

# Wool & Walnut Pincushion

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These are the best pincushions I own. What makes them so terrific is that they are made from wool and filled with ground walnut shells.

I now have one by every machine, and intend to make several more for small gifts.

The flat stitch-out is 3.5" in diameter when finished; when stuffed the cushion is approximately 2.8" wide.



Ground walnut shell makes a wonderful fill for pincushions; it not only gives the completed cushion enough weight to stay put when you jab pins into it, but it also helps to keep pins sharp. The wool fabric is malleable enough to mold into a pleasing shape as you complete the cushion, and wicks away humidity to help keep pins from rusting. As well, the natural lanolin acts as a lubricant for the pins.

The basic shape stitches up in under 3 minutes on the embroidery machine. The hand-finishing takes just a little longer, and goes faster once you've made a few of these.

Make them in any color and add a simple button, or make them in red with a tomato-style stamen.

## *You will need*

- *Two 4x4" pieces of wool fabric in the color of your choice*
- *Light-weight tear-away stabilizer or plastic bag*
- *Ground walnut shells for filling*
- *Heavy crochet cotton or string for stitching*
- *Two small flat two-holed buttons*
- *One 2x2" piece of green wool felt (optional)*

# Wool & Walnut Pincushion Instructions

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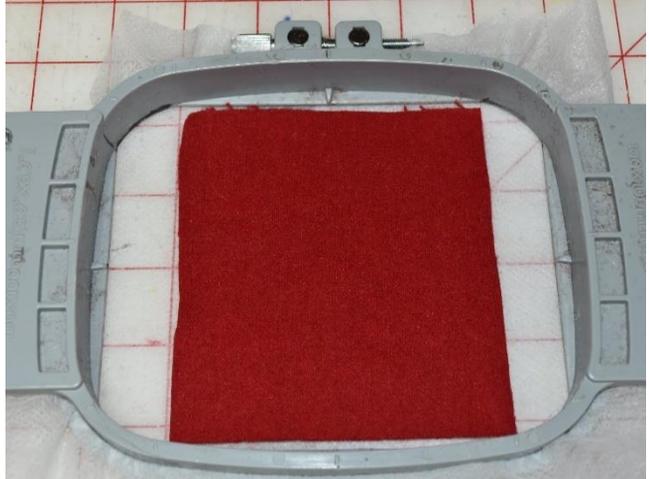
1. Hoop a single layer of lightweight tear-away stabilizer in the 4x4" hoop. You can also use a plastic wrap product such as Glad Press N Seal (sticky side up) or even plain cling wrap. I normally use regular plastic bags as stabilizer for this project.



**Note:** Plastic works well for this project, but I'm told that not all machines will tolerate it (my sister reports a bit of a challenge with her machine). If yours is one such, choose a light tear-away stabilizer that you can remove completely from the stitch-out.



2. Lightly spray a 4x4" piece of wool fabric with temporary spray adhesive and press it down in the center of the hoop. (If you're using Press N Seal, just press it in position against the sticky surface.) In the demo, am using red wool woven fabric.



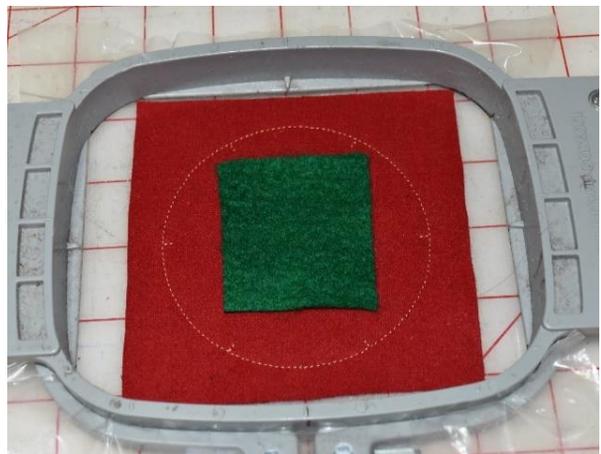
3. Insert the hoop into the machine and stitch the first color. Remove the hoop from the machine, but do not unhoop the design.



4. If you are making the plain cushion without a stamen, proceed directly to step #7.

If you are adding the green stamen, place a 2x2" piece of green felt over the red wool in the center of the hoop.

Return the hoop to the machine and stitch the next color.



5. Remove the hoop from the machine once again, but do not unhoop the design.

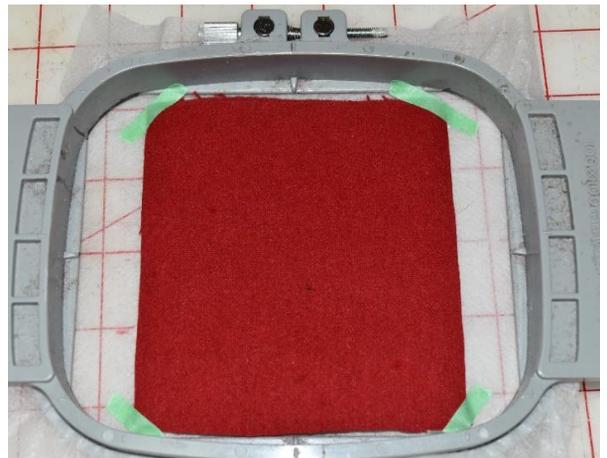


6. You may wish to trim the stamen now, leaving a small border. I am using a pair of curved scissors to do this, but a sharp pair of nail scissors would also work.



7. Lay the second piece of wool fabric over the stitched piece in the hoop. Tape the corners with masking tape to hold the fabric in position. Return the hoop to the machine and stitch the final color.

