

A Mask Is Better Than No Mask

**ALL WE HAVE IS
EACH OTHER**

A GUIDE TO CREATING FABRIC MASKS

Last Edited: March 29, 2020



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acknowledgements

© this zine is pieced together with lots of love and commitment for our collective wellbeing. we hope you are all reminded that in times of crisis, community in many ways have always shown up for one another. our hope is that these tools and whats comes with your creation are shared/ distributed with those around you.

© we want to acknowledge and center Disabled folks, ImmunoSuppressed/ ImmunoCompromised folks, Sick/Ill folks, Spoonies, Neurodivergent folks, Mad folks, Deaf/Hard of Hearing folks, Crip/Krip folks, Blind folks, Black folks, Indigenous folks, People of Color, Queer folks, Trans folks, Nonbinary folks, Elders, Youth, Undocumented folks, Incarcerated folks, Unhoused folks, Displaced folks, Sex Workers, Autonomists, Creators, Vendors, Giggers, Artists, First Responders (this includes but not limited to people especially in our Pods/ Circles, people outside of just performing wage labor professionalism), and so many more of us who hold our praxis in collective care.

© we want to acknowledge and thank community members already creating mutual aid* responses and organizing with each other to meet the demands of those around us.

*WHAT IS MUTUAL AID?

Mutual aid is when people get together to meet each other's basic survival needs with a shared understanding that the systems we live under are not going to meet our needs and we can do it together RIGHT NOW! Mutual aid projects are a form of political participation in which people take responsibility for caring for one another and changing political conditions, not just through symbolic acts or putting pressure on their representatives in government, but by actually building new social relations that are more survivable.

definition from bigdoorbrigade.com

© we want to acknowledge the emotions and thoughts that come with reading this zine, being in this process and any action(s) you might take to tend to them.
PACE

© we acknowledge that face masks (specifically N95, 3M & other respiratory masks) may be temporarily unavailable due to high demand. we encourage folks to not hoard and keep in mind the people who have tested positive for the Coronavirus (symptomatically/ asymptotically), people experiencing flu-like symptoms, folks in outbreak zones, sick/ ill folks, older folks, health care workers, care workers, and so forth.

© if you feel ENTHUSIASTIC and MOTIVATED by the end of this, you are invited to create masks based on your personal and collective needs, capacity and interests.



IMAGE FROM IG @NOBONZO

best practices



◎ WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE (AND WEAR) YOUR OWN CLOTH FACE MASK (AND HOW TO DO IT)

The sudden increase in demand for “Personal Protective Equipment” (PPE) and the interrupted supply lines in China have led to a critical shortage of small particle filtering face masks (N-95s) and fitted rectangular sneeze guards (“surgical masks”).

News reports, appropriately seeking to reserve limited supplies of these disposable items for medical institutions, have been asking people not to purchase these items. Public officials have been quoted suggesting - inaccurately - that face coverings can't help prevent the spread of this new virus. The truth is more complicated: COVID19 is spread from person-to-person in droplets of moisture, mucus and saliva from people with infections.

Coughing, sneezing, and even normal breathing put these virus particles into the air. One sneeze can put out thousands of droplets. People standing less than 6 feet away may become covered with these virus particles while they are still in the air. After the droplets fall, the virus particles can remain active for up to nine days. Infection occurs when someone breathes in airborne droplets, or when they touch their mouth, nose or eyes with hands covered in virus particles that have fallen out of the air onto counters, hand rails, floors or other surfaces.

Wearing a face mask stops people from becoming infected in two ways: (1) By blocking most airborne droplets filled with virus from being inhaled (2) By stopping the wearer from touching their own mouths and noses. Studies have shown that medical professional using surgical face masks correctly get 80% fewer infections than those who don't.

◎ SO WHY THE MIXED MESSAGES?

FIRST: Protection only comes when the masks are used properly. They must be put on clean, taken off carefully, and paired with rigorous hand washing, and the discipline not to touch the face.

SECOND: Gaps around the masks and between fiber (even in commercial surgical masks) are too large to block all viruses. Sneeze and cough droplets are usually between 7 and 100 microns. Surgical masks and some cloth masks will block 7 micron particles. The COVID19 virus particles are 0.06 to 0.14 microns.

Source: <https://www.instructables.com/id/DIY-Cloth-Face-Mask/>

◎ SO WHY SHOULD YOU MAKE YOUR OWN FACE MASKS?

1) In the event you become sick, having a supply of masks at home will give some level of protection to friends and family while you seek medical advice. It will certainly be *better than no mask at all* (see research notes).

2) By making your own and or for community, you will be decreasing demand on limited supplies of industrially manufactured, disposables, which are desperately needed by hospitals and nursing homes.

3) These comfortable, curved shaped masks rest closer to the face, with fewer gaps, than rectangular surgical masks.

4) Our homemade designs are washable, making them environmentally friendly.

Source: <https://www.instructables.com/id/DIY-Cloth-Face-Mask/>

◎ A MASK IS BETTER THAN NO MASK:

“While fabric masks will not offer the full protection of a surgical mask, regular fabric masks (referring to ones without filter pockets) have shown to be able to capture at least 50% of 0.02 micron Bacteriophage MS2 particles (5 times smaller than the coronavirus).”

Source: <https://smartairfilters.com/en/blog/best-materials-make-diy-face-mask-virus/>

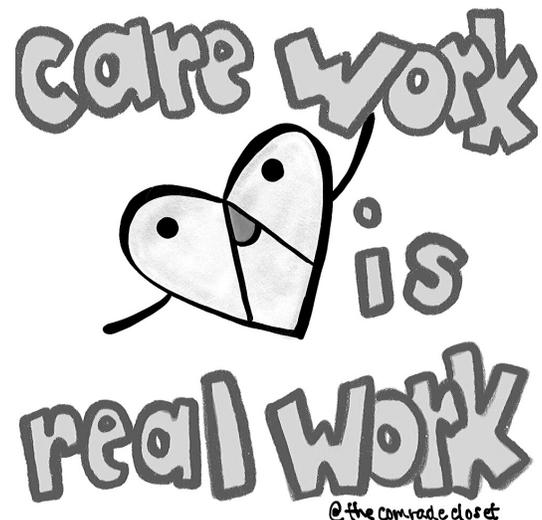


IMAGE FROM IG @THECOMRADECLOSET

@the.comrade.closet

materials

FABRIC

- **DO USE:** 100% Cotton, Quilting cottons or Cotton flannels. Cotton/polyester blends may have additional properties of repelling water, making them better barriers to keep droplets from soaking through outer layers. Fabric should be breathable and tightly woven. We understand that buying fabric isn't accessible to everyone so if all you have is a clean 100% Cotton activist shirt from that one campaign, use that ♥
- **DO NOT USE:** Vintage, stretchy, knit, sequined, velvet, metal, plastics, interfacing or unknown material.
- Use different fabric for the "inside" and "outside" of the mask to prevent the wearer from accidentally putting on the side that has been exposed to germs on/against their face. For safety precautions, please do not use elastics because they contain latex which can be harmful and even deadly to people with latex allergies.

