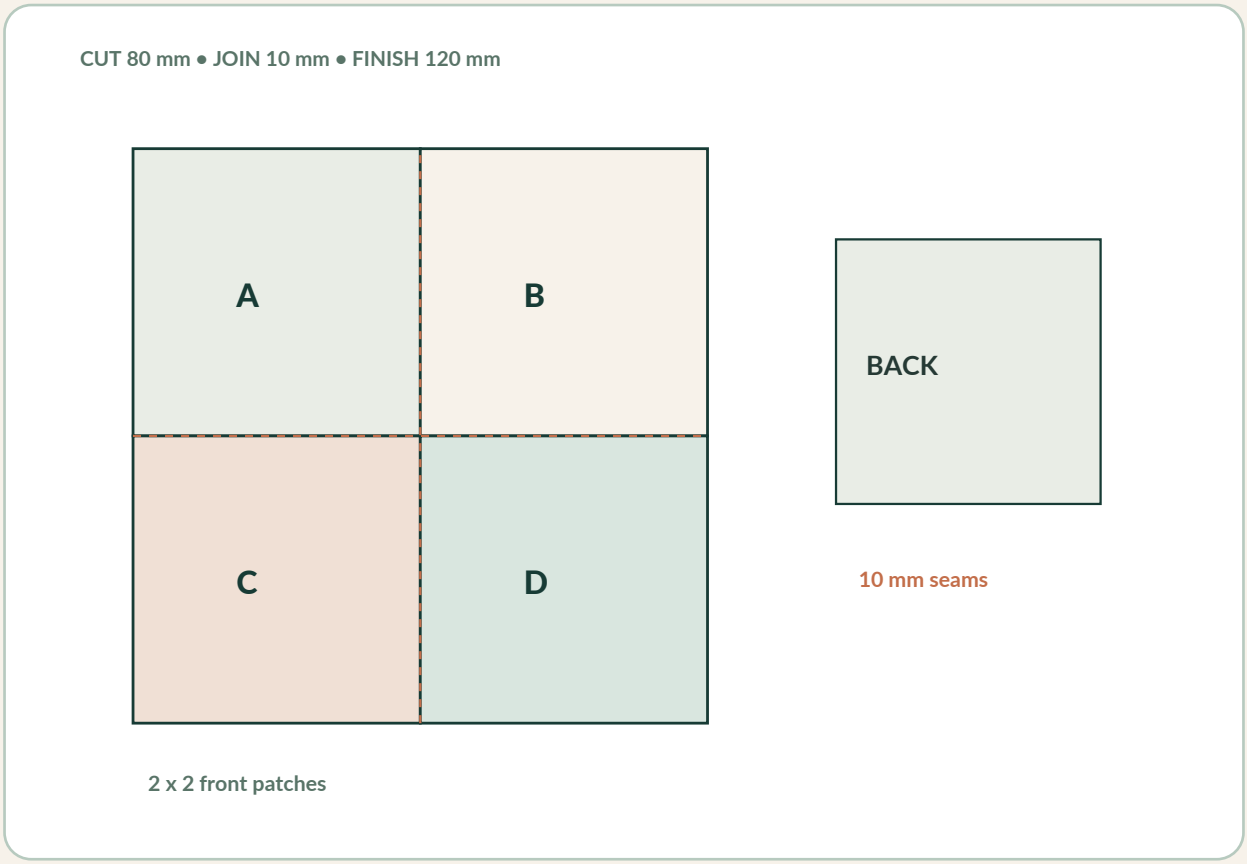
OFFCUTS & CREATIVE REUSE / PATCHWORK

Create a Fabric Scrap Patchwork Coaster

Four original patches, one measured backing, an honest use record



CUT 80 mm • JOIN 10 mm • FINISH 120 mm

Original illustrations and two reusable printable worksheets

Illustrative diagrams — not photographs of tested craft objects.

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Four measured fabric squares, a simple two-by-two patchwork front, one backing piece and a printable cutting-and-assembly record.

Four sound fabric offcuts can become a small, flat decorative coaster without buying a specialist patchwork template. The result is more useful when its dimensions, seam allowances and limits are visible from the beginning. This guide offers a specific **four-square two-by-two design** with a plain backing, a stitched perimeter and a small turning opening. The original cutting diagram and the two-page checklist are included in the free PDF.

