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EC65-1125 How to Make Slip Covers

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Extension Service
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture and Home Economics
and U. S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
E. F. Frolik, Dean E. W. Janike, Director

CONTENTS

	Page
Basic steps	2
Make cover in sections . . .	3
Cut or tear blocks	3
Cover cord	3
Make and cut continuous bias	3
Sew cording	4
Pin fit carefully	4
Anchor pinning	4
Perpendicular pinning . .	4
Complete one section at a time	4
Back section	5
Fit inside back	5
For channel back chairs .	6
Add boxing or wing	6
Apply outside back	6
Front section	7
For chairs with separate cushion	7
For chairs with "T" cushion	7
For chair without cushion	8
For chair with open arms	8
Arm section	8
Make front piece	8
Fit inside arm piece	8
Add outside arm	8
Fit outside and inside arm to front	9
Make closure to join arm sections to back section .	9
For chairs with open arms	9
Cushion	10
Fit the cord to the cushion	10
Join cord ends	10
Fit the boxing	10
1. To apply zipper . . .	10
2. To apply snap tape .	11
3. Join front and back boxing	11
Complete cushion	11
Flounce	11
Attach slipcover	12
You have done a good job if .	12

BASIC STEPS

Slipcover making is not a complicated process, but does require careful work organization, procedure and construction methods. These are the usual steps:

1. Raise the chair on saw horses or boxes for easier fitting.

2. Measure length and width of each part of the chair, allowing 1 inch for seams, 6 inches for tuck-in and 2 inches to turn under at bottom of chair. (See E. C 57-1124)

3. Make scaled blocks of each part and lay out to determine accurately the amount of material needed and as a cutting guide.

4. Tear or cut rectangles from fabric for each part. Pin labels on each for future identification.

5. Cut continuous bias and cover all cording at one time.

6. Anchor each piece right side out as it is fitted on the chair so that lengthwise and crosswise threads are straight.

7. Pin fit, placing pins perpendicular to chair on stitching line of cord or on folded edge such as dart. It may be preferable sometimes to chalk the shape and then stitch cording on chalked line.

8. Stitch and trim seams to 5/8 inch.

9. Complete the construction of each piece before going on to another section.

10. Place the sections on the chair.

HOW TO MAKE SLIP COVERS

by MAGDALENE PFISTER
Extension Specialist in Home
Furnishings

Slip covers can give a new look to furniture as well as offer protection from dust and wear.

Most upholstered pieces can be successfully slip covered. However, a chair with much wood trim around the back or one in which the padding and springs are badly out of place may better be re-upholstered.

Make cover in sections

You can make a slip cover with the smooth fit of upholstery. This can be most easily done by making the cover in sections which are tacked to chair. The sectional cover is easier to make and launder than a one-piece cover, but it takes more time to put on and remove from the chair. The sections you will have:

Back - consisting of the inside back, outside back and wing or boxing, if any

Arm - shaped front piece, inside and outside arm

Front or apron

Cushion

Flounce if desired.

Cut or tear blocks

Cut or tear fabric blocks for each part of the chair, allowing 1" for seams, 6" for tuck-ins and 2"

turn under at bottom of chair. Pin name and dimensions on each. Be sure the length measurements go lengthwise on the material.

Cover cord

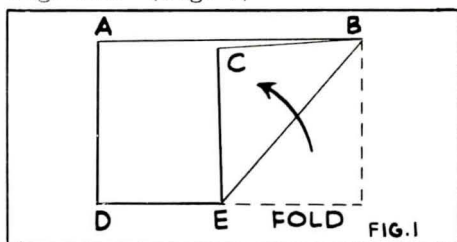
Cording is used on all seams to add strength, insure a tight fit and give a tailored effect. It usually looks best when made of the same fabric as the cover.

Cut a continuous bias and cover all cord at one time. It will take about 1/2 yard of 48" material to cover the 15 yards of cord that an average chair will require. A cording or zipper foot is necessary for stitching.

