

Rakusu Sewing Instructions



ZEN CENTER OF LOS ANGELES



**by Evi Gemmon Ketterer
and the Teachers Circle of ZCLA**

Fifth Edition

For information on training, courses and retreats contact:

Zen Center of Los Angeles / Buddha Essence Temple

923 S. Normandie Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90006-1301 USA

Telephone: (213) 387-2351; Fax: (213) 387-2377

Email : info@zcla.org; Website: www.zencenter.org

For questions about this book contact:

Gemmon Ketterer, email: programsteward@zcla.org

©2009 Zen Center of Los Angeles

Contents:

Gathas for Sewing a Rakusu	5
Precautions When Wearing the <i>Rakusu</i>	7
Rakusu Sewing Instructions.....	9
Material you will need	9
Sewing supplies you will need.....	10
First Steps to Start Your Rakusu.....	12
Rakusu with split pieces in the rice field	13
Sewing the rice field panels A – D from small pieces	17
Rakusu from one and the same fabric.....	19
Sewing the vertical panels together	23
Adding the Border to Your Rice Field.....	33
The Straps	58
The Neck Piece	69
The Broken Pine Twig	76
Knots and Stitches.....	84
Making a knot at the end of the thread	84
Making a knot at the end of a seam	86
How to make a knot between two layers:	88
The Step Stitch.....	92
The Blindstitch.....	94
The Baste Stitch	95
Cross-Stitch.....	96
Making a Rakusu Envelope	97
Sewing a Rakusu Envelope with lining	98
Cutting Instructions - From One Piece of Fabric.....	106
Paper Patterns.....	107

Gathas for Sewing a Rakusu

When sewing Rakusu, we chant a *gatha* or verse with each stitch. The Rakusu will take on the energy of the *gatha*. For example, if you chant the *Jizo Shingon Dharani*, you will wear the robe of *Jizo Bodhisattva*. When you chant the *mantra* from the *Heart Sutra*, your robe will become that and so on. Your chanting invokes the presence of the particular *buddha* or *bodhisattva* energy.

The *Buddha's* robe includes and contains everything, so regardless of how many errors you make in sewing your Rakusu, please realize that the *Buddha's* robe *is this very life* including all its ups and downs.

Here are some suggestions for *gathas* to chant while you are sewing:

Verse of the Kesa:

Vast is the robe of liberation,
A formless field of benefaction
I wear the *Tathagata* teaching
Saving all sentient beings.

(Japanese):

Dai sai geda fuku
Mu so fuku den e
I bu Nyorai kyo
Ko do sho shujo.

The Three Refuges

Being one with the Buddhas
Being one with the Dharma
Being one with the Sangha

(Japanese)

Namu ki e Butsu
Namu ki e Ho
Namu ki e So

I take refuge in the Buddha
I take refuge in the Dharma
I take refuge in the Sangha

(Pali)

Buddham Saranam Gacchami
Dhamman Saranam Gacchami
Sangham Saranam Gacchami

The Mantra of the Heart Sutra

Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha

The Mantra of Jizo Bodhisattva

Om Ka Ka Ka Bi San Ma E So Wa Ka

Refuges of the *Bodhisttvas*

Being one with the Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

Being one with the Great Wisdom Manjusri Bodhisattva

Being one with the Great Action Samantabadhra Bodhisattva

***Dharani* from the Gate of Sweet Nectar**

Now I have raised the Bodhi Mind.

I am the Buddhas and they are me.

The Name of the Lotus *Sutra*

Being one with Mahayana Saddharma Pundarika Sutra

Or Namu Myoho Renge Kyo

Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo

(Prayer for Extending Life)

KAN ZE ON

NA MU BUTSU

YO BUTSU U IN

YO BUTSU U EN

BUP PO SO EN

JO RAKU GA JO

CHO NEN KAN ZE ON

BO NEN KAN ZE ON

NEN NEN JU SHIN KI

NEN NEN FU RI SHIN

Kanzeon

At one with *Budhha*

Directly *Buddha*

Also indirectly *Buddha*

And indirectly *Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.*

Joyful, pure, eternal, being!

Morning mind is *Kanzeon.*

Evening mind is *Kanzeon.*

Nen, nen arises from Mind.

Nen, nen is not separate from Mind.

Precautions When Wearing the Rakusu

Like the *Kesa*, the Rakusu is a robe of the Buddha and is worn and cared for with utmost respect.

Guidelines for how to wear and care for your Rakusu:

- **Keep your Rakusu protected**

When it is not being worn, keep your Rakusu in a case or wrapped in cloth. Do not leave your Rakusu lying around on the floor or on a kitchen counter.

When placing the Rakusu in its case, first fold it in half with the white silk side facing outward and the preceptors name on top. On the ring side, fold the straps in half and lay them flat on the white silk then back again. The folded edge of the Rakusu is placed in its case first.

- **How to wear your Rakusu**

Dawn Zazen: When you attend dawn *zazen*, bring your Rakusu in its case. Set it down beside your *zabutan*. At the end of the dawn sitting, the *doan* will signal (*bong, gatz, bong*) to begin chanting the *Verse of the Kesa*. At the sound of the bell, remove your Rakusu from its case, set the case aside. Touch the Rakusu's pine stitch to your forehead and place the folded Rakusu on the top of your head. Do this with the straps down and the closed edge facing forward. Place your hands in *gassho* and chant the *Verse of the Kesa* three times together with everyone:

*Vast is the robe of liberation
A formless field of benefaction
I wear the Tathagata teaching
Saving all sentient beings.*

At the end of the third repetition, remove the Rakusu from your head. Again touch the pine stitch to your forehead with appreciation and reverence and then arrange the Rakusu around your neck. Adjust the Rakusu and straps as necessary. Be sure that the straps are not twisted.

First time during the day other than dawn zazen: If you have not put on your Rakusu during dawn *zazen*, put it on at your place of *zazen*. Kneel down on your *zabutan*, remove the Rakusu from its case and set the case aside. Place the Rakusu on your head as above and with your hands in *gassho*, silently chant the *Verse of the Kesa*. Put your Rakusu on as described above. Then take your seat.

Every time you put on your Rakusu: Whenever during the day or night you put on your Rakusu, first bring it to your forehead before placing it over your head.

- **How to remove the Rakusu**

Remove the Rakusu from your neck by its straps and follow the fold lines, turning the white silk side out. Fold the straps on the ring side so they lie flat then fold the remainder back again. Place it in its cover with the folded edge of the Rakusu going in first.

- **When to wear the Rakusu**

Wear your Rakusu in the *zendo*, during talks, and generally for any kind of teaching or sitting practices. We do not wear it during work, unless working in the office. When we wear it during meals, we do so and eat very carefully. Sometimes during informal meals, people will turn their Rakusu around so that the field is on their back, but this is not a good practice. You may also wear the Rakusu during meetings for Center business and with teachers or with each other.

- **When not to wear the Rakusu**

Remove your Rakusu when you go to the bathroom or work in the kitchen. Hang the Rakusu with the white side out on hooks provided or on the door handle. If none are available, you may fold the Rakusu and place it on a nearby shelf or another clean place.

We also remove the Rakusu when requesting the *kyosaku* during *zazen*. After bowing with the monitor, remove the Rakusu and fold it, holding it between your hands as you bow in *gassho*, offering our right and then left shoulders. If you need to place your hands on your knees, then place your folded Rakusu on your lap while receiving the *kyosaku*. When done, touch the Rakusu to your forehead and place it over your neck, adjusting the straps as necessary.

Rakusu Sewing Instructions



Figure 1

Material you will need

- 1 yard black cloth or gathered fabric
- ¼ yard white silk
- ½ yard black or white interface material
- 1 ring, plastic or wood, 2 – 2½ inches in diameter
- 25 inches of green embroidery thread

Sewing supplies you will need

- Scissors
- Ruler
- If you want to make the investment, roller knives and cutting boards are helpful for precise cutting of the little fabric pieces.
- Needle (Buy sharp needles at a store (like Singer® brand), it will make your life easier!)
- White Marker (A fabric store would have this. It looks like a pencil. You may also find white wax markers whose mark disappears under the iron and can easily be sharpened with a knife.)

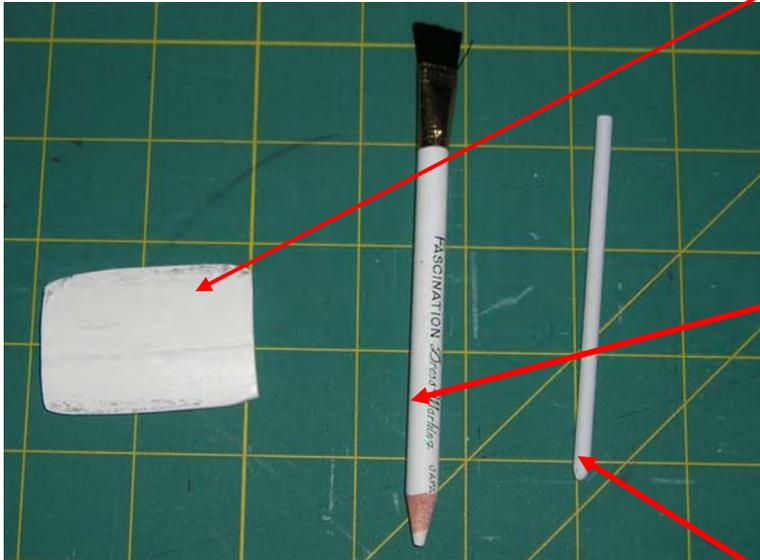


Figure 2

This is a wax marker, (not to confuse with a chalk marker of the same shape that breaks easily). On black fabric a wax marker disappears under the iron and can easily be sharpened with a knife.

This is a chalk marker. They are hard to sharpen and break easily. It is also hard to remove the chalk completely, when you draw lines with it. I don't recommend them.

This is a chalk mine for a refillable marker. I personally find them easy to work with lines that do not need to be removed

- Box of Pins (get the ones with a round plastic colored end if you can)
- Black Thread
- Pin Cushion
- An Iron and an Ironing Board
- If you gathered T-shirt fabric, light fabric or slippery silk and the like, you'll need some iron-on cloth interface material that sticks after ironing and makes the whole piece more firm (12 inches is enough. You can get this at a fabric store or you can ask Gemmon at the Zen Center for some.)

Some Information Before You Start:

- Your Rakusu is an intricate and individual piece of work and should be made without rushing. Please give it your full attention. Allow yourself plenty of time and enjoy making it, especially if you are not accustomed to sewing.
- Read the instructions carefully before you begin, Mainly the next page: *First Steps to Start Your Rakusu*.
- Wash and dye all fabric if necessary and iron it all flat. The dye should include a burgundy color. When doing the dying, use two parts black dye and one part burgundy dye to get the color that is most desirable for a ZCLA Rakusu. If you buy a kit, *iron the material before cutting* -- it will shrink a little.
- The last part of the book shows you how to cut out your black or dyed material. *Make copies of those pages, so you do not have to destroy this book.* Cut out the paper patterns for the A, B, C and D pieces. Note that you will need two pieces both A and C, so make two copies of pages 28 and 29. These patterns will give you the exact measurements for cutting and folding the rice field part of your Rakusu.

Important Terminology: The term “**right side**” will always refer to the side of the rakusu that will face out and be seen by others, while the “**wrong side**” will always refer to the side that is facing in or does not show.

Always pull your thread tightly when you sew. There should be no loops or loose threads be seen.

First Steps to Start Your Rakusu

First of all:

Don't consider sewing your Rakusu a task. Sewing your robe is to organically grow into a new phase of your life, which will be witnessed at your Jukai Ceremony.

Collect the fabric with this in mind and it will become a deep practice in itself.

Don't be nervous about the sewing itself. We have wonderful instructions and you will get all the support you need.

Collect fabric:

If you want to sew your Rakusu from collected pieces, then you need to collect at least 7 pieces. The maximum you can sew in, are 27 pieces. You can collect any number in between.

If you collect more pieces, the sewing becomes a bit more complex, but that should not hinder you to get into your Rakusu all those you want to commemorate as part of your practice.

The pieces are pretty small, around 5" by 16", and three pieces are longer (44"). That's the max. Most pieces are much smaller.

Ask for natural material, preferably cotton, linen or silk.

It is your choice, who you ask for fabric. It can be family members, friends, your teacher or spiritual friends. Tell them what it is for and that it is an important piece in your life that will be sewn together.

Ask preferably for natural fabric like cotton, linen or silk. If silk is very slippery, it is hard to sew. Ask for woven fabric instead of t-shirt fabric. But if you have a precious piece with a lot of meaning for you, then we will work everything out together.

Do not cut anything now. We will have to dye the fabric first and I will keep you informed about any step needed at the right time. We will set up a dyeing time at the Center a few days before the sewing class. If you can not make that one, then you will have to dye your fabric at home.

In addition:

You will need to buy a Rakusu kit (the ZCLA bookstore sells them). It includes the instructions, the interface fabric and the silk that is needed. The bookstore also offers extremely nice, handcrafted wooden rings.

Congratulations for your first steps as a Buddha Baby!

Rakusu with split pieces in the rice field

1. Make a copy of the paper patterns in this book (see page 107) and cut out the paper pieces.
2. Lay out all pieces of fabric in the pattern of the Rakusu so that you have a general idea of what it is going to look like. If you can, look at a finished Rakusu or study the pictures in this book.



Figure 3

3. Groups your pieces of fabric into three bunches:
Group 1: Pieces A-D for the rice field heart section
Group 2: E, F, G for the frame of the rice field heart section
Group 3: H, J, K, L for the straps



Figure 4

4. Put aside Group 2 and 3.

5. If you have all of the pieces of group 1, lay out your rice field like a puzzle so you get an idea of how the completed work will look.
6. Put your paper patterns on top of it, in the order you want your rice field to look.



Figure 5

7. Pin the patterns on each fabric.
8. If the pieces are very big, make a rough cut that is at least one inch bigger all around than the precise cut. Then iron the pieces.
9. If some pieces are of slippery or of T-shirt fabric, use an iron-on fabric interface for the backside before doing the precise cutting.



Figure 6

10. Cut all of the above pieces using sharp scissors or roller knife with square corners and clean lines. Please be very precise – extra care now will save you lot of work later. After cutting, immediately pin the paper back on the fabric, so you don't lose track.

11. If you use scissors: Mark all pattern pieces accurately on the cloth before making any cuts. Mark along the length of the cloth near the edge of the paper pattern, using the selvage (the edge of the fabric that is woven so that it does not ravel or fray) as a parallel line. However, do not include the selvage in any of the pieces.

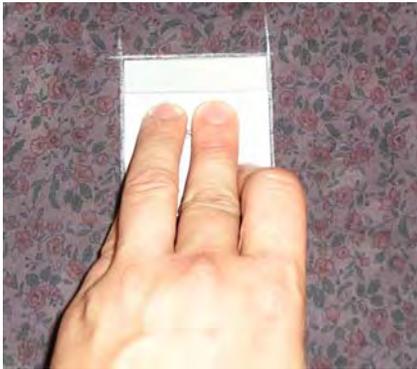


Figure 7

12. Cut precisely along the marking.



Figure 8

13. If you use a roller knife: Put the fabric piece flat on the table and the paper pattern on top of it.



Figure 9

- Put the ruler on top of the paper patterns so the edges line up precisely. Press down the ruler strongly and cut along the edge.

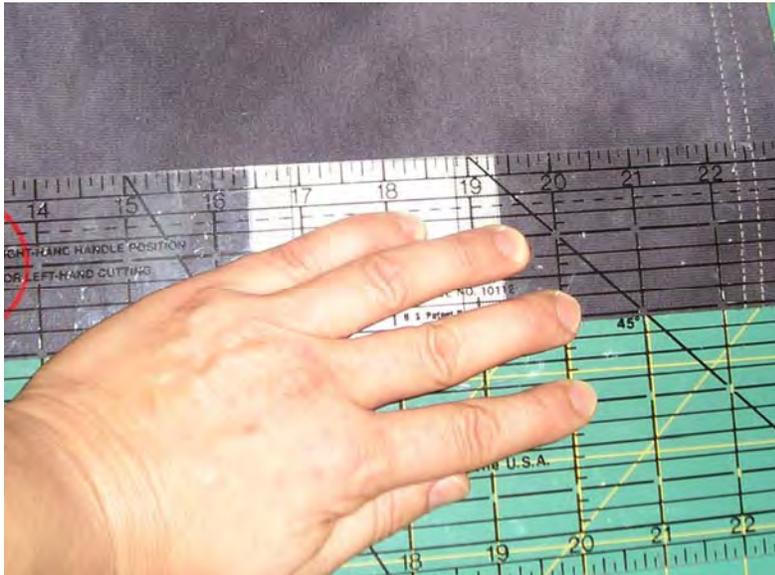


Figure 10

- Move the ruler carefully, so the paper does not slip on the fabric. Cut all around the paper pattern.
- Cut all rice field pieces and keep laying them out, so you don't lose track. Mark them precisely like: "A2L" for Piece "A", second piece from top "2", "L" for left side of the Rakusu.



Figure 11

Sewing the rice field panels A – D from small pieces



Figure 12

17. If you split the pieces A, C and/or D, use the smaller paper patterns provided. Start with pieces “A”.
18. Turn all pieces so you see the **wrong** side of the fabric.
19. Mark the bottom lines as shown in the paper patters or precisely 0,5' above the lower edge, leaving a bit space for the thickness of the marker. You may use a marker that does not resolve under the iron, as it is on the **wrong** side of the fabric.

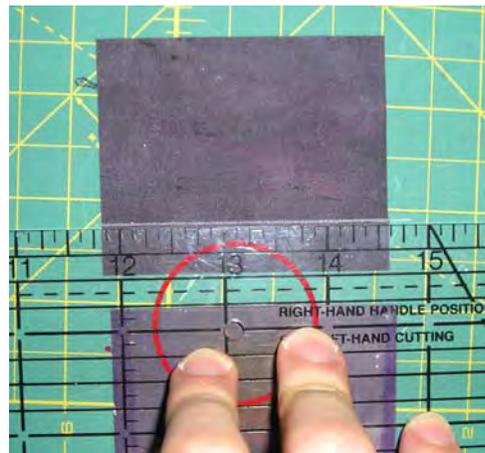


Figure 13



Figure 14

20. Pin the small pieces together, so the **right** sides of the fabric face each other and the bottom edge of A₁ is aligned with the upper edge of A₂, the bottom edge of A₂ is aligned with the upper edge of A₃ and so on.
21. Sew along the marking lines with the backstitch on page 92.

(I have to excuse myself, as I made the picture series with a Rakusu I sewed with the machine. I hope it will still help you to understand.)

22. Make sure that the tucks go in the correct directions. Iron them in the precise direction as seen in the picture (first one up, second down, third up, fourth down.)



Figure 15

23. Mark, pin and sew pieces "C" and "D" the same way.
24. Iron pieces "C" and "D" as follow: First tuck down, second up.



25. From this point on follow instructions on page 23.

Rakusu from one and the same fabric

26. If you make your Rakusu from one and the same fabric, here are the precise measurements of the pieces. I still recommend for beginners to use the paper patterns for pieces A – D. I adjusted their size a bit in the length, so you have more flexibility later on.

2 strips A	10 x 2.5 in.
4 strips B	8 x 1½ in.
2 strips C	9 x 1 in.
1 strip D	9 x 2¾ in.

27. Then cut the pieces of Group 2:

1 strip E	34 x 4½ in.	This will become the frame left bottom and right side of the rakusu center piece.
1 strip F	15½ x 4½ in.	This will become the top part of the frame.
1 strip G	9 x 2 in.	This will become the little piece on top of “F”.

28. And the pieces of group 3:

1 strip J	42 x 4½ in. (44 inches for tall people)	This will become the inner strap.
1 strip H	42 x 4½ in. (44 inches for tall people)	This will become the outer strap.
1 strip K	10 x 4½ in.	This will become the neck piece.
1 strip L	9 x 4½ in.	This will become the little strap that holds the ring.

29. Mark then cut from the interfacing material:

1 piece M	15¼ x 11½ in. (or if interface is stiff enough: 13¼ x 9½ in). This will go behind the rice field.
1 piece N	9 x 3¼ in. inside neckpiece
2 pieces of interface	1 ¾ in. x 42 in. (or 1 ¾ in. x 44 in.) to stiffen straps

30. From white silk:

1 piece P	12½ x 9 in.	This will be the piece on the back of the Rakusu, where Roshi write on.
1 piece O	10 x 3½ in.	This will no tbe seen. It is hidden in the fold neck piece.

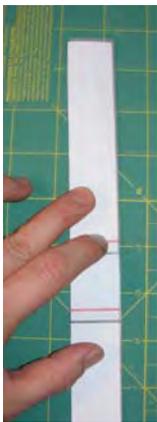
31. Groups your pieces of fabric into three bunches:

- Group 1: Pieces A-D for the rice field heart section
- Group 2: E, F, G for the frame of the rice field heart section
- Group 3: H, J, K, L for the straps

32. Add pieces M and P to Group 2. Add pieces N and O to Group 3.

33. Wrap the pieces of Group two and three and put them aside for now.

34. Take all the paper patterns and fold the horizontal lines backwards and forwards, so they bend easily.



35. Put your paper patterns precisely on top of the fabric. (The photo series shows an example with a “C” piece.) See Figure 16

Figure 16

36. Flip back the fabric and mark the horizontal lines as shown in your paper patterns. Use a pencil.

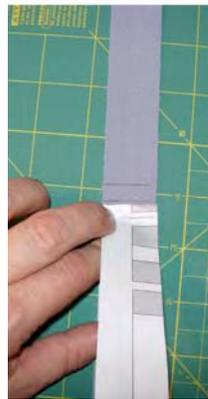


Figure 17

37. On the paper pattern, the red lines is where you later will sew, the black lines are where you iron.

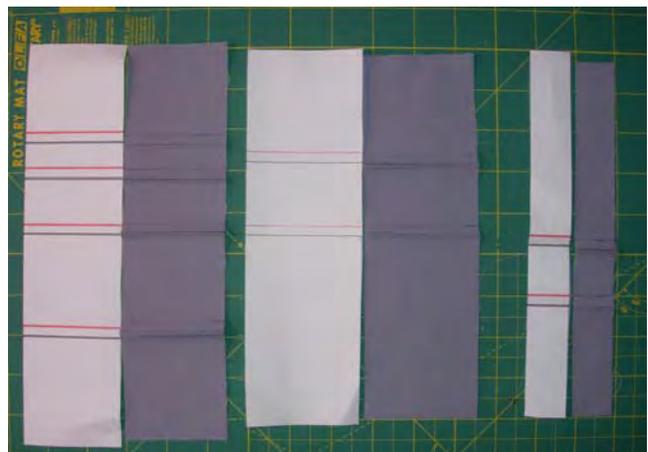


Figure 18

38. Fold the fabric and iron along those lines that are black on the paper pattern (the second line of the couple). See Figure 19.