This is **not** a hot-pad, potholder, oven accessory, microwave mat, food-contact surface, spill barrier or guaranteed heat insulator. Cotton fabric without tested insulation cannot be assumed safe beneath very hot cookware. Choose a cool, dry, lightweight object for a first decorative use, on a protected surface, and assess the actual finished coaster for the conditions you intend. Steadleaf Press drew and checked these instructions digitally; no sample was cut, sewn, washed, heat-tested or load-tested for publication.

1. Decide whether your scraps are suitable

Choose four clean, stable woven cotton offcuts of broadly similar weight and a clean backing piece. Avoid stiff coating, loose glitter, unidentified upholstery treatments, delicate historical fabric, stretchy knit and visibly deteriorated cloth for this first exercise. Reclaimed cloth must be clean and have a known enough history to judge ordinary handling. Follow its actual laundering instructions; do not automatically wash an unidentified or dry-clean-only fabric.

For the measured plan, you need **four squares cut to 80 x 80 mm** for the front and **one backing square cut to 140 x 140 mm**. A small ruler, removable marking pen or tailor's chalk, suitable fabric scissors, contrasting or matching thread, familiar hand needle, clips or properly managed sewing pins, and a secure place for sharps are sufficient. A sewing machine is optional only if you already know how to use it safely. A heat-safe iron and pressing surface are optional; never assume a fabric tolerates a certain temperature. Work on a stable, well-lit table away from food and drinks.

The four front squares can be a deliberate set of two colours or four pieces from the same fabric. Patterned fabric will show its direction differently when rotated. Lay the scraps on the table and confirm that each square fits *entirely* within sound usable fabric. Four small remnants with a combined area equal to four squares do not help if none contains a complete 80 x 80 mm patch.

Health Canada's arts-and-crafts guidance advises checking material identity and instructions, using suitable tools and keeping hazardous items away from children and pets [1]. Utah State University Extension lists fabric shears, measuring tools, pins and safe storage among ordinary sewing supplies [2]. These are general source-supported precautions, not an endorsement of this new pattern.

2. Understand the cutting diagram and seam allowances

The cut sizes are **not** finished sizes. This pattern uses a **10 mm seam allowance** at every joining seam and around the outside edge. Put two 80 mm squares side by side. When they are joined right-sides-together, the needle runs 10 mm inside each raw edge. The combined row is **80 + 80 - 10 - 10 = 140 mm** wide and still 80 mm tall. Make two such rows. Join the two rows with the same allowance: the raw patchwork top becomes **140 x 140 mm**. This is the same cut size as the backing.

Place front and backing right sides together, sew 10 mm in from all four outside edges, leave an unsewn turning opening and turn right side out. The nominal finished footprint is **120 x 120 mm**, because 10 mm is taken from each of two opposite edges: **140 - 20 = 120 mm**. Actual fabric, stitching and turning may alter the observed dimensions slightly. Do not call a sample precisely 120 mm unless you measure it.

The accompanying drawing is a **dimensioned assembly diagram, not a full-size fabric pattern**. Print it to read the sequence; measure fabric directly using an independent ruler. Do not lay the PDF on cloth and treat its drawn squares as physical-size templates. A change to the desired finished dimension requires a new cut calculation; multiplying the printed page automatically will alter margins and text, not just the design.

3. Lay out four squares before sewing

Put the squares in a two-by-two grid. Call the top row A and B and the lower row C and D. Keep an ordinary paper note of your arrangement. If the print direction matters, mark the back of each patch A through D lightly using a removable method. A label attached to the work surface is safer than an ink mark whose removal is unknown.

Check that the raw widths and heights really are 80 mm. The important boundaries are the **stitch lines 10 mm in** from the raw edges. Mark one joining line on each pair if this is your first attempt. Make each mark on the wrong side so it will not appear on the finished face. If the cloth frays badly as you handle it, stop and select sounder fabric; a nominal seam allowance is not a promise that unstable fabric will hold.

Keep the intended seam allowance consistent. Changing to an 8 mm join on one row and a 12 mm join on another may make the patchwork intersection difficult to align. You can deliberately change allowance in a revised pattern, but recompute the panel and backing sizes first rather than hoping the edges will meet.

4. Sew row A-B and row C-D

1. Place A and B with their **right sides together** and the edges to be joined aligned. Secure them with clips or pins kept away from your working hand and needle. If using a machine, remove pins before they reach the needle; do not sew over them.
2. Stitch a straight line **10 mm from the aligned raw edge**. Use a secure start and finish suited to your chosen hand-stitch or machine method. This guide assumes you can use a familiar basic seam; a novice can practise a few stitches on scrap first. Do not claim this small sample proves seam strength.
3. Open the joined row and smooth the seam allowance gently. Where the material and equipment instructions permit, press the allowance toward one side or open. Keep fingers and fabric away from heat not allowed by the care instructions.
4. Repeat with C and D to make a second row. Lay the two rows face up and confirm that each has a visible pair of squares and a joining seam at the intended midpoint.

