

# Making a Toque Frame and Cover

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## Materials:

- 1) Heavyweight buckram: at least ½ yard @ 44"
- 2) Crinoline bias tape: 3 yards
- 3) Rayon covered wire: 2 yards
- 4) Craft muslin for making your pattern: 1 yard
- 5) Silk: 1 yard
- 6) Thread, extra sewing machine needles, millinery hand sewing needles, plastic clips, tape measure that has centimeters marked, scotch tape or wire end joiners, a compass or pencil and string to make a circle. Extras: wire cutters, a zipper foot.

## Measuring:

Measure your head where you would like to wear the toque, for instance, almost to the bottom of hairline in back and to the bottom of the hairline in front. Others prefer to wear their toque higher or lower on their forehead. The measuring tape should not be so tight that you struggle to get it off your head, or so loose as to fall down. Don't forget to account for how you will be wearing your hair.

## Make a pattern:

You will need 5 pattern pieces: 1) a circle for the buckram tip (the circular top of the toque), 2) a tip circle with additional seam allowance, 3) a rectangle for the buckram side-crown (the main upright cylindrical part), 4) a rectangle for the fabric cover's side-crown, and 5) a bias strip to finish the edge.

1) The tip: using a compass or a pencil with string tied to it, draw a circle the circumference of your head (probably easiest to do on paper first). Sizing chart (radius in centimeters because the smaller units make it easier to measure):

Hat Size (in inches)	Tip Radius (in centimeters)
19.5"	7.9 cm
20"	8.1 cm
20.5"	8.3 cm
21"	8.5 cm
21.5"	8.7 cm
22"	8.9 cm
22.5"	9.1 cm
23"	9.3 cm
23.5"	9.5 cm
24"	9.7 cm

- 2) The tip cover: Make a pattern piece whose radius is  $\frac{3}{4}$ " larger than your tip for seam allowance. (i.e.  $\frac{3}{4}$ " larger all around).
- 3) The buckram side-crown: cut a rectangle that is the length of your head measurement and as wide as you would like your toque's height to be. 4" to 5" is a common height. (Tip: Cut a piece out of paper, wrap it as you would wear the toque, and look in the mirror. It always looks taller when it is on your head.)
- 4) The side-crown cover: cut a rectangle that is 2 inches longer than your head measurement and twice the height of the buckram side crown.
- 5) The bias band: cut a pattern piece that is 3 inches wide and 2 inches longer than your head measurement.

### Cut the buckram:

Cut a tip and side-crown of buckram. Since buckram is hard to pin I usually just trace the pattern pieces onto the buckram itself and cut.

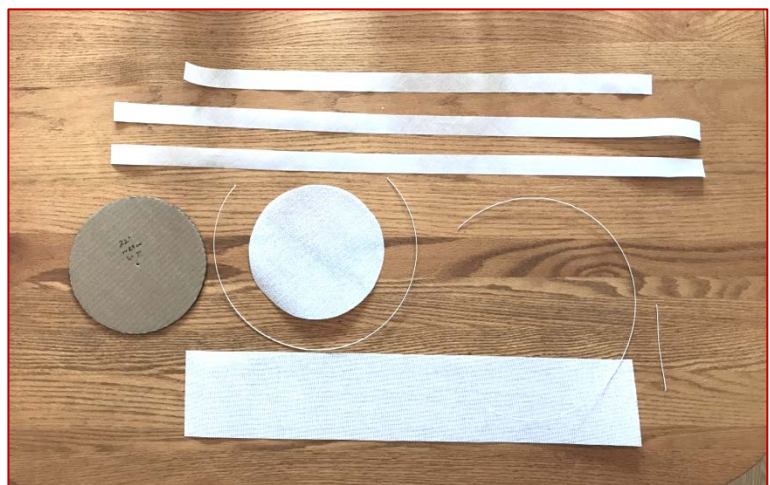
### Cut the 3 pieces of crinoline tape:

- 1) the length of the tip's circumference plus 1"
- 2) the long side of your buckram side-crown plus 1"
- 3) 2 inches plus three sides around the buckram side crown (2 short sides and one long side)

### Cut the 3 pieces of wire:

- 1) the circumference of the tip
- 2) one long-side length
- 3) one short-side length

The image shows a cardboard circle that I use for a pattern, plus the pieces (top to bottom: 3 of crinoline tape, one buckram tip, 3 pieces of wire and one buckram side-crown



## Wire the tip:

1) Wrap a small piece of scotch tape or a wire end joiner around each end of the 3 wires.

