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SEWING BLOG

Turn Flat Sheets Into Fitted Sheets in 6 Easy Steps

By **Irene Valle** on September 28, 2016 Add to Favorites

In need of a fitted bed sheet but can only find a flat one in your linen closet? This tutorial is for you! Read on to learn how to sew fitted sheets starting with a flat sheet.

WHY MAKE DIY FITTED SHEETS?

1. Fitted sheets can cost more than the flat ones — here in Italy, they cost more than double a flat sheet.
2. Sometimes fitted sheets are not included in bedding sets.
3. Fitted sheets can be hard to find in luxury natural fibers, like linen or hemp blends and sturdy, durable cotton wovens.
4. If you have a bed with unusual measurements, you know how hard can be to find a fitted sheet that fits.

Whatever your reason for learning how to sew fitted sheets, don't worry: They're super easy to DIY! Let's get started with this tutorial, created for those (like me) who have tons of flat bed sheets laying in their closet but could use more fitted ones.

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DIY FITTED SHEETS TUTORIAL

WHAT YOU NEED:

- One flat bed sheet for your mattress size (or bigger)
- Flat 3/16" or 1/4" elastic (you will need approximately 50" in length)
- Matching thread
- Sewing machine
- Scissors
- Pins
- Measure tape
- Serger (optional)
- Rotary cutter and cutting mat (optional)

STEP 1: MEASURE YOUR BED

To take precise measurements you'll reuse several times. After all, a bed won't grow like a weed, so you can reuse those numbers over and over.

As you take your measurements, keep these things in mind:

1. Remember to measure exactly from one corded edge to the other, laying the measuring tape flat and straight on top of the mattress.

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2. You don't want anything on top of your mattress except a mattress protector, if you use one.
3. If you're using brand new flat sheets, pre-wash them before you cut them. Otherwise, you'll end up with too-small fitted sheets: A woven cotton could shrink significantly, depending on various factors.

HERE'S HOW TO MEASURE YOUR OWN BED:

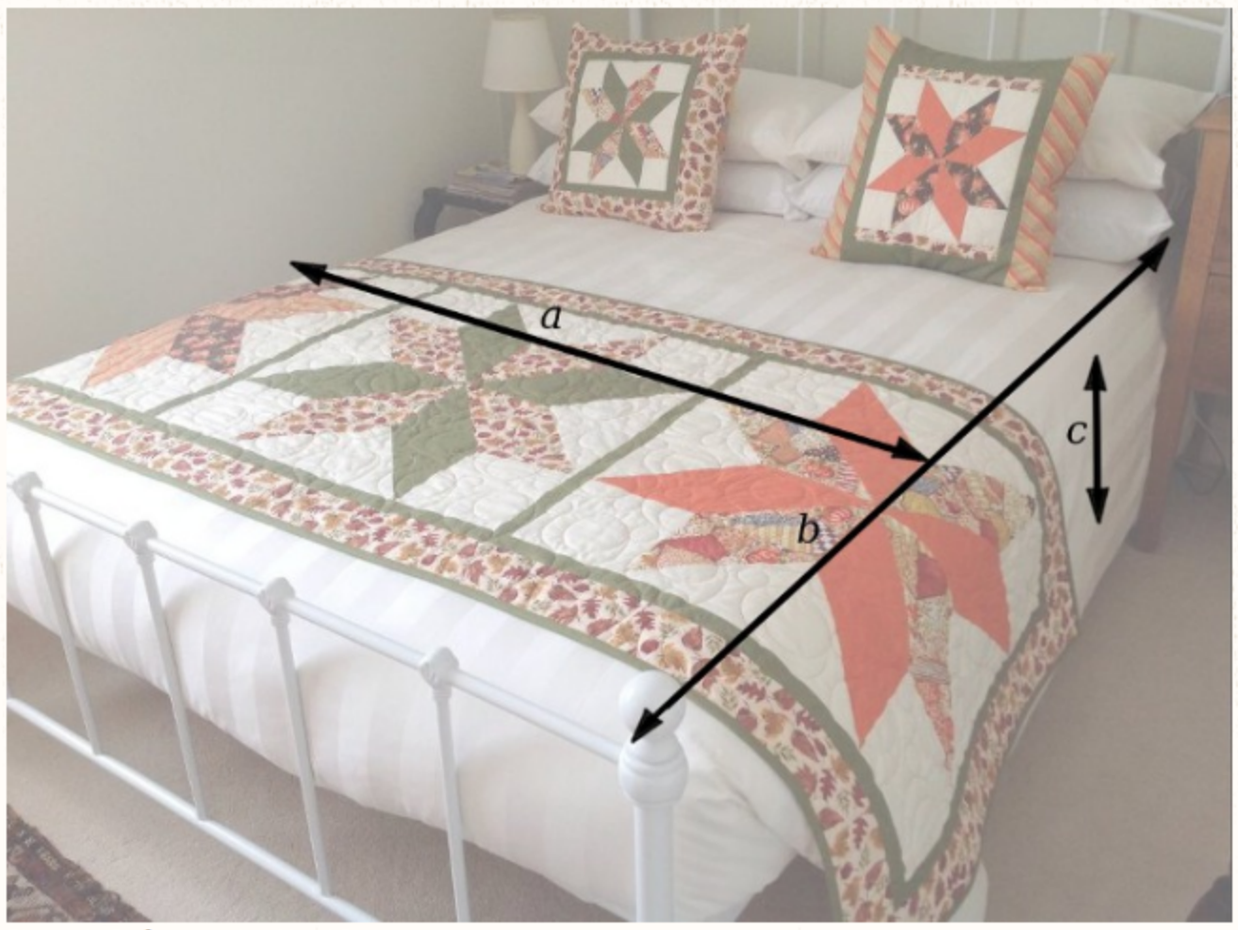


Photo via Craftsy member Meryl S

Take the measurements for width, length, and thickness as shown above, either in inches or centimeters.

