How to Sew a Facemask

These instructions are for an adult-size, double layer with metal noseband and filter pocket cloth facemask.

Material List:

1/3 of a yard of tight weave material

Matching thread

~7" bendable metal wire

Tools List:

Sewing machine or needle

Scissors

Fabric pencil (regular pencil works too if it's a light fabric!)

Rotary cutter and mat (not required but makes cutting faster)

Pins

Iron & ironing board

Step 1: Cut the Material

Each mask requires the following cuts:

- 1 16" x 8" tight weave material (mask)
- 1 6" x 2" tight weave material (nose band)
- 2 1" x ~44" tight weave material (straps)

Start by ironing your fabric. I find a high steam setting gets the wrinkles out the fastest. Once the material is smooth, line up the selvage edges and iron in half. Square off the edge using a straight edge cut off the excess.

Since these are just masks and not quilts so they don't need to be perfect, I don't bother squaring it up the "right way". If you do want to learn the proper way to prepare for fabric, here is a handy dandy tutorial on it:
https://www.mybluprint.com/article/how-to-square-up-fabric

Cut (2) strips 1" wide for the straps from the full width of the fabric (approximately 44").

Cut (1) 8" wide x 16" long piece for the mask. This will be folded to make a mask 8" x 8" wide, so if you'd prefer to use two 8" x 8" pieces that will work too.

Cut (1) 6" x 2" wide piece for the noseband holder.

Step 2: Create the Straps

Fair warning, this step sucks the most. These straps are made from double fold bias tape folded in half, so all the rough edges are inside. They make specialty bias tape makers, but you can also use an ironing board and a needle for the same effect. Take the needle and push it through your ironing board, leaving an approximately 3/8" gap underneath the needle to slide your fabric through. 3/8" forces a bit of overlap on your fabric at the middle so it will be a little thicker, but I found it made ironing the tape much easier than having it ½" wide.
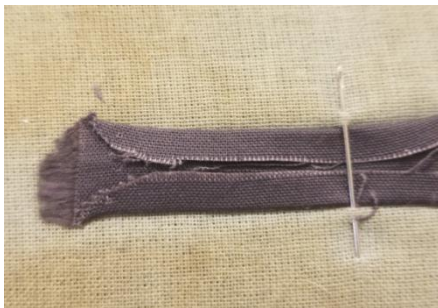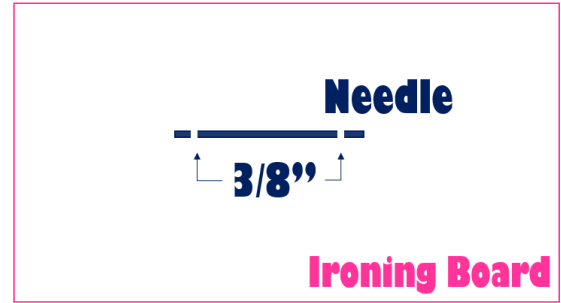

Fold the fabric in half so you can shove it underneath the needle in the 3/8" pocket. Smooth it out with your fingers so it looks like the image on the left. A little overlap is okay! Use your iron and press into place. Don't drag the iron along the fabric. Instead pick up and place where you would like to iron. This helps prevent fraying on the fabric and keeps it from stretching out. Once your seam is set, pull the end through so there is a fresh piece to press. Repeat until you reach the end of the bias tape. You will probably have to adjust it as you go to keep the seam centered as you as you go.

When you are finished it should have a little overlap on the rough edges and a smooth face on the other side. Cut each strip in half so you have 4 pieces approximately 18"-22" long. Fold each piece in half so the rough edges are tucked inside and then sew straight down the middle. I use one hand to guide it and keep it folded in half while using the other hand to guide the back as I sew. If you aren't coordinated enough for this, press it in half before sewing so it stays aligned.
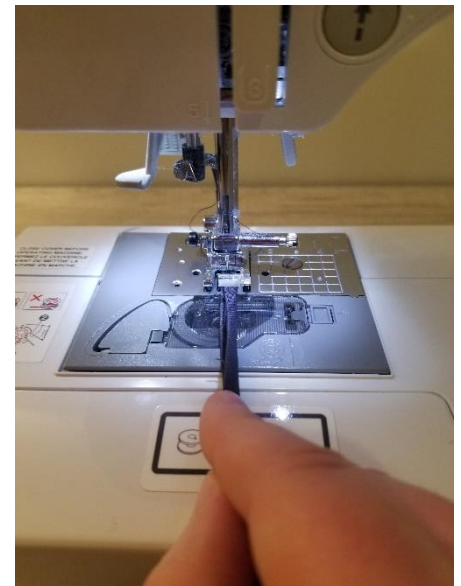
Step 3: Sew the Noseband

This piece will hold the metal wire to ensure a better fit around the nose. Start by laying wrong-side up and press the 2" edges approximately ¼" in. Sew this seam in place about 1/8" inch from the edge of the material.

Next, press the material in half with the wrong-side inside so the piece is approximately 5.5" x 1". Sew along the same seams in the previous step so the rough edges are all inside of the pocket, with the opening along one 5.5" edge.

