



DESIGN & MAKE

BY HEATHER LUKE

Soft Roman Blind

Soft Roman Blind



When a fabric is this sumptuous it doesn't really work to restrain it too much, so within the confines of the Roman blind, we let the folds remain soft and the edges drop a little. It pulls up into less than 15 cms (6") within the recess and is also the easiest version to make...

Soft Roman blinds are one of the most useful of all window treatments, they can be fitted inside or outside the window, made from the finest of sheers or, as here, the thickest teddy bear velvet. This window treatment was designed to be elegant and to block all light, so as well thickly interlined curtains we used the same heavy fabric at the window - against the window - as a black out blind. By making the blind as we have it pulls up into just about 15cms (6 ") at the top.

Metallic sheers between the two were a bit of a luxury, they helped to lighten the overall depth as well as providing the summer curtains. So the needs for blackout, for elegance and for winter warmth are all covered....

Any fabric can be used for soft Roman blinds, depending entirely on your preferences and needs. A heavy fabric like this fulfils many criteria; it blocks light and directs light - so that light falls onto the lower part of the room only, it blocks an ugly view and provides warmth and draft-proofing to a single glazed window, but if your requirement is for a blind that just shields, filters, light then you'll need a sheer linen or lightweight cotton, something fine that can be lined so that the lining adds body and necessary weight but doesn't change the texture.

Design notes

WHY CHOOSE SOFT ROMAN BLINDS ?

- * Soft Roman blinds are the less formal version – more suited to informal rooms, design and people.
- * Those who are pernickety about straight lines and exact folds won't enjoy them, at all. However, your children and guests might, as these blinds require less order and attention.
- * Soft blinds are best fitted close to the window frame, rather than in front of a deep recess. As there is no formal rod structure to hold the blind it will be inclined to fall back into the space behind it. By means of the top batten and a solid rod at the lower edge the blind can be fitted in front of the recess, but if too close to the edges it will just skew inwards all the time, and especially if there is draught, or even the slightest breeze.
- * Soft Roman blinds pull up slightly randomly, although just how randomly is controlled by other factors – such as the distance between the rows of vertical rings. The more rows there are (and therefore the number of cords) and the closer they are, the more controlled the pull-up will be.
- * With a soft blind the lower edge be made more or less floppy; the making is the same, the pull-up will remain soft but the finish varies. The four options we use are:
 - 1) For the most rigid: a D-end wooden batten or a metal strip is run through the bottom fold, this will hold the lower edge straight, however without the support of a rod system above, the pull-up remains soft.
 - 2) For the least rigid: a length of chain weight is run through the bottom fold. This adds the weight that a blind needs to fall well and defines the hemline, but is only as controlled as the rows of cording – it will follow the shape created by the pull-up cords.
 - 3) For a straight fold line with soft hem below: a fabric covered rod or batten is fixed at the back, behind the lowest line of rings. The rod is first stitched to the back of the blind – through to the main fabric to be secure it, the rings are then stitched to the fabric sleeve.
 - 4) For the optimum and the one used here: chain weight and covered rods are used together. The chain weight helps the blind to hang well and at the same time controls the shape of the hemline, keeping it evenly formed between the rows of rings. The covered rod stitched to the blind holds the lower edge straight and provides a guideline for the rest of the folds.
- * Chain weight comes in various weights – use the lighter weight one for sheers, the medium weight for linen etc. and the heavier weight for wools and velvets.
- * The covered rod or batten is made to the same width as the blind, unless the sides are meant to drop (see later notes), in which case it is made to width between the outer rows of rings (or the same as the lining). It looks best covered in the main fabric, but lining is a good alternative, especially if the main fabric is quite thick.

Design notes

THE SIDES

* The fall at the sides is determined by the freedom given to the edges. Firstly, the rows of rings must finish in from the sides, then the restraining rod, batten or metal strip needs to be cut to fit between the outer rows of rings.

* At the planning stage, decide the side drop you want to see, to have: 4-6 cm (1 3/4" - 2 1/2") just gives a soft, informal edge, 10 - 15 cms (4"-6") make more of a statement. For this blind we chose 11 cms (4 1/2").

* The window architecture may have some say in the decision- if there is a wide frame it might be beneficial to follow the same line. It's always worth looking at the window for a grid guide and sometimes these details really do matter.

* Allow enough fabric for the turn-back, or the facing, to match the dropping width. It not only looks much better, but provides a good firm edge for stitching both the outer rows of rings and the ends of the covered rod or batten.

* So if the finished blind width is 90 cms (36") and the drop sides are planned at 8 cms the fabric width needed, including the seam allowances is $1.5 + 8 = 90 + 8 + 1.5$) Or ($5/8" + 3" + 36" + 3" + 5/8"$).

When the dimensions come too close to, or over-run, the given fabric width, the solution options are:

- a) to add just a slip onto each side.
- b) to make the facings (turn -back) in the same or contrast colour.
- c) to bind the edges and use the binding return for the purpose.
- d) to reduce the amount of turn-back and therefore side drop.
- e) to create a wide border from the front around to the back, all of which becomes the side drop.
- f) consider whether railroading the fabric is an option for you.

THE EFFECT OF LIGHT

* Soft Roman blinds are easy to make and take up less space than a formal Roman blinds with their rodding systems, however neatly done. These blinds are very often chosen to filter light, to add a soft layer to a window treatment, perhaps to effect a measure of privacy at the back of a bathroom door, or kitchen door, as soft treatments for rows of garden room of windows etc.. The fabrics chosen are frequently lightweight - sheer or at least finely woven, semi opaque enough that the workings on the back are visible from the front.

* It is most important to be aware of how the blinds will look with bright light shining through, and to choose the way the corners are made, the stitching methods, the rings and the weighting accordingly.

