

# Fabric book cover tutorial

by



Here is my little tutorial to learn how to make a pretty cover for paperback books. It's great to protect your books in your bag or prevent everyone to know what you're reading. It is inspired by Japanese book covers I saw when I was living there.

This tutorial is meant for all levels. I tried to make it accessible to beginners by detailing certain steps in details, adding instructions which will probably seem obvious to more experienced people. It is free to download on my blog (<http://anomori.com/blog>) and you are authorized to download, print and copy it freely. You cannot distribute it for a fee and cannot use it for commercial purposes. You can link to the pattern on my blog but cannot host it on your blog or website.

## **\*\* Finished product**



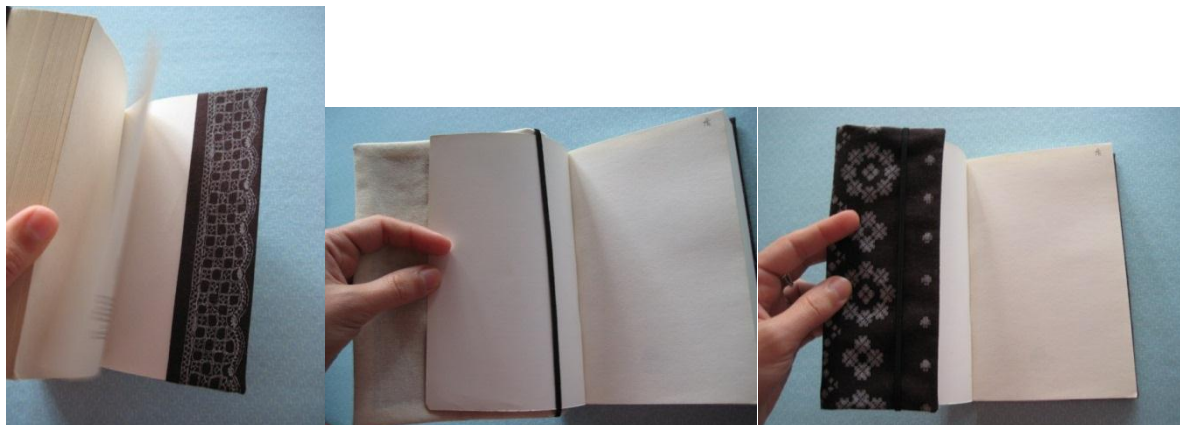
**Inside view :**





The cover is made of a rectangle and lined, with a sewn on fold at one end and an elastic on the other side.

One side of the book cover will be put inside the sewn fold. The other side will be in a moving fold, formed by folding the excess fabric over the cover and maintained by the elastic. That way you can use the same fabric cover with books of different width.



Note: in the example shown here, the sewn on fold is at the back of the book and the movable one at the front, but you can do it the other way around if you wish. I did it for the last cover I made, since I wanted to add embroidery at the front and wanted it to always be at the same place.

### **\*\* Needed materials**



- Fabric for the outside and matching thread
- Fabric for the inside (I use neutral fabrics since it won't be seen)
- Soft elastic (width: between 4 and 9mm)
- Pattern (you're going to trace it)
- Cutting tools. I use a rotary cutter with a self-healing mat, but you can use sewing shears.
- Tracing tools
- (optional) Ribbon or a thin strip of fabric to make a bookmark

