

Vintage Pillowcase Lunchbox Tutorial



This tutorial describes how to make a vinyl-covered lunchbox bag and matching desk placemat from a 20" by 30" vintage percale pillowcase. The finished bag is about 6.5" high, by 8" wide by 6" deep. (The gathered top and handles make it a little taller.) The accompanying placemat is about 9" by 12" – just the right size for your desk at work.

Of course, you don't have to use a pillowcase. A vintage sheet, curtain or even a contemporary cotton print would work just as well. If you choose a heavier fabric for the body and handles, you may want to forgo the iron-on vinyl and, similarly, if you want to forgo the iron-on vinyl, you probably want to choose a heavier fabric (or at least a heavy interfacing). The drawstring panels on top of the bag, the lining and the placemat will all be more successful if made from a lighter weight fabric like vintage percale or quilters' cotton.

I've trimmed my bags with ric-rac, but any 3/8" -1/2" trim will do. If you're using a vintage pillowcase, you will need to use some kind of trim to cover a worn crease in the fabric.

Materials:

1 Vintage percale pillowcase (cutting instructions follow) and matching Thread
1 Yard Iron-On Vinyl
15" x 20" piece Fusible Fleece
2 Yards Medium Ric-rac and matching Thread
1 Yard 1/2" Cotton Twill Tape
1 Yard Cotton Cord for Drawstring Closure
Light-Colored Embroidery Floss
1 Yard Lightweight Fusible Interfacing
1 Snap Fastener
4" x 8" scrap Wool or Wool-Blend Felt
4" x 8" piece Freezer Paper
Vintage (or new) Button and Matching Embroidery Floss

If not using a pillowcase, you'll need fabric cut into the following shapes:

From any fabric:

Exterior Bag = 15" x 20"

Handles = 3" x 12" (two)

From light or mid-weight fabric:

Bag Lining = 15" x 20"

Drawstring Panels = 7" x 15" (two)

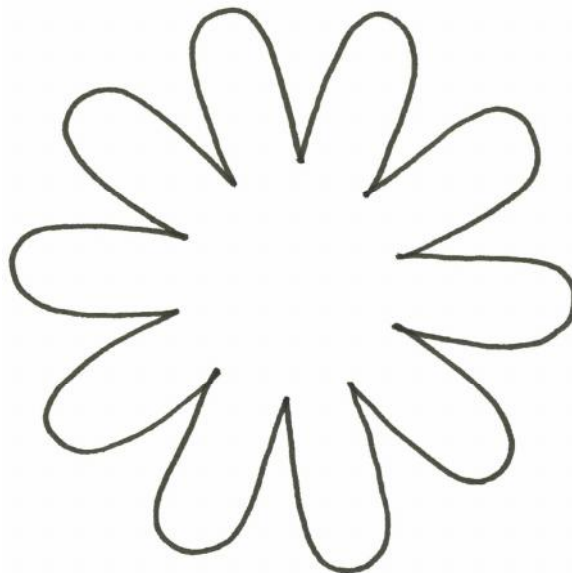
Placemat = 10" x 13" (two)

Placemat Pocket = 3.5" x 4.5" (two)

Placemat Closure = 1.5" x 12" (two)

Special Supplies:

Rotary Cutting Mat and Cutter
Clear Quilter's Ruler
Heavyweight/Denim Machine Needles
Hand Sewing & Embroidery Needles
Scotch® or other similar Clear Tape
Disappearing Ink Pen or similar marking tool
Safety Pin
Snap Press (or other tools for attaching snaps)



Template for Felt Flower Detail

Step One: Cut Pillowcase

Note: Before you start cutting, measure your pillowcase's "header" (the folded part on the open end). If it measures less than 3.5" from the folded edge to the seam, follow alternate cutting directions in blue.



Lay pillowcase on your cutting board with the open end on the right, the folded side at the top, and the two seamed sides on the left and at the bottom.



