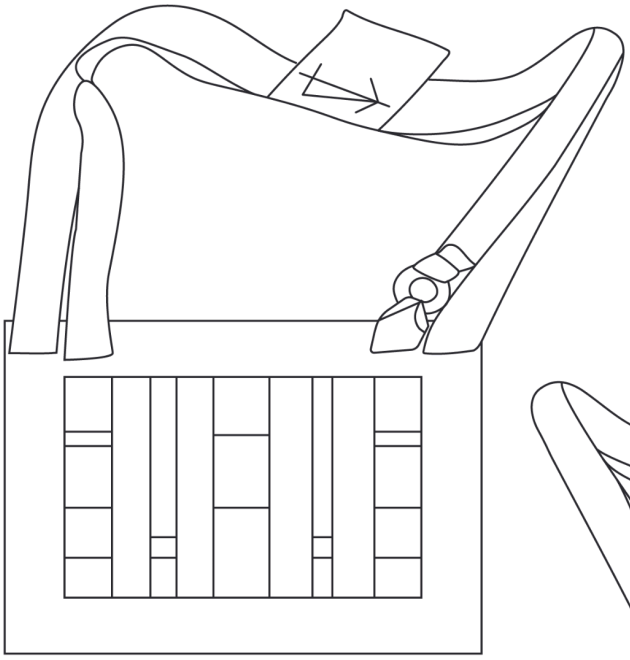


INSTRUCTIONS FOR

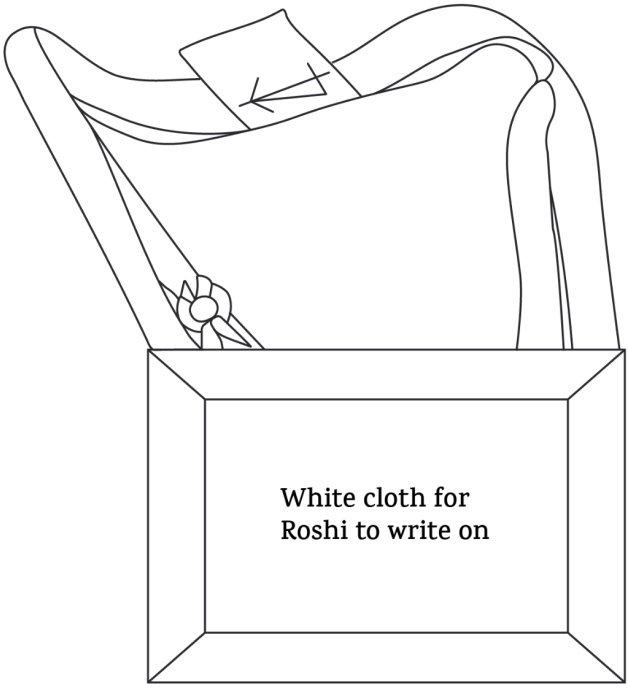
SEWING A

Rakusu

Zen Community of Oregon



Front



Back

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Preparing to Sew



Your Rakusu is an intricate and sacred piece of the Buddha body and should be made without rushing. Please allow yourself plenty of time to enjoy the process. Zen sewing is a practice of keen attention and care. You are invited to bring ritual into this practice, setting up an altar, wrapping your rakusu project in a beautiful piece of fabric, lighting a candle and incense, doing bows and setting an intention/dedication before and after each sewing session. In this way your sewing practice becomes a sacred ceremony filled with intention, presence, and gratitude.

As you sew, you will continually chant Namu kie Butsu ("I take refuge in Buddha" or "I plunge my life into Buddha"). Align your chanting or silent recitation with the movements of sewing just like we align our breath with walking during walking meditation. "Namu" as the needle enters the fabric, "kie" as it pokes through from the back, "butsu" as you draw the needle out of the fabric.

To avoid confusion and mistakes, read through all the steps and know the basic order of construction before beginning your rakusu. Then, as you go, read each step carefully again. It is very helpful, if not essential, to have a finished ZCO Rakusu in front of you while you work.

General Sewing Notes

- If you are new to hand sewing and have not received professional sewing instruction, please watch this video: https://youtu.be/X4DCdRWFoj8. It will show you how to properly thread, knot, keep your thread from unintentionally knotting, and properly hide knots and end strings. The common way of doing these things is often not the best way!

- Be sure to use an overlapping backstitch (see above) or a knot at the beginning and end of each and every seam or the seams will come apart! Hide any knots inside the seam allowances so they are not visible on your finished rakusu.

- Pressing, pinning, and basting the fabric are very important aspects of sewing. Do not skip these steps! Also, **be very careful that your iron is not too hot** or it will make burn marks on the fabric! When you need to iron on the right side of your rakusu (the part that faces out), use a pressing cloth (a piece of thin cotton cloth between the iron and your fabric). This will protect the fabric from burning.

- If you are using a fabric that has a pattern (for example a diagonal weave), even if it is the same color, make sure you arrange the pieces in the same direction so that the pattern on the fabric lines up and will look nice when sewn together. Some fabrics do not have a pattern and the weave looks the same from all directions.

- If you are using fabric that has a right and a wrong side, meaning the front (right side) looks slightly different from the back (wrong side), make sure that the markings are on the wrong side of the fabric. Some fabrics look the same on both sides. If your fabric looks the same on both sides then your "wrong side" (or inside) will be the side you mark on and your "right side" (or outside), will be the side that you do not mark on.

- Make sure the selvage (the tightly woven frayed edge of the fabric) has been cut off. Do not include this raw, uneven edge as part of your rakusu pieces.

Material List

- ☐ 1¼ yards black cloth (45" x 22")
- ☐ ½ yard white cloth (22½" by 9")
- ☐ ½ yard white non-woven, medium weight, non-fusible interfacing (25¼ x 15")
- ☐ 1 wooden or plastic 2-3" circular ring
- ☐ 26" of green embroidery floss

Tool List

- ☐ Thread that matches the color of your fabric (use a good quality, durable thread; polyester is stronger than cotton)
- ☐ Sharp, thin needle
- ☐ Embroidery needle
- ☐ Sharp scissors
- ☐ Sharp thin fabric pins
- ☐ White fabric marker or chalk (available in fabric stores; looks like a pencil)
- ☐ Measuring tape or yard stick
- ☐ Iron and ironing board

Glossary of Stitches

Overlapping Backstitch

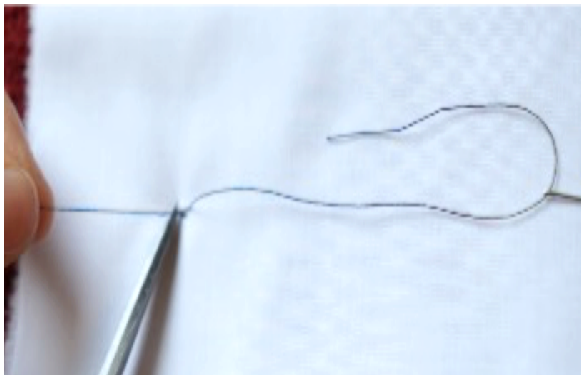
This is one way you can secure the beginning and end of seams similar to how sewing machines do it. You can also use a knot which is typically more secure but not as aesthetically pleasing. This is a smoother, more professional alternative to a knot that can be easily hidden but if you choose to use it. Just make sure it is secure!!!

1. Bring the needle up though the fabric.
2. Make a ⅛" stitch.
3. Go back over your original stitch 3 times.
4. Repeat steps 2–3. (if you tug on the thread, it should feel secure)
5. Cut the tread tails at the starting and finishing end of the thread right up close to the stitches.







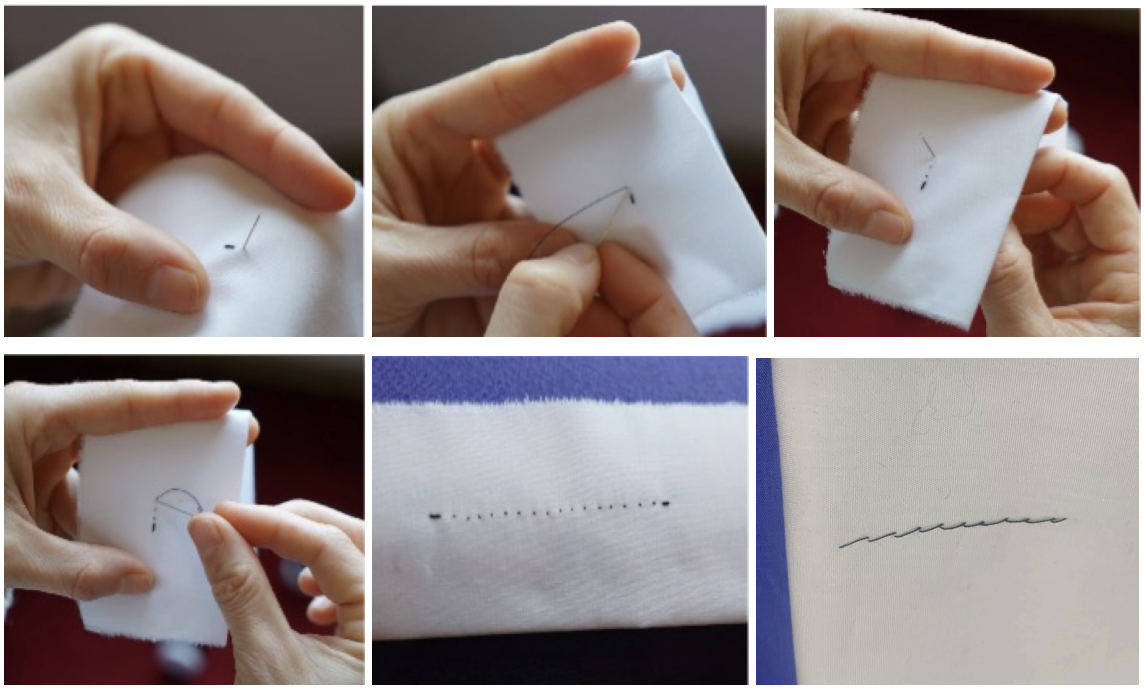


Partial Backstitch (Namu-kie-Butsu Stitch)

This will be your primary stitch “Namu” as the needle enters the fabric, “kie” as it pokes through from the back, “butsu” as you draw the needle out of the fabric.

*Watch this video for a demonstration of the Namu-kie-Butsu stitch: https://vimeo.com/248416864

1. Secure the end with the overlapping backstitch or a knot.
2. Bring your needle up through the fabric.
3. Insert your needle 1/16” behind and 1/16” down from where you came up. Then make a ⅛” slightly slanted stitch on the backside of the fabric.
4. Repeat steps 2 & 3 until you reach the end.
5. Secure the end using the overlapping backstitch.
6. The front side will look like tiny diagonal dots and the back side will look like small diagonal lines.
7. Secure the end with the overlapping backstitch or a knot.

