



DESIGN & MAKE

BY HEATHER LUKE

Theo : piped and frilled cushion

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Timeless checks in timeless colours, this fabric is soft and friendly, the feather and down pad is squidgy and it's all very comfortable - no hard edges anywhere.....

Frills aren't everyone's cup of tea, but they are informal and they soften things. When the fabric is right they are neither overpowering nor even too feminine, they just make a fabric look more interesting and a cushion more inviting. On a practical note, one of the greatest advantages of frilled cushions is that they are inclined to stay where they are put - the weight of the frill and the way it drops from the sides, helps to keep it all balanced. They are about the only sort of cushion that will stay put on a leather sofa, and in the crook of the arm to back, and are generally less inclined to slip.

Just one slightly softer cushion design can change the atmosphere of a sofa, bed, room even - by knocking an arranged formality to make it a little bit more approachable. This fabric is from one of the always reliable Ralph Lauren summer collections. One of my favourites, it's very soft to the touch and it works particularly well with plaids, prints, tweeds, florals and plains of all types. A simple gingham might have a bit less depth, but will look just as good as this one. The key for this look is to avoid anything shiny or stiff. And to realise that keeping checks absolutely straight - on the back and the front - is not for the faint hearted, and that it will look every bit as comfortable in a small print, or a plain fabric, until you have the will or the experience to handle it. You can still have a checked piping...

The small subtle detail of piping on the cross (bias) changes the scale and dimension, elevates it just enough, without shouting - in exactly the way small subtle detail should ...and must.



.....so comfortable here by the fire

Make

So these classic red, blue and white checks never fail to work summer or winter, inside or outside, in family rooms, dens or informal sitting rooms.

The piping is cut on the cross (bias) and the frills are doubled – folded back on themselves. The back is zipped to be hard wearing enough for a family room. The zip is set into the cushion back, only just up from the bottom edge so that it doesn't matter too much which way up the cushion lands. Or you can set it into the piping for a neat finish and to avoid another line of pattern matching – in which case follow the same instructions but stitch the back to the front and set the zip in just after the frill has been made. With all checked fabrics it's important that the lines are kept throughout the making process and this applies as much to the frill and the piping as to the main cushion pieces. On the front, and on the back- and this isn't easy. To gain a perfect result with anything of course is a matter of accuracy – for us, cutting and stitching – and experience. If you aren't used to handling several layers of fabric and / or frills, do start with an all-over print that will be kind to you if you make any errors – even a mm or two 2 (1/16") off shows here. Then progress to small checks.

Any plain colours too will work beautifully for this frilled cushion, because it's undemanding and because the frill brings texture and movement. The only caveat is that the frill is doubled- turned back on itself so the fabric must be reasonably light and fine.

For this project we used a 45 cm (18") cushion pad and prefer the filling not to be too stuffed, so the cushion cover finished size is 48 cm (19 1/4").

If you're making up check, plaid or stripes, adjust these dimensions so that they fit well and look well on all four sides, even if it means making your own cushion pad to fit your cover.

We used 2 1/4 x fullness for the frill – allow slightly more or less depending on the thickness of the fabric and the look you're wanting. Any less than 1 1/2 x and there won't be enough to spread around the corners. If at all possible, cut the frill in one length – down the roll, or with as few joins as possible.