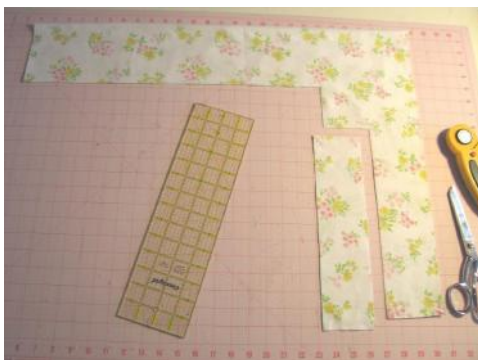
Use your rotary cutter and ruler to remove the folded "header" from the open end of the pillowcase and set aside.



Use your rotary cutter and ruler to cut off the seams along the bottom and left side. Make sure the lower left corner is now a perfect right angle.



Measure 15" up the left side and 20" across the bottom and cut a 15" x 20" rectangle. The two resulting pieces will be the main exterior and lining panels.



From the lower left corner of the remaining piece, cut a 3" x 12" rectangle. The resulting pieces will be the handles.

Alternate Cutting Directions: Don't cut your handles here. Instead, cut a 7" (across the bottom) x 15" rectangle. These pieces will be your drawstring panels.



Using the cut you've already made as a guideline, continue cutting across the top, creating a folded piece approximately 5" x 25" (10" x 26" when unfolded). This will be the placemat.

Alternate Cutting Directions: Follow the directions above, but trim the resulting piece to 26" wide. Use the remaining piece to cut two 3.5" x 4.5" pieces which will become the pocket on your placemat.



From the remaining piece, cut a 1.5" x 12" rectangle. The two resulting pieces will become the placemat closure. Discard or save remaining pieces as desired.

Alternate Cutting Directions: Ignore this step.



Bring the "header" you set aside earlier back to the cutting table and use your rotary cutting tools to remove all seams.

Alternate cutting directions. From this piece, cut your handles (two 3" x 12" pieces) and your placemat closure (two 1.5" x 12" pieces). Discard or set aside remaining fabric as desired and ignore all remaining steps. You are now finished cutting!



Press the remaining piece open and lay it, right side up, on your cutting table. You will notice a worn line where the fold used to be. Use your quilter's ruler and rotary cutter to make a cut 3.5" from the fold/worn line. The cut should extend the length of the fabric and be repeated on both sides of the fold. The result should be a long piece, 7" wide, with the fold/worn line running through the center.



From this piece, cut two 15" wide pieces. These will be your drawstring closure panels.



Re-fold the remaining piece.



Measure 4.5" along the folded edge and cut a 3.5" x 4.5" rectangle. Cut along the fold so you have two 3.5" x 4.5" pieces. These will become your placemat pocket. Save or discard remaining fabric.

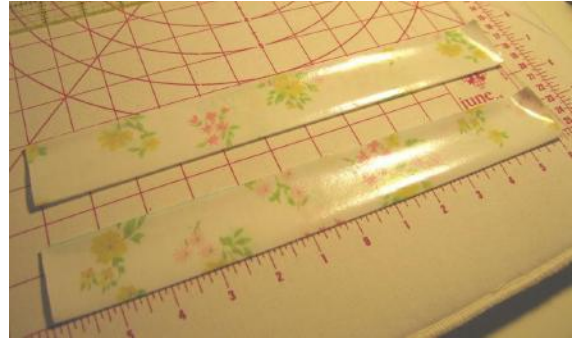
You are now finished cutting!

Step Two: Make the Handles

Start by cutting Iron-On Vinyl. You will need a 15" x 20" piece for the main bag and two 3" x 12" pieces for the handles. Follow manufacturer's instructions for fusing the vinyl to fabric.



Following manufacturer's instructions, fuse the two 3" x 12" pieces of Iron-On Vinyl to the handles. Keep one of the paper backing pieces to use in the following steps.



Using the paper backing to protect the vinyl from your iron, press each of the handles in half, wrong sides together.



