

How to Sew a Fabric Bowl

January 14th, 2009

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Linda Permann, contributor



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Use your fabric bowl to store notions, buttons, jewelry, or other small trinkets.

Photo: Linda Permann

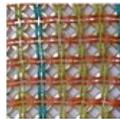
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Sew up a sweet and soft coiled bowl to stow all your notions, threads, and more. I learned to make these at my local [sewing](#) store, and they have been such a hit that I just had to share.

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 Int

Here's what you'll need to get started:

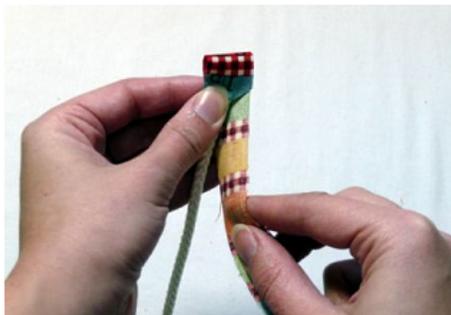
- 50 feet of 1/4-inch- to 3/8-inch-diameter [cotton clothesline](#). This is available at big box chains and hardware stores-just make sure it seems soft enough for a needle to pierce.
- Several strips of 1/2-inch- to 3/4-inch-wide fabric, cut selvage to selvage. You'll find that the thinner strips are actually easiest to work with. If slightly fraying fabric bothers you, you can cut your strips on the bias. This is too fussy for me but will give your finished bowl a cleaner look.
- Sewing machine loaded with a NEW quilting/sharp needle
- Thread to match or contrast with your fabric. (You will use a lot of thread to make a big bowl, so wind two bobbins before you get started to avoid later frustration.)
- One binder clip ([they look like this](#))
- Cording foot. (This is totally optional-if you have one, use it; if you don't, your standard foot will be fine.)



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The basic idea is that you are going to build the bowl by coiling the clothesline around itself by sewing each successive coil to the previous coil. You will wrap the clothesline with fabric as you go, so the process involves a lot of alternating between wrapping and sewing the coils.



To start, cut one short edge of a fabric strip at a 45-degree angle. Fold it down over the end of the clothesline and carefully wrap it around the clothesline a few times. Even if it's a little messy, you won't notice on the final product.

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Place the end under the foot of your machine. Put the needle down, using the machine to hold the clothesline in place. Wrap the fabric around the clothesline counterclockwise, angling the fabric strip slightly so that the wrapping doesn't get too bunched up. Wrap anywhere from 12 to 18 inches of clothesline, then use a binder clip to hold the end in place.



Next, fold about 1 inch of the wrapped end down to the left of the length of clothesline. Place the fold under the foot of your sewing machine as shown. Using a zigzag stitch, sew down the fold.

When you are close to the end of the fold, put the needle down, raise the foot, and pivot your work, turning the folded end to the left. Put the foot down again, hold the wrapped clothesline close to your work, and sew the next part of the clothesline to the piece. Continue to pivot the work, coiling and sewing more clothesline as you go to form a base for your bowl.

When you are about 4 inches from the end of your wrapped clothesline, stop sewing with your needle down (to hold the work in place). Remove the binder clip, and wrap the rest of the clothesline with the remaining fabric of the current strip. Continue sewing the coil.



About 4 inches before the end of the clothesline and fabric wrap, stop sewing with your needle down. Cut the fabric end at a 45-degree angle as shown, then cut a second fabric strip in a reverse 45-degree angle. Insert it underneath the fabric strip on the clothesline, hold it in place, and begin wrapping the clothesline with the second strip.

Continue to sew, wrap, and add new strips of fabric as necessary. Make a base of at least 3 inches in diameter if you want to make a larger bowl; this way, you will still be able to fit the bowl under your machine as you add height.



To begin adding height to your bowl, hold the base at an angle. Continue to coil and sew around the base while holding the bowl at an angle. If you hold the bowl at a shallow angle, it will slowly grow taller and wider. If you hold it at a sharp angle (almost perpendicular to the machine's foot plate), it will grow taller without gaining much width. With time, you'll get a better feel for this.

Continue to coil around until your bowl is approximately the size you want it to be. If you don't want to add handles, skip the next step.