For a consistent look — and to be sure your fitted sheets DIY will be on grain — snip and rip off two contiguous existing hems and start measuring from those raw edges.

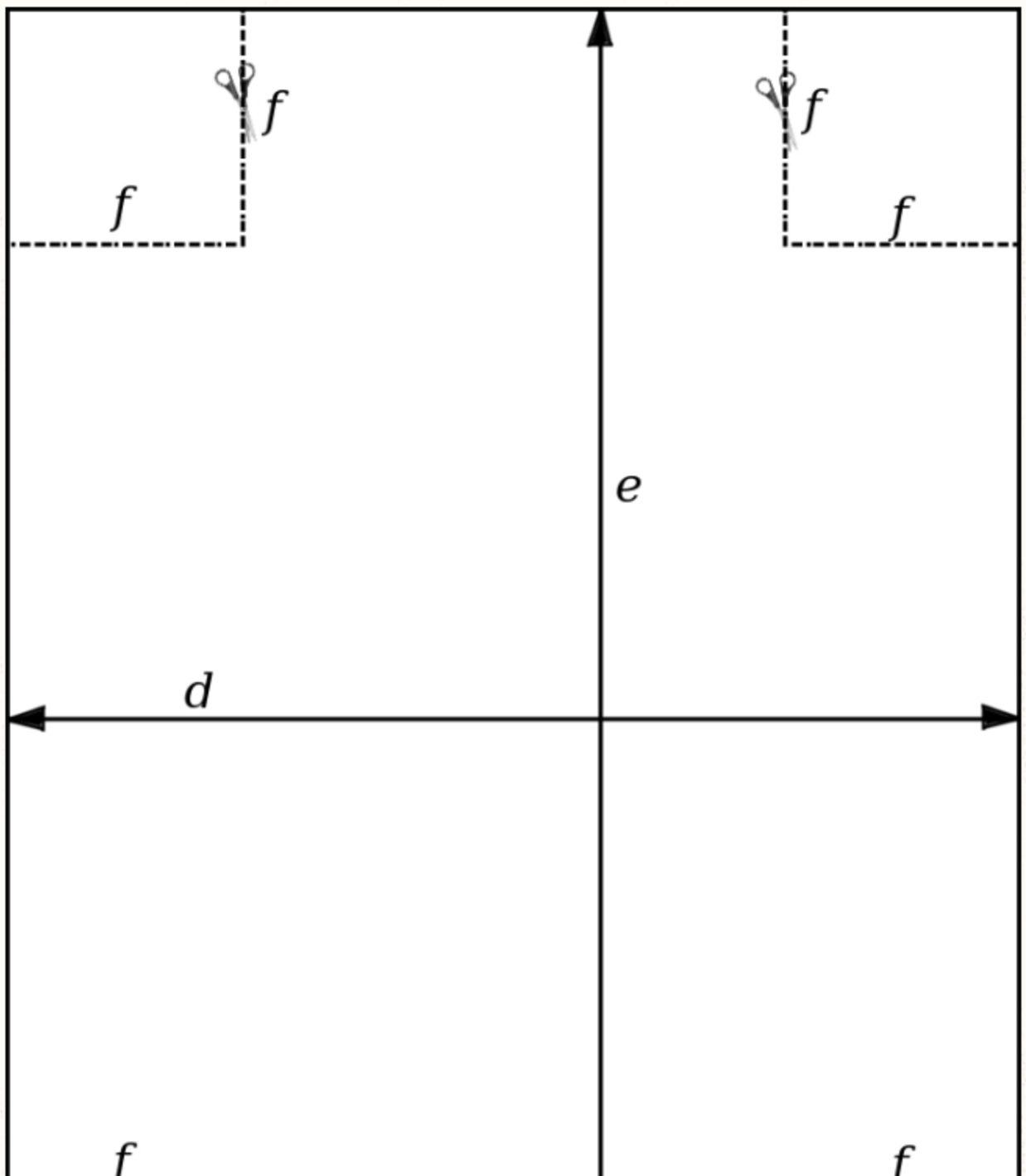
STEP 2: CUT YOUR FLAT SHEET

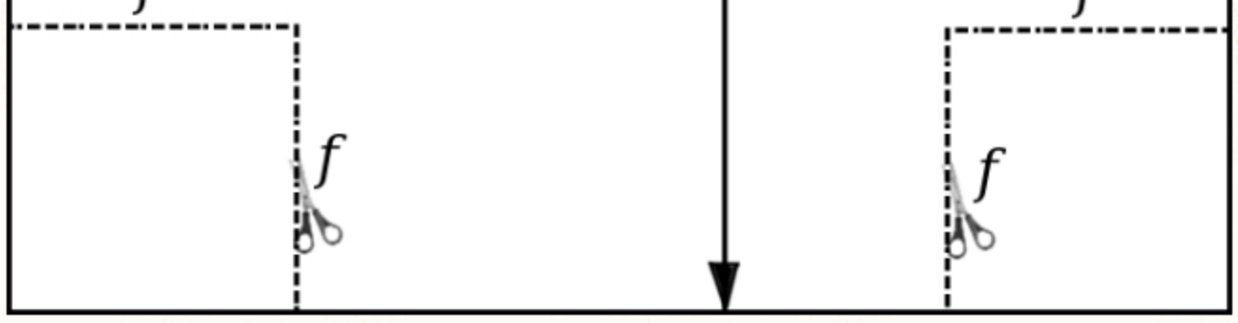
If you want to take a quick shortcut, use the free Fitted Sheets Calculator I have made for you. You only need to take the three measurements shown above, pop them into the calculator and you'll instantly get your fabric measurements in the same units.

OR, FOLLOW THESE QUICK MATH INSTRUCTIONS:

- For the *width* of your fitted sheet: add the width (measurement A), the height twice (measurement C times 2), plus 5" (13 cm) for two seam allowances and extra fabric to slide under the mattress. This is measurement D.
- For the *length* of your fitted sheet: add the length (measurement B), the height twice (measurement C times 2), plus 5" (13 cm) for two seam allowances and extra fabric to slide under the mattress. This is measurement E.

Cut the sheet to size. *Tip: If you have a fabric with a pattern printed on it, make sure it goes in the right direction!*