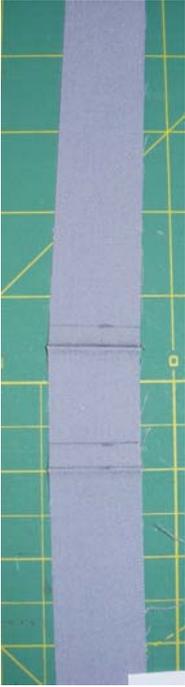


Figure 19

39. Sew along those lines that are red on the paper pattern. See Figure 20.
40. Do so with all A, C, and D pieces.

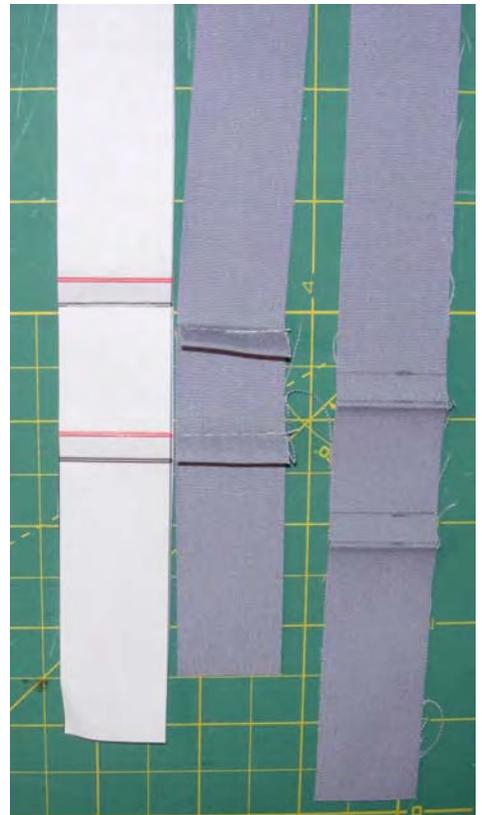


Figure 20

41. Iron all tucks in the correct direction as shown in Figure 21 and Figure 22

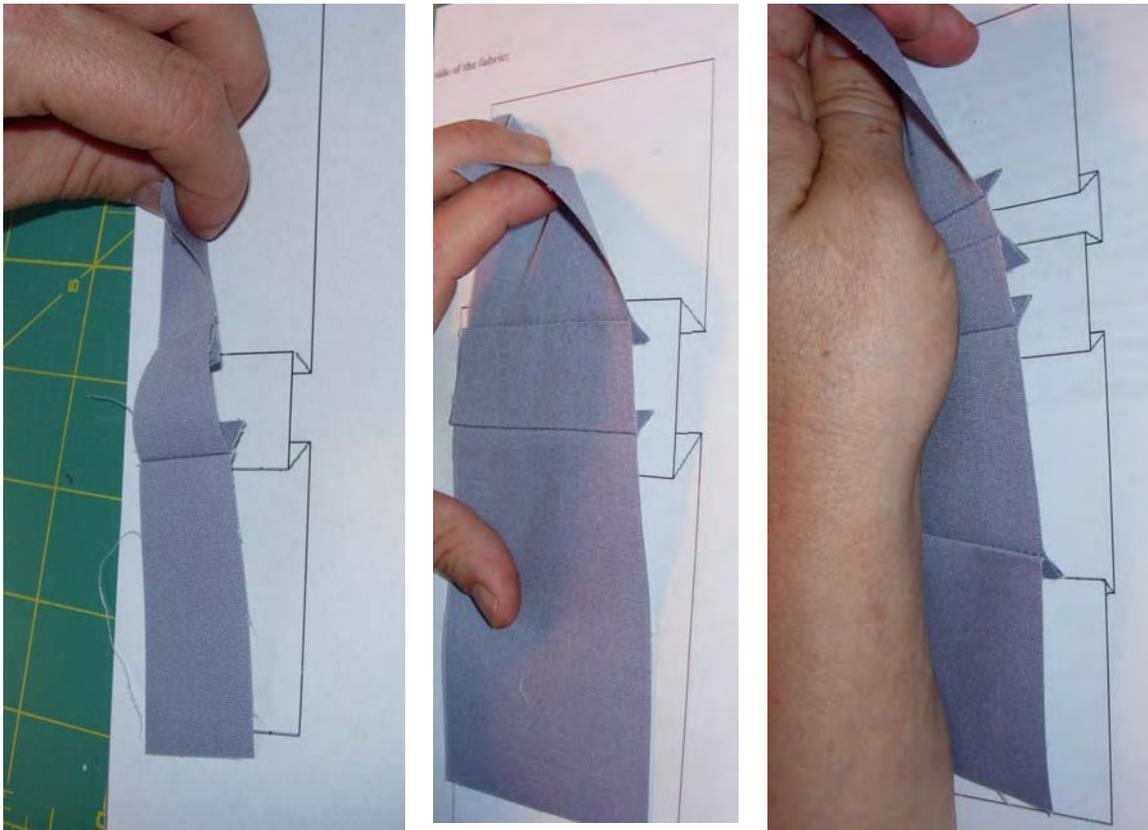


Figure 21

Or a view from the back:

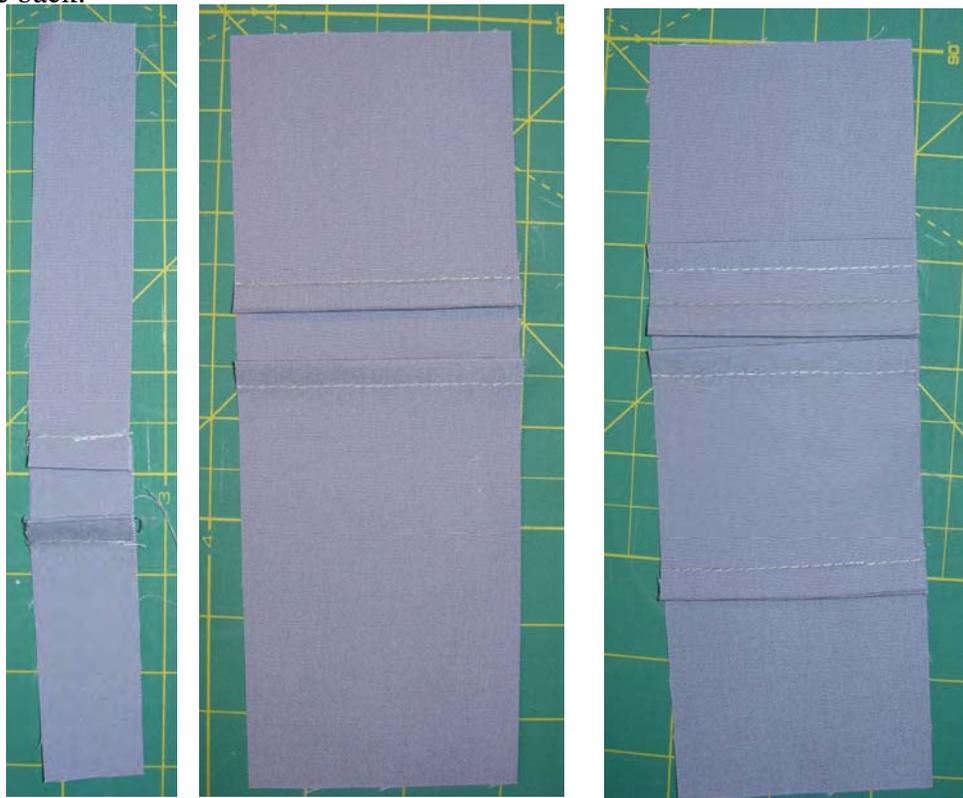


Figure 22

Sewing the vertical panels together

42. Lay out your vertical panels precisely as they will be at the end.

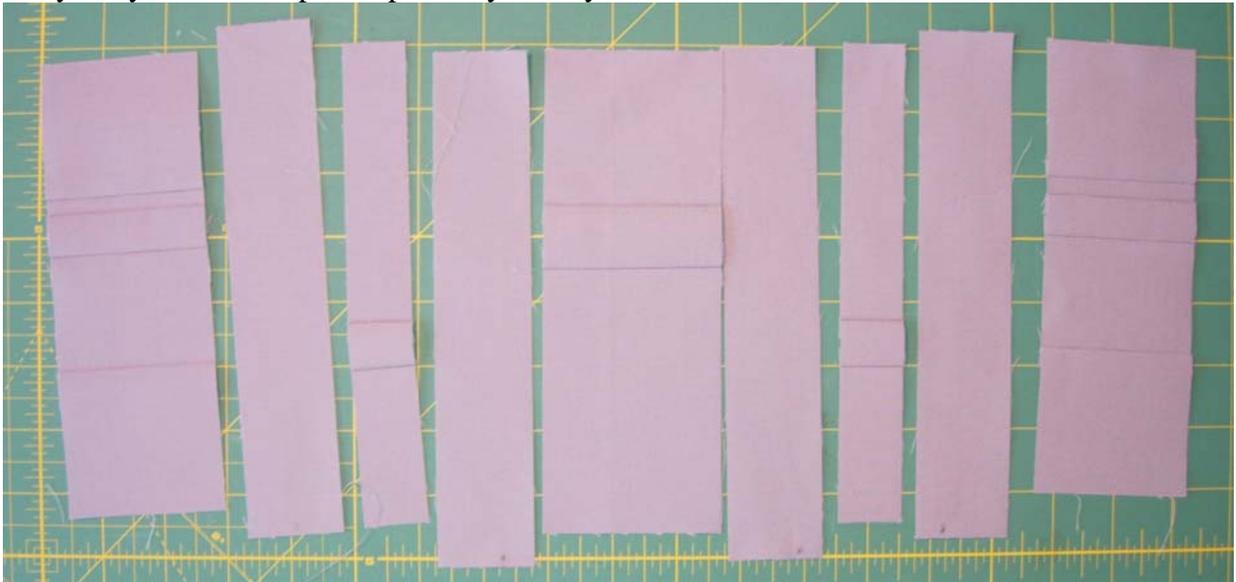


Figure 23

43. Mark the vertical lines on B, always use a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam allowance. (Be careful, if you mark too far into the pieces, your rice field section might get too short!) Mark both edges.



Figure 24

44. Make three groups of your vertical panels: $A_1, B, C - B, D, B - C, B, A_2$



Figure 25

45. Start with the A1 – B – C Group, turning “B” on “A”, so their **right** sides face each other. See Figure 27.
46. Pin the edges together precisely. Stitch by hand along the marked line on piece “B”, using a step-stitch. See Figure 27 and Figure 26.



Figure 27



Figure 26

47. Iron the tuck toward "B".



Figure 28

48. Then add piece "C" to AB. Put "AB" down so you face the right side of the fabric. Put "C" next to it, so the lower seam on "A" matches the lower seam on "C".

49. Then flip "C" on top of "AB", so the seams are still matching. See Figure 29.

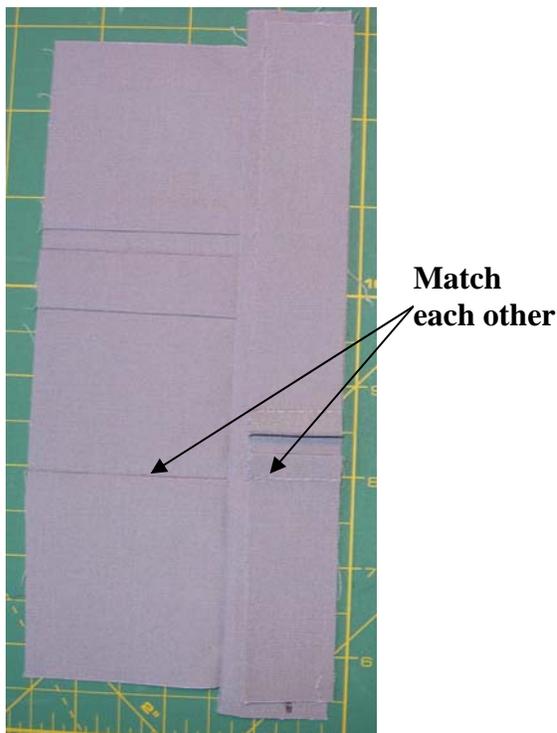


Figure 29

50. Pin the pieces together before you turn them around and sew along the marked line on piece “B”.



Figure 30

51. Iron the tuck towards “B”.



Figure 31

52. Now sew A₂,B,C together the same way. At the end, always iron the tuck toward the “B” piece. See picture series in Figures 32.



Figures 32

53. Now sew B,D,B together the same way. At the end, always iron the tuck toward the “B” piece. See picture series in Figure 33.

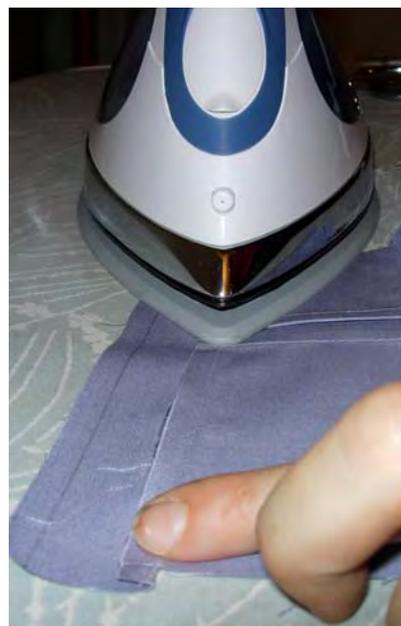
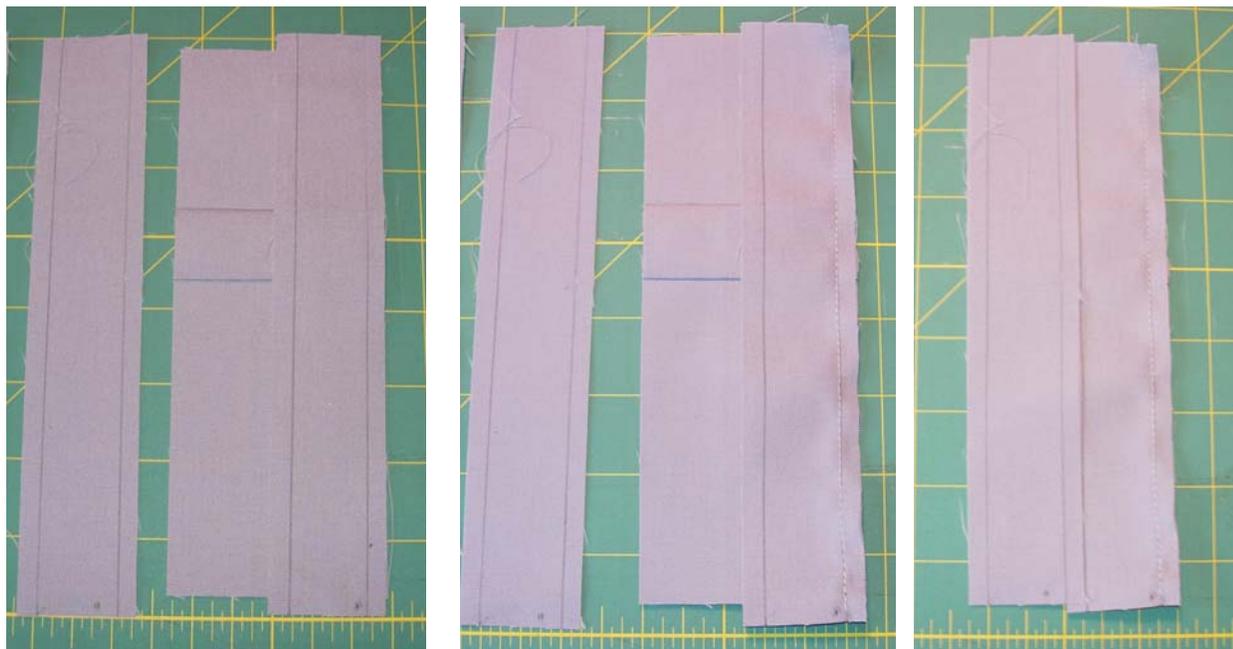


Figure 33

54. Lay out the three groups next to each other, so the upper edge of pieces “A” and piece “D” match. If you worked precisely, then the third line of pieces “A” will match the second line of piece “D”. See Figure 34.

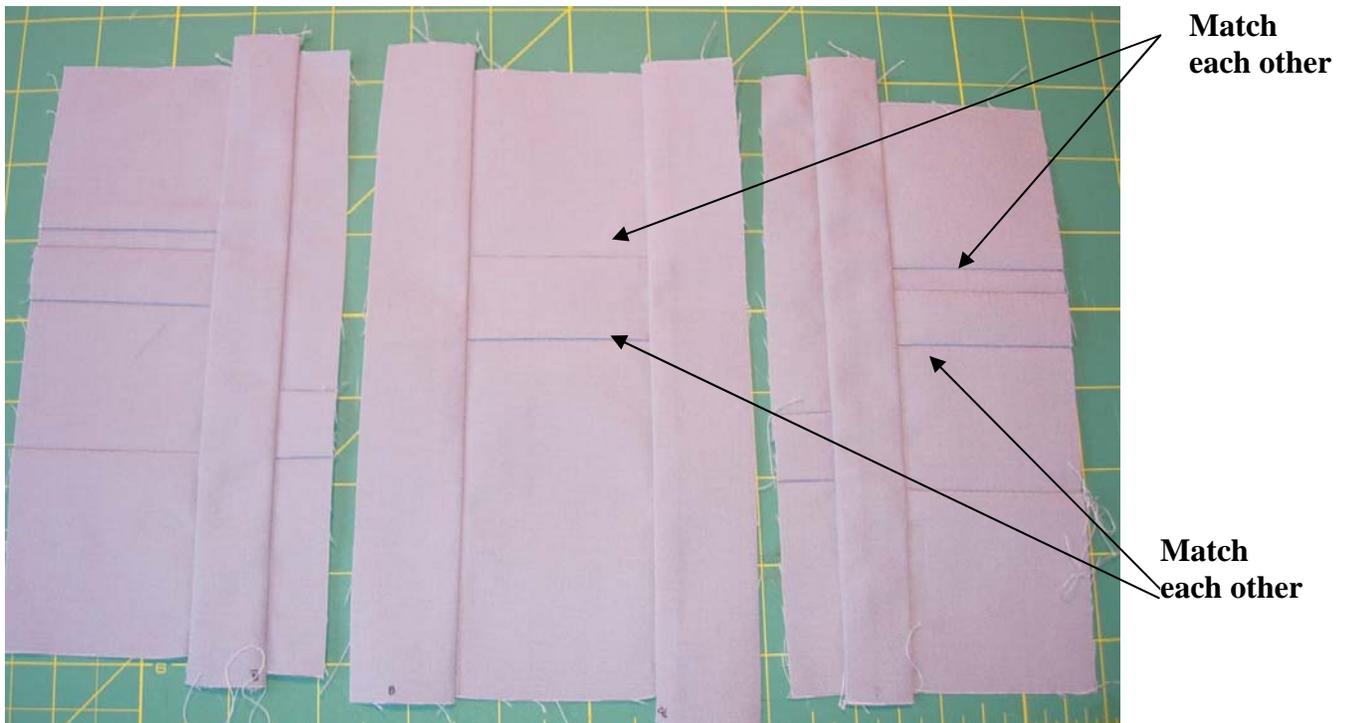


Figure 34

55. Flip the right group on top of the center group, so the lines still match.

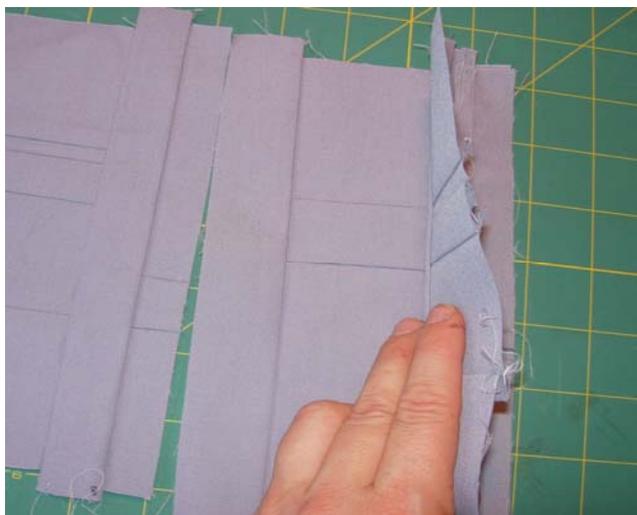


Figure 35

56. Pin along edge of “C”. Turn the pieces around and sew along the marked line on piece “B”.



Figure 36

57. Open the pieces and iron the tuck of the new ham towards “B” again.



Figure 37

58. Now flip the left group on top of the bigger group, so the upper line of “A₂” matches the upper line of piece “C”. All other lines will by itself more or less match each other as they should.

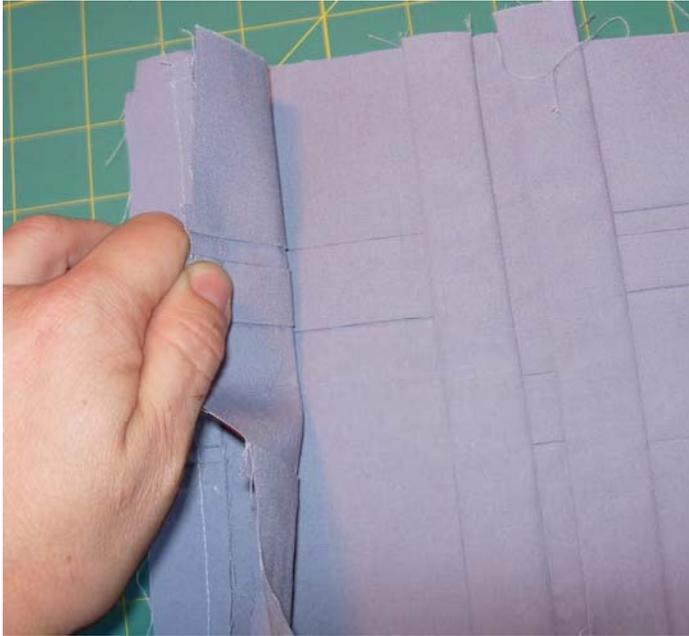


Figure 38

59. Pin along piece “C” again. Turn the rice field around and sew along the marked line on piece “B”.
60. Open the rice field and iron the tuck towards “B”. Now all tucks should be ironed towards the “B” pieces and the A,C,D pieces should be flat.



Figure 39



Adding the Border to Your Rice Field

62. Now gather your fabric pieces bundled in Group 2.
63. Take piece M at $15\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ inch then fold and press a 1 inch edge turning on all four sides so the cloth measures precisely $13\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ inch from each folded edge. If your interface was very stiff, you can skip this point.
64. Fold your heart piece lengthwise and widthwise and mark the center of the piece with a pin. See Figure 41.



Figure 41



65. Do the same with the interfacing piece M.



Figure 42

66. Using the pins as markers, place the rice field exactly in the middle of piece M so that the pins meet. There should be less than $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches of space between the rice field piece and the folded edges of the frame. Pin them in place.



Figure 43

67. Do a basting stitch (see Page The Baste Stitch95) as near as possible to the outer edges of the rice field piece. Remove your pins when done stitching.



Figure 44

68. Place the white cloth piece P in the middle of the back of the rice field piece. Pin then baste-stitch outside of the rice field piece. Unpin after the baste stitch has been made.



Figure 45

69. On the right side of the fabric, with a marker that disappears under the iron, mark 0.5' on each long side of piece E.



Figure 46

70. Iron towards the **wrong** side of the fabric.



Figure 47

71. Fold the border strip piece E in half lengthwise and press with an iron.



Figure 48

72. Starting at the top left corner of the interface, tuck the border piece E around the fold. Pin just the top part of E to the rice field.



Figure 49

73. Go tightly around the corner, leaving the inner edge open.



Figure 50

74. When you finished pinning all around the three sides of the rice field, prepare your corners, by tucking them in. at the end the vertical and the horizontal line of E should meet each other.



Figure 51

75. Pin the edges in that position.



Figure 52

76. Just to make sure, the backside of E in not yet attached.



Figure 53

77. It helps to draw a straight line directly next to the edge on the rice field. Use a marker that disappears under the iron.