* All seams should be planned at this stage to coincide with vertical pull-ups and for the best looking blinds all dimensions should accommodate the window architecture.

* Any planned borders or coloured linings need the same consideration - a deeper toned border for example may very well show through a fabric that did not at first seem to be see-through. The problem is that, with the light behind, it just looks dull - not all like the lovely colour you chose for the front....

Design notes

CONSIDER THE ARCHITECTURE

All dimensions should work with the window architecture.

* In terms of the shape of the space, blinds may need to accommodate old or odd windows- a wonky top for example. And compromise may need to be made between covering the glass space and filling an uneven, perhaps very small, frame. As blinds must always be fitted level and made to hang straight, any adjustment for the window needs to be made within the heading or the hem. For top adjustment the heading batten can be shaped to fit the window and the top of the blind made to this template. It's less easy to shape the hem, as even the slightest 'off-horizontal' line will show when it's raised. However with a soft blind treatment this sort of discrepancy is less obvious - far easier to accommodate than within a formal blind.

* For the worst case scenarios or, arguably, the most interesting windows, we've made sure that the blind colour matches that of the frame as closely as possible - whether wooden, stone or specially painted to accommodate, to avoiding unsightly odd bits and shapes around it when it's lowered.

* Take a look at the frame size, the window panes, and the proportions. It's generally best to work with the given, architectural, dimensions. Not to go into too much detail here, but if the balance of the blind mirrors the proportions of the window in folds, widths between pull ups, etc. the finished effect will be far more harmonious and pleasing than if it doesn't. For example, seams can be designed to be hidden by obvious uprights or divisions; the pull-up cords can be planned to line up with the panes- they become less visible, whether the sun is highlighting the works or not. In any space there is always some obvious or less obvious underlying grid that can inform these sort of decisions.

* Rows of blinds look really stunning. When there is a frame or some sort of gap between them then they will all be able to raise and lower individually. If, however, blinds need to butt up, they will need to take turns to be at the top. That's OK as long as you're happy with a less formal appearance. In which case, soft blinds just make this an easier, more laid-back look.

* Bay windows, oriel windows, curved windows, adjoining and oddly shaped windows - many of which look stunning with blinds, just need some extra thought to make sure the junctions work, for the blinds to operate fully and as you wish them to.

* Wide windows that require more than one blind to fill the width may be a problem with soft blinds. In any case they will need to hang within the recess rather than in front, to prevent the centres falling back.

* For very tall windows soft blinds need their own running system. In which case, cords are fitted to the window frame at either side and tensioned. These align with an extra row of rings on the edges of the blind which are slipped over the side cords. So in effect the blinds run up and down along these cords, whilst still operated by the cording method.

* With splayed windows the batten should be shaped to fit so that the blind, fitting to the front of it will cover the space wall to wall.



Technical design

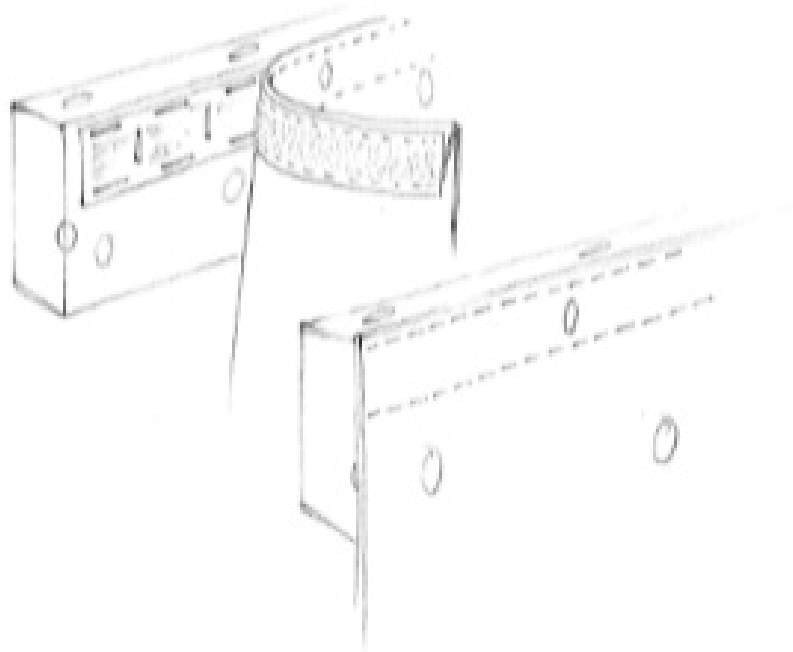
WHICH BLIND TOP TO CHOOSE?

Broadly speaking the blind will fit to the front or to the top of the prepared batten and this will inform how and where the touch and close tape, will be stitched to the blind.

OPTION ONE

Here the tape is fitted to the back of the blind after the heading allowance has been folded over. Two rows of machine stitching show on the front.

1. Press the fabric over to the wrong side, along the tacked overall drop line.
2. Place the touch-and-close tape over, so that the raw edges are concealed, pin to hold.
3. Machine stitch close to the top and bottom edges.



