## Patterns

- 71 Bodice Armhole Pattern (for Amazing Apron)
- 73 Bag Top Pattern (for Big, Bad Bag)
- 75 Bag Strap Pattern (for Big, Bad Bag)

## Difficulty

Easy ★

Medium ★★

Hard ★★★

# Welcome!

In *Maker's Guide to Sewing Stuff*, you will develop sewing skills that will allow you to make all kinds of really neat stuff. Once you master skills like pattern drawing, choosing fabrics, cutting out patterns and sewing seams, you'll be on your way to creating things to wear, things that you can make and sell, and also things to make life easier and to brighten your day!

In the *STEAM Clothing FUNdamentals* curriculum, you have discovered why certain fabrics perform differently than others (Science), become familiar with tools used for sewing (Technology), and learned how to perform basic sewing skills to understand how clothing is put together (Engineering). You've also had a chance to think about color and pattern for fabrics (Art) and how adding or subtracting from a design makes a difference in the amount of fabric needed, and how the garment fits (Math).

Now it's time to try out what you've been learning and make some stuff. Each activity in this book begins with a story about how and why youth made the item. When you've finished making the things featured in this book, you can then create a "Maker's Journal" where you can add your own stories about what you've made. Include patterns you used and swatches of the fabrics. Keep adding to the journal as you learn more and more about sewing. No doubt you will be amazed at how you've grown as you have learned to master the skills of sewing!

Launch into the world of sewing by Making Stuff!

# Don't Forget to Remember!

## Care for Your Equipment

Like many things, the better the condition of your sewing equipment, the happier you'll be with the results. Always use very sharp shears and scissors when cutting fabric. Never cut paper with your fabric shears.

Replace the needle in your sewing machine for each new project.

Make sure pencils are sharpened when you are drawing patterns.

Be sure that hand sewing needles and pins are not rusty.

## Prepare Your Fabric

Preshrinking does exactly what it says it will do – shrinks the fabric before you cut it up for sewing. Purchase a bit more fabric than the pattern calls for to be sure you have enough for the project after washing it. If the project calls for a “fat quarter,” don't worry – a fat quarter won't shrink too much for any of the projects in this book.

Press fabric before cutting, and after straightening the grain. Wrinkles can cause dimensions to be off just a bit, and can complicate your sewing project.

## **Sew Accurate Seam Allowances**

The more you sew, the easier it will be to relax behind the sewing machine. Practice sewing straight lines, and pay attention to the lines on your machine's throat plate. If there are no markings for  $\frac{1}{4}$ ",  $\frac{3}{8}$ ",  $\frac{1}{2}$ ",  $\frac{5}{8}$ " and 1", you can mark a  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " piece of tape and stick it to the throat plate.

## **Make Adjustments Along the Way**

All great sewers are also great rippers. It doesn't matter how well you can sew, there will be times you sew the wrong pieces together. Don't try to be a perfect sewer – we want you to enjoy yourself! However, sometimes, if you sew a wrong side to a right side, or a pocket upside down, you'll want to rip it out and start over. As a general rule, it is easier to rip the bobbin thread, so try ripping from the back side.

## **Be Creative**

This is what makes sewing FUN. The directions in this book should be thought of as a launch pad for you creating your own project designs. Try making something as described here the first time, and then make another one using your own ideas. You can vary sizes, color combinations, or pockets, or add ruffles and lots of different kinds of trims. You can also dream up your own variations for many of the projects.

Always be on the lookout for things you can use in your sewing projects – a button jar is a great source for inspiration!



# A Mate for Your Plate

Emalee is anxious to learn to sew. She doesn't have any experience, so she decides to start at the very beginning. She wants to try to understand about the "grainline" for woven fabrics. Her mom recently mentioned that she wants to buy a set of placemats to give Emalee's aunt for a wedding shower gift. Emalee thinks she could make them herself using the directions on pages 8-9. What a wonderful gift these placemats, handmade by Emalee, will be for her aunt!