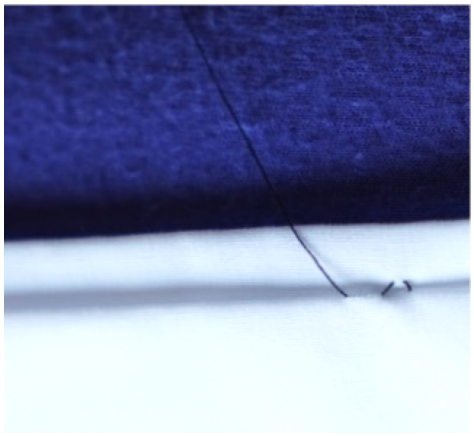


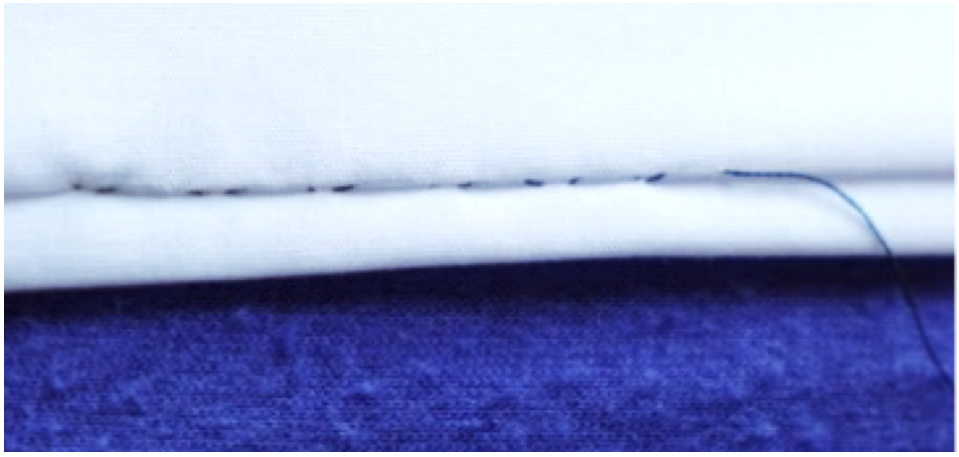
Slip Stitch (Invisible Ladder Stitch)

You will use this stitch for much of the second half of the rakusu construction.

1. Secure the end using the overlapping backstitch or a knot.
2. Slip your needle inside the folded edge for a distance of ⅛" and bring the needle out through the folded edge, being sure you stay exactly inside the fold line and do not catch any fabric on either side.
3. Insert the needle into the fabric directly across from the fold where it came out, making a stitch about ⅛" long.
4. Bring the needle straight across from where it came out and insert back into the fold for another ⅛" stitch.
5. Continue this back-and-forth pattern, make ⅛" stitches as you pull snug each stitch until you reach the end of your seam. When finished, the stitches should be nearly invisible.
6. Secure the end using a knot of the overlapping backstitch.



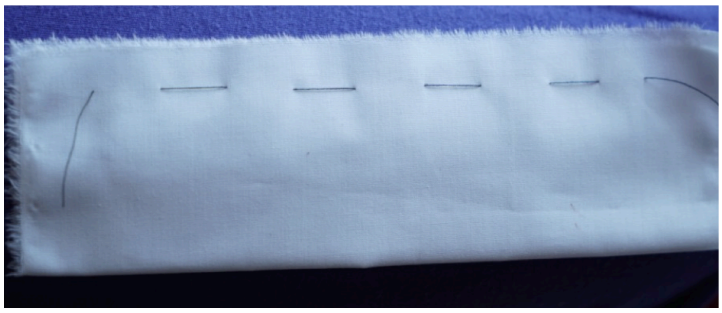




Basting Stitch

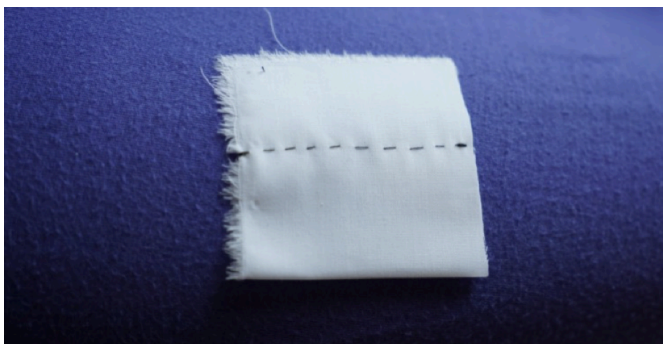
Basting stitches are temporary stitches to hold the fabric in place while you work on the final seam. Basting stitches are preferred to pins because the fabric can lie flat. They don't have to be pretty. Don't secure the ends of a basting stitch so that they can be easily removed if needed. If you are very experienced at hand sewing you probably don't need to baste at all the places the pattern says. If you are new to hand sewing, it is highly recommended to baste everything to ensure your final product turns out neat.

1. Weave the needle in and out of the fabric creating the look of a dashed line.
2. Use ½"–1" long stitches with equal length spaces between.



Short Running Stitch (Slab Stitch)

1. Secure the end using the overlapping back stitch or a knot.
2. Weave the needle in and out of the fabric creating the look of a dashed line.
3. Use about ⅛" long stitches with equal length spaces between.
4. Secure the end using the overlapping back stitch or knot.



Preparing Your Fabric

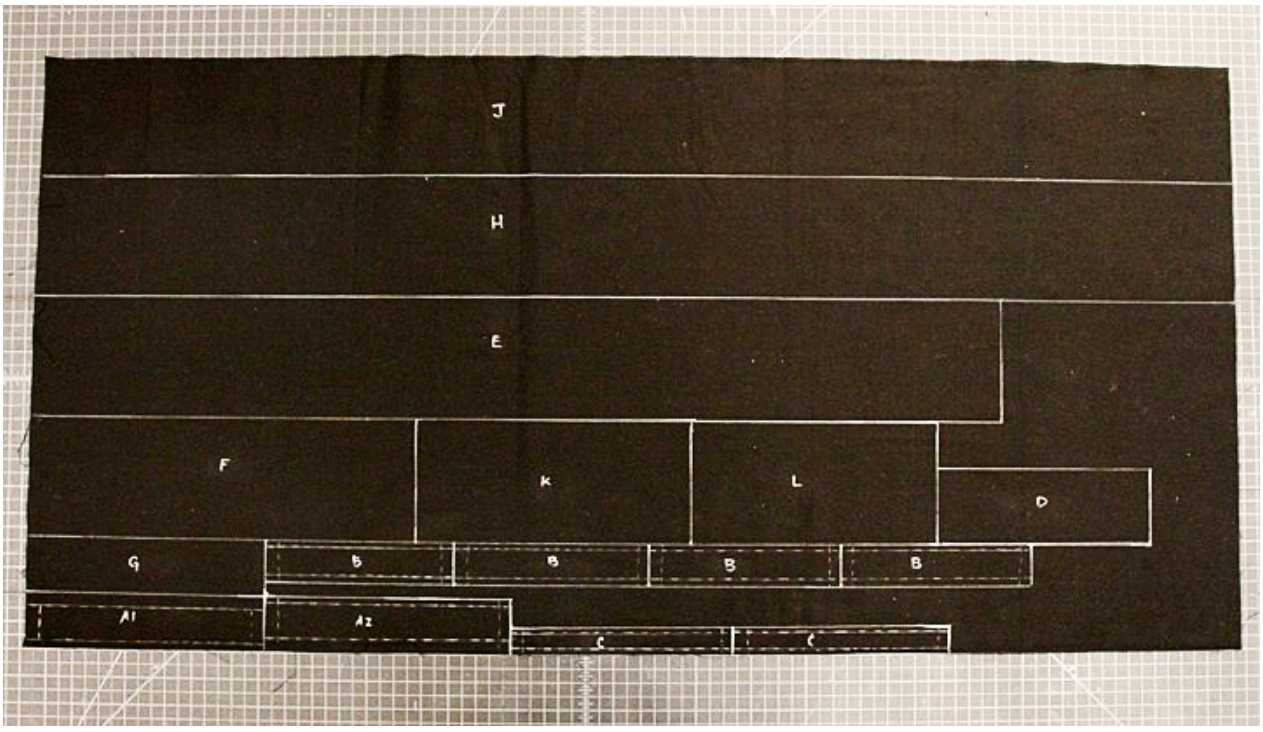
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1. Ironing

With the wrong side of the black fabric up (depending on the type of fabric, right and wrong sides may not be different), iron the fabric flat. Remember, when you need to iron on the right side, use a pressing cloth (a piece of thin cotton cloth between the iron and your fabric). This will protect the fabric from burning.

2. Marking

- Use your measuring tape and marking pencil to draw your cutting lines and label each with the appropriate letter (see photo below).



- Also mark dashed stitching lines for pieces A–D.
- Use the measurement list and the cutting layout below. Mark and re-check all cutting lines of all pattern pieces before cutting! Accuracy is important here.
- Make sure to draw your lines and letters on the wrong side of your fabric (the side that will be facing the inside that will not be seen on your finished rakusu).

- Mark lines with a straightedge. Start with piece J and work your way down. There are 16 pieces of black cloth, 2 pieces of white cloth, and 2 pieces of white non-woven interfacing (stiffening fabric for inside the rakusu).

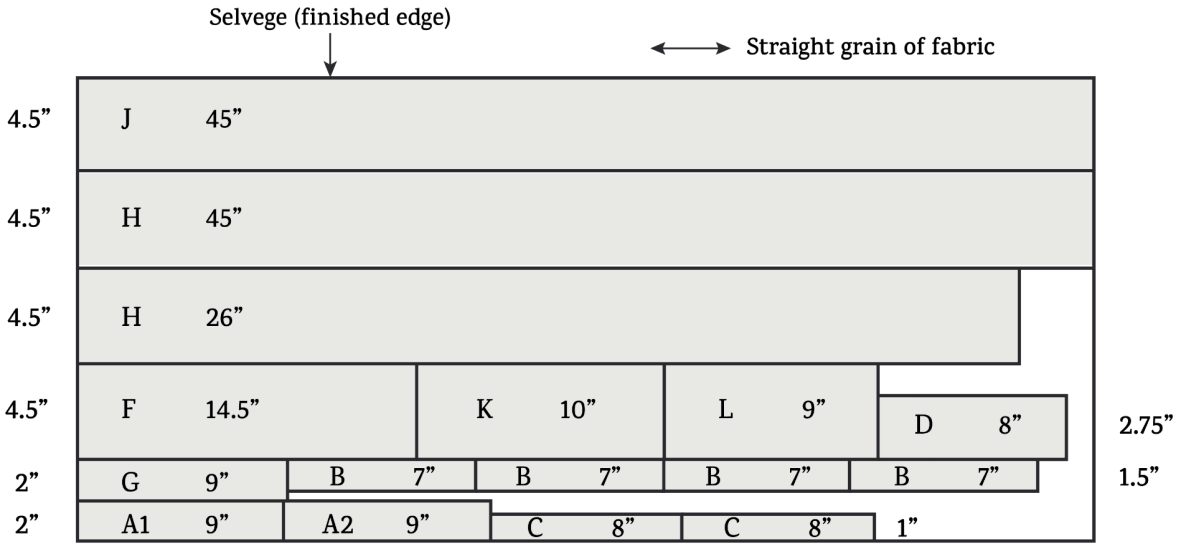
NOTE: Be aware that 'rice field'* pieces A, B, C, and D also include stitching lines (dashed lines ¼-½" from the edge of the piece). All vertical stitching lines of the rice field are ¼' from the edge of fabric except the outer seam lines on pieces A1 and A2 which have a ½" seam allowance on the outside edge. Please note that A1 and A2 are not identical, but mirror each other. One fits on the right side of the rakusu and the other on the left with the ½" seam allowance side facing the outer edge of the rice field and the ¼" seam allowance facing towards the center of the rice field.