Again using the paper backing piece to protect vinyl, fold each of the long raw edges under about one quarter inch.



Your handles should now look something like this. Using the paper backing to protect vinyl, press the handle again. This will cause the folded under pieces (which are covered in vinyl) to fuse together.



Using a heavyweight/denim needle, stitch along the edges of the handles. Perfecting your stitch may be tricky. You may want to use some scraps of Iron-On Vinyl and some scrap fabric to make a practice handle. If you find the vinyl sticks to your machine, try putting a piece of tissue paper under the handle while you sew, tearing it away when you're finished.



Switch thread to match trim and then sew trim along the center of the handles.

Step Three: Make the Drawstring Panels

Start by returning your machine to its “regular” settings (i.e. if you altered your machine tension to sew the vinyl, you’ll want to switch it back now).



You’ll be sewing the ric-rac over this worn line where the fabric used to be folded.



Sew the ric-rac (or other trim) over the worn line. If your fabric doesn’t have a worn line, press it in half or use a disappearing ink marker to create a guideline for sewing the trim.



Get out your twill tape and press it flat.



Next, press the entire length of the tape in half, as shown.



Cut four 8” pieces of the folded tape. You’ll use these to cover the raw edges of the drawstring panels.



Slip the one side of one the drawstring panels into one piece of the folded tape, pinning in place.



Switch back to white thread (or whatever color you’re using for your bag) and stitch along the edge of the tape, removing pins as you go. Repeat with the other side of this piece and both sides of the other.

Step Four: Make the Outside of the Bag

Begin by using manufacturer's instructions to fuse Iron-On Vinyl to the main bag panel. Save the paper backing, as you will use it several more times. *When working with the vinyl coated panel, be aware of your iron's location at all times, keeping it far away from your work when not in use.*



Lay main bag panel on your table, vinyl side up, with one of the short (15") ends on top. Using Scotch® tape, temporarily secure one of the handles along this top edge. Top (ric-rac) side of the handle should be facing down. Each end of handle should be about 5" from each side.



Lay one of the drawstring panels, right side down, along this same top edge and pin in place. (Don't worry about the vinyl. You'll be able to press out any holes.)



Switch machine settings back to the ones you used to sew the handles and stitch .5" from edge, removing pins as you go.



Remove tape from handles and lay panel on your ironing or pressing board. Using the saved paper backing to protect vinyl, press seam and handle toward the vinyl side.



Topstitch .25" from the top of the vinyl panel, securing handles and seam allowance in place.



Repeat the last five steps with the other end of the main bag panel. Then, fold panel so right sides are together and pin one side in place.



On this same side, Use your disappearing ink marker, make a mark 2" from the top of the drawstring panels.



Using a half inch seam allowance, stitch from this marked point to the bottom/fold, backtracking to form a "tack" at both ends.



Repeat the last three steps on the other side. Your bag will then look something like this.



At the bottom (fold) snip each corner so you can open up the seams. Using the paper backing you've set aside, press these seams open.



Fold and press .5" along the top edges of the drawstring panels.



Fold and press .5" again, pinning the casing you've created in place.



Switch machine back to "normal" settings and sew along the edge of the casing, removing pins as you go.



The top of your bag should now look something like this.



Open up the bag, so you can fold and flatten one of the corners as shown.



Using a quilting ruler to make sure the corner is straight. Line up the ruler to measure 2.5" from the point to the top of the ruler and 5" across the top (from edge to edge).



Use your disappearing ink marker to draw that 5" line and pin corner securely.



Switch machine back to "vinyl settings" and sew across this line, backtracking at both ends.



Repeat the last four steps on the other side. Your bag should now look something like this. Do not turn right-side-out just yet. Set aside.