EAR LOOPS/ OVER THE HEAD BANDS

- We have been using thick elastic cord with a thickness of 3mm. (see image attached on the next page) to create ear loops. The material is soft, stretchy and comfortable over the ears.
- **ALTERNATIVES:** elastic, a shoelace, or sewn fabric to tie around the ears or behind the head.
- **AVOID:** hair bands or rubber bands as they can be irritating after long wear.
- **NOTE:** We have seen feedback from nurses that tight elastic has been irritating and there is a preference for tie-on masks

NOSE WIRE

- 2 - 4 twist ties, paper clip, decorative wire, or picture wire.
- **NOTE:** For maximum effectiveness of the cloth mask insert a nose wire to ensure it is secure on your face.

FILTER

- *No matter what pattern you are using, in order to get the most out of your mask, it's super important to leave a pocket for a filter. That way, if and when filters become available, you can insert one into your mask.*
- We recommend the highest filtering style of hvac filters. We used the Filtrete Advanced Allergen coded Purple because packaging states that it filters viruses and has a level of 1500 (but if you can find higher, go for it!) These filters are not manufactured or marketed for mask use but have been generally working for us.

[Youtube: DIY face mask N95 shaped, easy sew possibly .3 micron filter volunteer respirator hospitals make](#)

- **ALTERNATIVES:** A couple dryer sheets, kitchen paper towels, cheap non-waterproof reusable grocery bags, or non woven sewing interfacing. You may see Vacuum filters suggested as filters, however because of their thickness it makes it harder to breathe through them.



preparation

Begin by **WASHING** your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds.

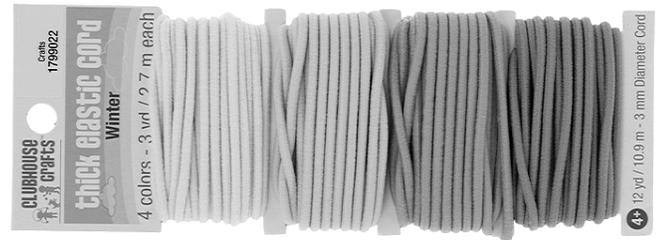
Clear and **CLEAN** the space you are working from free of food, smoke, pets, and kids.

WASH the fabric with **UNSCENTED** detergent.

Utilize **NEW** and **UNUSED** fabric if you are distributing the mask to places with strict PPE requirements.

(for example hospitals or clinics)

For extra cleanliness, **BOIL** the mask for 10 minutes once you complete them and let them air dry.



Available at Craft Stores

REMEMBER

- **THESE ARE NOT 100% VIRUS PROOF.** Please don't make that promise. Regardless of what anyone claims these are not "CDC approved." The patterns and materials suggested in this zine are the best that we can find right now and a form of community based harm reduction at best.
- **LEAVE SPACE FOR A FILTER!** In order to make masks effective for the long term and be used for all folks, leave an opening for the filter.
- **HAVE A LIST READY OF MATERIALS USED.** In the case people have specific allergies and responses to said materials.
- **DON'T ASSUME EVERYONE WANTS A MASK.** Ask those you are in relation with and in community with if they need one.
- **LOOK-UP AND ASK ABOUT MASK MAKING EFFORTS IN YOUR AREA:** There are possibly already coordinations underway or you may find there aren't any/there are gaps and you want to start coordinating.



Available at Target

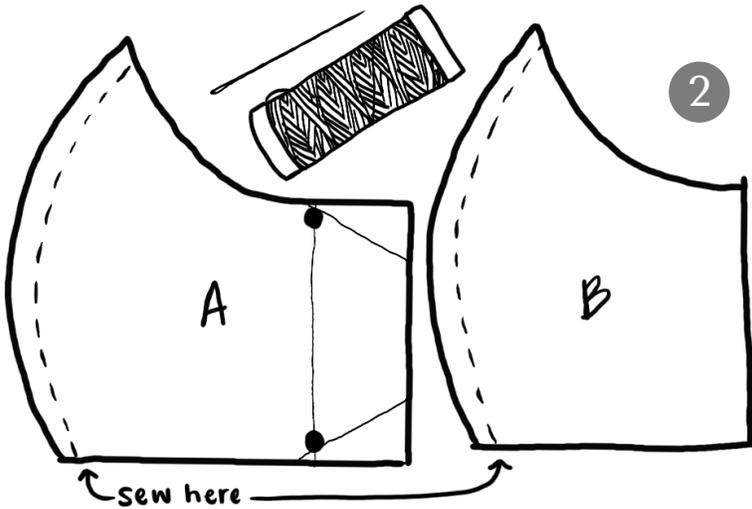
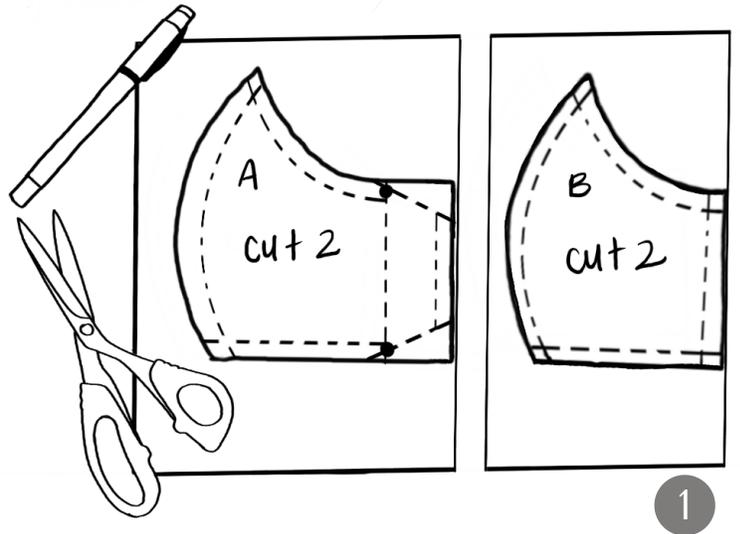
step by step sewing guide

STEP 1:

After you decide what size pattern you will use, cut them out, and pin them on fabric that you've folded in half.

This should give you two pieces of fabric for pattern A and two pieces for pattern B.

Draw the 2 dots from pattern A onto the back of the A fabrics. Then pencil a line in between, going down from dot to dot.



STEP 2:

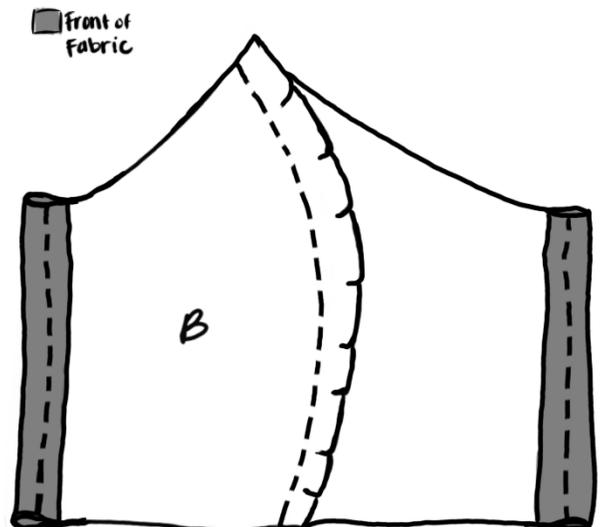
Grab both pieces of A and with the front of the pieces of fabric facing each other, sew alongside the curved bill.