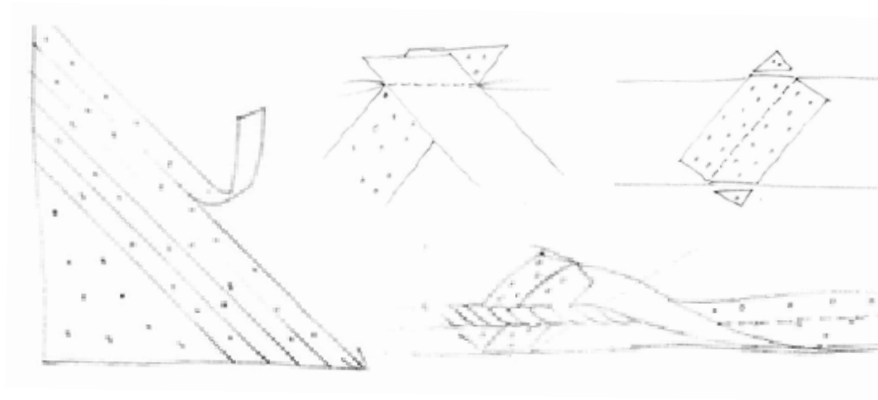
MATERIALS

Cushion pad:	45 cm x 45 cm	18 " x 18"
Fabric: 1.40 m for	Front	51 cm x 51 cm
	Back	51 cm x 51cm
	Back	51 cm x 5 cm
	Frill	4.5 m x 15 cm
Piping :	210 x 4.5 cm	85" x 1 3/4"
Piping cord:	no. 4	
One zipper:	40 cm	16"

Option: to set the zip into the piping – cut one piece only for the back and make it 1-2 cms (1/2") longer to give yourself a wider seam allowance for the top flap.

PREPARE

1. Cut out the cushion backs and front, placing any pattern to its best advantage. For the benefit of pattern, remember that the allowance for the closure is always added to the bottom of the back piece. Plan any stripes or checks to look good at each side – top to bottom as well as side to side – it's surprising just how often many 'squares' aren't. Fit the dimensions to the weave and the pad to the cover.
2. Cut out the piping and make it up. If it's going to be cut on the bias, then plan to cut it from one corner right across the fabric, with the backs and fronts above and beneath it. It should always be in one length for each cushion – however, as it's not a perfect world and should you need to join it, whether it's cut straight or on the bias, this is how..



Tip! To keep the piping pattern on track, make it slowly so the edges stay absolutely together. If the piping cord ridges show through at all, then line it first with a fine, pre-shrunk calico.

3. Join the frill pieces with flat seams, matching the pattern and to make a circle. Press the seams open.

MAKE THE ZIP

1. Place the larger cushion back flat on the worktable with the right side up. Lay the narrow strip along the bottom edge and 1.5 cms (5/8") apart. Pin these together to hold, then mark the opening to fit the zipper, leaving approx. 4 cm (1 3/4") from each side. Stitch from the marks to the edges on both side, then stitch across again, to secure.



2. Press the seams open and the seam allowances flat. Turn it over so that it is right side up, with the zipper opening towards you.
3. First undo the closure to about half way, then place it underneath the opening so that the lower fold - of the strip - is right against the teeth. Pin the ends beyond the teeth, to hold the zipper tape still.



Advice! If you prefer to take this in small stages, stitch this section now. Either take it to the machine and stitch close to the fold line, or hand stitch with small running stitches, back stitch or stab stitch. Use matching thread.

4. Close the zipper and bring the top flap over, so that the top edge just overlaps the lower fold - to cover the lower stitching line.