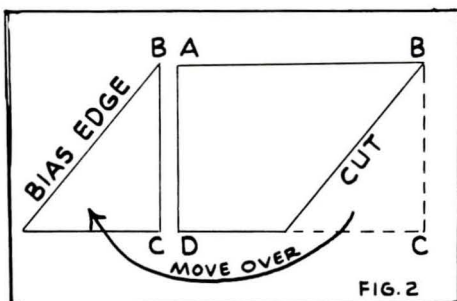
Make and Cut Continuous Bias

Start with any square or rectangular piece of material -- cut straight with lengthwise or crosswise threads on all four sides.

Fold up corner C to get bias edge BE. (Fig. 1)

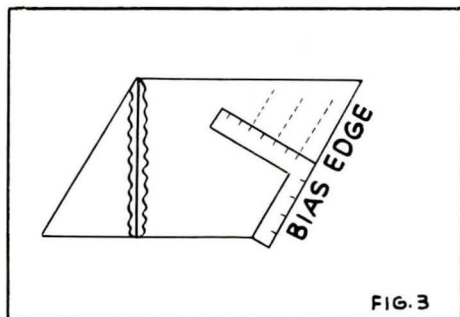


Cut through fold BE. Join straight edges BC and AD. Press seam open. (Fig. 2)



Turn fabric wrong side up. Lay one edge of square on bias edge of fabric. Now mark entire piece the width bias should be cut.

To determine width the bias should be cut, roll bias edge of fabric over cord with a $5/8$ " extension of raw edge on each side of the cording. Now measure width you will need to cut bias. This will be a little more or less than 2 inches. (Fig. 3)



With ruler and tailor's chalk, draw lines connecting marks you have just made. Now join the two straight edges. Begin by bringing B to join A. (Fig. 4) This allows a width of the bias to extend on both sides of a cylinder piece. (Fig. 5) Stitch and press seam open. Cut bias on lines drawn.

Sew Cording

Fold the bias strip, right side out over cord, and stitch cord in center of bias strip using cording foot on machine.

Pin fit carefully

To assure a smooth, perfectly fitted slip cover, the pieces cut and labeled should be fitted and pinned directly on the chair with the right side of the fabric out. See that the fabric lies snugly against chair without wrinkles. A good slip cover does not slip.

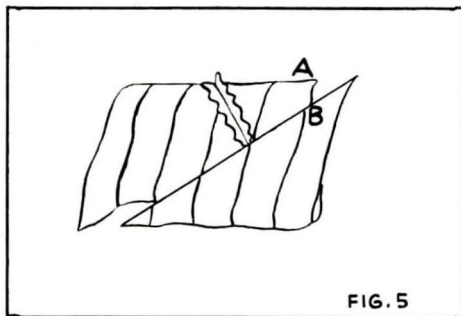
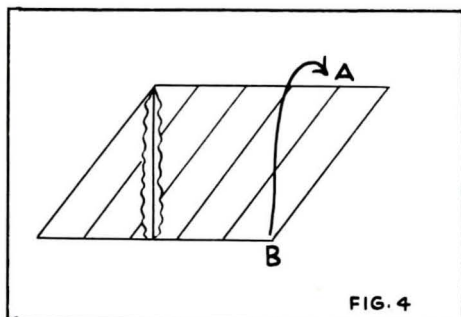
Check carefully to keep lengthwise thread grain perpendicular to the floor and crosswise grain parallel to floor.

Part of the ease in fitting and making the slip cover depends on the method of pinning. These methods are helpful:

Anchor Pinning is done with "T" pins or corsage pins to hold the material on grain as snugly as you wish the slip cover to fit when finished.

Perpendicular Pinning is done with heavy pins which are jabbed perpendicular or at right angles into upholstery on the stitching line of the cord, or on the folded edges of darts. This enables one to lift the fitted piece from the chair with pins remaining so that it can be basted or machine stitched.

Complete one section at a time



Complete the construction of one section before going on to another. Seams are stitched securely close to cording and trimmed to $5/8$ ". Bias extension or tuck-in tabs are attached after cording is stitched to seam line. All edges of tuck-ins are turned up and stitched. Back stitching at the end of every row of machine stitching will help make the seams rip-proof.

Back section

Remove cushion from chair. Mark center on both inside and outside back of chair with chalk.

Fit Inside Back

Fold the rectangle of fabric for inside back piece lengthwise to locate center and cut a notch at top and bottom to indicate center.