2) Sew the crinoline tape around the tip far enough from the edge to make a channel. Leave 4-5 inches of crinoline unsewn. You will be passing the wire through this channel so make sure your stitches don't get too close to the edge—there needs to be room for the wire and its covered ends. (Tip: Try to keep the fold of crinoline tape right up against the buckram or the size of the circumference will increase.)



3) Gently but firmly, push the wire through the channel. It's tricky. If it gets stuck, try to move the wire end slightly by pushing it side-to-side inside the channel. Continue until the wire is all the way through. Then, finish sewing the crinoline tape with the last bit of wire in it. (Careful! Don't break a needle!)

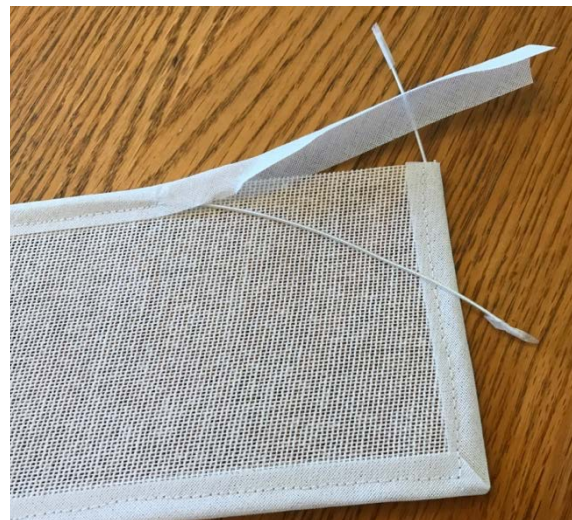
If the channel is really too tight don't force it and kink the wire. Just use a seam ripper to remove a few of the tight stitches, then re-sew that bit.

## Binding and Wiring the Side-crown:

1) Starting at the top of a short side (upper right corner in picture), wrap the longest piece of crinoline tape around that short side and sew it down, leaving enough room for a channel. Leave the top open.

2) Continue binding the edges by folding and turning the corners and sewing the long side. Fold the next corner and sew a short side. Fold the last corner and sew the remaining couple of inches.

3) Starting at that last corner, overlapping the tape that is already at the beginning of that side, sew the last piece of crinoline tape along the remaining long. Leave a couple of inches unsewn at the end.



- 4) Insert the short wire into the short end and the longer wire into the longer end.
- 5) Now stitch the remaining end and turn the corner. This seals off the wire ends. Be careful—go slowly so you don't hit the wire and break a needle. This is where a zipper foot is useful!! Turn the corner

### Joining the pieces:

Hold the tip's edge up to the left top edge of a long side of the rectangle that does not have wire in it. The tip should face you and the rectangle should be behind it.

**IMPORTANT>>>**Don't sew the side-crown upside down. One edge has a wire and one doesn't, i.e. the tip has a wire but the side-crown edge that will be joined to it should not have the wire. The wire should be at the head opening instead.

2) With double thread, and using a whip stitch, sew left to right.

3) As you sew, keep moving your fingers along to pinch together the tip and the side-crown. This is a slow and laborious process because round things do not like to be attached to straight things, but just keep pinching close to where you stitch. Try to stitch through only the crinoline, not the wire!

Your stitches will probably end up leaving gaps but you can use a fork to pull up the threads to get them tighter. Again, a tedious process but it really does make a difference.

4) Sew the back seam together with a whip stitch. You can overlap the edges as needed to accommodate the tip's size.



## Cutting the cover:

To make a bias strip, fold one corner of your fabric up to make a 45-degree angle. You can use a book to get the correct angle. (The book does not have to be about cats.) Place one edge of the book along the selvedge and fold the corner of the fabric up until it aligns with the other edge of the book. The resulting triangle does not have to be the full width of the fabric. It just needs to be big enough to cut out a tip with added seam allowance and a bias strip



3" wide and the length of your side-crown cover (i.e. buckram side-crown width plus 2"). **WARNING>>>WARNING>>>**Make sure you are using the pattern piece of the tip that has the **seam allowance!**

Don't cut the pieces yet. You only need one tip and one bias strip. Pin along the diagonal fold to keep the fabric from shifting, then carefully cut along the diagonal fold to separate the triangle from the rest of the fabric. Once cut, move the remainder of the fabric out of the way and pin and cut your tip with seam allowance and the bias strip from the now-single layer triangle.

## Sewing the Cover:

1) The object is to cover the tip evenly and smoothly. To help get an accurate size, place the togue upside down on the fabric tip cover and trace around it exactly. Also, mark where the back seam is. If there is excess, just trim it away so that your seam allowance is even all around.



2) Stay stitching: Sew all the way along the line you traced in step 1 so your fabric will not warp and stretch.

