

10 Easy Sewing Projects for Absolute Beginners

Step-by-Step Instructions for Every Project

From bookmarks to skirts · Build skills one project at a time

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Welcome to Your Sewing Journey

This guide takes you through 10 beginner-friendly sewing projects, each with clear step-by-step instructions, a materials list, and a practical tip. Projects are ordered from the very simplest to the most rewarding — so start at the top and work your way down.

What You'll Need for Every Project

- Cotton fabric (easy to handle & forgiving)
- All-purpose thread in matching or contrasting colours
- Fabric scissors (never use these on paper!)
- Pins or Wonder Clips
- Measuring tape or ruler
- Seam ripper (every sewist uses one — embrace it)
- Iron and ironing board

Three golden rules: (1) Press your seams at every step. (2) Start slow — speed comes later. (3) A seam ripper is a tool, not a failure.

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Project 1 · Fabric Bookmarks

TIME	SKILL	YOU'LL NEED
15–20 min	Super Easy	Cotton/linen scraps, ribbon, thread, pins, scissors, iron

Fabric bookmarks are the perfect first project — they're small, quick, and teach you the essential skill of turning fabric right-side out for a clean finish. Use up any scraps and make a handful in one sitting.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Cut your fabric**
Cut two rectangles of fabric, each 6 cm x 20 cm. If using different fabrics for front and back, cut one of each.
- 2 Pin right sides together**
Place the two pieces with the 'right' (pretty) sides facing each other. Pin around all four edges, leaving a 2–3 cm gap along one short edge for turning.
- 3 Sew the seam**
Using a straight stitch, sew all the way around the rectangle with a 1 cm seam allowance. Backstitch at the start and end. Don't sew across the turning gap.
- 4 Clip the corners**
Use scissors to carefully snip the fabric at each corner, cutting close to (but not through) the stitching. This removes bulk and gives sharp corners.
- 5 Turn right side out**
Push the fabric through the gap you left. Use a blunt pencil or chopstick to poke the corners out fully. Press flat with an iron.
- 6 Close the gap & topstitch**
Tuck in the raw edges of the gap and press. Topstitch all the way around the bookmark 3–4 mm from the edge. This closes the gap and gives a professional finish.
- 7 Optional ribbon loop**
Before step 3, fold a 6 cm piece of ribbon in half and tuck it into one short end between the fabric layers with the loop inside. Sew over it — it will become a hanging loop when turned.

■ **Tip:** Press your seams at every step — it makes a huge difference to the finished look, even on something this small.

Project 2 · Simple Drawstring Bag

TIME 30 min	SKILL Easy	YOU'LL NEED Cotton fabric (50x40 cm), cord or ribbon (80 cm), thread, pins, safety pin
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A drawstring bag is a rite of passage for new sewists. It looks impressive but uses only straight seams. Great for gifts, toiletries, or storing small sewing projects.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Cut the fabric**
Cut one rectangle of fabric 50 cm wide x 40 cm tall. Alternatively, cut two pieces 25 x 40 cm to use contrasting fabrics.
- 2 Fold or join**
If using one piece, fold it in half widthways (right sides together), so you have a 25 x 40 cm folded piece. If using two pieces, pin them right sides together.
- 3 Create the channel**
On the top edge (open end), fold 1 cm down and press. Then fold another 2.5 cm down and press again. Pin in place. This will become the drawstring channel.
- 4 Sew the channel**
Sew along the bottom fold of the channel, close to the edge. Do not sew the sides yet. This keeps the channel open at the sides for threading the cord.
- 5 Sew the side seams**
Open the bag back out flat. Sew a straight seam down each side, stopping just below the channel stitching so the channel remains open at the sides.
- 6 Finish the seams**
Trim seam allowances to 0.8 cm and zigzag or overlock the raw edges if you have that option. This stops fraying inside.
- 7 Turn right side out & thread cord**
Turn the bag the right way out. Attach a safety pin to one end of your cord and thread it all the way through the channel, around and back out the same side. Tie the cord ends together and pull to gather.

■ **Tip:** Use a safety pin clipped to the end of the cord — it acts like a needle and slides through the channel easily.