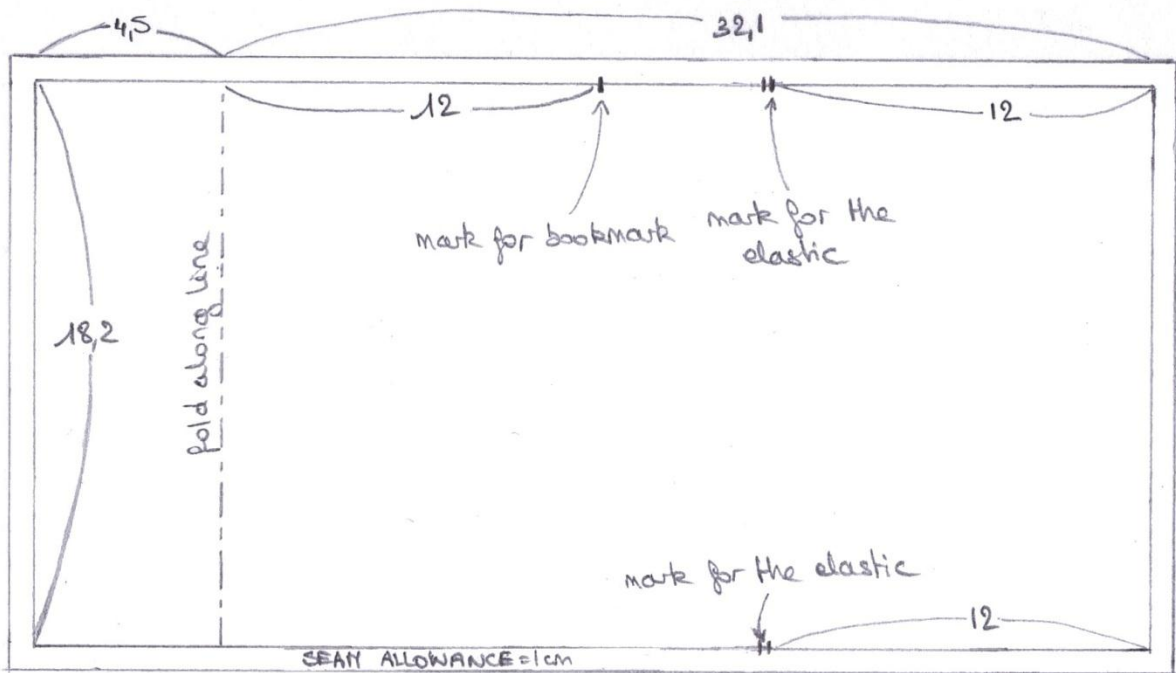


## **\*\* The pattern**

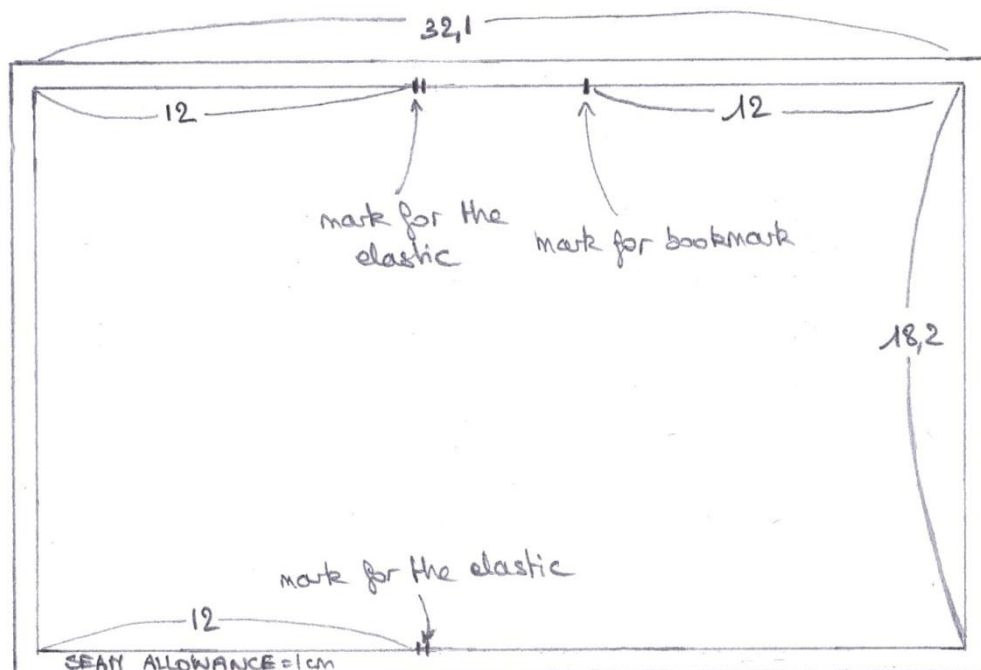
It's very simple since it's basically a rectangle. The lining fabric is cut using the same pattern as the outside, minus the sewn on fold which isn't lined. Here are the measurements and marks to trace, depending on which side you want the sewn on fold to be. All measurements are in centimeters.