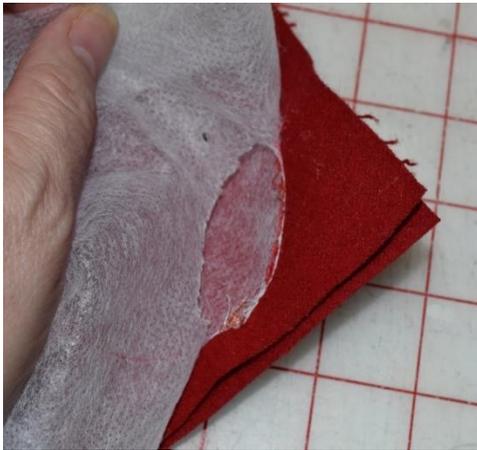
**Note:** If you didn't stitch out the stamen, you need to skip over it on the machine and go directly to the last color.



8. When the last color has finished stitching, remove the hoop from the machine. Unhoop the design.



9. Tear away the stabilizer from around the outside of the stitched design, as well as from inside the stitched circle. The plastic or lightweight tear-away should remove easily.



10. Using pinking shears, trim around the design, leaving an untrimmed segment along the opening.



11. Using a chopstick or a length of dowel, turn the pincushion right side out through the opening. Use the stick to push out all around the circle.



12. You can purchase ground walnut shells at a pet store, where it's sold as a litter box filler. **Make sure that you have purchased the walnut shells and not a clay-based filler.** Only the walnut shells are suitable.

13. Use a funnel to add the ground shells, filling the cushion as full as you can. I used about 1/3 of a cup, easing it in using the chopstick.



14. With matching thread, sew the opening closed using small hand stitches, following the line of stitching as a guide. Tie off the stitches securely.



15. With your fingers, shape the cushion into a round shape, rolling the edges to ensure they are pushed all the way out. Press the middle to form an indentation.

16. Thread a large needle with at least 1m of heavy crochet cotton or string in a matching color (I'm using red).

Tie a knot 6"-8" from the end of the string, leaving a tail. You will use this tail to tie off at several points during stitching.



17. Insert the needle through the middle of the cushion, from bottom to top. Pull up the string tightly and stitch through the middle again, returning the needle to the bottom side of the pincushion.

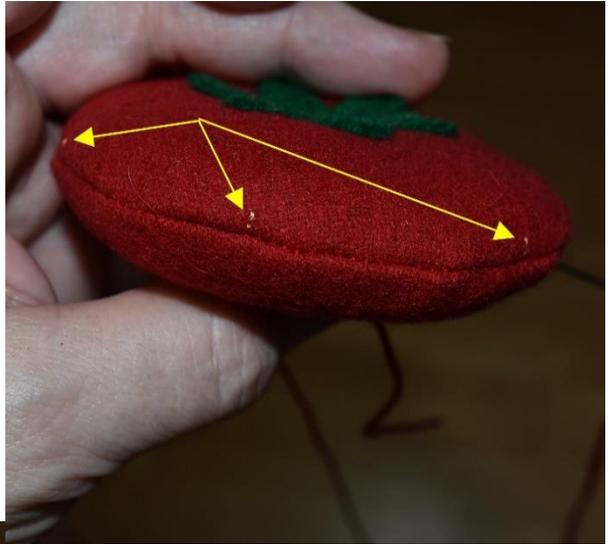


18. Pull the string up snugly and use the tail to tie a knot on the bottom of the pincushion. Do not cut the string.

19. To give shape to the pincushion, you will be creating six segments, as shown in the photo. To do this, you will use the same length of string to stitch six times through the center of the cushion, wrapping the string around the outside each time.



20. If you look closely, you will see stitched registration marks on the edge of the cushion, showing where to align the string as you pull it up tight.



21. Without cutting the string, bring the needle around from the bottom of the cushion, and insert it again from the top, right through the center. Pull the needle through and draw the string tight around the edge of the cushion, aligning it with one of the registration marks.

22. Repeat, next time aligning the string with the registration mark opposite the one just stitched. Pull up tight and use the string tail to tie another knot. Do not cut the string.



23. Repeat, again making the two stitches opposite each other, and ending with another knot. And once again, do not cut the string.



24. Finish with a last pair of stitches, pulling up tightly and tying a final knot using the thread tail. Do not cut the string yet.

25. To finish the pincushion, you will be stitching a button to each side using the same string. Flat, two-holed buttons are easiest to work with.



26. Use the same string to attach the buttons. Add the bottom button first. Run the needle through the first hole and then back through the second, all the way through the center of the cushion, bringing it out in the middle on the other side.



27. Pull up tight to draw the button close to the bottom of the cushion. Note the string tail still uncut.

28. Add a button to the top of the cushion using the same method. Then stitch through both buttons one more time, pulling up tight on the string. When you run the needle down through the top button for the final time, exit it beside the bottom button rather than through the hole (see next picture).



29. Bring the needle out just to one side of the bottom button as shown. (I am holding the string tail that I left at the beginning – I will use it to tie the final knot).



30. Tie one last knot using the string tail, pulling the knot underneath the button as you tighten it. Trim the string tail.

31. Run the needle through the cushion and bring it out on one side. Trim the thread. The pincushion is completed.



Some of the finished pincushions.



I have made several so far, some with stamens and some without.

All are made of woven wool fabric except the blue one, which is made from wool felt. I'm not sure whether the felt will hold up as well as the woven over the long term, but I was in a hurry to make one for a friend whose favorite color is blue.

I did not line these, but if you prefer you can add a small pouch of muslin or other fabric to help contain the walnut shell dust if you worry that it might migrate out of the cushions.

Tightly woven wool is best for these, but whatever fabric you choose, you really do want to fill these with the ground walnut shells. I have previously made some that I filled with polyester stuffing, but they are not at all the same thing – they lack the heft of the walnut shell ones, and don't hold the pins as well.