

Cushion Cover

This When I bought my house the previous owners kindly left behind some porch furniture for me, since I didn't have much of anything. It was sturdy, comfortable, and... icky. Everything was forest green and mauve... and floral (and not in that cute, modern retro kind of way).

Despite everything, the only thing really wrong with this Adirondack chair was the cushion, and when it started ripping apart, it was time for the cover and its mauve piping to go. A quick and panic-inducing search on the internet revealed new ones to be \$50 or more -- in even more delightfully hideous variations of colors.

Commence sewing to the rescue!

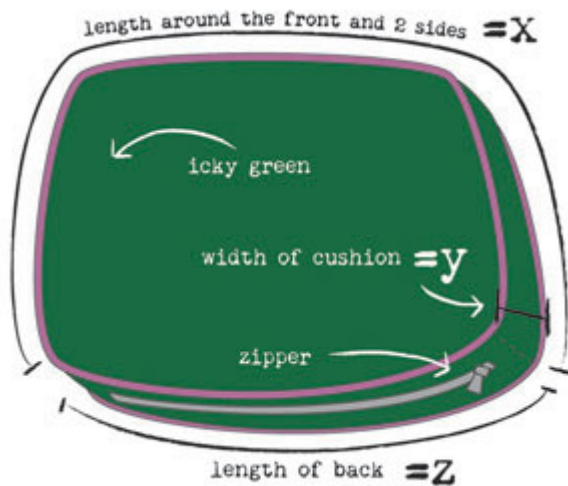
Supplies

So, today I'm going to show you how to re-cover a cushion because I'm cheap and damn if I think a new one is worth 50 bucks. Here's what you'll need:



Steps To Complete

So, the first thing you're going to want to do is measure things. I know, I know, that means math, and trust me, I'm not big on math. After all, I went to art school. But this is easy math, I promise.



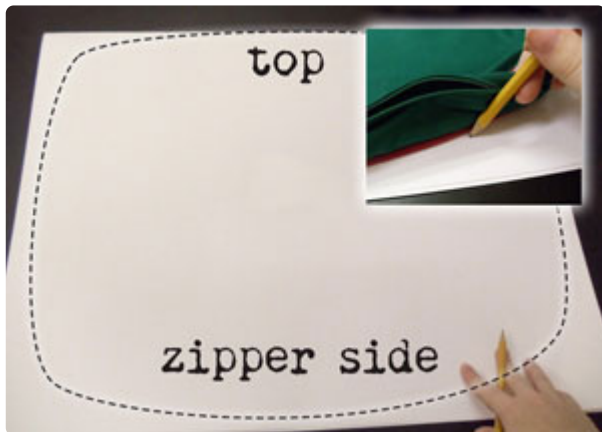
You're going to need three key measurements from your cushion. The first is the length around the sides and front all together, called "X." The next one is the width of the cushion, "Y." Finally, the length of the back piece (likely with a zipper) called "Z."

You might be asking, what about the main pillow shape? Easy peasy. We're going to trace that, because it involves drawing and NO math. Huzzah.



Start by removing that old cover. Unzip it and carefully (i.e., grunt, yank, and swear) remove the cushion inside. Put your fuzzy pillow form aside, but keep that pillow case for measurements.

Tracing! About as much fun as you can have with an old '80s pillow cover and a pencil -- I think. Either that, or I'm not creative enough. It's better than math anyways.



Now, when you're tracing your cover, take note of the shape. You might have a perfectly square or rectangular pillow, which is handy, or you can have an evil pillow like mine which looks almost rectangular, but lies. One side is slightly rounded to accommodate the curve of the chair. This is also the side with the zipper. Make note of that on your template so you don't confuse yourself later.



Go grab your.. erm, slightly un-ironed fabric and fold it in half, wrong sides together. Don't judge me. I did iron it later. You can either pin your template and cut around it, or trace it and cut it out after. Remember to add your seam allowance! I'm adding about 1/2 inch all the way around my shape.



Cut out your two layers together, so you have a back piece and a front piece for your pillow. And stop looking at my carpet. It's office carpet. I can't help the drabness of the color scheme. Maybe it's in color cahoots with the pillow.

Now it's time for our favorite part, adding machine embroidery! If you're not adding machine embroidery, you can always embroider it by hand. If you're not doing it by hand, you can always image transfer the design. If you're not doing anything with a design and don't know what I'm talking about, you're probably new here. Howdy.



Hoop up your fabric with some stabilizer. I'm using a light mesh stabilizer so it will be less obvious under my very light white fabric. When hooping, make sure you take into account the seam allowance, unless you don't care if some of your embroidery slips into the seams.

Set your machine a-stitching and leave it to work its magic.

While your sewing machine is doing your bidding (or rebelling at every chance, if you have my machine) we can use this time to cut out the rest of the pieces for your cushion.