*The 'rice field' is the completed center patchwork section of the front of the rakusu. It is the main centerpiece of the rakusu which is modeled after the monk's full main robe. It is said that the Buddha's instruction to Ananda was to make a robe that resembled the form of a rice field, with various square and rectangular sections, some recessed and others elevated.

Figure 1

Fabric Marking Layout

Spread black fabric in a single layer.



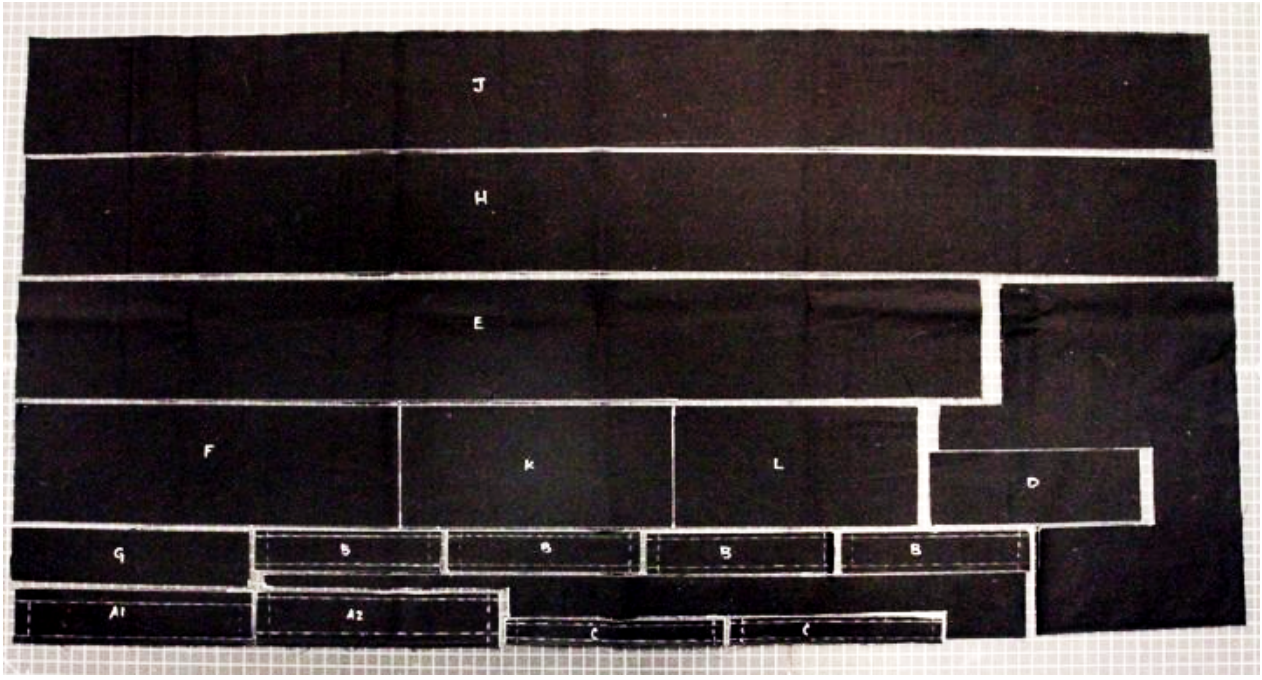
Fabric Segment Inventory

Black Fabric:	A1: 1 piece, 9″ x 2″
	A2: 1 piece, 9″ x 2″
	B: 4 pieces, 7″ x 1 ½″
	C: 2 pieces, 8″ x 1″
	D: 1 piece, 8″ x 2 ¾″
	E: 1 piece, 36″ x 4 ½″
	F: 1 piece, 14 ½″x 4 ½″
	G: 1 piece, 9″ x 2″
	H: 1 piece, 45″ x 4 ½″
	J: 1 piece, 45″ x 4 ½″
	K: 1 piece, 10″ x 4 ½″
	L: 1 piece, 9″ x 4 ½″
Interfacing:	M: 1 piece, 15 ¼″ x 11 ½″
	N: 1 piece, 10″ x 4 ½″
White Cloth:	O: 1 piece, 10″ x 3 ¾″
	P: 1 piece, 12 ½″ x 9″

3. Cutting

Re-iron any pieces that have been wrinkled or folded. Now cut all the pieces with sharp scissors, making nice square corners and clean lines. It is important to be very precise. Make sure not to cut the dashed stitching lines!

After cutting, re-measure all your pieces to make sure they are indeed the correct size.



Sewing Your Rakusu

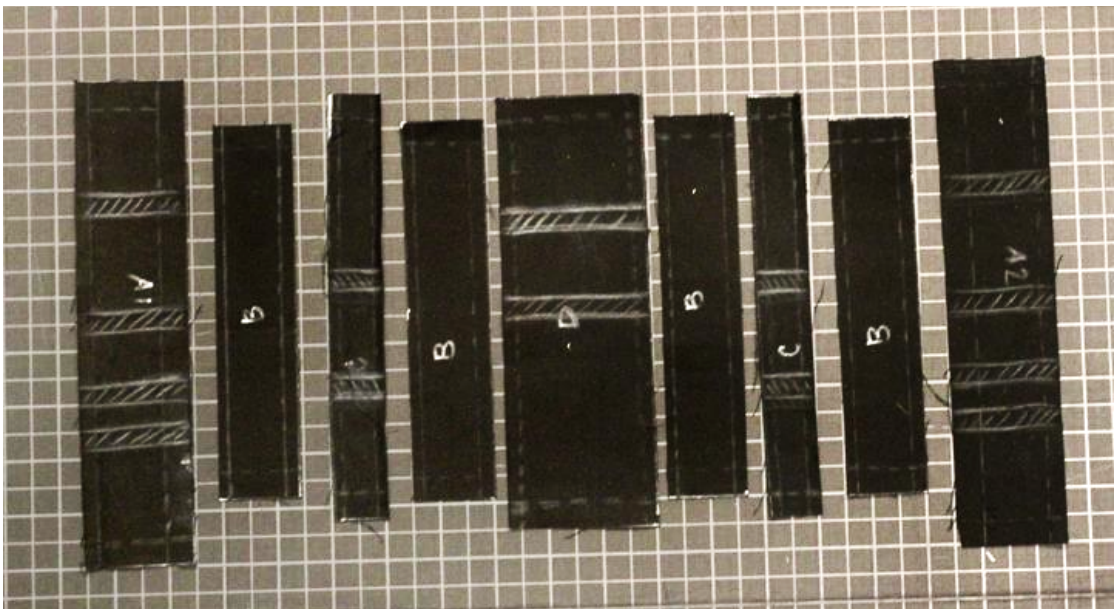
All seams should be sewn by hand. Directions on how to make various stitches can be found above in the Glossary of Stitches.

Step 1: Creating the Rice Field

First mark 'tuck' lines on pieces A through D on the wrong side of the fabric (the side that won't show when the rakusu is completed). You will make pleats, 'tucks', by sewing these sets of lines together to elevate certain parts of your 'rice field' to give it a more textured, patchwork look. Use the pattern pieces at the end of this pattern or the measurements from those pattern pieces to mark your tuck lines. If you choose to cut out and use the pattern pieces, check to make sure they are indeed the same size as your cut fabric pieces since printing can alter the size of the pattern.

Mark on the wrong side of the fabric.

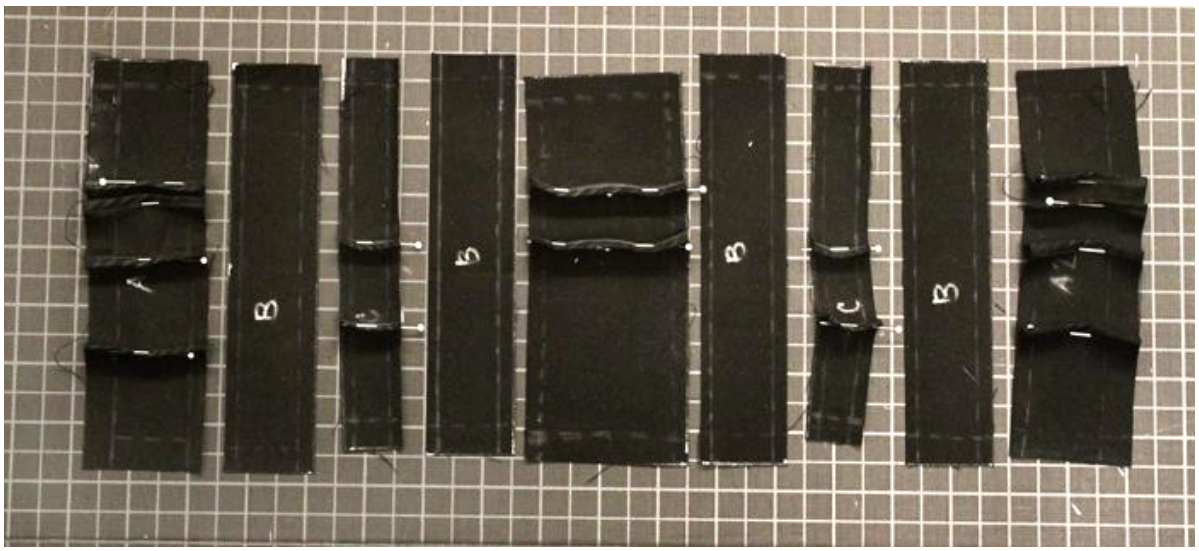
Below are the tuck lines completed. As seen in this photo, you may add diagonal lines in between each set of tuck lines so that it is very clear which sets lines will be sewn together to form a 'tuck'.



*Before completing the following steps, watch this video: https://youtu.be/IxAU-qDJTko

Now mark all the same tuck lines on the right side of the fabric of pieces A, C & D. They should mirror identically the tuck lines you have already made on the wrong side of the fabric. Do not make the stitching lines or piece letters on the front. Make sure every tuck line is in the exact same place on the front and back of each piece. The four B pieces have no tuck lines. These lines on the front will soon be hidden and help you know where to fold the fabric. The lines on the back will be your sewing guides.