Technical design

OPTION TWO

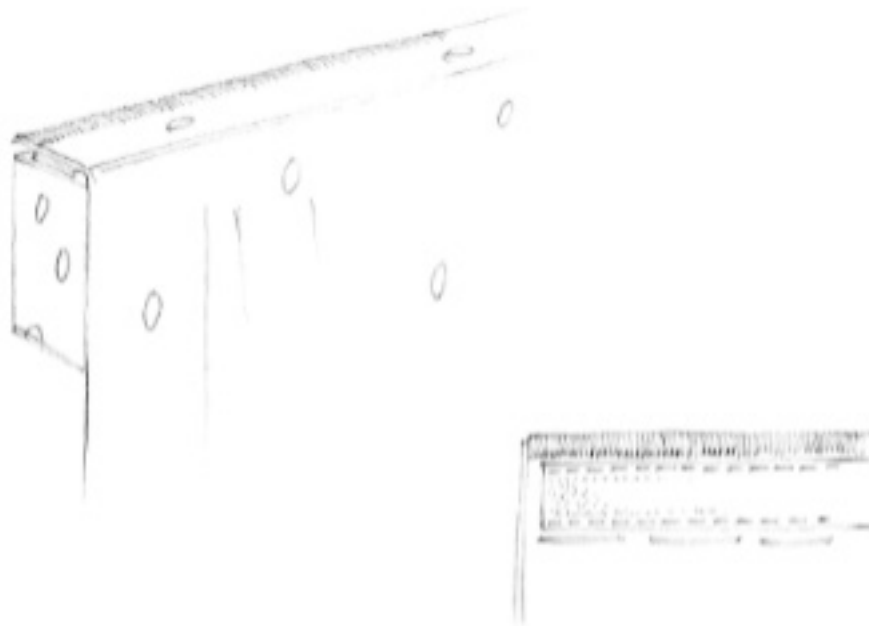
The most discreet is to fit the blind and tape over the top of the batten - certainly where there is access above, and also within the recess if the holes are pre - drilled and the blind won't need to be taken down for laundering in the foreseeable future.

Here the tape is designed to fit the top of the batten. The blind has the batten depth added to the length.

1. Make as above, but with the tape stitched on above the tacked overall drop line, so that the tack line will align with the top of the covered batten..



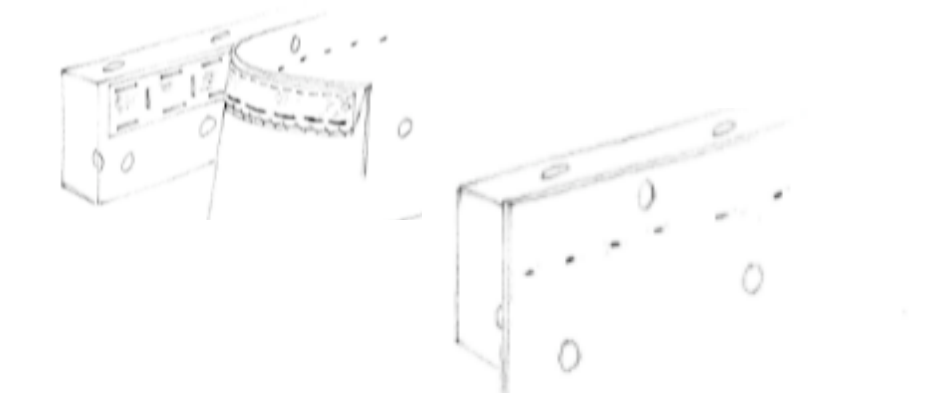
2. Or - shown bottom right and for a thick fabric, stitch the tape to the back, just above the overall drop line and finish the raw edges by overlocking.



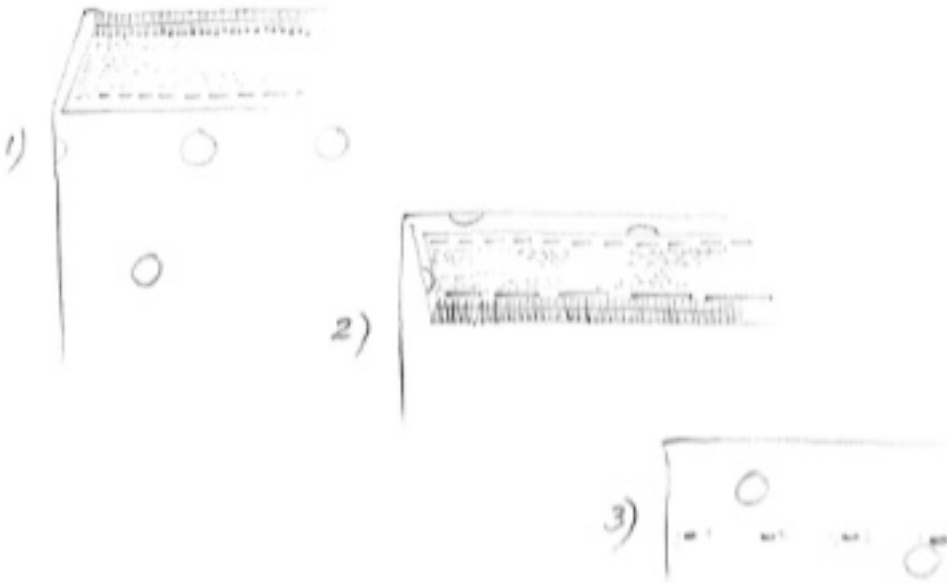
Technical design

OPTION THREE

Here the tape is fitted to the front of the batten, but as invisibly as possible. One line of stitching only is visible. It can be machined in place, but we use this method when we want the top to look good, not crushed by stitching lines, so we hand stitch.