Project 3 · Envelope Pillow Cover

TIME 30–40 min	SKILL Easy	YOU'LL NEED Medium-weight cotton or canvas (enough for 3 panels), thread, pins, iron
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Envelope pillow covers are genius — no zip needed. Two overlapping back panels create a hidden opening. Once you make one you'll want to re-cover every cushion in the house.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Measure your cushion pad**
Measure the cushion pad. Add 2 cm on each side for seam allowance. This is the size of your front panel.
- 2 Cut the panels**
Cut one front panel to the full cushion size (plus seam allowance). Cut two back panels — each the same width as the front, but two-thirds the height, so they overlap generously.
- 3 Hem the back panels**
On each back panel, fold one long edge (the inner edge) over 1 cm and press. Fold over again 1 cm, press, and sew along the fold. This creates a neat hem on the opening edges.
- 4 Assemble the cover**
Lay the front panel right side up. Place the two back panels on top, both right side down, with the hemmed edges overlapping in the centre. Pin all around the edges.
- 5 Sew around the perimeter**
Sew all the way around the outside with a 1.5 cm seam. Backstitch at the start and end. The overlapping back panels create the envelope opening.
- 6 Clip corners & turn**
Clip each corner diagonally, being careful not to cut the stitching. Turn the cover right side out through the envelope opening. Poke out the corners with a blunt tool.
- 7 Press and insert pad**
Press the cover with an iron for crisp edges. Insert the cushion pad through the back opening — the overlapping panels hold it in place.

■ **Tip:** Choose a medium-weight fabric like canvas or linen-cotton blend — it holds its shape and gives crisp, professional-looking edges.

Project 4 · Fabric Coasters

TIME 20–30 min	SKILL Easy	YOU'LL NEED Cotton fabric scraps, lightweight wadding/batting, thread, pins, iron
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Coasters are perfect for practising corners and topstitching. Make a set of four or six and you have an impressive handmade gift. They're also a great way to use up small fabric scraps.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Cut your pieces**
For each coaster, cut two 12 x 12 cm squares of fabric (front and back) and one 12 x 12 cm square of lightweight wadding or batting for body and absorbency.
- 2 Layer up**
Place one fabric square right side down, then the wadding on top, then the second fabric square right side up. Pin all layers together. This is your 'sandwich'.
- 3 Sew around the edges**
Sew around all four sides with a 1 cm seam, leaving a 5 cm gap along one side. Backstitch at the start and end of the gap.
- 4 Clip the corners**
Trim the seam allowance at each corner diagonally to reduce bulk. Be careful not to cut through the stitching.
- 5 Turn and press**
Pull the coaster right side out through the gap. Use a blunt tool to push the corners out neatly. Press with a hot iron so it lies completely flat.
- 6 Close the gap**
Tuck the raw edges of the gap inward so they align with the seam line. Press flat and pin in place.
- 7 Topstitch all around**
Sew 5 mm from the edge all the way around the coaster. This closes the gap and gives a polished, quilted look. You can add an X stitch across the centre for extra texture.

■ **Tip:** Vary your fabric choices across a set — mixing plains and prints makes a beautiful gift set. Tie them together with a ribbon.

Project 5 · Tote Bag

TIME 45–60 min	SKILL Beginner-Plus	YOU'LL NEED Sturdy cotton (canvas or denim, 60x70 cm), matching thread, pins, iron
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The tote bag is where many beginners truly fall in love with sewing. It's visible, functional, and genuinely satisfying to carry something you made yourself. This version includes boxed corners for extra depth.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Cut the fabric**
Cut one rectangle 40 cm wide x 70 cm tall for the bag body. Cut two strips 8 cm x 55 cm for the handles.
- 2 Make the handles**
Fold each handle strip in half lengthways (right sides out), press. Open, fold each long edge to the centre crease, press, then refold along the centre and topstitch down both long edges. You'll have two sturdy straps.
- 3 Prepare the bag body**
Fold the main rectangle in half, right sides together (short edges meet). Pin the two side seams. Sew down both sides with a 1.5 cm seam allowance.
- 4 Box the corners**
Open out each bottom corner. Match the side seam to the base fold, creating a flat triangle. Sew across 4 cm from the tip. Trim the triangle. When turned out, this creates a flat base with depth.
- 5 Finish the top edge**
Fold the top raw edge down 1 cm and press. Fold down another 3 cm and press. This is your hem and handle attachment zone.
- 6 Attach the handles**
Tuck each handle end under the folded top hem, about 10 cm from each side seam. Pin in place. Topstitch the hem all the way around, making sure you sew over the handle ends securely.
- 7 Reinforce the handles**
Sew a small rectangle or X box stitch over each handle attachment point. This reinforces the stress point and makes the bag strong enough for groceries.
- 8 Turn and press**
Turn the bag right side out, poke the corners out, and give everything a final press with an iron.

■ **Tip:** Use a heavier needle (size 90/14) if sewing through denim or canvas — it prevents skipped stitches on thick seams.