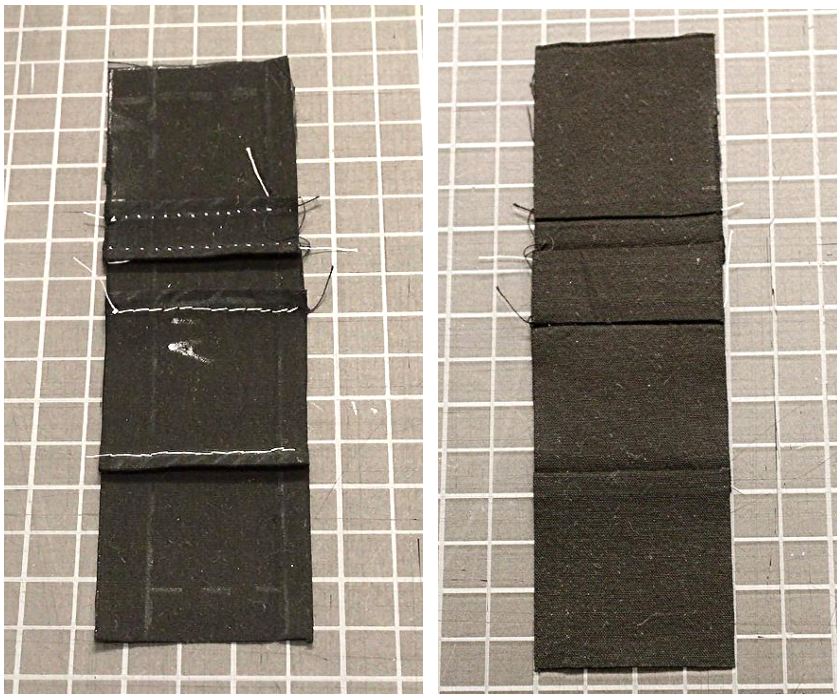
Iron and pin tucks. To make a tuck, bring the two lines of each tuck together, matching the lines on the right side of the fabric. Iron, fold, and pin in place on the seam allowance of the backside (as demonstrated in the video above).



Start sewing! Use black thread (white thread is used in photos for demonstration purposes only). Use the namu-kie-butsu stitch for the entire ride field section. Start by sewing the tucks on pieces C and D. Stitch along the lines you drew on the wrong side of the fabric. Then sew the tucks of the A pieces. Make sure that the top and third seam lines of A, more or less, match up horizontally with the two seam lines on D, and that the bottom seam line of A, more or less, matches up horizontally with the bottom seam line of C. This means that these seam lines should line up when you place the finished pieces side by side. It's ok if lining up these seam lines means that the top and bottom edges of your pieces don't line up exactly.

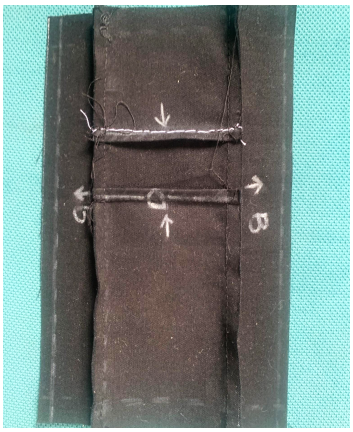
Press the tucks (aka, the seam allowance) in the direction shown by the arrows in the photo below. This will give some of your squares an elevated look and others a

more recessed look. For example, in the photos of piece A below you can see that in accord with the arrows on pattern piece A, the top tuck is ironed up, the 2nd is ironed down, the third is ironed up and the fourth is ironed down which, when viewed from the front, give some sections an elevated look and others a recessed look.



Pin and sew together the rice field: Pin pieces A, B, C, and D following stitching lines on the wrong side of fabric. Start with: B – D – B. Then A1 – B – C. Finally, C – B – A2. Be sure that your seam allowances stay lying in the direction of the arrows as you sew them down. (The amount of fabric 'allowed' for the seam. In this case it is ¼" seam allowance.)

Also, before sewing, be sure that the horizontal stitch lines of all identical pieces line up across the rakusu. Use a straight edge to check this. Having them more or less line up is more important than the top and bottom edges of the rice field lining up. Often the lengths of the various pieces will be slightly different at this point, no problem! Do not trim them to match, just let them be.





Sew the three sections together, lining up the top and third seam lines of A with the two seam lines on D, and the bottom seam line of A with the bottom seam line of C. Don't worry if they're a little off, they usually are!

Press all vertical seam allowances toward the B pieces, which will give all the B pieces an elevated look. Now press your whole centerpiece flat. Remember to use a pressing cloth on the right side of fabric so you don't burn the fabric. You have completed your ride field!




Lay the rice field centerpiece before you. Measure and mark with a fabric pencil lightly, centered, on the right side (the side that you will see on your finished rakusu), a rectangle approximately 10" x 6¼". You want the seam allowance (the fabric on the outer perimeter of your marked rectangle, to be at least ¼" and no more than ½." Do not cut the extra length off of the pieces that are longer as you may unintentionally cut your knots causing the seams to come apart. This uneven raw edge will soon be hidden inside



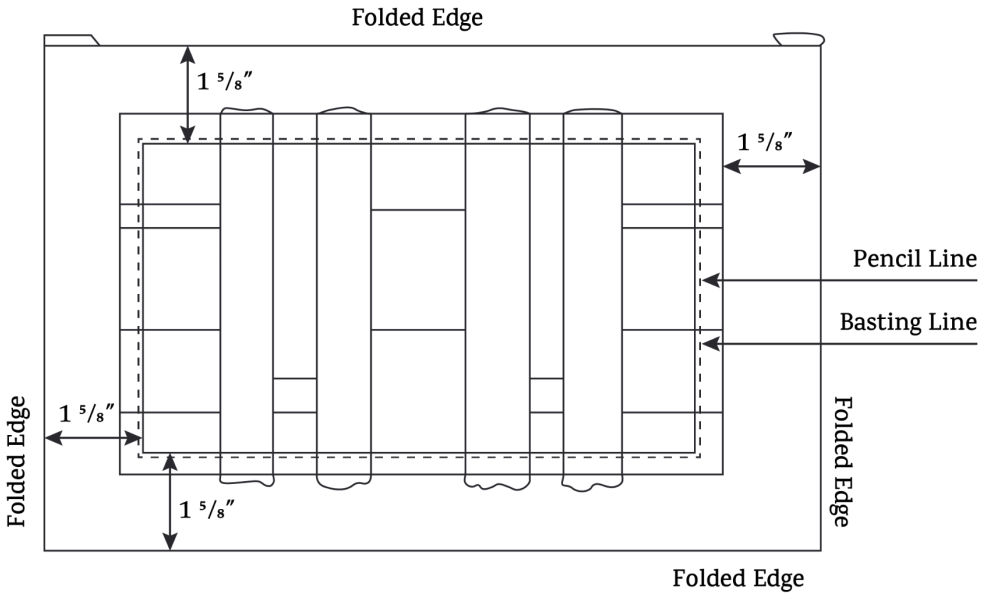
Step 2: Attaching the Backing

On interfacing piece M, pin and press a 1″ fold on all 4 sides, so that the folded cloth measures 9½″ x 13¼″. You might have to adjust the fold a little so that the interfacing measures these dimensions. (Interfacing fabric melts at a lower temperature than the fabric, so be very careful your iron isn't too hot!)



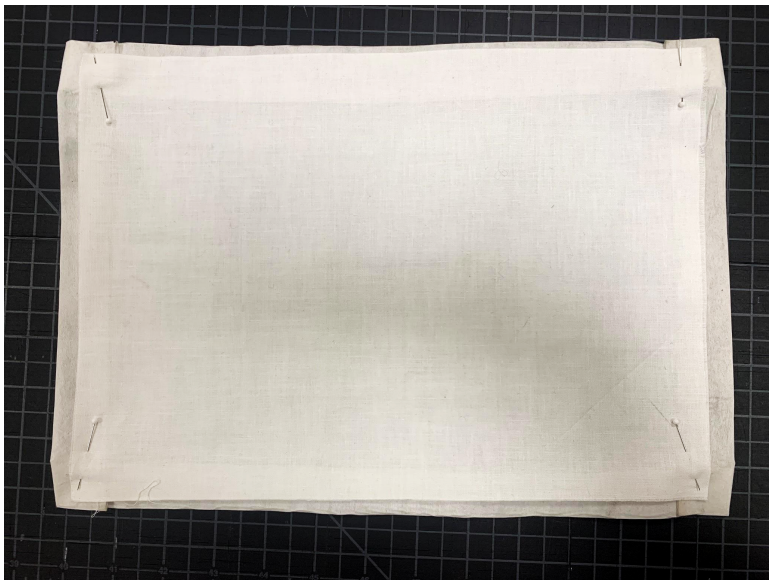
Place the finished center rice field section in the middle of the interfacing piece M, so there is a 1 ⅝″ space between the pencil line and each folded edge on the interfacing. It is important that this number (1 ⅝″) be accurate even if it means once again folding over the 1″ interfacing section a little more or a little less than 1″. Pin, then baste in place outside of the pencil lines. Remove pins. Press.

Figure 2





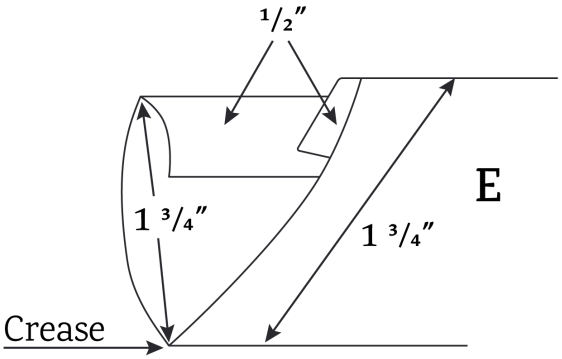
Now turn the piece up-side-down and place the white cloth (piece P) in the middle, so that it is centered between the folded edges of the interfacing. Make sure to iron piece P before pinning it to the rakusu so that it doesn't have any fold lines. Pin. Baste ¼" away from the raw edge of P. Remove pins. Press again.



Step 3: Attaching the Border

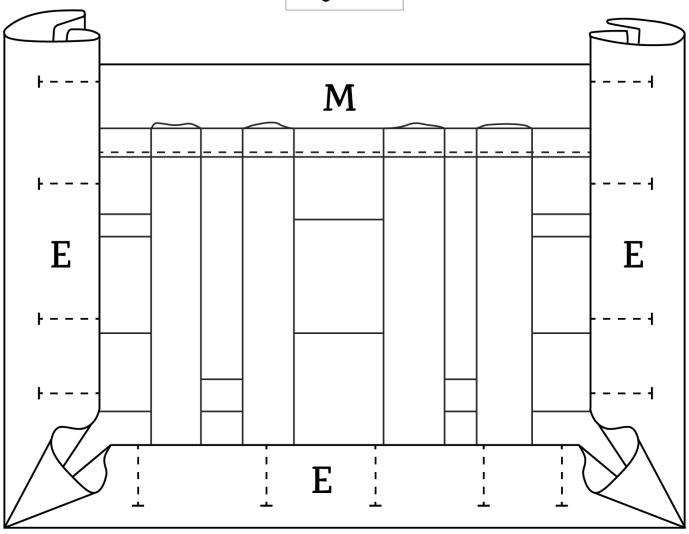
Press border pieces E and F exactly in half lengthwise (hotdog style), right side out, then press both raw edges inside so that it measures 1¾" width all the way along.

