

Memory Bear Sewing Instructions

Hello! And THANK YOU for considering creating Memory Bears with the Gilchrist Legacy Sewing Team!

I'm excited to share these revised instructions, which I created to coordinate with the Large Bear Pattern used by our Gilchrist stitchers. I took these photos in real time while making a bear from clothing provided by one of our patient's families.

My hope is that this guide serves as a helpful, step-by-step companion as you complete your own Memory Bear project.

Best of luck — now, let's get started!



1) Take stock of needed supplies

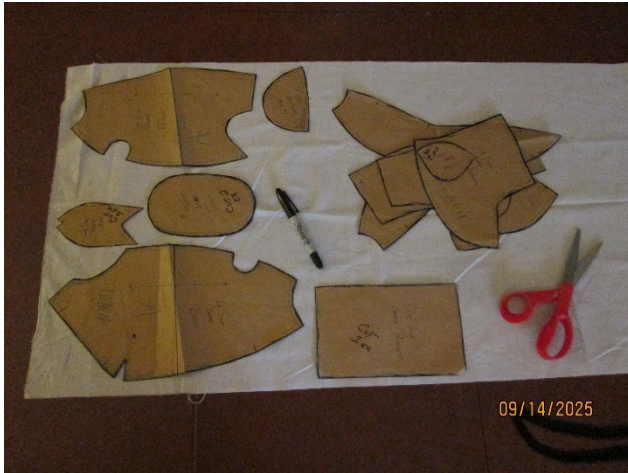
Look at all the clothing and materials provided to you in your project packet. Consider if you might need to add supplementary fabrics to your Bear. In this case, I've added some pieces of bath towel for texture.

Make certain you have the needed eyes, noses, Velcro, labels (paper and cloth), cotton fusible interfacing, pattern, stuffing, pen/pencil, scissors and ruler.



2) **Cut out your paper pattern.** My pattern I'm using is the original brown paper copy yours will be the grey xerox copy unless you choose to trace it again onto pattern paper of your choosing (instead of cutting).

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- 3) **Spread** out your cotton fusible interfacing on your work surface and trace the indicated # of pattern pieces needed for the whole bear onto the cotton side of the interfacing.



- 4) Once you have traced the correct # of pieces, **cut** around them to separate them. You can cut exactly on the lines, or just loosely outside them. This photo illustrates both cutting methods.

There should be 25 pieces in total for each bear.



- 5) **Consider the garment(s) you've been given and how many bears you are to create.** In my example, the family is asking for two bears and provided one shirt for each. We're going to make the grey flannel now.

Look at the design of the garment and what details you might want to preserve for use on the bears in special or specific ways.

Also check for stains and worn places or holes you need to avoid when laying out your pieces. Remember, these garments are already pre-loved.

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- 6) **Organize your interfacing shapes** by which materials you choose to have showing on the outside ... you will see I've placed my pieces on top of the shirt, white towel, and grey towel respectively based on how I want each part of my bear to look.

PLEASE NOTE: the arm pieces with the slightly wider armpit area are visible from the front of the bear while the two narrow ones are the back of the arms.



- 7) Before adhering ANY interfacing to the family garments, **REMOVE any portions of the garment you want to save for embellishment** once the bear is created ... in this case, I've removed the collar, buttons, front button placket, pocket, and brand label ... you might also find rhinestones, lace, fringe, embroidery, or images on garments that you'll use to make patches or reattach at a later time. Place these in a safe spot until needed.



- 8) **Adhere all pieces of interfacing to WRONG side of garment and/or supplementary materials** with warm steam iron on the warmest setting acceptable to the garment material. I used "cotton" since I'm adhering to cotton flannel and terry towel materials.

This image shows some leg and a pocket piece being ironed to the sleeve of the flannel shirt.

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- 9) This image shows many parts being adhered to the grey towel material I had left over from another project.