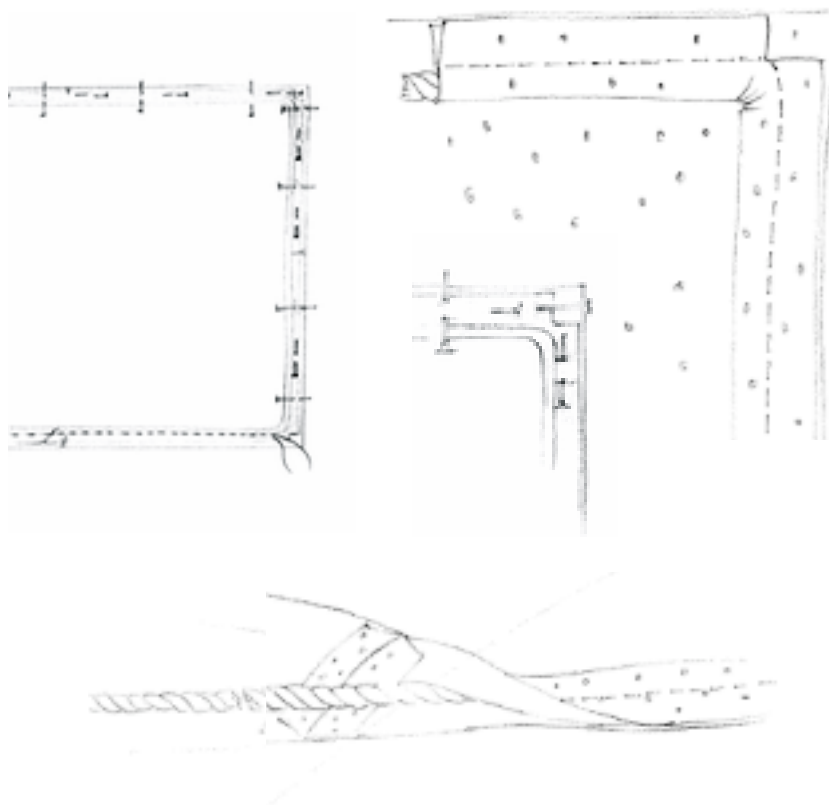


5. Stitch the zipper in place, then press the work lightly, and over the stitches to bed them in. Open it up by about 5 cms (2"). From the back, take a couple of stitches into each the four ends of zipper tape to secure them to the seam allowances.



TO MAKE THE PIPED FRONT

1. Place the cushion front flat on the worktable with the right side up. Pin the piping all around. Start at the centre bottom and work around to the first corner. Stop 1.5 cms (5/8") from the corner and snip the seam allowance to just before the piping stitching line. Pin a sharp corner in place.



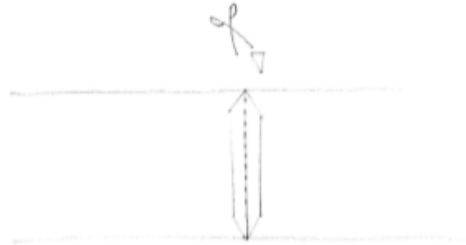
2. Continue pinning all the way around, pins along the cord and close, to hold it in place – checking always from the back that the pins are in straight, that they run along the edge of the stripe or check, or wherever planned. Position pins across the piping – these pins will stay in place whilst you're machining – holding the fabrics together and preventing them from slipping and moving.

3. To make the piping join, trim back the stitching on both sides of the piping and open out the fabric. Snip the piping cord just to one side of where the new join will be. Finger fold the fabric ends to both wrap around the cord and overlap diagonally. Cut it to fit, then stitch the join by hand or machine, finger press the seam flat. Pin the fabric back over the cord.

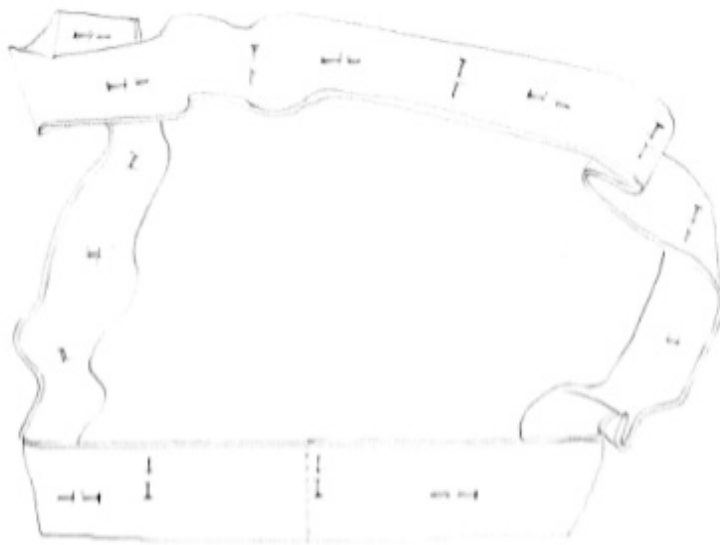
4. Stitch the piping cord on, keeping the stitches as close to the cord as possible, and closer than the cord stitching. Have a look to make sure it's stitched evenly, that the lines are straight, go back and redo any areas that could be closer, or better. Take out all pins, trim the loose ends and press the work.

MAKE THE FRILL

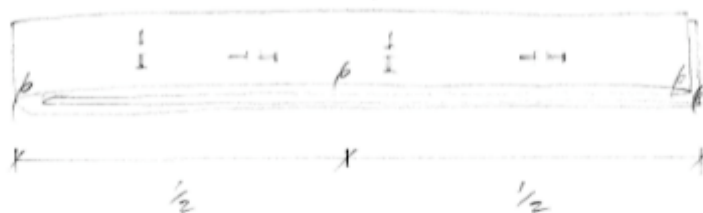
1. Trim away the edge of the joined frill seam (s) , within the seam allowance, at the top and the bottom.