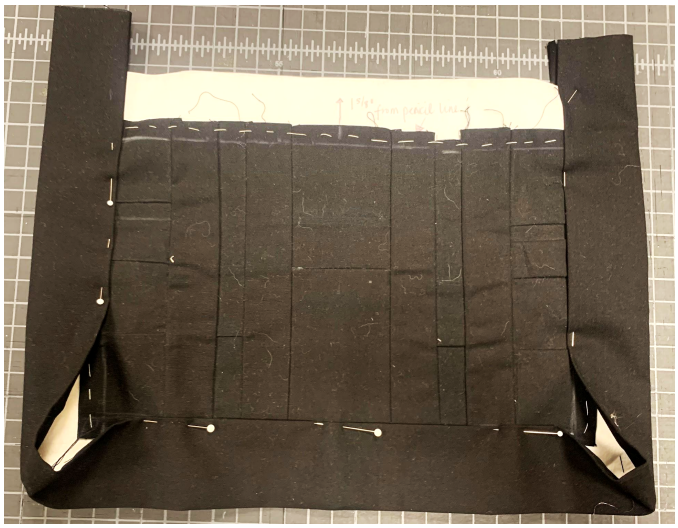
Figure 3



Line up the center of the border piece E with the center of the bottom of the rakusu. Wrap the border piece E all the way around the folded edge of the interfacing, pinning as you go. Make sure that the edge of the interfacing fits snugly into the crease of the border and that the fabric wraps snugly around the tip of the corner. Do not worry about the extra fabric at the corners yet. The folded edge of the border E should just barely overlap your pencil line on the center section. Does it look like this diagram (Fig. 4)? Is the center rice field section the right way up?

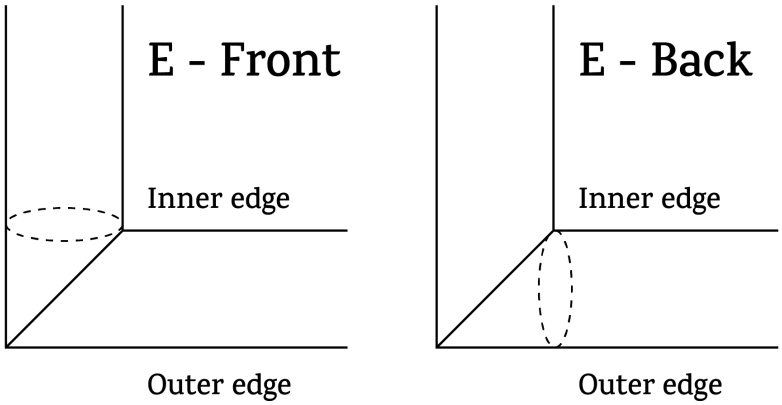
Figure 4





Now the corners: on the front, fold the excess cloth inside, under the side edges, making a diagonal seam line from the inner border corners to the outer border corners. You may have to remove the pins a little to get the fold to lie neatly, then re-pin. Do the inner edges meet at 90 degrees? Pin in place. On the back, do the same except fold the excess cloth under the bottom edge (in order to distribute the thickness of the folded fabric evenly).

Figure 5



Trim off the raw top edges of border piece E so that they are in line with the top edge of the Rakusu. Baste inner and outer edges of the border and the diagonal corner folds on the front and the back of the rakusu. Take care not to shift the fabric. Remove pins. Press and make sure everything is flat and the corners (inner and outer, front, and back) are sharp.



Slip-stitch the inner edge of the border and the corners on the front. Your stitches should pick up the top layer of fabric and can pick up the interfacing but should not come through to the back. Then turn it over and stitch the back in the same way.

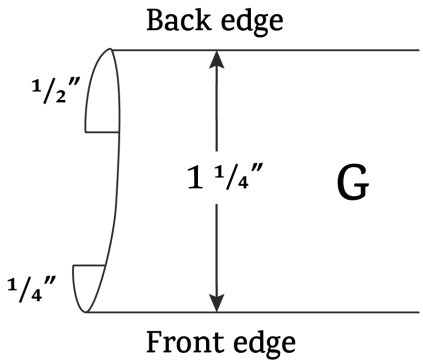
Make sure your stitches cannot be seen from the opposite side of the rakusu. Press carefully. Take out your basting stitches.

Fold pressed top border piece F over the top edge of the Rakusu, again making sure it is a snug fit. Pin in place. Tuck the ends neatly inside themselves, squaring them off by folding the excess cloth inside towards the back of the Rakusu. Press and in place. Baste both the inner and outer edges of the top border in place, taking care not to shift the fabric. Remove pins. Slip-stitch the front inner edge first, then the back, and ends closed.



Piece G is an extra piece of fabric added to the top edge of the rakusu border to prevent wear. To prepare piece G, with the right side of fabric facing out, press under ½" from the edge, along the long edge of the cloth. On the other edge, press under ¼" from the edge.

Figure 6



Fold G centered over the top edge of the Rakusu, so that ¼" shows in front and 1" shows in back. Is it centered?

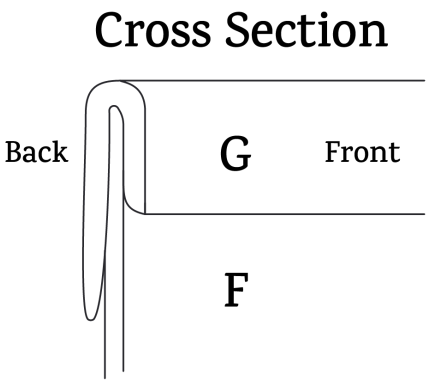
Pin piece G to the top border. Fold and press the side ends neatly under, at a right angle in the front and forming a slant in the back. See photos below of the front and back views with piece G folded over and pinned. Notice how the front and back are different according to the instructions above. The back section is longer and its side edges are folded at a slant.





Baste in place. Slip-stitch around the entire edge of piece G, making sure the stitches don't show through to the reverse side. If needed, add a short running stitch through all layers to give this top edge a firm finish.

Figure 7



This diagram (Fig. 7) is a cut cross section that shows what piece G looks like sewn over the top border piece F, with 1" of fabric folded over the back and ¼" of fabric folded over the front.

Step 4: Making and Attaching the Straps

Next are the straps. Fold pieces J, H, and L lengthwise, right sides together. Pin raw edges together and sew, using the overlapping backstitch, ½" from raw edges,

leaving one end open on all three pieces. Trim seam allowance to ¼" and clip corners diagonally to minimize extra fabric bulk at seam lines and corners. Be sure to leave ¼" seam allowance at the diagonal corner cuts so that the seam doesn't open (the diagram below makes it look like you cut all the way to the stitching line but don't do that or you might have a hole at the corner. Use a chopstick or ruler to neaten corners. Ensure that your corners are sharp. Press, leaving open the one raw edge of each strap.

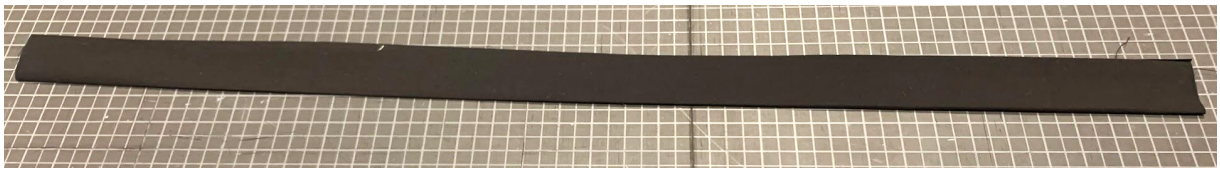
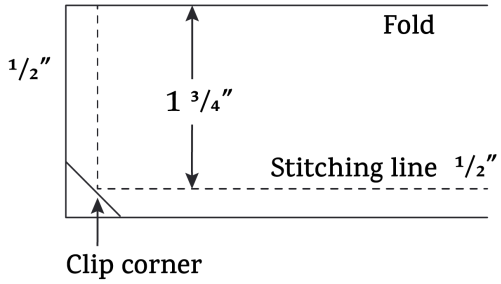


Figure 8

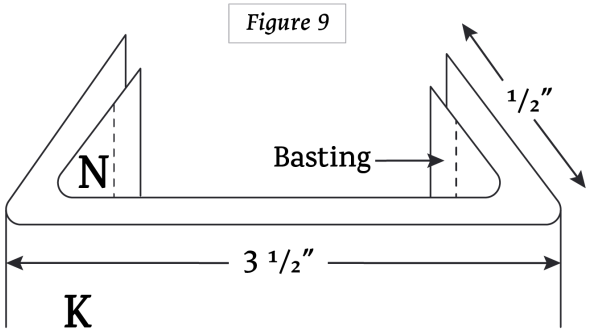




Step 5: Making and Attaching the Center Neckpiece

Now you will make the rectangular neck piece on which you will embroider the pine twig. Pin fabric piece K exactly on top of interfacing piece N (they should be the same size), wrong sides together. Fold and press in ½" on each side length. Press then baste the long sides ¼" from raw edges. (It is easiest to get these pieces to sit flat, one top of one another, if you baste one side, take the pins out, press the seam allowances down, then baste the other side.) It will appear that the black fabric is smaller than the interfacing after you have folded down the seam allowances, that's fine. It's just that it uses a little extra width to wrap around the outside.

Figure 9

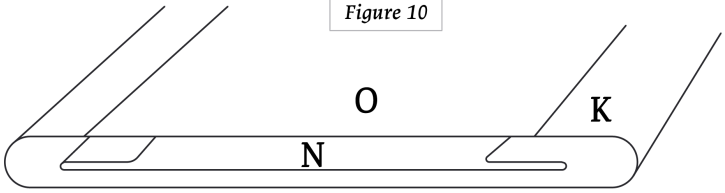




Fold in half widthwise for a moment to check that both ends are still the same width! If not, adjust seam allowances so that they are.

Fold under ¼" on long sides of piece O and press. Pin O to K–N centered so that aprox. ¼" of K shows on either side of O. Baste, then slip-stitch both sides of O to K. Be sure the stitches do not show through to the other side of the piece. Remove any visible basting stitches.

Figure 10



Fold under the raw ends of this piece K–O–N to make ½" seam allowances on either end, press. Mark the very center of each side end with a small mark.



Repress the straps if needed and pin the finished ends of the long straps J and H to the top edge of the Rakusu (on the left as you look at it from the front, see drawing on front cover). The seamed edge of the strap should be towards the center (inside) of the Rakusu and the folded edge should be facing out on both straps. Make sure the straps hang over the front of the rakusu about 1¾" down just to the bottom edge of the top border. Slip stitch them securely from the back to the top edge of the Rakusu. Only sew through the single fabric layer on the back of the strap without coming through to the front. Stitch a second time so this seam is extra secure. This is the most likely place for a seam to tear out because the straps get some pull.