The Utah State University Extension's Patchwork Pouch project demonstrates the general sequence of arranging and numbering pieces, joining adjacent patches right sides together and managing seam allowances [3]. Our 80 mm square coaster dimensions, 10 mm seam choice and original worksheets were independently designed for this guide; the university's different project is not their source.

5. Join the two rows at the centre

Turn one completed row against the other so **right sides face inward**. Align the side edges and the seams where A meets B and C meets D. You can place the two centre seam allowances in opposite directions so they nest rather than form a bulky ridge. Clip the rows, keeping the seam intersection aligned.

Sew across the joining edge using a **10 mm allowance**. Open the new patchwork panel and inspect its cross. Four front squares should now be visible. The joining seams meet close to the centre, but small differences are ordinary in a practice item. If a junction is badly offset, determine whether cutting or sewing introduced the change. A visible mismatch is not fixed by pretending the piece measures 140 mm if it does not.

Check the raw patchwork top against the pre-cut **140 x 140 mm backing**. They should be of similar size based on the arithmetic. If the front has become distorted, do not stretch it aggressively to meet the backing. Correct an unsuitable practice panel or recut a new backing to an honestly revised design. Never assume a narrow outer allowance will hold simply because two edges can be forced together.

6. Add the backing and turn the coaster

1. Place the patchwork front and backing **right sides together**, with the backing's intended exterior face against the patchwork. Clip or pin the four outer edges on a stable table.
2. Mark a **40 mm turning opening** in the middle of one side, well clear of the corners. Sew around the perimeter **10 mm inside the raw edges**, stopping and restarting at the two ends of the opening. Secure the thread at each end according to the technique used.
3. Before turning, check that every intended seam was stitched through both layers and that no needle or pin remains inside. You may reduce excess corner bulk very carefully without cutting into stitching; that step is optional, and a safe beginner can simply keep the corners modest rather than making aggressive cuts.
4. Turn the patchwork through the opening. Gently guide each corner outward with fingers or an appropriate blunt tool, not a needle point or improvised blade. The coaster should lie roughly flat rather than become a tight stuffed object.
5. Turn the raw edges of the opening inward by the same nominal **10 mm**. Close the opening with a suitable small hand stitch that catches both folded edges. Verify no exposed raw edge is left where it could fray, and account for the sewing needle when finished.

You may add a simple topstitch near the edge if you already know how and the fabric behaves, but it is **optional**. Do not sew through an attached pin, use an unfamiliar hot tool to flatten the project, or stack a wet-adhesive decoration on an object meant to rest against another surface. The guide intentionally does not require batting, quilting foam or a heat-resistant layer, because it makes **no insulation claim**.

7. Decide how the coaster may be used

Place the completed piece flat and check the corners, seams and fabric condition. A useful decorative application is beside a desk, under a clean, cool, lightweight cup whose surface will remain dry. Even then, test the actual combination on a protected surface, because fabrics may transfer dye and allow condensation through. Do not place a very hot kettle, cookware, candle, hot plate or similarly heated vessel on it. **This is not a potholder or hot pad.** A successful stitch practice piece may be more useful as a small desktop fabric mat than as a drink coaster.

When the material's care instructions permit cleaning, follow them and dry completely before storing. The guide does not certify colourfastness, machine-wash durability, absorbency or food-contact suitability. A stain, curling edge or loose stitch is a reason to reassess the proposed use and repair or retire the item, not to hide a problem beneath the object it supports.

For a gift, describe it accurately: “Small hand-sewn patchwork fabric mat; ordinary decorative use; heat and water resistance not tested.” An attractive handmade face does not establish safe contact with hot surfaces or prevent water damage to furniture.

8. Troubleshoot a first sample honestly

The row is not 140 mm wide. Recheck the two original 80 mm cuts and both 10 mm allowances. Record the actual measurement; do not change the backing by eye without documenting the new cut size.

The centre points do not meet. Align and clip the joining seams before sewing. If a row was assembled in the wrong order, re-check your A-B / C-D paper layout. The original arrangement is a design choice, not a structural guarantee.

The outside edge ripples. Check whether one layer stretched, whether the fabric differs in weave or weight, and whether the stitching tension is distorting the layers. Stop using force. A newly cut sample may be easier than repeatedly unpicking fragile cloth.

