

WORKSHOP: "SETTING UP TO SEW" – COILED BASKET



Summary: We will make a coiled basket or a small vessel with machine stitched fabric wrapped cord. Participants can adapt their bowl to a shape of their own design.

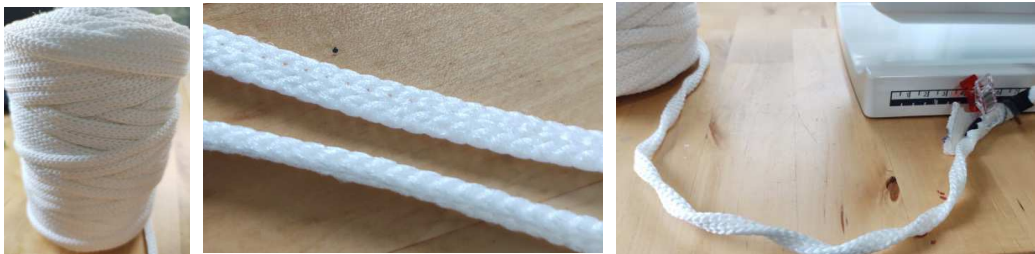
Materials and Equipment

small sharp sewing scissors
sewing machine with zigzag stitch
~ size 90 denim or universal machine needle
sewing thread – spool and bobbin
sharps hand sewing needle or similar
straight pins
iron and board
2-3 small clips
instructions/ideas sheet

colourful woven fabric – optional: several colours
nylon coiling cord: 49 feet or 15 m for basket shown
sewing shears/scissors
tape measure
optional: shaped buttons or found objects
optional: hem gauge
optional: pencil, eraser, ruler
optional: sketching paper
optional: tailors ham, stack of cork (not provided)

Class Plan: Sewing a Cord Basket

1. Optional: Sketch a shape template for your basket or vessel and lid.
2. Select a cord for wrapping. We used a flat nylon cord. You can also use cotton cord. Just check that what you are using will comfortably fit under the pressure foot of your sewing machine.



- a. If you are using a flat cord, ensure it lies flat when you coil sew it on your machine (above centre).
 - b. As you coil it may periodically need untwisting as you work (above right).
3. Select fabric for wrapping your cord. It can be all the same colour, or several colours that work well together. This is a great opportunity to use up fabric that isn't exciting on its own but would look great in colour blocks.

4. Cut or tear your fabric into 1" wide strips.

a. Some fabrics do not tear well and fray (left) or simply won't tear at all length or widthwise (right).



b. Clip the edge at 1" intervals using your hem gauge or a tape measure and sewing shears.



c. Rip your fabric into strips from the clipped edge (below left).

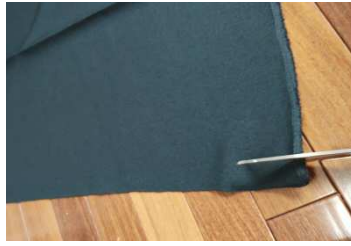


d. Make a pile of strips (above right). You won't need a huge amount and can rip more as needed.

e. Trim the loose threads from your strips if there are a lot.



f. If just the right fabric won't tear, it can be worth cutting into strips with scissors. You can mark your 1" wide strips or just estimate, they don't have to be exact.



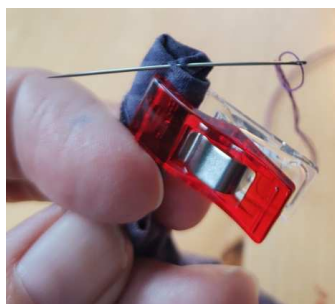
5. Select thread for stitching your basket and wind a bobbin of the same colour. You could choose a matching or contrasting colour. This is a good time to use up non-slippery thread of unknown fibre content.



6. Start wrapping your cord at one end with the end of your first fabric strip and hold it with a clip.



- a. Put a few hand stitches in the end with a sharps needle and matching thread.



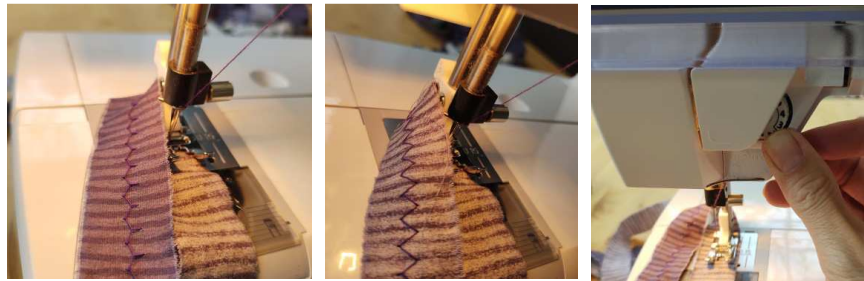
- b. Wrap about 4" further along your cord and use a clip to hold it in place. Overlap turns a bit each time.