TRIM AROUND ALL PIECES ON THE LINES TO SEPARATE THEM.



- 10) If you choose to divide body parts into more than one material, **draw your division lines** on the interfacing pieces for clarity (I'm using an arm as illustration.) You can see in the #9 image that the upper arm is flannel (plaid showing through the interfacing) and I'm adhering the paw portion to the terry towel for contrast.



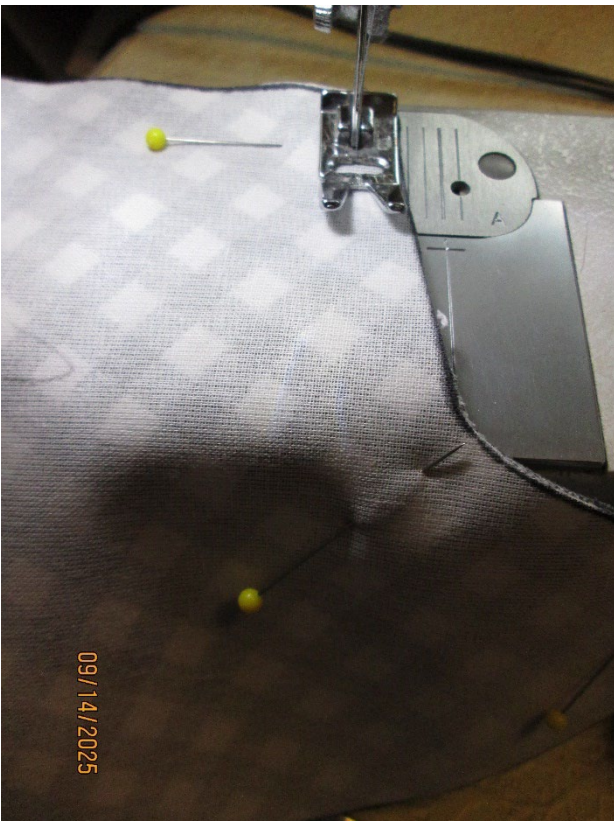
- 11) When you are finished adhering and cutting out all of the pieces, you should have 25 individual pieces of bear body with outer fabrics on one side and interfacing adhered to the backs, as seen here. Some plaid, some towel, some a combination.

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**** Note:** *From this point onward, I find it easiest to think of the Bear as a main body cavity with arms, legs, and head created separately and attached to the body after their creation. I often begin with legs and arms. Being somewhat simple, they move quickly and give me a sense of accomplishment.*



- 12) **Legs:** pin two leg pieces together, right-sides together, and stitch ... I use the width of my standard machine foot (or approx. 1/4 – 3/8 inch) for ALL seam allowances. Leave both top and bottom open !



- 13) To illustrate, you can see the leg-piece here and the foot aligned with the edge – simplest way, I've learned.

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- 14) After stitching both legs, **put 3 small, clipped notches in the ankle area** seam allowance to allow for flexibility. (Scissors are pointing to the correct area.)



- 15) **Consider any desired embellishment** to the bottoms of the feet before attaching them to the legs ... in this case, I've added a heart.

This can be a great place to add veterans' patches to be added or small details from clothing like uniforms or jackets with corporate names.



- 16) Pin the bottoms of the feet to the legs and stitch.

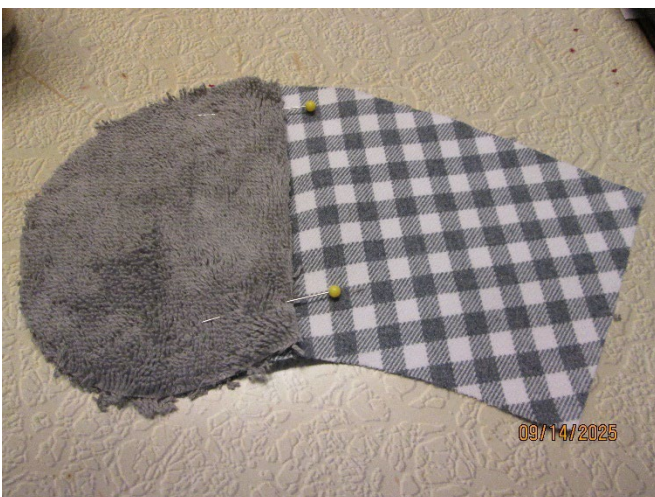
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- 17) You will note that the heels and sides of foot pin smoothly while the toes will be gathered or pleated, as you like.