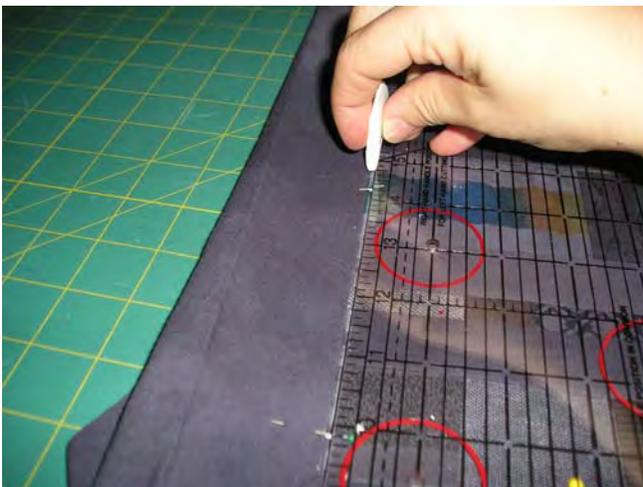


Figure 54

78. If you are right handed, start sewing on the upper right edge of the rice field (if you are left handed, start with the upper left edge). Use a blind stitch to attach E. Here is a photo series how to do it.
79. Cut a thread that is long enough to go all the way around. Start by making a knot at the end of the thread. Then come with your needle out of the top edge of piece E

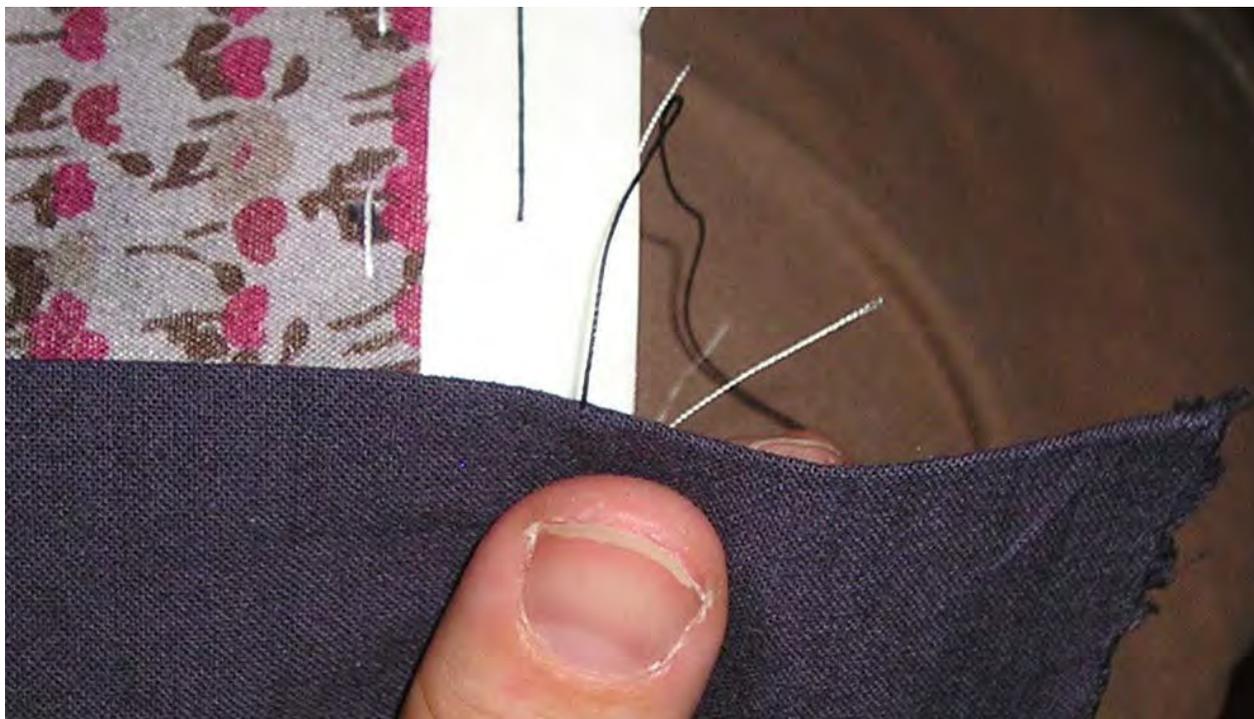


Figure 55

80. Exactly across from where you came out, enter into piece M, turn the needle around and come back up around 1/4" later.

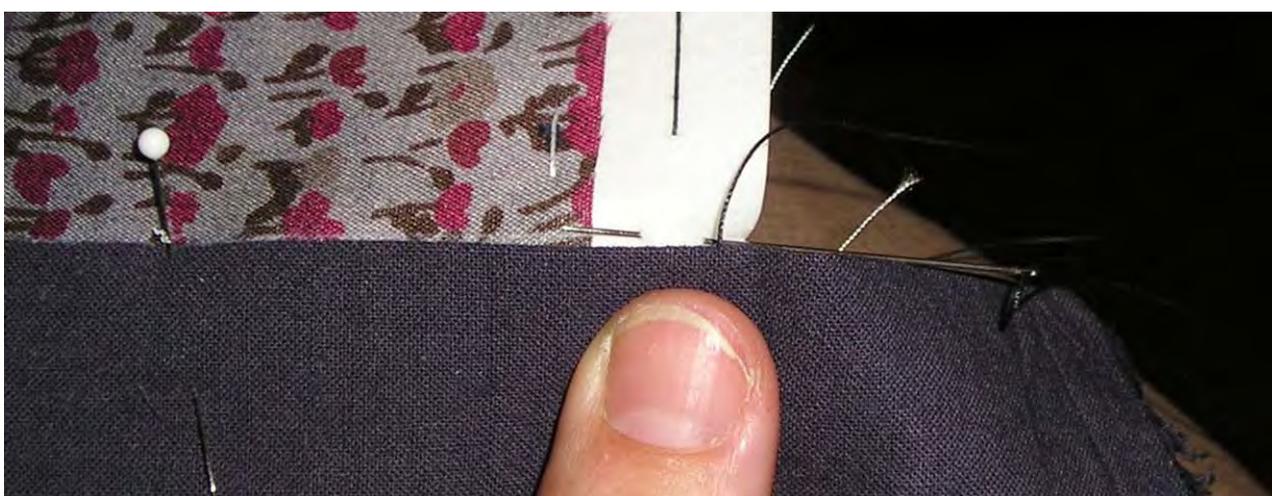


Figure 56

81. Exactly across from where you came up again, enter piece E and tunnel the edge for around $\frac{1}{4}$ ", before you come out with your needle again.



Figure 57

82. Do three or four stitches the same way.
83. When you reach the fabric part of the rice field, try to catch all but not the silk on the back. That way you later need not to worry about covering the stitches when you attach the backside of E.



Figure 58

84. Then pull the thread tightly, so it disappears.



Figure 59

85. Sew all the way around, ignoring the edges at this point. Your white pencil line helps you to sew straight in the rice field.

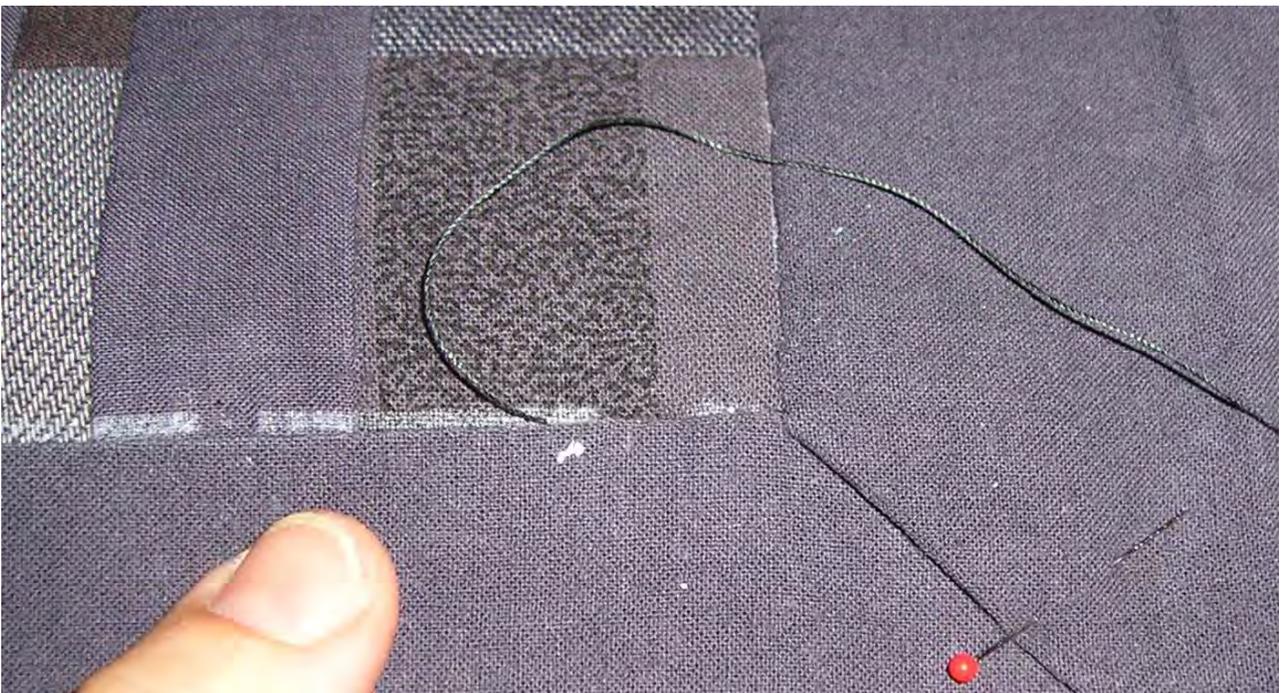


Figure 60

86. At the end make a knot and start a new thread. This knot can be openly seen, as piece F will later cover it.
87. Now turn the rice field around and pin E to the silk. If you did not stitch through in the front, you will now not have a problem with being short. If your thread can be seen at times, you will need to cover it with the frame piece.



Figure 61

88. Pin all around. This time tuck the corners into the other direction as you did in the front, so the bulk of tucked fabric is spread out evenly.

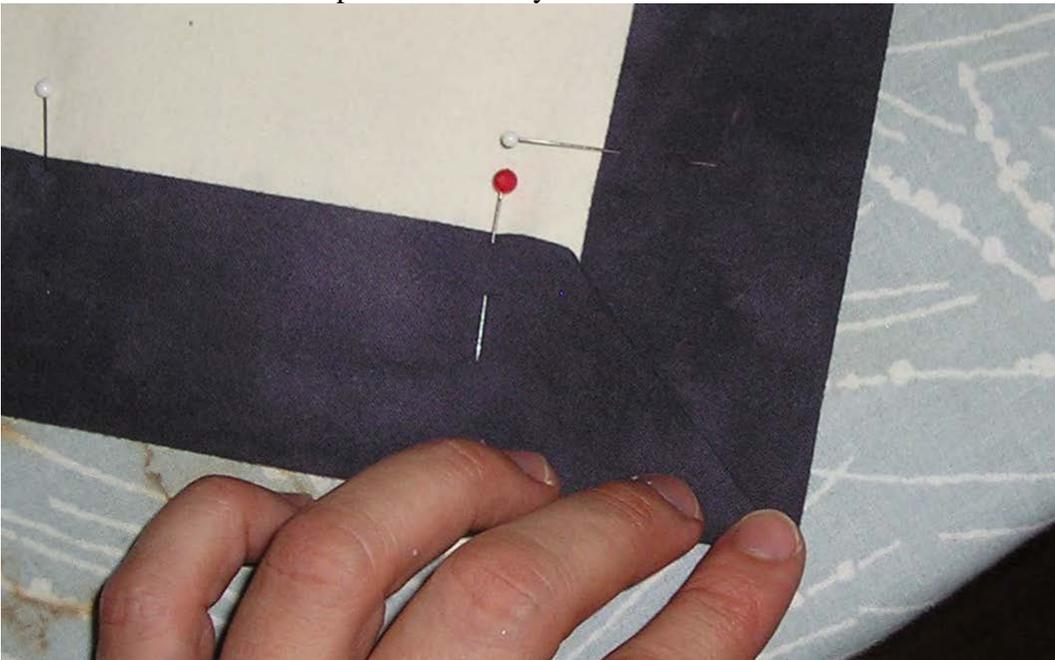


Figure 62

89. Draw a very thin pencil line on the silk, directly where you will attach the frame to the silk.

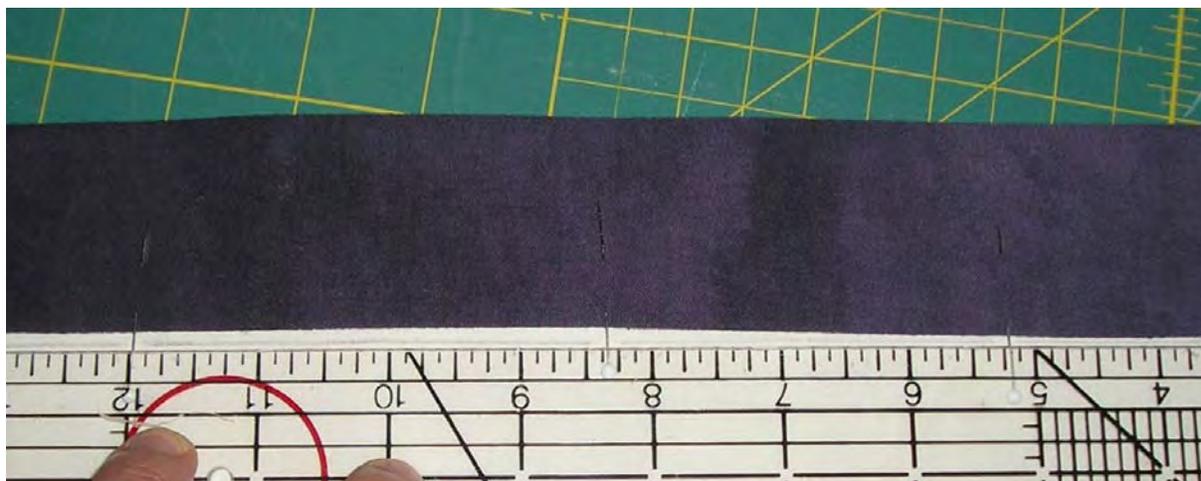


Figure 63

90. Start sewing as before. This time, if you come to a corner, close it with a blind stitch as well.



Figure 64

91. When you are at the end of the corner, stitch through to the front and turn the Rakusu around.



Figure 65

92. Close the front part of the corner.



Figure 66

93. When you get back to the inner edge, go back through, turn the Rakusu around and keep sewing along on the back. Do the same with the second edge.

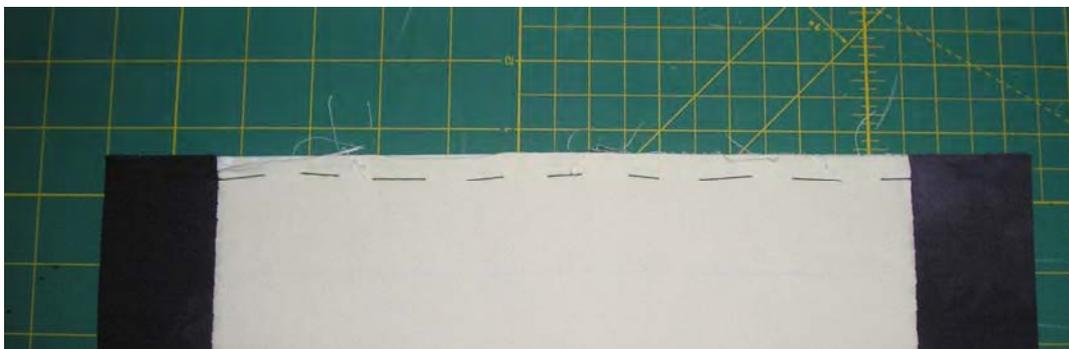


Figure 67

94. At the end make a knot. Cut of the fabric that sticks beyond the edge of the rice field.



Figure 68



95. Prepare piece F by marking 0.5' on both long sides. Mark it on the **right** side of the fabric with the marker that disappears under the iron.



Figure 69

96. Iron it towards the **wrong** side of the fabric.



Figure 70

97. Then iron it in half.



Figure 71

98. Open the piece F again and put the rice field on top of it, so you can see the silk. Line up the middle iron fold of piece F with the upper edge of the rice field.



Figure 72

99. Iron both open ends of F inward.

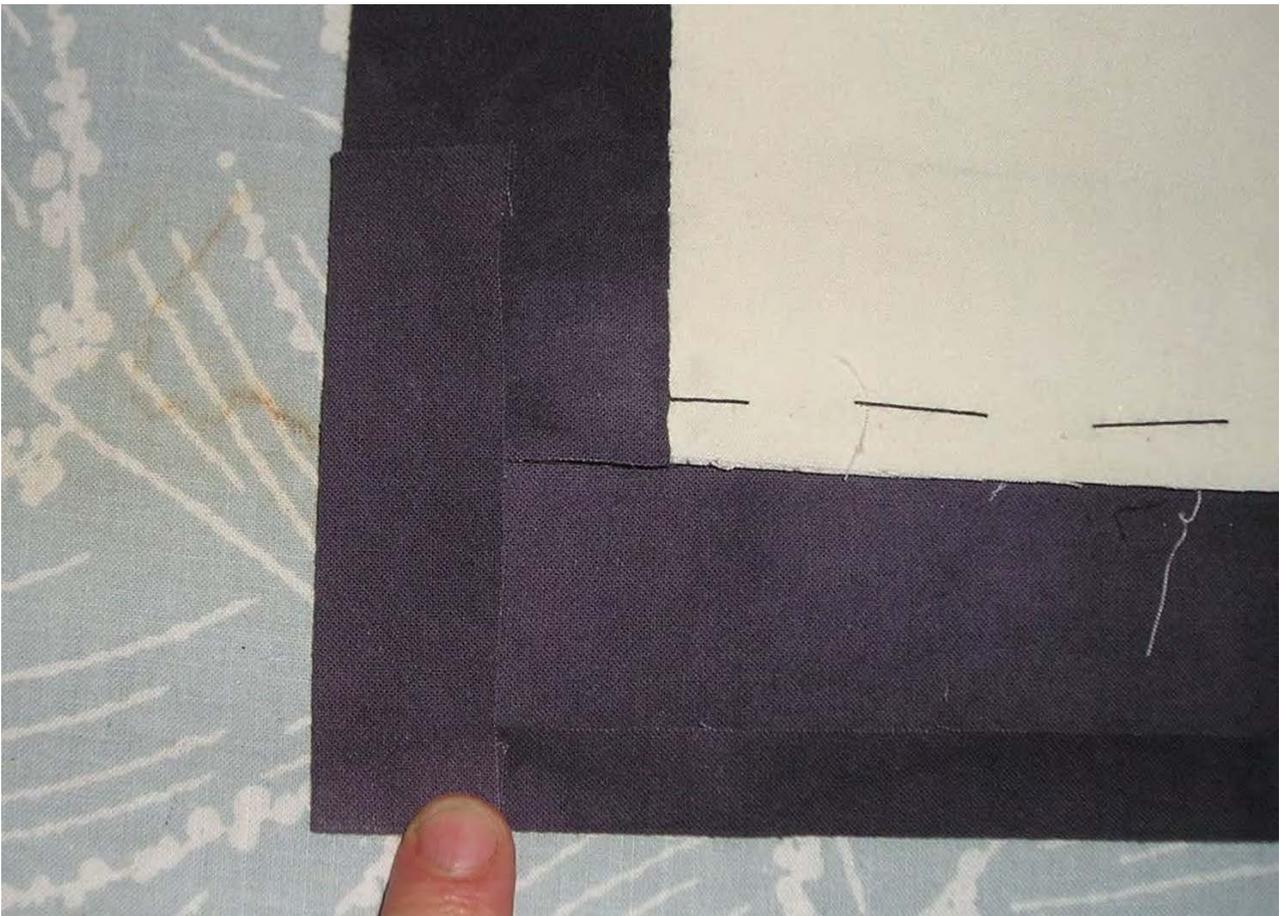


Figure 73

100. Then iron a little bit of the corners inward.

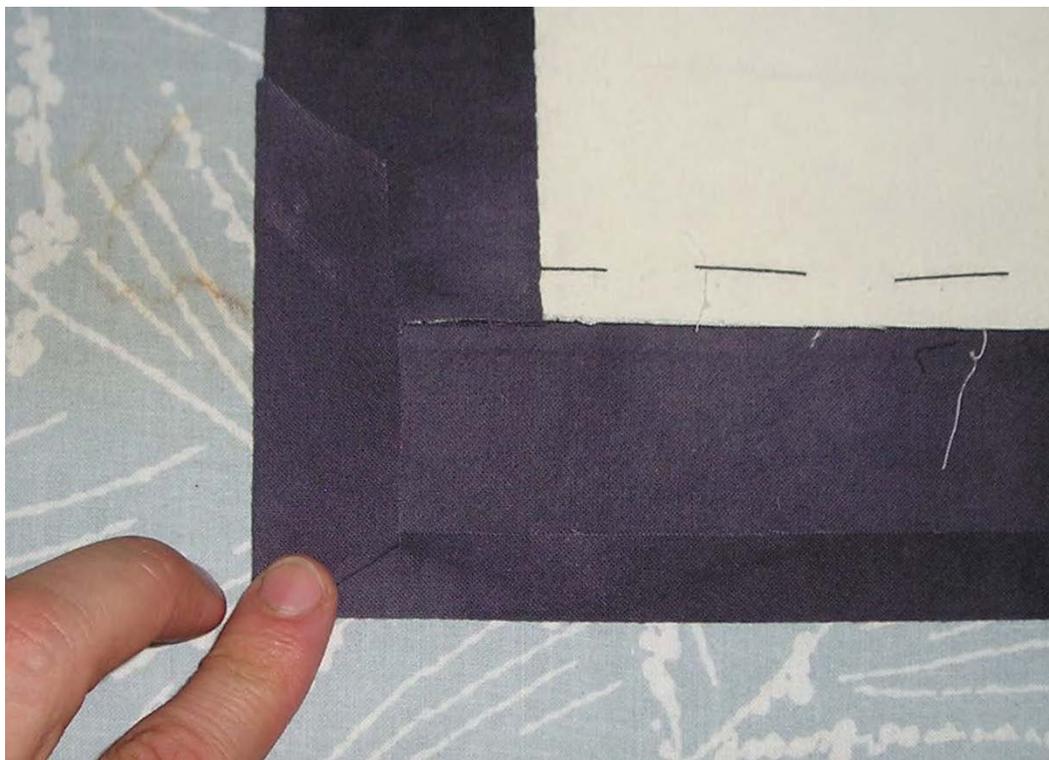


Figure 74

101. Fold F over towards the back and iron it again.



Figure 75

102. Pin F to the rice field in the front and in the back.



Figure 76

103. Mark a white line on the rice field next to the edge as you did with piece E.



Figure 77

104. And a thin pencil line on the silk as you did before.

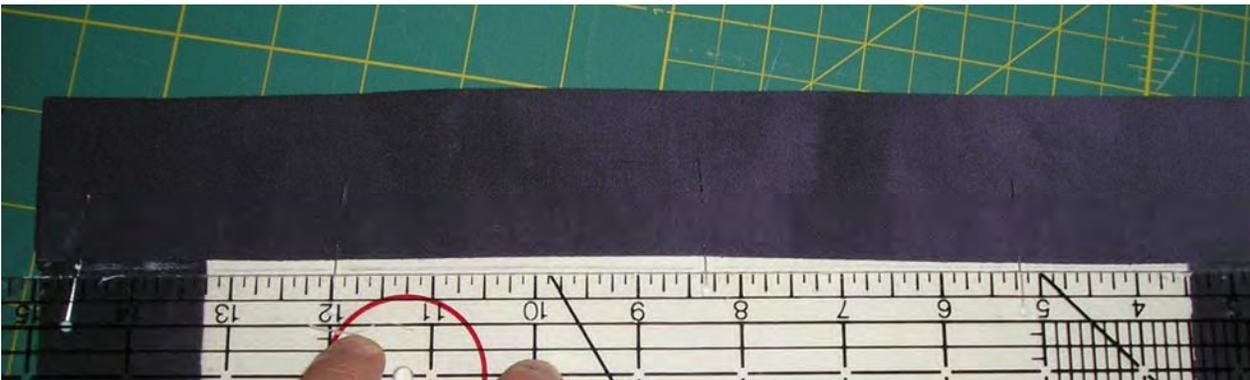


Figure 78

105. Start sewing in the upper left corner (left hander right corner). Make a knot at the end of the thread. Hide your knot by coming from inside the fabric and exit exactly on the edge.



Figure 79

106. Make a blind stitch by tunneling on both sides of the corner.



Figure 80

107. When you get to the end of that seam, attach the front side of the rice field to the piece F.



Figure 81

108. When you get to the end of the line, go up and down the corner.



Figure 82

109. Then attach the back side of the rice field to the piece F.



Figure 83

110. At the end make a knot and hide it (see stitching page 86 for that).



Figure 84

111. Take piece G and mark $\frac{1}{4}$ on one side and $\frac{1}{2}$ ' on the other. Mark on the **right** side of the fabric.

