STEADLEAF PRESS
GROW / MAKE / MEND

MAKE / M05 - USEFUL SEWN OBJECTS

Make a Simple Cushion Cover

Three measured pieces and a clean envelope opening.
No zip, buttonholes or guesswork in the cut list.



ORIGINAL THREE-PIECE CUT PLAN

370 x 370 mm front + 2 backs at 370 x 260 mm

FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Includes a dimensioned cutting diagram, assembly guide and a worksheet.

Calculated geometry, not a photograph or a physically fitted sample.

A measured envelope-back cover, using three fabric rectangles and no zip or button.

A useful cover begins with an honest measurement

For a first cushion-cover project, an envelope opening on the back avoids a zipper, buttonholes and the need to close an opening by hand after inserting a cushion. This design has one square front and two overlapping back pieces. The overlap allows a removable cushion insert to pass through the rear; it does not lock it in place or guarantee a snug fit. The cover is intended as an ordinary decorative accessory for an existing cushion, not bedding for an infant, a support device, an upholstered safety component, or a fire-resistant furnishing.

This original example targets a **nominal 35 × 35 cm flat cover** with a **roughly 11 cm overlap**, assuming precise cutting and sewing. It is based on a **35 × 35 cm cushion insert**, but inserts vary in fill, loft and corner shape. Treat the fit as untested until you try the actual insert. If the user needs a different size, the formulas below provide a planning method, not a prediction of how thick fabric will behave.

Your completed project should contain three correctly cut pieces, two clean back-opening hems, an overlapping back assembly, a continuous perimeter seam, adequately finished raw edges and an actual finished-size record. It is not necessary to claim perfect fit to learn from the first attempt.

1. Confirm the fabric, pillow and tools

Choose a stable, washable woven cotton or cotton-blend fabric suitable for the intended decorative use. Prewash and press it if the supplier's care information allows, so that later laundering does not unexpectedly change the fit. Avoid highly stretchy knit, heavily coated fabric or loosely woven material for the first trial. Check the right and wrong side of all three pieces. For a directional print, mark which edge should be at the top before cutting, especially for the two back panels.

For this example, have enough fabric for one **37 × 37 cm front square** and two **37 × 26 cm back rectangles**, plus a separate small scrap for testing the chosen stitch. This is a cut list, not a yardage guarantee: fabric width, directional matching, shrinkage and defects affect how much to buy. Gather fabric shears, measuring tape or rigid ruler, removable fabric marker, pins or clips, matching thread, a needle or suitable sewing machine, seam ripper and a safe pressing surface. Keep all pins accounted for. Utah State University Extension describes accurate cutting and measuring as basic sewing work and gives examples of seamed and hemmed pillow pieces. [1,2]

If using an iron, follow the fibre's instructions and the iron manufacturer's safety requirements. If using a sewing machine, follow its threading, presser foot, needle and electrical safety directions. This guide specifies construction steps but cannot validate your equipment or a novel material combination.

