

Notebook Pouches

The perfect gift

By Tina Whiteley

It's always handy to have a little notebook or diary in your handbag, but somehow they always end up right at the bottom of your bag and they can start to look dog-eared after awhile. Putting them in a stylish case or pouch is ideal, as they are not only protected, but you've also got somewhere to keep a handy pen or pencil .

You won't need very much fabric to make them and if you have lots of scraps, they work well with mix and match linings. The pouches are easy to sew and they make great gifts.

You will need

- Outer fabric - cut 1
- Lining fabric - cut 1
- Batting/felt - cut 1
- Narrow Ribbon or cord - cut 1
- Sticky tape
- Button
- Scissors
- Machine sewing threads
- Cardboard for template
- Quilting ruler
- Rotary cutter and mat
- Sewing machine
- Size 12 top stitch needle
- Iron and pressing cloth

Instructions

Step 1 - Make a Pattern Template

Measure your notebook, taking note of the height, width and thickness, to make your own template for the pattern pieces.

The required width of fabric will be twice the width and thickness of the notebook plus 2 inches (5 cm). The length of the fabric will be the height of the notebook plus 2 inches.

To reduce the bulk of the batting it's a good idea to cut it $\frac{1}{4}$ inch smaller all round, or you can trim it afterwards once you've sewn the seams.

For example, my notebooks were 3 inches wide, 4 inches high and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, so my outer and lining fabrics both measured 9 inches (22.5 cm) wide and 6 inches (15 cm) in length. I cut my batting to measure $8\frac{1}{2}$ " (21.5 cm) x $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches (14 cm).



Step 2 - Cut Out Fabrics

You don't have to make a template. You can take measurements and cut each fabric to size, using your rotary cutter, quilting ruler and mat. However, when making a number of these pouches for gifts, I find it's quicker to trace around a template rather than repeatedly measuring the fabrics.

As stated previously, it's a good idea to cut the batting just slightly shorter all round by

approximately a ¼ inch, so that it just catches in the stitching. It then doesn't bulk out the seam allowances, and gives a neater, flatter finish. If you want to cut the batting the same size as the outer and lining fabrics, you can always trim it up after you've sewn the seams. (In the latter case, you will only therefore need one template for all the fabrics if you are working with templates).

Cut a 3" length of ribbon for the button loop.

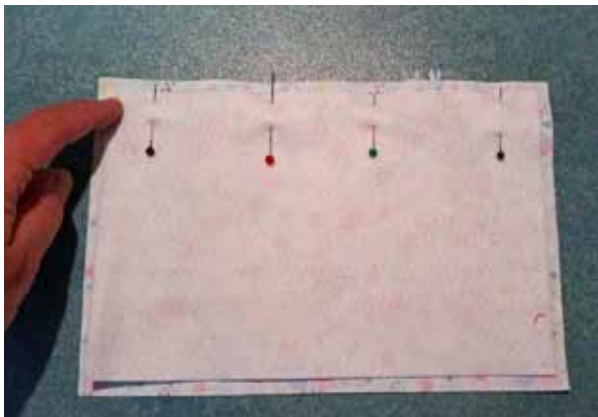
Step 3 – Placing the Ribbon Loop

Fold the outer fabric in half with wrong sides facing and press. Fold one edge in half again towards the centre crease and finger press. This is the centre back line to place your ribbon loop. Hold in place with some sticky tape, making sure the loop faces downwards on the right side of the outer fabric, as shown.



Step 4 – Sewing the Top Seam and Ribbon Loop

Place the lining face up and place the outer fabric face down on top of it. Place the batting on top of the outer fabric, making sure that all three layers are lined up together. Pin along the top seam as shown below.



Thread your machine with toning thread in the needle and bobbin and set a stitch length of 2.2 or 2.4. Make sure that the ribbon loop is safely tucked inside and the ribbon tails are just showing outside the seam line. Begin to sew the seam and when you get to the ribbon loop, sew just beyond it, reverse stitch back over it and then sew over it again and continue to the end of the seam line. This will reinforce the ribbon loop. Remove the sticky tape after you have sewn the seam.

Tip:

With most standard “A” feet the width of the edge of the foot to the centre stitching line is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (if you want to be really precise you can use a quilting $\frac{1}{4}$ inch foot). Line the edge of the “A” foot up with the edge of the fabrics and that way you will just catch in the batting as you sew. Depending on your sewing foot, you may need to move it slightly to the left or right to do this. (Repeat for later seams).

Step 5 – Pressing and Top Stitching the Top Seam

Open out the fabrics as shown below and press the seam flat to the outer fabric side. Once pressed, fold the two pieces back with wrong sides facing and top stitch along the edge of the seam you have just sewn as shown below.

For top stitching, adjust your stitch length to 3.



