



SEW sensational

PILLOWS

Linda Lee

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Sixth&Spring Books
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New York, New York 10013

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introduction

Nothing is as simple or as satisfying to make as a pillow. It's small and manageable, it requires minimal equipment and materials, and it doesn't take much time to construct. But the impact of a great pillow is huge when accessorizing a piece of furniture or room.

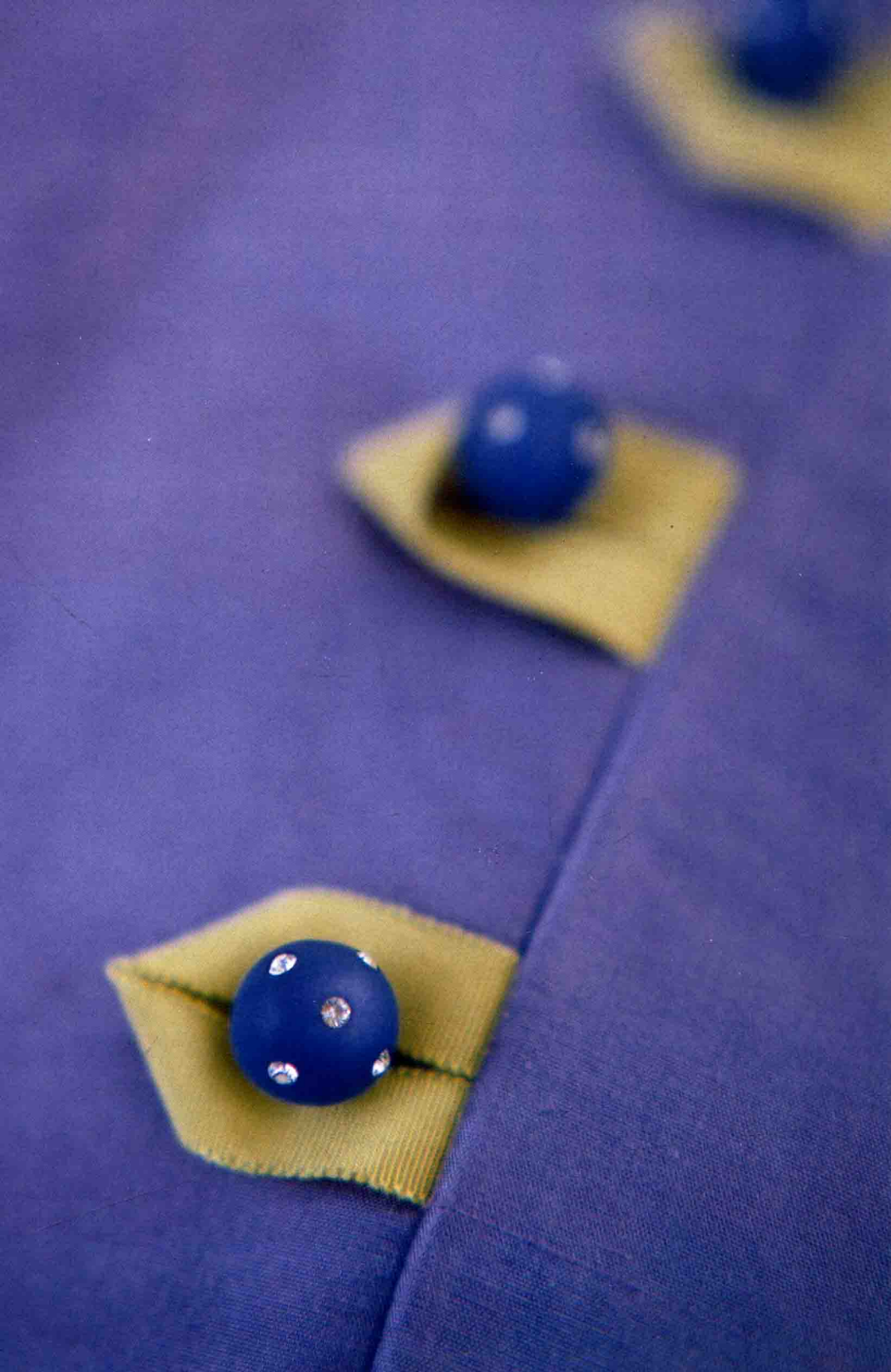
Pillows are personal. You get to choose colors and fabrics that feel good and tickle your fancy. It's an opportunity to splurge on a fabric that's too expensive to use in a large piece or a chance to work with coveted scrap or vintage pieces. Most of the fun of making a pillow is in selecting the fabric, playing with the design concept, throwing the fabric around the room to see how it looks. I like to assemble a lot of fabrics in a pile on the floor to sort them in combinations. I will then stand back and observe them from a distance. It's amazing to see how they change according to what they are used with and in what proportions.