Project 6 · Zipper Pouch

TIME 40 min	SKILL Skill Builder	YOU'LL NEED Two fabric rectangles (22x16 cm each), 20 cm zip, thread, zipper foot, pins
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Zippers sound scary, but they're far more manageable than you'd expect. This beginner-friendly method uses a standard zip and a zipper foot, and opens the door to bags, pouches, and organisers of all kinds.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Prepare your pieces**
Cut two fabric rectangles, each 22 cm wide x 16 cm tall. These will be the front and back of the pouch. Press them flat.
- 2 Position the zip (front)**
Lay the front fabric piece right side up. Place the zip right side down along the top edge, with the zipper tape aligned with the fabric edge. Pin in place.
- 3 Sew the zip to the front**
Attach your zipper foot. Sew close to the zip teeth along the top edge. Fold the fabric away from the zip and press.
- 4 Attach the back panel**
Place the back fabric piece right side down on top of the other side of the zip tape. Pin and sew, then fold back and press.
- 5 Zip it halfway**
Before sewing the pouch shut, open the zip about halfway. This is critical — you need access to turn it right side out later.
- 6 Sew around the pouch**
Fold the whole piece so front and back are right sides together, zipper in the middle. Pin and sew around the remaining three sides (bottom and two sides) with a 1 cm seam, leaving the zip end open.
- 7 Trim and turn**
Clip the corners, trim seam allowances, and turn the pouch right side out through the open zip. Push the corners out, press flat, and admire your work.

■ **Tip:** Go slowly around the zip pull — stop with your needle down, lift the presser foot, slide the zip pull past, lower the foot, and continue. This keeps your stitching straight.

Project 7 · Reusable Fabric Napkins

TIME 20 min each	SKILL Easy	YOU'LL NEED 100% cotton fabric (38x38 cm per napkin), thread, pins, iron
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Fabric napkins are repetitive in the best way — each one sharpens your accuracy. They also replace single-use paper napkins, making them an eco-friendly staple. Linen or cotton both work beautifully.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Cut and press**
Cut your fabric into 38 x 38 cm squares. Press each piece flat. For a set, cut several at once.
- 2 Mitre the corners (optional but beautiful)**
For a professional finish: fold each corner in at 45 degrees to the wrong side, press. Then fold in the edges 1 cm on each side and press. The corner will form a neat mitre.
- 3 Standard hem (simpler)**
If skipping the mitred corners, simply fold each edge over 1 cm and press. Fold over another 1 cm and press again, creating a double-fold hem all the way around.
- 4 Pin the hem**
Pin all four sides of the hem in place. Make sure the corners are neatly folded — either mitred or simply tucked.
- 5 Sew all four sides**
Stitch along each side of the hem, close to the inner fold. When you reach a corner, stop with the needle down, lift the presser foot, pivot the fabric 90 degrees, lower the foot, and continue.
- 6 Press the finished napkin**
Give the napkin a final press on both sides. A well-pressed napkin looks store-bought.
- 7 Make more!**
The beauty of napkins is repetition — your second will be noticeably neater than your first. Make a set of four, six, or eight.

■ **Tip:** Use a contrasting thread colour for a pretty detail — a white napkin with a sage green hem stitch looks effortlessly stylish.

Project 8 · Headbands & Scrunchies

TIME 15–25 min	SKILL Easy	YOU'LL NEED Fabric strip (50x8 cm for scrunchie), 20 cm elastic (6 mm wide), thread, safety pin
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Scrunchies are addictive to make — they're quick, use tiny amounts of fabric, and make brilliant gifts. Once you've made one, you'll want to make ten. They also teach you how to sew elastic, a skill you'll use again and again.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- Cut your fabric**
Cut a strip of fabric approximately 50 cm long x 8 cm wide. Silky or stretchy fabrics give a gathered look; cotton gives a more structured finish.
- Fold and sew the tube**
Fold the strip in half lengthways, right sides together. Sew a seam along the long edge, leaving a 1.5 cm seam allowance. You now have a fabric tube.
- Turn the tube**
Turn the tube right side out — use a blunt pencil or safety pin to push it through. Press gently so the seam runs along one side.
- Join the ends**
Fold the tube into a loop. Tuck one raw end inside the other by about 1 cm. Pin the two ends together (still as a loop).
- Thread the elastic**
Attach a safety pin to one end of the 20 cm elastic. Feed it through the tube loop, making sure not to twist it. Let both ends of the elastic stick out of the opening.
- Sew the elastic ends**
Overlap the elastic ends by 1.5 cm and sew back and forth over them several times to secure. Tug to check they're firmly joined.
- Close the opening**
The elastic will pull the fabric into a gather. Tuck the raw fabric edges in and sew the opening closed by hand or machine. Your scrunchie is done!

