

# How to Make Reusable Sanitary Pads

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Across Ghana there are girls who can not afford disposable sanitary pads or are too ashamed of their menstruation to ask for help. Peace Corps volunteers work extensively with young women and encounter these problems throughout schools and communities. Teaching girls how to make reusable sanitary pads is a tool to aid sanitation, teach about sexual health, and empower girls to be independent. There are many different styles of reusable sanitary pads and you can find various patterns on the internet. Some of these instructions are complex for new sewers and ask for materials not accessible in rural settings. I often hear about volunteers looking for good directions, so I have created a guide that I hope is easy to understand and cost-effective.



A teacher helping a student sew a reusable sanitary pad at the Leadership Camp for the Deaf  
Photo Credit: Rebekah Alviani

# Getting Started!

## Materials:

- Paper templates
- Cotton fabric (dark colors preferable)
- Fleece (Can be substituted with flannel or cotton, dark color)
- Sewing needles
- Pins
- Dark colored thread
- Pure water satchet
- A pair of metal snaps (Can be substituted with metal hooks or velcro)
- Marker

## Tips:

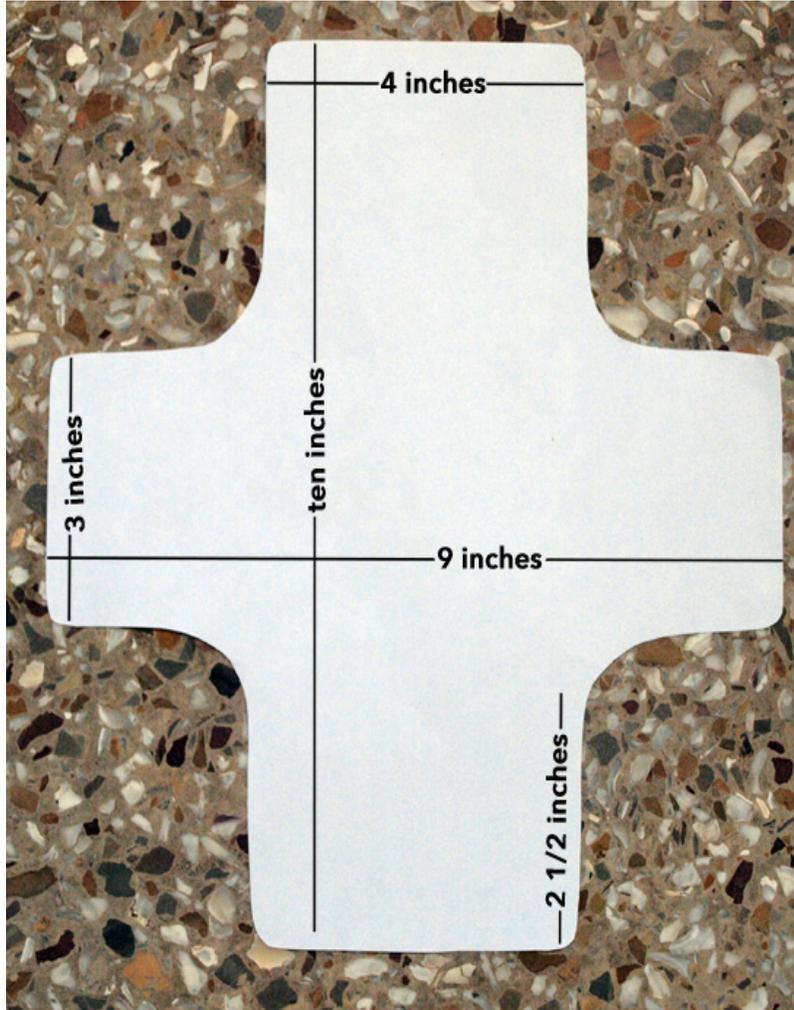
- Use this lesson as an opportunity to teach about menstruation and the importance of personal hygiene.
- Possibly invite boys to sew sanitary pads to give to their sisters.
- Provide a clean plastic bag (like Ziploc) to keep the pad materials together.
- You need about 1 ft x 3 ft strip of fabric to make one pad and one liner.
- Wash the fabric and water satchets before sewing.
- Explain that you must wash your pad and its liner after every use and hang to dry in the sun.
- It is preferred for each girl to make at least one pad and two liners, so they can change regularly. Having several pads and liners is even better!
- Bring a pair of underwear to demonstrate how the pad is worn.
- Explanation about menstrual health plus sewing one pad and one liner takes about 3-4 hours.
- If some materials can not be found try experimenting with different local supplies that best fits your need.