Repeat for B

STEP 3:

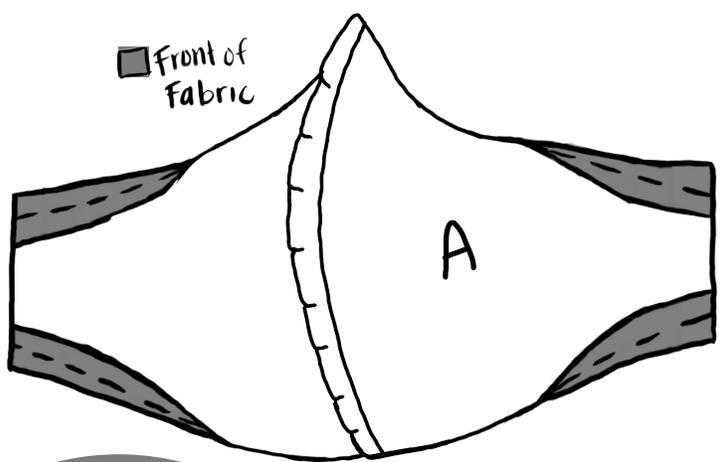
Slightly clip the curved seams on the curved bill of A & B at about 1/2" intervals. Make sure not to cut down to the stitches.

Then, fold the straight edge of B toward the back side of the fabric and stitch downward.





4



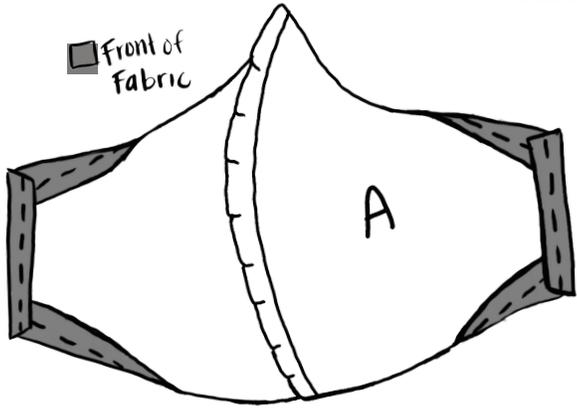
STEP 4:
 Grab A and fold the top and bottom corners inward so it creates a slight diagonal shape.

Use the dotted lines on the pattern and the transferred dots as guides.

STEP 5:
 Still on A, fold the straight edge side about 1/8" and stitch downward.

(Ironing helps keep these pieces in place.)

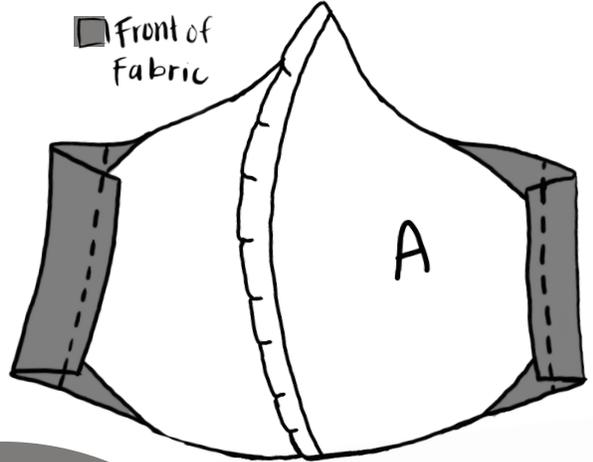
5



STEP 6:
 Still on A, fold the angled stitched edge towards the penciled line and stitch down again.

Leave enough room for the elastic/string to fit through the sleeves.

6

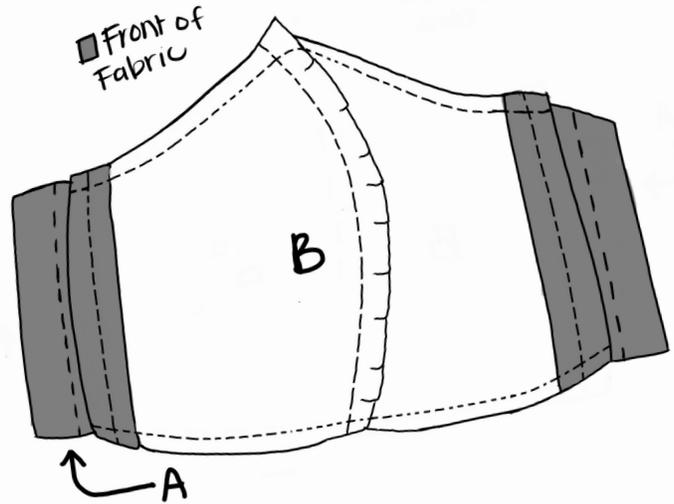


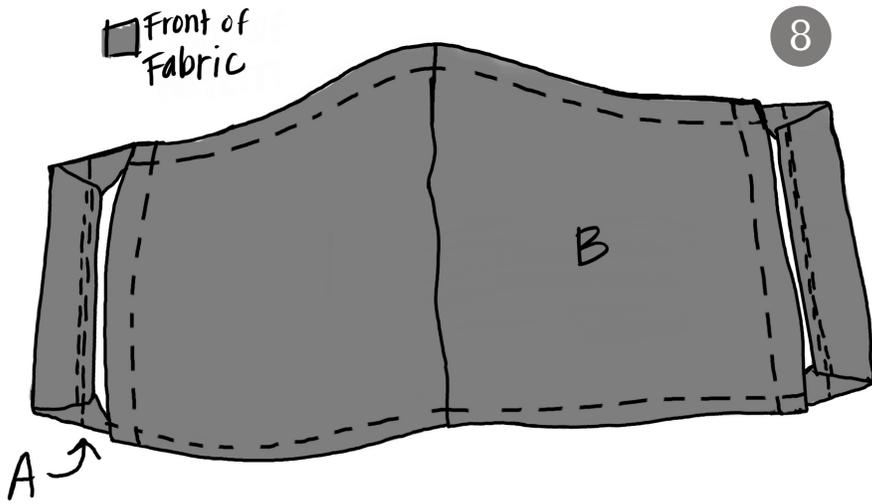
STEP 7:
 Grab both A & B and put together the front of the fabrics -- make sure you align them along the middle seam.

Sew along the top and bottom of the mask in order to secure it.

