Belly Bands for Pillows

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Belly bands are a great quick-change option for updating old pillows or marking the changing seasons. They're more compact and easier to store than extra pillows, so you can make several and redecorate when you want!

Materials

Fat quarters or fabric scraps for the front*

3/8 yard of backing/binding fabric

Floriani Embroidery Batting

6 buttons, 1 1/8" diameter

Quilting, sewing, and embroidery threads

Heavy-duty thread

Toothpicks or skewer

Optional: Floriani tear-away stabilizer

Notes

- These instructions create a belly band for a pillow about 18" square. To adapt the size for your pillow, measure around the stuffed pillow and add 6". You can fine-tune the overlap before finishing, so it's best to start with too much rather than not enough. Make the band width about half of the pillow width.
- *For the pieced samples, I used ethically sourced scraps from a sari-making factory. They're available as fat quarters from Darn Good Yarn (see Resources).
- The samples use a selection of quilting and embroidery threads, including Premium Metallic Embroidery Thread, from Floriani.
- Specific instructions are given for a belly band with a large embroidered panel. You can adapt these instructions by making additional pieced blocks to create a band without embroidery.

Cutting

From the fat quarters or scraps, cut:

> 1 rectangle, 9 1/2" x 11 1/2"

1 rectangle, 6 1/2" x 9 1/2"

4 squares, 6 1/2" x 6 1/2"

4 rectangles, 4" x 3 1/2"

4 rectangles, 3" x 3 1/2"

From the backing/binding fabric, cut:

1 rectangle, 10 3/4" x 43"

From the batting, cut:

1 rectangle, 12" x 44"

Construction:

Seam allowance is 1/4". Press the seam allowances to one side as you work.

1. Arrange the squares and rectangles as shown, creating a good variety of color throughout the project.

SEE ILLUSTRATION A

2. Sew a 3" x 3 1/2" rectangle to a 4" x 3 1/2" rectangle. Stitch the resulting unit to a 6 1/2" square to make a block. Make four blocks.

3. Sew the pieced and solid blocks together as shown to create the belly band top.

4. Center the pieced top on the batting. If you are using Floriani Embroidery Batting you will not need backing fabric for this step. To use a different batting, place tear-away stabilizer or a rectangle of muslin behind the batting.

5. Quilt the top and batting layers together. The sample uses a diagonal grid of lines spaced 1 1/2" apart. Choose a thread color that blends into the fabric that will be the embroidery background.

6. Embroider the design at the center of the large plain block. I used a piece of tear-away stabilizer behind the embroidery batting to provide extra security for this large, high stitch count design.

7. Trim the batting to match the top, squaring the corners and sides.

8. Lay the backing on the top, right sides together, matching and pinning the two long edges. *The backing is larger than the top.* Allow the same amount of backing fabric to extend beyond the pieced top at each short end. Stitch the two long edges.

9. Turn the belly band right side out. The backing will wrap around the seam allowances on the long edges, creating a mock binding. Press the long edges only so that you don't flatten the quilted area.

10. Edgestitch the mock binding near the seamline through all layers for the look of a topstitched binding. Alternatively, stitch in the ditch to hold the layers in place.

11. Trim the ends of the backing 5/8" beyond the pieced top. Fold the raw edge of the backing to meet the raw edge of the band and press. Fold again along the band edge, bringing the backing over the raw edges to complete the faux binding. Edgestitch.

12. Work three buttonholes on *each* end of the band (six total), 5/8" from the short end. Position one buttonhole at the center of the band and one buttonhole 3/4" from each long edge.

13. Position two buttons back to back with a toothpick or skewer between the buttons. Thread your needle with a doubled heavy thread or a twice-doubled length of all-purpose thread. Stitch the buttons together. Tie the thread tails securely. Add a drop of seam sealant to the knot and trim the thread tails; remove the toothpick. Make three double buttons.

14. Wrap the band around your pillow. Slip each double button through a buttonhole at each end of the belly band to secure it around the pillow.

Why use double buttons?

Using double buttons makes the band reversible. It also allows you to shift buttons from one band to another, so that you can use the same buttons for all of your belly bands. If you prefer, you can make three buttonholes on one end of the band and sew three buttons to the other end for a traditional closure.

Note: If you use buttons with metal or plastic shanks rather than sew-through buttons, you will not need the toothpick to maintain space between the buttons.

Resources

Embroidery design: A7448 Paisley Dragonfly Oval (5.87" x 8.32") from emblibrary.com

*Sari silk fabrics: Darn Good Yarn, Inc. (darngoodyarn.com)