Step Five: Make the Lining



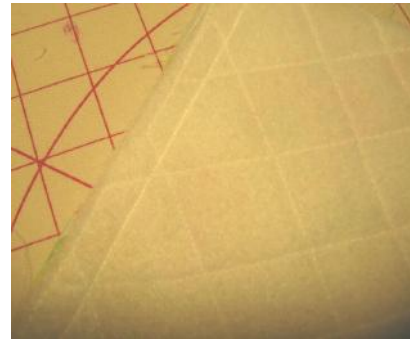
Iron Fusible Fleece onto the wrong side of your lining panel. Machine quilt in desired pattern.



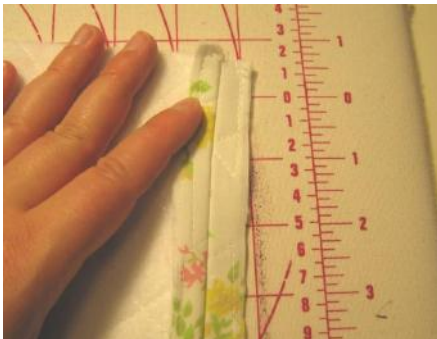
Fold lining panel in half so the right sides of both 15" ends line up together.



Pin sides as shown. . .



. . .and sew using a .5" seam.



Clip the seams open at the bottom fold and press seams open.



Using the same method you did with the outside of the bag, flatten one of the corners as shown.



Again, following the same directions as with the outside of the bag, measure and mark a line 2.5" from the corner and 5" from side to side.



Pin corner securely and sew along marked line.



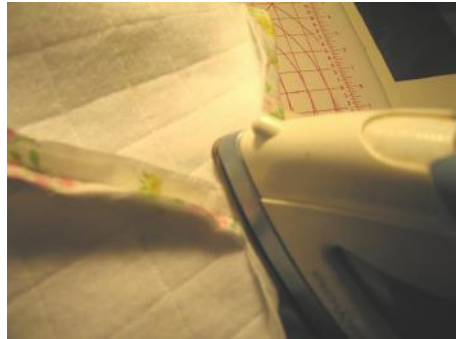
Cut off corner and repeat the last four steps on the other side.



Your lining panel should now look something like this.



Fold over the top edge of lining panel .5", as shown



Press this fold in place.



Stitch .25" from the folded edge, as shown.



Your finished lining panel should look something like this.

Step Three: Finish the Bag



Line up the bottoms of your exterior bag and lining panel as shown.



Using embroidery floss or heavy thread, hand stitch the corners together.



Your joined pieces should look something like this.



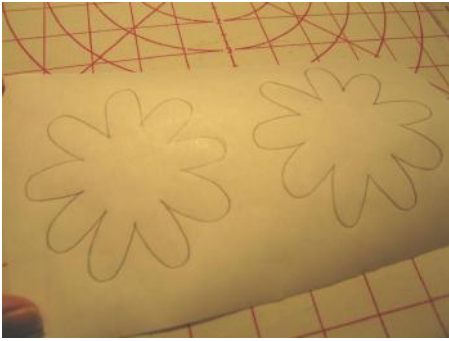
Turn the entire thing right-side-out.



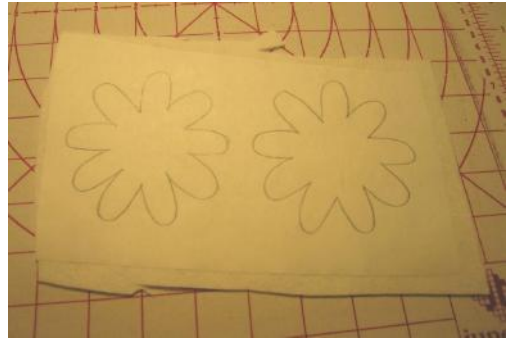
The inside will look something like this.



The outside will probably look beat up like this. Don't worry! You can now use the paper backing you saved to press the sides of your bag flat. This should remove any damage to the vinyl surface.