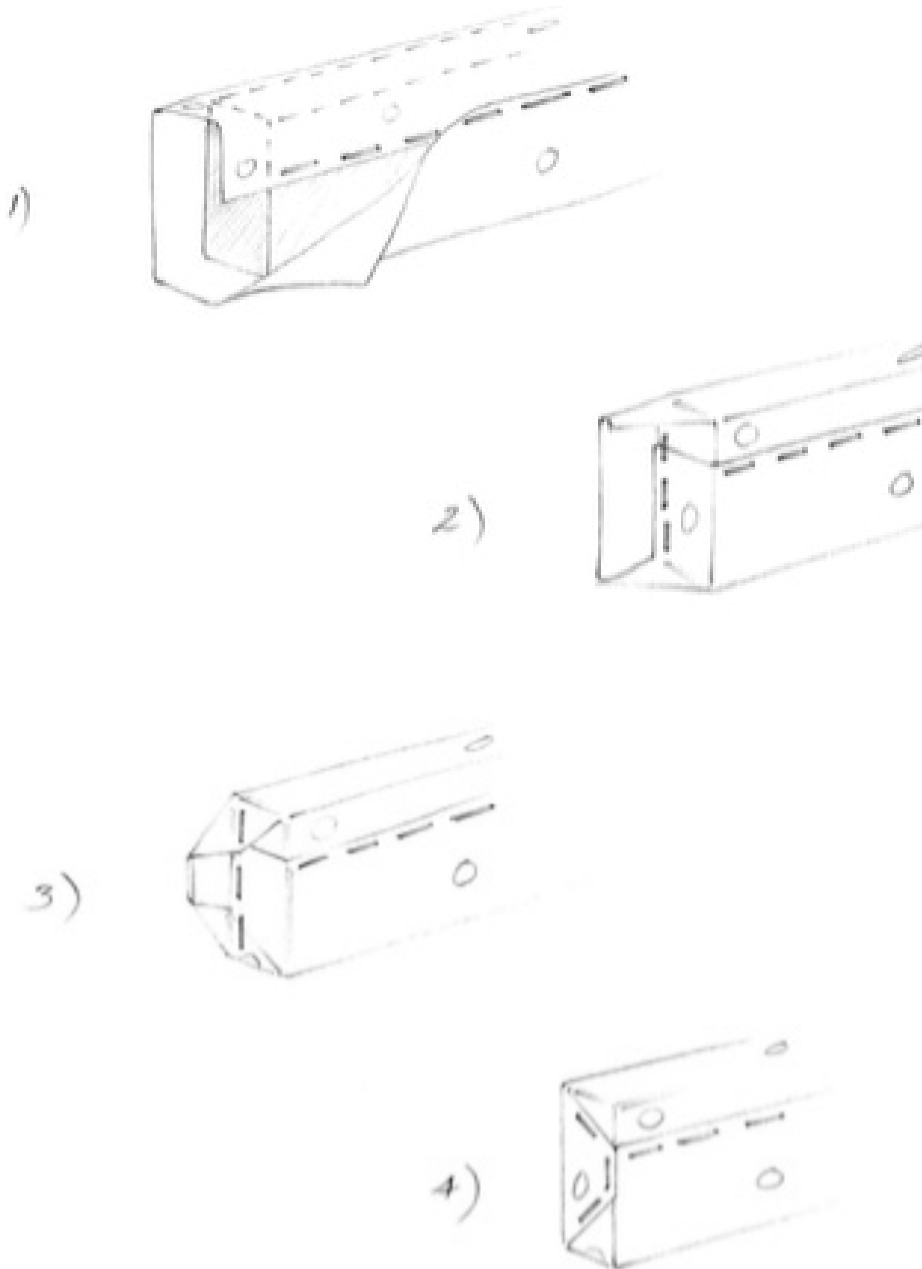
1. Working from the front, line up the bottom of the tape with the marked overall drop line and pin to hold. Stitch the tape down, just inside the edge.
2. Overlock, over-sew or zig zag the raw edges, so holding the tape and the fabrics together.
3. Press the tape to the back of the blind, pin to hold, then hand sew the lower edge in place. The stitches can be tiny or long, to show or not to show, in sewing or buttonhole thread and can be placed to best effect with stripes, patterns, weaves etc.



Technical design

TO COVER THE BATTEN

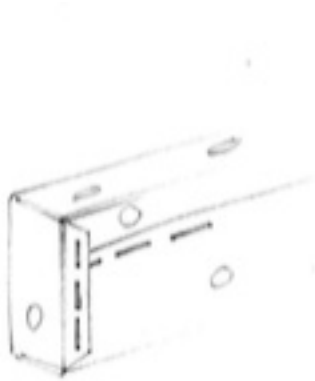
Option One: Using a staple gun. Place the fabric onto the worktable with the batten over it. If you have it and don't mind using it, a touch of spray glue will hold it lightly in place for you.



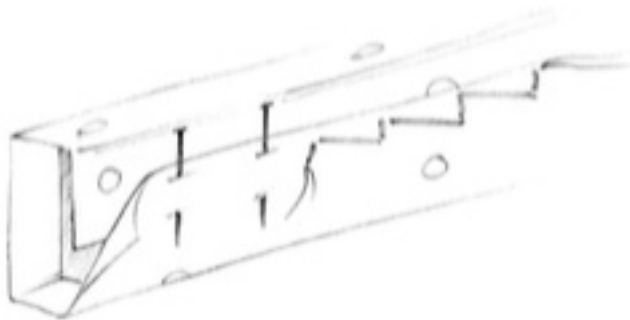
Technical design

TO COVER THE BATTEN

Option Two: Where the end might be on view – i.e. outside a recess, fold the fabric right to the back, so that there are no staples where they can be seen.



Option Three : If you don't have a commercial stapler or there isn't one to hand it can be just as easy to hand stitch the batten cover. Use this long stitch as it provides a secure stitch that you can pull on, to tighten the fabrics. Trim and fold the ends back in the same manner as with stapling. Or use tacks and a tack hammer if you have one available.





Make

Watchpoint! Blinds are often made with lightweight fabrics that are sheer or at least fine enough that the workings on the back are visible from the front. It is important to be aware of how the blinds will look with bright light shining through, and to choose the way the corners are made, the stitching and the weighting accordingly.

Watchpoint! All seams should be planned to coincide with a vertical pull-up and all dimensions should accommodate the window architecture.