2. Put the cut list and seam allowance together

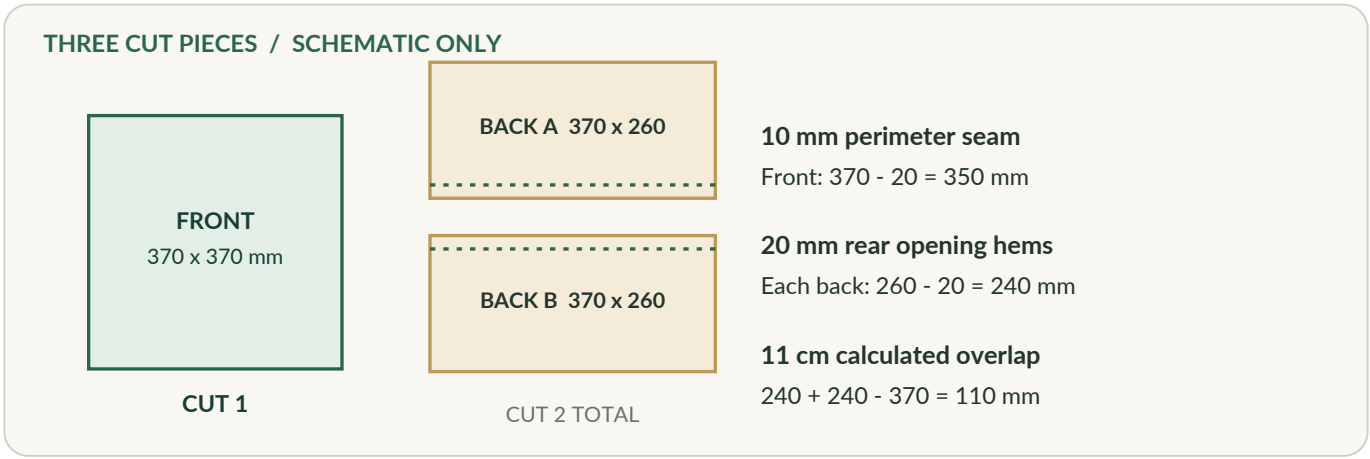
The **front piece** is cut at **370 × 370 mm**. The example uses a **10 mm** seam allowance all around, so its calculated flat finished dimensions are **370 − 10 − 10 = 350 mm** along each side. Do not add a second seam allowance to the dimensions given here.

Each of the two **back pieces** is **370 mm wide × 260 mm high**, cut as a rectangle. Only the long edge that will lie at the central rear opening is hemmed before assembly. Fold that long opening edge **5 mm**, then **15 mm** again to the wrong side; the completed hem consumes **20 mm** of panel height and encloses the raw cut edge. Each panel therefore extends **260 − 20 = 240 mm** from its raw outer edge to its hemmed inner edge.

Lay the two prepared back pieces across a **370 mm** square. One raw edge aligns with the top of the front; the other raw edge aligns with the bottom. The inner, hemmed edges overlap by a calculated **240 + 240 − 370 = 110 mm**, or **11 cm**. After a 10 mm perimeter seam, the visible cover is about 350 × 350 mm; the overlap remains roughly 110 mm in the central area. This calculation assumes the two hems are both accurate. It does not certify that the insert will never slip through the opening.

The downloadable cutting-plan PDF is a **dimensioned diagram, deliberately not a full-size cutting pattern**. A 370 mm square cannot fit on an A4 or US Letter sheet at actual size. Use the printed cut list and a real ruler on your fabric. Do not enlarge the diagram or infer measurements from its appearance.

3. Lay out and cut three clean rectangles



On the wrong side of the prewashed fabric, mark the front square and two back rectangles with a ruler. A large paper square can help you check perpendicular corners, but it is the actual measured edge that matters. Mark the intended top of each fabric piece if the printed pattern has a direction. Cut on the solid outer dimensions only; do not cut along the dashed sewing or overlap lines shown on the plan.

Before putting scissors down, count the pieces: one front, two backs. Confirm the front is 370 × 370 mm and that each back is 370 × 260 mm at the cut edges. Photograph or record a measurement that differs. A missing 20 mm on both backs can significantly shrink the overlap. Do not assume the cover will still close just because the fabrics are attractive.

Keep this first project simple. A piping edge, large appliqué, lining, cushion insert with unusual loft, gathered ruffle or invisible zip would change the stack thickness and construction. Those modifications need their own pattern and trial. The original example is three flat panels only.

4. Make the two back hems

Identify the **370 mm long edge that will become the opening edge** on each back piece. On the wrong side, turn 5 mm and press or finger-crease, then turn another 15 mm to hide the raw edge. Stitch close to the inner folded edge, securing both ends. Repeat on the other back piece. Do not hem the outer top or bottom edge where the perimeter seam will be sewn later. Do not hem a 260 mm short side by mistake: that would alter the outer width instead of creating the rear opening.

Lay both hemmed back pieces on a flat surface right side up, one above the other. Align the upper panel's raw top to the top of a 370 mm square and the lower panel's raw bottom to its bottom. The two finished hem edges

should cross and overlap near the middle by about 110 mm. The back assembly should cover a full 370 × 370 mm outline. If a large gap remains, stop and recheck the hem folds and cut sizes before joining it to the front.