To add a handle, pull the wrapped coil away from the bowl and continue to sew along the edge of the bowl, skipping the wrapped coil for about an inch or two, as shown. Press the coil back into the side of the bowl, and catch it again where you'd like the handle to end. Continue sewing around and add another handle directly opposite of the first, if desired.



When you come around to the handles again, just line up the wrapped coil with each handle and sew it in place. The easiest way to do this is to place one on the left side of the handle and one on the right, holding the coil to the handle as you sew. I only add two rounds of coil for each handle on small bowls, but as always, you can play with it.

Cut the clothesline where you'd like to end the bowl. (You may have to unwrap back to that point—just make sure there's at least 4 inches of fabric strip overhanging the end of the clothesline.) Wrap the end of the clothesline as best as you can. I usually leave a little bit of the fabric strip hanging off so that I can hold on to it.



Press the end under the edge of the bowl as shown so that the end point won't be so obvious. Sew over the end, backstitch, and remove the bowl from your machine. Trim off any excess fabric from the wrapped end, and you're done!



Use your fabric bowl to store notions, buttons, jewelry, or other small trinkets.

Be sure to log in and share your creations!

See more of my projects on my personal [blog](#), and look for my new book, [Crochet Adorned](#), in stores August 11, 2009.



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Comments (66)



AlwaysSewLove writes: I've made three so far and am wondering if anyone has had any luck piecing the clothesline into your basket. I hate to waste what is left on my roll but it's not enough for a whole basket. Thanks for any help!

Posted: 9:39 pm on November 19th



jaly63 writes: I'm always looking for a project that incorporates scraps-I'm a sewer, so I have lots! And that is deliciously colorful. Having said, I didn't read through prior posts! Have you ever done a throw rug using this technique? I know the project will get slightly unwieldy as it grows! But....it seems easy and gorgeous. Thanks for the posts and for you followers examples. Very motivating.

Posted: 11:57 am on October 31st



ann6340 writes: I've made several of these and love to give them away as gifts. I also embellish the bowls with either fusing fabrics to them, adding trinkets/charms/beads, and/or yarn.

Posted: 1:37 pm on September 13th



darenest writes: I've tried to make the bowl using two different sewing machines and my zig zag stitch works at first and then starts going straight and then zig zags randomly. I bought quilting needles but it's still doing it. Can anyone tell me how to fix this?

Posted: 4:31 am on August 17th



Thequiltlady writes: Just keep it flat for a rug?

Posted: 6:23 pm on March 30th



Dizzyest writes: I have made at least 25 and actually sold some which was a pleasant surprise. Having a blast with these things. But can't get my sides straight, they always want to fan out. Any help sure would be appreciated. Getting ready to start another!

thanks
Delores

Posted: 11:26 am on October 30th



Ygillan writes: I'm now on my third basket/bowl and it's really fun! Just a suggestion: CUT THE FABRIC ON THE BIAS. It makes wrapping SO much easier. My first two baskets - which turned out beautifully - were a bit "fuzzy" with fraying edges of the straight-cut strips. Not a bad feature but I decided to try the diagonal cut on my third bowl and the wrapping of the cord goes WAY faster and no fraying. It just has a more finished look to it. Also, on the last two rows of chord I switched to a contrasting RIBBON wrap, which, honestly, took the bowl/basket to a whole new level. Also, how about making a lid for the bowls with an inverted one on top, big button knob? Just a thought...

Posted: 9:24 am on June 13th



Tomib writes: Where can I see a picture of the picture of the pincushion?

Posted: 10:33 am on March 29th



HCDiane writes: Never mind....figured it out myself.

Posted: 5:58 pm on January 11th



HCDiane writes: Is anyone else but me having problems with their sewing machine keeping the zig-zags? I have 2 sewing machines and have tried both and they both keep skipping some of the zig-zags. I am so frustrated!

Posted: 12:44 pm on January 6th



HCDiane writes: What size machine needle do you use and what size thread do you recommend?

Posted: 9:30 pm on January 5th



Koshin writes: I found in Poland in my town only 5 mm cotton string (its about 0.1968 inches) or 5.5 mm (0.2165 inches) would it be appropriate? Please help me because i have to take here at least 10 000m to order, and i dont want to waste my money

Is it good enough to do it with 5mm or 5.5mm cotton string??

