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Faux Chenille

by Sue Bleiweiss

Making faux chenille is one of the easiest ways to create texture with a flat piece of fabric. The most important thing to keep in mind when you are choosing your fabrics for faux chenille is to pick ones that ravel easily at the selvages. Your fabric should be unwashed and pressed free of wrinkles.

For this faux chenille pillow cover project I'm using some wonderfully soft fairly loose woven cotton fabrics. I chose these fabrics because when cut they frayed easily making them good candidates for this technique.

I like to work in stacks of 4 –6 layers of fabric. More than that can make it hard to cut the channels but experiment for what works best for you and gives the result that you want.

Begin by layering your fabrics on top of one another. The layer that you choose for the bottom will show through once the chenille process is finished so choose a color that is pleasing to you. I'm using a piece of denim for my base layer but any fabric will do.



Using a marking pen that will wash out during the laundry process, mark 45° angle stitching lines anywhere from ½" to 1" apart across the length of the fabric.

For this example photo, I am using a stack of 10" square fabrics with a light colored one on top so that you can see the marking lines.



I've drawn my lines 1" apart. Different widths of stitching will give you different results during the laundry process so it pays to do some samples before taking on a large project.

Take your stack of fabrics to the sewing machine and stitch along the lines you've drawn. Remember to backstitch at the beginning and end of each row you stitch.



Now it's time to cut the channels using a sharp pair of scissors. Cut each channel open but **DO NOT CUT THROUGH THE BOTTOM LAYER!** In the photo below I am cutting the channels open but leaving the denim layer intact.



Cut two pieces of fabric the same size as your chenille piece and fold up and press 2" on one edge of both pieces.



Place these pieces right sides down onto the right side of the chenille piece aligning all the raw edges and then sew them together using a 1/2" seam allowances. Turn the pillow cover right sides out through the open flaps in the back.

And now the magic happens! Throw the pillow cover into the washing machine with a couple of towels and set the washer to run for the longest cycle. Then just toss everything into the dryer to dry. Once you remove it from the dryer you may need to brush it with a stiff brush and trim up some loose threads and then insert your pillow.



TIP

If your pillow cover hasn't "bloomed" or "chenilled" enough for you then repeat the laundering process. You may need to do this a few times to get the look you want. If it hasn't bloomed by the end of the second laundering then it's probably because the fabrics you chose are just not suited for this technique. You can also get some interesting results by varying the direction that you stitch your lines, like I did on the pillow cover on the right in the picture.