Pin outer strap H in place on the right outside edge, in the same manner as the other side with the folded edge facing out and flap hanging down to the bottom of the top border. Make sure it isn't twisted. Pin inner J next to it. Don't worry about attaching the ring yet. First you will determine how long the straps need to be. Also, don't sew or finish the ends of the straps yet. Wait until you have fitted the rakusu.

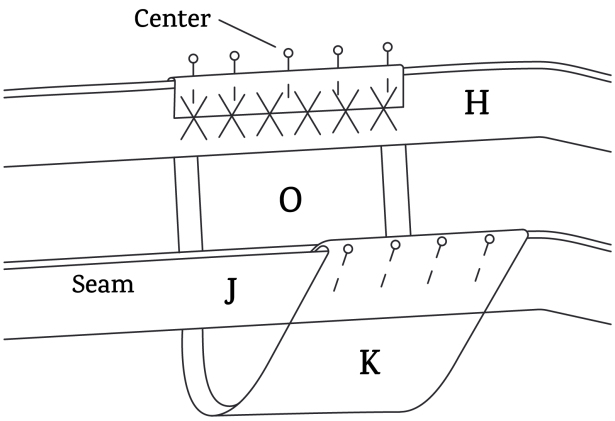
Now try it on and check in the mirror. The bottom edge of the Rakusu should come to approximately 4" below your navel when you are standing up. Most people will need to shorten the strap a good 5–8". Pin and repin until you get it right. Place your hands in shashu to help you judge. Your hands should rest comfortably under the rakusu when held in shashu just below the chest at the level of the solar plexus. Also, try sitting zazen. In the zazen posture, the rakusu should hang down enough to cover your mudra but not fold too much onto your lap. Make sure the straps are lying flat and even, inner strap J lies on top of outer strap H at the neck without crossing or twisting. When you are satisfied, pin straps firmly in place.





Fold the Rakusu in half to find the exact center back point of the straps. Mark the center back on both straps with your fabric pencil. Fold the pressed ½" seam allowances of the raw edge of piece K–O–N over the straps, lining up the center marks on each. Cross-stitch the raw ends of K to the straps making large diagonal stitches in one direction and then back in the other direction to form Xs (see diagram and photo below). Make sure your stitches only catch the straps and don't come through to show on the outside of the K–O–N neckpiece. Before basting, fold together and check to make sure that the neckpiece is pinned in the correct direction with the bulk of the fabric lying down the back, away from the neck, and that the straps are still lying flat and not twisted. Use black thread (white thread is used in the photo for demonstration purposes only.)

Figure 11





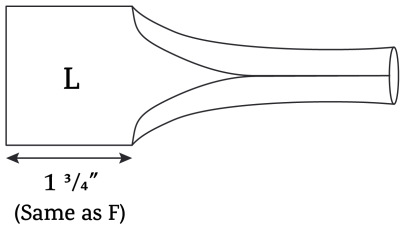
Pin all layers together so that the straps are sandwiched inside the neckpiece. Make sure the entire piece is centered and lying flat. Slip-stitch the ends of the neckpiece that are folded over the straps together. Do not sew the side edges of the neckpiece together. Press.



Step 6: Finishing the Straps and Attaching the Ring

First we will finish strap L to which the ring will attach. Fold the lengthwise edges of the raw unfinished end of piece L, towards one another, lining up the edges in the center starting at 3" from the finished edge. This should leave 1¾" rectangle of the finished end completely unfolded to hang down over the top border piece like the other straps do. The seamed edge should be facing in towards the center of the rakusu just like the other straps. Pin and baste in place. This step narrows the piece, making it easier and neater to tie onto the ring.

Figure 12





Before doing the final stitching on piece L, we will pin this piece to the rakusu and attach the ring to find out how long it needs to be.

Pin L to the Rakusu in the same manner as the other straps, letting the unfolded 1¾" section of L hang over the top border. Draw the narrow folded end of L through the ring from front to back. The folded part of the strap should measure 1½" from where it attaches at the top of the border piece to the outside edge of the ring, and then be able to go through the ring and reach back down to the backside to the top border, plus add ½" extra length for a seam allowance to tuck under. Cut off any extra length (typically about 1") and remove pinned piece L from the rakusu.

Slip stitch the edges of the two folded lengths together where they meet in the center. Remove basting stitches and press well.



Measure to make sure that the outer long strap H is the same length on each side of the centerpiece. If not, adjust the pin on the unsewn side to make it even. Leave the extra length on this strap for now.

Again pin L to the Rakusu in the same manner as before, right up next to strap H, letting the unfolded section of L hang over the top border and the folded edges facing out so it can be seen when looking from the front. Leave the ring off for now.

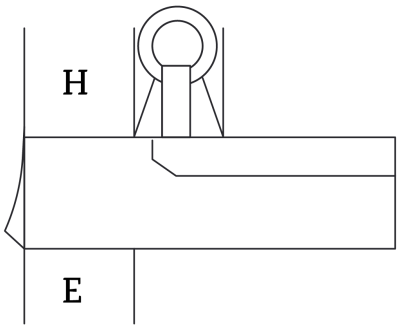
Try it on one more time just for good measure before sewing down the final straps.

Sew strap H to the top edge of the rakusu. Next sew strap L to the top edge of the rakusu. Use a slip stitch for each of these seams and attach in the same manner you did the straps on the other side, going over the seam twice and making sure it is extra secure. Make sure your stitches only pick up the back layer of the fabric strap and don't show through to the front. You can sew both these small seams and the following one with the same length of thread since they are right up next to one another. That way you only have to make two knots instead of six!



Draw the narrow folded section of L through the ring from front to back, folding under the ½" seam allowance and pinning it to the backside of the strap so the end sits where the strap attaches to the top of the rakusu border. Pin and sew the back side of strap L to the top edge of the rakusu, with the ring attached. Also neaten up the backside of strap L by continuing your seam ½" up each lower side of the back strap, tacking it to the back of the front of the strap. Again, be sure your stitches just pick up the back layer of the fabric strap and don't show through to the front.

Figure 13

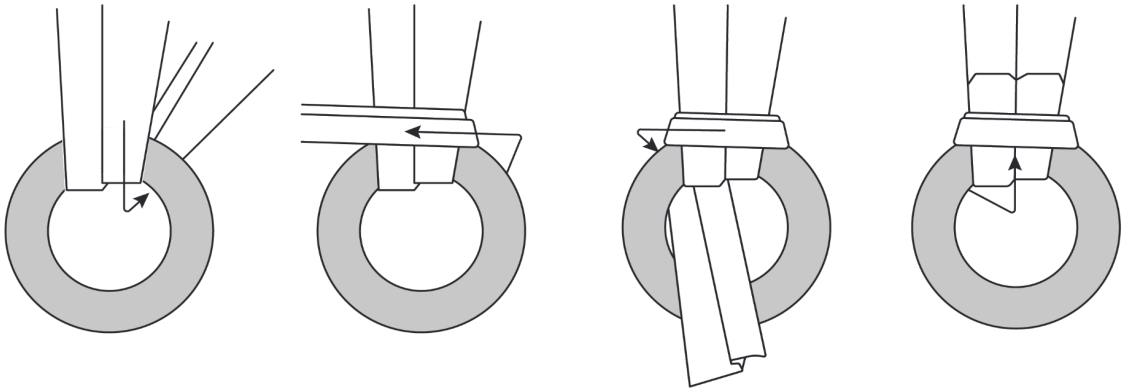




Cut off the extra length off of the end of strap H (usually 5"–8"), leaving ½" extra length below the border to tuck up as a seam allowance into the strap and finish the end. Carefully square off the end, making sure the corners are sharp. Be gentle not to open the seam as you have just cut off your end knot! Press, pin shut, and close using a slip stitch.

Leave strap J long for now and use the diagram below to tie it on the ring. Make sure the strap is lying flat and not twisted or crossed with the other straps. It usually takes several adjustments to get the knot to sit at the right length. Placing it on a hanger to see how the straps hang is a good trick for finding the correct knot placement. It will hold itself in place if you pull the strap taut after tying it. The strap should poke out the top of the knot about 1½" and also be sure to leave another ½" extra for a seam allowance. Cut off extra fabric and finish the raw end of J in the same manner as H. Again, be careful not to open the seam as you have just cut off your end knot.

Figure 14







Step 7: Embroidering the Pine Twig

What does this symbol mean? Some say it is a pine needle, others say it is a casuarina needle. Some say it is one broken needle and others say it is two, the first whole and the second broken. It is said that some cultures believe that the spot on the neck where it covers is a vulnerable and open gate to the body/mind that needs to be protected from harmful energies entering. Here are some reflections on the symbol…

> The pine is in the asian area a symbol for a long life, sanity and strength. So the broken one may point towards the impermanence of even this.
>
> On the back of the rakusu are crossed casuarina needles from an ancient Buddhist tree signifying that this is a mountain path, signifying that it takes you deep into the journey into the true self. As Rilke said, so that we walk into the silence, for hours meeting no-one. Also the needles are the green shoots of the Way, the manner in which the Way will spring up like dandelions in a pavement in the city. Somewhere, no matter what state you are in, you can always find a little green trace of it. There are two needles crossed with each other. Every time you are caught in an opposite, at bottom there is always some unity there, if you can find it. There's always some way to hold the two together. And that is the enlightened task. So that we can find the true action.

– John Tarrent

I don't think that it–that is just to keep… two parts tied together. It is… pine leaf… it is always green, and pine for a long long time, and it doesn't change its color all year round. So we have some special feeling about pine, and that pine leaf we use in various ways, you know, that design. When you make… some furoshiki,[a square piece of cloth in Japan used for wrapping items such as gifts] you know, we put pine leaves [on them]… I think that is why; maybe better to ask Yoshida–roshi [laughs]. He may have some reason–she may have some reason, but I think that is more very common… in Japanese culture to use pine leaves… We have many pine–tree design or pine–leaves design. We like bamboo also. Bamboo.

– Suzuki Roshi

To make the pine needle design, read through all the following steps before you begin.

Practice on a spare piece of cloth first with some spare embroidery thread. Do not use the same thread to practice as it will start to unravel.

You can make the pine needle by eye or measure and mark the main points lightly with a pencil as you go. If you measure and mark the dots, it's easiest to mark the 3 points on the mainline to start (points 6, 0, & 1) and then measure and add each new dot as you go. Use an embroidery needle and green embroidery floss.

The pine twig is approximately 2⅝" long by 1" tall. The central line (points 0,6, & 1) lines up horizontally with the top edge of the straps and is approximately 1" from that top edge. Point 1 is approximately ¼" from the right side edge and point 6 is approximately ⅜" from the left side edge. Here are the approximate distances between points, the order of stitches and the diagram.