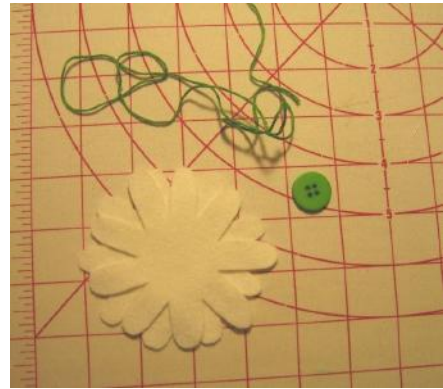
Using the template, trace two flowers onto your scrap of freezer paper.



Iron the freezer paper onto your wool felt scrap.



Cut out both flowers, peel away the paper backing, and arrange the flowers as shown.



Gather your vintage button and coordinating embroidery floss.



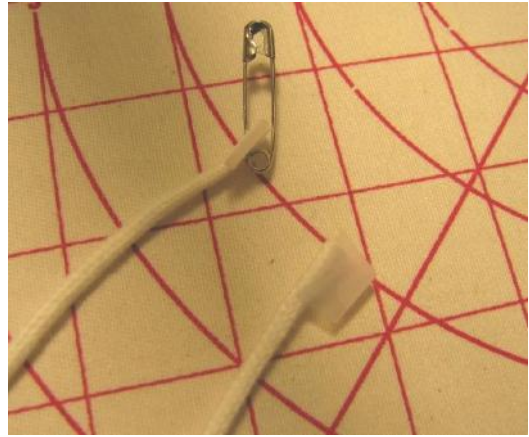
Sew flower onto your bag just below one of the straps, making sure to keep your stitches/knots in the seam allowance (so they will be covered by the lining).



Your finished flower should look something like this.



Finish the lining by hand stitching the top of your lining panel to the seam allowance between the bag body and drawstring panels.



The last step is to add the drawstring. Make sure your cording is protected with tape at both ends. Then attach a safety pin to one end.



Use the safety pin to pull cording through the casing at the top of your drawstring panels. . .



. . . like this.



Tie both ends together as shown.



You'll then be able to gather and tie the top like this.

Your bag is now finished!

Step Six: Make the Placemat



Gather the placemat, placemat closure and pocket pieces and reinforce all of them with lightweight fusible webbing. Cut the 10" x 26" panel into two 10" x 13" pieces.



Place the two placemat closure straps, right sides together, as shown.



Using a .25" stitch, sew up one long side of the strap.



Press open seam and then press strap flat, with wrong sides together, as shown.



Press under one end about .25", as shown.



Then press the two long sides under .25" as shown.



Your strap should now look something like this.



Starting at the raw short end (the end you didn't fold under) stitch close to the edge around the entire strap.



Attach a snap fastener a scant two inches from the raw edge, as shown.



Attach the other half of the snap fastener to the finished end of the strap, making sure the "working" sides of the snaps line up properly.



Decide which pocket panel will be the outside and stitch a row of ric-rac about 1.5" from the top.



Place right sides of pocket panels together, stitch around sides and top (leaving bottom open) using a .25" seam and backstitching at the ends and trimming corners as shown



Turn the pocket right-side-out and press.



Fold under the bottom edges about .25" as shown.



Decide which of your placemat panels will be the front and line up the pocket in the lower right corner, about 1.25" from the edges, as shown.



Pin pocket in place . . .



. . . and stitch close to the edges of the sides and bottom, as shown.



On the left side of your placemat front panel (the one you just attached the pocket to) pin your closure strap in the center of the left side as shown.



Attach strap by sewing very close to the edge.



Lay placemat front and back on your work surface, right sides together.



Pin in place and then stitch around the entire placemat using a .25" seam and leaving an approximate 4" opening for turning.



Turn the placemat right side out and press.



Stitch around the entire placemat, close to the edge, catching and closing up the opening you left for turning.



To fold up placemat, fold over the top of the placemat, as shown. . .



. . . then fold as shown, and fold again.



Finally, wrap closure strap around and snap to secure.

And you're done!



The End!

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