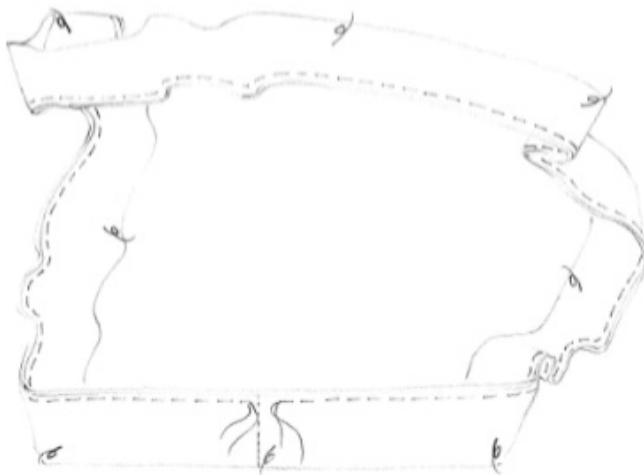
2. Fold in half length-wise, raw edges exactly together, and press the folded edge. Pin to hold.



3. Mark this piece into 8 sections. Fold in half and half again and stitch coloured tacks into the folded side of the frill (to keep them away from the gathering and stitching).



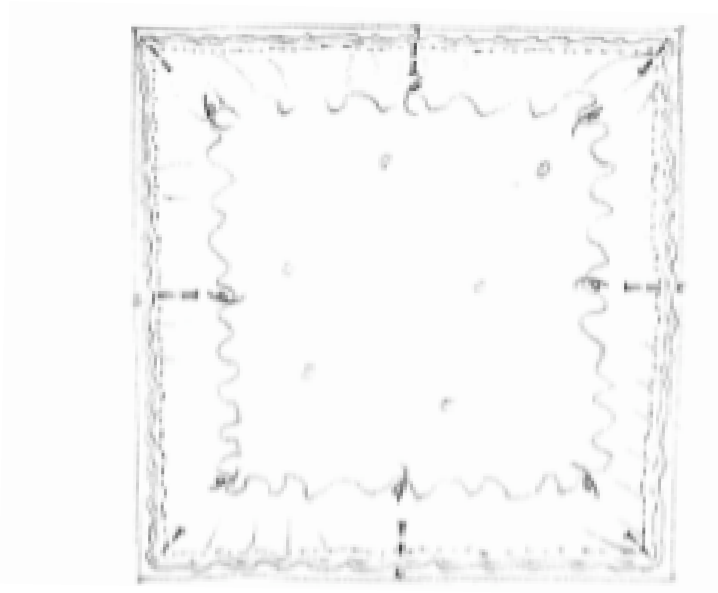
4. Stitch a gathering thread 1.4 cms (just under 5/8") from the raw edges- follow the checks. It's a good idea for anything other than a light weight fabric, to make new gathering threads for each section- it's just easier to pull up this way, and with less risk of breaking threads - especially anything tightly woven or matte.



5. Mark the cushion front with coloured tacks or snipped notches to note half way along each side.
6. Gather the frill slightly. Pin each of the coloured tacks to one corner and one half side mark.

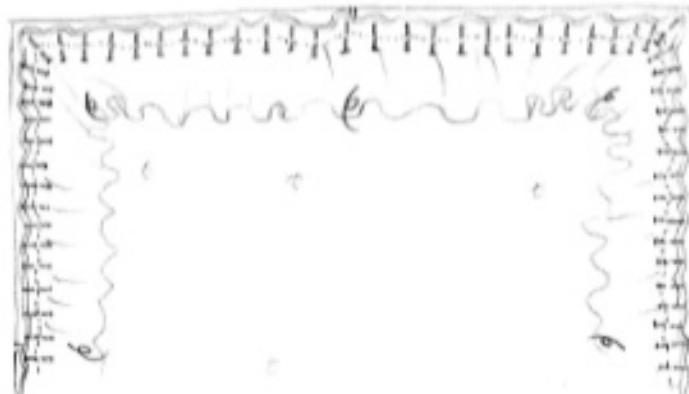


7. Pull up gathers evenly between each of these points, not to quite fit yet, but to keep the fabric under control whilst you're working. At the start of each section wind the threads around a pin in figure-of-eight style to secure them.