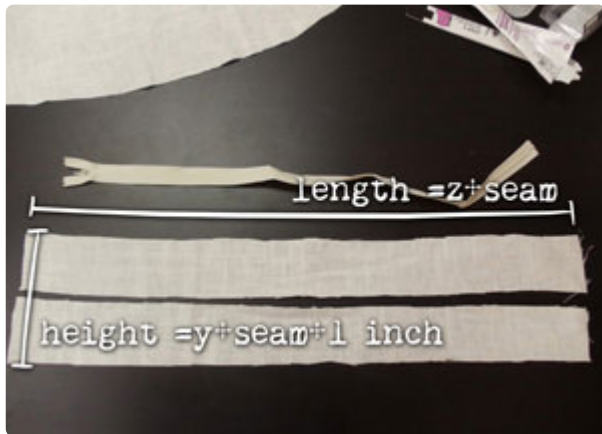
Let's start with the long strip that's going to go around the pillow, what we labeled "X" before. Take that measurement and add an inch (assuming you're using a 1/2 inch seam). Cut it out using the width you got before (Y) and also add an inch. In my case that means I'm cutting out a strip of fabric 50 inches long by about 4 1/2 inches wide.



With any luck, or if you're really slow at cutting, your machine will be done with your embroidery. OK, it probably won't be, but that's the magic of tutorials. I get to skip ahead.

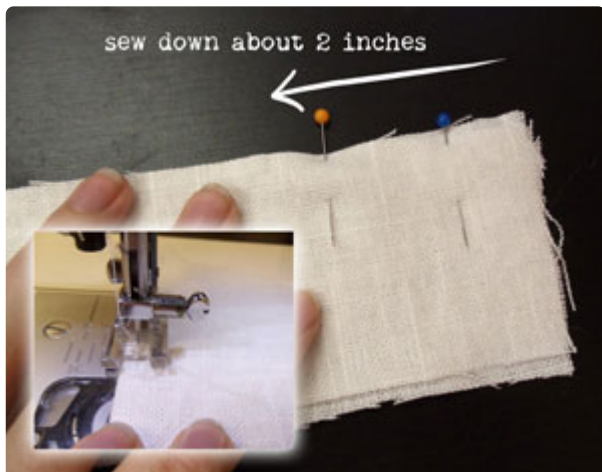
Ain't it pretty? I kept it a light, simple design, since I had light fabric and I didn't really want to sit on a really dense, heavy design anyway. Set this piece aside for now.

Now on to the slightly tricky bit, the zipper. Well, truth is it only looks tricky. In actuality, there's an easy way to add a zipper here.

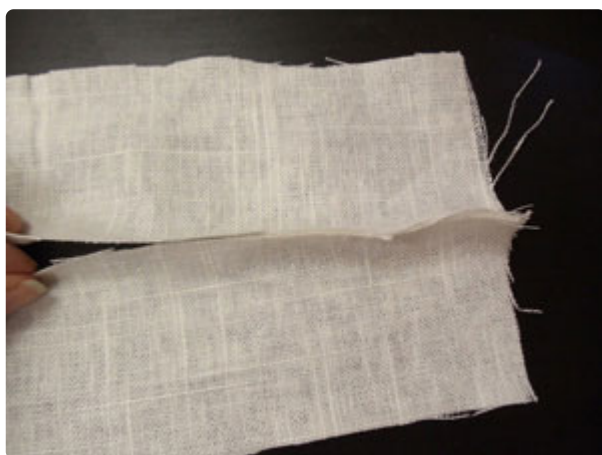


Here's the neat little trick. Cut a piece of fabric the width of your back, (your "Z" measurement) plus one inch for seams. For the width, instead of the 4 1/2 inches we had before, add an extra inch or so for our zipper seams. Once you have this piece, cut it down the middle the long way, like so.

Fold these two pieces in on themselves, right sides together. Pin them together along either end, and sew down about 2 inches or so on both ends.



Basically, the goal here is that the unsewn gap you leave in the middle should be about the same length as you'd like your zipper to be. Mine was a few inches short of the full length of the pillow, hence sewing in a few inches.