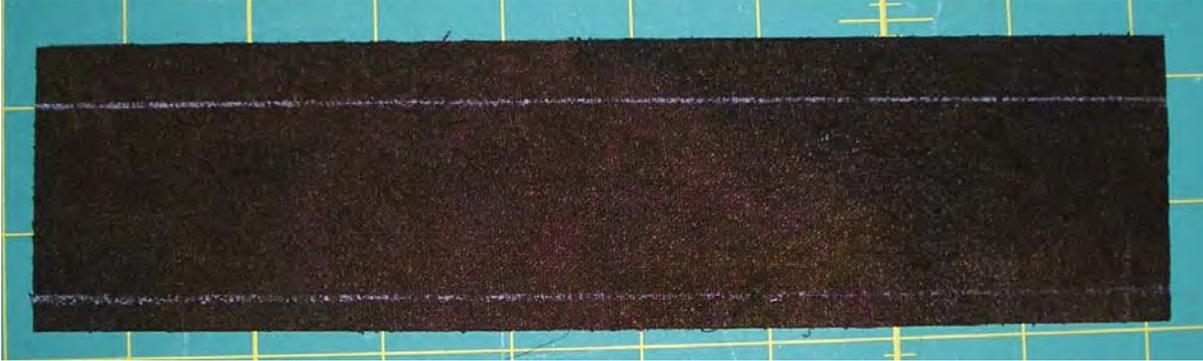


Figure 85

112. Iron these edges towards the **wrong** side of the fabric.



Figure 86

113. Then press $\frac{1}{2}$ inch at each end.



Figure 87

114. Find and mark the middle of both the top of your rice field piece and piece G.



Figure 88

115. Lightly draw a horizontal line $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the top edge of your rice field piece.

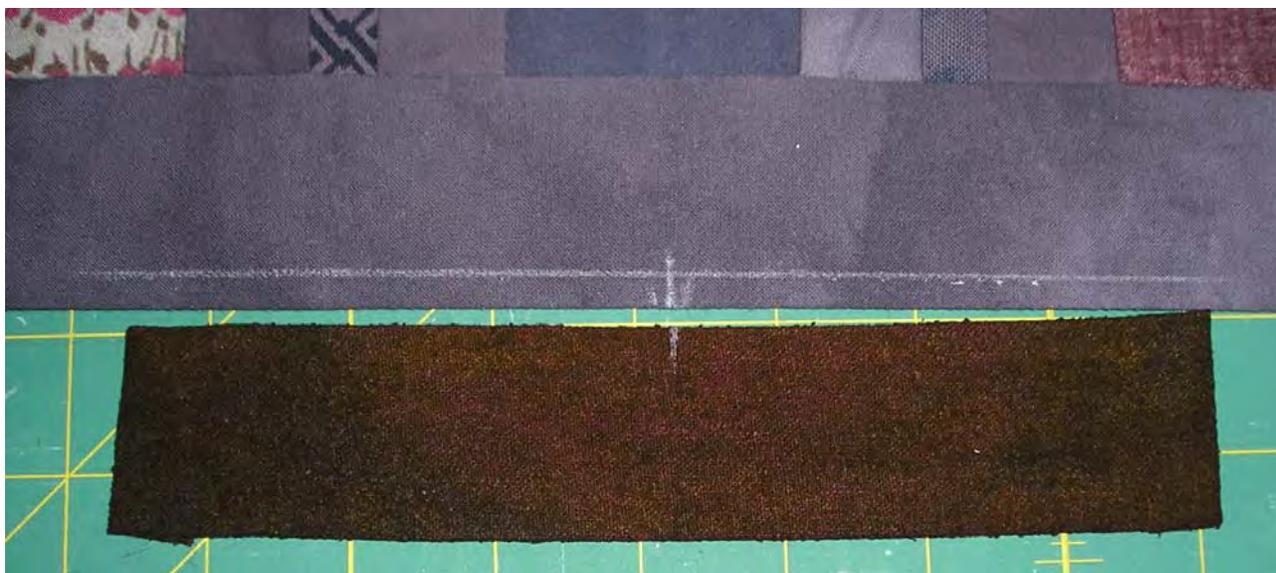


Figure 89

116. Bring the front edge of G down to meet this line. Center piece G on the top of the rice field piece and pin.

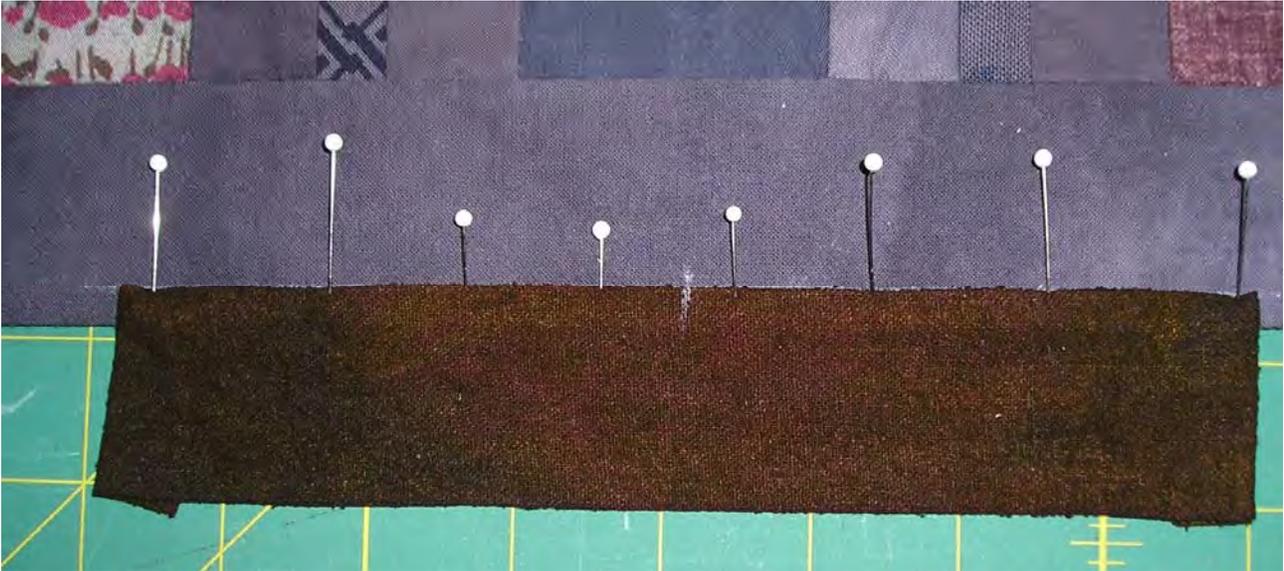


Figure 90

117. Draw a line directly next to the edge of G.

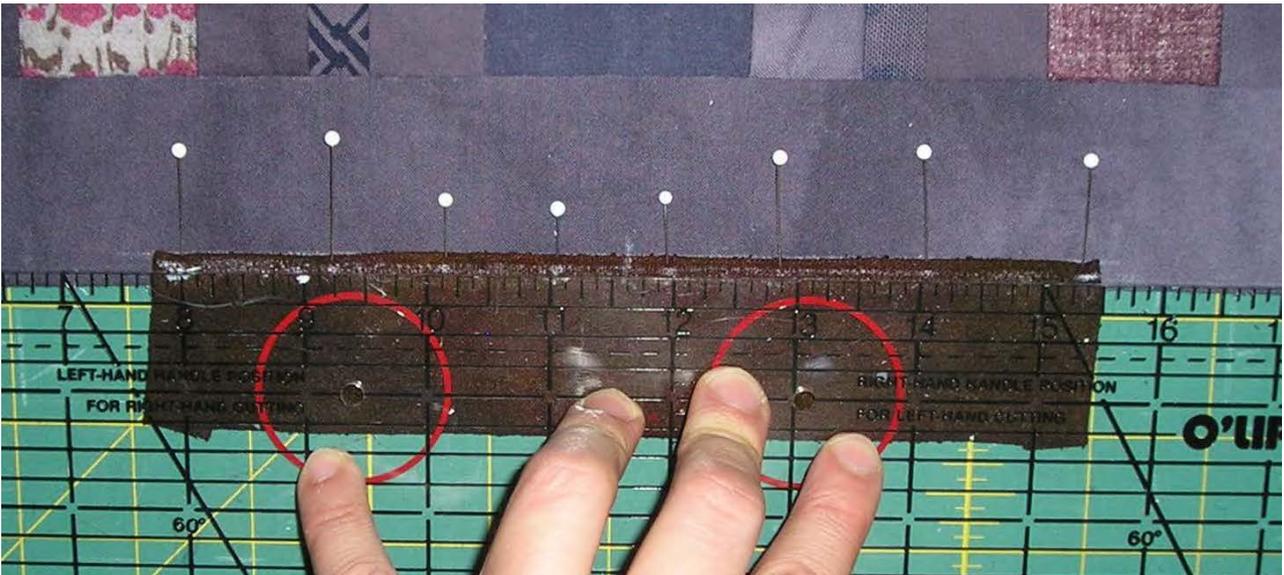


Figure 91

118. Use a step-stitch as embroidery to attach G in place. It is the same stitch you used to sew the rice field pieces together, but in this case you leave a space between the stitches.



Figure 92

119. Fold and press the excess material to the back, forming nice 45° angles at the ends of G.

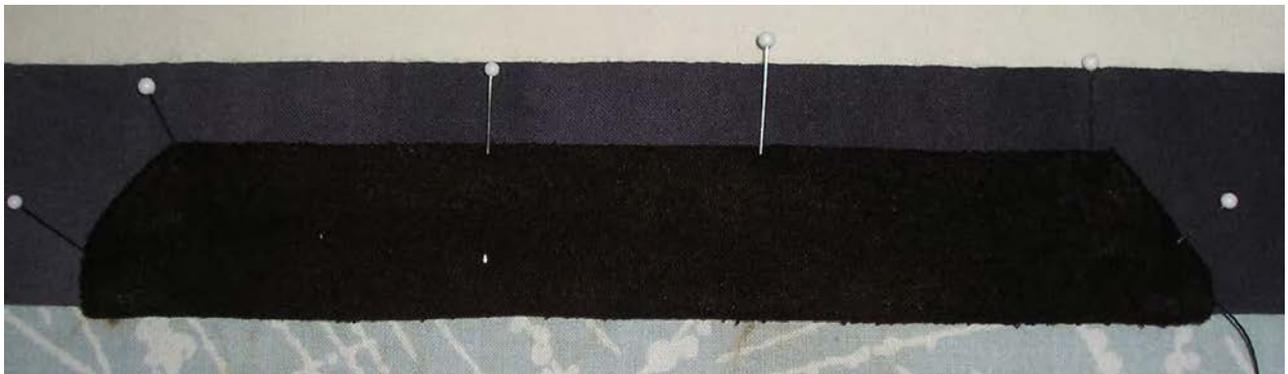


Figure 93

120. Blind-stitch to attach it to the rice field.

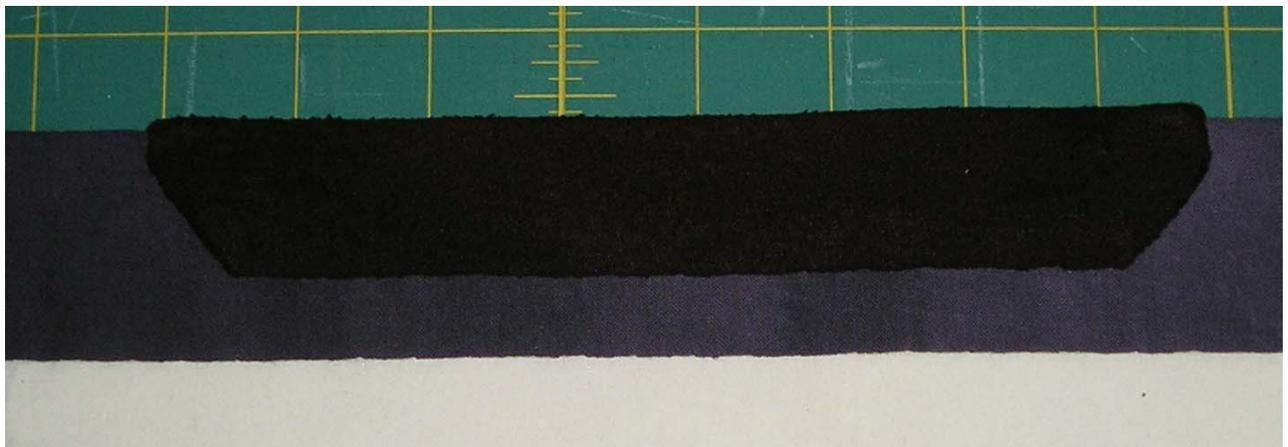


Figure 94

The Straps

121. Gather your fabric pieces in Group 3. At ZCLA you are allowed to sew the straps with a sewing machine. If you have a light fabric, add an iron-on interface to pieces H and J.

122. Take pieces H and J and mark 0.5' along the long edge and ONE short edge.

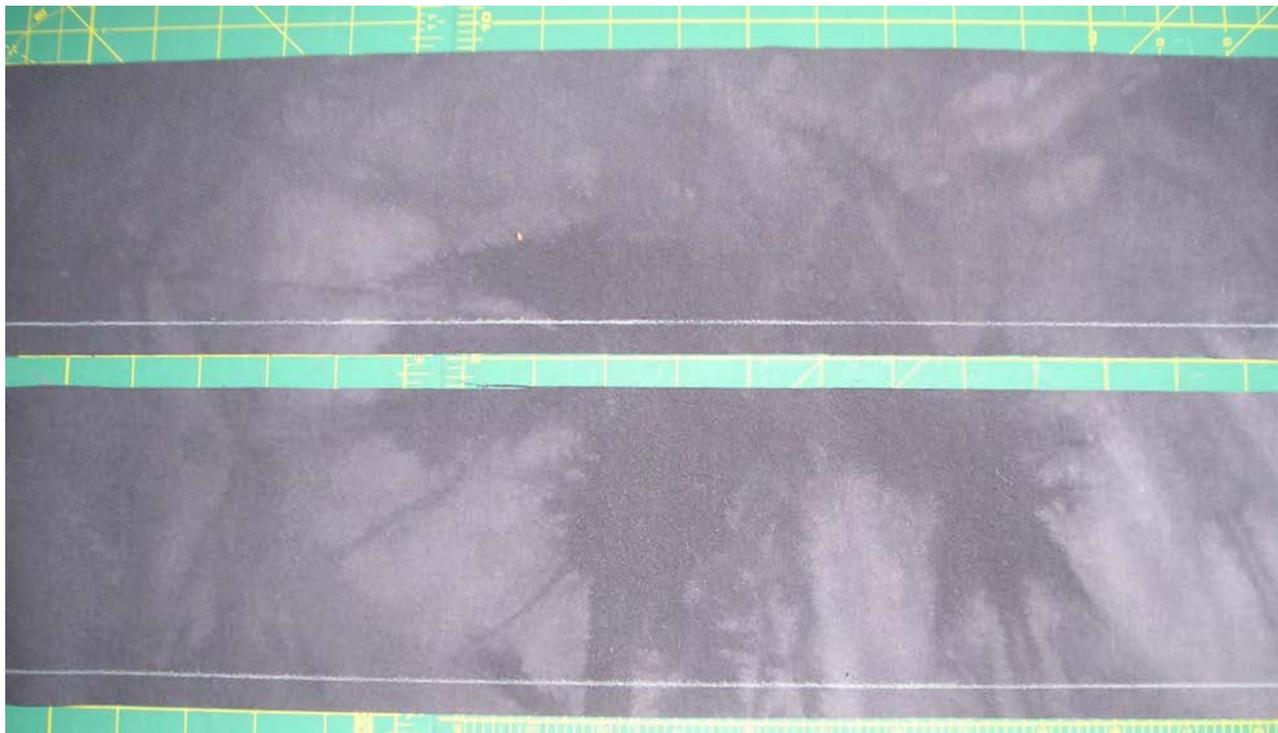


Figure 95

123. Iron on the interface along this line.



Figure 96

124. Fold (don't iron!) H and J down their lengths and pin all raw edges together.

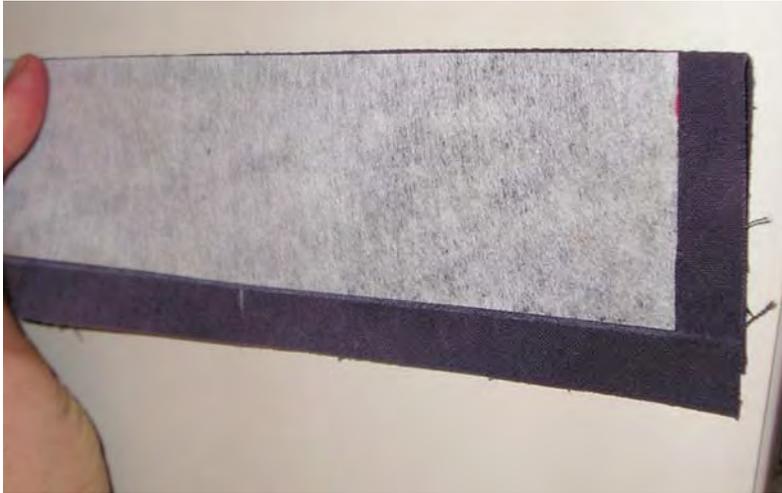


Figure 97

125. Machine or hand-stitch the raw edge length and one end, keeping one end open.

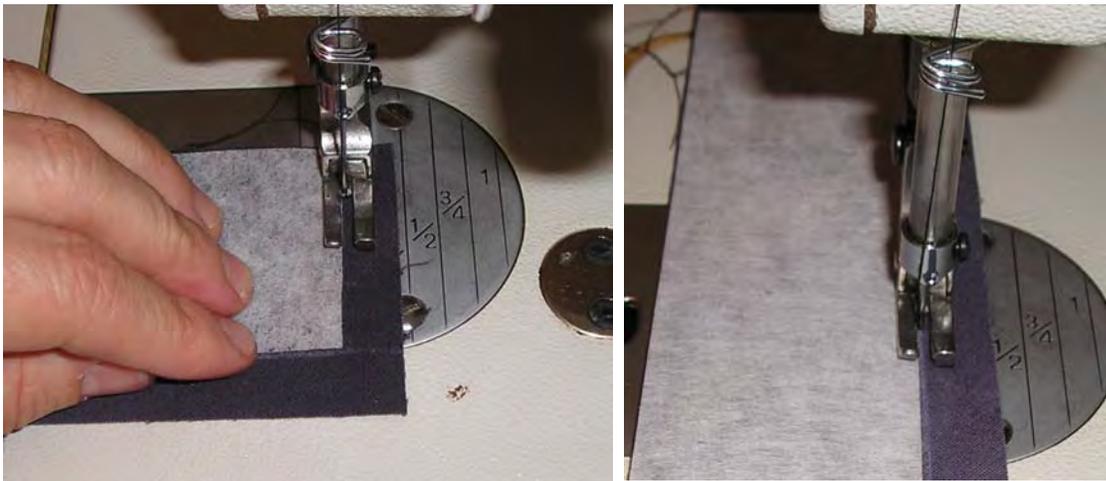


Figure 98

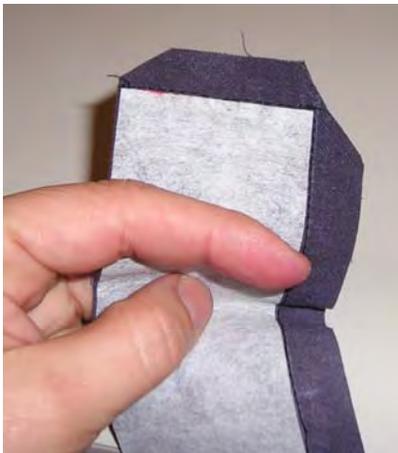


Figure 99

126. Clip both end corners of H and J so you won't have bunches at the ends.

127. Stuff in the end that is closed as far as you can with your fingers. See Fig. 100



Figure 100

128. Use a yardstick or a long cooking spoon to turn straps inside out, carefully starting at the closed end. See Fig 101.



Figure 101

129. Pull out the seams and corners completely. You might need a pin or a needle to get the corners out neatly.



Figure 102

130. Press carefully afterwards, making sure that you have turned the strap completely inside out so the seams are right at the edges as you press with your iron.



Figure 103

131. Mark 0.5' along the long edge of piece L.



Figure 105

132. Fold L down its length and pin all raw edges together. Machine or hand-stitch the raw edge length. See Figure 104.



Figure 104

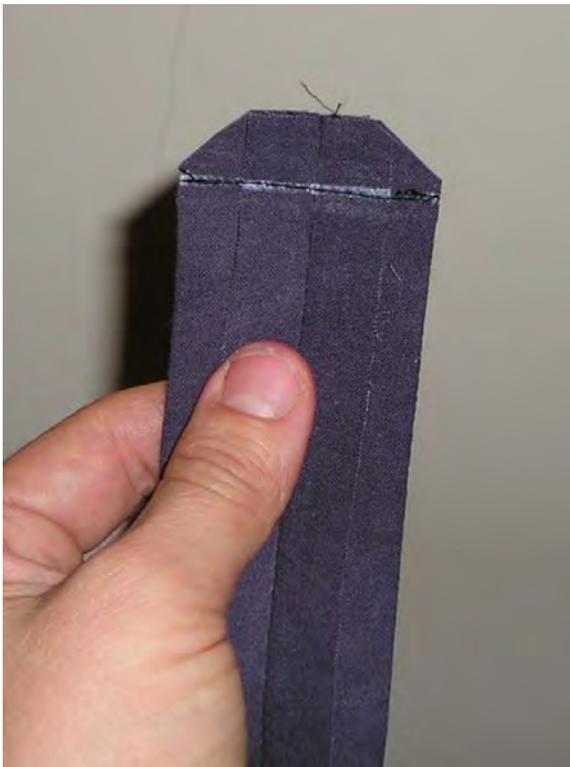


Figure 106

133. Take the seam to the middle and close one end (see Fig. 106). Keep the other end open.

134. Clip the corners.

135. Turn inside out with the help of a ruler or a long spoon. Fold and press.

136. Pin the finished ends of H on the outside and J on the inside to the top edge of your Rakusu, on the left side as you look at it and as illustrated in the picture below (when you wear your Rakusu, your right side). The seamed edges of the strap should be towards the inside of the Rakusu and lined up with the bottom of F.

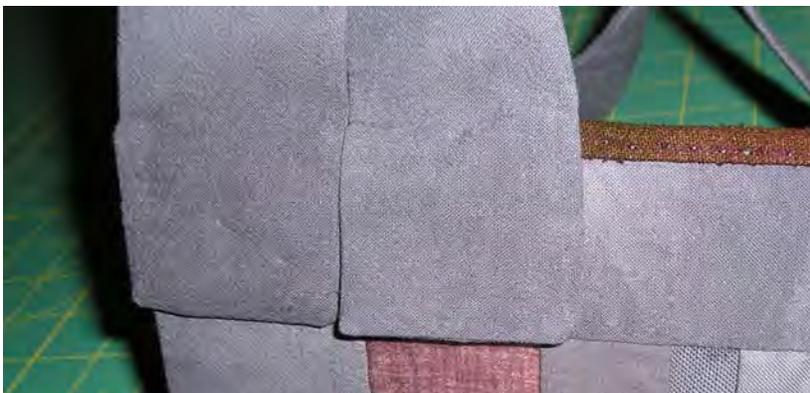


Figure 107

137. Stitch them securely from the back, without coming through to the front. Sew only at the top edge of F. Let the ends hang freely. When you start, hide the knot between two layers of fabric and sew at least once back and force, so this seem is really secured.



Figure 108



138. Measure the length of your Rakusu. 38 inches for the strap length of piece H fits most people. Measure in cloth in which you usually would sit and stand or sit upright, while you are doing so. Don't look down. Either let another one measure you or do it in front of a mirror.

The Rakusu should cover your *mudra* (hand position) when you sit in your regular *zazen* position. (Your *mudra* is usually held a full hand length below your navel.)

You can also use the upper edge of the Rakusu lined up with your solar plexus.