Place piece on chair, right side out with center marks matching and 1" allowed at top for seam. (Fig. 6) Smooth so lengthwise and crosswise threads are straight. Anchor pin securely. (Fig. 7)

To fit around curve of arm rest the first finger of the left hand on arm against chair. Start clipping near middle of arm curve. Use scissors with sharp point. Clip to first joint of left finger. Move left finger down toward seat 1". Always keep this finger on arm and against back of chair when clipping to prevent cutting too close to the chair body. Now at point where clipping began, cut toward seat or parallel to left finger 1". Then cut perpendicular to finger joint 1" again. This forms a 1" tab. (Fig. 8) Continue cutting as many tabs as necessary to make material lie flat.

At top of chair ease fullness or pin a dart on each corner. If a dart is made the folded edge should be on the straight of the material. Place

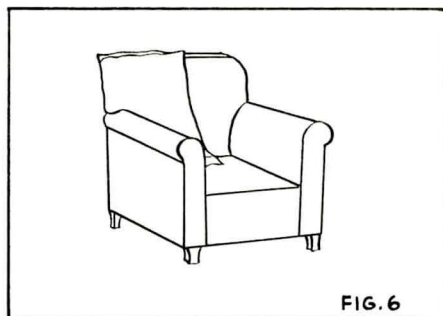


FIG. 6

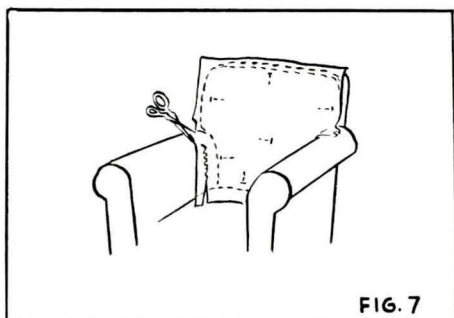


FIG. 7

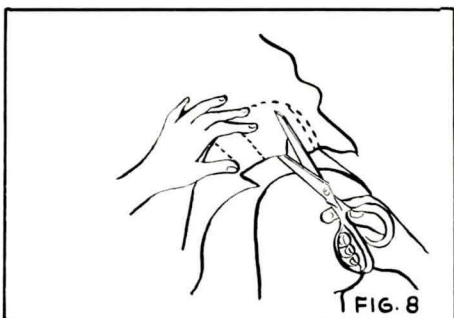


FIG. 8

pins on the edge of the fold. Both sides of the chair should be fitted alike. (Fig. 9A)

Apply cord to snipped curved edge. Bring cord to chair seat. Let cord rest against inside back of the chair with the seam forward. Place pins straight down through the cording and chair, pulling the tabs slightly as you pin. (Fig. 9B)

When the shape of the chair has

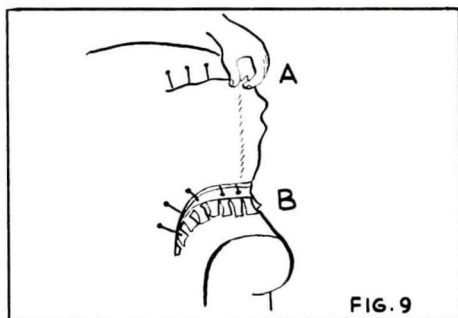


FIG. 9

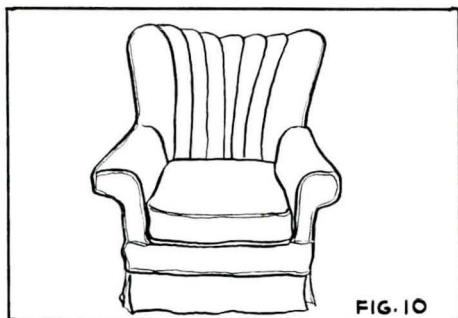


FIG. 10

set in sections, wings or boxings, the cording is applied around entire inside back. After cording is in place lift the piece gently from chair a few inches at a time. Complete insertion of pins without removing them from seam of cord.

Baste cording if necessary and then sew by machine. Trim seams to 5/8".