Best regards

Posted: 2:43 am on December 2nd



dianic writes: Thank you so much Linda! Best tutorial on the web... I made a great little bowl with some frayed denim, hand-dyed fabric and tie-dyed fabric... Looks great and I have to say I am going to experiment with different fabrics and make all my Christmas gifts this year from coiled, covered rope!! I mentioned your tute on my blog today - <http://alteredartandstuff.wordpress.com/2011/06/17/project-denim-part-deux/> Rosie =)

Posted: 7:31 am on June 17th



MeSewPretty writes: Has anyone tried substituting stretched t-shirt strips (like for a rug project) for the clothesline? Someone told me I could just use a dab of elmer's glue stick to add new strips... any thoughts. great project thank you.

Posted: 11:29 am on June 1st



BadgerACat writes: I have so much trouble hand sewing a handle on these baskets. My machine isn't industrial enough to do it.

I use a sharp sturdy needle - and pliers to pull it through. I get overzealous and pull too hard and end up breaking the thread.

Hints? Tips?

Most appreciated.

Missy

Posted: 9:12 am on March 10th



Jetmujs writes: woowow this is awesome and your tute too, thank you for showing this methode, really like it, :-D

Posted: 9:52 am on November 6th



BadgerACat writes: My clothesline seems thin which seems to cause me trouble figuring out the width and the length of my stitch. Any help would be appreciated.

Posted: 8:30 pm on August 3rd



isnessofwhatis writes: Mare:

I had a hard time getting mine started too, I had the same problem you are having. Getting it started is by far the hardest part. Here is my possible solution for you

Take a 5 inch or so section of rope and fold in half. Raise your presser foot as high as possible. on my machine there is the normal height and if I pull up on the lever a bit it raised up a bit more. Start sewing about an inch from the fold and do the normal back stitching. What you are creating is a leader. So now you have a leader and your rope for the bowl, put the leader under the presser foot so it almost touches the back of the needle and your project rope so it is just under the needle. Make sure the threads are towards the back of the machine. Start the stitching very slowly and when the thread is firmly locked in place you can help the piece through by pulling on the threads.

Posted: 11:35 pm on July 15th



maresan1 writes: I'm really excited about trying to make these fabric bowls but am having trouble sewing it on my machine. I may be wrapping the fabric too much on the rope but it won't slide easily through my machine, which is a very good Pfaff. I bought cotton rope and its not big in diameter. I would really appreciate any suggestions.

Posted: 8:10 am on July 9th



isnessofwhatis writes: I love this tutorial. I looked at several on the internet and this is by far the best one. The pics that go along with it are great. I've made two bowls so far and have gotten MANY great compliments on them.

Posted: 10:02 pm on May 15th



Susanspel writes: I had some tangling of thread when I first started. I have a Baby Lock Crafters Choice machine. I went to my sewing guy and he told me I was using the wrong size bobbin. The bobbin was too small and would jump around causing the tangling on the basket. Don't know if this is your problem, but it worked to solve mine. Not all bobbins are created equal I guess. Just got done with the Easter season and made many baskets close to 40 I think. I have some other ideas I am trying with the coiled fabric idea. I will post if they turn out. Still love making them.....just can't stop.

Posted: 9:52 pm on April 4th



susansv writes: Am making my first one and like a couple others who posted, my bottom thread is all loose and bunched up and awful. Any idea what I am doing wrong? I tried different tension settings and no help. thanks.

Posted: 5:22 pm on March 28th



KenmoreToni writes: I just love making bowls and coasters as gifts and YES it is addicting Linda! I have made maybe six different bowls this past year and maybe two dozen coasters! It is so relaxing and satisfying and a great way to use left over fabrics. I also quilt and like to make a bowl to match with the leftovers. Like to make in different shapes to go under the pie plate, square pyrex etc. and place home made goodies inside as gifts. I thank you for posting this info as have been asked how to make and you explain it beautifully!

Posted: 11:19 pm on March 12th



sophiecai writes: lovely.....gonna try after my vacation....thanks for sharing

Posted: 9:30 am on February 17th



Tinita writes: how come my fabric bowl thread turns into a giant thread nest?