8. Working on one section at a time, pin the gathers into small even pleats. Start by pinning half way along the section, then half way between this and one end, and continue in this manner, always pinning into the middle of the last gap. By this, the pleats will be evenly spaced but in a natural way- perhaps not exactly the same all around, but not far off, which is good for an informal cushion / pillow. Expect to have a pin at least one every cm (1/4").

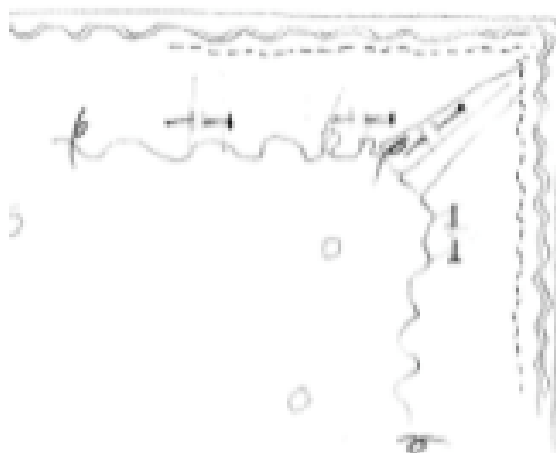
9. To stitch the frill on, work from the other side, so that you can follow both the checks and the piping stitching. Stitch just inside the last stitching line - i.e even closer to the cording and always on the line. A slightly skewed frill matters much less than compromising the straight line.



Advice! Pin one side completely first. Stitch this side on. Then do the opposite side and stitch this one on. Make one snip into the seam allowance at each corner, so that the frill can turn onto the adjacent side freely. Pin these sides. Pin the corner fabrics out of the way so that the stitching space at each corner is clear.

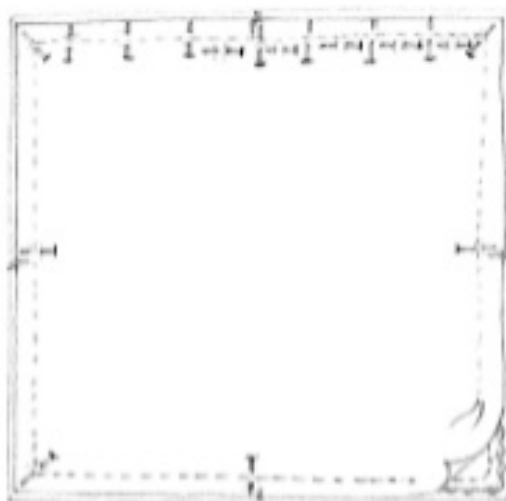
10. Take out the pins. Check from the front to make sure it all looks good, that no earlier stitching is showing and the frills haven't been caught up. Take out the gathering threads, press along the seam allowance to flatten the gathers.

Pin the frills down to keep them out of the way, and flatten the corners as much as possible.