It doesn't have to be exact, each pine needle is slightly different, just like us! The design should look as pleasing on the back as on the front. Excepting the first and last, all stitches are through all layers of fabric (both straps and both sides of the centerpiece). Follow the stitching steps below and try to come up as close to the previous stitch as possible without splitting the threads so that the segments don't have spaces between them. You might also want to use sewing wax to cost your thread so that it doesn't split or fray.

Distances between points:

Point 6– 0: ½″

Point 0– 4 : ⅜″

Point 0– 5: ⅜″

Point 0– 2: 1½″ (point 2 is ½″ from the main line)

Point 0– 1: 2 ⅛″

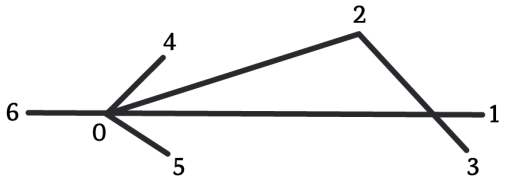
Point 2– 3: 1″

Point 0 to where line 2–3 crosses: 1 ⅞″

Order of stitches:

1. Make a knot at one end and stitch from between the layers up from the backside at point 0 (so that your knot is hidden on the inside between the layers of fabric).
2. Make a single stitch down through point 1
3. Up at point 0
4. Down at point 2
5. Up at point 3
6. Down at point 2
7. Up at point 0
8. Down at point 4
9. Up point 0
10. Down at point 5
11. Up at point 0
12. Down at point 6
13. Up at point 0, halfway though. Again, hide the knot between the layers of fabric.

Approximate size of pine twig (when printed out on a 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper)





Press the entire rakusu carefully and de-lint. You have finished your Rakusu. Gassho!

Caring For Your Rakusu

Folding Your Rakusu

The rakusu can be folded in half or quarters. In our lineage it is most common to fold in half with the words facing inside but you can also fold the opposite way. Fold in half with the ring facing down, then fold the straps neatly down all the way over. Lastly, take a hold of the neck piece and fold the straps halfway up again, placing the neck piece approximately in the center of the rakusu. If you wish, fold in half once more into quarters to make it smaller.



Storing Your Rakusu

You always want to store your rakusu in an honorable place, up high off the floor or on top of your sitting cushion. Never stack things on top of your rakusu. It represents the Buddha's body, that which is most sacred to us, and we should treat it as such, giving it the highest position.

Eventually you will want a case for your rakusu. You don't need to have one right away and it's good to wait and see if one is gifted to you in the weeks after your ceremony before you make or buy one for yourself. If you do want to make one, you can ask Zenworks for a pattern.

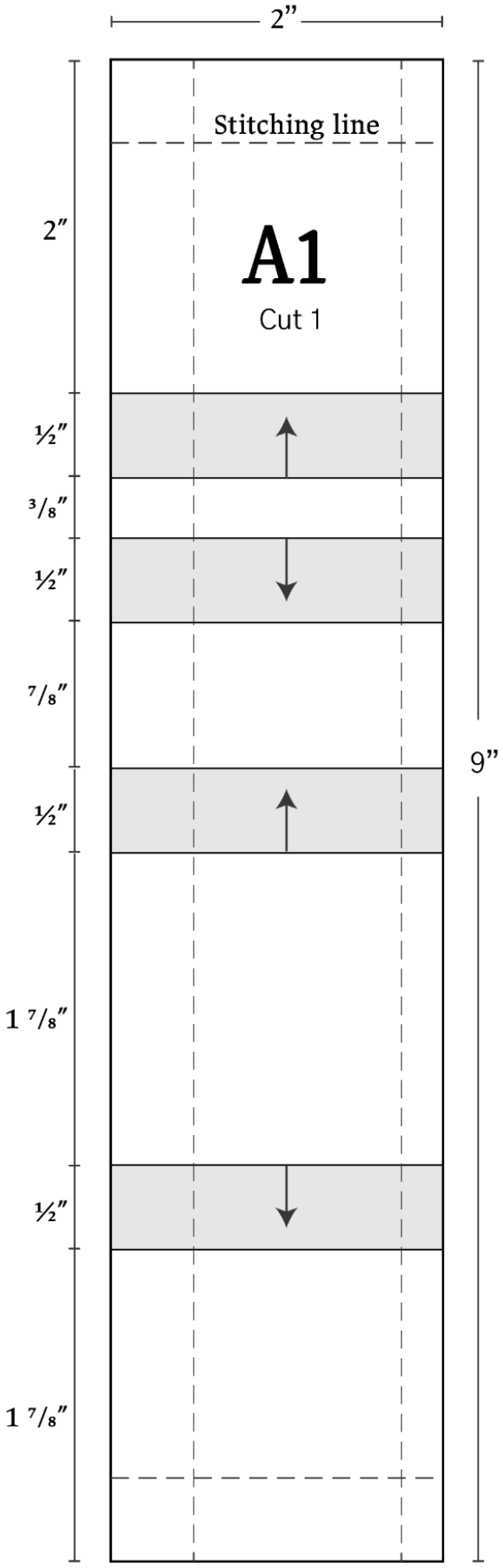
(*Please contact Shinei at shinei@zendust.org with any questions or suggestions for improving this pattern. Thank you!)

Rice Field Tuck Patterns

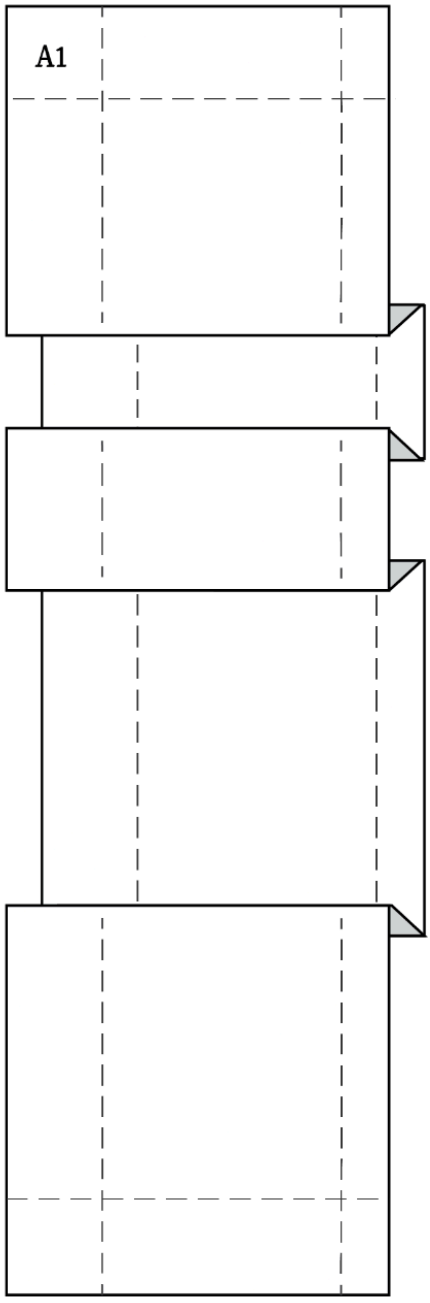
The next four pages of this document contain patterns you may print to [insert instructions]



Tucks shown in shaded areas. Press tucks in the direction shown by arrows.