The turning opening will not close neatly. Verify that the two raw edges are folded inward by roughly 10 mm and are held without twisting. Practise a few small hand stitches on scrap if needed. Keep every sharp item accounted for.

A cool cup leaves moisture. Remove it and dry the surface according to its own care needs. Do not claim an ordinary patchwork mat is waterproof; select a different protected surface or object.

9. Record one result and plan a careful variation

The two-page worksheet records the original cuts, row order, joining allowances, backing size, turning opening and measured finished dimensions. Use the second page to write the actual material identity, where the item was used, any observed moisture or fraying and how sharps were returned. This is an honest small-project record, not a formal wear test.

Illustrative example — not an observed Steadleaf trial: Jules cuts four 80 mm squares but joins the first pair unevenly. The row measures 138 mm, not 140 mm. Jules writes the measurement in the record and chooses a fresh practice piece rather than hiding the difference. In another hypothetical example, Priya finishes a mat with a small gap at the turning opening; she closes it carefully before placing any object on it and records that cleaning durability remains unknown.

A later variation can use **90 mm squares** if you want a larger nominal **140 x 140 mm finished mat** using the same 10 mm joins and perimeter: 2 x 90 - 20 - 20 = 140 mm, with a **160 x 160 mm backing**. Recalculate rather than scaling the PDF. Every size is an editorial geometry example until you cut and measure a real sample.

References, rights and boundaries

[1] Health Canada, **Arts and crafts safety**. Labels, tools, storage, child safety and workspace precautions. Read source

[2] Utah State University Extension, **Basic Sewing Supplies**. Familiar suitable cutting, marking, measuring and needle-handling equipment. Read source

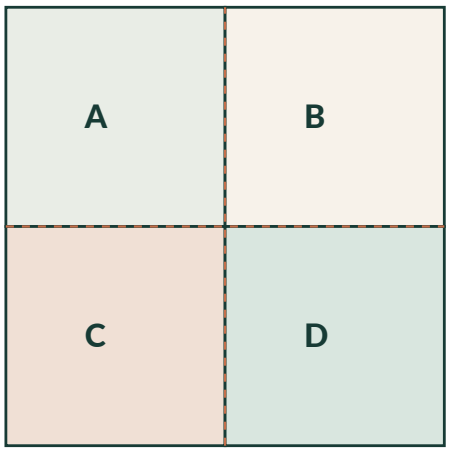
[3] Utah State University Extension, **Patchwork Pouch**. General patchwork ordering, right-sides-together joining and seam management; **not** our coaster geometry. Read source

[4] Seamwork, **Terminology glossary**. Background definitions for seam finishing and edgestitching. Read source

All patch sizes, panel arrangement, cutting and assembly diagrams, original text, table and printable record forms are Steadleaf Press educational designs. No third-party sewing pattern or artwork is reproduced. The project was digitally checked; **no fabric was sewn or physically tested by Steadleaf Press**. This educational guide provides no promise of heat resistance, absorbency, fabric strength or safe food contact. The reader must follow actual material and tool instructions, and must not use the coaster to protect against hot surfaces or carrying loads.

PATCHWORK CUT & ASSEMBLY MAP

Original diagram: reference dimensions only; measure real material.



4 x 80 mm patches

Front raw 140 x 140

Back cut 140 x 140

Outer seam 10 mm

Finished about 120 mm

Fabric origin / correct care

Patch A/B/C/D each cut

80 x 80 mm / actual checked

Top row and bottom row joined

10 mm inside each raw joining edge

Raw front width and height after joins

140 x 140 mm target / actual:

Backing cut and right-sides alignment

140 x 140 mm; front against backing

Turning opening and outside stitch

40 mm gap; 10 mm perimeter

Needle and pin count before moving

All sharps safely returned / needs attention

Do not infer structural, heat, wash or safety performance from a diagram.

FINISHED COASTER / USE RECORD

Record only measured and observed outcomes, not imagined trials.

Actual finished size (measured, if made)

_____

Outer opening closed, raw fabric enclosed?

yes / no / not attempted

Seams catch all intended layers?

yes / no / not attempted

Fabric suitability / care information

_____

Cool, dry decorative use only

accepted / changed / not tested

Moisture / dye / heat tests

not tested unless the reader actually checks

One issue or change for next attempt

_____

Needles, pins and shears secured?

yes / no / not used

No samples physically made or certified by Steadleaf Press.