Version 1: sewn on fold at the end of the book:

- Outside fabric:



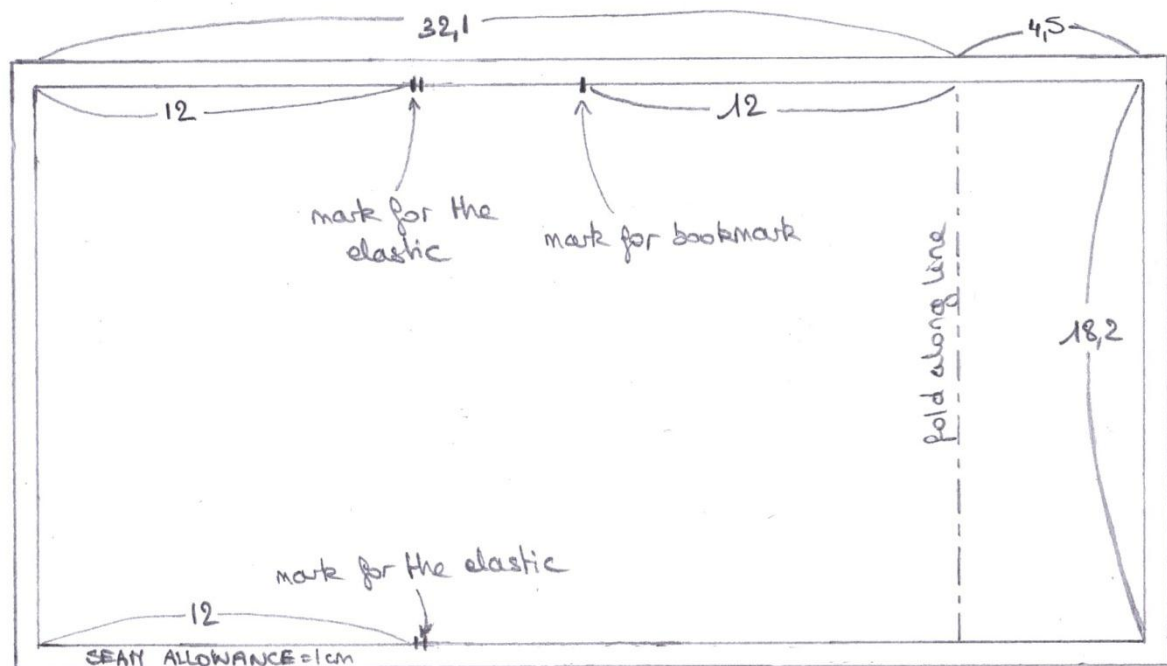
- Lining fabric:



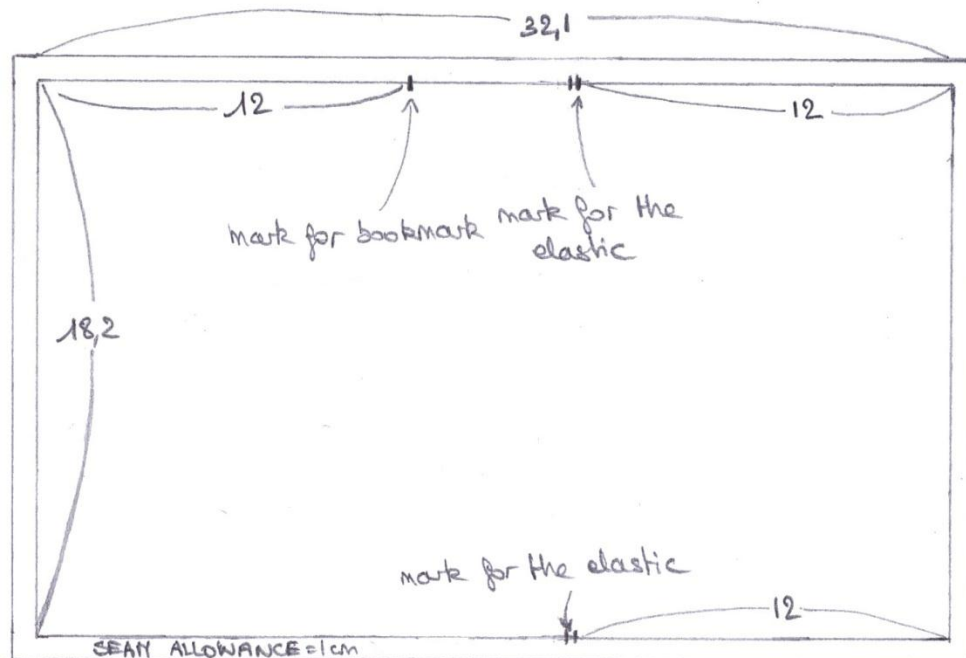


Version 2: Sewn on fold at the beginning of the book:

- Outside fabric:



- Lining fabric:



I use 1 cm seam allowances so that's what I've written here, but you can use whatever you prefer.





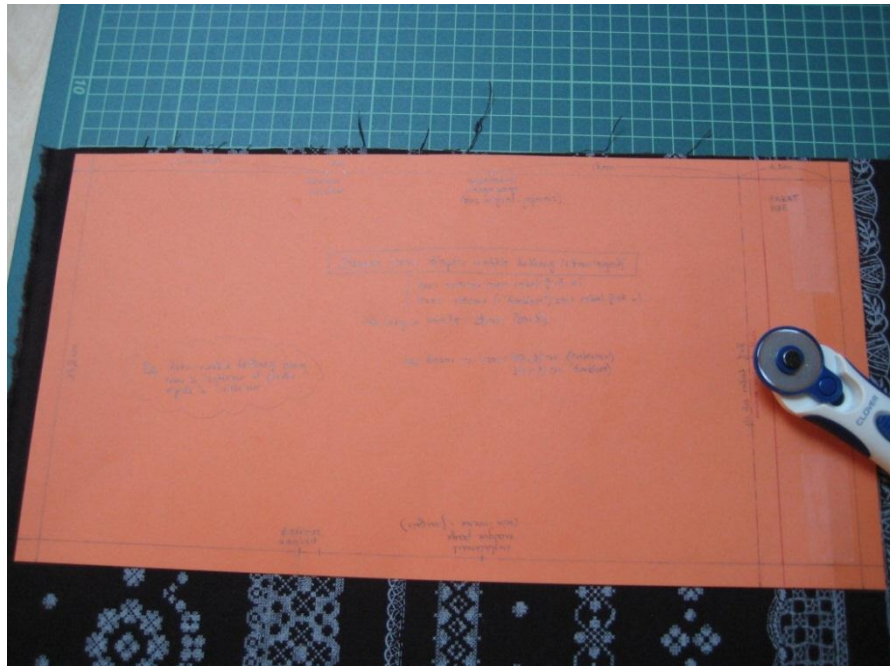
This pattern is for a small sized book (paperback book in English I think...). It should be the right size for most books of that kind, except the very thin books or the very thick ones (if your book has more than 700 pages it will probably be too short).

For thin books you will have to reduce the movable fold so that it doesn't go too far into the book. For thick books it's the contrary: you will have to lengthen the pattern and maybe move the elastic towards the free end of the fabric cover. For example for a 700 pages book you will have to add at least 2 centimeters to the free end and move the elastic at least 1 cm towards the end. For a 800 pages book you will have to do more drastic changes.

## **\*\* Cut and construction**

Once you've traced your pattern you can start making your fabric cover.