(Only sew over B, making sure not to close the sleeves in A)

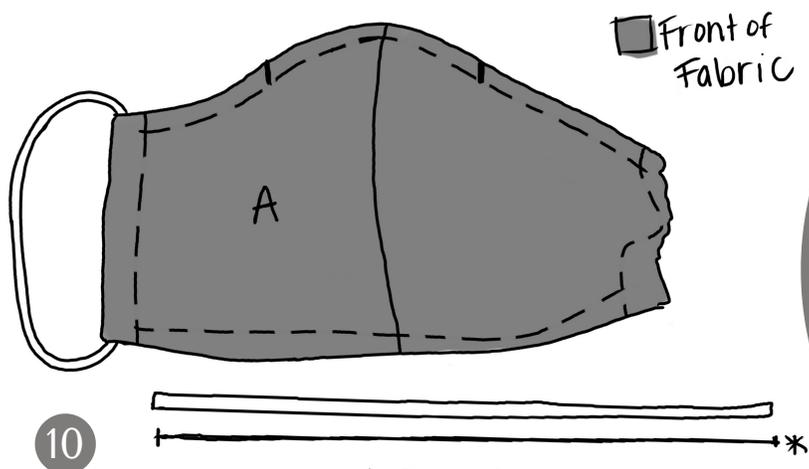
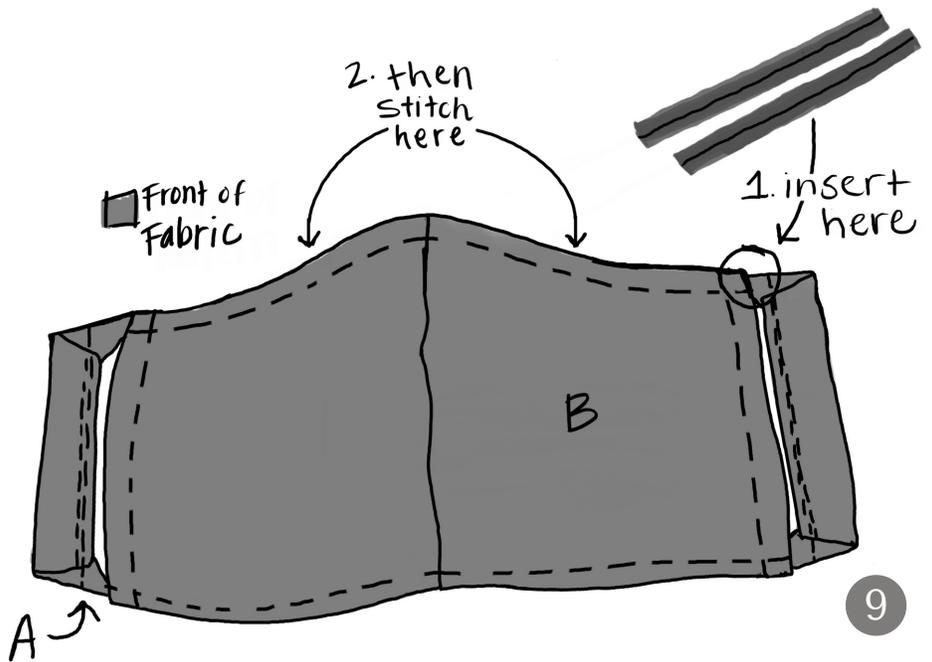
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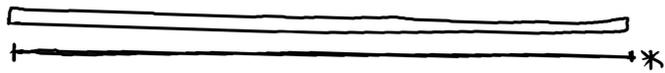


STEP 8:
 Turn your mask right side out, and once again, sew along the top and bottom of the mask to secure it when it is washed.
 (Make sure not to sew over the sleeves in pattern A)

step 9:
 (1) Use two to four twist ties to insert them in between the top stitches and align in the middle.
 (2) Once centered, secure the ties by stitching the ends



step 10:
 If you are using elastic, measure 9 to 11 inches and loop it through the sleeves. If you are using a string or a shoe lace, measure enough to tie from behind the top and bottom of the head.
 (if it's yours, try it on for fit and adjust accordingly)



cut 9 to 11 inches

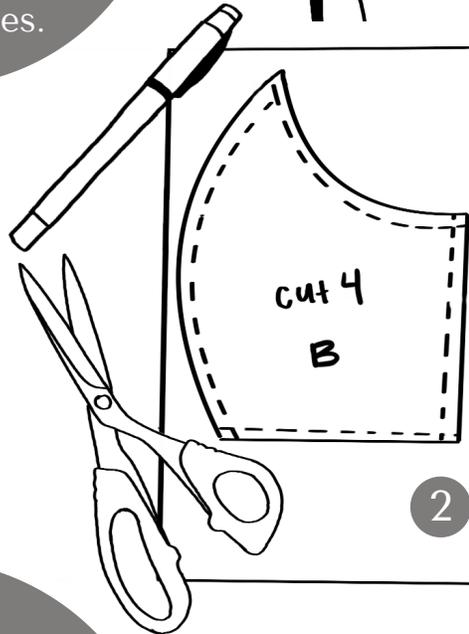
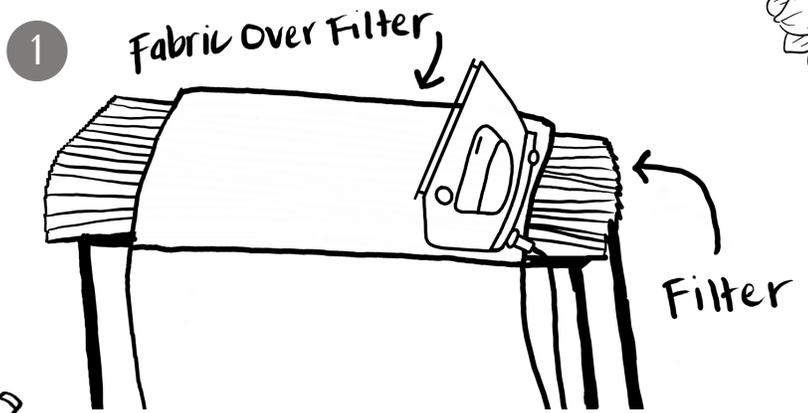
*Not to scale



filter sewing guide

STEP 1:

If you are using the suggested filter, unravel it, and flatten it out. Once you have it flattened out, put a fabric over it and iron out the ridges.



STEP 2:

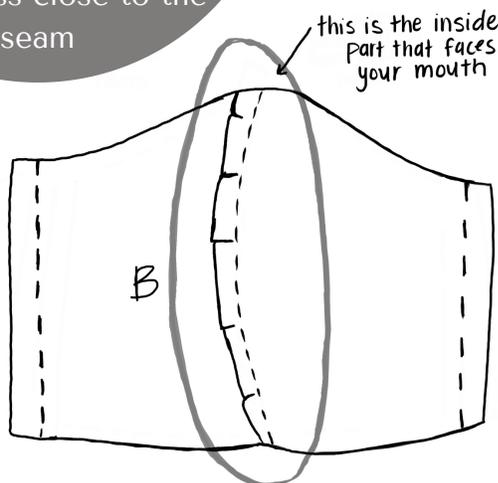
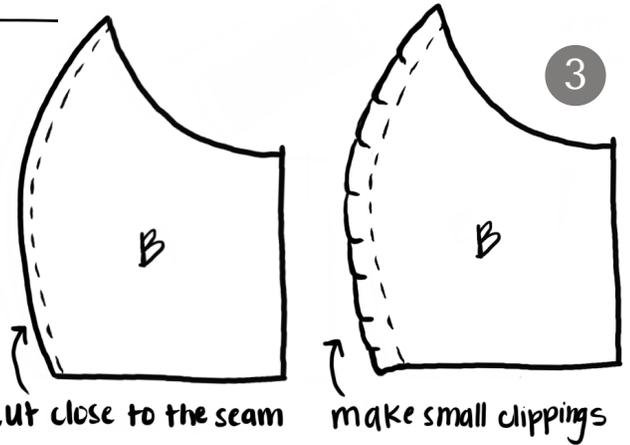
Outline your pattern and cut 4 pieces per mask.

