Make a Reusable Cloth Napkin Set

Two square practice napkins, controlled double-turn hems and clear corner records

A matched pair begins with a measured square

A reusable napkin set is an approachable way to practise following a cut outline, turning raw edges, managing a corner and keeping a hem line reasonably even. This original guide describes TWO independent squares of simple woven scrap, each nominally 180 x 180 mm before folding. One printed master can be used twice; it is not a 360 mm connected cut pattern. Use two pieces of the same material if you want a visually coordinated set, and record when they differ. Decorative thread colours can vary without changing the geometry.

On each square, a first turning guide lies 10 mm inward from every raw edge, followed by a second turning guide another 10 mm inward. Think of these as reference distances for a double-turn hem, not two stitched squares. After both turns have been made toward the WRONG side along all four edges, the central nominal field bounded by the final inner folds is 180 - 2(20) = 140 mm in each direction. This is a calculated flat reference, not an observed finished size; corner overlap, fabric thickness, edge stretching and uneven hand work may alter it. The final hems can be secured close to their inner folded edges with a suitable low-load hand stitch.

Two corner treatments, one careful decision

Four hems meet at each corner. Simply folding one turned side across the other creates a thicker overlapping corner, often acceptable for a practice napkin if the cloth can lie flat. A neater corner can be planned by trial-folding the corner diagonally and bringing the adjacent turned hems into alignment, but the exact method depends on the cloth and is not guaranteed by a flat diagram. This guide includes a separate enlarged 60 x 60 mm corner study with a 20 x 20 mm highlighted intersection. The diagram identifies where four turned bands compete for space; it is NOT an instruction to cut off the corner or a promised perfect miter.

Decide in advance whether to use a simple overlap corner or to attempt a diagonal rehearsal on spare paper. Before trimming fabric, if ever necessary, test the actual fold on scrap and follow a sewing reference appropriate for the chosen material. Never cut through the future seam or corner simply because a diagram shows a diagonal. The safe default for this small original teaching sample is a no-trim overlapping corner.

Read the PDF at true size

The first original vector sheet is a full-size 180 x 180 mm square with solid CUT border and pale 10 mm and 20 mm inset guides. The second sheet is a CORNER SCHEMATIC; its 60 mm square is an enlarged planning area and its markings are not additional pieces to sew into the napkin. Both carry independent printed 50 mm calibration bars. Select A4 or US Letter and Actual Size / 100%, not Fit or Shrink. Check the entire outer border and a measured scale bar before making a cut.

Arrange an uncomplicated and safe table

Choose two clean inexpensive woven cotton offcuts with reasonably stable edges and a compatible thread. A millimetre ruler, fabric marking tool, ordinary scissors, a hand-sewing needle, a small container for sharps and optional safe clips are enough for this instructional exercise. Do not hold the cloth against your leg or palm while piercing it. Do not press pins under an iron or turn a sharp point toward a supporting hand. If you choose to press a crease, first follow the fabric's actual care label and the iron's instructions; an iron is optional and is not required for the digital lesson. A dry finger-fold on expendable cloth or the paper drawing can show the planned path without heat.

Place the two 180 mm squares side by side and identify the same face on each as RIGHT side. Marking this matters: a double-turn hem conceals raw edges by folding to the WRONG side, so folding in the opposite direction changes the appearance. Use light removable marks that are appropriate for the actual textile. Printed pale guides are not holes, perforations or stitch recommendations. The listed numerical dimensions are the authority if your printer scales the PDF unexpectedly.

Prepare both squares - steps 1 to 7

1. Print pattern sheet one on the chosen paper size at 100%. Measure its 50 mm reference bar with a ruler and check the whole 180 mm cut outline. If any part is clipped, mark directly with a ruler on a bigger sheet rather than tracing an incomplete edge.

2. Use the original template or a millimetre ruler to mark TWO separate 180 x 180 mm cloth squares. Note their actual measured sizes before trimming; do not pretend the fabric has become square because the PDF is.

3. Cut only the solid OUTER outline with safe scissors, if the scrap permits. Preserve the whole corner; do not trim the highlighted diagonal from the separate corner study.

4. Mark a light 10 mm first-turn distance inward along all four raw edges, then a second guide at 20 mm from each original raw edge. Check corners by measuring perpendicular to the respective edge, not along a diagonal.

5. Turn one raw edge approximately 10 mm toward the wrong side. Hold or finger-crease gently without pulling the grain. That first turn encloses only the first 10 mm of the original edge.

