

How to Sew a Booksnake

Gabriel Hamer, Newberry Library

A booksnake is a weight that holds open books. It is especially useful for fragile books, where you don't want to just crack the spine to get the book to lay flat, but I personally use them in my non-library life as well! Recently I've used my pet snake to hold open my knitting magazine while I work on a sweater.

Fabric

Plain old quilting cotton is the cheapest option and the easiest to sew, but you can play around a bit with fabric types if you'd like. My pet booksnake is made of stretch velvet, which I find provides nice flexibility and weight. I've also seen snakes made of regular velvet, suede, denim, and satin. Whatever fabric you choose, make sure that the weave is tight enough that the filling won't escape.

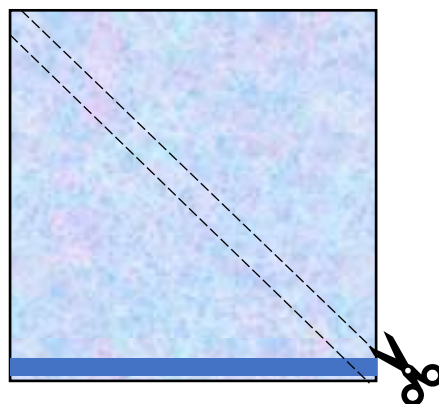
Weight

Again, you have some choices here. A midweight option that many libraries use to fill booksnakes is aquarium rocks. Glass microbeads, available at craft stores, make lighter-weight snakes, for smaller or more delicate books. The heaviest snakes that I've come across are stuffed with lead buckshot!

Supplies:

- Fabric (quilting cotton, stretch velvet, or whatever suits your fancy)
- Weight
- Sewing thread
- Needle
- Pins
- Marking tool
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Sewing machine (optional)
- Cutting mat (optional)
- Rotary cutter (optional)
- Funnel (optional)

Step 1: Cut your fabric, taking seam allowance into account. The average snake at my library is about 1" wide and 12" long, and I like a seam allowance of $\frac{1}{4}$ ", so I cut strips of fabric $2\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and $12\frac{1}{2}$ " long. When you cut your fabric it helps to **cut on the bias**. This is a sewists' trick to get the maximum amount of stretch and flexibility out of a fabric. Cut your strip of fabric at a 45-degree angle to the selvage edge, like so:



Step 2: Now you're going to fold your snake in half, long sides together, and pin every couple of inches. Make sure the right sides are together! Sew along one short edge and one long edge, leaving one short end open, like so:



If you're comfortable doing this, trim excess fabric so that there's less bulkiness around the seams of the snake.

Step 3: Turn your snake inside-out. Fill it with weight to within an inch or so of the open end.

Step 4: Tuck extra fabric into your snake and pin the sides together if you need. Sew up the open end of your snake. If you're using a sewing machine, going back and forth with a zigzag stitch a few times works well. If you're hand-sewing, you might want to try a whip stitch or blanket stitch to finish.