Make two bias tabs (3" x 8") and sew to the curved sections. Make 2 rectangular tuck-in flanges (6" x 8") hemmed on three sides. Sew these flanges to the corded seams starting at the lower end of the bias pieces. (Fig. 12)

For Channel Back Chairs

The inside back piece usually takes more than one width of material. Sew the two widths of material together before fitting. Anchor material tentatively across entire top. Straight of material usually follows top edge. Starting at center, work material between channels with hands, as deep as the channel. Pin a loose pleat at top. Continue this fitting on each channel around chair. (Fig. 10) At the bottom of each channel sew a tuck if necessary to hold each channel in place.

Complete inside back as for other chairs. If tuck-in between channels is shallow, pin out a dart from top to bottom along each channel and stitch; or with a curved

needle tack material in each channel in place after slip cover is finished.

Add Boxing or Wing

Return inside back piece to chair and pin in position. Tuck in tabs to assure smooth fit. Fit and add boxing, side back or wing sections.

Anchor cord at bottom of chair extending 1". Bring cord up to top corner, across top, and down to bottom of chair on other side. Cut cord. The cord should rest on the very edge of chair back, and be pinned about 1" apart on the seam line. Gently lift material with pinned cord from chair. Stitch, trim seam.

Apply Outside Back

Return inside back to chair, pin in position. Anchor outside back piece in place by pinning down the center of the chair.

Starting at center top of outside back piece, turn under seam allowance. Bring folded edge to stitching line on cord. Work from the center, keeping the material straight with the grain, fit back to the cording. Pin closely. (Fig. 11) The completed section looks like Fig. 12.

If the chair is irregular, very curving, or has wings, sew the back and front together 2 inches below the shoulder curve, leaving the opening for putting the slip cover on

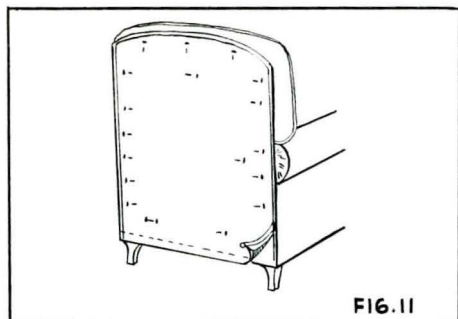


FIG. 11

from the shoulders, full length. The cord then can be sewed to the outside back, and when the slip cover is put on it is blind-stitched or tacked from the shoulder to the base.

Front section

For chair with separate cushion which has arms that come to the front, make the front section in four pieces. (Fig. 13A) One piece will be for lower front, another for the upper front base to which two tabs 3 inches wide and 10 inches long are sewn to make boxing for the

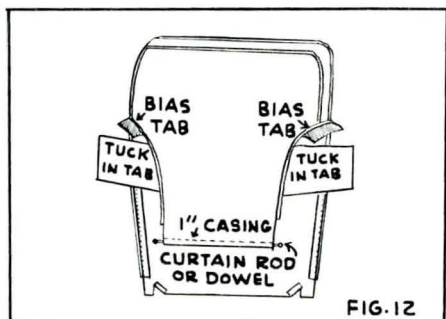


FIG. 12

flexible spring section of the chair. (Fig. 13B)

Attach lower section with cord at the joining. This part extends under the front arm section and should be tacked in place. (Fig. 13C)

For chair with "T" cushion, anchor seat base piece to chair carefully. Miter front corners. (Fig. 14A) Stitch. Anchor to chair again. Do the 1 inch tab cutting around curve of arm where seat base joins arm front. (Fig. 14B) Cut tabs to point where tuck-in be-