6. Fold the same edge toward the wrong side once more by another nominal 10 mm. Its final inside hem edge now lies roughly 20 mm from the original CUT edge, with the raw edge concealed inside the double turn.

7. Repeat the first and second turns on the opposite parallel edge. Keep the folds reasonably even; use removable clips only while positioning and remove them before the needle reaches them.

Finish the remaining edges - steps 8 to 15

8. Repeat the 10 mm plus 10 mm inward turn on the remaining two sides of the square, still toward the WRONG side. You will encounter a thicker meeting point where the four hem bands overlap.

9. At each corner, gently unfold only enough to study how the two adjacent hems meet. Keep the no-trim overlap as the first candidate; the 60 mm drawing records fold directions, not guaranteed fabric behaviour.

10. If a diagonal paper rehearsal clarifies an optional flatter corner, fold scrap PAPER diagonally through its highlighted 20 x 20 mm intersection, then return to the actual cloth and assess bulk without cutting off any real fabric. This is a learning exercise, not a fixed miter formula for every textile.

Before continuous hem stitching, confirm that ALL FOUR edges have completed both folds and that ALL FOUR corners have been assessed with their final overlap positions. Do not stitch the long sides before reconciling all corners.

11. Secure the corner by hand only after both adjacent folded edges are aligned. Choose a compatible small stitch, hiding the starting knot inside the hem where possible. Do not sew a thick metal clip into the corner.

12. Sew gently along the inner folded hem edge on one side, following the actual fold rather than driving the needle on the original 20 mm pencil line if the cloth has moved. A steady low-load running stitch or other appropriate hem stitch is a practice option, not a certified machine-strength seam.

13. Continue around the remaining sides, checking that the cloth is lying flat and that no raw edge protrudes. If the needle is hard to push, stop, support the material and choose another scrap or compatible needle rather than increasing force.

14. Complete the second napkin in the same sequence. Compare the two measured squares and corner choices. A coordinated pair can include different colours, but record if one has a wider turn or a heavier corner.

15. Account for the needle, pins and scissors; record actual square dimensions, fold readings, corner method, fabric, stitching style and any observed difference. Mark NOT TESTED for work you did not physically perform. Never invent washing or durability results.

Understand the corner arithmetic without forcing cloth

The first 10 mm inward turn and the additional 10 mm inward turn make a total planned consumption of 20 mm at EACH side of the blank. A 180 mm cut width therefore leaves a 140 mm nominal inner field. In the 60 x 60 mm corner teaching diagram, the shaded 20 x 20 mm meeting area represents the part where adjacent double-turned hem bands overlap. It is not a separate 20 mm patch, not a required excision, and not evidence that a particular corner will lie flat. The fabric's weave, thickness and thread tension are relevant. Retain the original full-size printed reference if you redraw a different hem width.

A 50 mm scale bar printed at 49 mm indicates a 49/50 = 0.98 factor. A nominal 180 mm blank printed at that same factor would be 176.4 mm across, not 180 mm. This calculation does not describe a printer Steadleaf Press has tested. If the cloth is measured manually, write the ACTUAL measured width instead of copying the theoretical size.

Compare use and laundering claims carefully

A hem that looks smooth before washing may change after laundering because the cloth can shrink, wrinkle, fade or fray. Do not infer wash durability, repeated-use suitability or stain resistance from a digital pattern. A fabric intended for table service should be selected with its actual fibre information and manufacturer care guidance, especially if it may touch hands, mouths or food. The original printable does not certify hygienic suitability or textile safety; choose materials appropriate for your intended use rather than assuming every scrap can become a household napkin.

If the final folded area seems smaller than expected, remeasure both original cloth dimensions and every turn. A wide second fold can consume more than planned. If a corner forms a thick lump, unpick a rehearsal sample if safe and try a gentler overlap rather than cutting into the stitched area. If a hem ripples, compare thread tension, grain direction and fabric stability; never pull hard enough to distort or tear the textile.

Adapt responsibly

A larger napkin can be designed using the same relationship: planned inner reference = original cut length minus twice the TOTAL turned-under depth. For example, if a new cut square measures 220 mm and each edge turns under 15 mm in total, the ideal inner field is 220 - 30 = 190 mm. This example is independent of the supplied 180 mm template; do not enlarge a screenshot and assume the 50 mm calibration bar remains correct. Redraw both cut and fold guides numerically, then check actual paper size and fabric behaviour.

References, original work and publication limits

Oregon State University Extension, *Hemming Skills* (4-H 320-32), https://extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/extd8/files/documents/4-h320-32.pdf . Used only for general hem considerations; none of its drawings are reproduced or represented as a test of this new napkin reference.