Hold H at the outer edge of your rice field and pin it there.



Figure 109

139. Cut piece H a half inch longer than needed when you line it up with the lower edge of piece F (as illustrated in Figure 110).

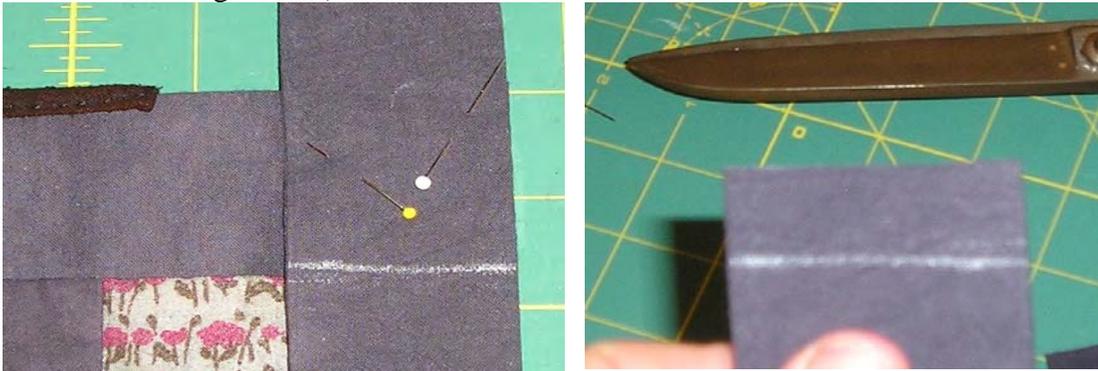


Figure 110

140. Tuck the excess in and close the end with a blind-stitch.



Figure 111

141. Pin it back to the edge of the rice field and pin the piece L next to it.



Figure 112

142. Starting with H, sew the two pieces on F. When you reach the end of L, don't make a knot and cut the thread yet. Just remove the needle and let the thread hang loosely. We will later pick it up again. We will first prepare the rest of piece L and loop the ring in.

143. Above the edge of the rice field, fold the one end's edges, over the other toward the front. Press well with an iron.

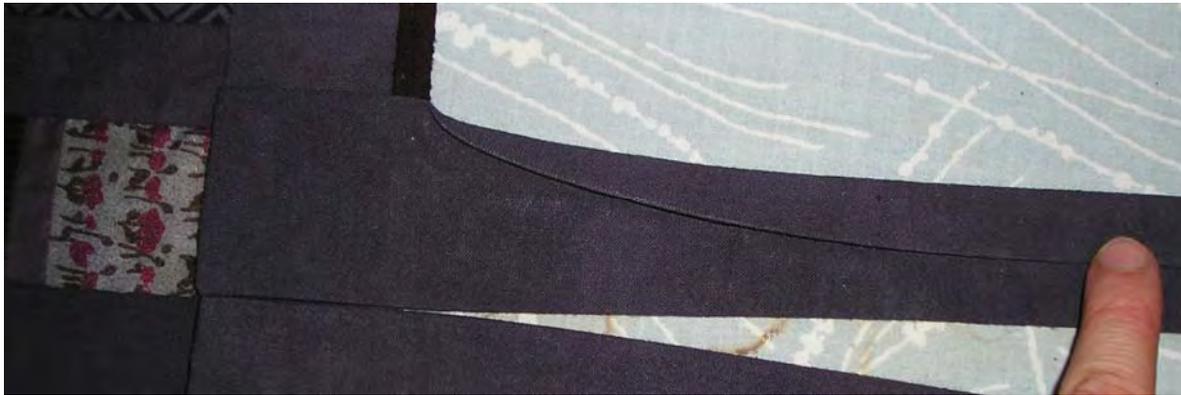


Figure 113

144. Then fold the other edge over it, so you get as narrow as soon as possible. Press well.



Figure 114

145. Put the ring in and fold piece L to the back two fingers above the edge of the rice field.



Figure 115

146. Cut L about 1/2 inch longer,.

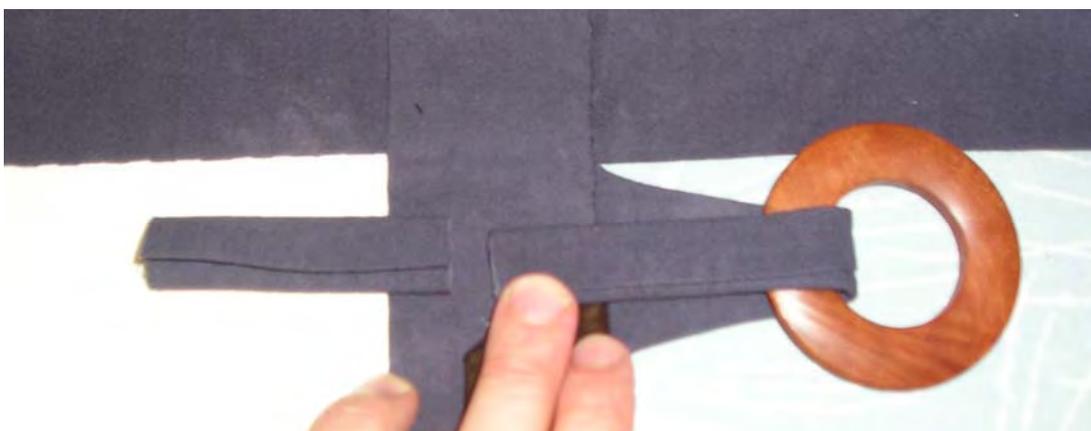


Figure 116

147. Then fold in the raw edge.

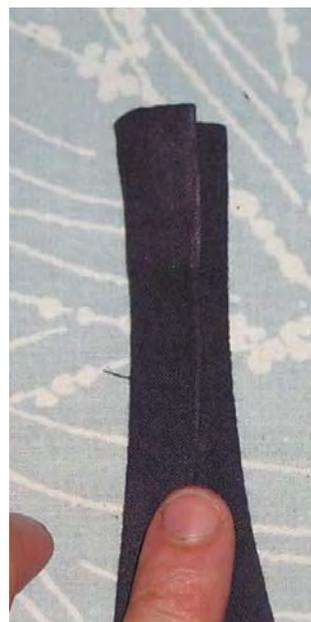


Figure 117

148. Pick up that loose end of the thread again and attach L in the middle of its own on the back of the Rakusu.



Figure 118



149. To measure J: Draw the raw ends of J through the Rakusu ring. Make sure that H is on the inside of J and that both straps are straight and not twisted (see Figure 119).

Figure 119

150. Make the knot for J and draw it tight. It may take some practice to get the knot to sit at the right length. The knot should hold itself in place if you pull the straps taut. Check the photo series below. Usually, the knot is not stitched into place.



Figure 120



151. Finish the raw end of J: Mark the end 2 fingers above the knot and cut $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above it.



Figure 121



152. Tuck in the half-inch and close it with a blind-stitch. The final length should be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the knot.

Figure 122

The Neck Piece

153. Mark $\frac{1}{4}$ ' on either long side of piece K



Figure 123

154. Pin K and O together on one side and sew $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the raw edge down the length with a step-stitch.



Figure 124

155. Then Pin the other two raw edges of K and O together and sew along the marked line.

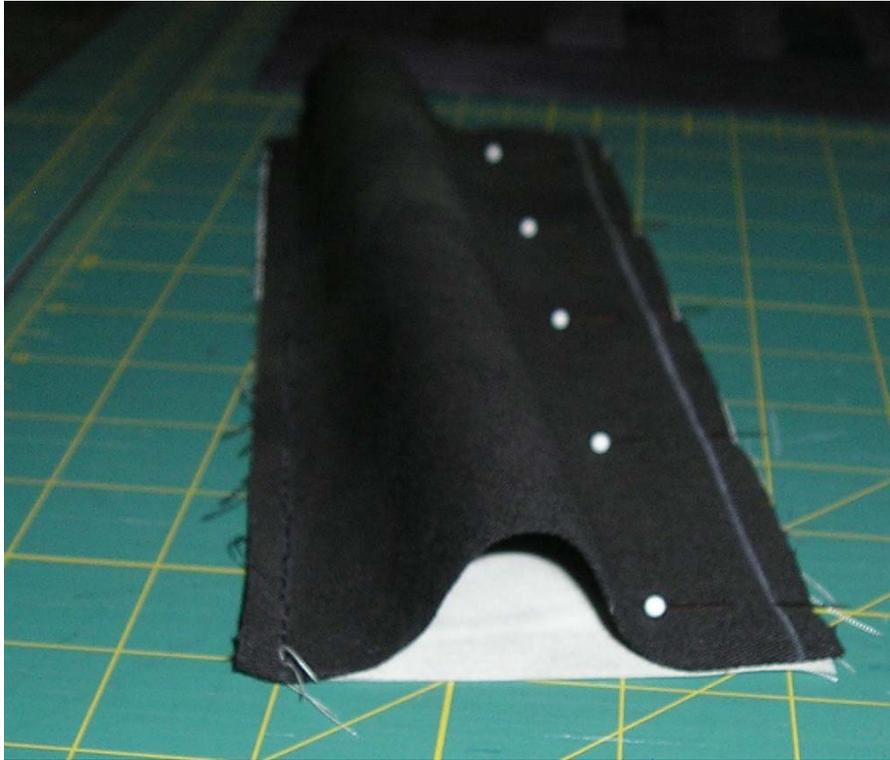


Figure 125



156. Turn the piece inside out and place the stiff interface piece N in between. Press so that O begins $\frac{1}{4}$ inch inside of K. Shorten N so it is $\frac{3}{4}$ inch shorter than K on each end.

Figure 126



157. Fold in the short raw ends $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and press.

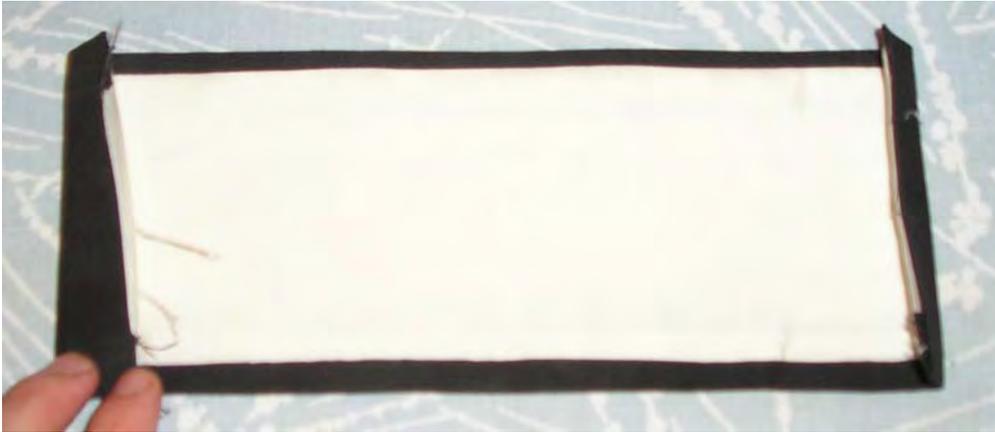


Figure 127

158. Mark center of each short raw side.

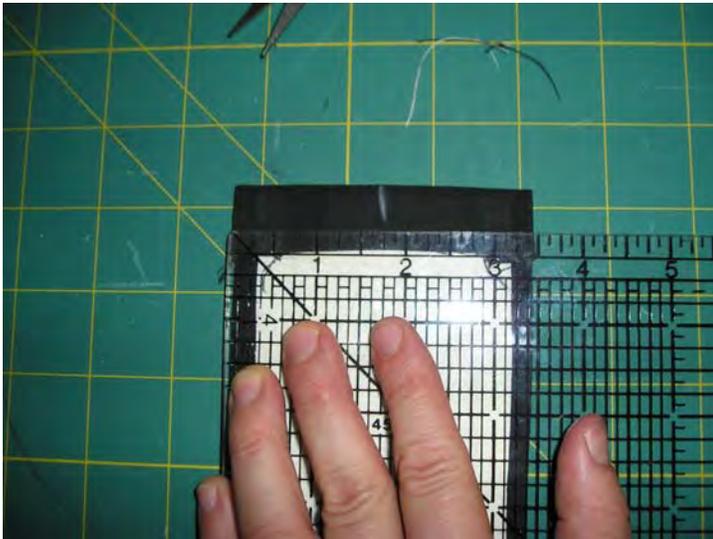


Figure 128

159. Fold in half and press the piece.



Figure 129

160. Fold your Rakusu in half to find the exact inside center point of the straps along their seams. Mark along the inside and the top edge on both straps.

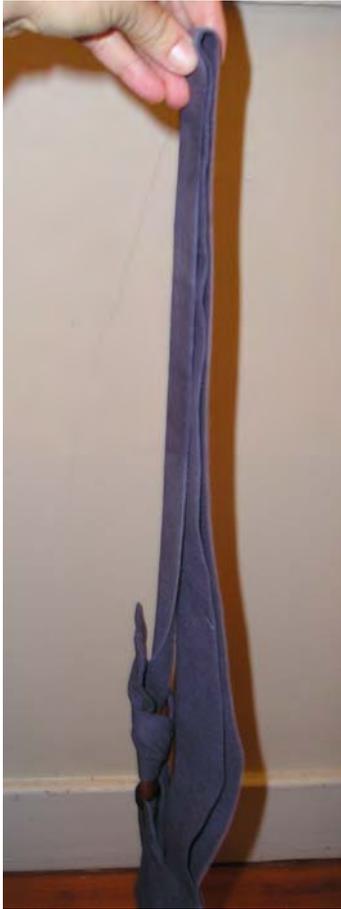


Figure 130



161. Lay the Rakusu over you knee, without opening the straps.

Figure 131

162. Fold the raw ends of K over the straps, lining up the center points and pin.



Gemmon's advice: "The easiest way for me is to take the Rakusu how it will look at the very end, folding the K piece over the straps, matching the middle points. Then I open the straps a little bit and fix K with pins, before opening widely to sew the pieces together."

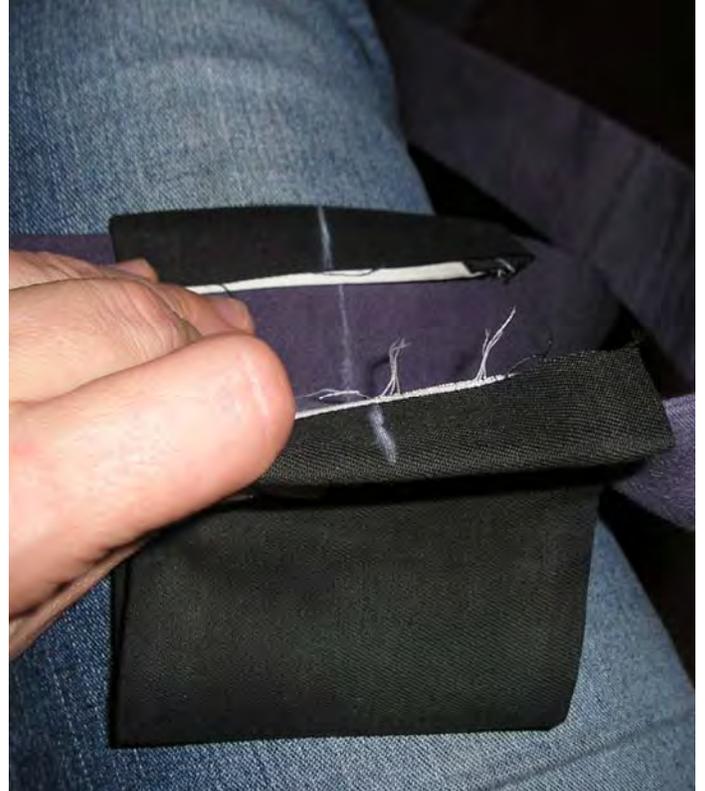


Figure 132

163. Fold the corners of the raw ends inwards and press.



Figure 133

164. Cross-stitch the raw ends of K to the straps. See Picture series on page 95.
If cross-stitching is too complicated for you use, sew in circles around the edges as shown in the picture.



Figure 134

165. Place both sides together, so the straps are sandwiched inside K, then blind-stitch the folded edges together. Press it so you don't see the sewing.



Figure 135

The Broken Pine Twig

166. Mark the twig's shape with a wax marker to guide you. Mark it in the direction you see below on the side that later seen, when you wear your Rakusu.

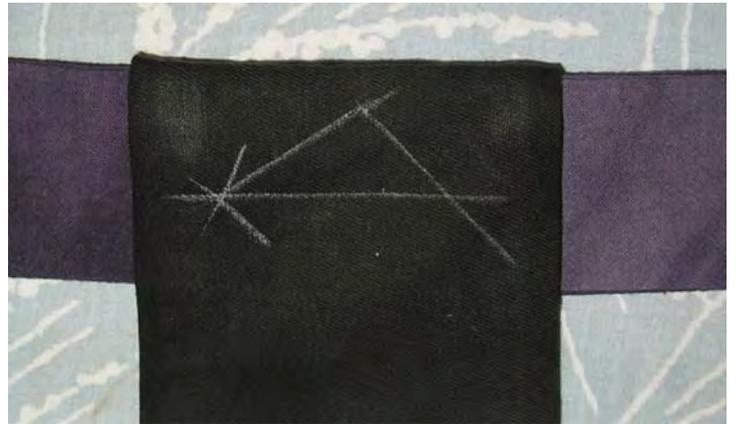
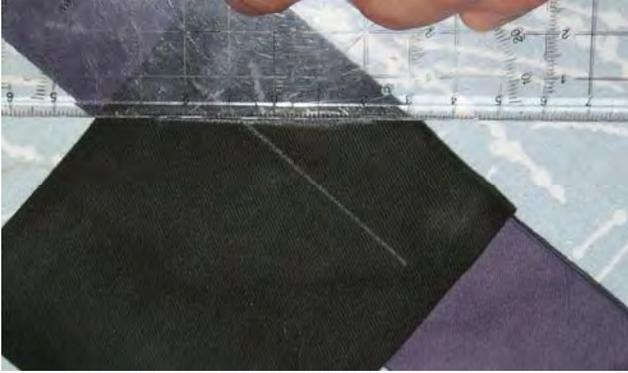
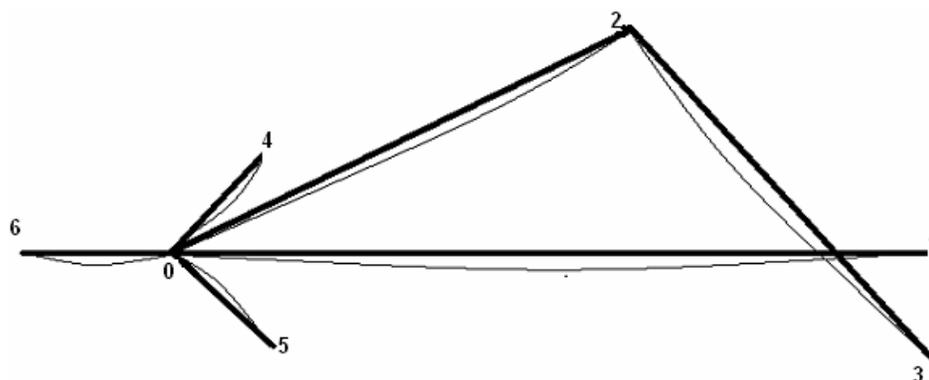


Figure 136

167. Thread your needle with the green thread. One line is one stitch. The pine twig should be in the center and about ½ inch from the edges. **Stitch through all pieces.** The finished design should look as pleasing on the back as it does on the front. Stitch following the order indicated Figure 137 below. Press when complete.

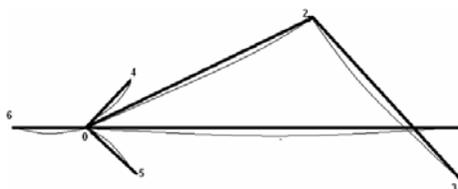
Enlarged View:



1. Stitch from the inside of the straps to point 0
2. At the right side one stitch to point 1
3. At the back side back to point 0
4. At the front side to point 2
5. At the back side to point 3
6. At the front side back to point 2
7. At the back side back to point 0
8. At the front side to point 4
9. At the back side back to point 0
10. At the front side to point 5
11. At the back side back to point 0
12. At the front side to point 6
13. At the back side back to point 0, but then come up just through one part of the strap and make a knot on the inside where nobody can see it.

Figure 137

Actual size of the broken pine twig:



Here is the picture series for the Pine Twig:



Come from in between the layers of fabric and get out on point 0.



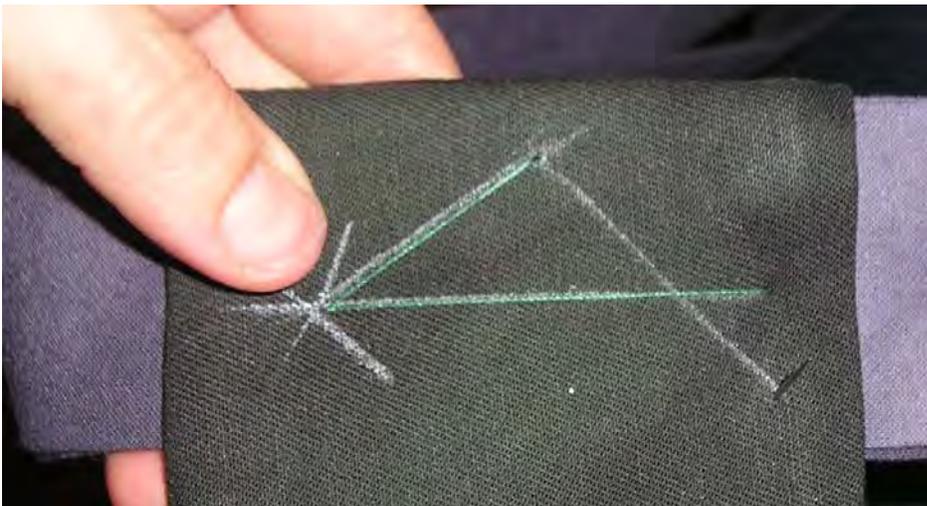
Go vertical back in and through all layers on point 1.



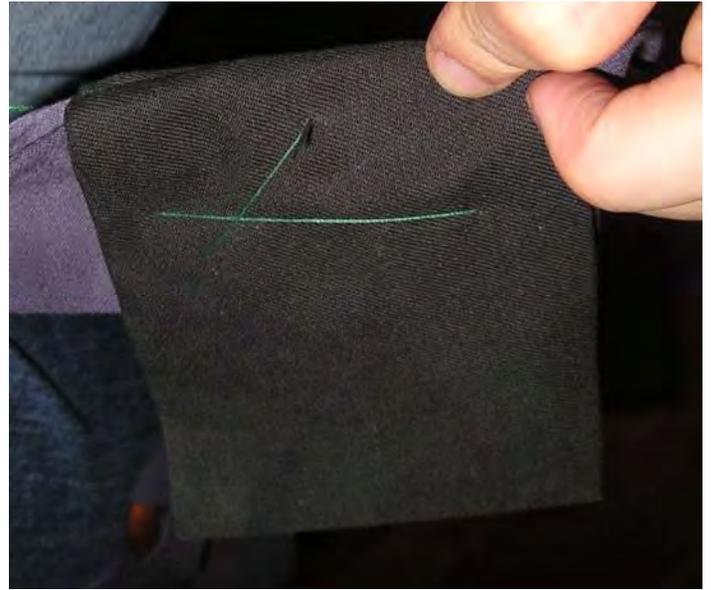
Come back up exactly in point 0.



Go down in point 2



Come up in point 3.