## Skills to Know

STEAM Clothing 1: FUNdamentals, Chapter 1: Getting Prepared  
Fabrics for Sewing (woven fabrics)

Sewing Machine Parts (sewing practice)

STEAM Clothing 1: FUNdamentals, Chapter 2: Fabrics and Fibers

Holding It All Together (woven fabrics and weave structure)

STEAM Clothing 1: FUNdamentals, Chapter 3: Start Sewing

Make the Cut (preshrink fabric and straightening the grain)

## What You Need

- $\frac{3}{4}$  yard cotton fabric with a visible weave structure.
  - A fabric like duck works well.
  - Be sure the fabric is heavy enough to protect a table from hot plates.
  - Check out the fabrics that are used for home decorating. You should try to find a fabric that has woven threads you can easily see. If the raw edges are coming unraveled, it is a good sign it will be easy to work with.
- Tape measure
- Washable fabric marking pencil, or tracing paper, or tailor's chalk
- Scissors
- Pins
- Thread to match the fabric
- Seam ripper
- Sewing machine with a universal needle, size 12 or 14







## Cut the Fabric

1 Launder your fabric in hot water and dry in a hot dryer to preshrink it.

2 Straighten the grain of the fabric.

A Snip about 1" into the fabric, cutting through the selvage edge.

B Grip each side of your snip, and tear the fabric all the way across to the other selvage.

- Once you've torn the fabric, you know that the tear line follows one weft thread, so the torn edge is straight.

C Do the same thing for the other raw edge of the fabric - snip into the selvage, and tear across the fabric through the opposite selvage.

D Fold the fabric in half, aligning the selvage edges.

E Determine if the corners line up, and are square. If not, stretch the fabric to square it up.

F Press the fabric using a steam iron set to the cotton setting.

3 With your tape, measure 12" along the selvage edge, and mark the selvage.

4 At the mark, clip about 1" through the selvage.

5 Tear the fabric all the way across, and snip through the other selvage. You now have a strip of fabric that is 12" high and the width of your fabric.

6 Snip into the fabric about 1" in from the selvage edge.

A Tear off the selvage.

B Measure 16" from the new corner, and snip. Then, tear at the snip. You should now have a 12" by 16" placemat. Repeat across the fabric, measuring 16", snip, then tear - depending on the width of your fabric you should be able to get one or two more placemats.

- Note: For each additional placemat going across, you only have to make one snip. The raw edge you tore for the previous placemat is straight, and doesn't need to be torn again.
- Don't worry that the threads of the raw edges are unravelling.

7 Continue until you have as many placemats as you want to make.

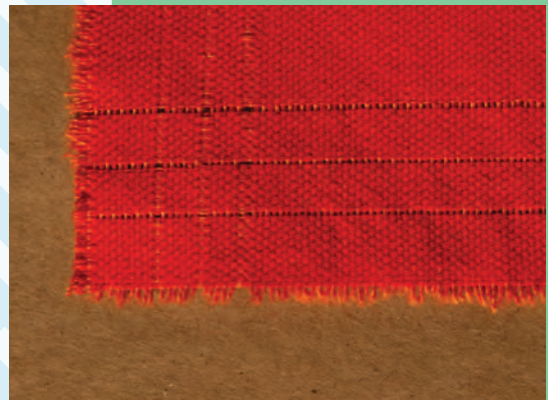




## Make the Placemat

- 1 Using your tape measure, mark  $\frac{3}{4}$ " in along all edges of each placemat.
- 2 Use your seam ripper to pull up a thread at the first mark. Grab hold of the thread and pull it out across the width or length of the placemat. You may need to grab the thread with tweezers if your fingers can't pull it. Do this all around the placemat (you will be able to see a line  $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the cut edge all the way around).
- 3 Put the placemat under the presser foot of your sewing machine, and carefully stitch along the lines where the threads you pulled used to be, using thread matching your fabric.
- A Start stitching where two lines cross each other.
- B Stitch to the next corner, stop stitching, and pivot where the lines cross.
  - To pivot, with your needle down through the fabric, lift the presser foot, and turn the fabric.
  - Put the presser foot back down, and continue stitching.

- C Continue stitching all around the placemat following the lines.
- D When you get to the corner where you started, pivot, and stitch about 1" past the corner on top of previous stitches. Snip threads.
- 4 Unravel the threads all the way up to your stitching to form a fringed edge. The stitches prevent further unraveling.
- 5 That's it - press your placemat, and you have one finished product!
- 6 Repeat for the remaining placemats.
- 7 Press the placemats, and tie them with a pretty ribbon - you've created a handmade set of placemats! Congratulations!



## Take It a Bit Further

If you liked pulling the threads, you can add some more interest to your placemat by pulling more threads. Try measuring  $\frac{1}{4}$ " in from the stitching, making a mark and also  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in and making a mark. Pull threads at each of the marks. Stitch as you did before. Now, continue pulling threads out between the two sets of stitching. This kind of decoration is called "drawn thread work". It is a bit of work, but well worth the effort when you see the finished product.