- 18) Here is the completed foot viewed from its bottom, still turned inside-out. Now **TURN both foot and leg combos RIGHT SIDE OUT.**



- 19) If you have chosen to divide the paws from the arms, then zig-zag or top-stitch over the joining seam area now to keep the joint from fraying over time. I choose to zig-zag stitch over the edge of the towel to join it to the flannel.

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- 20) **Pin one arm-front to one arm-back and stitch** around leaving the armpit area open. In this photo you can see the zig-zag stitch from the previous step visible on the inside of the piece.



- 21) Two arm-pieces finished and turned right-side-out.



- 22) To create the **Body Cavity**, begin by creating the rear pocket for mementos or voice recorder. **Stitch Velcro** onto fashion side of pocket piece – leaving seam allowance at edges to connect the pocket to the back of the body.

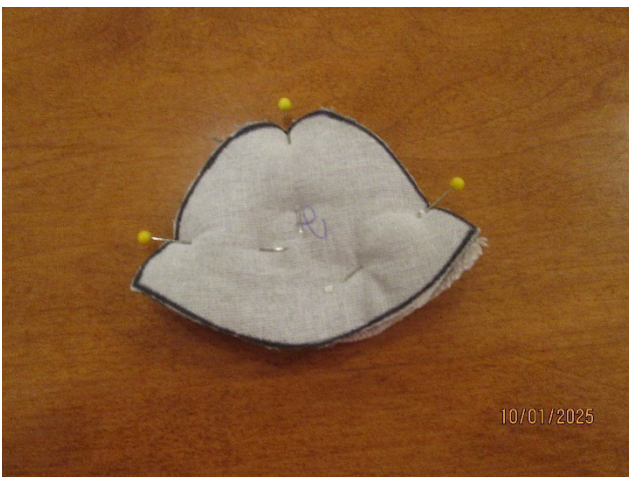
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- 23) I often choose to stitch the original shirt tag into the inside of the pocket as a surprise for the family to find - especially if they indicate the loved one has a brand loyalty (e.g., Wrangler or Under Armor® etc.) – do this NOW.



- 24) **Stick the Velcro together** to create a pouch shape. Then **stitch down** both sides to create an actual pocket with Velcro opening at the top!



- 25) **Pin the two tail pieces** with their right sides together. Stitch around the curve as pinned then turn right-side-out.