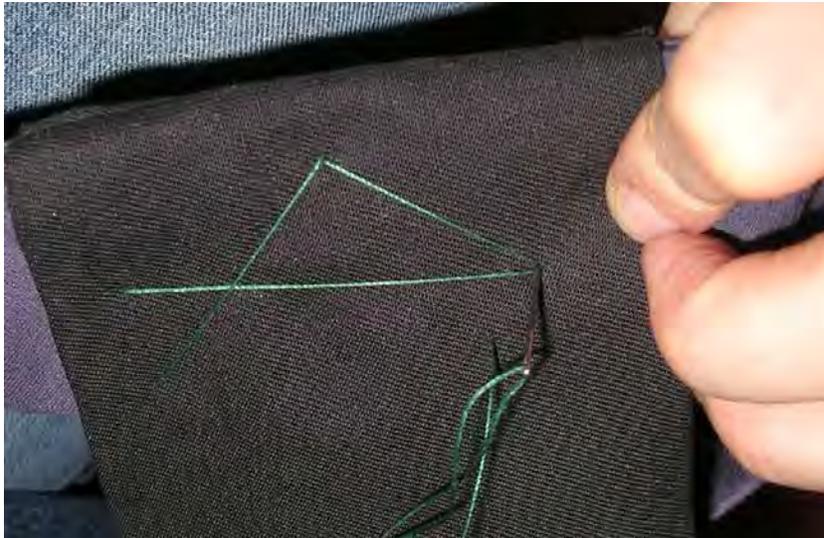
Go down in point 2 again and make sure, that you get pout at the same point as before, so your pine twig looks in the back as in the front.



Come back up in point 0.

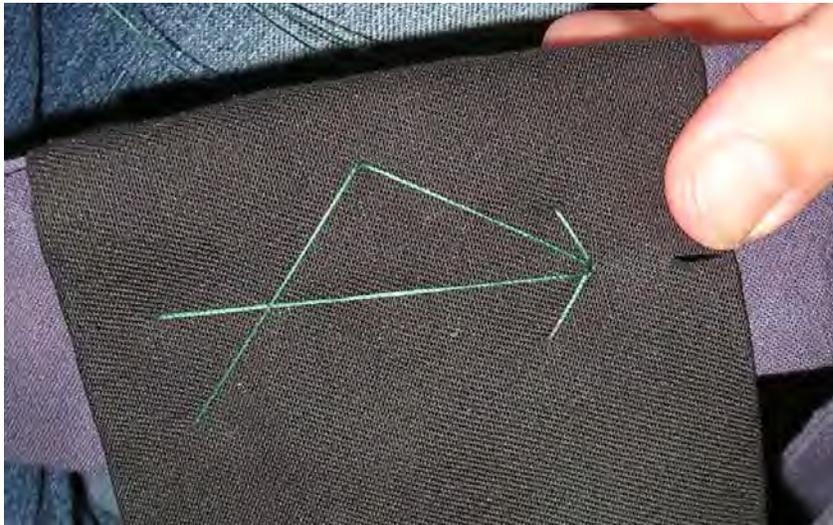


Go down to point 5 (or go up first to point 4, it does not matter).

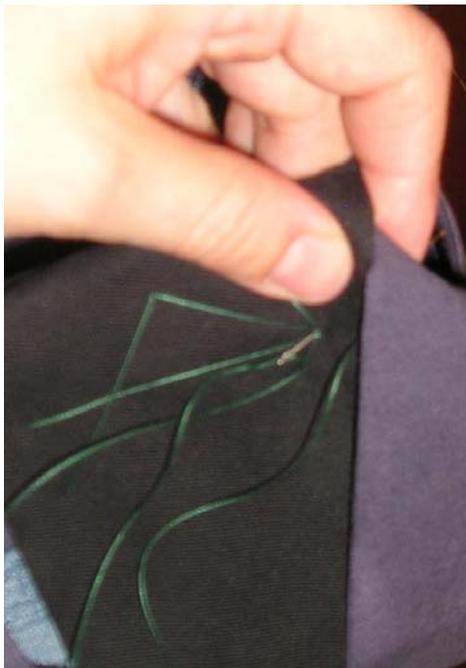


Come back up in point 0, making sure it looks the same in the front and in the back.

Then do the same with point 5, coming back to point 0.



Then go down on point 6 (this is a picture from the back side).



As you come back up, do not go through all layers, but just through one strap.



There you make a knot, so it is hidden, when you let go of the fabric. Make a secure knot on top of it and cut the thread so short, that it does not stick out to the side.



This is at it looks, when you have done!

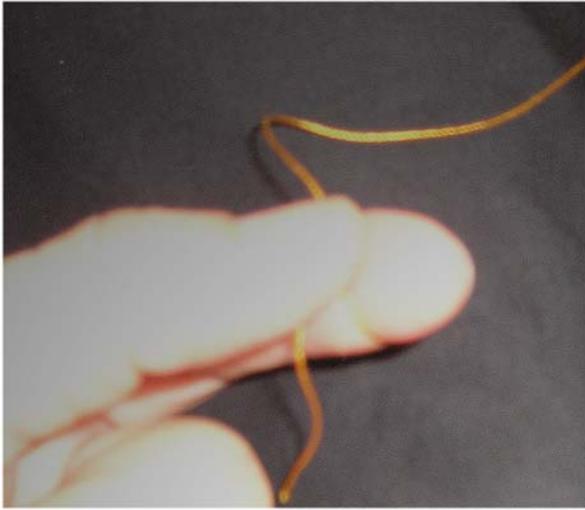
You have finished your Rakusu.



Congratulations!
Gassho.

Knots and Stitches

Making a knot at the end of the thread



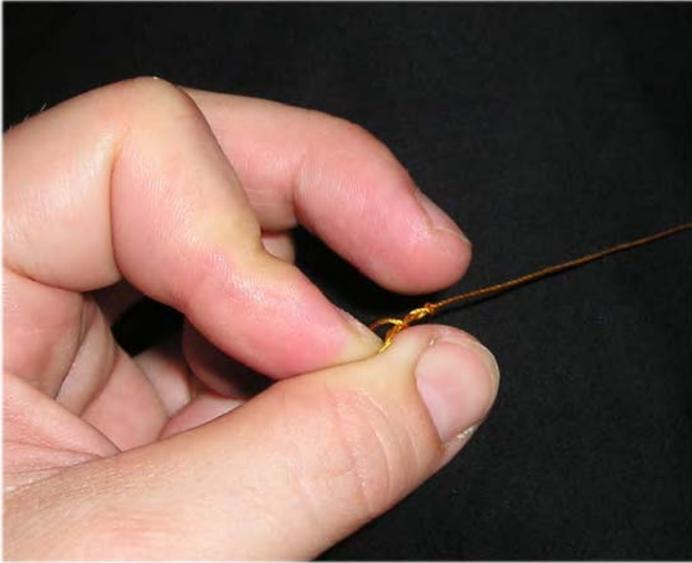
1. Loop thread around your first finger, holding with your thumb



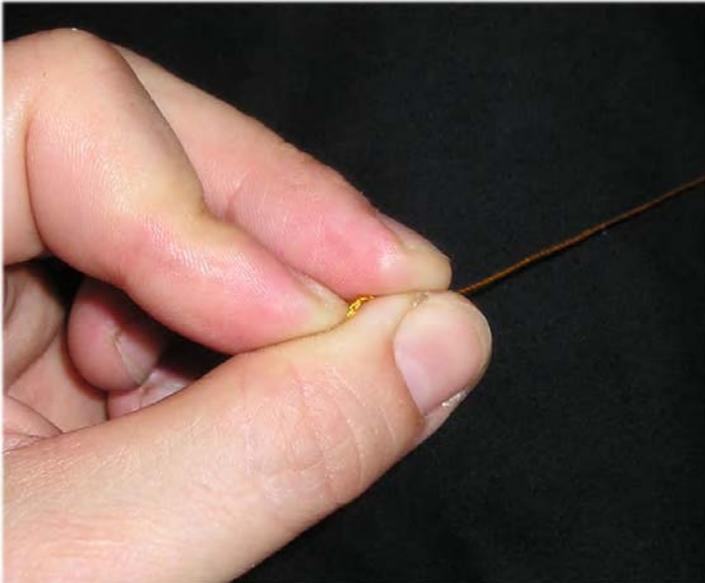
2. Pull the thread till the end disappears between your fingers.



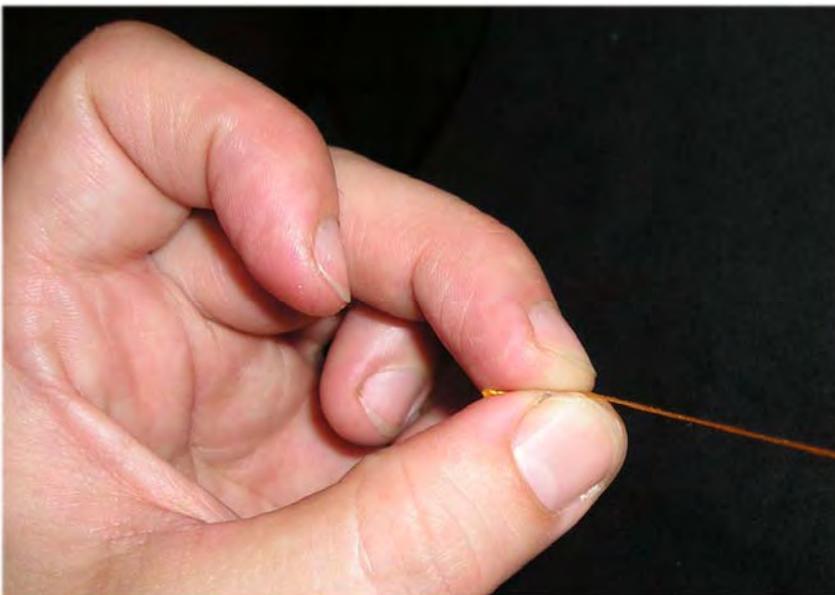
3. Pushing thumb and finger against each other, pull the finger in, so the thread starts rolling.



4. Keep rolling till the loop comes out between your fingers.



5. Grasp the knot with your second finger, pressing against the thumb.



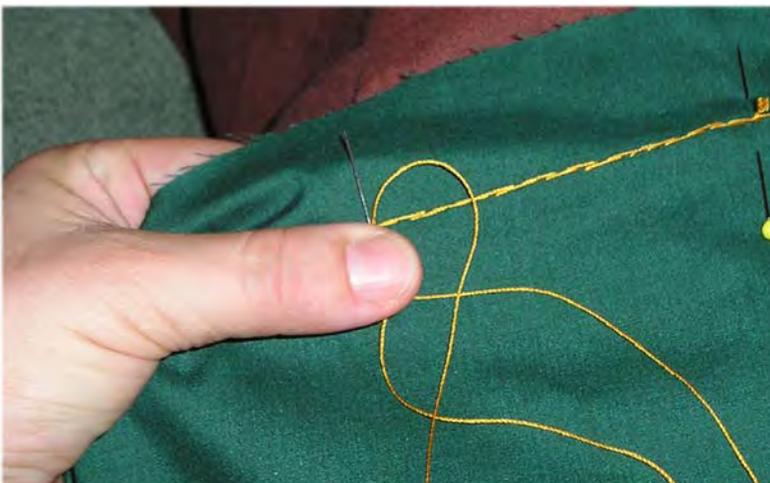
6. Remove the first finger and pull the thread till the knot sits tight.

Making a knot at the end of a seam

1. Stitch to the wrong side of the fabric, the side that is not seen. Pull out, till the thread is straight.



2. Without pulling out the needle, grasp the last stitch.



3. Push the needle down with the thumb of your left hand (if you are right-handed).



4. With the right hand loop the thread twice around the tip side of the needle.



5. Pressing down the thread with the loops, pull out the needle.



6. Pull till the thread is straight and you feel the knot tight under your thumb.



7. Pull the knot tight.



8. Set a simple knot on top of it and cut thread near the simple knot.

How to make a knot between two layers:

You will just need this knot if you run out of thread while adding the frame to the body of the Rakusu.



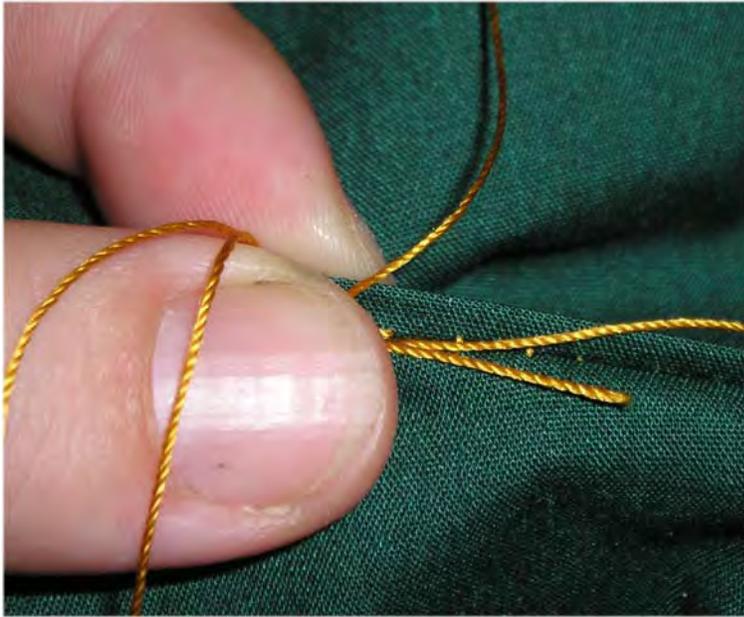
1. Put your needle between the layers and pull the thread straight



2. Grasp the last stitch without pulling out the needle



3. Loop the thread twice around the tip side of the needle.



4. While pulling out, push down the loop under your thumb.



5. Pull straight until the knot is tight.



6. Make a second, simple knot shortly after.



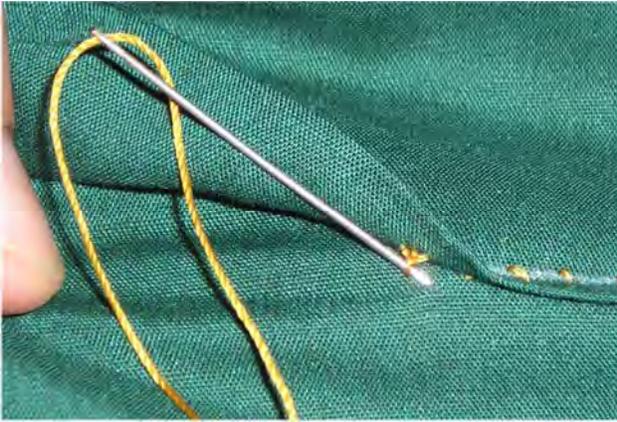
7. Make a stitch, going between the layers, coming up an inch further on the **right** side of the fabric.



8. Pull till it “clicks.” This happens when the second knot disappears between the layers.



9. Straighten the thread till the fabric gets a bit curled and cut the thread. Straighten the fabric again and the cut end will disappear between the layers.



10. Make a knot at the end of a new thread.
11. Go between the layers and behind the other knot.



12. Come out on the **wrong** side of the fabric where your other stitch would have come out, so you don't see an interruption of the flow.



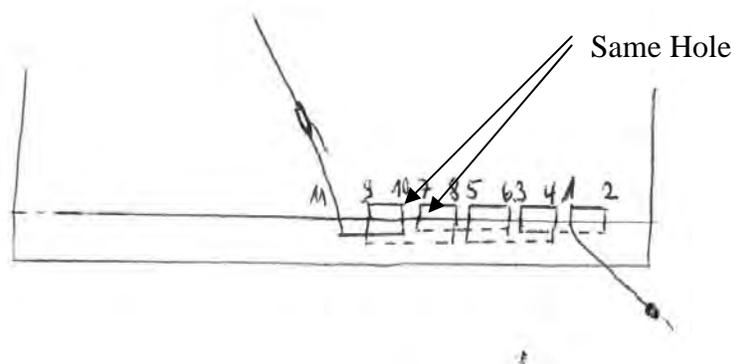
13. Keep coming up to the right side and continue sewing.



14. The knot will be hidden between the layers.

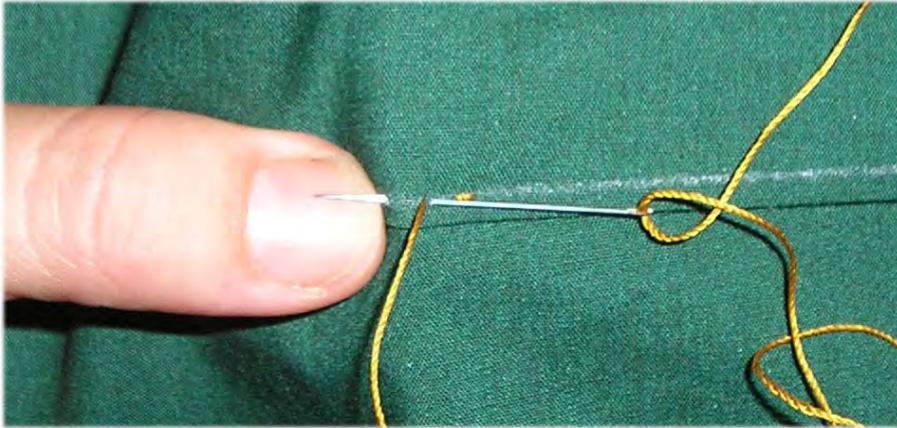
The Step Stitch

You will always use the step stitch to sew two pieces together on their left side. For example all the pieces in the heart of the Rakusu will use the step-stitch.



1. Start at the right end of the panel, if you are right-handed or at the left end if you are left-handed.
2. Start the stitch by inserting the needle and thread from below (through the wrong side) and pulling it through to the right side until the knot is tight.
3. Then stitch backwards about ¼ inch.
4. Then stitch into the backside forward about ½ inch. When you stitch back the next time, use the hole from the last stitch to go down through again.
5. Come back up through the wrong side about ¼ inch forward with the same movement. Go back – down and come forward - up. Again and again.

NOTE: The pictures below might be a bit confusing, as they were made for the okesa (monk's robe). For the Rakusu it is the same but with no gap between the stitches. The only time you leave a gap is when you apply piece "G" to piece "F".



When you reach the end of the thread or the section you are sewing, make a knot on the wrong side of the fabric. If you don't know how to make the knot, please ask somebody to show you or see page 86; this is an important knot. It has to be secure and tight to the fabric. It's best to run the remaining length of thread through the previous stitch, and tie the knot tightly to the fabric.

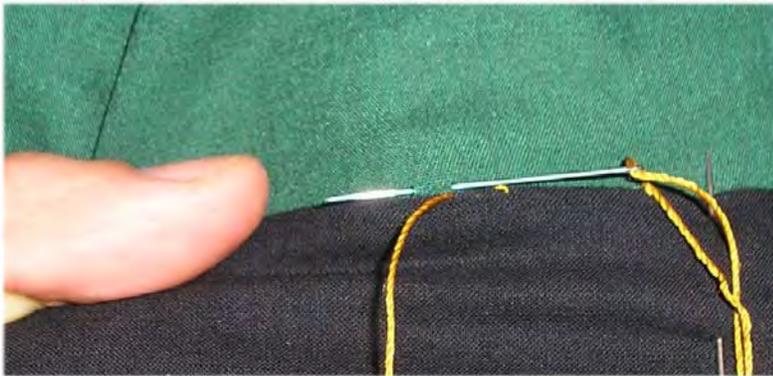
Always try to hide the knot if you can. Wherever possible, make it at the wrong side of the fabric or between layers.

The Blindstitch

You will need this stitch to attach the frame and the rice field, as well as for closing edges as for “K” and the end of a strap.



1. Come up from the wrong side of the fabric close to the edge of the layers you want to sew together.
2. Exactly across from where you came out, stitch in and along the edge of the other fabric, coming out ¼ inch further.



3. Exactly across from where you came out, stitch in again and sew along like this for 3 – 4 stitches.

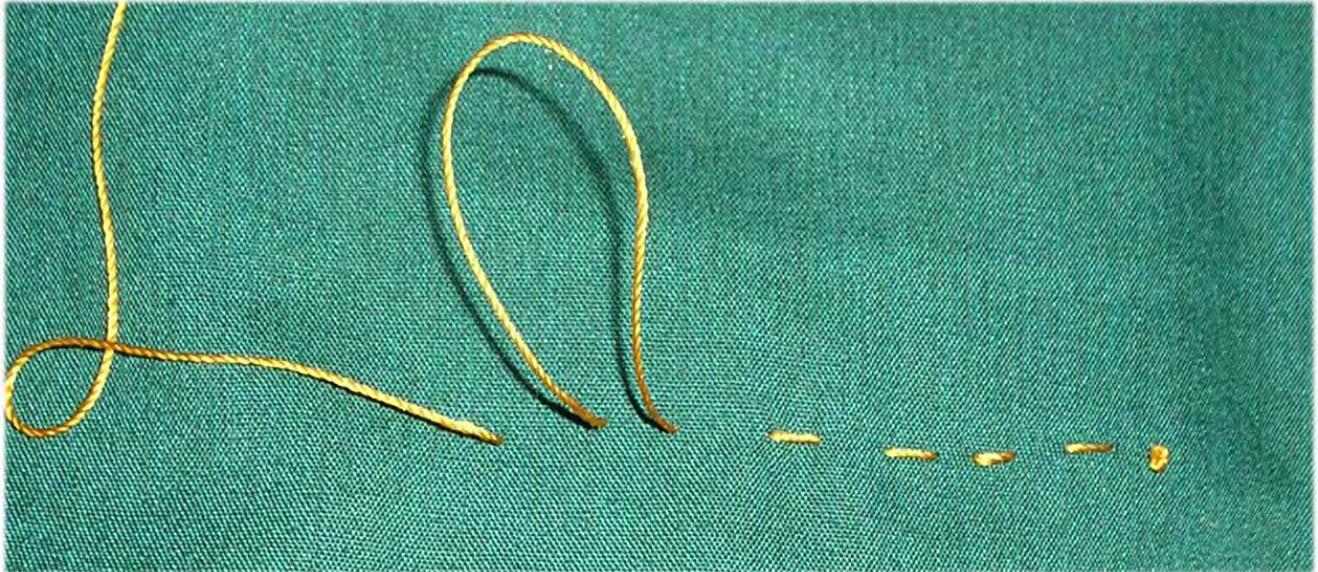


4. Then pull the thread till the stitches are unseen.

The Baste Stitch

The baste stitch is very simple. You will need it to join together your Interface with the rice field and the silk.

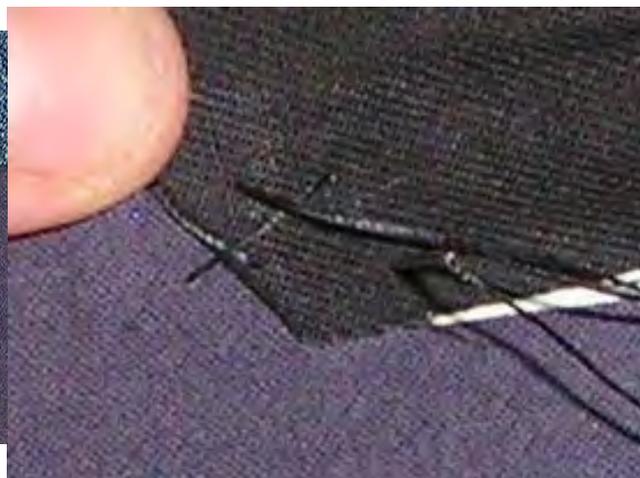
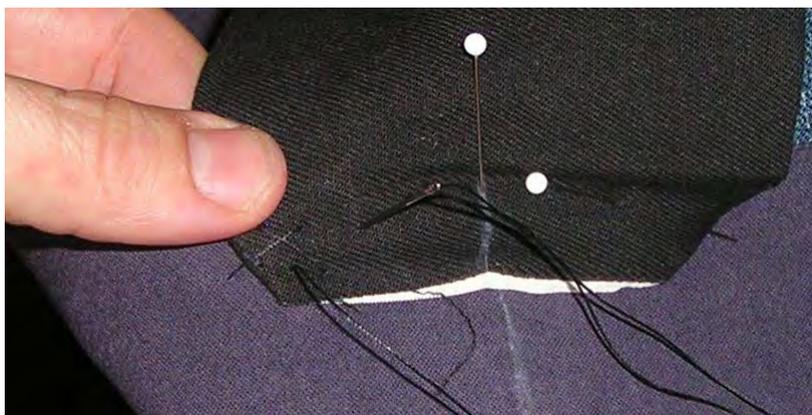
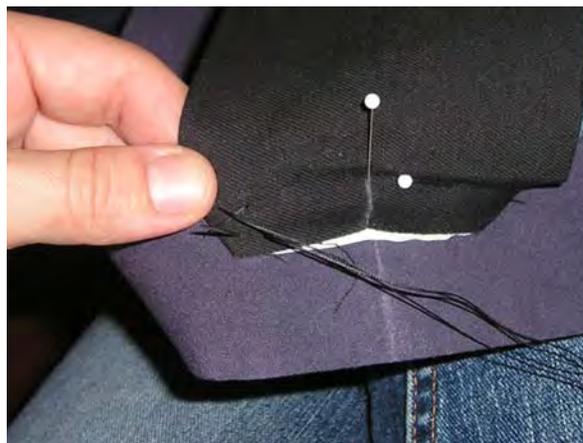
Just come from the wrong side of the fabric and then keep going in $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch up and down stitches. See picture below.



