
How to Sew Napkins with Liana Allday

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(relaxed jazz music) - Hi, I'm Liana from Creativebug and I'm going to show you three ways to make cloth napkins. We'll start with the easiest napkin first. This is the fringed edge napkin. And then we'll move onto a slightly more complicated one where we are gonna use a zig zag stitch and it's going to give this kind of farmhouse napkin look. Finally, I'm going to show you how to make a classic mitered napkin. This is what you think of when you think of a formal dinner napkin, but really, these projects can be as casual or as formal as you please, depending on the fabrics you choose. And if you've never sewn before, this is a great place to start. (relaxed jazz music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- The materials for this class are pretty basic. The first choice you have to make is which fabric you're going to use. And when you're looking for fabric, you wanna make extra sure that the fabric is going to be washable, that it's not going to shrink and distort, because ideally, you're going to be washing these napkins over and over again. I would look for a fabric that is a cotton or a linen blend. Quilting cotton is great. And the yardage that you need is really gonna depend on how many napkins you wanna make, as well as the width of the fabric. As the general rule of thumb, about one yard of 44 inch wide fabric is going to give you about four 16 inch dinner napkins, or about nine 10 inch cocktail napkins. So keep that in mind when you're buying your fabric. Next up you're going to need a cutting mat, a clear gridded ruler, and a rotary cutter, and it's always handy to have your snips and your fabric shears on hand. You're also going to need an all-purpose thread. I have kind of a mixture here of bright colors. You might also just want a neutral white. It really just needs to match your fabric. You're going to need pins and a pincushion, an iron and an ironing surface, and of course, you're going to need your sewing machine.

Chapter 3 - Three Ways to Make Napkins

Fringed napkins

- The first kind of napkin I'm gonna show you how to make is a fringed edged napkin. What I mean by that is that literally I pulled away the warp or the weft thread so that all you have left is this fringe along the edge, which is really cool especially when you have fabrics that have a color change cause you get a little bit of colorful fringe along the edge. The thing that is stopping it from continuing to unravel is this single sewing line that you do all around the edge of the napkin, which I'm gonna show you how to do on the machine. First, you need to cut your napkins. The fabric I'm working with for this particular napkin is a cotton linen blend, and it's actually called a toweling fabric. The reason it's called a toweling fabric is because it was made for dish towels or napkins in this case. It is woven so that it's actually the width of an ideal dishtowel or napkin which makes your life a lot easier. So in this case, I'm just going to cut out a 17-inch square and then I'll trim off the selvages which will give me a perfect size for making this napkin. All you need is your quilting ruler and rotary cutter. For this particular napkin, you really wanna make sure that you are cutting along the grain. Cause when you're pulling away those warp and weft threads, it just is better if you're pulling away a nice even thread rather than having it kind of jump all over the place, which will make

more sense when we get to that part. You can use any kind of quilting ruler for this. I just happen to have this giant one here. I do like to have one with a nice long edge so I can do even cuts. I'm just looking in here to see that my threads are really running up and down. See the grain in the fabric here, it kind of wiggles up and down a little bit. Just do the best you can to try to cut it right along that grain. When you think you got it, go ahead and cut. These loosely woven fabrics wanna wiggle around a bit, so just take your time when you're cutting this out. Be extra careful. Make sure you're getting these nice even cutting lines. Now we're ready to cut the selvages, so I'm gonna go ahead and turn my fabric. And again, here I have a nice helping guideline. I can line up this stripe of pink right here with my half-inch cutting line and know for certain that I'm gonna get a half inch on either side. Now do the same thing to the other side. Now we just need to cut that final fourth side to make sure it's all squared up. Remember for this one, I'm going to be making a 17-inch square napkin. These large rulers are great for helping you actually make sure you have that 17-inch square. But again, you can use your cutting mat to find out if you actually have the right square. Just a little bit of trimming to do here. We're all set. Now let's go to the machine and sew it. We're gonna sew a box around the perimeter of this napkin with a half-inch seam allowance. That will usually say $\frac{4}{8}$ on your machine. I'm gonna slide it up to the $\frac{4}{8}$ and actually I'm gonna start in the middle of a side rather than a corner cause it's just easier for me to keep it neater. Drop down the foot. Lower the needle. We're gonna be using a medium length straight stitch and we're gonna back stitch at the beginning and the end of our seam. I'm using a coordinating thread which I think works best for this project, but you can use whatever you want. So a couple of back stitches, (sewing machine humming) and then just work your way around, and then stop when you're about half inch from the edge. And remember, we know that that is right where our pink line is with this particular fabric. Keep your needle down, lift up the foot, pivot, and we'll go down this way. (sewing machine humming) Stop again with your needle down, turn your work, find that $\frac{4}{8}$ inch line, do the third side. (sewing machine humming) And one more time going along this pink edge. Keep your needle down, lift the foot, pivot. (sewing machine humming) Then we're just gonna finish up that fourth corner, needle down, turn, and do your best to line up where you began. (sewing machine humming) It looks like we're back at the beginning. It's almost hard to see because the thread matches so well. Back stitch and go ahead and break your thread. Now is the fun part when you get to make the fringe. I find it helpful to use a simple pin for this job. Really all you're gonna do is just find the thread closest to the edge and kind of pull it away. Once you pulled it away, you get to just pull. Of course, if you take too many like I did, it sticks a little bit. As you can see, you just keep going. It takes a little bit of patience, but they will all eventually come out, and sometimes you can even get a couple at a time. There is no exact science to this. You just keep pulling until you get down to your half-inch stitch line. Just make sure you don't pull that stitch line or you're gonna actually lose that barrier that's keeping all of those threads from unraveling. So you'll see here I was pulling along and then I got hit with this point of resistance. That resistance is actually my stitch line. So if you're pulling and all of a sudden it doesn't want to pull anymore, that's because you've reached your stitch line. Don't pull any harder. When I pull on this, you can see, that's my actual stitch line lifting up. You don't want to do that. If you do pull too hard, you could always go in with your pin and push it down. Now I know that when I was cutting up my fabric, I wasn't exactly on grain, which is okay. Just leave all these guys dangling out like this and we're gonna come back in at the end and just cut them all off. Just keep pulling your threads until that you've removed them entirely, or they stop because of the stitch line. Now let's just give these guys a trim. They're gonna be buried within the fringe here and nobody will ever know. Now we have one side done. Go ahead