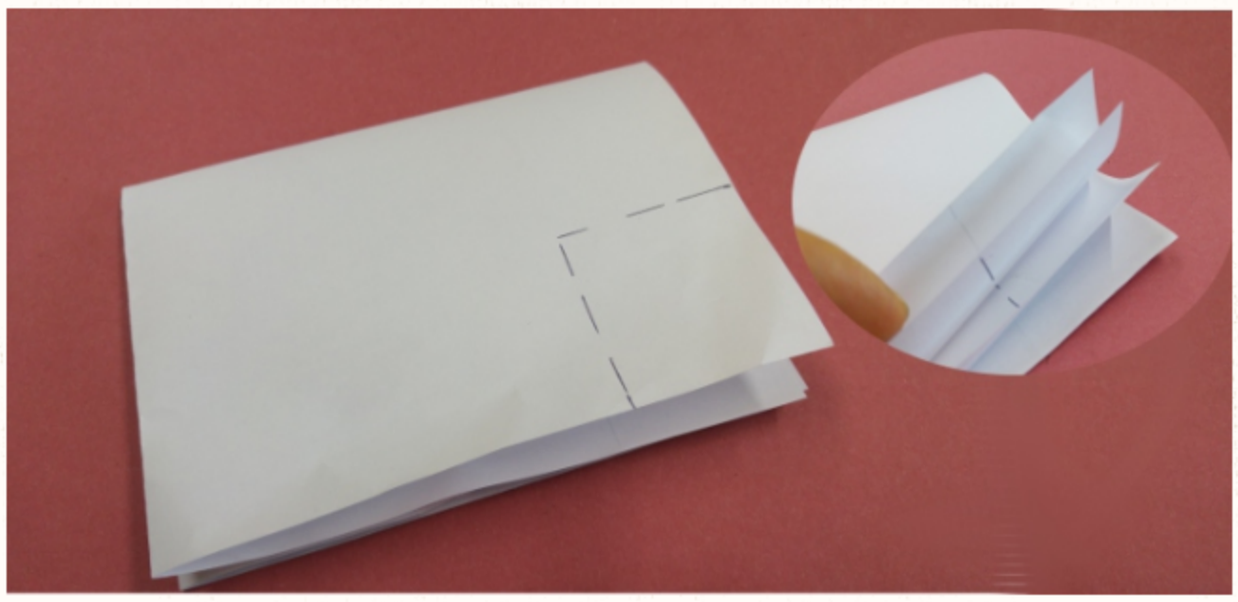




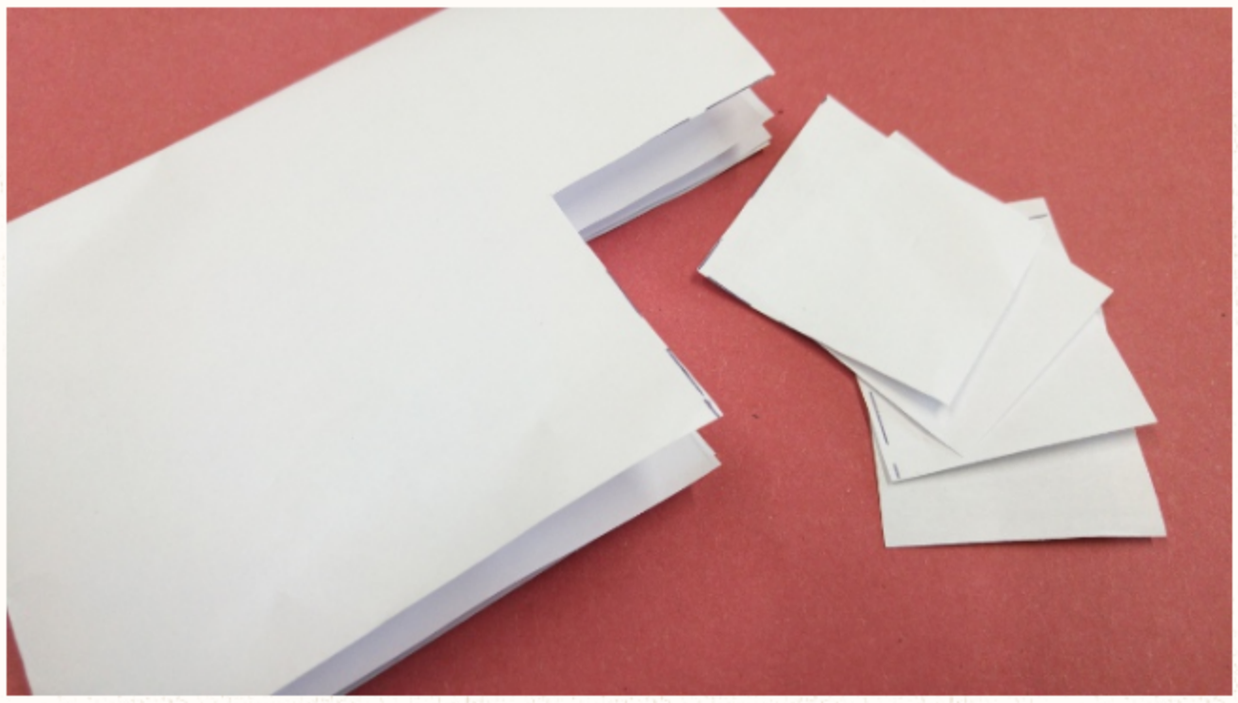
STEP 3: CUT THE CORNERS OF THE SHEETS

Then, you'll cut off each corner. The corner cut should be a square that's measurement C + 3" or 8 cm (which