Cross-Stitch

You will only use the cross-stitch to sew the straps and the piece K together. The cross-stitch is a beautiful embroidery stitch for sewing the edge of the Rakusu envelope.

Start from the back, sew to the front side. Stitch diagonally across in and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch backwards out then diagonally upwards in and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch backwards out.



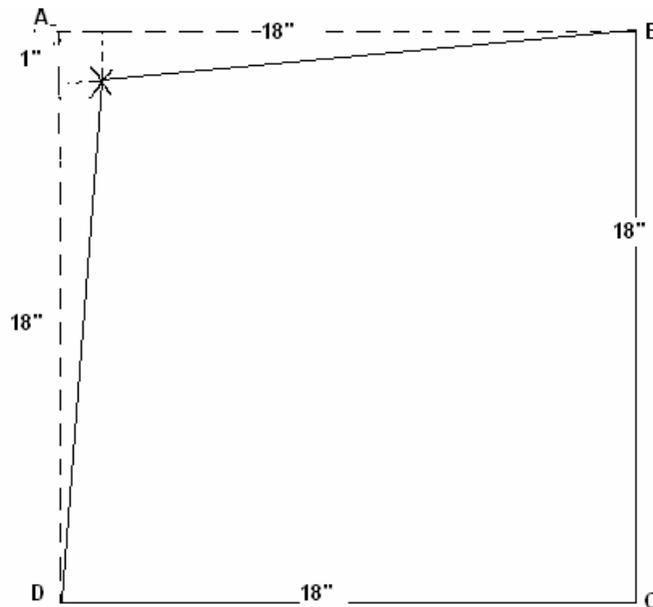
Making a Rakusu Envelope

You can sew the envelope with a sewing machine if you want. There are many different ways to sew an envelope or case. With a slippery material on the inside, the Rakusu can be put in and taken out more easily.

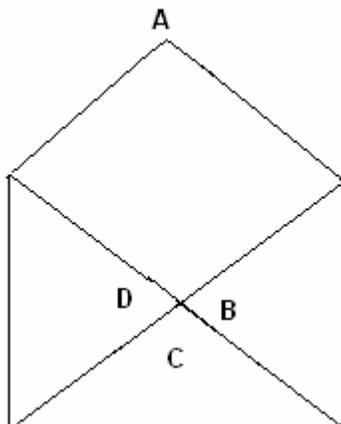
To sew two different pieces of material to each other, the cross-stitch is a very nice application stitch. Cut out two of the pieces as below. Iron the hems inside and sew them together.

The following will describe a simple version using just one piece of fabric sewed by machine:

Draw a diamond on a piece of fabric with each side's length equal to 18 inches. Then take away 1 inch from one corner as shown in the figure below to avoid bunching the inside fabric when it is folded. Iron all around 1 inch for the hem of the resulting uneven diamond shape and sew it together with a double stitch on a sewing machine.



Then take corners B, C, and D and fold them inwards so they built an envelope (see figure below). Close the seams with a blind-stitch.



(It is a nice tradition to ask a friend to sew an envelope for you.)
:-)

Sewing a Rakusu Envelope with lining

1. Choose your exterior case fabric. It is often either the same fabric as the Rakusu or a pretty, traditional silk.
2. Choose the lining for the case. It's good to use a slippery fabric so it is easy to take the Rakusu in and out.
3. Lay the fabrics out flat on a table or floor (with a cutting mat under it if using a cutting knife). Put the case fabric down first, so that its **right** side faces up. Put the lining fabric on top of it, so the **wrong** side of the fabric faces up.
4. Mark a square of 18". (See Figure 138.)

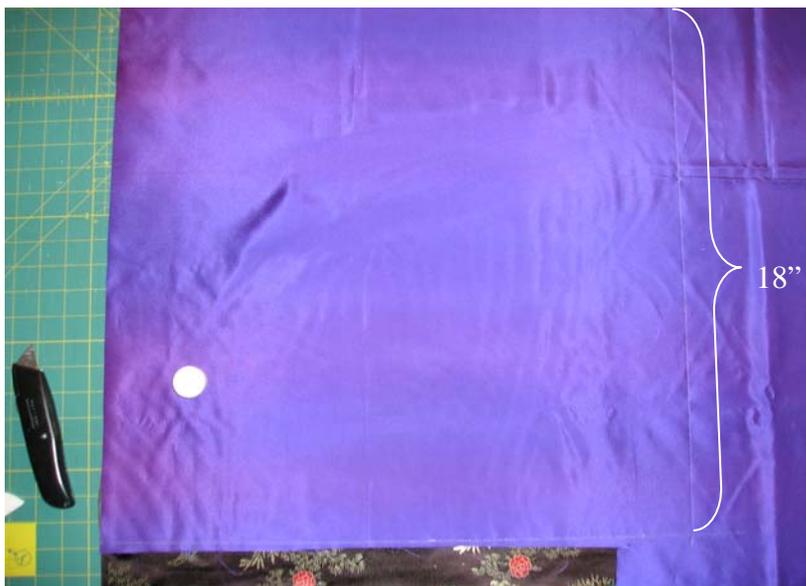


Figure 138

5. On one corner, measure in 1" from both sides.



Figure 139

6. Then connect the other corners with this point, as shown in Figure 140.



Figure 140

7. If using scissors, pin the two fabrics together now and cut along the inner frame.
8. If using a roller knife, cut both layers and then pin them along the cutting line.

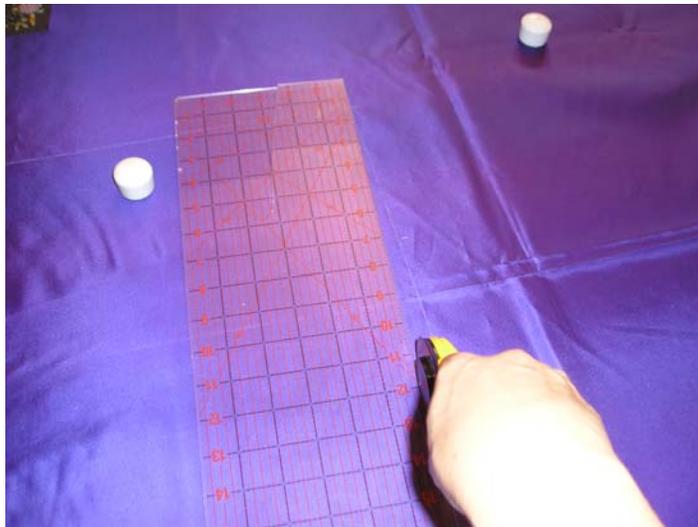


Figure 141

9. Pin Connection A-B and B-C

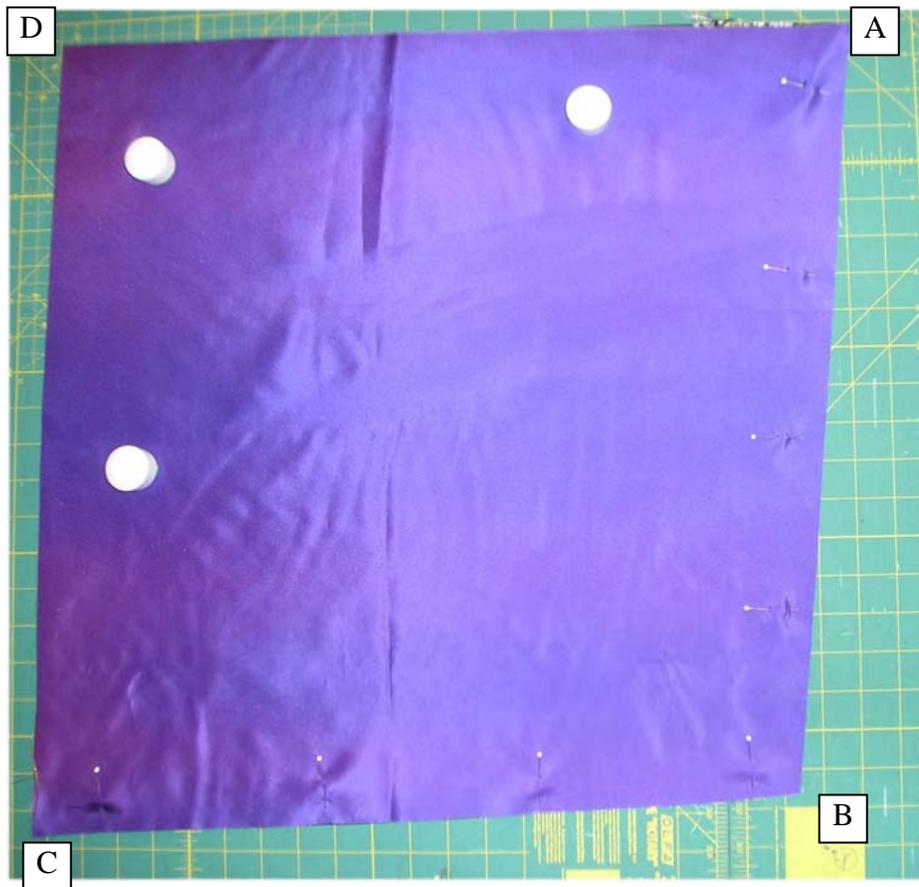


Figure 142

168. Sew the two pieces together 0.5 inches next to the edge **A-B** and **B-C**. (See Figure 143.)

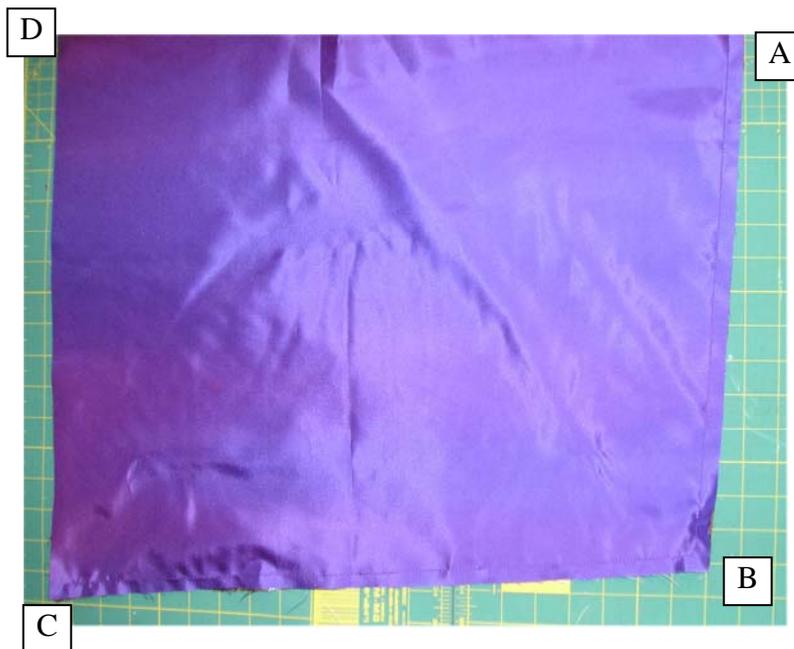


Figure 143

10. Just moving the lining fabric, bring point **D** and point **C** together and pin the lining fabric along the edge. (See Figure 144.)



Figure 144

11. Sew these two pieces together, $\frac{3}{4}$ " next to the edge.

12. Bring point **C/D** and point **A** together, so a little square is formed. Pin that edge together.

13. Sew along this edge, leaving a 3 inch opening. This will be needed to turn around the envelope later.



Figure 145

14. Now do the same with the case fabric, but sew just 0.5' close to the edge.



Figure 146

15. Turn the case inside out by pulling all the fabric through this 3'' opening.



Figure 147

16. Push the bag part of the lining fabric into the bag part of the case fabric. Push the edges well into each other. You now have an envelope like Fig 95.



Figure 148

17. Now pull out the inner bag again and close the 3 inch opening with a blind stitch. See stitching page and Fig 96.



Figure 149

18. Push the lining back in and iron it down. The inner fabric can stick out a bit.



Figure 150

19. You now make a hidden small stitch in the corners, coming from inside the bag. See Series of Figure 151. This is necessary so the lining bag will not come out when you remove your Rakusu later.

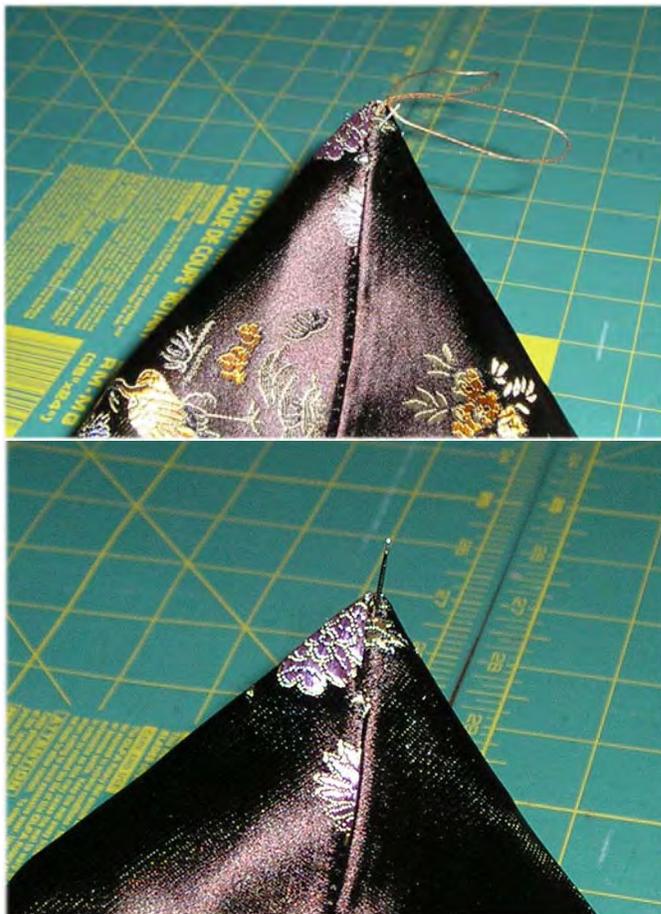


Figure 151



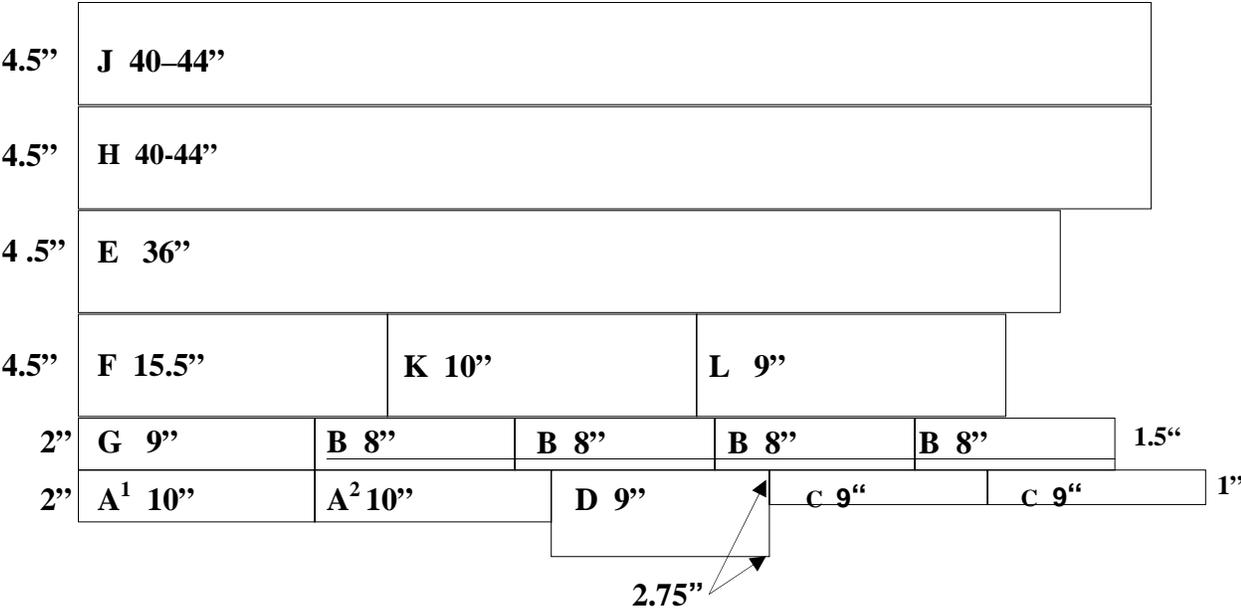
20. Iron your case flat and fold the lid over as big as you need for your Rakusu. If you travel a lot, you may sew a snap fastener in the corner of your lid and on the opposite place on the bag.



Enjoy your complete set of Rakusu and case and case!

Cutting Instructions - From One Piece of Fabric

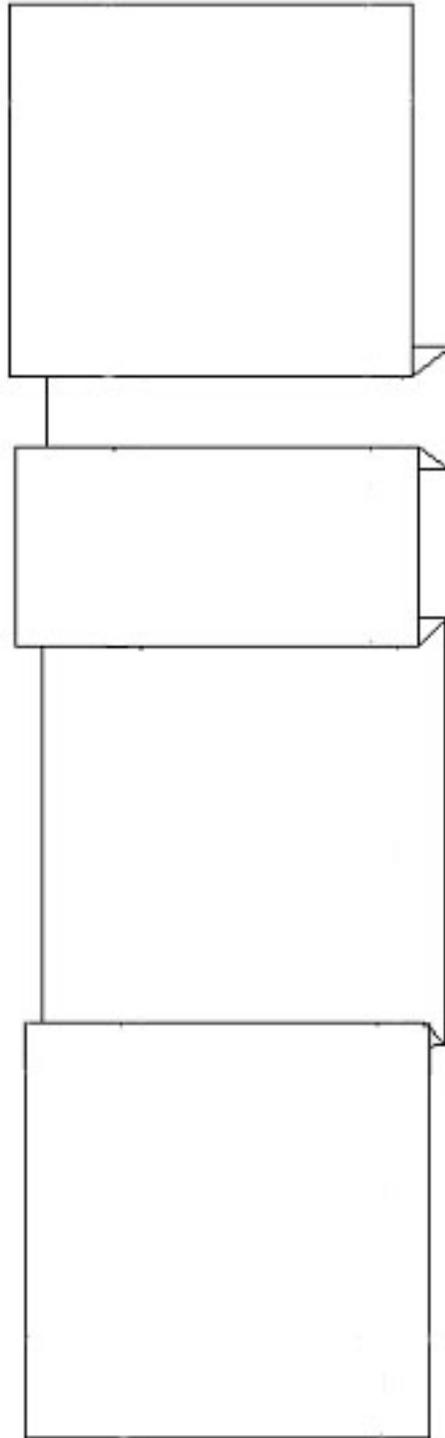
(One yard of fabric is more than enough.)



Tall people should use 44 inches for piece J and H.

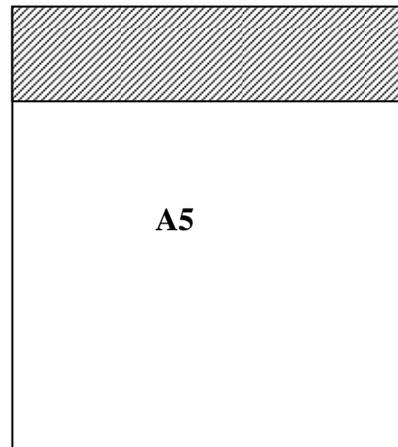
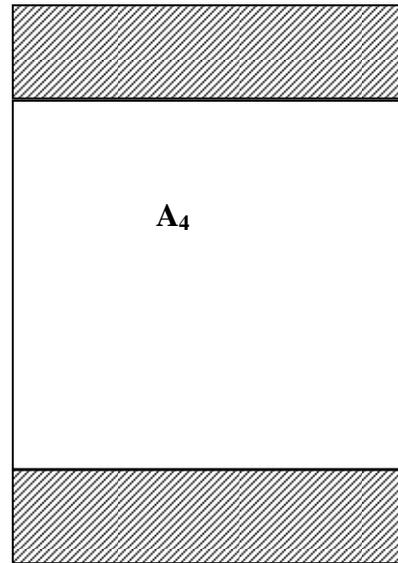
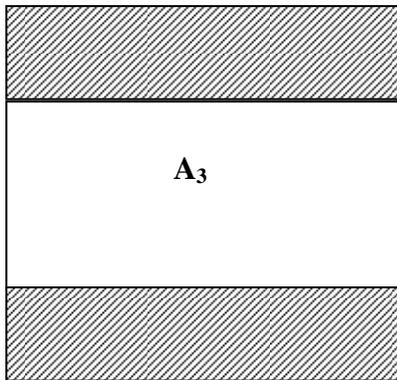
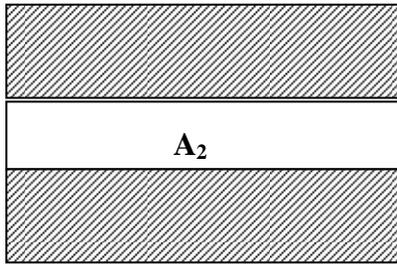
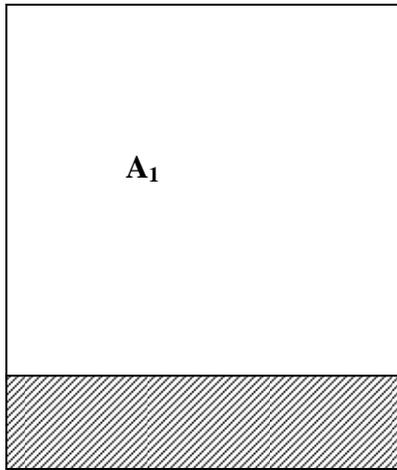
Paper Patterns

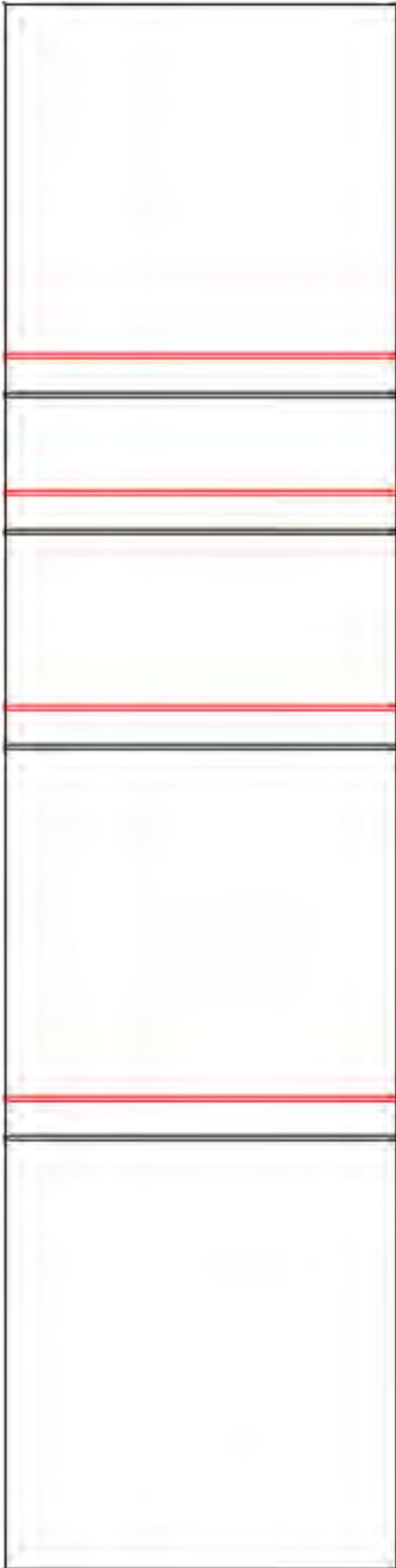
Hint: Draw your lines near your ruler's edge and make thin lines on your fabric or you would lose size!