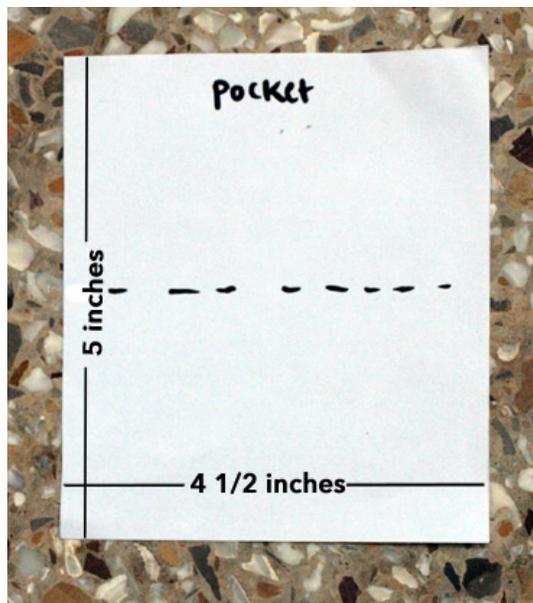
A full set of reusable pads and liners.

## Make Paper Templates:

1. Draw and cut out "Pad Template". Length: 10 inches Width: 9 inches



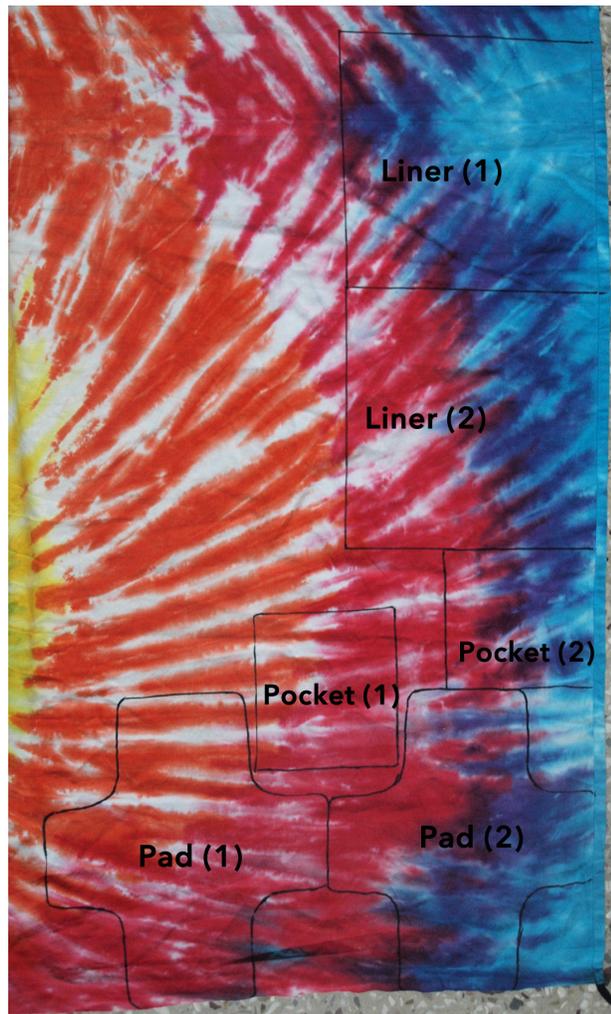
2. Draw and cut out "Pocket Template." Length: 5 inches Width: 4 1/2 inches



## Making the Pad:

1. Trace 2 "Pad Templates" and 2 "Pocket Templates" onto the cotton fabric.

Draw 2 squares "Liners" (8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches) onto fleece fabric (or you can use the same cotton fabric if fleece is unavailable).



2. Cut out all fabric pieces. Cut one water sachet open by cutting off the glued edges and then down the center seam. Trim water sachet to the same width and length as the pad (it will not extend onto the wings).



