How to Sew a Face Mask

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised against healthy people wearing masks, but it is reviewing its guidance. Ordinary people should not use medical-grade masks, which are in short supply. And social distancing and hand washing are much more important. But the widespread use of nonmedical masks could reduce community transmission. By TRACY IA AND NATELLE BAUERLE

**TOOLS**
- Needle and thread (and a sewing machine, if you have one)
- Scissors
- Pins or clips to hold fabrics in place (safety pins and paper clips will also work in a pinch)

**MATERIALS**
- At least 20 by 20 inches of 100 percent cotton fabric, such as a flat tea towel
- 4 strips of cotton fabric for ties, about 18" long and 1/4" wide
- 4 flat, clear hair slides
- Two flat (1/4") sewing elastics that are 7" long each

**STEP 1 Prepare Your Materials**
Choose your fabric, wash it on the warmest setting, and dry it on high heat. (Towels are better to see than T-shirts or linens, according to the Stanford Anesthesia Information and Needle Lab.) Fold the fabric in half. Measure and cut out a 6" x 6" rectangle to create two identical-size layers using the sewing pattern below. This is your mask base.

Now it's on to the fabric ties:

**STEP 2 Adding the Ties**
Take one of your rectangular fabric layers. With the "right side" (the outer-facing side) down, press the 4 fabric ties, one piece per corner. Make sure that the ties are gathered in the center of the fabric layer before advancing to the next step.

**STEP 3 Cutting Ties**
Cut 4 thin pieces of material, about 18" long and 1/4" wide on the right-hand side of the page. Fold each piece of fabric twice lengthwise, then twice more to lock the rough edges inside. Sew a straight line along the with. This will prevent the fabric ties from having frayed edges.

**STEP 4 Start Stitching**
Eyeball a midpoint from the middle. Sew a straight line across the fabric, about 1/2" above the bottom edge of the fabric. Add a couple stitches forward and backward in both directions to secure the ties in place.

**STEP 5 Stitch Around**
Stitch around the perimeter of the fabric layers, repeating the forward and backward motion at each corner to secure all the elastic ends or fabric ties. Continue to stitch your way toward the starting point, but stop to allow for a 1 1/2" gap.

**STEP 6 Turn Out**
Turn your project right-side out from the little 1 1/2" gap. Your fabric ties or elastics should now stick out, like little legs. Make three staggered pleats lengthwise on the mask, as if folding a paper fan. Turn the mask inside out, form the mask into the wearer's face. Secure each pleat with pins.

**STEP 7 Finishing Up**
With your pleats held in place by pins, stitch around the perimeter of the mask, 1/2" away from the edge of the mask. This is called a top stitch. Take care when stitching over the pleats so the mask may be quite thick. Top stitch a second time around, about 1/4" in from the first round of stitching. Now you have a completed mask.