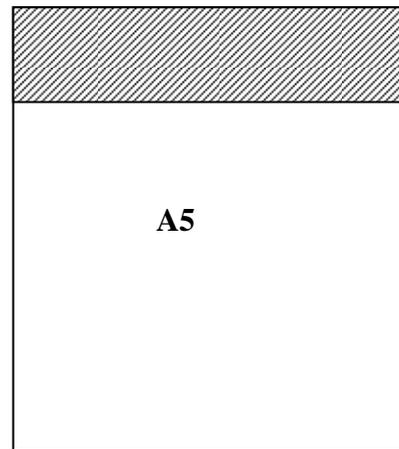
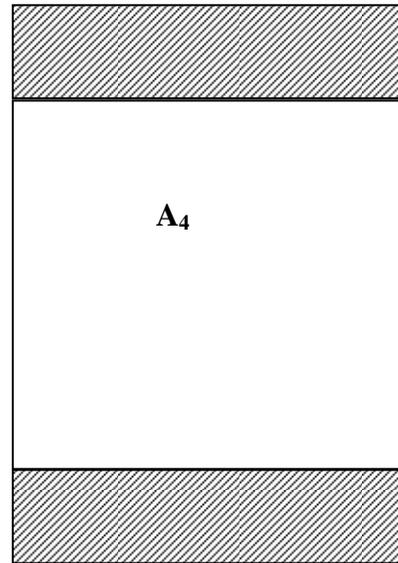
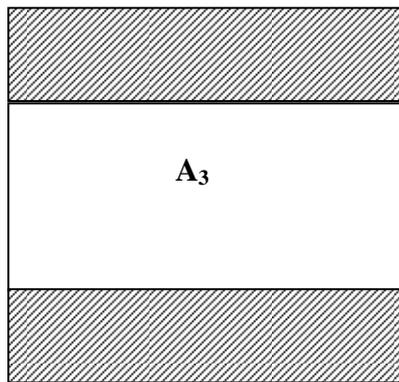
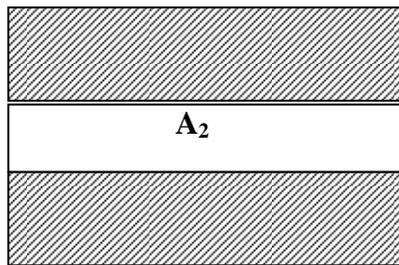
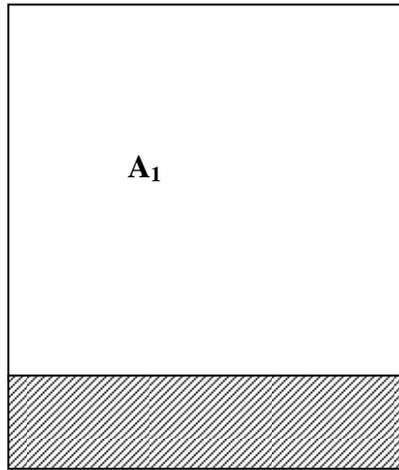
Direction to press tucks
for A¹

Or, if you want to split A^1 into 5 parts:

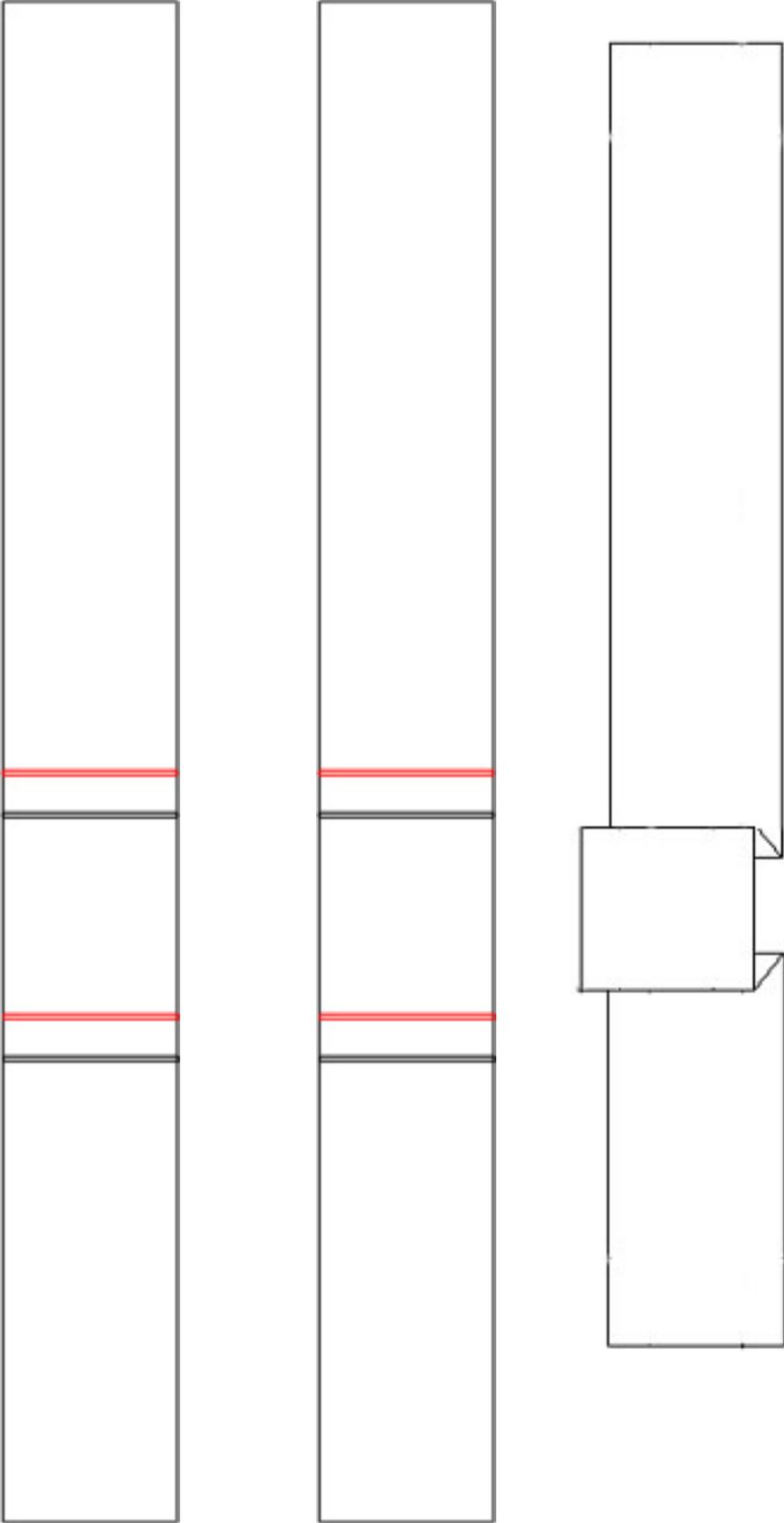




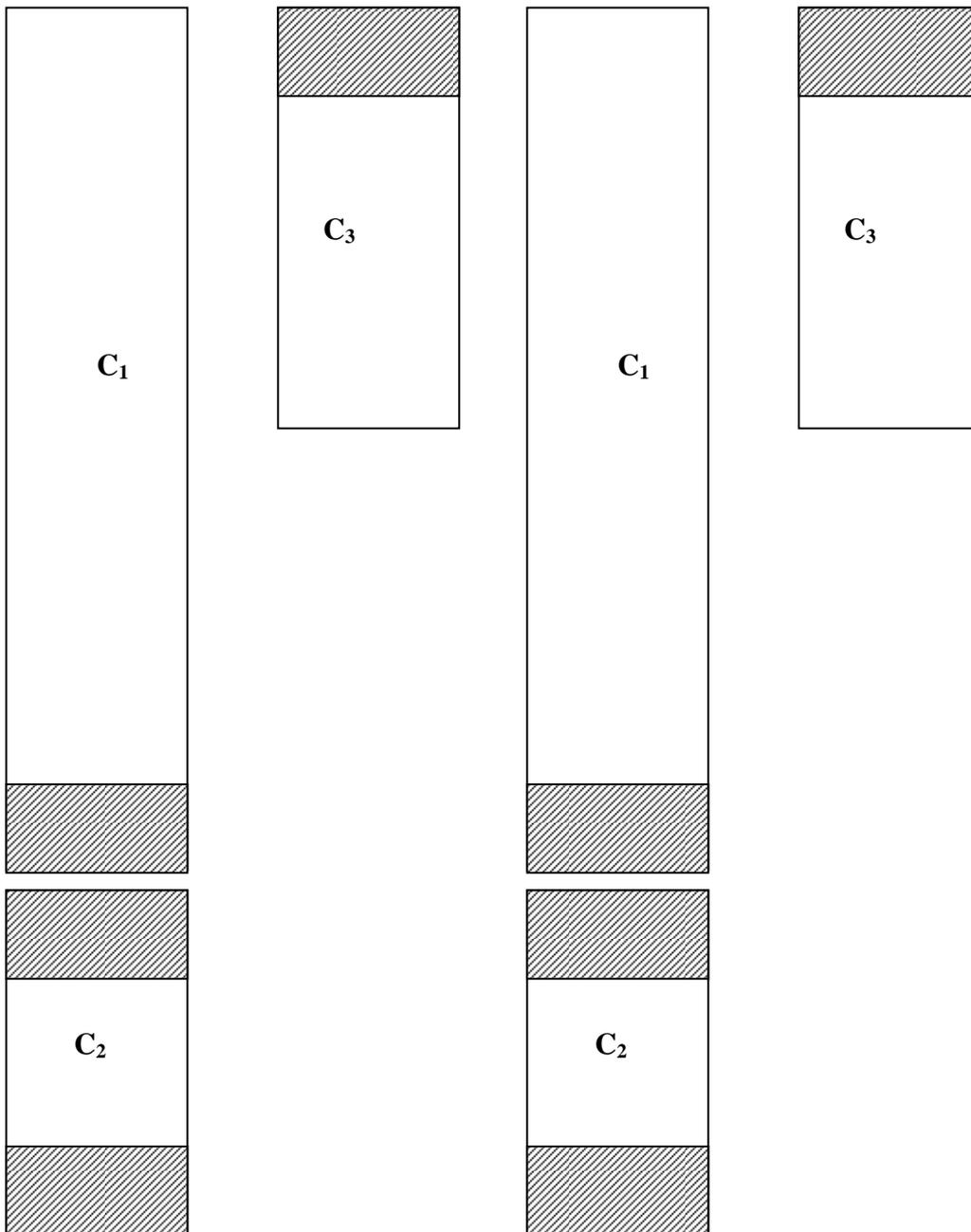
If you want to split A^2 into 5 parts:



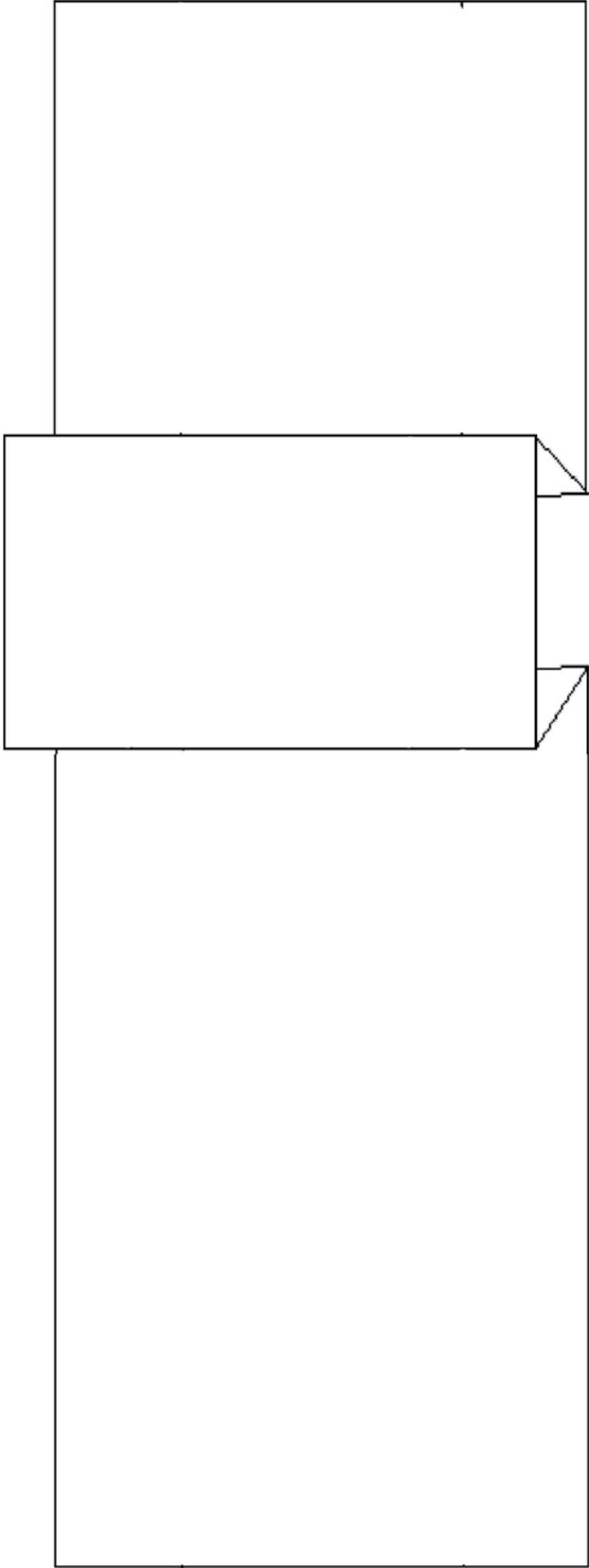
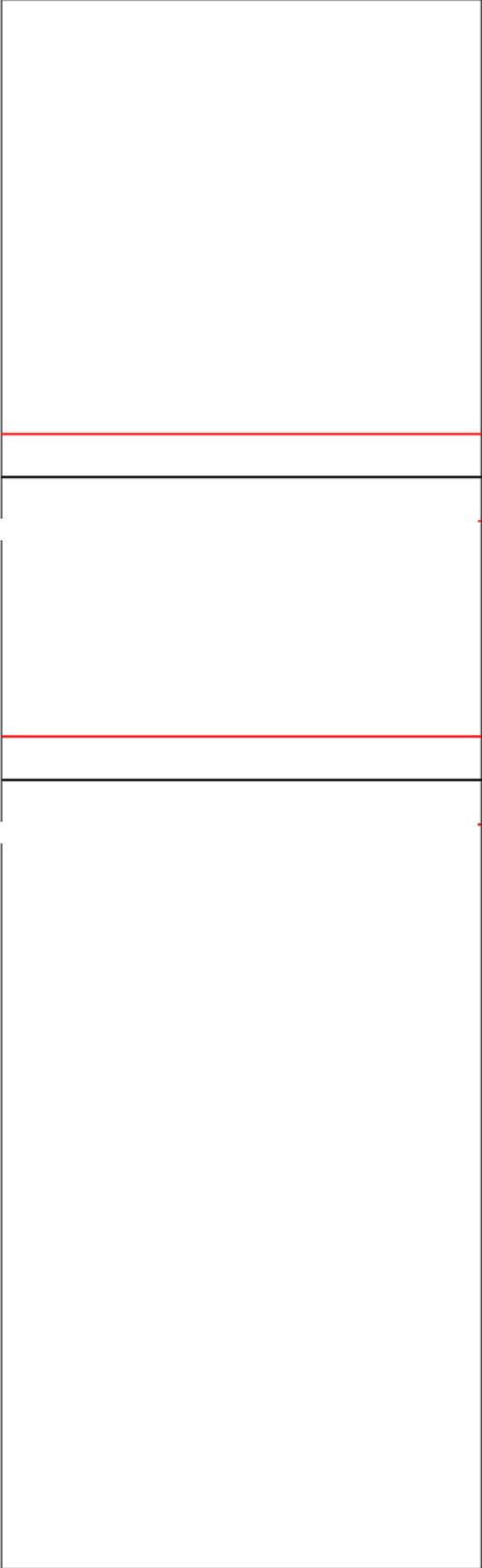
Cut two C pieces:



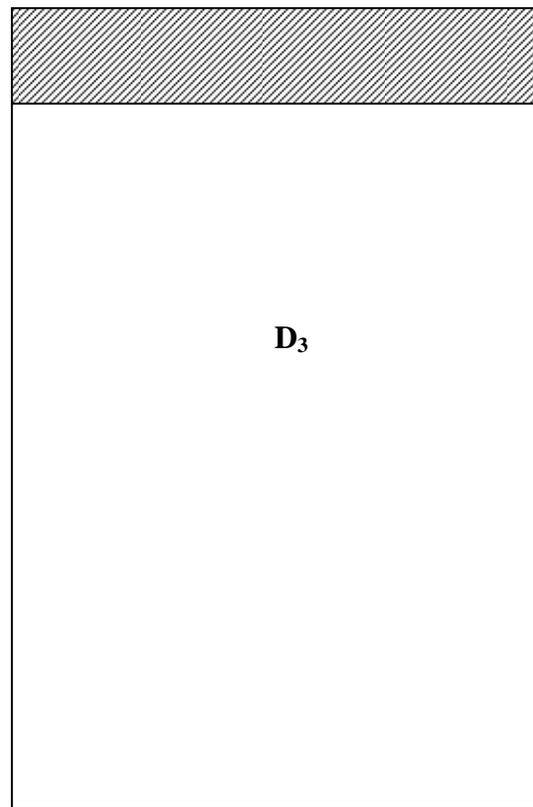
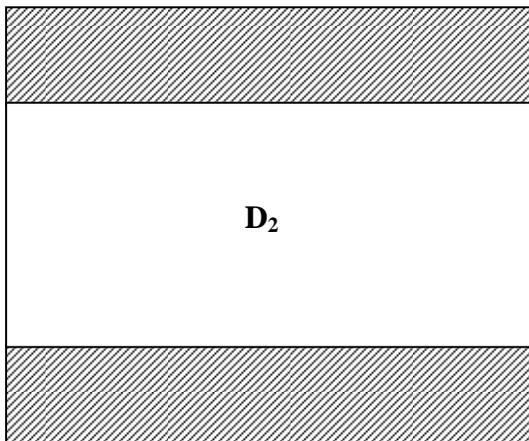
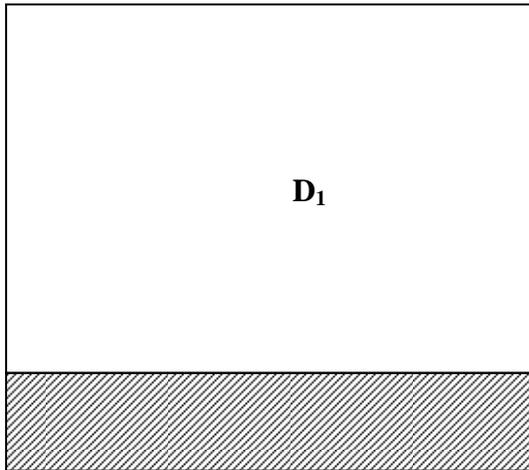
Or if you want to split C into three parts (cut these twice):



Cut one D piece and mark on the wrong side of the fabric:

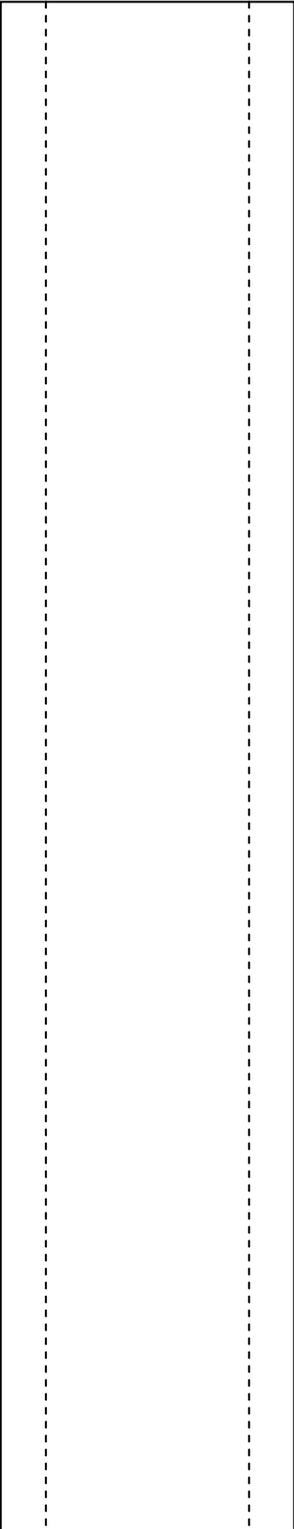


or if you want to split D:

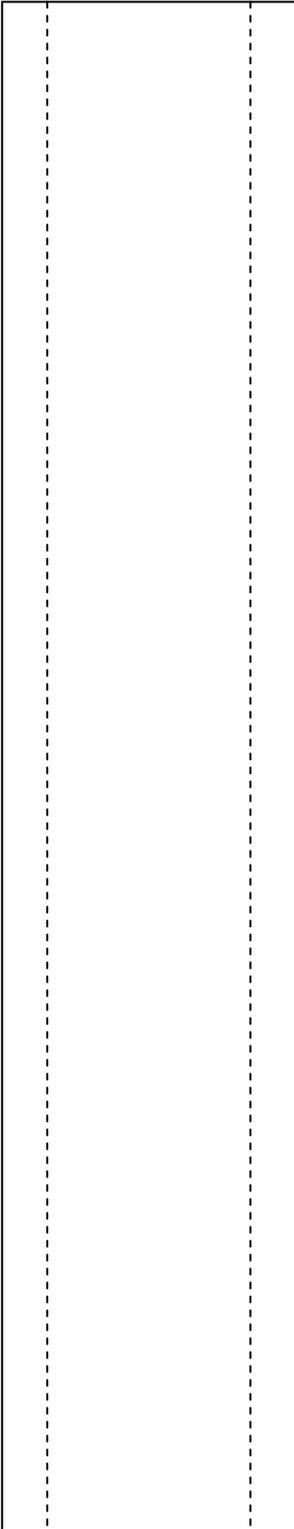


Cut four B pieces total:

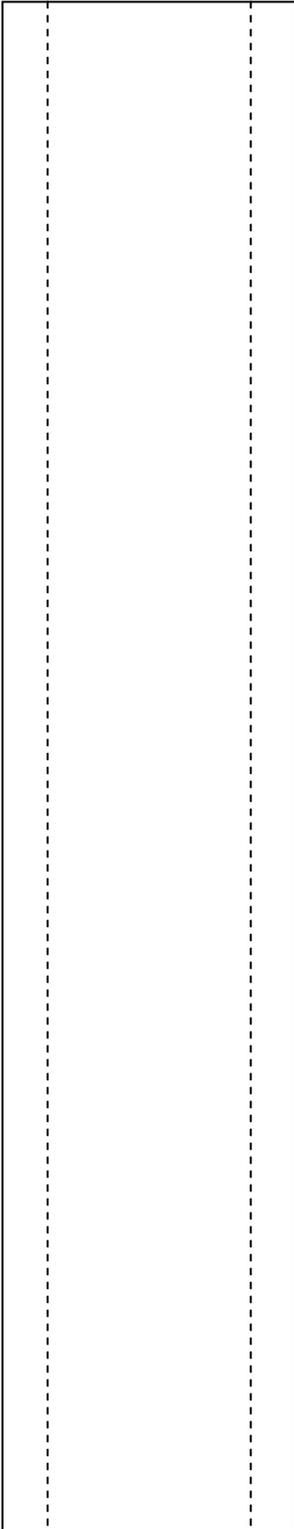
1.



2.



3.



4.