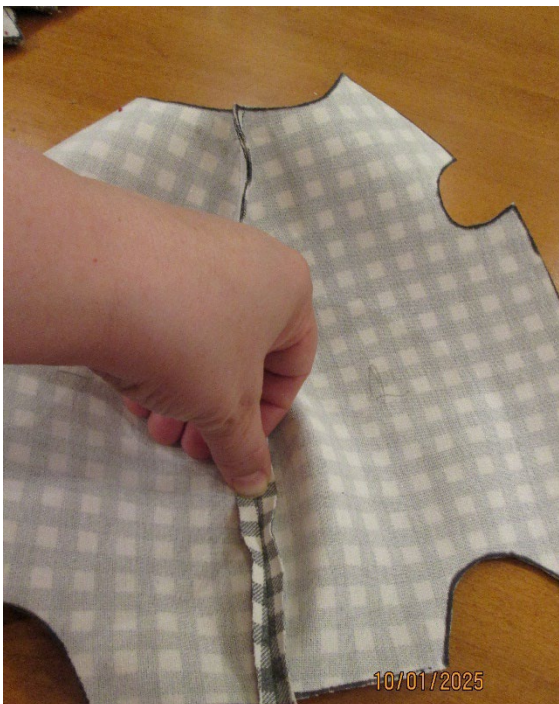


- 26) **Top stitch the bottom of the tail closed** for easier insertion into the butt seam. If the tail material is *really* thin, then some stitchers choose to put a TINY bit of fluff into the tail before closing it, to give more shape. You can also add a small pleat into this closing-seam to pinch the tail and give it more dimension.

THEN PLACE THE TAIL AND POCKET ASIDE SAFELY.



- 27) Create the body front by **pinning the two front pieces together** at center front-seam and stitching as pinned here.



- 28) **FINGERNAIL-PRESS** the front seam flat ... or iron over a rounded towel or tailor's ham ... I find a nail-press is usually more than sufficient.
- 29)

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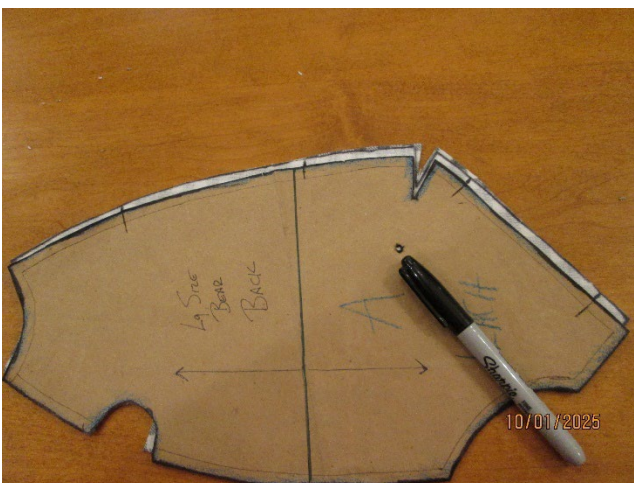


30) This is the time to **embellish the front** panel in any way you need to or choose to. Here, I'm re-applying the front button hole panel from the shirt. Now is also the time to applique or embroider or decorate the front in any way – apply lace, gems, buttons etc.

I have the front panel stitched on here.



31) I **re-stitch the buttons** – spacing them closer to make them seem bear-sized. Then place the completed front aside for safety.



32) Use the back pattern piece to **transfer the hash marks and dots onto the center back** of the cloth pieces. You only need hash marks on one side ... but the dot needs to be on both sides.



- 33) **Pin at hash marks and stitch** as I have done here ... leaving the seam open between the two upper-hashmarks (for the pocket) and between the lower two hash-marks (for stuffing and access later).



- 34) Even after years of making these, I still **align the pocket with the center-back by inserting my hand between the two back-pieces and out the upper seam left open**. Then, I open the Velcro on the pocket and stick my fingers in as I bring them together, the seam allowance on the center-back meets the seam allowance next to the Velcro on the pocket with correct sides together.



- 35) I find sewing this step **WITHOUT PINS** is easier and less-painful, but I've illustrated the placement (with pins) in this image for clarity. The seam on the pocket meets the upper center-back seam allowance on the body's back.



36) I ALWAYS **sew the pocket to the center back while looking at the POCKET side**. In this way, you can see the stitches of the Velcro placement and take care to stitch **OUTSIDE** them - only sew fabric to fabric - **do not** sew through the edge of the Velcro at this time. If you do, the pocket edge won't turn properly. The Velcro is too stiff. Sew down one side. Clip threads and realign to view the other side with the pocket on top and stitch up the seam.



37) Now you can see the pocket is attached to the center back. **Fold the edge with the rough (or Male) Velcro back neatly and then TOP STITCH down the center** of the Velcro to keep this side of the pocket from pulling and rolling when the bear is stuffed ! **ONLY** topstitch this side ... if you topstitch both sides, your pocket seam will stick out instead of lying flat as is necessary.