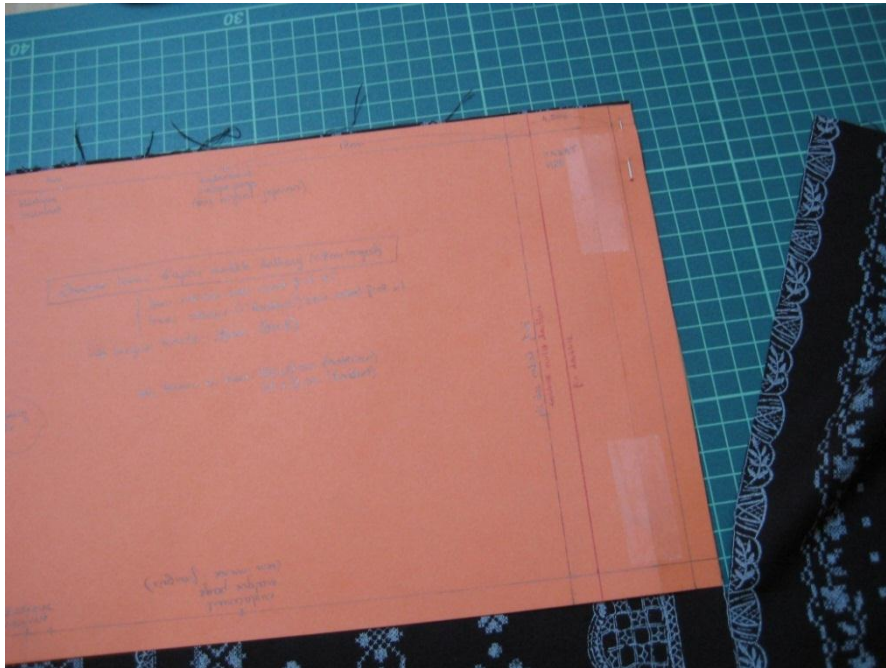
1. Place your fabric with the wrong side on the table so that you see the right side. Put your pattern on top of the fabric, paying attention to the motif placement so that it pleases you. Here I positioned the pattern so that I had a full lace stripe on the sewn on fold.



Note: in this picture the pattern is positioned so that the sewn on fold is at the beginning of the book. Since this fabric doesn't have any nap and this isn't a one way design I don't really care and can turn the fabric cover whichever way I want. But if your fabric has a one way design or nap, be careful how you place your pattern. If you want the sewn on fold at the end of the book, you'll have to place the pattern with the fold on the left (opposite to what you see here). If you want the sewn on fold at the beginning of the book, place it with the fold on the right as it is here. See the pattern section for more info.



2. Cut the outside fabric around the pattern.



3. You get a fabric rectangle. Mark the sewing lines and the fold line on the wrong side of the fabric. On this picture I've also traced the elastic and bookmark marks but you don't need them as we're going to sew them to the lining fabric.

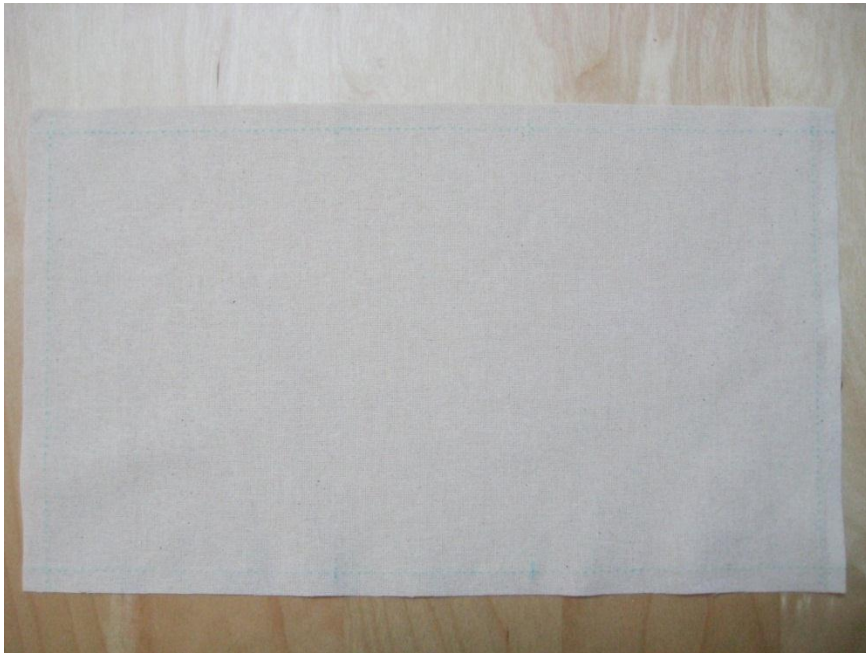


4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the lining fabric. On the wrong side of the fabric, trace the sewing lines and the marks for the elastic and bookmark if you want one.