Put two pieces together and sew alongside the curved bill

STEP 3:

On the first set, clip the curved seams at about 1/2" intervals. Be careful not to cut down down to the stitches.

On the other set, cut off the excess close to the seam



STEP 4:

Open both pieces and align the middle seams to each other.

Sew the two straight edges together.

Adjust it inside your mask & you're ready to go

****THIS IS A SUGGESTED FILTER PATTERN THAT WILL LIFT YOUR MASK AWAY FROM YOUR LIPS MAKING IT EASIER TO TALK****
TO FIT THE FILTER INTO THE LARGE MASK, CUT THE SAME SIZED PATTERN ABOUT 1/2 AN INCH INWARD ALL AROUND AND IT SHOULD FIT INSIDE THE PATTERN. OTHERWISE, ADJUST ACCORDINGLY.

IF ALL THIS SOUNDS LIKE WAY TOO MANY EXTRA STEPS, JUST DO A GENERAL RECTANGLE CUT OUT AND INSERT IT INTO YOUR MASK.



*WASH YOUR MASK AFTER EVERY WEAR

*IT IS RECOMMENDED TO HAVE TWO MASKS PER PERSON SO YOU CAN SWAP THEM OUT WHILE ONE WASHES. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT WITH THE CURRENT URGENCY, HAVING ONLY ONE MASK MIGHT BE MORE REALISTIC FOR FOLKS.

*DO NOT WASH THE FILTER. REMOVE IT BEFORE YOU WASH THE MASK, THEN REINSERT IT ONCE IT DRIES UP.

*BECAUSE THERE ISN'T A LOT OF RESEARCH DONE FOR "ALTERNATIVE FILTERS" PLEASE USE DISCRETION ON REPLACING YOURS. WE WILL UPDATE THE DOCUMENT IF/WHEN THAT CHANGES.

*LASTLY, REMEMBER THAT EVEN WITH A MASK, YOU SHOULD STILL PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING.



care and wear

how to put on and remove a mask

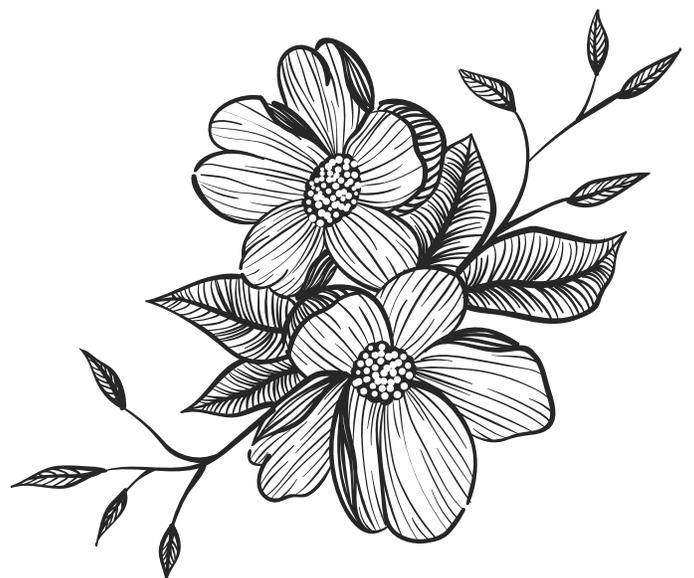
PUTTING ON

1. For **20** seconds, Wash your hands with soap and water OR if no access, rub hand sanitizer before touching the mask.
2. Lift up your mask to make sure there are no obvious tears or holes on either side.
3. Determine which side of the mask is the top. The side of the mask with a high ridge and a bendable edge is the top and is meant to mold to the shape of your nose.
4. Determine which side of the mask is the front. The side with the loop holes is usually the front and should face away from you, while the inside touches your face.
5. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using. Face Mask with:
 - **EAR LOOPS:** Hold the mask by the ear loops. Place a loop around each ear.
 - **TIES:** Bring the mask to your nose level and place the ties over the crown of your head and secure with a bow.
 - **BANDS:** Hold the mask in your hand with the nosepiece or top of the mask at fingertips, allowing the headbands to hang freely below hands. Bring the mask to your nose level and pull the top strap over your head so that it rests over the crown of your head. Pull the bottom strap over your head so that it rests at the nape of your neck.
6. Mold or pinch the ridge to the shape of your nose.
7. Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin.

REMOVING

1. For **20** seconds, Wash your hands with soap and water OR if no access, rub hand sanitizer before touching the mask.
2. Avoid touching the front of the mask. The front of the mask is contaminated. Only touch the ear loops/ties/band.
3. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using. Face Mask with:
 - a. **EAR LOOPS:** Hold both of the ear loops and gently lift and remove the mask.
 - b. **TIES:** Untie the bottom bow first then untie the top bow and pull the mask away from you as the ties are loosened.
 - c. **BANDS:** Lift the bottom strap over your head first then pull the top strap over your head.
4. Wash your mask.
5. For **20** seconds, Wash your hands with soap and water OR rub hand sanitizer before touching the mask.

<https://www.sfcddcp.org/communicable-disease/healthy-habits/how-to-put-on-and-remove-a-face-mask/>



resources

PRINTABLE FILE TO DISTRIBUTE HERE

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DAkx_mR2eSs64sGLtBBJ9Hi0oaeuHUVa?usp=sharing

COLLECTIVE CARE IS OUR BEST WEAPON AGAINST COVID-19

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uP49OQGhosfBN4BOYQvyy_Mu3mpCSOYzipI3LksC-S8/edit

PATTERN ORIGINALLY FROM

<https://www.instructables.com/id/DIY-Cloth-Face-Mask/>

FABRIC MASK BEST PRACTICE

https://docs.google.com/document/d/15Y2_5fFWuog_o4q3CjhpdfFC8LXrST3_KcfBPjPwCzI/edit

TOOLKIT MUTUAL AID 101 #WEGOTOURBLOCK

[https://gdoc.pub/doc/e/2PACX-](https://gdoc.pub/doc/e/2PACX-1vRMxV09kdojzMdyOfapJUOB6Ko2_1iAflm8ELelgma2Iwt5HoTqPIQXadFO1eZcOySrPW6VtU_vey.p)

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MUTUAL AID with AOC & Mariame Kaba

#wegotourblock

WHAT MUTUAL AID IS

“We must cooperate to survive!”
- P. Kropotkin

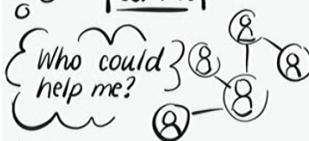
SOLIDARITY!
NOT CHARITY.



AID & ACTIVISM & EDUCATION

HOW TO BUILD A MUTUAL AID NETWORK

① Build a pod map



② Connect with those folks

Can you help?
Sign me up!

③ Find a buddy to work with



④ Identify your support zone



⑤ Start small (5-20 people)



⑥ Establish comms channels (multiple!)



⑦ Get the convo started!

⇒ needs
⇒ goals
⇒ what else?!

⑧ HELP!



STAY CAUTIOUS!