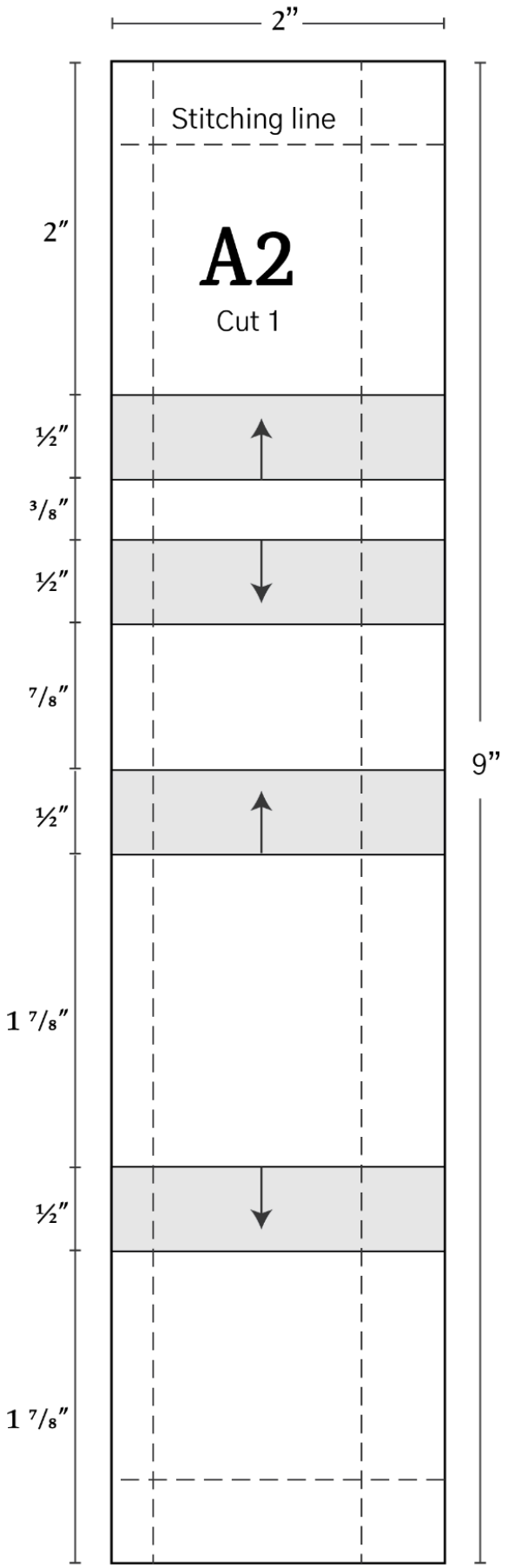


Direction to press tucks in A1

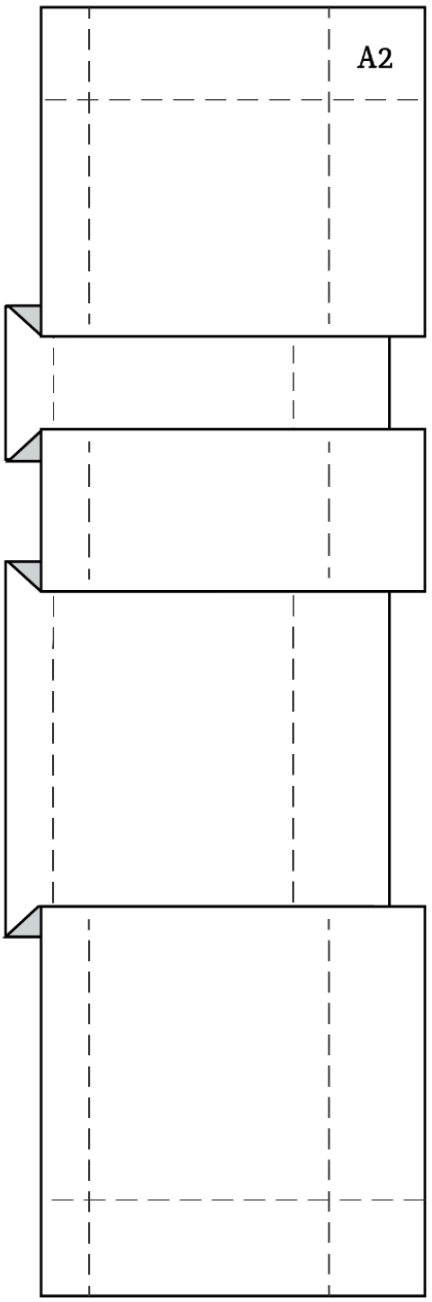


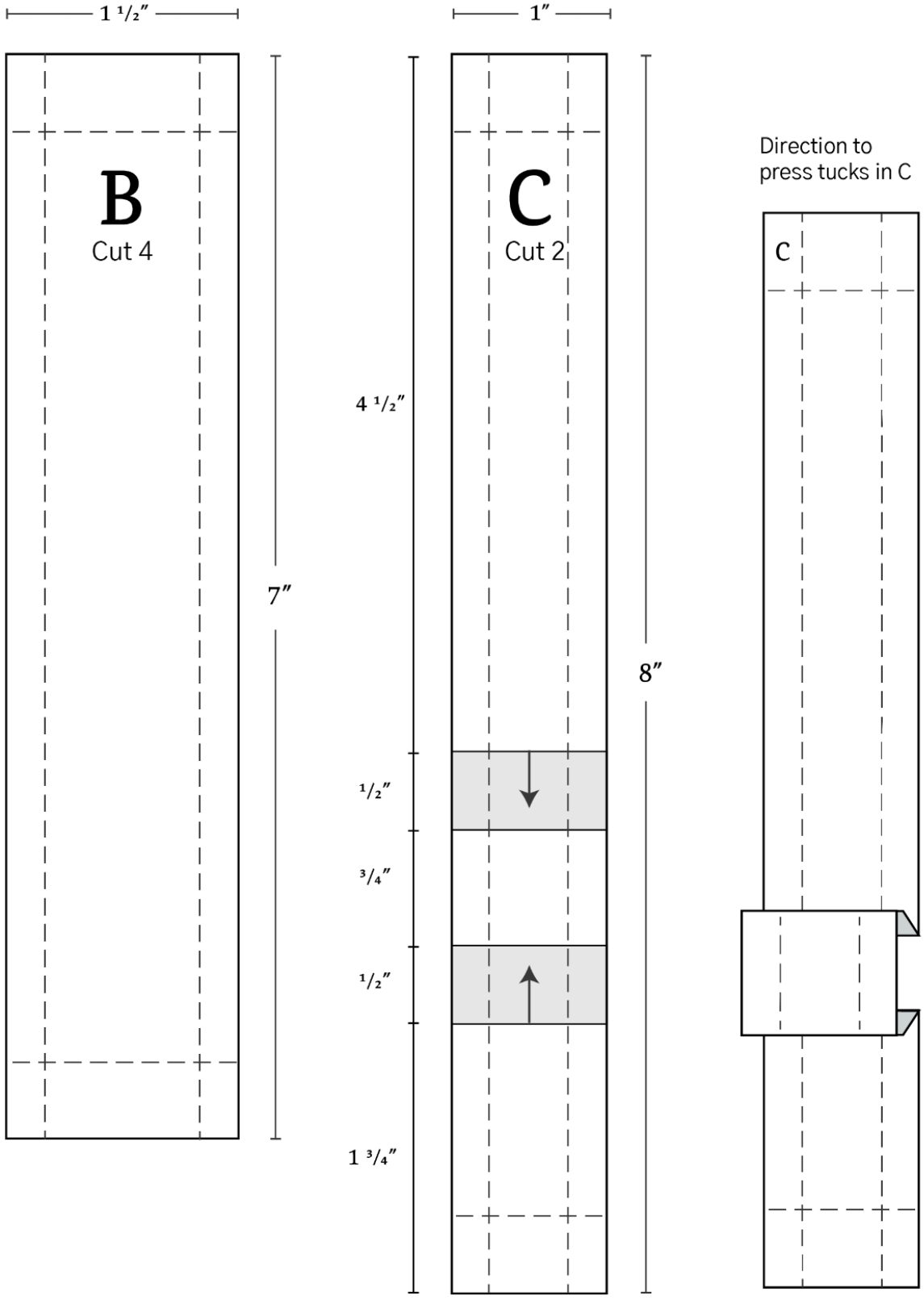


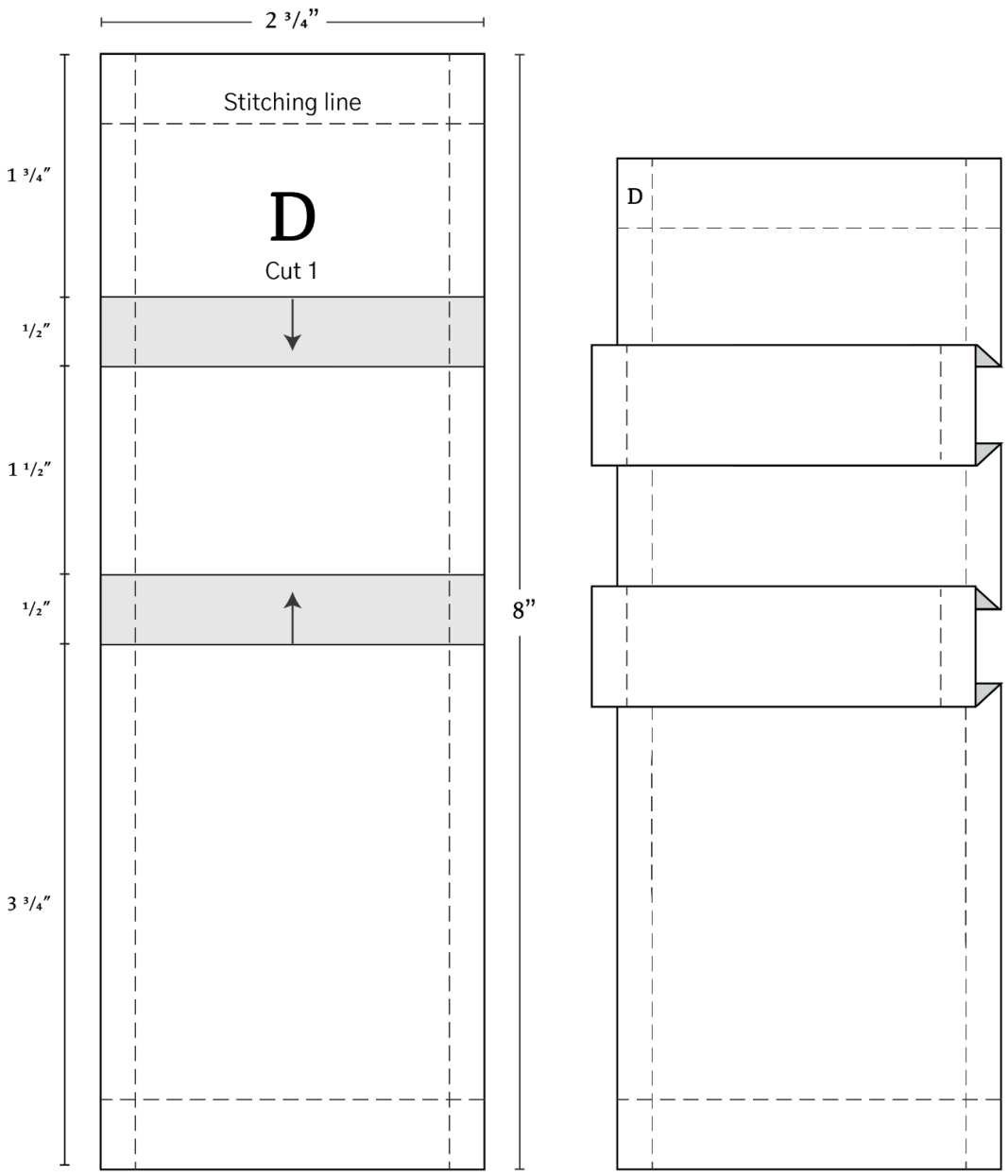
Tucks shown in shaded areas. Press tucks in the direction shown by arrows.



Direction to press tucks in A2



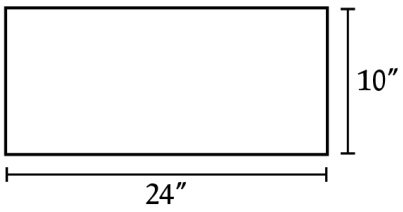

1 1/2″
B
Cut 4
7″
1″
C
Cut 2
8″
4 1/2″
1/2″
3/4″
1/2″
1 3/4″
Direction to
press tucks in C
C


2 3/4”
Stitching line
D
Cut 1
1 3/4”
1/2”
1 1/2”
1/2”
3 3/4”
8”
D

Rakusu Cover Pattern

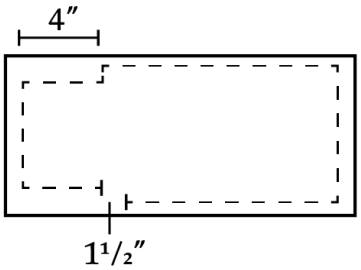
The purpose of the Rakusu cover is to keep the Rakusu clean and neat when it is not being used. Usually the outside is made of a good piece of fabric and the lining is made of a slick type of material so that the Rakusu can be slid in and out easily, i.e. silk or rayon.

1. Cut 2 pieces 24″ x 10″ = 1 lining piece + 1 outside piece



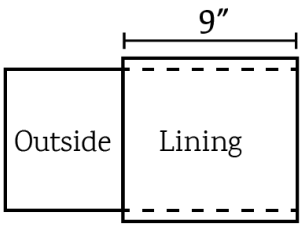
2. Pin the right sides of the material together so that the inside faces out.

3. Sew by machine or small stitch by hand ½″ to ¼″ from the raw edge, all the way around, leaving a 1½″ opening so that the right side now faces out. Iron piece flat along the sewn edges.



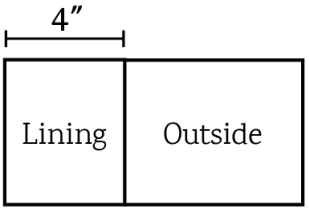
4. Pull the whole piece through the 1½″ to ¼″ from the raw edge, all the way around, leaving a 1 1/2 ″ opening on a long side.

5. Fold the end with the opening up 9″ and pin, making sure that the opening edges are tucked in as if sewn (or you may sew the opening closed first). Make sure also that the lining is facing the outside.



6. Stitch ½″ down each side of the fold.

7. Pull the pocket right side out.



8. Iron the 4″ flap down. Use a snap or just leave folded over.

9. Now your cover is ready to use!