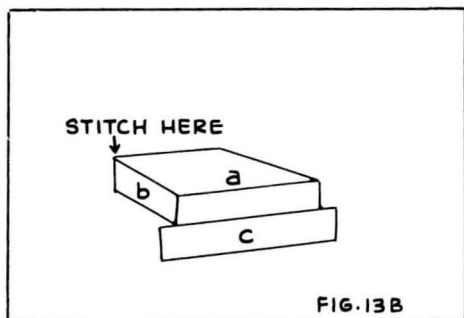


FIG. 13B

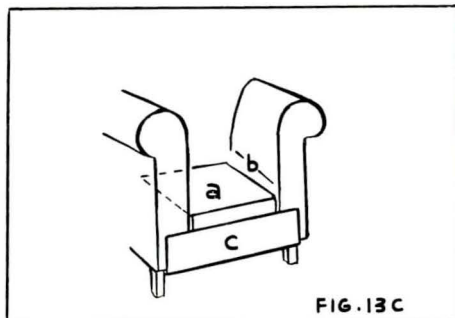


FIG. 13C

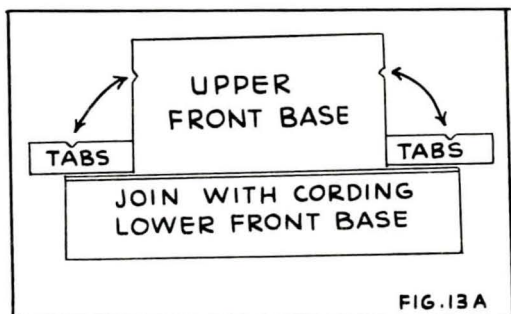


FIG. 13A

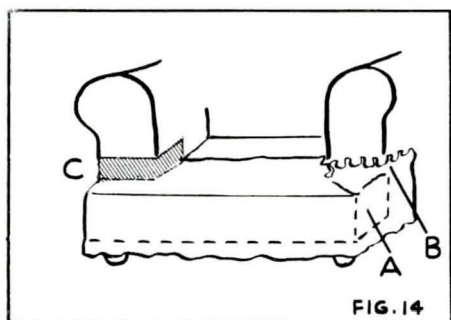


FIG. 14

gins. Sew a 3 inch bias around this curve. (Fig. 14C)

For chair without cushion. When no cushion is used, seat cover should extend over entire area and allow six inch tuck-in on sides and back. Hem back edge and insert rod to hold it in place.

For chair with open arms lay material on seat of chair, wrong side up. Smooth to arms on each side. At arms lay extra material back. Insert a pin on the fold, marking the center of the wood arm. (Fig. 15) Cut from edge perpendicular to 1/2" of this pin. Snip and apply cord so that it fits snugly around arm.

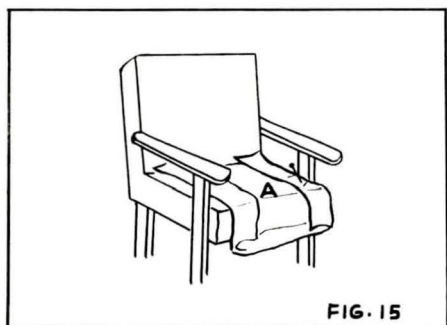


FIG. 15

Arm section

Front of arm piece is pinned in position on chair. Chalk mark the shape using the upholstery cording on chair as guides. A pattern may be made in the same way with paper, cut and tested to see if it fits perfectly. (Fig. 16)

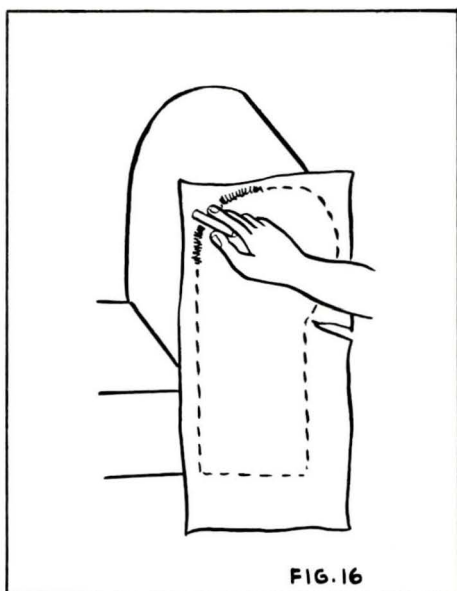


FIG. 16

Allow 5/8" seams beyond marked line. Cut one piece at a time -- a right and a left.

Sew cord on edge of each arm front piece, slightly easing cord around curve. Snip to make seam lie flat around curve. (Fig. 17)

Fit inside arm piece, by starting at front of chair, leaving seam allowance extend over front edge of arm. Bring material to back of chair and anchor. Start cord at point where outside back joins outside

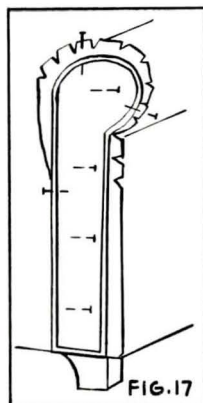


FIG. 17

arm. Bring cord to arm front. Stretch cord tight. Anchor in front. Insert pins on stitching line of cording. Stitch and trim.