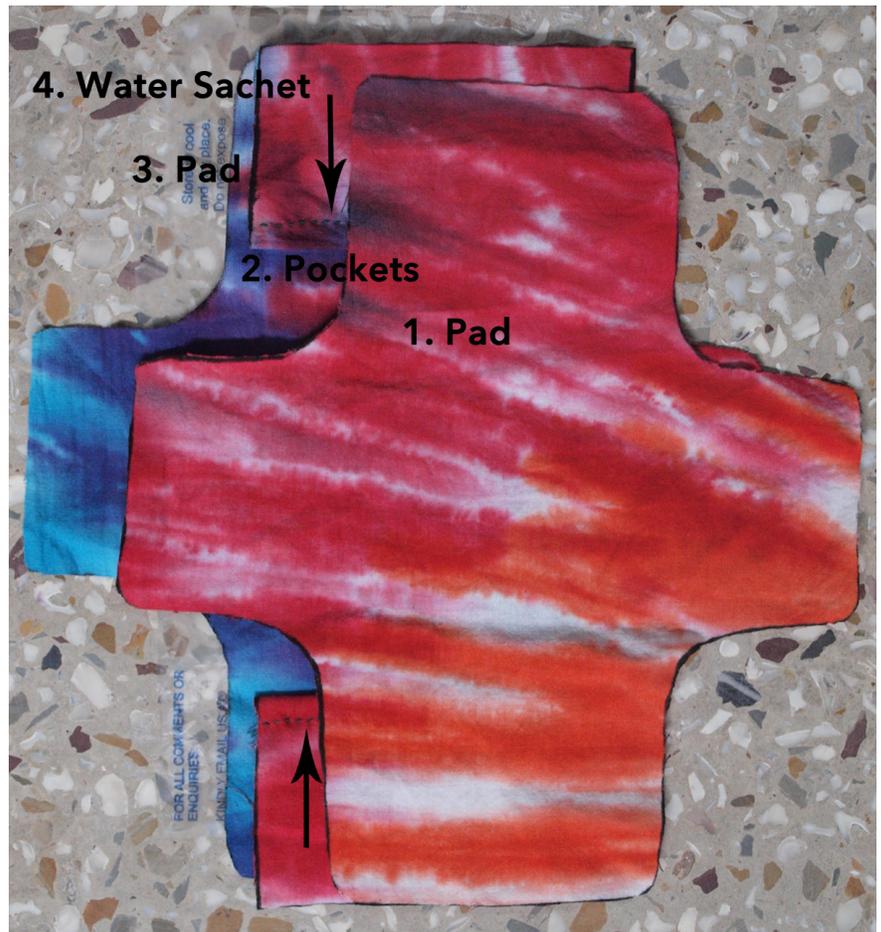
3. Fold both pocket pieces in half along the width.  
So, that their height is 2 1/2 inches and width is 4 1/2 inches.



4. Sew a line across the folded edge of both pockets with about a 1/4 inch gap.  
Use a small tacking stitch.



5. Assemble the layers of fabric. From bottom to top: Water Sachet, Pad (1), both Pockets, and Pad (2). The sewn edges of both pockets must face towards the center of the pad.



6. Pin only the top and bottom edges of the pad. Do not place any pins towards the middle of the pad because they will create holes and leakages. Trim the edges of the pad so that all edges are even.



7. **Only** sew along the long edges of the pad leaving about a 1/4 inch gap.  
Use a small tacking stitch.  
**Do not** sew along the top and bottom openings.  
It is okay that the water sachet will not be sewn along the wing area.



8. Use the openings to turn the pad inside out.  
The water sachet should now be in the middle.



9. Smooth out seams so that the pad is flat.  
Sew lines across both openings with about a 1/4 inch gap.  
Use a small tacking stitch.



10. Flip the pockets over.  
This side will be the pad interior.



11. Use a hammer to attach metal snaps to each of the wings. Make sure that the snaps are in the center and are about 1/2 inch from the edge. If you can not find metal snaps you can try using plastic snaps, metal hooks, or velcro. These things can be found at most tailors' shops. The pad is fully assembled, now let's sew the liner!



Frontside

Backside



## Making the Liner:

1. Place the two liners (the 8 1/2 inch squares) together so that their edges align. Sew along the outer edge of the square using an overcast stitch.



2. Fold the liner into a trifold that will fit into the pad pockets.  
Congratulations, your pad and liner are now complete! For a full set make at least one more liner, so that the liners can be regularly changed and washed.



## Washing Instructions:

Both the liners and pads can be hand washed like normal clothing with detergent and soap. The liners will soak most of the menstrual blood and should be changed and washed often. It is important that they dry in the sun to kill any bacteria.



Backside with clasp

This pattern has been adapted from the Days for Girls International pattern to fit the needs and resources of the Ghanaian environment. For further questions contact [darakatzenstein@gmail.com](mailto:darakatzenstein@gmail.com)