Posted: 9:57 am on February 8th



LindaPermann writes: brymj- yes, so long as it's something the needle can pierce (ie. still rope-y, but not actual plastic). it all depends what you're willing to put through your machine. :)

Posted: 12:19 pm on February 5th



brymj writes: Can you use synthetic clothesline? I could not find cotton.
Thanks for your help!

Posted: 7:17 pm on January 27th



DomesticDisaster writes: I love this, thanks for the awesome tutorial. I'm having a bit of trouble though (I'm new to sewing). The thread on the bottom of the coil is all loose and bunched up. Any idea what's causing this?

Posted: 9:00 pm on January 18th



tipperrose writes: Thank You... Your directions are excellent... please keep up your Good Work... Thank You for sharing your talents !

Posted: 5:56 am on January 16th



Sculptedthreads writes: You can find more instructions in Susan Breier's book "It's A Wrap" published by Martingale & Co. I just noticed when I went to their website that she has "Volume II" coming out in February.

Jan

Posted: 10:08 am on January 15th



wishcrafter writes: please ignore my last post i did not look at the tutorial right i am trying to find home work my husband has lung cancer and only part of one lung left he is great and we are happy it is just hard with me not working

Posted: 8:24 pm on January 6th



lindaFlorida writes: If you want to have the nonfrayed look, you can iron the edge a 1/8 or 1/4 of an inch that will be showing. Also, If you want to wrap many strips at a time, a few drops of white glue at the start of a new strip holds it nicely. It is addicting. I even made a little one, using thin rope, as a Christmas ornament.

Posted: 7:05 pm on January 6th



wishcrafter writes: hi are you making a tube around the rope? or are you stitching through the rope? could you tell me the finished size and price range I'm in fi without a job and trying to hang in there thanks so much for your help

Posted: 6:58 pm on January 6th



etees writes: Hi Just made 2 bowls.They came out okay for this first try.I would like to make a small rug. Do I do it the same way????

Posted: 7:23 pm on August 21st



don_mae writes: I LOVE this fabric bowl. Getting ready to start on the 3rd.

Posted: 8:15 pm on July 22nd



Susanspel writes: This is the post that got me started on making these baskets. I have made about thirty to date and sold ten of them already. This post gave great directions that are easy to follow. I have started coiling the fabric around the rope when I am watching t.v. or riding in the car. Once I have several clotheslines wrapped I sit down and sew. Creating different shapes and adding details with sculpting the line around the basket has given new interest to the baskets. I also go to thrift sales and antique stores to find fabric and other embellishments. You can find a lot of different buttons and beads that give the basket character and make it one of a kind. Thanks for getting me started.

Posted: 10:50 pm on July 15th



texasjewell writes: I love these. They should come with a warning. Very addictive. Your directions are great.

Posted: 9:21 pm on June 8th



jkundhi writes: This is such a cute idea! I totally need to make one!

Posted: 12:48 am on April 21st



allenma writes: I have been looking for instructions to make this basket everywhere, thanks for posting it. I am making one of these baskets for my daughter to be used as her Easter basket. Could someone please give me some ideas on how to make a handle for it. Thanks so much.

Posted: 9:56 pm on March 16th



LindaPermann writes: shellyc- I totally understand-- they are so addictive! i was just thinking about going to stock up on more clothesline this week.... not that i need any more bowls.

Posted: 12:42 pm on March 11th



shellyc writes: I'm obsessed with making these - I'm on my 8th bowl. They have totally different personalities based on what fabrics you use. LOVE THEM! Thanks for this tutorial.

Posted: 10:29 am on March 11th



tacoslinger4 writes: Just found this pattern and really excited to get started on it. Thanks for sharing it.

Posted: 4:19 pm on February 21st



LindaPermann writes: thanks all- i'm glad you're enjoying the tutorial!

Posted: 11:30 am on January 30th



love3Es writes: I just finished my first fabric bowl, and I LOVE IT! It's so sweet, and it was so easy to make (thanks to your great tutorial!). I'm going to use it as a thread/waste catcher beside my sewing machine.