38) View of the finished pocket, open.

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- 39) A view of the finished pocket closed. If you zoom in, then you can see the topstitching.



- 40) To begin to insert tail into the center-back ... clip **almost** to the dots on each side of the center back seam.



- 41) Fold the center back as shown with pocket visible, the dots near you, and the cut opening near you.

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- 42) Retrieve tail from its safe place and insert into the seam. You can see that it almost reaches the dots. If you've sewn a pleat in the center for shape, then it won't be quite as wide- and that's okay ! Each bear is unique.



- 43) Stitch through all layers from dot to dot using your standard seam allowance.



- 44) Tail placement as seen from correct side.

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- 45) If you wish to machine-stitch the Gilchrist label ... this is a good time to do so! Label is placed below the pocket and over the tail on the bear's rear. (The alternative is to stitch it here *by hand* when the bear is completed).



- 46) To complete the Body Cavity ... attach the front to the back ... pin & stitch both shoulder-seams.



- 47) Pin and stitch both body side-seams ... I pin flat near the armpits (at top of image) and ease/gather the bottom of those seams down the length of the body.

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- 48) This view shows the amount of material needed to be eased or gathered at the bottoms of the side seams.



- 49) With gentle guidance it usually lays in pretty flat. You could run a gathering stitch along the bottom of this seam between the pins and pull for perfectly even gathering, but I usually lay it against the throat plate and ease with my fingers.



- 50) Pleat, pin and stitch crotch seam. **LEAVE BODY INSIDE-OUT!** Doing so makes attaching arms, legs, and head simpler.

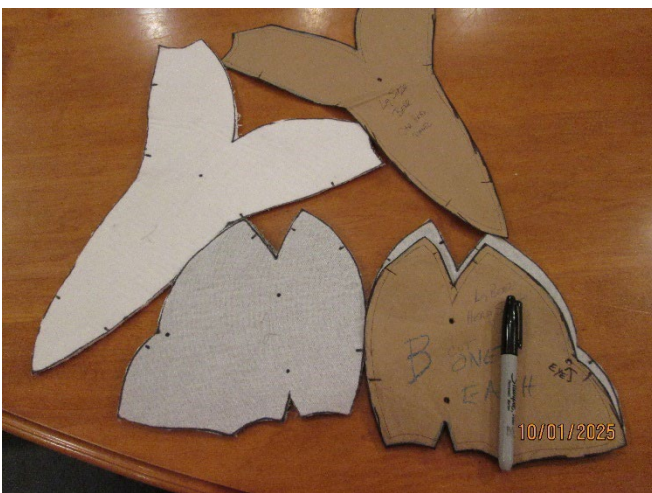
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- 51) To begin to create HEAD - **pin 4 ear-pieces** with right sides together and stitch around curve. Flip right side out.



- 52) **Fold corners** toward center for added dimension, and top-stitch the bottom edges to hold shape. If really flat material is used, you can insert a tiny bit of fluff into the ears to give more shape before closing them off.



- 53) Using paper pattern, **mark ALL hash marks** and dots from paper pattern onto 2 head side pieces and head center Y shaped piece.

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- 54) **Clip toward Dots** indicated by my fingers and scissors on 2 side head pieces and center Y head piece.



- 55) **Sew center seam** of Y-shaped center head-piece from Dot to end of seam at standard seam allowance. Doing so will close the top of the Y-shape



- 56) A view of the Y-seam stitched.

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- 57) **Insert ears** into side head-pieces, fitting between dots and hash marks ... stitch through all layers from dot to tip of piece (end of seam)



- 58) View of stitched ear from inside the piece.



- 59) **Sew neck darts** from dot to neck on both side head-pieces.



