

## A DIY Face Mask

I never thought I would be making these and actually wearing them. Well, I am now. I had to go to the hospital with my son for a post operative check-up the other day. I have had a cough for the past couple of days and in these weird times you can't get a cough, can you? Nobody wants a cough now, right?



There is a shortage of masks out there, and we need to reserve as many as we can for medical professionals, so I did a bit of research and made 2 face masks at home. There are a lot of tutorials online these days and a lot of different theories about which model and which fabric is better to use. It also depends on if you're making the masks for personal use or if you're making them for the community. Sewers all over the world are making masks for hospitals and caretakers because they can't get any more of the real stuff. A diy mask is better than nothing, right?

First, the most important criteria is that it has to keep in or keep out viruses as much as possible. For that, the model has to fit you well. It has to cover your nose and mouth completely, with as tight of a seal as possible— but comfort is important to consider, too. You have to be able to breathe through the layers of fabric. If you are stuffy, you will not keep the mask on for very long. This is especially important for children, I think. In addition, it has to be washable at a relatively high temperature so you can reuse it.

I would like to emphasize that you have to make your own decisions about your health and seek the advice of the experts in your community. This mask will not keep virus particles out, but it definitely seems like it would help if someone coughed or sneezed directly on you. It might also help keep droplets from your own cough or sneeze somewhat contained. Make your own call here or **ask for professional advice**.

If you are making these for your community or a charity organization, I would definitely check with them regarding what they want. They might have special requirements or demands.

Here is some additional information about material, layers, filters, and more:

### **About the material**

Woven cotton has some pros but also cons. It's easy washable at a high temperature and it's comfortable against your skin. Cotton doesn't keep out the viruses very well, I read. Cotton soaks up humidity from your breath, which is not good 'virus wise'. Polyester and polypropylene are denser, so they keep out viruses better, and don't soak up humidity as much as cotton. But they are more difficult to work with and people don't tend to have this material in their stash. Non-woven material appears to be better than woven material, [according to this article](#). They compared different materials and criteria and concluded that the fabric that is used for a cotton t-shirt is the best option. So, you can start cutting up old t-shirts!

<https://smartairfilters.com/en/blog/best-materials-make-diy-face-mask-virus/>

### **The number of layers**

For breathability, one layer is most comfortable. I wore my mask for an hour and one layer was already a challenge for me. I felt a bit cramped.

The article above also says that the difference between 1 and 2 layers isn't that big when it comes to protection. But most governments are now insisting on 2 layers. If you want to insert a filter, you need 2 layers.

### **A filter?**

Some people are inserting filters like a piece of a new vacuum cleaner bag or just an ordinary paper tissue. A lot of governments are advising to put in a filter.

If you want to add a filter, you need to make a mask with 2 layers for sure.

### **Elastic or ribbons?**

To hold the mask to your face, you can either sew on elastics that hook behind your ears, or that go all the way around the back of your head. Elastic is easy and fast to attach, but elastic might not withstand high temperatures when you wash the mask. If you are not making it for someone in your house, a ribbon is more likely to fit.

We also have a tutorial for an ear strain head strap for a face mask. Some health workers have soar ears of wearing masks with ear loops day in day out. This might help them. [LINK](#)

An easy and fast way to make the straps is using jersey strips, just cut 3/4 inch strips from an old t-shirt. They won't unravel or fray and are easy to tie.

### Choose a pattern

If you look at the patterns that are going around, there are the “duck’s beak” pattern and the “rectangular-pleated” pattern, with a couple of variations.

In this post I’m explaining the “folded rectangular” pattern. This one is constructed like surgical masks and I think this is what health workers would like to wear. A finished mask is 4.5 inch to 7 inches.

### The rectangular pleated face mask pattern: 2 layers with an opening for a filter.

Cut 2 pieces of fabric: 8 inch x 8 inch



Measure 1 inch and press a hem of 1 inch (towards the wrong side) at one side. The filter will be put behind these turn-ups. This is the bottom side of the mask.



Attach the top sides of the inner and outer fabric together with a 1/4 inch seam allowance, right sides facing.