**Warning:** remember the sewn on fold isn't lined! Be careful to cut the lining fabric narrower than the outside fabric. If you made two separate patterns for the outside and lining you won't have any



problem. If you're using one paper pattern for both be careful to stop at the fold and add the sewing allowance.



*(my sewing lines aren't easy to see here, they're in light blue)*

5. Turn the lining and trace the marks for the elastic and the bookmark (if you're adding one) **on the right side** of the lining, **within the seam allowance** (so that it won't show in the finished product). They will be sewn to the right side of the lining, so it will be easier if the marks are on the right side.
6. Overcast the short side of the main fabric rectangle on the side where the sewn on fold will be. The other edges will be inside the two fabrics and won't show, so you can leave them as they are.



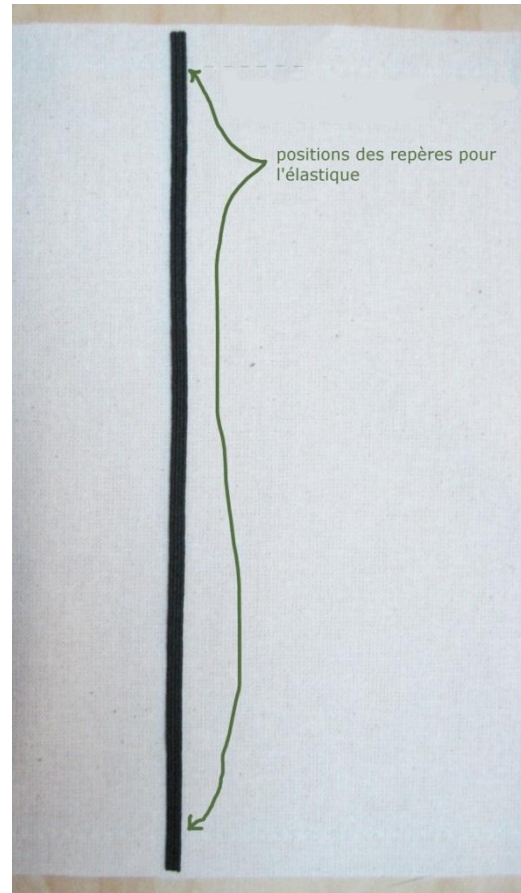




7. Place the elastic **on the right side** of the lining fabric and cut the desired length.

The text on the picture at right says “marks for placing the elastic” (sorry I couldn’t translate it directly on the picture)

8. Fix it in place **within the seam allowance**. It’s just meant to prevent it for moving before we sew everything together. I usually to a little cross stitch with basting thread. Check that the elastic is following a straight line.



**Warning:** the elastic band mustn’t be too loose so that it maintains the folded fabric, but above all it mustn’t be too tight. If it is it will pull on your fabric and might bend it and distort your book’s cover.

9. (optional) Repeat steps 7 and 8 for the bookmark if you want to add one.

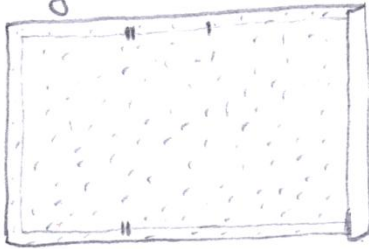




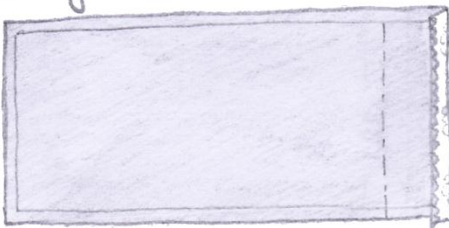
10. Outside fabric: fold the sewn on fold's seam allowance to the wrong side and press with your iron. Then fold the sewn on fold along the fold line, **right side to right side**.