- 60) **Stitch the side head-pieces** to center head Y-piece. **Pin and stitch one side at a time.** The front hashmark near the nose is the most important registration mark. Ease the rest of the curve to fit using the other two hash marks as guides.



- 61) Make certain that your **seam goes through the eye-dot near the nose's hashmark.** When you are satisfied that the seam is sewn correctly, clip one notch near each eye-dot to ease the area.



- 62) **Stitch dart** in chin piece and then pin center of dart to nose area on head where the center Y and both side head-pieces meet.

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63) **Pin, ease, and stitch** each side of chin to the head side pieces at their bottom opening.



64) View of the finished stitching for the chin.



65) Use small, sharp scissors (or some other sharp object of your choosing) to **poke a hole for the nose-post** where center Y-piece and two side-head pieces join ...

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- 66) **Poke the nose-post** through that hole.
(view from inside the head)



- 67) View from outside the head – the nose is wide at its top and narrow at its bottom.



- 68) **Slide washer provided OVER the nose-post** until you hear it click and it rests firmly against inside-material.

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- 69) **Poke ONE EYE HOLE** near one eye dot, insert eye post, I usually poke mine just next to the dot on the side of the head. If you poke through the dot, you risk popping the head seam open causing damage to the head.



- 70) **Slide provided washer over post** until it meets material, locking eye as tightly as possible.



- 71) **Measure distance** between first eye and nose BEFORE poking second eye hole ... repeat measurement and insertion directions on the other side of the head ... in this way, the eyes will be evenly spaced because you have measured them to be so !! You can use fingers or tape measure or whatever you have near you to measure.

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72) Finished head view



73) Insert Head (right side out) into body cavity neck hole (body is inside out). Insert ears first with nose to center front body seam.



74) Image shows head partially inserted. Align the center back seam of head with the center back seam of body, then pin. Align the chin curve with the center front body seam and pin. I hand-stitch the head to the body, lockstitching for strength. I find it too cramped to get under the machine but other people find it easy. Your choice.

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75) Fold top of each leg, matching seam to seam and pin or pencil-mark the two side folds as shown.



76) Insert both legs (right side out) into the body cavity (inside out) aligning your pins with the crotch seam and side seam on body. Make certain that the TOES point toward the FRONT of the body when you insert the legs. Pin around leg hole as needed.



77) To ease legs into leg holes to fit, cut small clips/notches along the BACK of the leg hole on the body. Generally the front doesn't need to be notched, but if your legs are really tight, you can notch both front and back.

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78) View of hand stitched leg-holes, with legs inside the body cavity.



79) Turn body RIGHT SIDE OUT through the hole left open in back between legs. Go gently. Yes, it will come through. You just need to squeeze a bit and have patience.



80) I ALWAYS turn my bears BEFORE I put the arms on. Because even after all this time, I still put the arms on backwards if I don't.

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81) Clip/notch ALL AROUND both armholes. NOT TOO DEEP.



82) Align the arms, but only attempt to pin and stitch one at-a-time.



83) Slide each arm into its armhole, right sides together and slide them out the access hole between the legs. There is plenty of room to hand stitch around the armpit/shoulder ! Arms generally fit well unless fabric is really, REALLY bulky. Then you may need to ease and notch a little deeper.

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84) Flat bear pictured with arms attached.



85) Seam below the tail is still open for stuffing the bear. Most ladies' hands fit in that opening . Gentlemen might have to be very careful or leave a bit more open.



86) Fill the bear with the provided Poly-Fill. Stuff to the desired firmness!

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87) Pin as needed to secure for hand stitching!



88) Blind stitch closed (I left stitches visible here for you to see where I've stitched)



89) Your bear is now fully 3 Dimensional!! Add the rest of your hand embellishments as desired. I've added the original shirt collar back around his neck to finish the flannel shirt look. Some bears get nightgowns or T shirts or Lab Coats created for them. This is the point where the extra creativity begins. **Let's Celebrate!**
YOU'RE FINISHED!