and remove the threads from the other three sides of the fabric in the exact same way. Last thread. When all four edges are fringed and trimmed, you're done. Now you can go on and make as many more napkins as you want. I actually have another napkin here that I've already finished that is in this blue and pink color way which I love. Both of these are made from the same kind of fabric which as I said is a linen and cotton blend. It's nice and stiff and it actually makes the fringing really easy to do. So this trick will work with any woven fabric, but when you're shopping, if you can shop in person, that's always best. Look for something where you can really see the grain. You can actually, if you wanna cheat a little bit at the store, you can actually pull a little bit off the cut edge of the fabric and see how easily it pulls away. That'll be a good clue as to whether or not it's gonna be good for this technique. I love these napkins. I think they have a really sweet vintage feel to them. I could see these working as easily for breakfast as for dinner. They're just a great, casual, all-purpose, and maybe even summertime napkin.

Mock serger "farmhouse" napkins

- These second napkins are, what I like to call, the Farmhouse Napkins. And the reason I call them that, is just because they're soft, they're casual, and they have that, kind of, French countryside feel to them, with the bright pop of color around the edges. I have, actually, just cut out a 17 inch square. I want it to be a nice, big napkin. It's really important that you cut out the napkin, and then immediately go to the sewing machine, 'cause you really don't want any frayed edges around the sides. I like to come through, even, and just make sure I've cleaned up all my edges, nice and neat. And over here, I see a few more errant threads. Again, it doesn't need to be perfect. These are super casual napkins, but this will make your cleaning up, at the end, a little bit easier, if you start with a nice, clean edge. And we're ready to go. But before we head to the machine, I just wanna explain a little bit about what we'll be doing, because this actually looks like it's been serged, or maybe you used a Rolled Hem Foot, but we are just gonna be using a regular sewing machine foot. And we're gonna set the machine to a wide zigzag stitch, and just go all the way around the edge. And what it does, is it traps the threads, and it loosely finishes the edge. I've threaded my machine with a really nice, bright thread, which will really pop. I'm going to set my machine for a zigzag stitch. And then, I need to adjust my zigzag width, and five is the highest that my machine will go, and that will work great for this. And finally, you're gonna wanna adjust your stitch length, so it's somewhere between a zero, and a one. That looks good to me. And now, we're ready to sew. So what we wanna do, is line up the edge with about halfway in this foot, that's about a quarter inch. See, it's a little bit easier to see once it's down. And we're gonna go ahead, and lower the needle, and backstitch. (sewing machine slowly whirring) And then go ahead and move forward. (sewing machine whirring vigorously) Now, as you get going, you're gonna find that it helps to hold on to this back of the fabric, that's coming out the back of the machine here, and just gently tug it as you move. Don't pull really hard, just gently move it along. (sewing machine whirring) And before you get too far, go back and check out your work. You wanna make sure that the foot is really lined up properly with the edge of your fabric. This looks about right to me, you can see that it's wrapping around the edge of the fabric. There's a few stray threads popping out, that's totally fine, we'll go back and trim those off later. You just wanna make sure that there's not a lot of fabric on the other side of the zigzag stitches, or you've gotta scooch a little bit closer to the edge. This just takes a little bit of practice to get right. In fact, before you get started, you might even just wanna trim off a little square of fabric, and give it a practice round, before you go in for the main event. (sewing machine whirring) So, as you approach the edge of the fabric, you can either go right up to the edge, or you

