

Baby Rudy's Safe and Easy Sleep Sack



A sleeping baby stirs our nurturing and protective instincts. We snuggle, rock and whisper sweet tunes. We want babies to sleep well and safely, but as research on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) due to suffocation and strangulation evolves, recommendations for safe sleep have shifted. A new recommendation is **not** to use blankets in the crib from birth until after the baby is 12 months old. A blanket poses a risk of suffocation and SIDS if it gets over the baby's head, if the baby re-breathes trapped exhaled air, or if the baby becomes over-heated, (see American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations and Caring For Our Children Standards in the reference section.)

Babies are comfortable and safe sleeping in sleepers or even their regular close-fitting clothes, (if they aren't too heavy or have drawstrings). However, a popular alternative to a blanket is a sleep sack. It fits around the baby like a long shirt that is closed at the bottom. It doesn't pose the same risks as a blanket and comes in many sizes and weights to fit the baby and the season. Sleep sacks are usually made of soft fabric like blankets and come with sleeves or without.

In the following pages you will find directions on how to make a simple sleep sack pattern and sew it yourself. The sewing directions are geared to the novice and are meant to be easy to follow but leave plenty of space for creativity. It takes about an hour to make the pattern and sew it up.



This sleep sack is named for Baby Rudy, a smiling newborn-sized doll used to demonstrate infant care for parents and child care providers in Oregon.

**Are you ready to try making
a sleep sack of your own?**

Supplies and tools

Rudy wears a newborn size, so the fabric yardage here is for a newborn-size sleep sack. For larger sizes, make your pattern first, measure the length and width to figure the yardage needed for one front and one back piece. The paper used to cur the pattern should be thin. Newspaper is inexpensive and works well but can be messy. Tissue paper or thin wrapping paper also will work. You will need a sewing machine. Cozy, soft fabric that doesn't fray on the cut edges is preferred for easy sewing. Fleece is a good choice.



- ½ yard fabric 58-60 inches wide
- Thread matching the fabric
- 18 inch plastic zipper
- Newspaper or other thin paper
- Felt pen
- Small ruler
- Yardstick or straight edge
- Infant shirt the size of the sleep sack
- Scissors
- Straight pins

Making the pattern

The pattern is designed to be cut on fabric that is doubled and positioned on the fold. It will look like half of a sleep sack. One pattern piece will be used for all fabric cutting. The shirt will be used to size the pattern, so be sure it fits the size infant who will be using the sleep sack.

- Position the shirt on the paper
- Using the felt pen, draw the shape of half the neck and shoulder ½ inch larger than the shirt and extending ½ inch beyond the shirt sleeve seam. Then draw ½ inch away from the curve of the arm hole and ½ inch toward the shirt at a right angle.

- Place the zipper on the center of the shirt with the top end of the zipper tape at the edge of the back of the shirt neck. Measure and mark on the paper another 6 inches length past the end of the zipper (Longer for larger sizes). Draw a straight line between the end of the zipper and the mark.
- To make the bottom of the pattern a little more than twice the width of the shoulders, measure the width of the outline of the shirt neck and shoulder and double it. Then add 1 more inch. For Rudy's newborn size, the neck outline measures 4 inches. The bottom of the pattern will be 8 inches plus one more inch for a total of 9 inches.
- Place a ruler at the top of the shirt outline across the neck for a visual aid. Draw a 9 inch line on the bottom of the pattern at a right angle to the extended center line and an even distance from the ruler at the neck.
- Using the yardstick, draw a line beginning at the bottom of the drawn arm hole and the end of the line for the bottom side of the pattern.
- Where these two lines meet at the bottom of the pattern, round the corner. This can be done by eye, using a compass, or by drawing around the bottom of a small glass or cup.
- Write the word "Fold" along the center line of the pattern and draw an arrow from the bottom of the pattern to the top.



Cutting the fabric

You will be cutting out the back and front pieces using one pattern but you will place the pattern on the fabric in different ways.