the calculator will measure for you). This is measurement F.

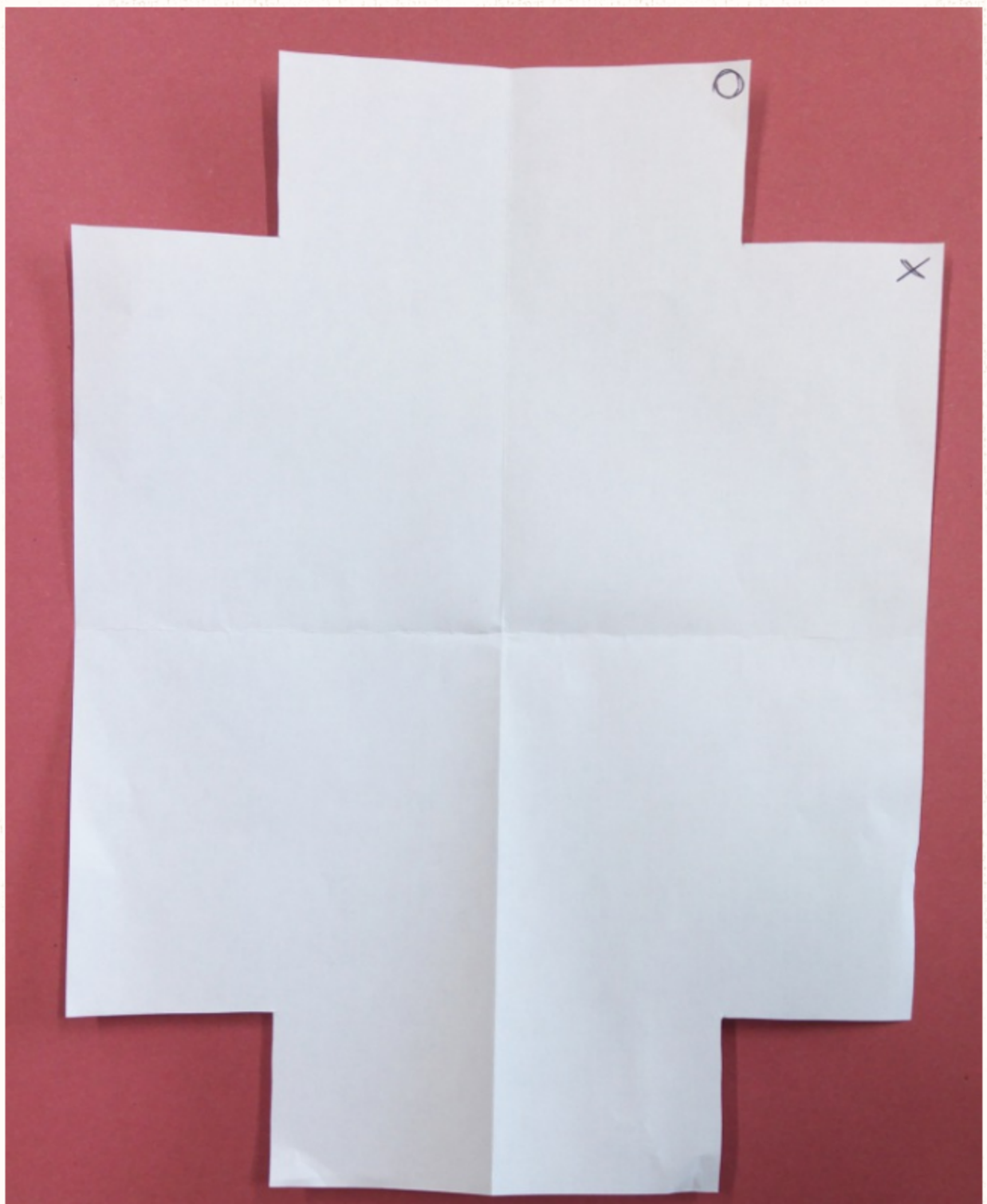
Fold the fabric in half by length and then again in half by width, which will pile the four corners together in one spot.