If you are new to sewing, making a pillow is like Sewing 101. You get the feel of the fabric, some calculation and stitching experience and for the most part, the construction is straightforward. For the more advanced sewer, making pillows is a creative experience, a chance to show your stuff without getting bogged down in epic projects. The fabric can dictate the outcome, or the surface of a pillow can be like an artist's canvas. Paint it, pleat it, bead it or stitch it. But whatever you do, enjoy it, use it and hand it down.

I hope you enjoy the book. I would love to know what becomes of your pillowmaking.

Linda Lee

pillow **basics**



All projects in this book are sewn using $\frac{1}{2}$ "/1.3cm seam allowances unless otherwise noted.

The preparation instructions in this book are written for use with down pillow forms. When using down or down-and-feather forms, the pillows are cut exactly the size of the form. For example, an 18"/45.5cm form requires pieces cut 18" x 18"/45.5 x 45.5cm, which includes seam allowances. When using a polyester form, cut the pieces 1"/2.5cm larger than the form.

Knife Edge Pillow

Sewing this simplest pillow style requires this technique which prevents "dog-eared" corners.

Start by pinning the two sections of fabric together with right sides together.

Mark a $\frac{1}{2}$ "/1.3cm seam allowance along all four sides of the pillow. Measure the length of a side and divide into quarters. Mark a point one-fourth of the side from each corner.

Sew the seams, tapering the seam inward at the one-fourth mark immediately preceding the corner point. The taper should be a minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ "/.6cm. The

heavier the fabric, the more exaggerated the taper. **1**

Rather than sewing a sharp point, sew a "soft point". Taper back to the original seam allowance width on the adjacent side and repeat for each corner. Generally, the excess fabric is not trimmed out of the corner. The seam allowances help to fill out the corner and soften the point.

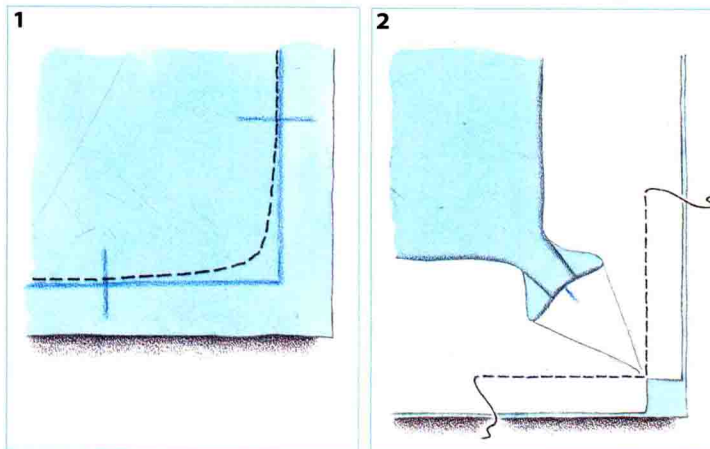
Box Pillow

A box pillow is created when a band of any width is inserted between a front and a back.

With right sides together, begin sewing one edge of a band to one pillow section in the center of one side, not at a corner, and maintain the same seam allowance for all sides.

Stitch to the corner, and insert the needle into the fabric. With small trimming scissors, clip the boxing fabric perpendicular to the corner point and continue sewing the next side. Repeat for each corner. **2**

Sew the seam to join the two ends of the boxing. Press the seam open and complete the sewing of the boxing to the edge.



Fabric Buying Tips

Most of the pillows in this book can be made using about $\frac{1}{2}$ yd/.5m of fabric.

Specific yardages are not given for each project because the pillows can be constructed in any size that works for your design situation.

When purchasing fabric to make a pillow, I usually buy at least one yard/meter. Even though it may be too much, this gives me some design options and a chance to play or make a mistake. If a fabric has a pattern, I buy at least two full repeats.

Most interior fabrics are at least 54"/137cm-wide, so you can get both the front and back of a pillow out of the width of a piece of fabric.

Mark the corner points on the opposite edge of the boxing directly in line with the corners that are sewn to the pillow. As you sew the other edge to a pillow section, make sure the marked corners are precisely in place at the corner points.

Leave an opening along one edge to insert the pillow form.

Bolster Pillow

Cut the end circles the same diameter as the pillow form. Cut the pillow body the same length as the form. Measure the circumference of a circle along the seam allowance line and add two $\frac{1}{4}$ "/1.3cm seam allowances to cut the width of the pillow body.

