

Book Pillows

Project 12

Supplies and Tools

heavy paper or poster board cut into pattern template (4 pieces, 1 set for each participant):
front/back: 24-by-18-inch rectangle
top: 5½-by-24-inch rectangle
pocket: 6½-by-4½-inch rectangle

straps: 4-by-19½-inch strips
iron and ironing board
needles
pencils
scissors
sewing machine
yardstick

Materials

embellishments
fabric (about 1 yard total for each participant)
threads
twin-size pillow (1 for each participant)

Step 1: Designing

This is the time to think about the design and theme of the pillow. Participants may want to draw a simple sketch or just have an idea in mind. Teens can take their inspiration from their favorite things or, if they are making the pillow for a friend, choose a theme to fit her or his personality and likes.

Flowers and gardening themes, animals, superheroes, cartoon characters—all can be worked into these pillows. So many types of fabrics and patterns are available that it will be easy to make book pillows for everyone on the teens' gift lists. Just remind participants that they will want to make each pillow fun and inviting.

Teens can also take inspiration from a favorite fabric they would like to reuse. Denim from a worn-out pair of jeans or skirt, cotton from a soft, lacy top, velvet or silk from a much-loved dress—all would make excellent material for pockets, tops, or straps. Tablecloths, curtains, or even soft towels could be used for the front and back of the pillow. A pillow made entirely from a fancy beach towel would be a great summer reading gift for a favorite beach bum.

Step 2: Preparing the Fabric

Wash, dry, and iron the fabric as needed. Lay out the fabric on a large cutting area and pin the pattern in place. If you're using poster board, carefully trace the pattern onto the fabric.

Cut out the following pieces:

- two 24-by-18-inch rectangles for the front and back of the pillow (use your main fabric)
- two 4-by-19½-inch rectangles for the straps
- one 6½-by-4½-inch rectangle for the pocket
- one 5½-by-24-inch rectangle for the top

Use coordinating or recycled fabrics for the smaller pieces to enhance your theme or design.

Step 3: Pressing

Press the fabric for the straps by folding ¼ inch in on each side of the fabric. Press well so that it stays in place, then fold this in half and press again (pin if needed to keep it in place). Press out the pocket and fold down about ¼ inch for the top hem. Fold ⅛ inch around the

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pocket's outer edges and press well (pin if needed to keep in place). Press the top piece, making a ¼-inch hem at the bottom. Press well (pin if needed). Press the pillow front and back.

Step 4: Sewing

Set up the sewing machine and thread with matching or coordinating thread.

Sew the straps at the folded edges. You can use a simple straight stitch or a decorative stitch depending on your fabric and the look you want.

Sew the pocket's top hem. If you want to add a decorative trim at the top, this is the time to do it. You could use binding tape or lace ribbon. Sew around the pocket edges. You may want to add other small embellishments such as fabric appliqués or decorative stitching to the pocket to enhance your theme.

Lay out the front of the pillow on the table and place the pocket on the right side about 1½ inches from the bottom and 5½ inches from the right side. Line up the pocket as straight as possible and pin into place. Sew the pocket in place.

Lay out the front of the pillow again and place the straps on the left side. Place the first strap ¾ inches from the side, and place the next strap 3½ inches from the first strap. (*Note:* You want the straps to be a bit loose so that a book can slide in.) Check for alignment and adjust if necessary. Pin in place at the top and bottom, but don't sew them down. The straps will get sewn when you sew the back and front together.

Place the top piece right side down onto the front piece; place the back piece right side down onto this and pin together. Again, this piece will get sewn into place when the front and back are sewn together.

Sew these pieces together at the top, the right side, and the bottom of the pillow.

Stuff with the twin-size pillow. This will be a tight fit so you will need to wiggle the pillow in, straightening as you go. If you're not careful to keep the pillow straight as you stuff, your pocket or straps can go out of alignment.

Hand sew the left side of the pillow with a tight running stitch.

Done!! Snuggle up with a good book! If your pillow is a gift, add a bookmark or book light to the pocket.