1. Grocery shop at non-peak hours

2. Practice social distancing

3. Avoid public transit

4. Clean surfaces often



Image By: Monica Trinidad

pieced together by:

YESSI (THEY/THEM)

AN UNDOCUMENTED QUEER FEMME AND ORGANIZER IN LOS ANGELES. THEY HAVE BEEN MAKING THESE MASKS AND WOULD LOVE TO SEE HOW THEY TURN OUT IF Y'ALL MAKE THEM! CONNECT WITH THEM VIA INSTAGRAM @YESSIXUNT.

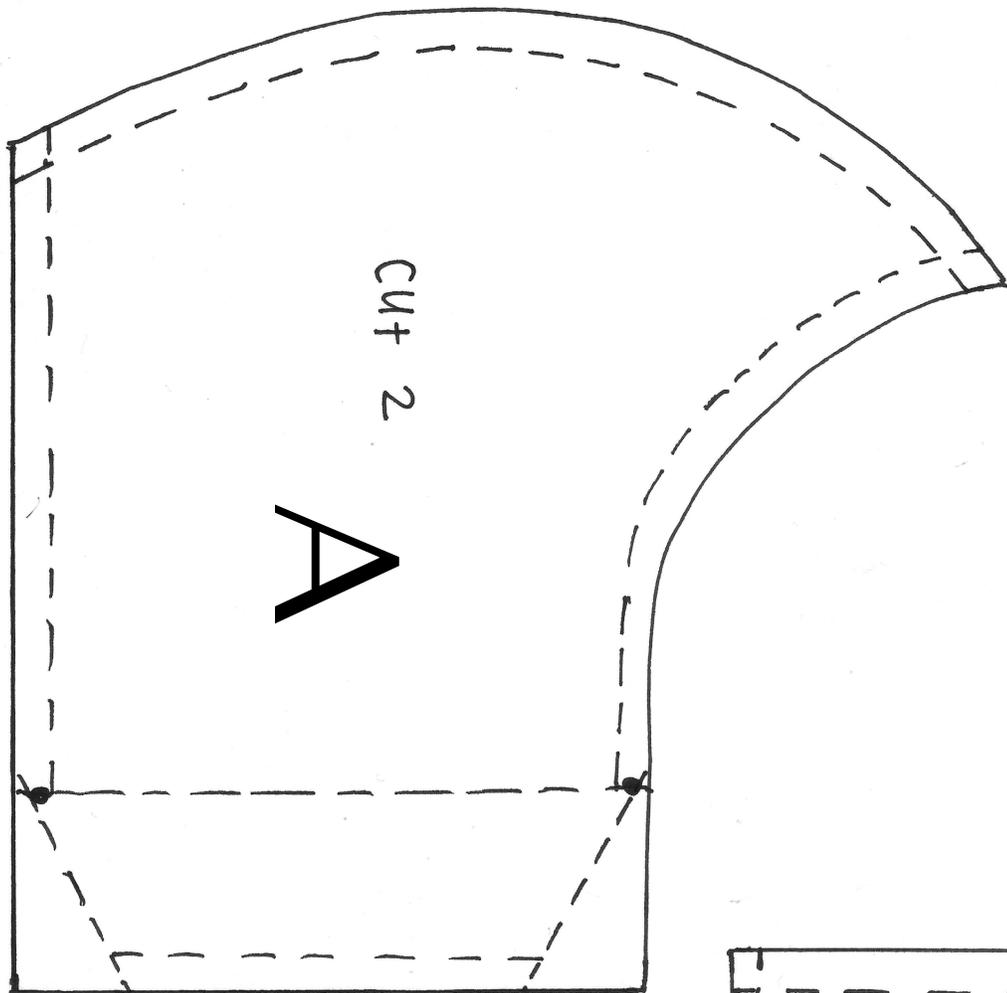


N (THEY/THEM)

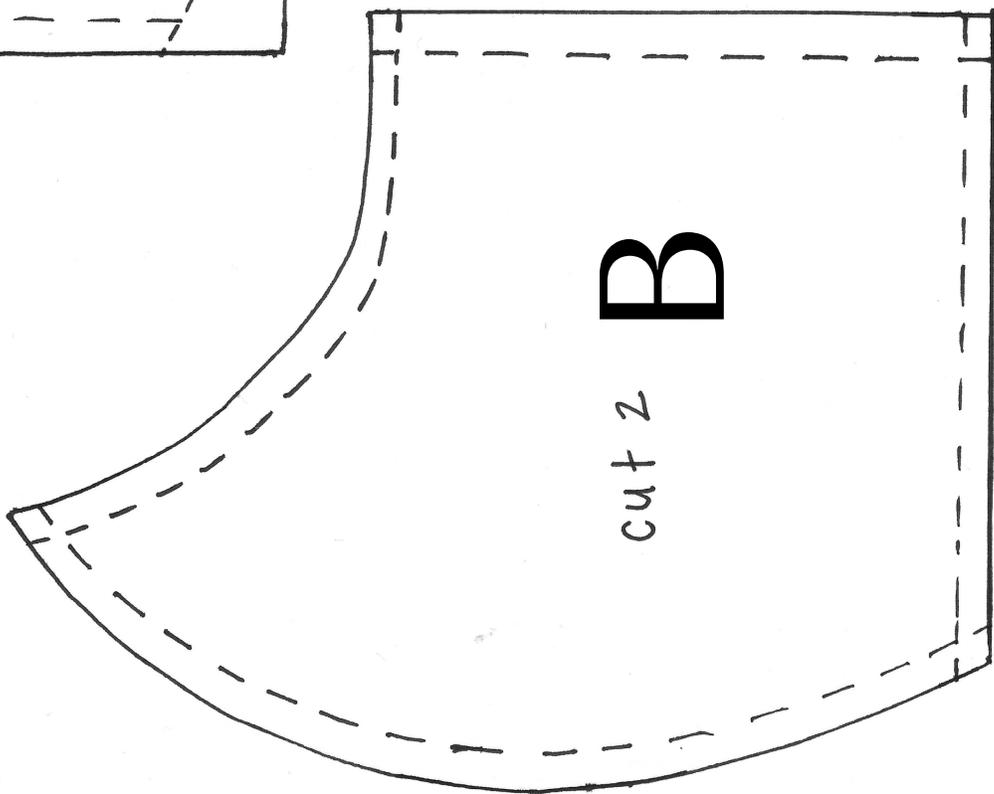
A NEURODIVERGENT IMMUNOSUPPRESSED QNB ON TONGVA TERRITORIES. CONNECT WITH THEM VIA INSTAGRAM @NARUGIT.

