



The finished outboard cover.

Cover Up

Simple covers offer protection for hatches, outboard engines or windlasses.

Story and photos by Jim Grant

There are some sewing projects that are just so easy that I hesitate to offer instructions. Small covers are among them. The one cover I sorely needed was for an outboard motor of mine so here are the steps to make it. The same techniques outlined here are perfectly appropriate for hatch covers or windlass covers or almost any other small, regularly, shaped object cover.

Patterns for objects like a hatch with square corners are easy. Unfortunately, outboards and windlasses have no such corners, though they can be considered regularly shaped. This problem is easily overcome. Place a rectangle of cardboard on top of the object. Use double sided tape or duct tape to hold it in place. Then drape fabric over the flat, cardboard surface to make patterning quite accurate. Of course, the final fit without the cardboard in place will not be perfect but a glove tight fit is not appropriate in any case, as you want air circulation under the cover to eliminate moisture build-up and the resulting condensation.



SurLast draped (wrong side out) over the cardboard pattern.

Form Fitting

Start with a rectangle of fabric wide enough and long enough to drape over the object and down all sides with at least 2" (50mm) extra overlap on all sides. Drape the cloth so that the "right" side (if there is one) is underneath.

This cover is made using SurLast (60" wide, US\$13.95 per yard), a 100% solution-dyed polyester from the same company that makes Sunbrella.

It's nearly as durable as Sunbrella in resistance to UV and is far more resistant to abrasion damage. It's also about 25% lighter than Sunbrella so it's an obvious choice for any cover. One side of SurLast has a urethane coating that should be considered the under (wrong) side.

A couple of strips of double-sided tape on the cardboard surface (or the hatch top) keep the fabric from sliding. When properly positioned, mark the four corners as they drape over the cardboard (or the corners of the hatch as appropriate). If the cover is shallow, say 4" to 6" (101mm to 152mm) deep, gather the excess fabric at each corner into "darts" and temporarily staple in place with a regular office stapler. With deeper covers (the one for this outboard is 10" (254mm) deep), these darts are difficult to form with accuracy so remove the fabric and spread it flat on a table where it can be marked accurately. Indeed, the accuracy that results with the following marking method is a good idea even with very shallow covers.

Lay the fabric outer (right) side down. The four marks made over the cardboard corners should be visible. My corners form a rectangle measuring 17" by 7" (431mm by 177mm). Mark the rectangle on the cloth using a square to ensure right angles and straight lines. Continue the lines out beyond the rectangle the depth of the cover plus 2" (50mm). Connect the ends of the lines on the flaps at the ends and sides. The finished pattern should look like **Figure 1**.

Hold the fabric with the under side (the one with all the marks) against a window so the marks can be seen and transferred to the right side. Just put dots at the corners and line ends. Draw lines on the right side joining these dots using a straight edge so the pattern is visible on both sides of the fabric.

Corner Shaping

With the right side up, place double-sided basting tape on the outside edge of one of the marked flaps. Peel the paper backing away from the tape and

