



Illinois 4-H | Spark Ideas. Ignite Possibilities.

Learn about textiles, fashion, and personal style. Design and sew clothing and accessories while applying Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM).



Exploring STEAM Clothing

Spark Activity: Easy Large Envelope Back Pillow

SUPPLIES:

- 1.5 yard of 45" wide fabric for each pillow or $\frac{3}{4}$ yard of 60" wide fabric
- 24"x 24" premade pillow form
- Matching thread

DIRECTIONS:

All seams are 1/2" unless otherwise stated.

- Cut one fabric piece 25" by 25" for the pillow top.
- Cut two fabric pieces 25" by 15" for the envelope back of the pillow.
- Turn 1/2" under along one 25" side of each back piece. Press, and then turn under 1/2" again and press. Stitch the turned under edge in place. This could be done by hand or by machine.
- With right sides of fabric together, place a backing piece on the pillow top, aligning raw edges, and pin. Place the second back piece on the pillow overlapping the folded edges – this forms the "envelope" opening used to insert the pillow form. Pin. Sew together around the raw edges of the pillow. To reinforce the "envelope," you may want to sew over this area a second time.
- Trim seams at the corners and turn right side out.
- Press and insert pillow form.



OPTION: You may want to add ribbon ties or buttons and buttonholes to hold the envelope closed.

4-H Project Levels and Goals

Beginner

- Discover style with color and line
- Learn to read and select a pattern
- Identify fabrics and appropriate use for type of project
- Learn basic hand sewing skills
- Recognize basic sewing machine parts and use of a sewing machine
- Sew appropriate seams, straight stitching, and simple machine hem
- Perform fun science experiments on different fabrics

Intermediate

- Adjust patterns to body measurement for perfect fit
- Learn various seam and hem finishes
- Learn to incorporate sleeves, pockets, darts, interfacing, facings, collars, buttonholes, and zippers
- Choose patterns appropriate for knits and sew using knit fabric
- Identify natural and synthetic fibers using fun science projects
- Learn to add finishing touches

Advanced

- Use a variety of pressing tools
- Explore technology for advanced sewing techniques
- Learn tailoring and working with more difficult fabrics like wool, velvet, satin, vinyl, and leather
- Learn couture sewing techniques to create distinctive garments
- Learn about fabric properties and products used to clean your clothing
- Learn to use a serger

Put Your Project Into Action

Show Your Skills

- Exhibit at your local 4-H Show or county fair with a pillow case, skirt, dress, suit, or other piece appropriate for your experience level
- Demonstrate the difference between various types of fabric
- Show basic sewing techniques or how a sewing machine works
- Compare garment labels to learn about different fibers and care instructions

Service and Leadership

- Make pillowcases for children with long-term hospital stays or blankets for a nursing home
- Donate gently-used/outgrown clothing to a community-based organization
- Organize a community clothing drive
- Organize a community pattern or fabric exchange
- Organize a fashion show for a local senior center
- Assist in organizing a 4-H Sewing SPIN Club

Entrepreneurship

- Provide sewing alterations
- Sew custom clothing / items

Technology Connection

- National Institute of Fashion Technology
- LEDs or microcontrollers in clothing
- 4-H WearTec project
- Apparel companies reducing carbon footprint

Connecting with a Mentor

- 4-H club leader or U of I Extension volunteers
- Local sewing group such as a chapter of the American Sewing Guild or Association of Sewing and Design Professionals
- Local college fashion departments or clubs
- Local fabric store
- High school Family & Consumer Science teachers

Events

- Exhibit at your local 4-H Show or county fair
- “Make It with Wool” contest
<https://makeitwithwool.com/>
- Sewing classes at your local fabric or craft stores



Careers for People Interested in Clothing

Fashion Merchandising
Apparel Designer

Textile Chemist
Seamstress or Tailor

Start a Conversation

Do you have things in your wardrobe which could be altered by sewing?

Why would it be important to know what fabrics are moisture wicking? Breathable? Stain resistant?

What type of fabric will keep you the warmest/coolest?

Why do apparel companies state “do not use fabric softeners” on care labels?

Want to learn more?

go.illinois.edu/4Hclothing

Explore more at Illinois 4-H!

4-H.extension.illinois.edu



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Credits: California 4-H Clothing Project Sheet: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC4-H/files/133372.pdf> | Vogue Business: The Future of Fashion Tech in 2020: <https://www.voguebusiness.com/technology/future-fashion-tech-predictions-2020> | Authored by Doris Braddock, 4-H Program Coordinator with support from Amy Henschen, 4-H Youth Development Educator | 4-H Spark Sheets are a collaborative effort of 4-H staff, volunteers, alumni, and teens from across Illinois. A big thanks to the many contributors and reviewers!