

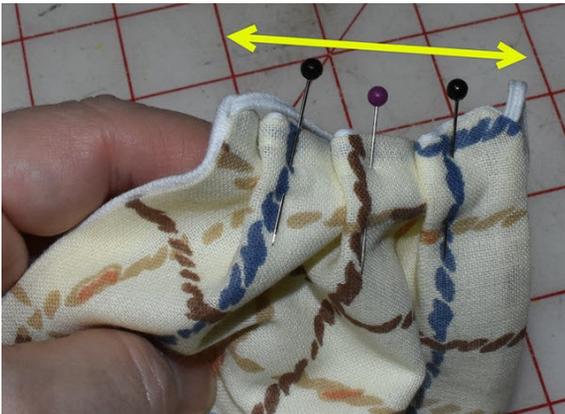
Mask Pleating Update

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Since making my first masks back in the spring, I've been playing around with different versions to try to find one I was completely happy with. After all the experimentation, I've ended up with a fairly simple modification to the original style, which I like better.

The style I started with was pretty standard -- a 6x9" rectangle, pleated along both short edges with three knife pleats and held in place with elastic straps around the ears.



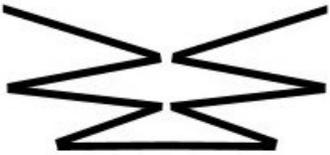
To be honest, I have never been completely happy with the pleats. For one thing, when the mask fits snugly enough around the edges, it's often uncomfortably tight across the nose. And hubby found the 6x9" size a bit too small. As well, I've hated making those three pleats, and have found it difficult to get them even and deep enough.

I tried a variety of iterations -- adjustable ties, darts, shaping, and gathering. DH didn't care for the ties, preferring the ear loops instead. And I found the various darts and shaping to be uncomfortable or to be more prone to slippage if you speak while wearing the mask. What to do?

In the end, I returned to the basic rectangle, enlarged now to 7x10", and altered the pleating pattern, using box pleats instead of knife pleats, as illustrated in the graphic just below.



*pleating pattern
knife pleats*



*pleating pattern
box pleats*

At right is a detail of the stitched pleats. Contrast with the original pleating pattern shown above.



To make the pleats, start by folding the mask in half lengthwise, with wrong sides facing.

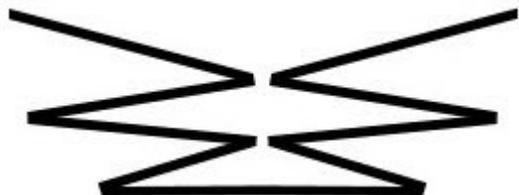
Mark at approximately 5/8" from the edge. You can simply pin the two layers, or you can stitch them together to a depth of about 1/2". Then open the flanges flat.



The next step is to fold the pleats. Make the same pleat on each side of center, so that the fold of the pleat lines up with the edge of the flap.

Pin the pleats in position as you work.

It may be difficult to see what I'm doing here; hopefully the image is clear enough. I'm folding and pinning the pleats in the box format shown in the diagram.



Once the pleats are pinned down, you will stitch across them to hold them in position.



A good quality sewing machine should be able to handle this task, but you may have to go slowly and possibly even operate the machine by hand in order to do the stitching.

I generally make three rows of stitching to hold the pleats in position.

I find the box pleats a bit easier to create than the knife pleats, and I really do prefer the way this revised mask fits.



In addition to being a little easier to create, I find that the revised pleating gives more space for the nose, while at the same time fitting a bit more snugly around the chin and over the bridge of the nose.



I'll be making my masks this way from now on, starting with a 7x10" rectangle instead of the 6x9" one. In fact, I like the revision enough that I took apart all the masks I'd previously made and re-pleated them in the new pattern. How obsessive is that?!