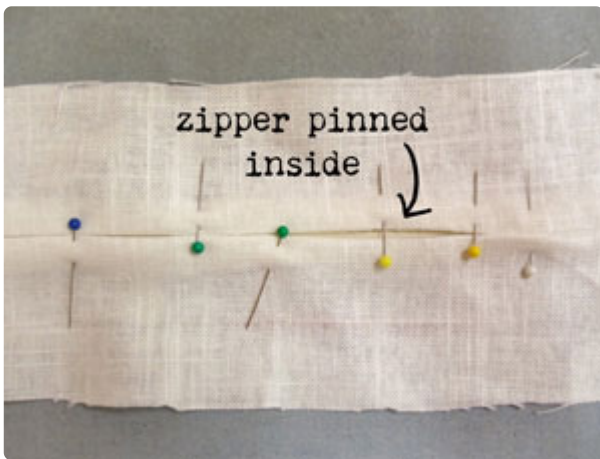


Open your fabric back up, wrong side facing you

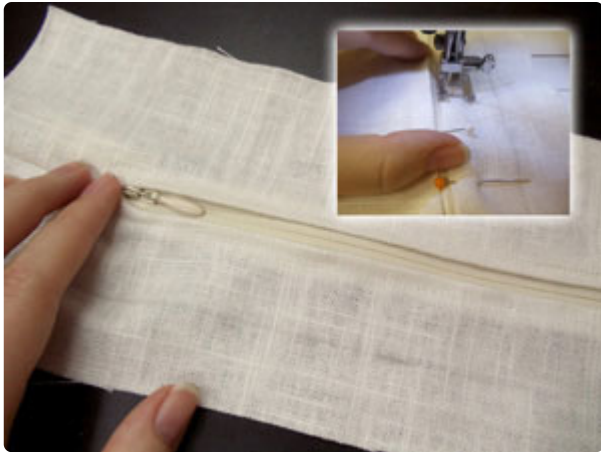


Take your iron and press open the seams of the raw edges, all the way up to the ends you stitched shut. Only fold them in a half inch or less, or you'll use up that extra seam allowance.

With your two edges aligned together (like the upper photo) place your zipper zipper-side down on the gap, making sure it's centered. Hold it in place and flip everything over.



Now, pin the pressed folds in place to the edges of your zipper.



Stick your zipper under your machine and carefully stitch down one side, across the zipper, back up the other side, and across again to finish it. The reason we want a polyester zipper is so we can sew right over it. Metal zippers play as well with metal needles as forks do with microwaves. There's one exciting moment and then not a lot of anything...

The more eagle-eyed of you will also spot I'm not using a zipper foot. I'm sorry, I know this makes me a terrible sewist. Sewer? Sewing-type person.

So, we have all our pieces now -- it's time to assemble!



I'm going to start with the pieces that are going around our cushion, the zipper piece we just made, and the long piece we cut earlier. Pin the edges of these two together, right sides in. If you find your zipper piece is still a little wide from the seam allowance, trim it down so they're the same width.

Sew a seam down the side you pinned together.

Now, if you're super swank about your math and measuring skills, you could just stitch the other side together in a big loop and trust that it's the right size. Though I rock at thumb wars and can make a mean Rice-A-Roni, I am not quite as gifted in the area of accurately measuring things.



Instead, I started by pinning the zipper piece along the back edge of the cushion piece (the one with embroidery), continued pinning it all the way around the long piece, and then found out how much of a seam I'd need to stitch at the end to make sure it lines up properly.



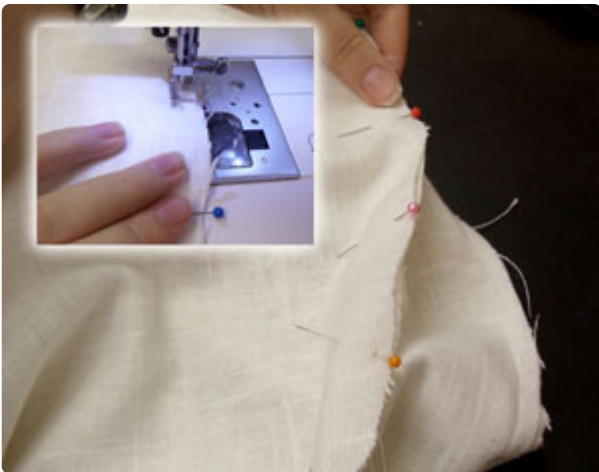
Once you have that last seam pinned and measured, sew it shut so your loop is complete. Finish pinning all edges in place, and sew a 1/2 inch seam around your pillow.



At this point I like to test the fit of my new cover by pulling it over my pillow form... It fits!



Remember to OPEN your zipper before you stitch this last step. Otherwise you won't be able to turn your cover right side out again and you'll be a sad panda.



Finally, pin your last cushion piece in place, all the way around the edge.

Not that I'm saying this for any particular reason or anything, but make sure you pin them right sides together. So you know, things don't end up inside out.



Turn your cover right side out again. Ta da!



Grab that cushion form and carefully (shove, stuff, bribe, and/or threaten) your form back into its little cover. Zip it up tight!



So, to recap, we went from the worn out '80s...



To bright and chic in no time flat! And it didn't cost me 50 bucks either. We're craftier than that.



Light and bright new fabrics and a little touch of embroidery really bring this chair back to life. I love it so much I'm going to recover all my cushions in the porch with the same fabric, and say goodbye mauve, hello embroidery!

Pretty much any chair that's got cushions can be dressed up in your own unique style, just let your imagination run wild!