With right sides together, sew the seam in the pillow body, leaving the ends open and an opening in the seam.

Staystitch along the seam allowance of each end. Clip to the staystitching. The smaller the circumference, the closer the clipping.

With right sides together, pin one end of the bolster body to one bolster end, allowing the fabric to spread open where clipped. Stitch the seam, keeping the staystitching inside the seam allowance. **4**

Repeat for the other end. Turn the pillow to the outside. Insert the pillow form and slipstitch the opening closed.

Covered Piping

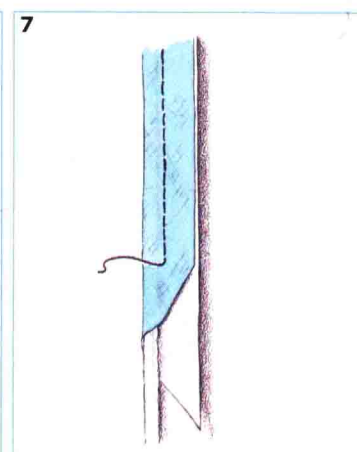
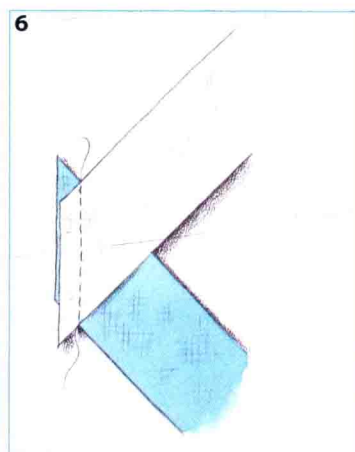
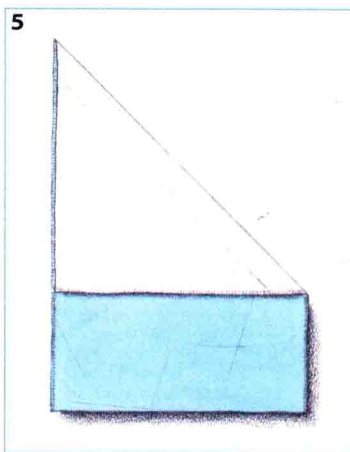
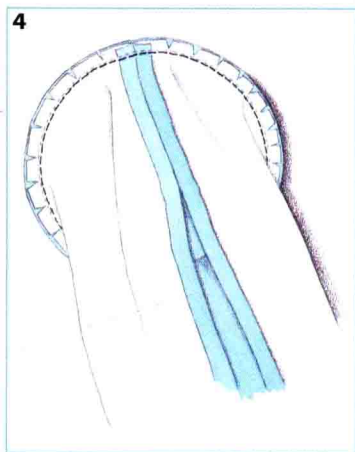
Strips of fabric to cover cording for piping should be cut on the true bias.

True bias can be found by folding one selvage edge of a piece of fabric 45°, creating a diagonal fold. Draw lines, usually about 2"/5cm apart for standard cording, parallel to the fold. Cut along the marked lines. **5**

To sew continuous strips together, place two strips right sides together with the ends aligned, matching the edges where the seam will be sewn. Press the seam allowance open. **6**

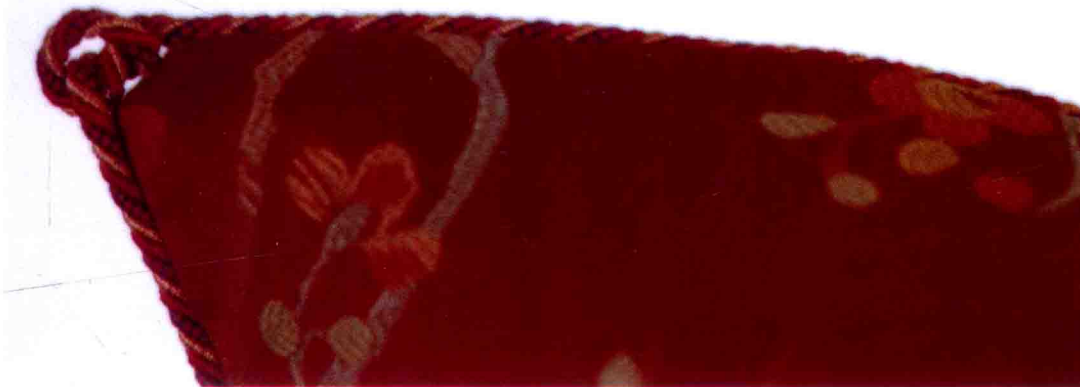
To make covered piping, insert a zipper foot or a cording foot on your sewing machine. Move the needle position, if needed.