Mark measurement F on both sides, starting from the corner. Cut out the square — use a rotary cutter and cutting mat to make this easier.



Your fabric will look something like this after it's cut:



STEP 4: SEWING THE SHEET CORNERS

With the right sides together, fold over the edges of one of the corners, matching the X and O shown on the picture above.

Sew from X and O mark to the point of the missing square, using a ½" seam allowance. Then trim and zigzag stitch the edge, or serge the edge with a four-thread overlock like I do).
Tip: To make your fitted sheets even more durable, you can sew the corners with a French seam.

Repeat for the other three corners.

Try the almost-done fitted sheets on to make you're you're on the right track!

STEP 5: ATTACHING THE ELASTIC

If you have a serger, run a three-thread overlock all around the raw edge (if you're a little lazy like me, use a four-thread overlock, so you don't have to pull one of the needles and one spool off!).

If you don't have a serger, press the entire raw edge ¼" toward the wrong side.

Then, press a ½" hem toward the wrong side of the fabric. Measure 16" on both directions from each corner seam. Mark those eight spots with your favorite marking tool or a pin.

Secure one end of the flat elastic to the wrong side of the fabric, ¼" or more in from the overlocked hem (or the first pressed hem), by sewing a few zigzag stitches one on top of the other (use stitch length of 0).

Be sure to sew the elastic into a single layer of fabric, on its wrong side, and not into a double layer or on the right side of the fabric. This way it will stay hidden into the casing.

Select a three-step zigzag stitch on your sewing machine, using your max stitch length. Select a width that allows you to sew onto your stretched elastic and just barely off onto the fabric on

each side. Testing on your fabric scraps is the key: For my 3/16" elastic and my machine, a medium width of 3 was just fine.

Here's how it should look, once it's done:

The easiest way to attach the elastic is to pull it as much as you can and finger-pin it to the fabric in front of your sewing machine with your right hand every 2-3 inches.

Once you reach the presser foot with your right hand, stop (needle down), pull another portion of the elastic until it's 2-3 inches long and finger-pin it again to the fabric.

Each time you stop sewing, double check your needle is down into the elastic AND the fabric, so it won't go anywhere. Don't pull the fabric, though: Just keep it taut to help it feed consistently, using your left hand to guide the fabric coming out behind your presser foot.

Once you reach the next 16" mark, turn your stitch length to 0, sew a couple of stitches on top of one another to secure the elastic. Then cut the elastic.

Pull the elastic and see the magic of a three-step zigzag:

Repeat for the remaining three corners.

STEP 6: ADD THE HEM

Set the stitch to a regular straight stitch (length = 4, width = 0).

Starting in the middle of one long side, far from the corners, topstitch the hem all around from the wrong side, using the ½" pressed hem from the last step as a guide. Remember to backstitch at the start and the end of the seam.

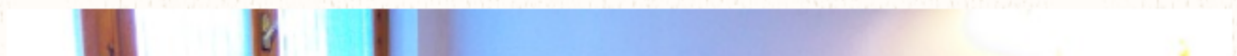
You can use a foot with a stitch guide like I do. It works like a charm to keep a topstitch consistent while sewing at the speed of light!

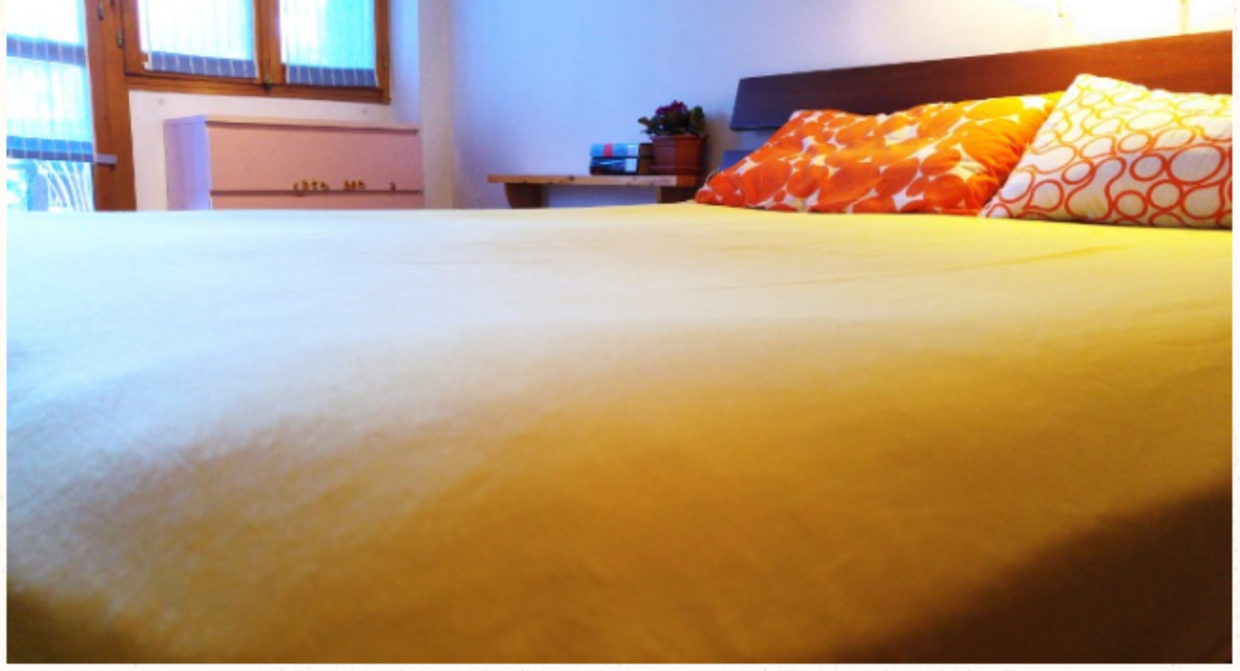
Once you are approaching a portion with elastic, stop with needle down and take a deep breath…