Pin outside to inside arm at cord and stitch. (Fig. 18)

Join to Front

Place corded front arm piece on chair, seam outward. Return inside-outside arm piece to chair. Fold under the seam allowance on arm covering and pin folded edge to the stitching line on the cord of arm front piece. Pin closely.

Now fit arm curve in back. Be sure the under arm corded seam is pinned securely to outside back of chair. Smooth material from arm front to back. Lay first finger of left hand on inside back and cut 1 inch tabs around the curve, as you did for inside back. (See Fig. 8, page 5) Chalk mark curve and apply a 3" bias. The material below the curve down to the seat will serve as tuck-in.

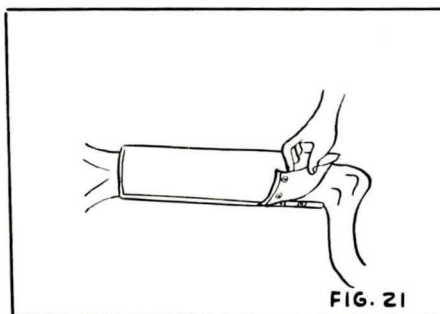
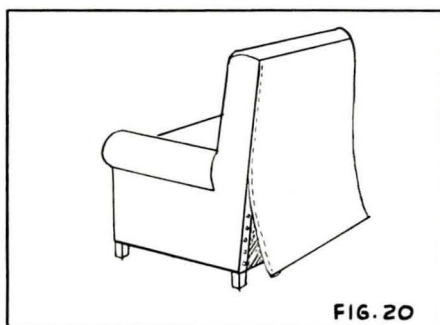
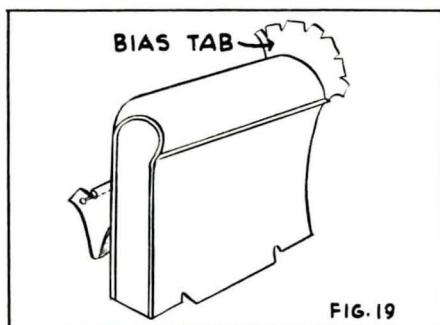
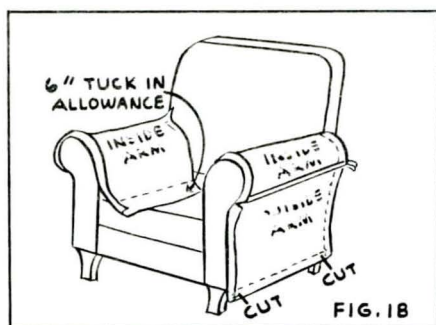
Remove arm section from the chair. Stitch and trim seam. Hem lower edges. Doweling may be inserted in lower inside arm to help keep it in place. (Fig. 19)

Make back closure to join arm and back sections with zipper or snap tape. (Fig. 20)

For Chairs with Open Arms

Where wood and upholstery meet at front, fold in a small pleat or ease fabric on each side of arm. Make snips if necessary and make it fit smoothly around wood arm. Apply cord on this edge.

Later when slip cover is put on chair it can be tacked to chair with curved needle or snapped along seam overlap on underside of arm. (Fig. 21)



Cushion

Fit Cord to Cushion

Center fabric on cushion and pin smoothly. Chalk mark for seam-line following the outer edge of cushion. (Fig. 22)

Place right side of cording on right side of cover beginning about 3" from the back on one side and continue around cover.

At corners clip cording the width of seam allowance so that a square corner can be turned. (Fig. 23)

To Join Cord End

Let cord lap 1" and snip. Rip back one end of cording 1". Cut out 1" of cording and turn under 1/2" raw edge on this end. Lap 1/2" over other end of cord, so the cords just meet. Stitch. Repeat for bottom cover. (Fig. 24)

Fit the Boxing

Locate opening in center of boxing across back and 4" along each side.

If no zipper or snap tape is used, boxing is made in continuous strip. One side is left open across back and 4" along each side which is stitched in place on cushion.