PREPARE

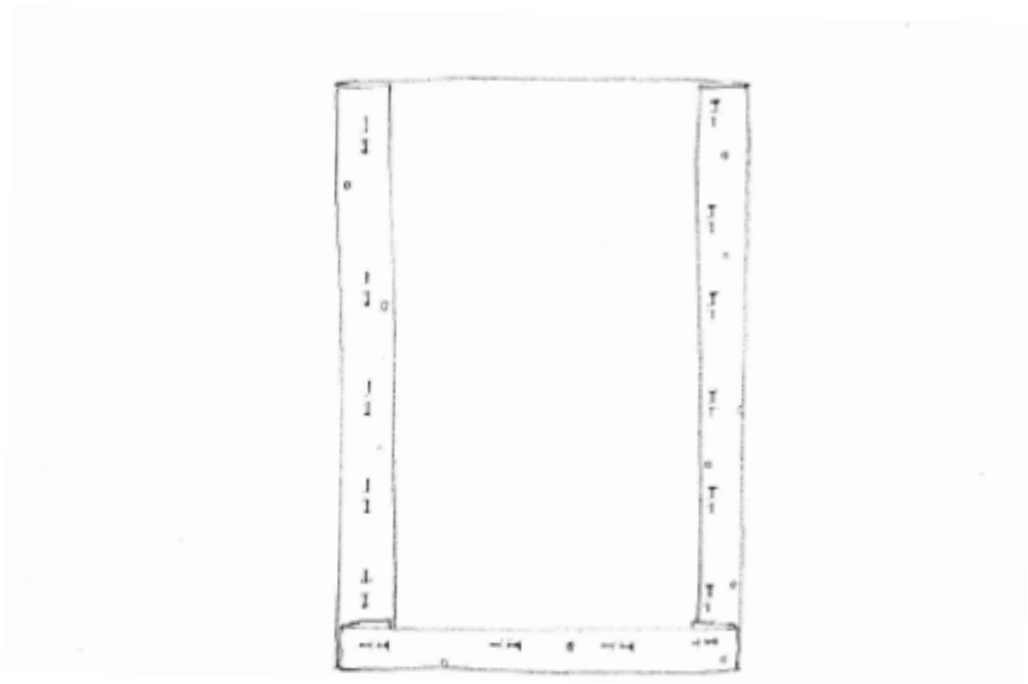
1. Measure the window. Plan the fitting position and the finished blind size. Plan the fabric and the cuts required. See Basic Techniques: Measuring Windows.

CUT OUT

1. Cut the blind fabric allowing 6 – 12cm (2 1/2 – 4 3/4”) for each hem and side, plus 3 cm (1 1/4”) for the heading. Join with flat seams and press open.
2. Cut the lining to the finished blind size. Join any widths with flat seams and press open. Remember to make sure that the lining fabric is exactly the same width as the blind fabric, so that seams will line up.

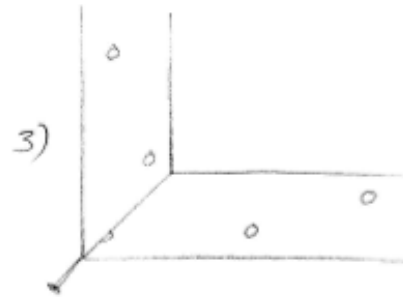
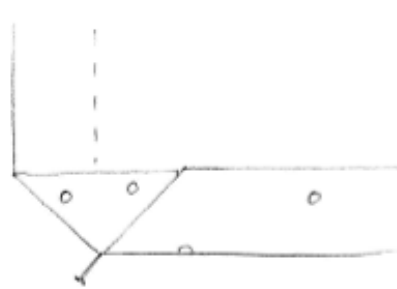
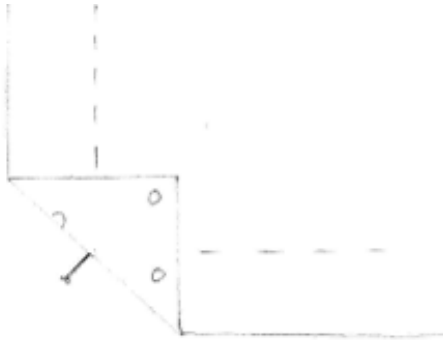
TO MAKE THE BLIND

1. Place the blind fabric right side down onto the worktable, sweep the metre rule over to smooth out every ruckle; press out any creases. Fold the sides over by 6– 12 cm (2 1/2 – 4 3/4”) Fold the hem up by 12 cm (4 3/4”). Press lightly and pin to hold.