Tip – If your fabric is not the same on both sides, make sure you fold the fabric with right sides together (inside out) and place the pattern on the fabric with the arrow pointing in the same direction.

- Cutting the back piece: Fold the fabric in half with the cut edges together. To cut the back of the sleep sack, place the center of the pattern along the fabric fold and pin. Cut out the fabric but do not cut the folded edge.

Remove the pattern. You should have one back piece. Put the back aside for now.



- Cutting the front piece: This time you will place the pattern center edge $\frac{3}{4}$ inch back from the fold to make room for the zipper. Pin the pattern to the fabric.



- To make room for the infant's neck in the front, measure 1 inch down from the neck on the center line and fold the pattern back between the center edge and the shoulder. (More for larger sizes)
- Begin cutting the pattern by cutting a line straight from the folded edge to the 1 inch folded point on the pattern center line. (See picture)
- Cut around the pattern, but do not cut the folded edge...yet!



- Prepare to sew in the zipper – after the front is cut out and while the pattern is still pinned to the fabric, cut along the folded edge of the fabric. Then remove the pattern.

Tip – To avoid more measuring again, pin the layers of fabric together along the pattern center line edge the length of the pattern. Mark the zipper length (18 inches) with a pin.



Sewing in the Zipper (It's not as hard as you think.)

Tip – Sew seams ½ inch from the edge of the fabric, unless instructed otherwise. At the beginning and end of a seam reverse stitching over the first and last 3 stitches to anchor the thread. Cut thread tails off as you go.

- Beginning at the bottom center, sew along the pinned seam ¾ of an inch from the edge (right sides together) stopping at the marked end of the zipper length. Cut the thread.
- The rest of the seam will be temporary and removed after the zipper is sewn in place. Change to a very long stitch length (basting stitch) and begin stitching where you stopped (¾ of an inch from the edge). Continue stitching all the way to the neck. Do not anchor the thread or cut the thread tails off.



- Keeping the front folded together, fold back one side of the seam allowance. Place the top of the open zipper tape to the neck edge of other seam allowance with the teeth along the seam line. (See picture) Pin zipper in place.

- Using the zipper foot (See picture) regular stitch length and anchor stitches sew the zipper tape edge to the seam allowance. Close the zipper.
- Open the front fabric facing up. Flatten the center seam and pin both seam allowances and the zipper smoothly through the front.
- Carefully stitch on the front, avoiding the zipper tab, down one side, across the bottom, and up the other side 3/8 inch from the seam.
- Remove pins and then the basting stitches by pulling the thread tails out.



Stitch the front and back together



- Place the front and back, right sides, together, pin and stitch around the entire sack except the arm holes and neck.

Tip – Make sure the seam at the bottom front is pinned open to reduce the thickness of the seam.

- The final step is to finish the arm hole and neck edges. Fold and pin the edges of the neck and arm holes 1/4 inch to the inside of the sack. (If your fabric frays at the edge,

fold once more before stitching.)

- Stitch the edge and remove the pins. Either a straight stitch or zigzag stitch will work well. Cut all loose thread tails.



- Turn the sleep sack right side out and zip it up.



You did it!

Want to learn more?

If you would like to know more about safe sleep for babies, here are a few places you can look:

For Parents:

American Academy of Pediatrics

AAP Expands Guidelines for Infant Sleep Safety and SIDS Reduction

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/pages/AAP-Expands-Guidelines-for-Infant-Sleep-Safety-and-SIDS-Risk-Reduction.aspx>

Safe Sleep for babies (Video)

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Safe-Sleep-for-Babies.aspx>

For Professionals:

WSCJTC Safe Infant Sleep Roll Call Training, March 2, 2014

Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission. This presentation will outline the basics of Safe Infant Sleep Practices and their relationship to Sudden Infant Death prevention. Law Enforcement will learn about a new crib distribution program in Washington State that will help to provide a safe sleep environment for infants at risk.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKdKKdMBBH0>

Caring For Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition

Major Change: Standard 3.1.4.1 Safe Sleep Practices and SIDS/Suffocation Risk Reduction

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/MajorChanges.cfm>