If zipper or snap tape is used cut boxing for back opening in two pieces, each about 3 1/2" wide and the length of the opening plus 2" for seam allowance.

To Apply Zipper

Join the two pieces with 1" seam down center and stitch 1 1/2" by machine. Secure thread, then baste to within 1 1/2" of other end which is machine stitched. (Fig. 25) Press seam open.

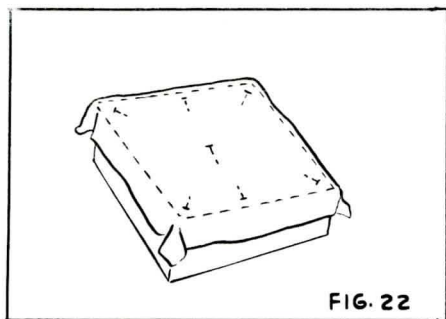


FIG. 22

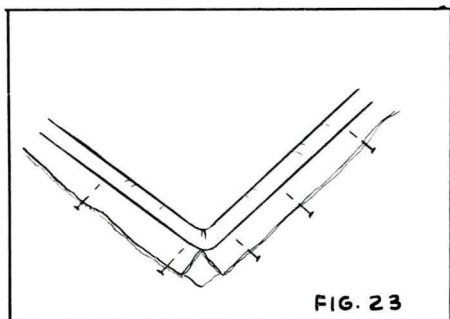


FIG. 23

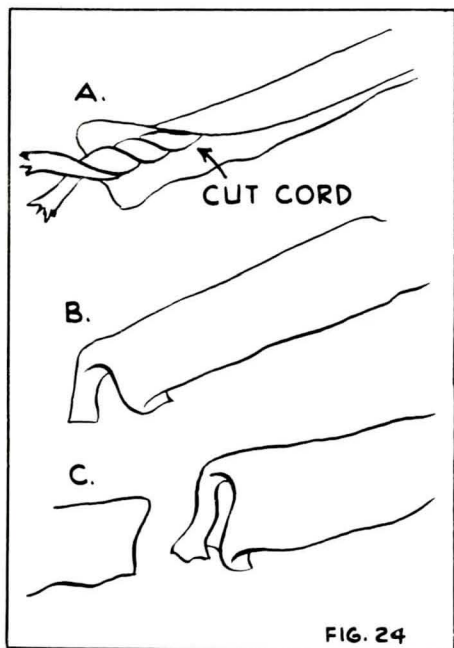


FIG. 24

Open zipper and place right side down on wrong side of seam with teeth next to stitched seam, beginning where it is basted. Use regular presser foot and stitch from beginning of tape to 1/2" beyond end of zipper. Leave needle in place in fabric. Close zipper. Turn square corner, stitching across ends of tape; turn again and stitch other side of zipper back to opposite starting points. Remove baste stitching.

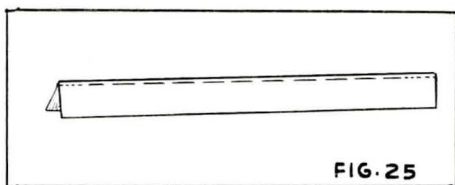


FIG. 25

To Apply Snap Tape

Fold under 1/2" on one piece of boxing and turn up 1/2" on the other piece. Sew snap tape on under side of first piece and on top side of second piece, covering the 1/2" seam allowance. (Fig. 26)

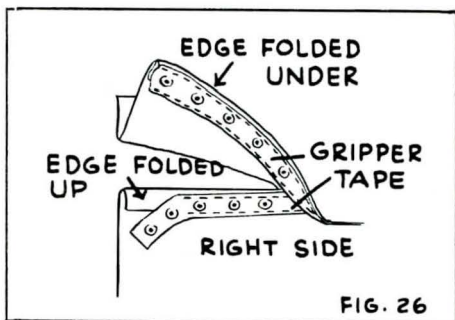


FIG. 26

Join Back Boxing to Front Boxing and test to see that it fits snugly around cushion. (Fig. 27)

Complete cushion by stitching boxing to top and bottom corded cover. (Fig. 28)