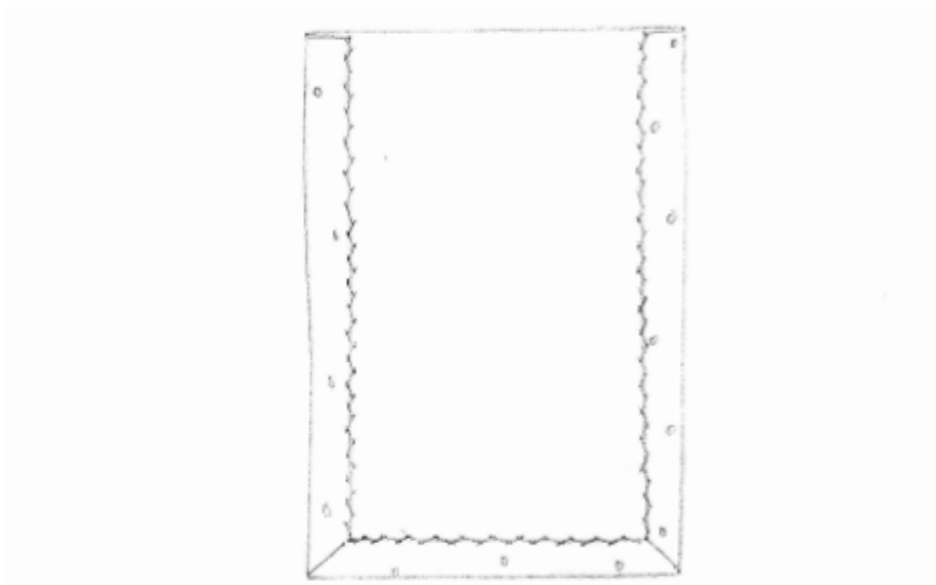
Make

2. Mitre the corners as shown.



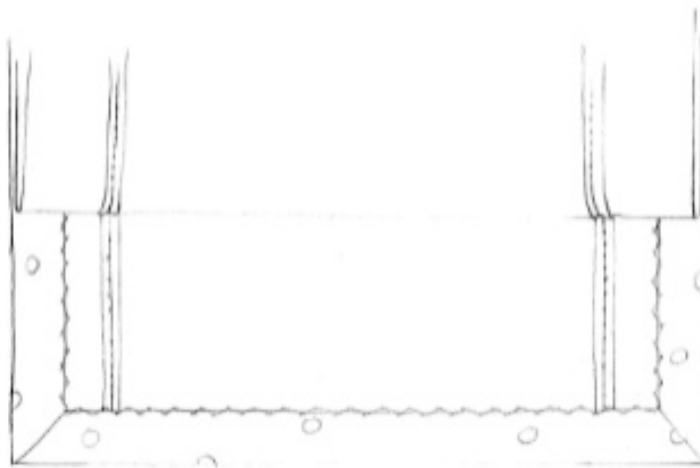
Watchpoint! With lightweight fabrics, now hold the corners up to the light to make sure that there are only parallel lines of fabric showing through. To keep neat lines, trim away any excess fabric you can see in the corners.

3. Herringbone stitch all raw edges and ladder stitch the mitred corner to close. Trim away any stray ends or frayed edges.

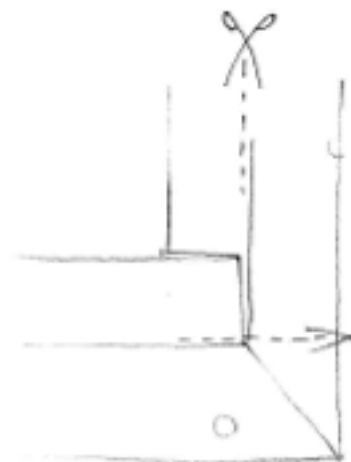


Make

4. Place the lining over. Match any seams – these seams should like directly above each other so that when the light shines through the effect is neat.

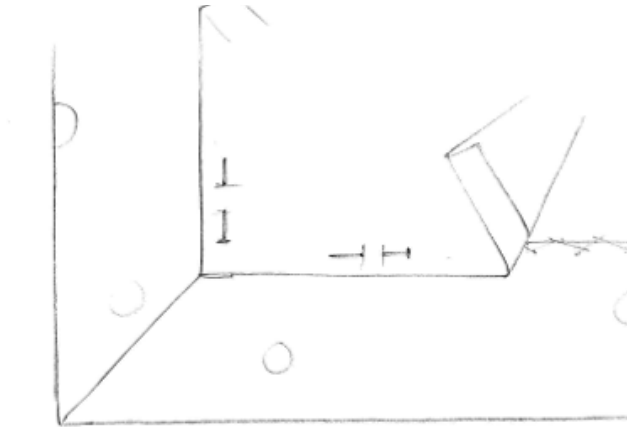


5. Fold the lining back onto itself so that the folded edge is 3 – 8 cm (1 1/4 - 3/4 “) from the edge of the blind. Trim along the fold lines to remove the excess lining.



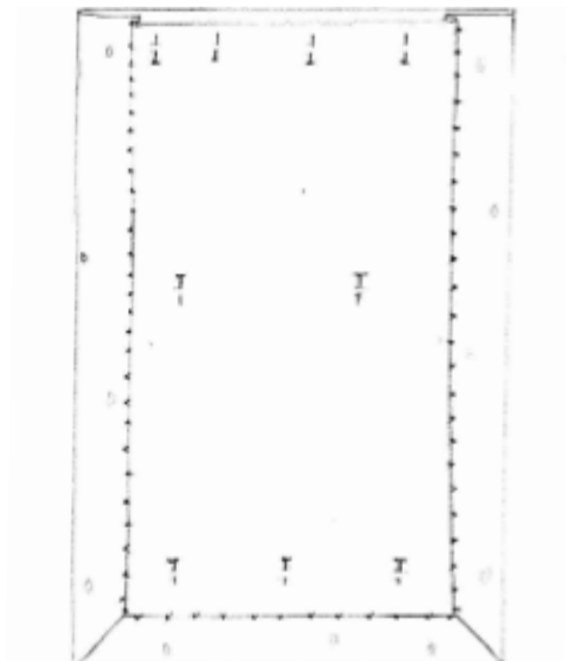
Make

6. Fold these edges under by 2 cm (3/4") so that the fabric and lining edges inside the blind are exactly aligned and the herringbone stitches are covered. Pin in place and press lightly.