Small Pattern

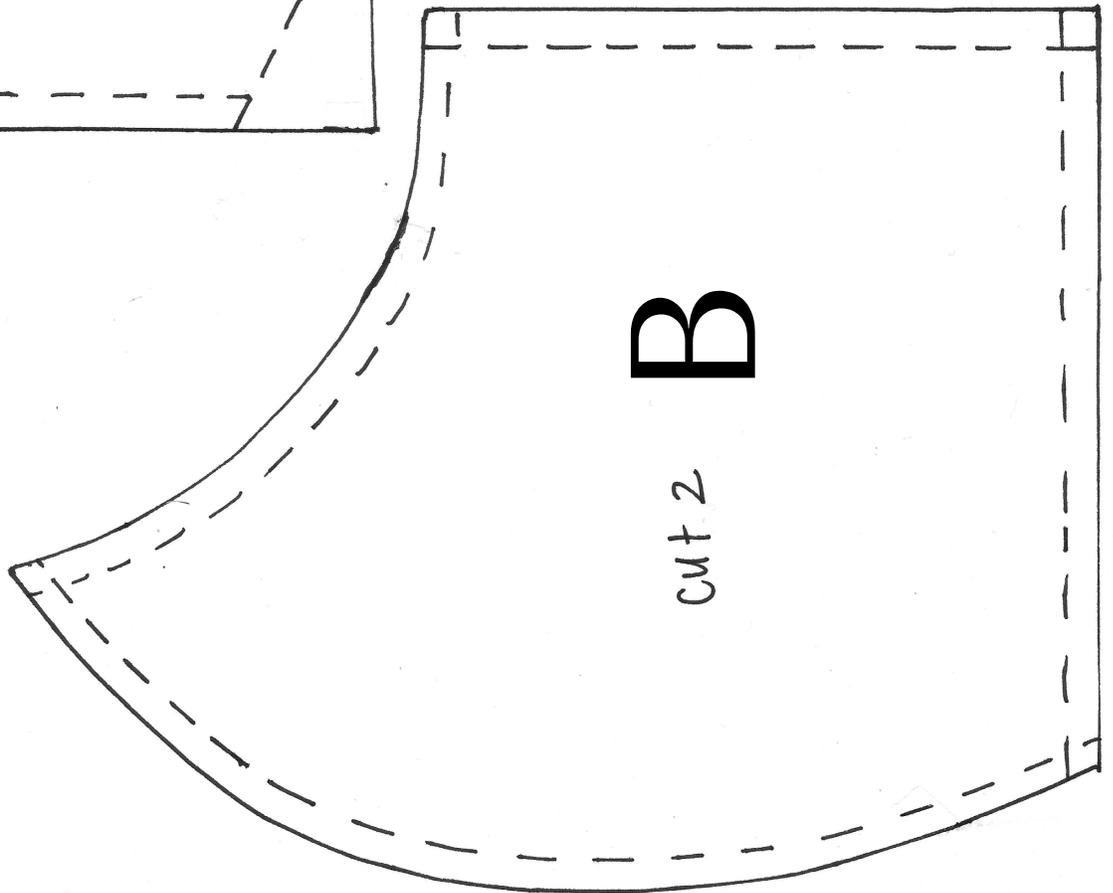
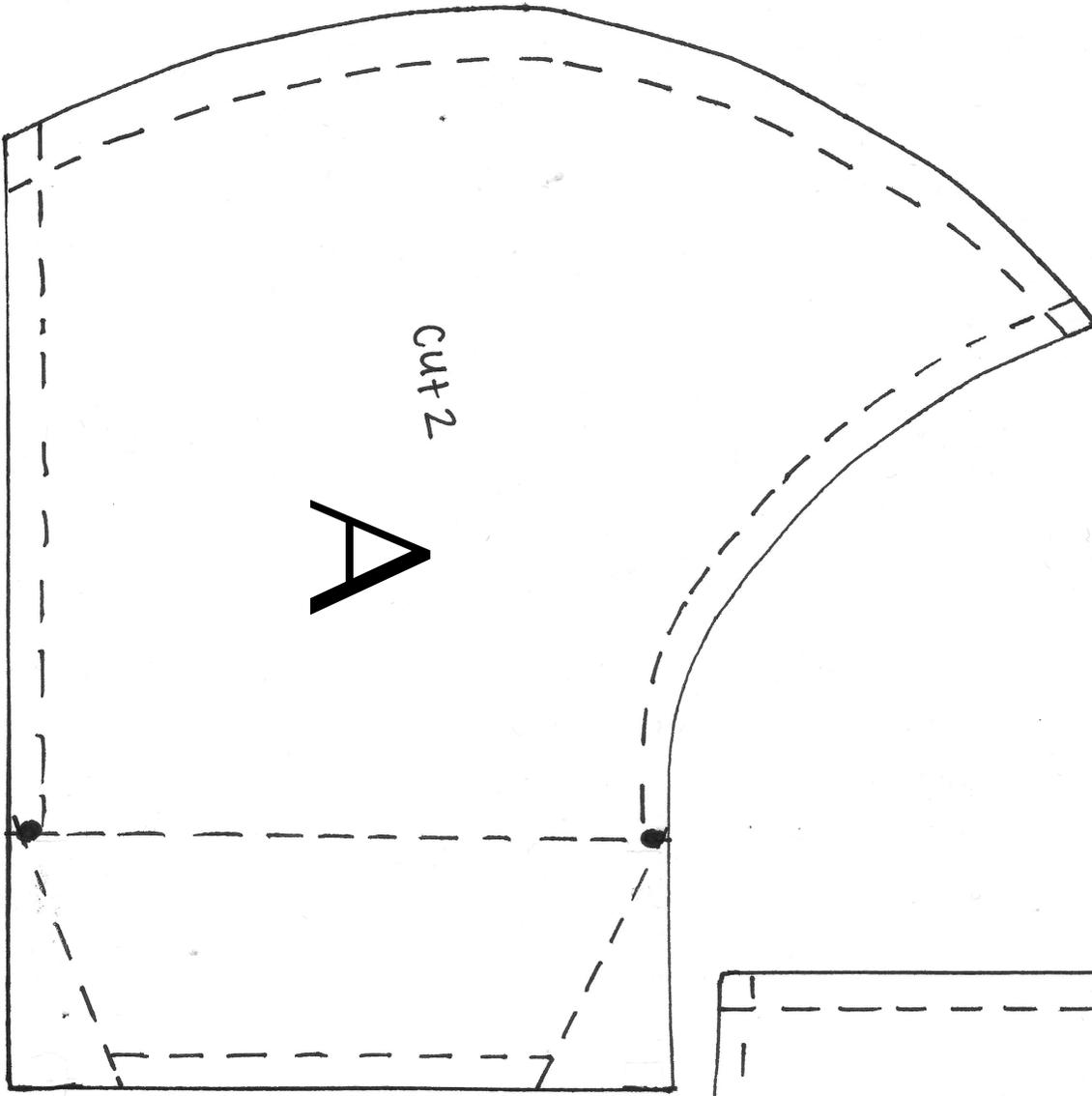
print on single sided page