Step 4: Sew the Mask

Place your 16" x 8" piece right side down on the ironing board. Press the mask piece in half. On the short edges press in ¼", and then another ¼" so all the rough edges are tucked inside.

½"

16"x8"

8"
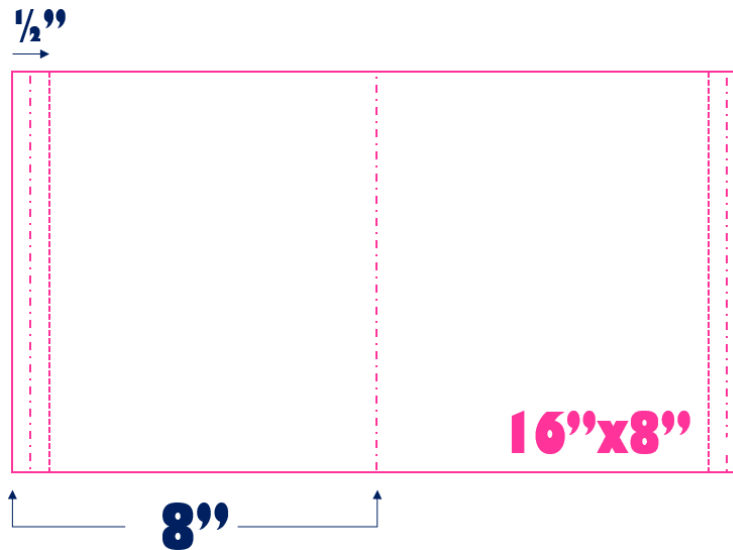
Sew one side of the ¼" bundle. On the other side, place the rough edges from your nose band inside the ¼" flap and pin in place. Sew down the center of the ¼" seam and remove pins. Sew approximately 1/8" down the other side (marked in pink below).
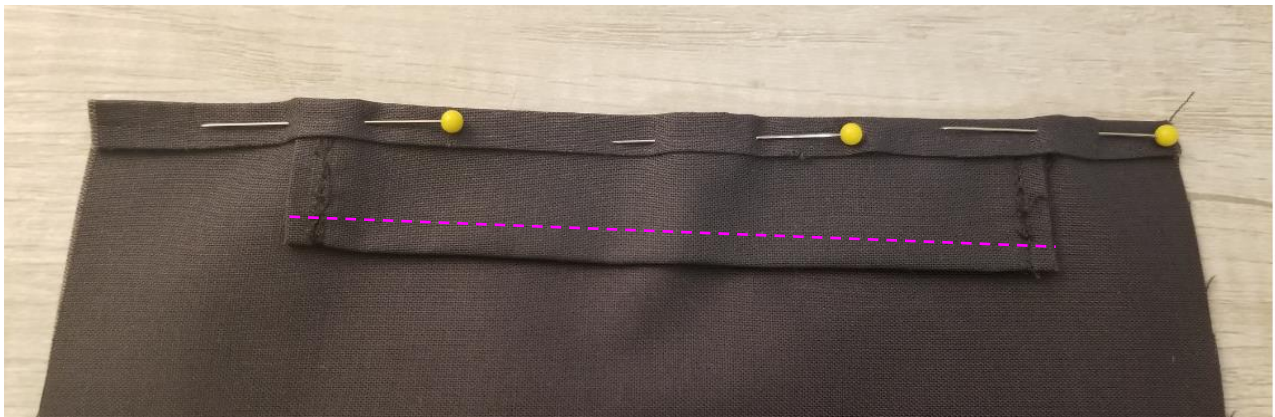
Place right sides together. Bundle up each strap individually leaving approximately 2" loose. Place the bundles between the fabric sandwich and slide the very ends out each corner. Pin in place.

Sew ¼" down the 8" sides, locking the straps into place. Turn right side out and press seams so they're nice and crisp.

Pull the straps out of the way and sew approximately 1/8" in from the two new seams that house the straps.

¼"
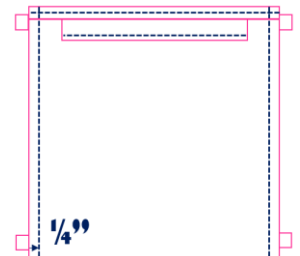
Now it is time to add the pleats. You can either eyeball them, or you can measure and mark starting at the bottom edge. Alternate marking 1" and ½" and repeat on the opposite side so pleats line up. Fold the ½" pleats and iron into place. Secure the pleat with a pin. Once all the pleats are pinned in place, sew approximately ¼" across the pleats down each side. Remove the pins and voila, your mask is sewn!

Step 5: Finish the Mask

Now it is time to insert the nose wire. Many pages I saw recommend pipe cleaners, but I didn't think they were stiff enough to keep my nose shape. Instead I bought the wire used to tie tomatoes up and cut a 7" strip. I bent the ends in, so they weren't sharp and threaded through the nose strap pocket.

Some sources say removable filters increase protection, so I inserted a coffee filter into the top opening to create an additional filtration layer. Keeping the folded wire side of the mask on the outside, away from your face, secures the opening and keeps the pocket from gaping

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