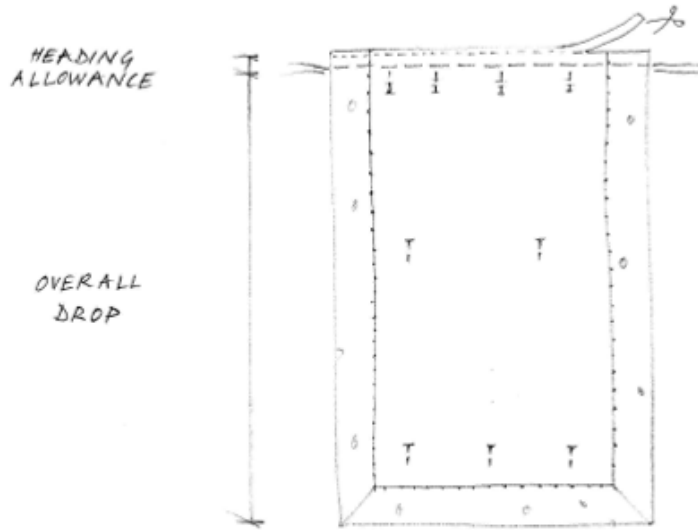
**** This is really important for a neat, well constructed piece !**

7. Slipstitch all around.

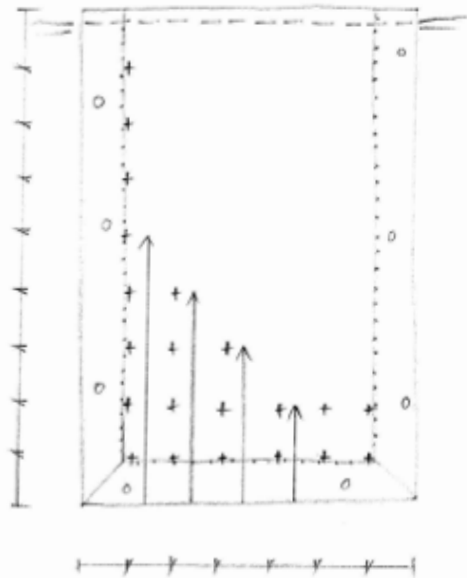


Make

8. Measure up from the hem to mark the finished length. Run a tacking line across to join the pinned markers. Transfer the pins just below this line to hold the fabrics together. Trim the excess fabric to 2 - 3 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ " - $1\frac{1}{4}$ ") above this line - the width of your touch-and-close tape)

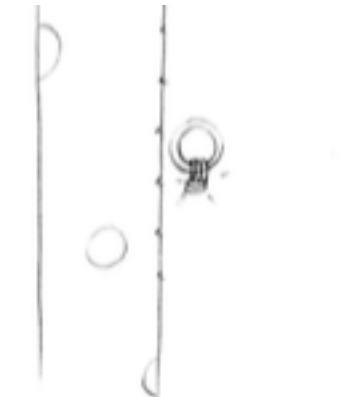


9. Measure up from the hem to mark each row of rings. To avoid any measuring slippage, always measure from the hem to each row. Mark the ring positions with crossed pins.



Make

10. Stitch each ring securely in place as shown. Stitch to the lining two or three times, then wind thread around the stitches and double stitch to fasten off. (You can add a blob of clear nail varnish if you're concerned about the security of your stitches.)



11. Stitch the touch-and-close tape to the heading for your chosen blind top.

Option 1: To fit the blind to the top of the batten.

Place and pin the tape to the front of the blind, stitch along the bottom edge and overlock or use the zig zag stitch to secure the fabric raw edges and tape together. (1) Trim any loose ends.

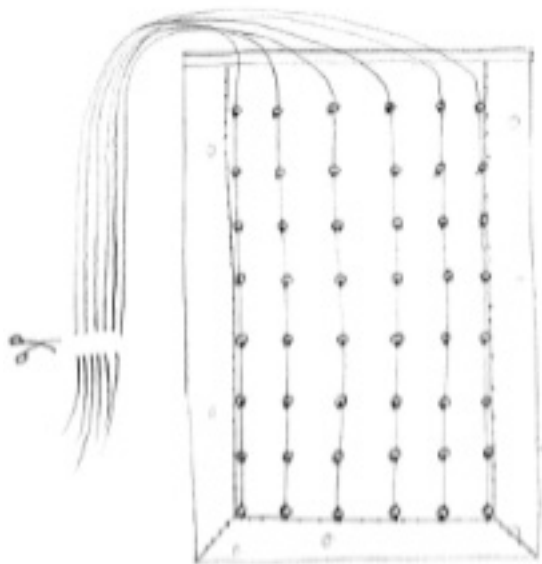
Option 2: To fit the blind to the front of the batten.

Fold the fabric and tape over to the back (2) pin securely, stitch along the lower edge by machine. Or better, by hand (3).



Make

12. Tie one end of the cord to each bottom ring, knot twice, then thread the cords through the rings from the bottom to the top of the blind. Leave the cord long enough to return to the cord holder.



13. At each bottom ring, stitch the cord tail to the running cord for about 2 cm (3/4") with small neat blanket stitch.





Make

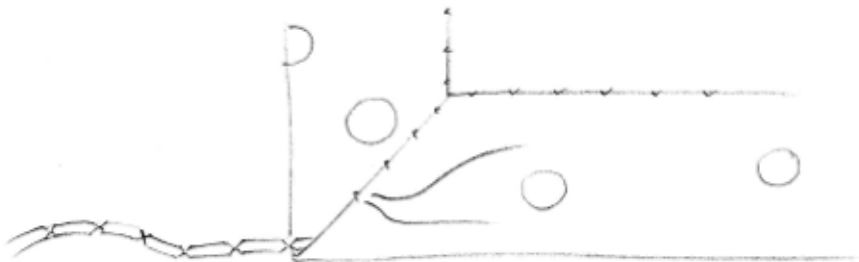
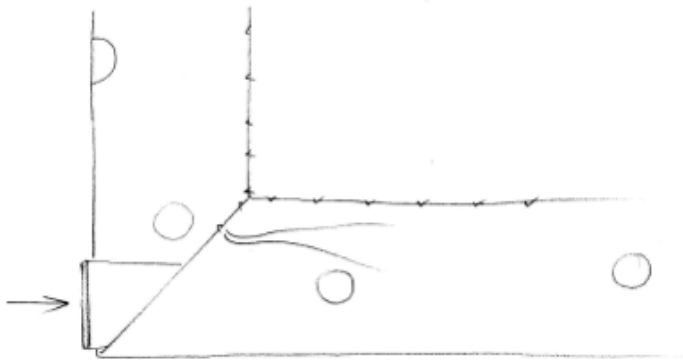
TO FINISH THE HEM

Option One:

For a soft blind with a straight lower edge: Slide the D-end batten along the hem line and behind the mitres. Slip stitch the mitres to close.