Now I think I'm going to make a few for Valentine's gifts and fill with Hershey's Kisses!

Posted: 11:20 am on January 30th



miekenoer writes: This is such a wonderful basket, i really must try it! There's one thing I don't understand, maybe my English isn't good enough. Do you stitch on the cord when wrapping around the fabric or just on a side of the cord to hold the fabric around it? Or did I read it wrongly?

Posted: 4:37 am on January 24th



LindaPermann writes: elle1- the cord is round. think of a round shoelace- it's basically that, but slightly larger. It's called clothesline at the hardware or big box stores, but if you can't find it, you can also buy cording in the home dec section at joanns (it's \$.29/yard or you can get it in a package). i think the nylon cord would work fine too (in fact, i'm pretty sure i tried some of that with good results, because i started experimenting with everything!).

Good luck with your bowls, cat beds, and placemats everyone!

Posted: 2:10 am on January 21st



jodieth writes: Awesome. I hope I can make one as good as you. This is a great gift idea. I could make one and put valentine chocolate kisses in it! Thanks.

Posted: 1:32 pm on January 19th



elle1 writes: Linda, is the cord you use round or flat? Can you use nylon cord, the type used for blinds? Thanks, I'm dying to make one of these baskets.

Posted: 12:45 am on January 18th



RumbleFluff writes: I LOVE LOVE LOVE this project!!! I'm going to make a cat bed, starting with basically a flat "placemat", then building up the edges with strips made from really long "Z"s". I hope it works! Thanks for this tutorial!

Posted: 4:58 pm on January 18th



evch writes: I never use my cording foot but I am sure I must have one. This is wonderful.

Posted: 2:07 pm on January 17th



shelleyskud writes: Linda, this is sooo amazing. I live in South Africa and this is very similar to baskets one can buy here, except, they are not made of fabric. I'm showing all my needlework friends.

Posted: 7:51 am on January 17th



adina60 writes: Another wonderful idea for using up scraps and I have plenty of those!

Posted: 6:04 am on January 17th



SewDanish writes: Great instructions! Batik fabric works really well and makes beautiful bowls. And one can make great placemats using this technique :-)
<http://www.SewDanish.etsy.com>
Scandinavian Textile Art, Unique Handmade Supplies

Posted: 2:54 am on January 17th



LindaPermann writes: quiltertq- awesome! post 'em up in the gallery if you have a chance!

Posted: 8:10 pm on January 16th



quiltertq writes: I have made three of these baskets so far. They are so fun to make and give to friends.

Posted: 5:45 pm on January 16th



gracie_girl writes: Very nice...You could make a whole plethora of beautiful storage containers to match your decor! Lovely...

Posted: 4:51 pm on January 16th



PetitGateau writes: This is great! I can't wait to try it!

And the pincushion is awesome!
Kayte, pattern coming soon for that??? hint hint :)

Posted: 2:52 pm on January 15th



LindaPermann writes: thanks everyone! it's really fun and addictive-- just took me a while to get around to the instructions. i hope you have fun with it.

and kayte- i love that pincushion. this probably isn't the only time it will show up in my posts. :)

Posted: 4:22 pm on January 14th



Sister_Diane writes: I love your fabric bowls. Thank you so much for the tutorial!

Posted: 12:36 pm on January 14th



erika_kern writes: Add me to the lovers! I'm a huge fan of this and have so many scraps! This is great!

Posted: 12:35 pm on January 14th



Androides writes: Very interesting tutorial!!! Great idea!

Posted: 12:05 pm on January 14th



kaytet writes: hah! and i was so excited by the bowl that i didn't even notice the pincushion that i gave you!!

Posted: 11:55 am on January 14th



kaytet writes: this is so great linda! i am so glad you posted the instructions!!!

Posted: 11:17 am on January 14th



CalPatch writes: GORGEOUS linda! i will have to try this; it would also make a great rug... and i love your little pincushion too ;n)

Posted: 11:11 am on January 14th



Lewidoo writes: Looks great. I want to try this. It's a pretty versatile idea. Might try and make coasters or hot mats.

Posted: 5:07 am on January 14th



ReneesFashions writes: OH, I really like this one ! I'm gonna have to try this.

Posted: 2:25 am on January 14th

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