…pull the elastic and the fabric taut, then go on topstitching. The ½" pressed hem will be your BFF!

Bonus tip: If you've got a square-ish bed, like mine, where sides have similar but not identical measurements, include a marking tab. For example, I made mine using T-shirt fabric scraps on one of the shorter sides. Now I don't have to guess when putting the sheet on.

Ta-da! Here's your fitted sheet DIY where it belongs.





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67 COMMENTS

Gail
September 28th, 2016

Thank you for this very useful tutorial.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
September 29th, 2016

My pleasure, Gail!
Thanks for your sweet words <3
Irene // Serger Pepper.com

Reply

Marian
September 28th, 2016

Very nice. We just went from a queen size to a split king. I will be making some twins rather than throw out perfectly good queens.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

That's a good idea, Marian!
I never throw out bed sheets, there is always something interesting to do with them. I have a huge 100+ links post scheduled for next week on my own blog 😉
Irene // Serger Pepper

Reply

Lieve
September 28th, 2016

Thank you for sharing this technique! This is very helpful!

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

Always glad to help, Sieve!

Reply

Donna A Dodd
September 28th, 2016

I used this method to make crib sheets for my grandchildren. It saves money and gives so many more color options! It is often less expensive to buy a new full/queen or even king size sheet than it is to buy a single crib sheet or to buy yardage from the fabric store. You can buy a couple of sheets and make matching curtains, valances, dust ruffles, etc.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

I totally agree with you, Donna!
I am totally addicted to repurposed bed sheets!
In fact, I have a huge 100+ links post scheduled for next week on my own blog ?
Irene // Serger Pepper

Reply

Janice
September 28th, 2016

Thank you for this excellent fitted sheet tutorial. It is a project I have wanted to do for a long while.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

Great to hear I am not the only one with this “problem”, Janice!
I love when I find other women struggling with the same things I do :*

Reply

ginni
September 28th, 2016

I have made crib sheet before BUT i have never even thought of this. this it great. thank you sew much for sharing this. WONDERFUL

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

You made my day with your sweet comment, Ginny… Thank you <3

Reply

Allison Dey Malacaria
September 28th, 2016

Because I only sleep on old thick cotton sheets, usually from the thrift stores, I often have to make the flats into fitteds as those are much harder to find. I’ve just been pinning and boxing the corners for years. It’s provides a very clean look and line and saves on working with elastic if that’s not preferable. Sometimes it’s easier to find matching flat sheets than a set of flat and fitted. Good skill to have!

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

That’s interesting, Allison!
I find hard for my sheets to stay put after sleeping in my bed, if I don’t add elastics, but probably this is related to the thin modern cotton fabric I topically find… Or it’s us that don’t have quiet nights LOL
Thanks for adding your suggestions!

Reply

Pam
September 28th, 2016

Thank-you for the in-depth instructions. Plus, the instructions about the elastic are quite helpful when wanting to replace worn, stretched out elastic.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

That's true, Pam!
My sheets tend to be worn out on fabric first, but if you need to change the elastic, that's definitely the way to do it 😉
Tranne for sharing 🙂

Reply

Anita Haynes
September 28th, 2016

Thanks for measurements.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

My pleasure, Anita!
Thank you for taking the time to comment :*

Reply

Jola James
October 1st, 2016

I have wondered about how to properly do this! THANX for the tutorial!GREAT info!!!

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 1st, 2016

Awesome, Jola!
I find so satisfying to solve all those little everyday problems in a sleek time-saving way!

Reply

Colleen
October 4th, 2016

Irene,
Thank you so much for this tutorial. I've wanted to make fitted corners on the bottom of my top sheets for a while now but was afraid I'd mess up a perfectly good sheet. In lieu of elasticized, fitted corners, I just stitched an additional 10 or 12 inches on from a sheet I was parting ways with anyway, so my husband wouldn't pull it out every night. Your tutorial has given me courage! Thanks again, what a great share!

Sincerely grateful,
Colleen

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 4th, 2016

Thank you, Colleen, for your sweet words: they mean a lot to me!
We are fitted-sheets-addicted here, glad to see we're not alone 🙂
Please don't be afraid: keep on trying and you'll keep on learning new skills.
Happy Sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Cherrylmaree Rudd
October 8th, 2016

Thank you very much for this tutorial. I have tried to do this a couple of times, especially for our Camper Trailer mattress. I have made hard work of it though. This make the whole process so much simpler.