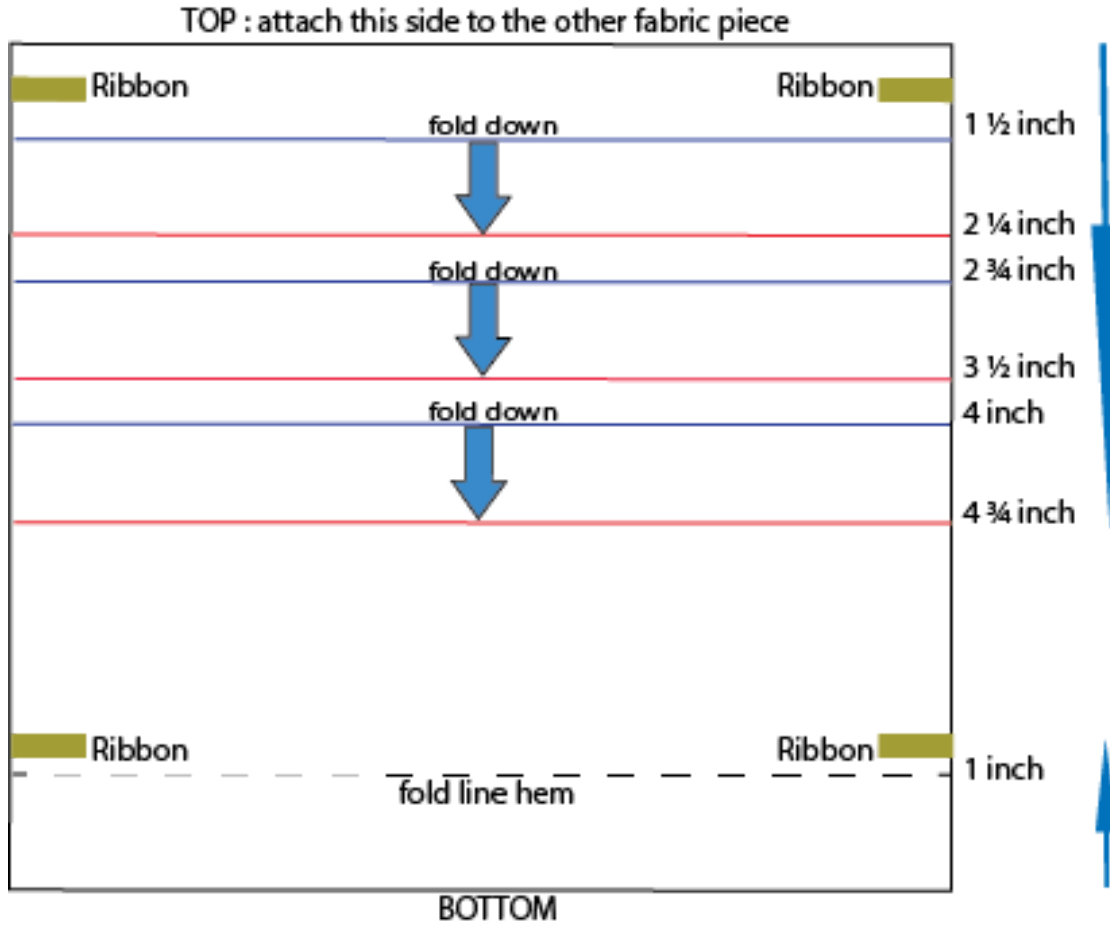
Mark and iron on the fold lines on both the inner and outer fabric and stitch down at  $\frac{1}{4}$ ". The pleats have to be facing down both on the inside and outside.

It's easiest to use 2 different colors for marking the fold lines. I'm using heat erasable markers that I can iron away. Alternatively, you can use another temporary marker and use a full line and a dotted line to make the difference.

Start measuring at the top of the fabric pieces on the right side where you've sewn them together.

Here's a little drawing that helps to understand how to mark for the pleats and where to add the ribbons (or elastic)





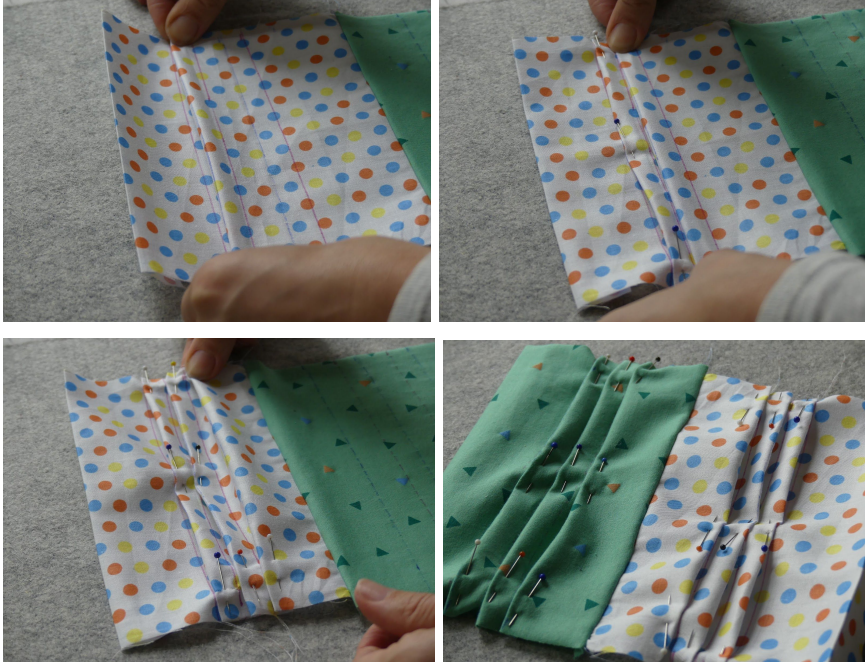
Measure and mark on the right side, from the top:

Blue lines at 1 ½, 2 ¾, and 4 inch (= 1 ¼ inch between 2 blue lines)

Red lines at 2 ¼, 3 ½, and 4 ¾ inch (= 1 ¼ inch between 2 red lines)



Fold the blue line towards the closest red line at the right side of the fabric. Pin the folds down. Do this for the 3 folds.



Press all folds. Sew the folds down at the edges at  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.



Cut 4 cotton ribbons 15 inches in length. You can use bias tape that you've sewn together, or pre-made ribbons, or make them yourself from fabric strips.

Pin the 4 ribbons (or the elastic) to the right side of the inner fabric at the marked points. Place the raw edge of the ribbon or elastic on the edge of the fabric. When you fold the 2 fabric piece's right sides together, the ribbons or elastics are caught in between the 2 fabric pieces.





Pin the 2 pieces together, right sides facing. Sew the 2 sides together with a 1/2" seam allowance. The bottom side can stay open or you can close it with a topstitch.



Turn the mask to the right side. It's ready to wear.



If you want just 1 layer, take the size of the inner fabric, hem all 4 sides at 1/4 inch, mark, iron and sew the folds and attach the ribbons or elastics.

Wash the mask regularly at a high temperature to kill all germs. Don't wear it longer than a couple of hours in a row. You will probably need more than 1 mask for every person in your home.

Take care, stay in touch with your loved ones, and try to stay healthy in these confusing times. Did you already check out our lively Facebook Group? Lots of fun stuff and very creative people to discover!

An  
Blogger & vlogger @ MadamSew.com