Option Two:

For a soft blind with a floppy lower edge: Slide the length of chain weight through the hem - it will go though quite easily, just make sure it doesn't catch on any seams.

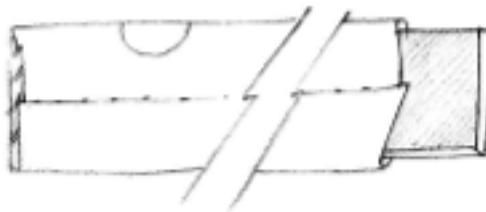
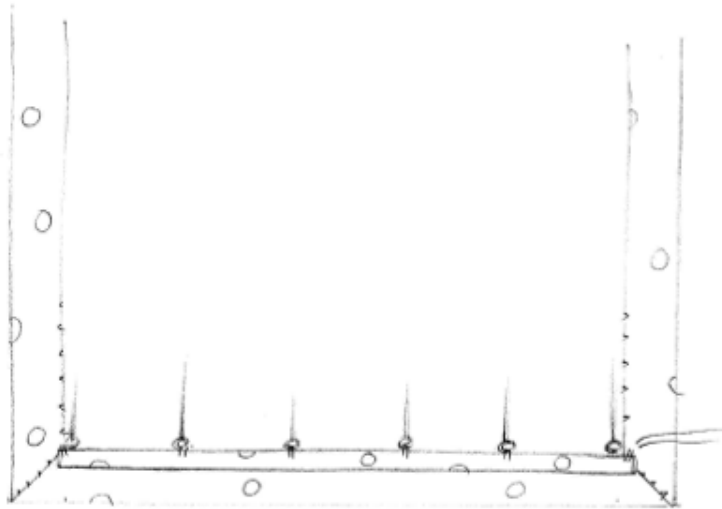


Tip! It's possible to fit the chain weight at the beginning; we prefer to add it now as it makes the work a bit heavier and more difficult to manage. Slip stitch the mitres to close.

Make

Option Three :

For a soft blind with a soft but controlled lower edge and with sides that can drop. To make a restraining bar, cut a wooden rod, narrow batten or strip of metal to the dimensions of the lining. Cut a piece of the main fabric wide enough to wrap around the rod three times x the length of this rod plus turnings for each end. with the blind fabric. Either pre-stitch a tube and slide it through then fasten the ends, or wrap the fabric around and hand sew it all the way along. Stitch it to the blind alongside the rings and take stitches through the rings to secure it all.

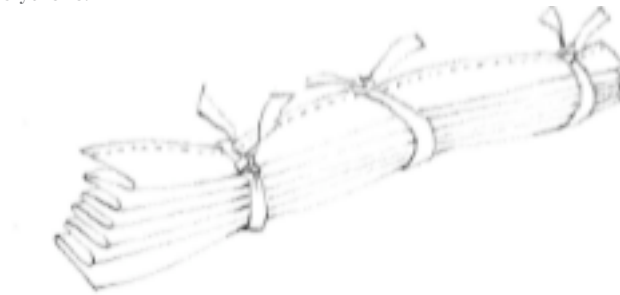


Make

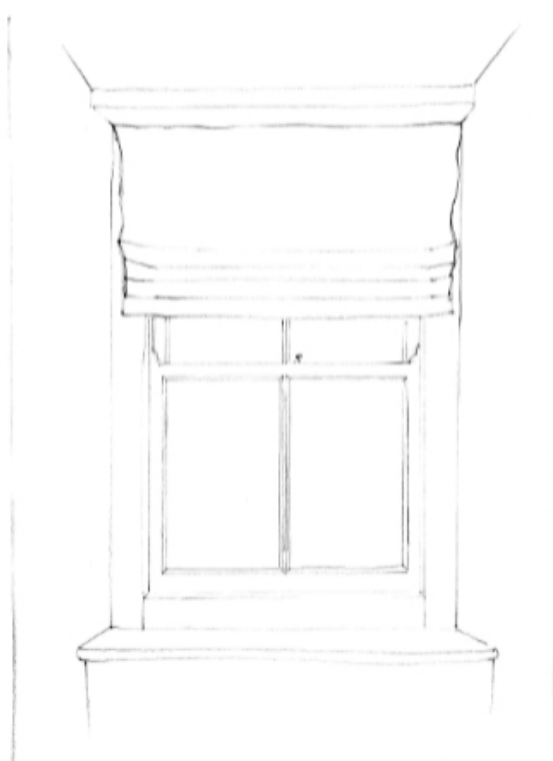
TRAINING AND TRAVELLING

1. Knot the end of the cords.
2. With the blind on the worktable face down, pleat the blind up as it will be when its' hanging.
3. Pull the cords up gently and wind them around a card or cord holder to keep them tidy.
4. Use heading tape or strips of fabric to tie the blind up.

Keeping it like this for a few days will help to train it, so that the folds have an idea how you're wanting them to behave. This is how we transport our blinds to the clients house, wrapped in a dust bag or length of polythene.



When blinds are first hung, it's also a good idea to leave them up, or partially raised whilst they acclimatise.





An interior designers guide to home furnishings, large and small, essential and ancillary, fun and serious. This soft Roman blind, whilst anchored around one we made for a client, is a comprehensive document for making any lined, informal Soft Roman blind.

Project Ref: Soft Rolled Blind

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