can round it a little bit at the corner. I like to round it a little bit. I just think it gives it a nicer, cleaner edge. (sewing machine whirring) So, we're gonna go ahead, and just turn it. And now, we're going the other way. (sewing machine whirring) And here at the corner, you just wanna pinch this back, and give it another good tug. (sewing machine whirring) Just keep sewing until you get all the way back around to where you started. (sewing machine whirring) Backstitch, and we are done. Now, we just need to go in and trim away any threads that weren't captured in our zigzag. I like to use my short little sharp scissors for this. Now, along all of these edges, you just wanna make extra sure that you don't snip through your colorful zigzag thread, or you're gonna unravel those stitches that are keeping all of those threads nice and bound. And at the corner, it actually, even though it's rounded, it really sucked in the fabric there, so it just needs a little, tiny trim, but not much more than that. I love the way that this bright pop of color looks going all around the edge of the fabric, but if you wanted an even more saturated pop of color, you could actually go all the way around the edge one more time, and that would fill in any of those white spaces that are left between the zigzags. Otherwise, this is ready to use. When you throw it in the wash, it's actually going to get rid of any of these loose threads that are hanging there, and you might actually need to give it one more little trim, if any fly loose. But otherwise, you're ready for your rustic picnic. And this napkin is ready to be folded up, and used. Doesn't that look pretty? And I love to pair it with other napkins that also have bright edges, like this. It makes it perfect for a daytime party, or even a dinner party.

Mitered corner napkins

- For these final napkins, we're going to do mitered corners and hemmed edges. These are only slightly more complicated than the other ones we did because they involve a little bit of folding and ironing and pinning, but they really are pretty straightforward. Now what do I mean by mitered corners? These are actually mitered corners. You can see that they come up almost like a picture frame to make this nice, neat edge. And the way we do this is by beginning at the corners and folding them up, and then we deal with the edges. I'll show you how to do it. We're going to begin with a 12-inch square napkin. And the size of napkin I'm making here is actually a cocktail napkin size. These fold up into cute little squares. If you wanted to make them larger, the instructions work the exact same way. So it's totally up to you. When we start with a 12-inch square though, we're going to fold over the hemmed edges. So what you're going to wind up with is actually a 10-inch square napkin. So keep that in mind, you're going to lose a little bit on each edge. And they're going to shrink. We're going to measure one inch in from the edge of the corner. So just line up your grid lines with both edges and mark where that corner hits. I'm using a pen for this. You might want to use a fabric marker. You're going to mark each corner the exact same way. Once we've marked all of our points you just fold up the corner to the point that you marked and give it a little press, and then you'll fold it up one more time. And just make sure that that fold looks even. There's a little bit of eyeballing that goes on here. Give that a press. Now do that to each corner. I love working with quilting cotton because it really holds the creases nicely but if your fabric is fighting you a little bit you can always use a little bit of starch or Mary Ellen's Best Press, that should hold it in place. But soon enough we're going to be pinning it anyway. Next you're going to be folding up these edges about a quarter inch. And pressing it. Do your best to try to keep it nice and even as you go. And then fold it up one more time and give it a press. Now there's a little bit of finagling that needs to happen once you move on to the next edge. Before we do that, I'm going to put in a pin to hold this in place and then one more right here along the center edge. And the finagling is because you want to roll this up once and then twice and have these two corners meet up perfectly and have this nice

mitered corner here. So in order to do that we need to start once again with folding up and pressing a quarter inch, then fold it up one more time, and this time we're going to make extra sure that those two edges meet nicely to make that corner. I like to give it a little press here before I move on. And even add a pin, then continue pressing. Now you can turn it and pin this side. We're going to do the exact same thing to the other two edges. And pinning is what really holds your mitered corners in place. Now we're ready to go to the sewing machine. With the wrong side facing you, just slide it under the machine, we're going to do a 3/8-inch seam and for that you just line it right up with your foot. Drop your presser foot down. We're going to use a straight stitch and I have a neutral white thread. Drop your needle down. Backstitch a couple times and then just go forward following the edge of your foot. (sewing machine whirring) When you get to the corner, go ahead and pull out your pin but just hold it in place with your fingers. And you're going to turn, right when you get to that crease. Put your needle down, lift the foot, pivot and continue right along with that 3/8-inch seam allowance. Backstitch, and your napkin is done. Just trim your threads and your napkin is ready to use. I love these little 10-inch square napkins. I just think they're so cute. You can just fold them in half and they're actually perfect for a kids' size, or you can fold them again and they make the perfect cocktail napkin. You can see I made them in pink too. And just like that you've learned how to make three different types of napkins. All are great for beginners, and they're all suitable for breakfast, lunch, dinner, formal events, picnics, you name it. Actually I think it's time for cocktail hour.