Very grateful
Cherrylmaree

Reply

Irene Valle
October 9th, 2016

Hi Cherrylmaree and thanks for liking my tutorial <3
I am so happy to hear I simplified your task: this is somehow my everyday mission… Writing easy instructions and create little helpers to make your sewing fun and simple!
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Elisbeth
October 28th, 2016

Hi Ms. Valle,
Thanks for this post. Are your measurements in cm or inches?

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 28th, 2016

Hi Elisbeth!
My measurements are in inches (“) but the calculator works with both.
I hope this helps 😉
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Brooke Smith
December 18th, 2016

Thanks for the tut! I’m going to use a loose version of this to make fitted sheets for our new caravan bunks!! I bought cheap king size quilt covers really cheaply on sale to cut up (y) 🙂

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
December 19th, 2016

That’s a great idea! You will end up with fabulous and customized fitted sheets, while saving a lot of money! That’s a win-win situation, in my book.
Happy sewing,

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Stephanie Smith
February 14th, 2017

The calculator sum is different to the written maths instructions. Please could you clarify as the calculator adds 5″ but the maths states 13″ added for the seams and tucking in for both width and length of fabric

Reply

Stephanie Smith
February 14th, 2017

The cut figures also vary between the calculator and the maths instructions – please clarify before I start

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
February 16th, 2017

Thanks Stephanie for spotting out this mistake!
Now it’s everything fixed <3

Reply

Deborah Werner
July 11th, 2017

Hello, I’m trying to make a sofa bed fitted sheet. The measurements are 59″ W, 69″ L, drop of 4″. The chart comes up with a fabric requirement of 64, 74, and 3.

The maths equal 72, 82, and 7.

Which is correct? The maths answer seems right.
Thanks for this great tutorial, no matter which is correct – this is an impossible size and I’m glad to have directions!

Reply

Irene Valle
July 11th, 2017

Hi, Deborah, and thanks for the heads up: the calculator wasn't working as expected 😕
I've now fixed it and it's giving the right numbers too, exactly matching the math instructions.
Can't wait to hear back about how your sofa bed fitted sheets come together!
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Rachel
February 23rd, 2017

Thanks so much for this very helpful tutorial. I recently discovered some holes in our fitted sheet and thought I was going to have to fork out $50 for a new set. Instead I knew some brilliant person would have come up with a way to remake a flat sheet into a fitted one. So I found a really nice, high quality cotton sheet at Goodwill and followed your tutorial. It was clear–thanks for reminding me to check the sizing before I put in the elastic because woops! I had to trim some more and redo two corners, but it worked out. The only problem I had was that I ran out of elastic. I guess 50" wasn't enough for me, but I just ripped some out of the old sheet and reused it. Feeling very thrifty=) $4 instead of $50 makes me happy.

Reply

Barbara
March 29th, 2017

Thanks for a great tutorial, will definitely give this a go

Reply

Janet
April 2nd, 2017

Thank you so very much for sharring all of your very clever information

Reply

Ann
April 6th, 2017

I am not seeing the drawing for the fitting sheet. I can't see where to put a or d

Reply

Stephen
May 16th, 2017

Your spreadshet formulas are wrong for the cm calculation.
They refer to the wrong cells.

Reply

Irene Valle
May 16th, 2017

Hi, Stephen.
I see what you mean, they should now be ok.
Thanks for pointing this out to my attention.
Please let me know if you still have troubles with the spreadsheet!
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Andreas
June 7th, 2017

Thanks so much. You never made me feel lost during this project. I accomplished the task without having to unpick anything. I have finished one sheet and will now do a few more. You are a great confidence builder. Thanks again.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
June 16th, 2017

Thank you, Andreas!
Your sweet words made my day <3
When I write a blog post, I do it hoping it can show my love for sewing and teaching others to sew, and when it happens, I feel like I've done something good… Thank you So Much for putting this black on white!
Happy Sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Lisa Andrews
June 14th, 2017

Thank you so much!! I have several perfect flat sheets but need more fitted, this will save me big $$! Now I don't have to figure it out on my own!!

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
June 16th, 2017

Hi, Lisa!
This is exactly the result I was aiming for with this blog post! Just follow through and you're done 😉
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Laurie
June 20th, 2017

I have been trying so hard to find 2 king orange fitted sheets for our camper but can only find sheet sets. Now I can but a set and make the flat sheet a fitted sheet!

Reply

Susann Codish
July 12th, 2017

Wow. This is amazing. Just bought a new mattress with different dimensions and am aghast at the price of fitted sheets, but realized I have access to 450-500 thread count flat Egyptian cotton sheets. This could save me a lot of money. Thank you!

Reply

catalina botello
September 16th, 2017

hi, why is the cut(f) measurement 1.5 cms longer than the measurement width/length of mattress + depth of mattress?

Reply

Melissa
November 16th, 2017

Hello, I'm using to make an odd sized sheet for my toddlers bed, it's a bit smaller than a twin. But much bigger than a crib mattress. My question is regarding the elastic. Do you run the elastic around the entire sheet? Or only at the corners?

Reply

Mariette Forget
February 28th, 2018

Hi! I have made my very first crib sheet and I want to thank you greatly because your explanations on how to measure the mattress was very very helpful! Thanks a million! 🙂

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
March 1st, 2018

Thank you Mariette for appreciating my tutorial.
Your sweet words totally made my day.
Irene // SergerPepper.com

Reply

namy
March 9th, 2018

Hello, Thanks for the nice tutorial. I have question – can we use king flat sheet and turn it into king fitted sheet or usually you have to go a size down say queen on mattress to be able to give enough fabric to fold under?