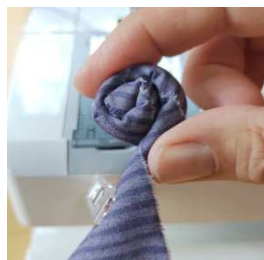
7. Set your sewing machine up for stitching your coiled basket.
 - a. We used a size 90 denim needle, a regular presser foot and throat plate with a wide opening for zigzag stitch, the widest zigzag stitch, stitch length 3 and top tension 4.



- b. Test stitch on your cord and check the back to make sure the tension is balanced (right) and the stitches aren't pulling too much to the top or bottom (centre).



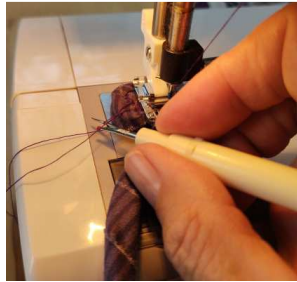
- c. Presser foot pressure was set at 2. You will know if it is set right if your coils can move under the presser foot and not slip around. Alter as needed for your machine.
8. Coil your wrapped cord end to the left by hand, like in a number 9 shape. If your cord is flat, keep the flat side down (not shown).



9. Position the wrap under your presser foot and start your zigzag stitch. Keep coiling as you go, stitching zigzag so the left side of the stitch goes into the previous coil and the right side goes into the new coil, joining them.



10. Tie off or sew in your starting threads so they don't get caught in your stitching. Pull on the top thread, and you can use the tip of a stitch ripper to pull the bottom thread up through. Knot the threads and/or take a few stitches to secure.



- a. Stitch back and forth $\frac{1}{2}$ " at the start and end of each seam instead if you prefer, then cut the threads.
11. Wrap about 10-12" of your cord and then hold the end with a clip. Remove the clips before they get to the presser foot. Pause to wrap the cord with the needle in the coiling to anchor it (below left).



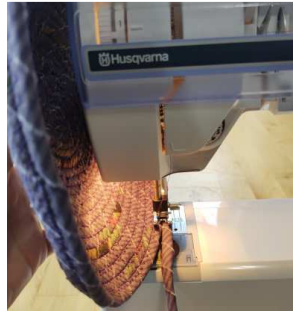
12. Once you are started, your coiling will grow quickly (above right).
13. Join a new fabric strip by overlapping the previous one about $1\frac{1}{2}$ " and keep wrapping. Hold the join with a clip.



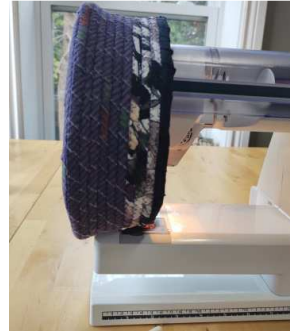
14. If your thread breaks, tie off the previous thread ends and start about $\frac{3}{4}$ " back to overlap the previous stitching.



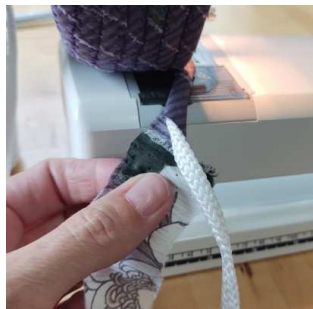
15. To make the side of your basket, tip it upward at the end of the machine as you stitch, partly overlap the new coil you're adding and pull a little more on the new coil.



- a. To transition from base to sides with a defined edge, overlap the new coil more and pulling a little harder on it for a few rows (below right).
- b. To transition from base to side with a smooth curve, use a slight overlap and a small amount of tension/pulling on the new coil, repeating for many rows (below left).



- c. Support your basket if you pause stitching while working on the sides, so the shape doesn't distort.
 - d. If you want your sides to stop curving in or out, stop overlapping or tension/pulling new coils.
16. After 6 side coils of purple we switched to white flowered fabric wrapping strips.