2 inches



Medium Pattern



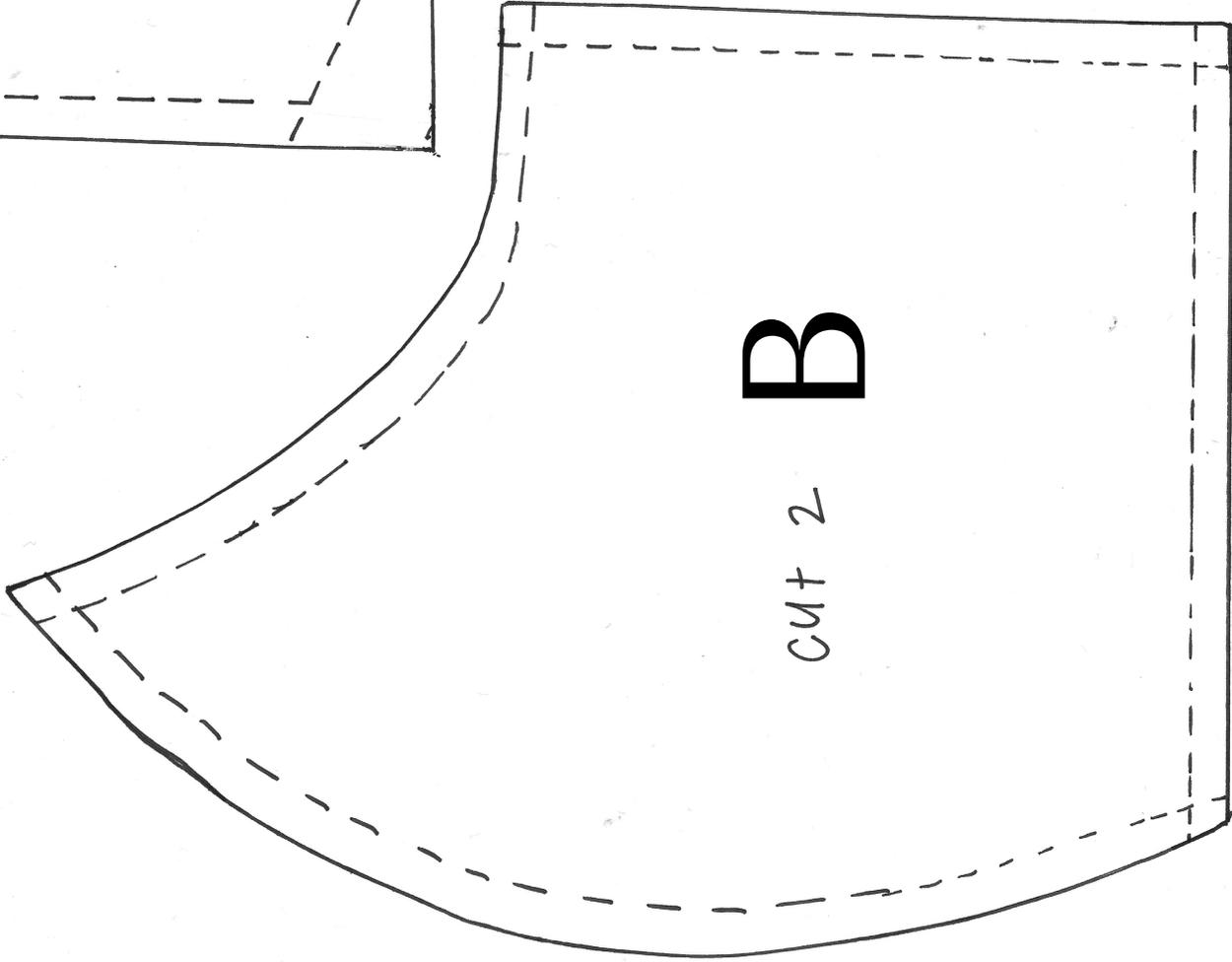
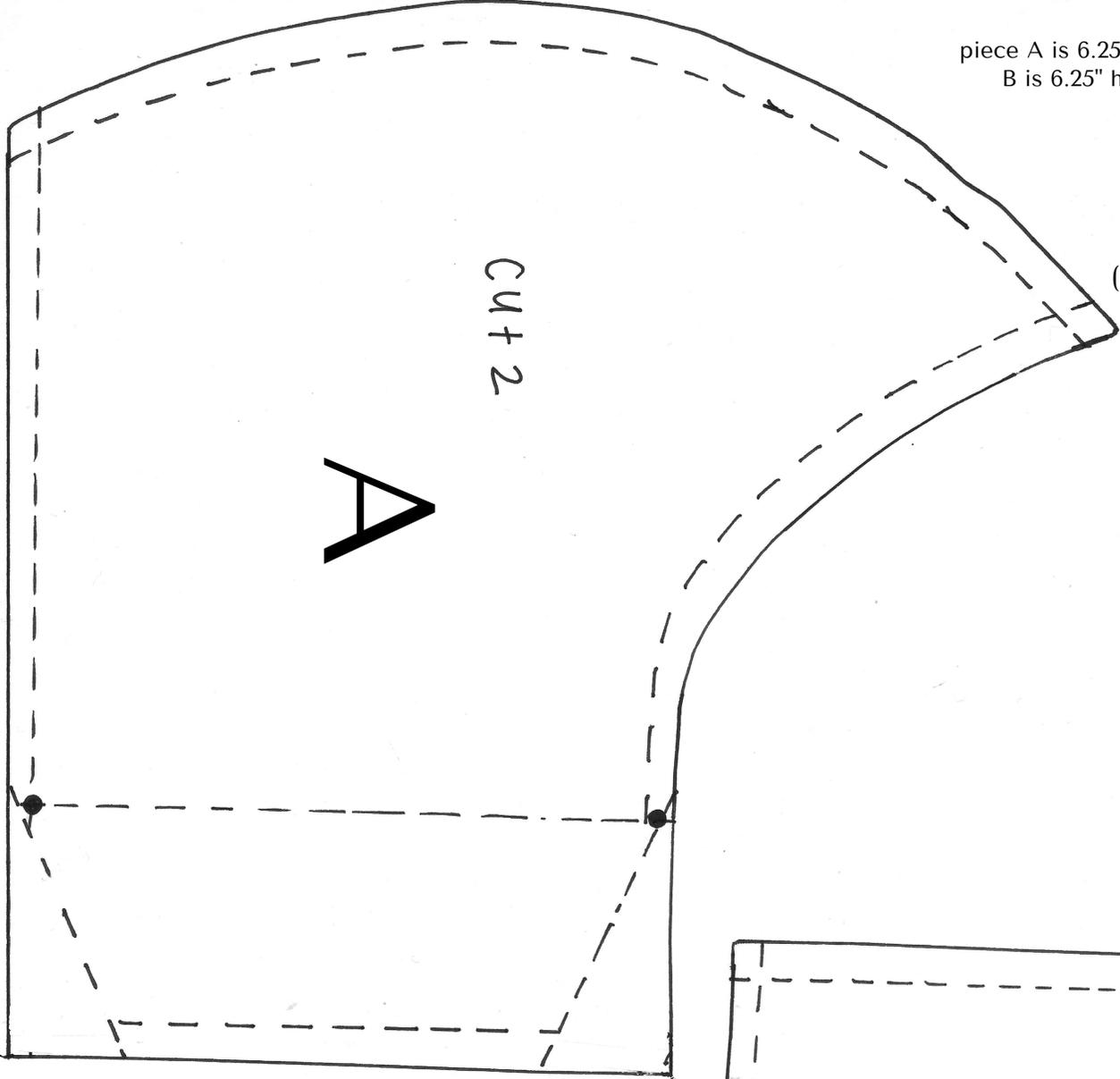
print on single sided page

piece A is 6.25" h x 6.25" w.
B is 6.25" h x 4.75" w

Large Pattern

(used as universal)

2 inches



print on single sided page