Also spreadsheet is giving error, CM column for width d is giving missing reference error?

Reply

Josie
March 14th, 2018

How much elastic should I use in each corner.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
March 15th, 2018

Hi Josie!
For each corner you need enough elastic to cover 32″ when stretched. The exact length depend on the elastic you are using, I can't guess a measurement not having your own elastic to test.
Il hope this helps.
Happy sewing,
Irene //Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Robin
March 19th, 2018

I am confused on a measurement. If we add 5" to account for extra fabric to put in elastic and to tuck under, then that is 2.5" for each side. So why do we add 3" to get a measurement for cutting out the squares in the corners? It seems like it should be adding 2.5". What am I missing? Thank you!

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
March 21st, 2018

Hi Robin!
I add that more room to allow the turn of the cloth around the mattress edges.
I hope this helps.
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Marie-Elena Baker
March 21st, 2018

THANK YOU SO MUCH !!!
This is a marvelous tutorial and I loved the calculator !!! It really helped!
This has made it such an easy project ! Your instructions are just great!
Love your name, "Serger Pepper Designs" !
I am ready to join your band!! ha ha !
Cheers!
Marie-Elena

Reply

Amanda
April 8th, 2018

Calculator is not working for me either. There is a missing reference value and my width is coming up as 17 inches which is too small.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
April 13th, 2018

Hi Amanda!
I am struggling with password protection not working on this spreadsheet like it used to work.
People keep on messing it put, no matter if it's password-protected.
I have fixed it again and again and again, in the last few months.
It should be ok, at the moment. Hopefully, it will stay this way 😕
I will search for another solution for this tech problem; in the meanwhile, it should work (until anyone else will have fun with it.
I hope you'll be able to use it.
Happy eawing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Gina
April 11th, 2018

Wanting to use your calculator, but width (d) doesn't seem to be calculating correctly as it's calculating 17″ for width of sheet, but that can't be right when the mattress width is 37″. Would it be possible to fix the calculator formula? Guess I'll try the math in the meantime. Thanks.

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
April 13th, 2018

Hi Gina!
I am struggling with password protection not working on this spreadsheet like it used to work.

People keep on messing it put, no matter if it's password-protected.
I have fixed it again and again and again, in the last few months.
It should be ok, at the moment. Hopefully, it will stay this way 😕
I will search for another solution for this tech problem; in the meanwhile, it should work (until anyone else will have fun with it.
I hope you'll be able to use it.
Happy sewing,
Irene // Serger Pepper Designs

Reply

Sherine Stephen
May 7th, 2018

Hi Irene thank you for sharing your valuable knowledge with us…I appreciate it very much…I passed this on to a girl who is trying to make a living out of this… I intend doing the same…may God bless you immensely. Once again thank you very much. Sherine Stephen

Reply

Sue
May 28th, 2018

finally I can have fitted sheets that fit my crazy sized RV mattress. I had some brand new king flat sheets that made great fitted sheets with your directions.!!!!!

Reply

Jenny
July 27th, 2018

I want to make sheets for my friend's trailer. One corner has an angle so I wanted to put elastic all along the bottom from corner to corner. How much elastic should I use?

Reply

Jessie
August 23rd, 2018

I am using your instructions to make fitted sheets for 2 twin air mattress cots. They are only 7" high and are held in place by a cloth pocket affixed to the cot. They allow maybe an inch of the fitted sheet underneath. Your cut measurements section says they allow for the sheet to go under the mattress but don't specify how much. Can you help with this so I can adjust my math?

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
August 28th, 2018

Hi Jessie
As you cared on step 2, since I am adding 5" for the extra fabric that goes under the mattress and I am using a 1/2" sa, I have something less (because of the turn of cloths) than 2" of extra fabric under the mattress, on each side.
I hope this helps 😉
Happy sewing,
Irene // SergerPepper.Com

Reply

Judy
October 4th, 2018

Thank you for this tutorial, it really helps. I just have one question. I want to put elastic all the way around and have trouble figuring out how much elastic I need. I is not that I am worried about buying too much (it is not that expensive) 🙂 I just want to make sure that it will go around the bed, yet hold it in place. My mattress size is 138.5x190x30cm

Reply

Irene // Serger Pepper Designs
October 6th, 2018

Hi Judy!
I would buy a length of elastic that cover the whole perimeter of your matters (although you'll need around a 75% of this length) because you need to grab the elastic to pull it and attach it and also because not all the elastics have the same amount of stretch, so I prefer having an excess of it than not having enough.
That said, I would make sure I have 6.5 meters of elastic (138×2+190×2).
Being a cheap piece of haberdashery, I'd suggest you to buy a 25 Mt roll on the web: it will cost you approximately the same and you won't have tiny leftovers, since you'll cut the elastic just when you're done attaching it (not before).
Just my two cents, I hope this helps you!
Happy sewing,
See you on SergerPepper.com

Reply

Manuela
November 14th, 2018

Hi Irene,
Firstly may I say that your tutorial is excellent, very easy to understand and follow. So thank you. I am though stuck and hoping that you can help me out as I don't know how to alter the formula to have more material on the underside. I am in fact making cushion covers for my couch and I made a cover from scrap following your instructions and it worked out perfectly. However I feel I need a little more tucked under as kids and dogs are jumping all over it, well sometimes anyway.
Thanking you
Manuela

Reply

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