Oregon State University Extension, *Plain Seams and Seam Finishes*, https://extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/4-h320-19.pdf . General advice about managing seam bulk, fabric fraying and choosing a compatible finish, not a validation of our 20 mm fold fields.

Adobe Acrobat Help, *Adjust page size for printing PDFs*, https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/desktop/print-documents/set-up-and-print-pdfs/page-size.html . General explanation of print scaling, not a printer calibration certificate.

All two-napkin measurements, original corner study, wording, record fields, vector diagrams and cover artwork were independently authored for Steadleaf Press. No outside commercial napkin template or third-party instructional illustration is reproduced. Steadleaf Press performed NO physical cutting, hemming, iron pressing, laundering, food contact, durability, strength, colourfastness or safety assessment. The complete free PDF contains the exact-size patterns and maker records. Any physical outcomes belong to the reader's own observations.

TWO-NAPKIN MASTER / CUT AND TURN LINES

ORIGINAL VECTOR / FREE / ACTUAL SIZE / PATTERN 1 OF 2

CUT TWO independent squares, each 180 x 180 mm.

All four edges: 10 mm turn + a second 10 mm turn.

Nominal central field: 140 x 140 mm.

Dashed guides are NOT cut lines.

Fold toward WRONG side; do NOT trim corners.

Solid perimeter = CUT; all fabric contact untested.

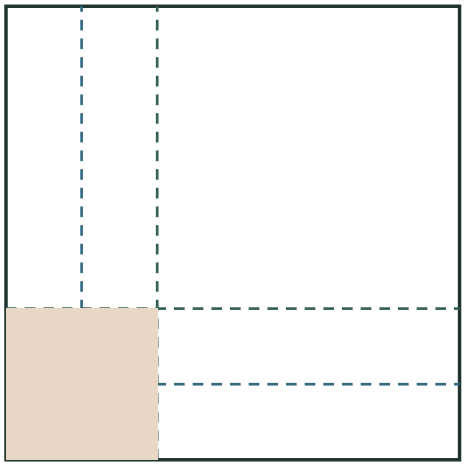


50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler (NOT a fabric mark)

ORIGINAL CORNER STUDY / NO-TRIM OPTION

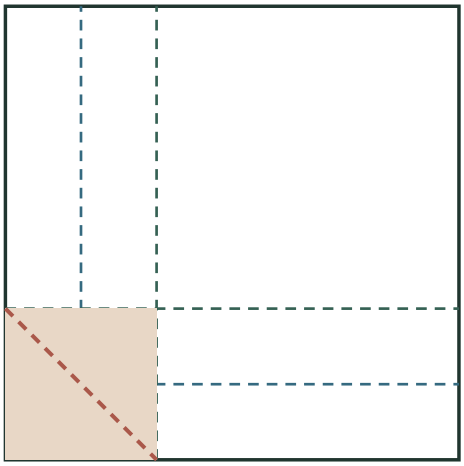
ORIGINAL VECTOR / FREE / ACTUAL SIZE / PATTERN 2 OF 2

A: NO-TRIM OVERLAP



20 x 20 mm corner meeting zone

B: PAPER CORNER REHEARSAL



20 x 20 mm corner meeting zone

Corner examples are planning SKETCHES - no fabric cutting required.

Do NOT cut the shaded corner. Test actual folds on scrap first.

The second square is a study reference, NOT a second napkin piece.



50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler

Fabric and care-label details for napkin A/B

Two cut squares 180 x 180 mm each

First turn 10 mm; additional turn 10 mm

Wrong-side orientation and 20 mm band

Corner choice: no-trim overlap or paper study

Actual 50mm reference bar on BOTH sheets

Stitching and raw-edge appearance if attempted

Real laundering/food-contact NOT TESTED

PUBLISHER: NO PHYSICAL BUILD OR PERFORMANCE TESTS PERFORMED

Only record a real observation if YOU performed it.



50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler

MAKER RECORD / OUTCOME

Which exact measurements did you use, and on what paper?

Which physical material and tools did you actually choose?

What did your real cloth, seams, folds, or joins do?

Which safety or fit issue stopped you, if any?

Where does the real sample differ from nominal math?

What was NOT TESTED? Never invent an outcome.

What would a responsible second version change?

Date, initials, all sharps stored, and next action

PUBLISHER: NO PHYSICAL BUILD OR PERFORMANCE TESTS PERFORMED

Only record a real observation if YOU performed it.



50 mm SCALE CHECK - measure with a ruler