

How To Make a Fleece Guinea Pig Mattress

by Jennifer Martin

Here's a quick and easy way to make a comfy bed for your guinea pigs to play and sleep on, that is economical and a cinch to throw in the wash once a week. Invest an hour or two of your time and you will be on your way to less laundry, happier pigs and a house smelling of hay and sunshine! If you can sew a straight stitch with your sewing machine, you can do this project.

1. Gather your materials. You will need:

- A walking foot for your sewing machine.



- A soaker layer -- to absorb the guinea pig pee -- this could be a towel or a mattress pad or Zorb diaper soaker material. I'm using Zorb, which you can buy online at <http://www.wazoodle.com/> (NOTE: If you are using a towel or mattress pad as your soaker, your Guinea Pig Mattress will only have TWO layers.)
- A fleece layer -- to wick the guinea pig pee away from the guinea pigs -- you can use a neutral color and plan to purchase pretty patterns to lay over it, or you can just go ahead and use the pattern. I'm using a sushi pattern because that's what I have.
- (Possibly) A bottom layer -- if you are using Zorb, you will need an outer layer to protect the Zorb from disintegrating in the wash, because it's really meant to be used as the inner layer of a diaper. I'm using sport nylon, because it gives the mattress some body and helps it lie flat on the bottom of the cage, but you could use flannel or whatever you have available. (NOTE: You do not want your bottom layer to be waterproof, or it will make the mattress difficult to wash and deodorize. Above all else, choose a bottom fabric that can stand up to repeated washings.)

2. Prepare your materials

- Wash your fleece as directed in [The Fleece Project](#). Do not skip this step or you will have puddles of guinea pig pee all over your mattress! You will want to

wash your soaker fabric as well to prevent shrinkage later on. Also pre-wash your bottom fabric if you are using it. Wash in the same temperature of water you plan to wash your finished mattress in.

- Cut your fabrics according to the size of your cage. Allow 1/2" on all sides for seam allowance if you want the mattress to fit exactly on your cage floor, a little more if you want it to come up the sides a bit. I recommend cutting the soaker and bottom fabrics a little larger than the fleece; you'll see why in the next step. My 2 x 4 C&C cage is 27" x 56" so I would normally cut my fleece at 28" by 57", but my fleece measures out at around 30" by 60", so I'm leaving it as it is and just cutting my other fabrics a bit oversized.

3. Layer and pin your materials. We're going to set things up so that you sew the mattress **INSIDE OUT**; we'll leave an opening for turning it right side out after the sewing. This actually makes the sewing easier and makes the whole thing look prettier in the end.

- Place your soaker fabric **RIGHT SIDE UP** (if it has one) on the table or floor or whatever surface you're using to pin.
- Place your bottom fabric **RIGHT SIDE UP** (if it has one) on top of your soaker fabric. (If you are not using a bottom fabric, skip this step.)
- Center your fleece fabric **RIGHT SIDE DOWN** (if it has one) on top of your bottom fabric (or soaker fabric if you are not using a bottom fabric.)
- Now pin around the fleece, making sure to catch all of the layers in each of the pins.



4. Now you're ready to start sewing. Install a walking foot and a new needle on your machine. Begin at the middle of one of the long sides of the fleece, and don't forget to backstitch at the start. Go slowly to avoid bunching and puckering. Work your way around the fleece using a 3/8" to 1/2" seam allowance, and stop about 4" from where you started, backstitching at the end of your sewing. (Because you cut your bottom layer(s) a bit larger than the fleece, you're assured that you've sewn through all of the layers all the way around. If you're like me, you're very glad you took this precaution.)



5. Now trim the excess fabric from around the fleece. Go slowly and trim fairly close to the stitching. Clip the four corners, being careful not to cut the stitching.



6. Time to turn your mattress right-side-out. Reach in through the opening you left and start pulling a corner through, and keep gently tugging until the whole mattress appears. Presto! Push out the corners with a point turner, chopstick, pencil or whatever you have lying around.



7. Now you need to topstitch around the perimeter of the mattress. This will close the opening you left for turning the mattress and also stabilize the layers and give it a nice finish. First pin the opening neatly closed. This is kind of fiddly; do the best you can. You may want to do some fussing with the outer edges of the mattress to make them lie flat. I like to pin mine to make sure my topstitching comes out evenly, but it's not absolutely necessary to take this step. If you are an experienced or careful sewer you probably don't need to. And the truth is, if your topstitching is not perfect, your guinea pigs will still love you and they will pee on it anyway. So. Topstitch 1/4" (okay, I usually do 1/2") from the outer edge, all the way around.



8. At this point, you might want to sew some quilting lines across the mattress to ensure that the layers won't bunch up over time. I skipped this step because my mattress is pretty small and I'm not worried about it bunching, but if you want to go ahead with it, you could mark lines at 6-8 inch intervals with masking tape and sew along the lines.

That's it! You're done! Admire your work, then tuck it in your piggies' cage and let them commence with the popcorning while you throw together a spare one for cage cleaning day!