Utah State University Extension's Reading Pillow project demonstrates an envelope-style construction using two hemmed and overlapping back panels. This Steadleaf design has its own 370/260 mm cut list and 10 mm seam allowance; the University project is cited for the construction principle, not as a test of this pattern. [2]

5. Stack the cover and make a perimeter seam

Lay the **front right side up**. Place the lower back panel **right side down** onto the front, aligning its raw bottom edge and side edges. Then place the upper back panel **right side down** over the lower, aligning its raw top and side edges. Both finished opening edges should sit inside the square, overlapping without being sewn together through their centres. The fabric right sides face each other where the front meets each back. Pin or clip the outer perimeter, making sure you have not trapped excess fabric in the overlaps.

For easier handling, make short basting stitches within the 10 mm seam allowance at the top and bottom edges where the back panels overlap, then remove temporary clips. Basting is not a replacement for the main seam. Inspect the opening again: you should still be able to slide a hand between the overlapping hemmed edges. If both hems have been caught together along the middle, correct that before sewing the perimeter.

Mark a continuous line **10 mm in from all four outer cut edges**. Starting on a straight section, sew the complete perimeter, pivoting at corners and securing stitches at the start and finish. Work steadily across the layered overlap, keeping the edges aligned. For machine work, follow the equipment manual. For hand work, use a consistent backstitch suited to this fabric and avoid gaps; a long loose running stitch is not an equivalent secure perimeter on a cushion cover. Do not sew across the centre of the envelope opening.

When the seam is complete, measure whether the outline is still square and inspect all four corners and the thicker sections where layers overlap. If the needle has missed a layer, turn and repair the section before inserting a cushion. Finish the raw perimeter seam allowances with an appropriate method for the fabric; for example, a controlled overcast or machine zigzag can limit fraying. Do not cut into the structural seam. [1,3]

6. Turn, press and insert the actual cushion

Remove all pins and the temporary basting that is no longer needed. Reach through the back envelope opening and turn the cover right side out. Ease the corners gently with fingers or a blunt turning tool. Do not force a sharp point through the fabric. Smooth the seams; press cautiously only if suitable for the fibre and equipment.

Measure the flat front face in at least two places. The calculated target is around 350 × 350 mm, not a guaranteed actual measurement. Turn the cover over and look at the overlap: both finished opening edges should lie flat, their raw edges concealed. Record the measured overlap if possible. No inner construction notes, loose threads or missed pins should remain inside.

Insert the cushion form gradually through the overlap without ripping the hemmed edges. Settle its corners and assess the actual fit. A lofty or firm insert may make the cover appear smaller and open the envelope wider. A loose insert may slip or wrinkle. Do not claim the back is secure solely because the cover lays flat without an insert. If the cover strains badly, remove the cushion and reassess rather than stretching the seam into failure.

7. Troubleshooting and safe adjustments

The back gapes open. Recheck the cut sizes, 20 mm hems and calculated 110 mm overlap. If the back panels were accidentally cut too short, extending their finished overlap without adding fabric is not possible. Start a new version with a measured back-panel length and test its fit; do not hide a short back with a promise that ironing will fix it.

One back panel is longer than the other. Confirm which edge received the hem and whether both panels began at 260 mm. Uneven 5/15 mm fold depths can shift the overlap. Carefully unpick and restitch an incorrect hem before assembly if the cloth allows.

The front looks rectangular, not square. Check whether the square was cut straight and whether every perimeter seam stayed 10 mm from its cut edge. A seam closer to the centre on one side changes the final shape. Record the difference, then correct the seam where possible.

The edges unravel. Inspect the fabric's weave and seam finish. An unlined decorative cover may need more careful overcasting or a fabric more stable than the one chosen. A serger or specialty seam finish is optional and requires proper instruction.

The corners are rounded or lumpy. Check bulky fold allowances and whether the seams are fully turned. Do not aggressively cut down a corner seam or puncture it with a sharp tool. Minor softness in the corner may be reasonable for thick cotton.

The cushion does not fit. The insert's label may describe nominal size rather than its real inflated dimensions. Measure the actual form and assess its thickness. A different fabric or size may be a better choice. This tutorial cannot certify the fit of a pillow it has not handled.