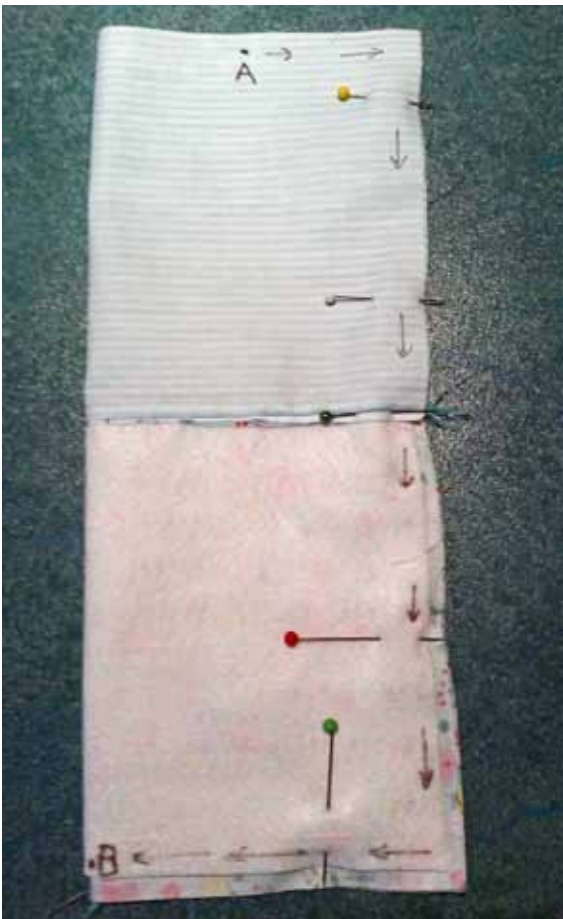


Make sure the ribbon loop is now facing up and stitch very carefully across it. Ideally, leave a tiny bit of the lining fabric showing just above the outer fabric, as it will look like piping and gives the top a nice neat edge. It will also give you a guide to stitch along, as you can effectively stitch in the ditch along the seam line.

Step 6 – Sewing the pouch and lining closed.

After top stitching, open out the lining and outer fabrics again so that they are both right sides up with the batting attached to the outer fabric, as per top image – step 5.

Fold the pouch in half so that the lining is at the top and the outer fabric and batting is on the bottom, as shown below.



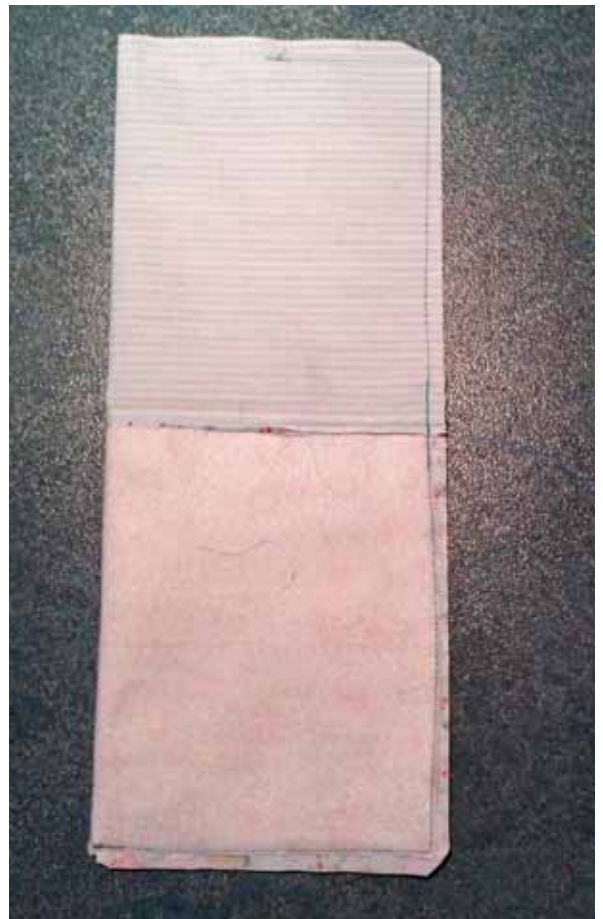
Carefully match up the edges and the piping lines in the middle and pin to secure. You will now be stitching all the way around, starting half way along the lining, leaving a gap so that you can turn the pouch through at the end. Adjust your running stitch length back to 2.2 or 2.4. Be sure to remove the pins before you reach them.

Start at point A, reinforcing the opening with a few reverse stitches at the beginning and stitch a ¼ inch in from the edge (again, just catching the batting) all the way round to point B, finishing with a few reverse stitches and lock stitch to secure.

Step 7 – Sewing the Pouch and Lining Closed.

Cut the corners of the seams on the diagonal, as shown below, to reduce bulk, for a neater finish when you turn through. Don't cut too close to the stitching and don't cut the corner where you have left the turning gap.

Trim the edges with a rotary cutter or pinking shears if you wish to neaten all the sides (except the side where you have left the turning gap. If you haven't pre-trimmed your batting, now is



the time to carefully trim it close to the seam, to avoid the bulk when you turn through.



To further secure the seams you can overlock or overedge them, as shown above. Leave a space near the turning gap to make it neater to close the gap when you turn through.

Step 8 – Turning the Pouch to the Right Side

Use a blunt ended chop stick to help push the pouch to the right side as shown, through the gap in the lining.



Step 9 – Sewing the Lining Closed.

Neaten up the gap and press the open seams so that they line up with the machine stitching. Then either sew the seams together by machine, using straight stitch - length 2.2 or 2.4, or, for an invisible closed seam, sew by hand, using ladder stitch.



Step 10 – Adding the Finishing Touches

Push the lining back inside the pouch and give it a final press. Sew a button of your choice to the front of the pouch, so that it lines up with the ribbon loop at the back, as shown below.

All that remains is to pop your notebook and pen into the pouch and you're all done.



Variations

You can also work larger and use these techniques to make a mobile phone, I-Pad or glasses case, varying the sizes accordingly. Alternatively, use little leftover scraps to work smaller, as I did to make this mini scissors case.

