

A photograph of a window seat. The seat is a long, rectangular cushion in a teal or light blue color, resting on a white windowsill. The window above is white with a brass handle. Light blue, textured curtains are pulled back on either side of the window. The background wall is a neutral, light color.

# DESIGN & MAKE

---

BY HEATHER LUKE

*Simple window seat*

# Simple window seat



*Window seats are places of invitation, to come and to sit, to watch the world go by, or to chat, to read, in every case to relax. And so they need to be comfortable cushioned, soft, welcoming.*

*Here the seat is soft but not squidgy, it's in a spare space with stone floors and lime-washed walls, comfort is important but it needs to be understated.*

*It could have been padded, buttoned, piped, so many other things, but the point is, that for here, this is just right.*

## Design

This is without doubt the simplest window seat cover ever, yet it fits, it looks good, and it works. We often use it to fit a splayed window, as shown more clearly on page 7.

The fabric used here is a fantastic sea green cotton woven with hessian-sack-coloured jute, which gives it the slightly agricultural look and feel that we wanted. Any fabric that suits both your environment and the space is good to use. It doesn't have to be that hard-wearing - even when used a lot it doesn't need to stand up the wear and tear of a sofa, or armchair. It can disappear into the background, or become part of the melee, or the single splash of colour in the room, as it is here.

All window seats need to be removable and washable, simply because water ingress might be an issue, because very often seat is also used as a dumping ground, drinks get spilt, news-print rubs off and they are at usually at sticky finger height.

A good height for a comfortable perch is 42 - 45 cms ( 16 1/2" - 18" ) off the floor, so the cushion pad depth may be governed, limited by the structural depth or conversely the pad can be used to redeem something too low.

The pad should be soft but firm-ish. This one is made from a layer of coconut fibre approx. 3 cms ( 1 1/4" ) deep, wrapped around with cotton curtain interlining, and then with a lining cover over.

# Make

## MATERIALS FOR THE WINDOW SEAT PAD

If you don't already have one this is the standard formula that we use for this sort of pad. We also use wool batting for covering, which is by far the best material to use, it's just more expensive than the cotton, which also does a perfectly good job.

1. One piece of cashmere or coconut fibre mat 3-4 ms deep ( 1 1/4" - 1 3/4" )
2. Three pieces of interlining large enough to wrap right around.
3. One piece of lining to cover the pad completely

## TO MAKE

1. To make this pad, which will be approx. 5 cms ( 2" ) deep: measure the window seat, front to back, checking at each end and at the centre; measure across the front and across the back. Draw these dimensions onto paper, place the template onto the seat to see that it fits, that the angles are right and decide whether it can be reversible or not.

2. Or if the window seat is very clearly an odd shape, make a template in situ using newspaper and masking tape. Tear or cut the paper to fit.

3. Cut a piece of 3 -4 cms ( 1 1/4" - 2 3/4" ) deep cashmere or coconut fibre pad to the size of the template, less 5mm ( 1/4" ) all round.

4. Wrap the pad with a layer of interlining. Cut three pieces to nearly-size, and over size. Line the first piece up with the bottom edge of the back, take it up and onto the top, over to the front, under and back again, up to the top of the back gusset. Don't pull it too tightly. Trim along the top and stitch the raw edge down, with longish herringbone stitches.

\* This can make the pad slightly deeper than the seat - if your needs to fit within a space, or behind front lip, then don't overlap the back edge, just herringbone the raw edges together.

5. Repeat this with the next two layers, but this time cover the sides, envelope style. Again use herringbone stitches to stitch the raw edges together.

6. You're looking for a good shape with soft edges at the front, that sits well onto the template - it should be exactly of the same length but extend over the front slightly.

7. Cut a piece of lining and do the same. We find it's just as easy, takes about the same amount of time, and makes for the best fit to hand sew it all on - knowing it will fit, than to make a separate cover to sleeve on, risking that it won't.



# Make

## MATERIALS FOR THE COVER

### 1. Fabric

To find the amount of fabric required for the seat cover.

- a) For the front to back, you'll need 2 x the front to back measurement, 2 x the pad depth and 2 x seam allowances.
- b) For the side to side measurement - the width of the space plus 2 x seam allowances. Use the width at its widest point.
- c) For the side gussets, two pieces the depth of the pad, x the depth of the window seat plus seam allowance all around.

### 2. Closure

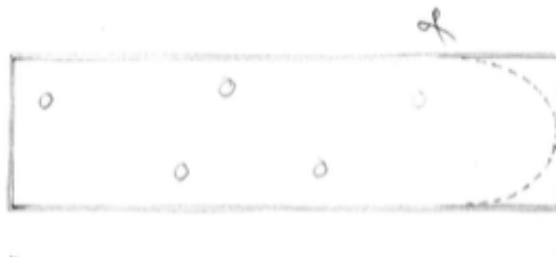
The choices are a zipper, hand stitching or popper tape.

## CUT OUT

1. Measure the width of the pad, whether its an existing one or newly made. Add 4 cms (1 3/4") for seam allowances. Measure the length and add 3 cms (1 1/4") for two seam allowances. Cut the fabric to these dimensions. If the seat is splayed, cut the fabric to the widest point, plus seam allowances.