2) Next, on one long side of the crown cover, double fold, press and stitch a narrow hem.

3) With right sides together, line up the back seam mark on the tip cover with a point about 1" in from the top left corner of the side-crown corner. Be sure you are sewing the tip cover on to the long raw edge of the side-crown cover, not the edge you just hemmed.

**THIS IS THE PART THAT REQUIRES PATIENCE. Go slowly.**

As you stitch the round tip cover to the straight crown side cover the fabric will want to bunch and pull. When the round edge starts to move away from the straight edge, carefully realign them. Don't pull and twist. You want the inside and outside to remain smooth--no crimping or puckering. You can also stop stitching, sink the needle to hold the fabric steady, raise the presser foot, then line up the pieces again before you continue.



Give yourself plenty of time. In some places you may have to re-adjust after every couple stitches so be patient. The care will pay off.

### The back seam:



Before sewing the back seam, pull the inside-out cover over the toque frame to see how it fits. Smooth the sides and pin the back seam together. You can trim the edges so that the seam allowance is even. Take the cover off the frame and sew the back seam (right sides together) then turn it right side out to try the cover on the frame again. It should be smooth and snug but not so tight as to warp the frame. Adjust the backseam as needed.

Once the cover fits nicely, take it off the frame and zigzag stitch, overcast, or use pinking shears to trim off excess. Also, being careful not to cut into the seam, make little slashes around the circle every inch or two to help it will lie flat.

Smooth and tuck the excess side-crown cover into the toque. You will want to pull the fabric firmly but gently without making the buckram buckle. Put clips around the rim to hold it in place.

The inside does not have to be perfectly smooth. You may wish to keep the clips on for an hour or so to let it all settle into place.



## The band:

1) Fold and press the 3" bias strip lengthwise and carefully press it. Then open it, fold each half to the center, press each edge. Then fold it in half and press it once more to get the folded edges to lay flat. (It is bias—it will try to stretch so don't pull too hard.)

2) Starting just a bit left of the backseam, wrap the folded strip around the edge being careful not to dislodge the rest of the cover, and clip it in place.

3) Continue around, smoothing and clipping the band to the toque's edge. When you reach the backseam again, trim off the excess end leaving about an inch that you can fold over and tuck to make a smooth finish.

4) Handstitch the band. Unlike a machine, hand stitches can be different sizes on the inside and outside. On the outside you can have a tiny stitch by sending the needle back through in almost the exact place it came out. On the inside—well, since what goes on inside a toque is nobody's business but yours, your stitches can be bigger and not perfect.



## What's next?

Decorating! Fancy trim around the edges, poofs, rosettes, bows, little beads scattered across it, tulle covering the whole thing (my favorite), a couple tassels—your choice.

You can also make a lining for your toque. I never do because I like to dance in toques and a lining just makes it warmer.

## Sources:

For buckram, I use the JudithM heavyweight. <https://www.judithm.com/>

Regular craft/fabric carry something they call buckram but it is too light for millinery.

Crinoline tape is slightly stiffened, open weave, lightweight, flexible and 1" wide. Do not use regular cotton bias tape—too dense and thick.

Rayon covered wire comes in different thicknesses. The lower the number the heavier the wire. I use #21 for toques but have also used #19 for toques or heavier hats.

## Hats, Bonnet, Patterns:

Time Tresses - <https://www.timelytresses.com/>

Danielle Perry has patterns, fabrics, trims, and more. Plus, many beautiful completed bonnets and hats.

Shocking Bad Hats – <https://shocking-bad-hats7.mybigcommerce.com/>

Rebecca Burnham's hats are shocking indeed—in beauty.

## Silk:

Prices are crazy. I usually look for lightweight taffeta or slubless Dupioni. Always leave enough time to order swatches so you can see the actual quality, the actual color, and if it is washable.

Puresilks - <https://www.puresilks.us/>

Good service and reasonable timeframe given that they ship from overseas.

Fabric Mill - <https://www.fabricmill.com/>

The store is in Plainview, Long Island, but they also do online orders. Their half price sales are great!

Renaissance Fabrics - <https://renaissancefabrics.net/>

Specializing in historic-looking fabrics and trims.

## Fashion Magazine Collections

- Ackermann, *Repository of Arts*, Internet Archive, <http://archive.com>
- Journal des dames et de Modes, *Costume Parisien*, Bibliothèque nationale de France/Gallica, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32799510k/date>
- Ladies Monthly Museum (few images), Hathi Trust: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009663057/Home>
- Images from *La Belle Assemblée*, *Ladies Magazine*, *Ladies Monthly Museum* are scattered across the web. Google Books has some—usually without the fashion plates.