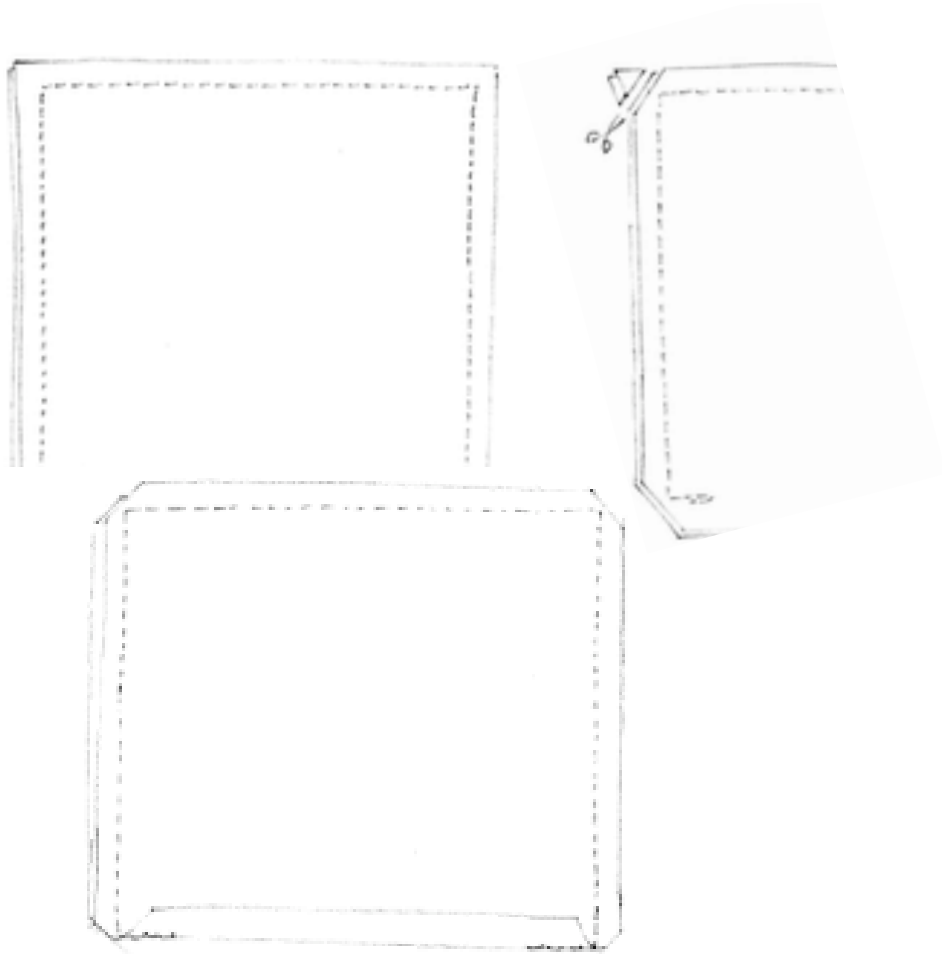


11. If the zip hasn't been done, then do it now, following the same method as shown at the beginning, for the back - overlock the bottom edge first - then return to step 12. If the zip is already set into the cushion back, place it onto the worktable right side up, with the cushion front over it, right side down.

12. Match and pin the corners and half way along each side, outside edges always together. If the cushion back is slightly long just trim it down. Open up the zip by about 5 cm (2"). Pin all the way around, close to the piping. Set these nose -to- tail, following the checks on the cushion back. These pins also keep the layers flat and stop them moving against each other and off pattern - add more further in if you need them. Also pin across the piping to keep the piping cord straight. Stitch all around, as close to the piping as possible.



13. Take out the pins and open the cushion out, look to see what's happened and if there is anything that needs to be re-done. If not, then snip across the corners close to the stitching line, to reduce any bulk. Press along the seam allowances to bed the stitches in and flatten the fabrics, tidy up the loose ends, and trim the seams. Finish them by over-locking or over-sewing .



14. Turn the cover right side out. Use a point turner to make the corners neat and square. Undo the frill pins and release them- straighten them with short sharp tugs - not too hard but enough to straighten the seam out, pull the corners out, and generally to make the cushion look good. Fit the cover over a pressing pad or roll if you need to press the fronts, and press the frills.

15. Fill the cover with your pad, and close it up. Really bash the cushion to the middle from opposite side seams - this forces the filling into the corners so that the cover looks properly filled and as smart as it should!



.... and in a quiet garden corner ...





An interior designers guide to home furnishings large and small, essential and ancillary, fun and serious. Our core projects are technically grounded and very carefully explained – these are the methods we use – they are reliable, honed, and proven for excellence. Clear enough for a relative beginner, challenging enough for an enthusiastic amateur and with the sort of tips professional makers appreciate.

For the work, the fabric is largely irrelevant, so we choose one, or another because, without fabric where would we be? Working with a great fabric that fulfils the practical criteria and looks in it's space is the best starting point. When the work looks this good, we know we've chosen well

PROJECT Ref: Theo: piped and frilled cushion

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