Lining fabric: fold the seam allowance at the end that will be under the sewn on fold to the wrong side and press.





Lining:

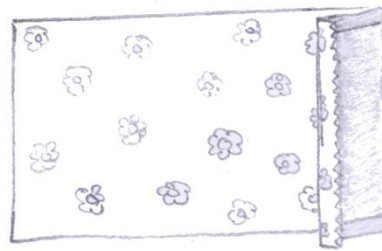


Main fabric:



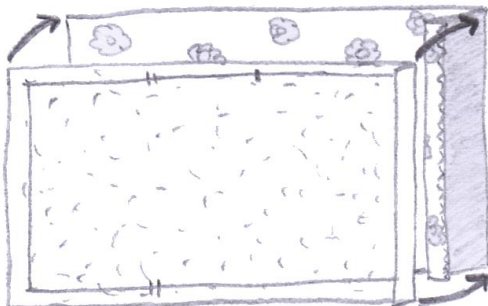
Legend:

-  Lining-right side
-  Lining-wrong side
-  Main fabric-right side
-  Main fabric-wrong side



That way everything will be sewn in place automatically when we sew our two fabrics together.

11. Place the lining on the outside fabric, **right side to right side**. Keep the fabrics in place with pins



Be careful to match the side of the lining where the seam allowance has been folded with the side of the main fabric where the sewn on fold is.

If you added a ribbon for a bookmark, be careful that its free end doesn't get caught in the sewing line at the bottom!



12. Stitch the two layers together on the three « regular » sides (= all except the sewn on fold side).

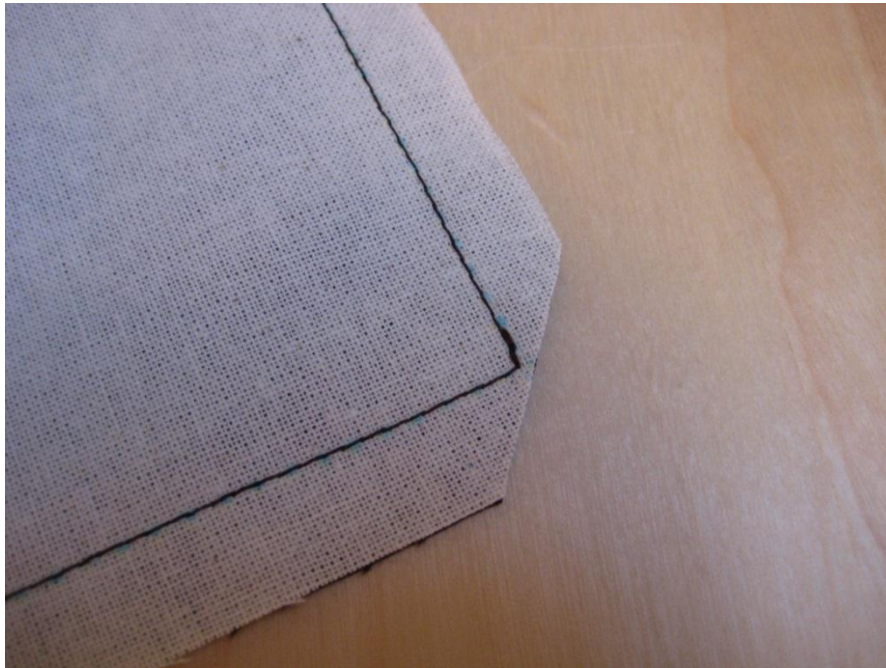


You can stitch the whole thing in one seam without stopping, starting at the right of the opening and going all the way to the left of the opening.

How to handle corners: when you get to a corner go slowly so that you won't go past it. At the corner, leave the needle inside the fabric, raise the presser foot, turn your fabric by 90°, lower the presser foot and start stitching again on the new line.



13. Cut the seam allowance at the four corners, without cutting into the sewing line.



Warning: if your fabric frays a lot, do not cut too close to the stitching line! It might fray on the outside even if you didn't cut into the stitches.