## TO MAKE THE COVER

1. Place the piece of fabric onto the worktable right side up, press to remove any ruckles or creases. Fold the fabric over so that the backs are together. Pin all the way along.
  - a) If the seat is rectangular, stitch along the seam allowance for 5 cms (2") from each side.
  - b) If it's shaped, place the template over, centre it up, allowing for the depth of the pad at the front and back, and trim it to shape, adding on the seam allowances. Then stitch the back seam for approx. 5 cms (2") each side. Secure the ends well.
2. If you're using a zip insert it into the opening - by hand or by machine, or a combination of both. See Basic Techniques - Zipper. Leave it slightly open.
3. To make the side gussets: fold one in half lengthways, then just round the corners of one end, as shown. Cut the other side to match.



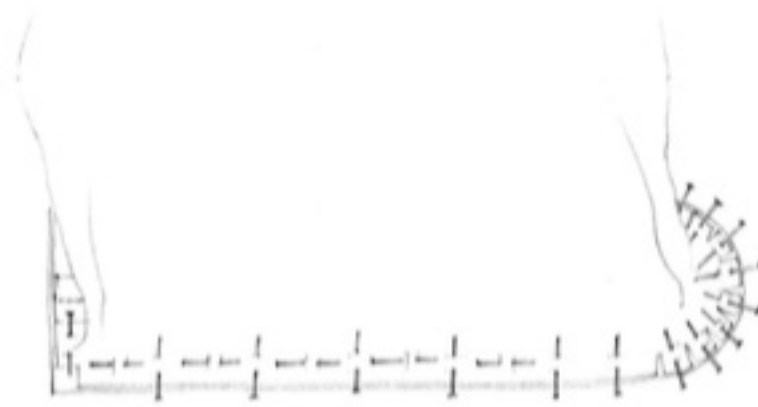
# Make

4. Snip into the seam allowances to denote the centre front and centre back. And mark the centre front of the cover - finger fold along the sides and snip into the fold line.

## FIT THE COVER TO THE SIDE GUSSETS

1. Working with one side at a time. Pin the centre back and front of the cover to the centre back and front of the side gusset. Pin the back section, snip into the corners, then working around, pin the whole cover side to the gusset.

**Tip!** The fit may not be exact - just little bit can make a difference. So, either use as many pins as are needed to ease any fullness. Or, if the fit is a bit tight, just move the cover in a bit - effectively reducing the size of the gusset just slightly.



2. Stitch all the way around, following the seam line, remove the pins.



# Make

3. Overlock or finish the seams. Press over a roll or a sleeve board.
4. Turn the cover out, press from the front, fill with the pad and that's it. Done.

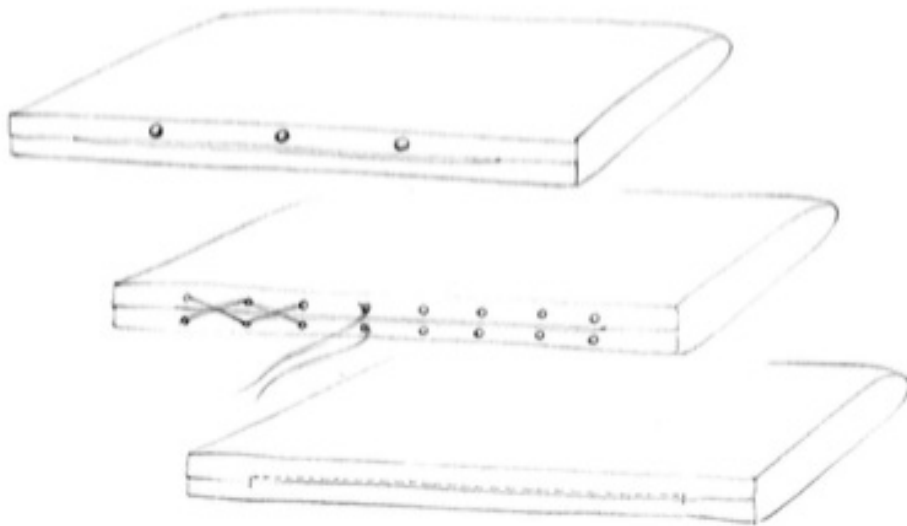
## OTHER CUSHION OPTIONS

This style of cushion is useful for spaces other than window seats - for example garden benches, stools and chairs. In some of these places the back closure is on show and even highly visible, in which case you might like to consider other, perhaps more decorative finishes and closures.

As always, test a piece of the fabric to make sure that what you want to do can be done with what you have to hand, then make the adjustments accordingly.

These artworks suggest just a few alternatives.

- a) Metal studs: bought in packets of varying numbers and sizes - in which case add a further 2 cms (3/4") to each side of the back. Underline ( see Basic Techniques) or support the inside back in some way if the fabric is quite lightweight.
- b) Metal eyelets and lacing : in which case add a further 2 cms to each side of the back , or enough to take the size of eyelet you've planned. Again, underline or support as necessary
- c) Hand stitching: show the stitches and make them interesting use linen or buttonhole thread in a contrasting colour. Yellow on denim perhaps?







*The great thing about this design is the way that any shape or splay of window recess can be so neatly accommodated – there is no need to worry about a piping line following an uneven form. Another reason we choose this design is because it most closely resembles a traditional horsehair pad. It works for all spaces where either firm and formal or squashy and very informal are not right. It does its job perfectly – it's comfortable yet non-intrusive.*





An interior designers guide to home furnishings large and small, essential and ancillary, fun and serious. It's good to contribute to our own home furnishings however little time or expertise we have, so small projects like this which are not so complicated and where the effect far outweighs the effort. Choosing a great fabric is the starting place, the better the fabric the more life it has of it's own the less work that needs to be done....

*Project Ref: Simple window seat*

All rights reserved. Please make copies only for personal and educational use, and then always in entirety and with full credit. Thank you.