■ **Tip:** Velvet fabric makes the most luxurious scrunchies and is easier to sew than it looks. Try it once you've done a few cotton ones.

Project 9 · Simple Apron

TIME 45 min	SKILL Beginner-Plus	YOU'LL NEED Cotton or canvas fabric (1 metre), matching thread, pins, iron, ruler
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An apron introduces longer seams and basic shaping without the complexity of fitting a garment. It's forgiving, practical, and makes a wonderful personalised gift.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Cut the pieces**
Cut one apron body: 60 cm wide x 70 cm tall. Cut two waist ties: 8 cm x 70 cm each. Cut one neck strap: 8 cm x 55 cm (adjust to your neck length).
- 2 Shape the apron body (optional)**
For a more professional look, taper the top of the apron body slightly — mark the top corners at 10 cm in from each side and cut a gentle curve down to the full width. This creates the bib shape.
- 3 Hem all edges**
Fold each edge of the apron body over 1 cm and press. Fold again 1 cm and press. Sew close to the inner fold. Do this on all four sides (or around all curved edges).
- 4 Make the straps**
Fold each strap piece in half lengthways, right sides together, and sew along the long edge. Turn right side out and press. Topstitch along both long edges.
- 5 Attach the waist ties**
Pin one waist tie to each side of the apron at the waist level (roughly two-thirds down the bib). Fold the raw end under and sew securely, reinforcing with an X stitch or box stitch.
- 6 Attach the neck strap**
Pin each end of the neck strap to the top corners of the apron bib. Sew securely — this takes some strain, so backstitch several times. You can add a D-ring for adjustability if you have one.
- 7 Final press**
Give the whole apron a thorough press. Hang it up and admire — this is genuinely wearable and gift-worthy.

■ **Tip:** Add a patch pocket to the front for extra practicality — sew it on before hemming the apron body for the neatest finish.

Project 10 · Elastic-Waist Skirt

TIME 60 min	SKILL Confident Beginner	YOU'LL NEED Lightweight cotton (1.5 m), 3 cm wide elastic (waist measurement + 4 cm), thread, pins, iron, safety pin
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The elastic-waist skirt is many sewists' first wearable — and for good reason. There's no fitting involved, no complicated closures, and the result is a comfy skirt you'll actually wear. Measure carefully and take your time.

Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1 Measure and cut**
Measure your waist and hips — cut to the larger. Cut your fabric to: width = hip measurement x 2 (for fullness), height = desired skirt length + 6 cm (for waistband channel and hem).
- 2 Join the side seam**
Fold the fabric in half, right sides together (so the two short ends meet). Pin and sew one side seam with a 1.5 cm seam allowance. Press the seam open. You now have a fabric tube.
- 3 Create the waistband channel**
Fold the top edge down 1 cm and press. Fold down another 4 cm (or enough for your elastic width plus ease) and press. Pin in place. Sew close to the bottom fold, leaving a 5 cm gap for inserting the elastic.
- 4 Prepare the elastic**
Measure elastic to your waist + 3 cm. Attach a safety pin to one end and thread it through the waistband channel all the way around. Make sure it doesn't twist inside.
- 5 Join the elastic ends**
Overlap the elastic ends by 2 cm and sew firmly back and forth several times. Let the elastic pull back into the channel.
- 6 Close the channel**
Sew the 5 cm gap in the waistband channel shut. Distribute the gathers evenly around the waistband.
- 7 Hem the skirt**
Try the skirt on and mark your preferred length with pins or chalk. Fold the hem up 1 cm and press. Fold up another 2.5 cm and press. Sew close to the upper fold all the way around.
- 8 Final press and wear!**
Press the hem and waistband. Give the gathers a shake and even them out. Put it on — you just made a skirt!

■ **Tip:** Pre-wash your fabric before cutting — cotton shrinks in the wash, and you want it to shrink before you sew, not after.

You're a Sewist Now!

Completing even one project from this list puts you ahead of the curve. Sewing is a skill — it grows every single time you sit at the machine. Your tenth project will look nothing like your first, and that's the whole point.

- **Move from straight seams to gentle curves**
Try a curved hem or a rounded bag base.
- **Add zippers to bigger projects**
A tote with a zip closure, or a washbag.
- **Explore simple patterns**
Look for beginner patterns with clear markings.
- **Try woven vs knit fabrics**
Jersey needs a stretch stitch — a whole new skill.
- **Make something as a gift**
Nothing motivates like sewing for someone you love.

Happy Sewing!

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