14. Turn your fabric cover right side out and press with your iron to remove any wrinkles and set corners and sides.

Trick n°1: here is a small trick to make it easier to get nice edges and corners if you have a sleeve-board for your iron. While the cover is still wrong side out, put it on your sleeve-board, with one of the newly sewn seam on top. Open the seam and press it with your iron. You probably won't be able to open all the seams on all their length, but do as much as you can. This will help turn the cover right side out and get neat edges and corners.

Trick n°2: after I turn the cover right side out I used a Japanese chopstick to help turn corners and get neater edges. I insert my chopstick inside the cover, between the two seam allowances against the seam and move along the seam. This helps prevent fabric from staying stuck inside the cover.

Here you are! You can now admire your completed project and go read something nice. ^\_^





## **\*\* Bonus: variations**

You now have all the instructions to create a basic fabric book cover. From this basis you can create an infinite number of variations.

Construction variations: place the sewn on fold at the beginning or the end of the book depending on how you prefer it. Lengthen or shorten the sewn on fold if you don't like the default size. Change the pattern measurements to accommodate it to bigger books. Add a bookmark or leave it out to use your own pretty paper bookmarks.

Embellishments: for the cover shown on this tutorial I used a fabric with nice motifs, which I didn't alter. But you can make it fancier (or just more fun to create) by adding embellishments or using more complex techniques. This pattern is perfect for this! You can for example add embroidery on the cover or on one of the inside folds (it can be a secret touch that only the reader will know of). You can use patchwork and make the outside with many different pieces of fabric. You can add applique, trims or lace. You can play with fabric coordinates. You could also cut the sewn on fold in a different fabric and add a seam in place of the fold on the pattern. One you have the perfect piece for the outside you can start at step 3 to construct the cover.

Here are some examples of other fabric covers made with this tutorial (the one you saw before was my first one, the prototype):



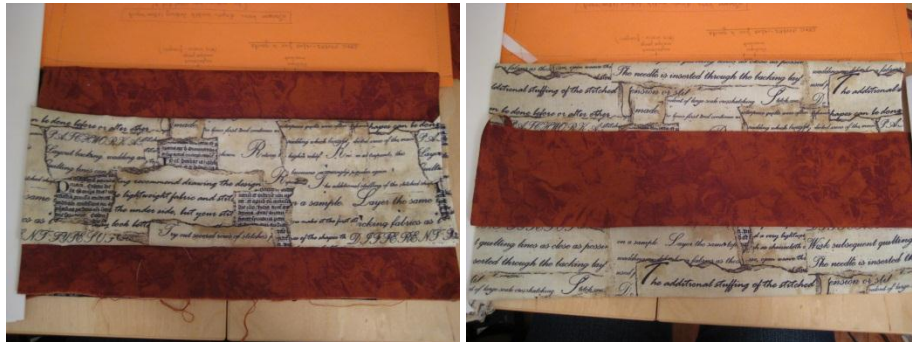
Here you have a Japanese inspired fabric and dark lining. You can notice that the pattern was placed so that the sewn on fold would have full motifs on it. It was widened a bit so as not to cut the bigger motif. This cover was made by a friend who is just starting sewing. The book cover was her first project and this one was her second one. This proves that this pattern is perfect for beginners.



Here the basic pattern was cut in two so as to use two different fabrics. A ribbon of the bottom fabric was sewn on the top part, and a bookmark was added. It was made in a strip of the bottom fabric.



For that kind of alterations you first need to decide exactly which size you want each strip to be. When you have your measurements you can cut the pattern in two pieces, and add 1cm of seam allowance to each cut part (or whatever seam allowance you like to use).



Tests for a book cover alternating contrasting fabric strips (I didn't make it in the end, but it's an interesting idea).



Tests for a book cover with lace and applique. In this case the main fabric was cut following the whole pattern, and the contrasting fabrics are then appliqued on top of it (so you get two layers of fabric at some places). Do not use fabric that is too heavy for this, otherwise the folds won't fold properly because of the thickness.



The final design I chose for this cover. One again I used the sewn on fold to add a special detail, here it's a lace strip. I also added a small piece of the same lace on the opposite fold.