Center the cable cording on the wrong side of the bias strip. Fold the strip over the cord, aligning the raw edges. Place the cord and bias under the presser foot with the cord to the left of the needle and the seam allowance to the right. Stitch close to the cord. Trim the seam allowance to an even $\frac{1}{4}$ "/1.3cm. **7**



I like my corded piping to have as few seams as possible, so I purchase one yard/meter of additional fabric, either the same or contrasting, to make long strips of bias.

I am generous when buying fabric because I collect and save small pieces and scraps of all shapes and sizes. Even though they may be not be large enough to make a pillow, they come in handy for piecing, inserts, accents and edges, sometimes spurring the creative process.



To attach the covered piping, pin the piping to one edge of the pillow front. Position the piping next to the zipper foot or under the cording foot and stitch over the previous stitching. Begin sewing about $1\frac{1}{2}$ "/3.8cm from the end of the piping.

Using the same principle as sewing a knife edge corner, taper the placement of the piping to the inside at the corners. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ "/2.5cm from the corner, insert the needle to hold the work in place and make three clips through the flange. Continue stitching the softened corner. **8**

Plan to join the piping in the center of a bottom edge. Leave both ends of the piping free for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ "/3.8cm, then overlap them and cut the excess from the finishing end about $1\frac{1}{2}$ "/3.8cm from beyond the starting

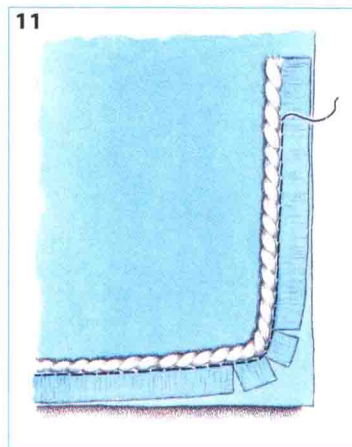
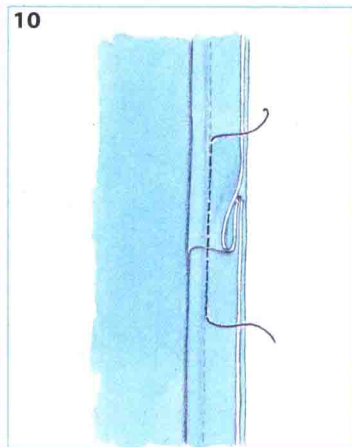
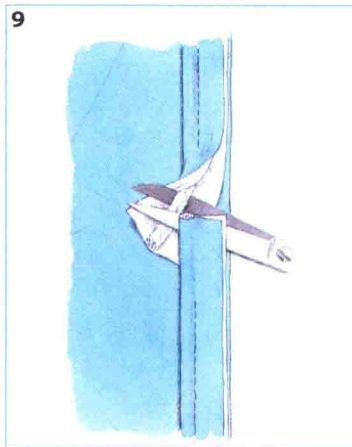
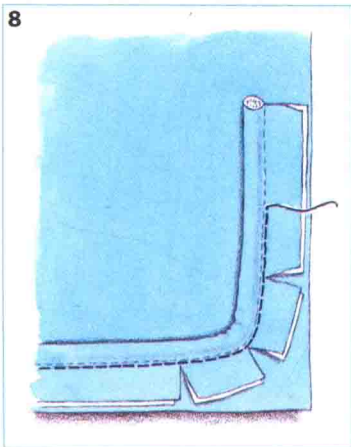
end. Remove the stitching that secures the cord from the finishing end and cut the cord so it butts the starting end. **9**

Fold the end of the finishing end to the wrong side and place the starting end of the piping on it. Wrap the bias covering over the joint and complete the seam. **10**

Decorative Cording

This method sews decorative trim which has a tape-like flange to an edge and ends it invisibly.

Sew the trim to the right side of the pillow front in the same manner as attaching covered piping. See illustration 8. Leave about 3"/7.5cm of extra trim at each end and leave about $1\frac{1}{2}$ "/3.8cm of space where the trim is not sewn to the edge. **11**





Separate the flange from the cord in the unstitched space. Carefully separate the individual strands of twisted cord and tape each end if the ends tend to fray. Overlap the ends of the loose flange and tape them together. Place the right-hand tails facing up and the left-hand tails down. **12**

Tape the left-hand tails over the taped flange, twisting the tails back into its original order. **13**