8. Record a first attempt, not a promise

Fictional planning example: Mae intends to cover a nominal 35 cm cushion with a medium-weight cotton remnant. She marks three panels and finishes the two back opening edges. At the assembly stage, she discovers that she folded one hem twice by 15 mm rather than 5 mm plus 15 mm. The overlap is smaller than expected. Rather than claiming the design gives 11 cm regardless, she records the actual hem and corrects the fabric while the pieces are still flat. The example does not say the final cushion fitted: no physical sample is being reported.

Keep a short record for the next cover: named insert and approximate loft, fabric type, front and back cut sizes, both hem folds, seam allowance actually used, measured flat size, measured overlap, and what happened during the fit test. It is reasonable to stop after a neatly sewn cover without claiming a durability or laundering result. This is a beginner decorative textile project, not a regulated nursery product.

One-page completion record

Insert label and actual dimensions: _____

Fabric / prewashing and pressing notes: _____

Front rectangle cut to: _____ × _____ mm

Back panels cut to: _____ × _____ mm (each)

Back opening hem, first / second fold: _____ / _____ mm

Measured overlap before perimeter seam: _____ mm

Perimeter seam allowance used: _____ mm

Any missing stitches or raw edges corrected: _____

Actual flat cover width and height: _____ × _____ mm

Real insert trial result, if performed: _____

Care instructions verified for actual fabric? Yes / No / Unknown

Sources and boundaries

[1] Utah State University Extension, **Basic Sewing Supplies**. Choosing basic cutting, measuring, hand-sewing and storage tools. https://extension.usu.edu/sewing/research/basic-sewing-supplies

[2] Utah State University Extension, **Reading Pillow**. Hemmed, overlapping rear panels, right-sides-together assembly and turning through the envelope opening; its dimensions are different from this original plan. https://extension.usu.edu/sewing/research/reading-pillow

[3] Utah State University Extension, **Four Square Pillow**. General techniques for back-panel preparation, basting, seam finishing and turning, not a tested endorsement of these exact dimensions. https://extension.usu.edu/sewing/research/four-square-pillow

The cut sizes and diagrams are original to Steadleaf Press and calculated digitally. The cutting-plan page is dimensioned but **not a full-size tracing pattern**. The size and overlap are design estimates, not measurements of a finished cover. This decorative guide makes no child-product, fire-safety, load-bearing or performance-compliance claim.

Three-piece envelope-back layout

DIMENSIONED SCHEMATIC - NOT A FULL-SIZE TRACEABLE PATTERN

Use a ruler and the written millimetre sizes to mark fabric; do not measure this illustration.



ASSEMBLY CALCULATION

10 mm seams all around the 370 mm front -> approximately 350 mm finished square.

Each back: 260 - 20 mm opening hem = 240 mm; overlap = 240 + 240 - 370 = 110 mm.

Calculated only: cushion loft, fabric and actual stitching affect fit.

Assembly and actual measurements

Use these steps with the written cut dimensions on page 1.

1 CUT

One 370 x 370 mm front; two 370 x 260 mm back pieces.

2 HEM

On the inner long edge of each back: fold 5 mm, then 15 mm.

3 OVERLAP

Bottom back first and upper back second, both right-side down on front.

4 STITCH

10 mm perimeter seam. Do not close the centre envelope opening.

5 TURN

Finish raw edges, turn through overlap, inspect actual insert fit.

FINISHED-COVER RECORD

Insert measured: _____ x _____ mm; thickness/loft: _____

Front actually cut: _____ x _____ mm

Backs actually cut: _____ x _____ mm and _____ x _____ mm

Hem folds: _____ + _____ mm | Outer seam: _____ mm

Rear opening overlap measured: _____ mm

Finished flat cover: _____ x _____ mm

Fit tested on a real insert? Yes / No Result: _____

Loose pins removed, raw edges finished? Yes / No

This original diagram is schematic. No real cutting, stitching, insert fit or wash test.

Decorative cover only; Original decorative-use cut plan; dimensions are calculated.