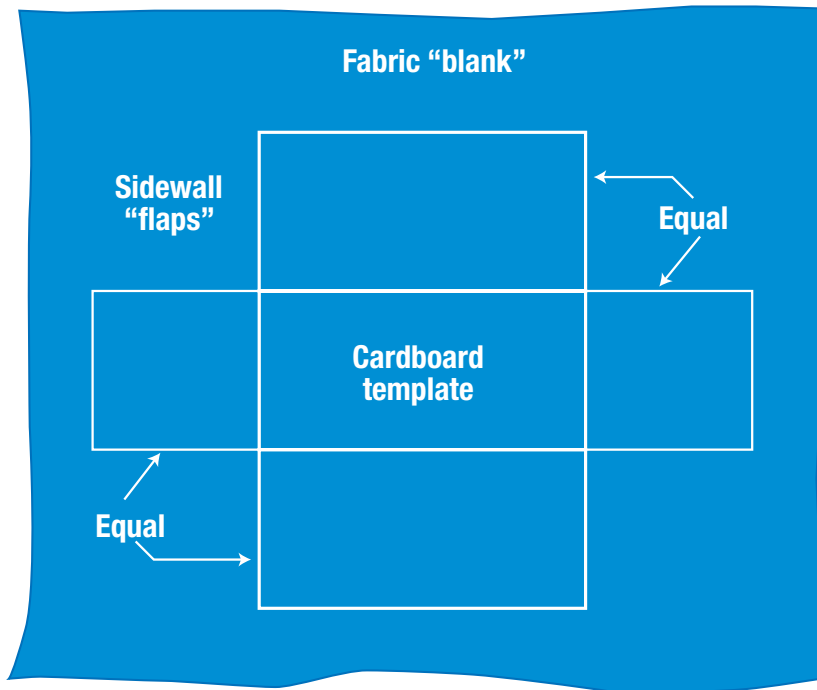


Figure 1: The outboard motor cover pattern.



Slit the angle between flap panels.

bring the outside edge of the neighboring flap over on top of the tape smoothing it in place so the lines of the two flap edges are on top of one another. It's helpful to cut down the center of the angle between the taped lines to a point about 2" (50mm) or so from the apex. You'll find it much easier to manage the positioning of the fabric.

Sew on the corner lines with long straight stitches. Be sure to back tack your stitches (reverse four or five stitches) at the corner end to prevent raveling (the other end of the stitch line is over sewn when hemming). Trim away the excess cloth in the darts, leaving a seam allowance of 1/2" (12mm). A nicely finished look and increased durability results if a binding is placed over this seam allowance and sewn in place. Do this at all four corner seams.



(top) Fold the seam lines over on top of one another. (bottom) Now, sew on top of the matched seam lines just inside the double-sided tape.

Now, turn the cover right side out and test fit.

Assuming all fits properly, take the cover off and adjust the lines on the outer edges of the flaps. The seaming process is seldom perfectly accu-



Use a binder attachment to cover the raw edges of the seam allowance to prevent unraveling.



Cut the binding away to reduce the bulge in the hem along the bottom of the cover.

rate so some adjustment might be required to the lines designating the bottom of the 2" (50mm) hem allowance. Once these adjustments are made, cut away excess material at the bottom of the cover.

Edging

Turn the cover inside out and fold up 1/4" (6mm) of fabric. Trim away most of the seam allowance and binding at each corner to make a flat fold. Use double-sided tape to secure that fold, if necessary. A light scoring along the fold line makes your work easier and more accurate. We use a dull awl along a straight edge to make the score line. The same technique can be used for the second fold, 1-3/4" above the first. Use double-sided tape to baste the hem in place.

Secure the double folded hem with a single row of straight stitches. Leave a 1" or 2" (25mm or 50mm) section open then insert a length of bungee (shock) cord all the way around inside the hem. Secure the two ends of the

SEWING



Hand sew the shock cord ends together, penetrating the cords three or four times and wrapping them with 10 or so turns.



(left) Binding a small opening is easier if the presser foot and binder are placed inside the hole in the fabric. (right) Completed bound opening ready for the outboard handle.



shock cord so that it makes a loop small enough to lock the cover in place firmly. Do this by hand sewing the cord ends firmly together or locking them together with hog rings (part #100952 from Sailrite) or short lengths of wire (tape over any sharp edges). Close the opening in the hem, turn the cover right side out and use it well.

Made to Order

Custom touches can be easily fitted. My outboard has a steering handle that would normally prevent pulling the cover all the way over the top of the engine. I cut a hole in the cover for the handle and bound the raw edge with a prefabricated 1" (25mm) wide acrylic binding tape (US\$.35 per foot from Sailrite). Now, the handle is easily run through the hole

in the cover as it's pulled down over the engine. Not only does it fit better but also the likelihood that it ever comes off in high winds is greatly reduced.

About the author: Jim Grant is the founder of Sailrite (sailrite.com), a supplier of specialty marine fabrics, component hardware and tools, sewing kits and sewing machines for boaters to build or repair canvas and sails.

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