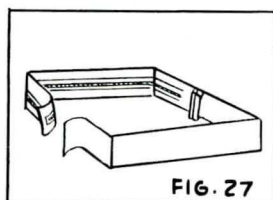


FIG. 27

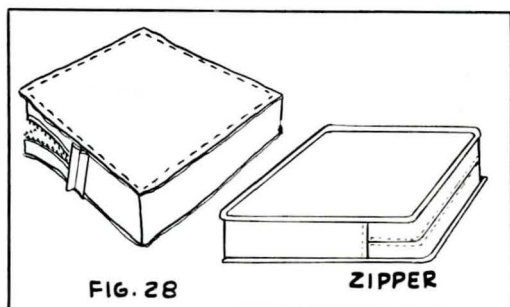


FIG. 28

ZIPPER

Flounce

When a flounce is used the arm sections and seat base front section may be joined together.

Sew cord at bottom to slip cover. Use a square or yardstick to measure this stitching line equal distance from the floor.

Decide the type and depth of flounce you want. A plain flounce with inverted pleats takes the least material and looks tailored. Corner pleats should be at least 3" deep. Cut the flounce, allowing for at least 1" hem.

Sew one flounce piece to back section, turning back 3" on each corner. This 3" forms part of the pleat.

Side and front sections of flounce are made in one piece. If pleats need to be pieced, do it under corners. At the back corner make one half of the 3" pleat and let the material extend over back. Stitch all pleats across top to hold in place. (Fig. 29)

Stitch flounce on seam line of cord being certain corner pleats are in place.

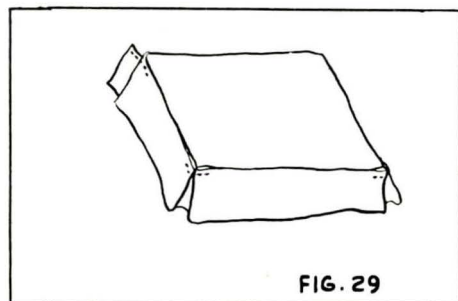


FIG. 29

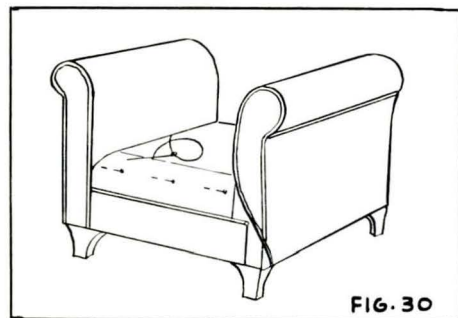


FIG. 30

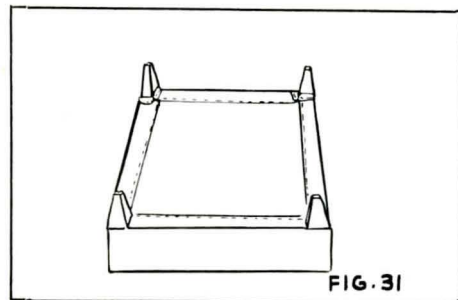


FIG. 31

Attach slip cover to chair

Put finished sections on chair in this order:

1. Front seat base section is fitted to chair and the top stitched to chair seat with curved needle. The tabs which extend on the lower front piece to front arm section may be caught by either sewing or tacking. (Fig. 30)

2. Arm sections are slipped on next, bias flanges turned upward. A rolled magazine pushed into the chair or doweling inserted in hem will help keep sections in place. Sew arm front pieces across chair to bottom of chair.

3. Back section tuck in all tabs. If no zipper or snap tape has been used, use a curved needle to sew the back section to arm section along the seam line of the cord.

4. To finish bottom edge of chair, turn the hemmed edge of slip cover under the chair and tack with small upholstery tacks or sew to the cambric which covers the springs. (Fig. 31)

5. Flounce may be attached with snaps or stitched.

You Have Done A Good Job When Your Slip Cover ...

1. Belongs to the room in which it is used.

2. Is made of well-chosen material and is suited to the furniture in texture, color and design.

3. Fits snugly with no wrinkles.

4. Has pleasing proportions; that is, the seam lines follow the basic lines of the furniture.

5. Has neatly and carefully made seams.

6. Is made with each section cut on the grain of the material.

7. Has inconspicuous closure.

8. Has a well-proportioned flounce, if used.