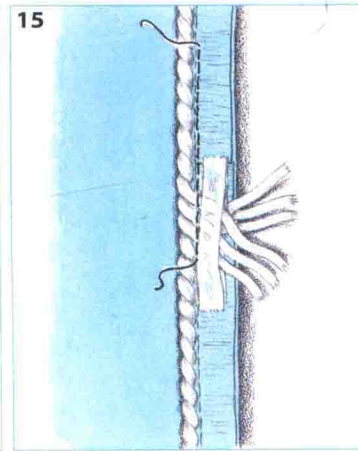
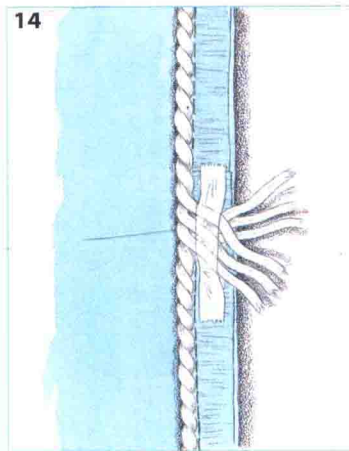
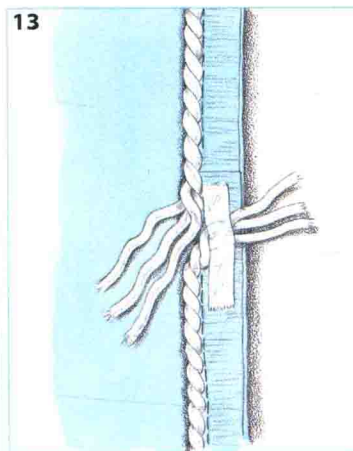
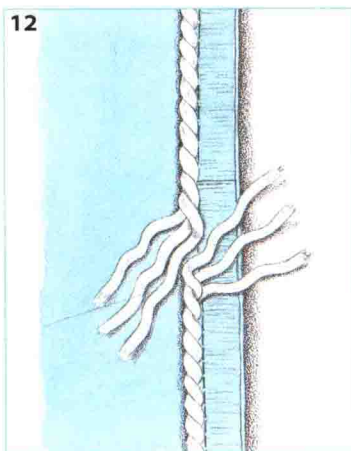
Manipulate the right-hand tails to return the individual strands to their original order, weaving them into the left-hand strands in the correct order. Tape the strands to the flange. **14**

Using a zipper foot or cording foot, stitch through all of the taped strands next to the finished cording. Trim the excess tails and remove the tape. **15**

Ruffling Techniques

Ruffling is made easy when using a ruffler attachment specific to your sewing machine. They are expensive, but well worth the investment. By changing the settings on the ruffler and altering stitch lengths per the manufacturer's instructions, the density and spacing of the ruffles can be changed dramatically. If a ruffler attachment is not available, this following method is a good option:

Knot one end of a strand of cordonnet or heavy cotton thread and place it over the seamline. Using a wide and



elongated zigzag setting, stitch over the cordonnet, couching it but not catching it. **16**

Wrap the knotted end of the cord around a pin to hold it in place, pull the other end of the cord and gather the fabric along the cord, evenly distributing the gathers.

Closures

Overlapping Closure

An overlap is a finished opening on the back of a pillow for easy insertion of a pillow form or easy removal for cleaning. It can also be a decorative element when planned out in advance.

Divide the finished pillow back measurement in half. To one half, add 4"/10cm for an underlap. To the other half, add 1½"/3.8cm for an overlap.

To the underlap edge, turn to the wrong side ¼"/.6cm and edgestitch. To the overlap edge, turn the raw edge to the wrong side ½"/1.3cm and then another 1"/2.5cm. Stitch close to the inside folded edge.

Lay the wrong side of the overlap side over the underlap side 4"/10cm. Baste the two pieces together along the seam allowances of both sides. **17**

Slipstitch

A slipstitch is an invisible way to enclose a pillow.

After inserting the pillow form, pin the edges together at the opening, folding the seam allowances to the inside of the pillow.

With a sewing needle and matching thread, slide the needle through the upper folded edge and at the same point pick up a thread of the under fabric. Continue in this manner, taking stitches about ¼"/.6cm apart. **18**

Attaching a Button

To attach a sew-through button, thread a needle and knot it. Make one stitch on the right side of the fabric at the button placement. Insert the needle up through one hole in the button. Working on the right side of the fabric, make several stitches through the holes, leaving some slack in the stitches. At the last stitch, bring the needle between the fabric and the bottom of the button. Wrap the thread around the stitches several times to form a shank. Secure the thread on the right side with several small stitches close to the shank. **19**

A shank button is sewn on in the same manner, passing the needle several times through the fabric and the eye of the shank before tying off.