- a. If you want an even number of coils in the colour you are ending, check the coil in that colour ends where it started and trim the wrapping fabric as needed (above right).
17. After three coils of white flowered fabric, we added one coil of dark green fabric.



18. To end your basket coiling, match up where you'd like the coils to end (e.g. a complete coil of dark green).
 - a. Cut the end of the cord. You can cut it on an angle to taper the ending more (left). Cut the wrapping fabric so it is a few inches longer than the cut cord (right).



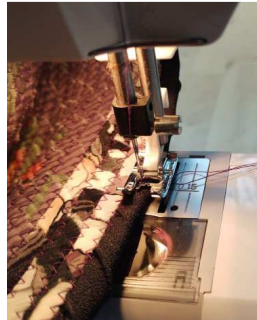
- b. Wrap the fabric to cover the cord end and then twist the extra beyond the end of the cord (left). Clip the twisted cord and fabric to the basket edge (right) and machine zigzag stitch it to hold it in place.



- c. Hand whip stitch over the end after machine zigzag stitching if the edge needs to be tidier.



19. When you are finished coiling your basket, go around the top edge with zigzag stitch, dropping the right side of the zigzag stitches just over the edge of your basket.



20. Trim any threads frayed from the edges of your fabric being careful not to cut your stitching.



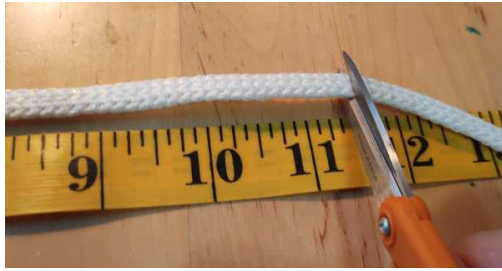
21. Shape your basket when you are finished coiling. You can shape your basket by hand, by gently stretching and pushing it into shape.



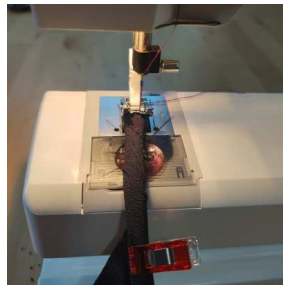
- a. You can also shape your basket by ironing carefully over a form. A tailors ham (left) is useful but can be substituted with a stack of heat resistant thick fabric or a pile of cork (second from right).



22. Optional: Add handles to your basket. Cut two pieces of cord 11.1/2" long.



- a. Wrap the end of each piece of cord with the end of a 1" wide strip of green fabric, the same way you started your basket. Machine zigzag stitch the whole length of each wrapped piece of cord.



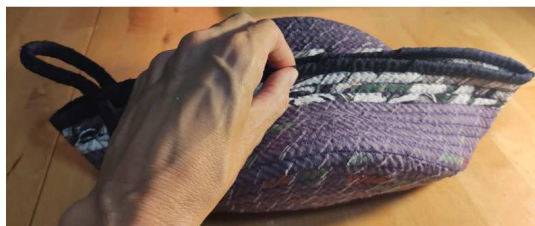
- b. Coil each end a full turn and machine zigzag stitch it in a spiral. Be sure they coil to the same side on each handle.



- c. Position each end of one handles the same distance down from the edge. Machine zigzag in place.



- d. Fold the top edge of your basket in half to find the opposite edge centre for the second handle.



- e. Fold the top edge of your basket in half the other way, matching the centres of the handle spaces to mark the handle spacing.



- f. Attach your second handle by machine zigzag stitching each end down, the same distance down from the edge as the previous hand. Tie off your thread ends.
23. Optional: Hand sew buttons on your basket using a doubled thread and needle. Use pins to position them first.



24. Happy creating, and please share pictures of your creations if you feel comfortable.

Useful Information/Adaptations/Variations:

- You could add handles by stitching on pieces of driftwood, or a single piece on top of a lid for a handle.
- If you want your colour changes to transition more gradually, you can experiment with cutting your end and new fabric start on the diagonal.
- You can make the edges of your basket curve in and out if you alternate a few rows of overlapping or expanding coiling with normal rows.
- If you want to make your sides wider, do the opposite of the above and push more length gradually into the new row of coiling without overlapping

Trouble Shooting:

- If your cord is flat not round, be sure to keep it flat when coiling to avoid lumps and too much thickness under the presser foot. Too great a thickness can cause your thread to snag and your work to get stuck. If this happens, take out your work, reshape it flat and try again.