

Pencil Pleat Draperies



This is my first try at pencil pleated draperies, but at this writing I have the first panel complete and it was a snap! The toughest part is actually finding the pencil pleating tape. I finally went to the internet and found a supplier called Atlanta Thread and Supply Company. They appear to be a supplier to drapery and clothing workrooms but they sent out just what I needed and got it to me fast. You can't ask for more than that!

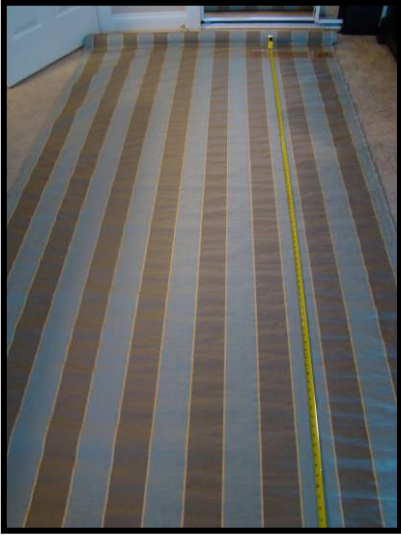
If you'd like to give this pencil pleated header a try, read through all of the instructions first so you understand how the draperies go together before buying your materials and jumping right in. I had to sort of learn as I went and it's not always the best way to go when you are working with expensive fabrics and a lot of yardage.

Materials List:

- Fabric of your choice
- Lining fabric
- Pencil pleating tape (enough to cover the full width of your panels before they are pleated)
- Matching Thread
- Pins
- Scissors
- Sewing Machine
- Tape measure
- Straight edge
- Drapery pins
- Drapery weights

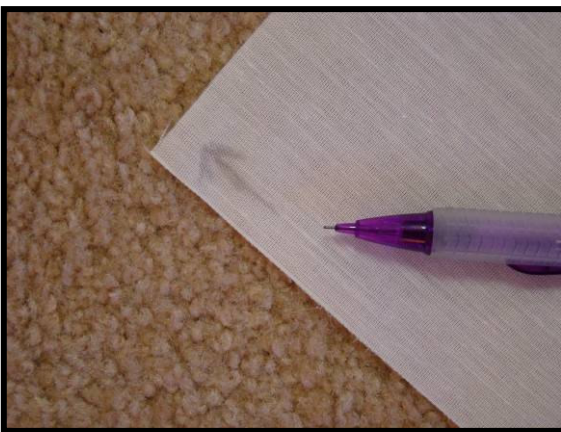
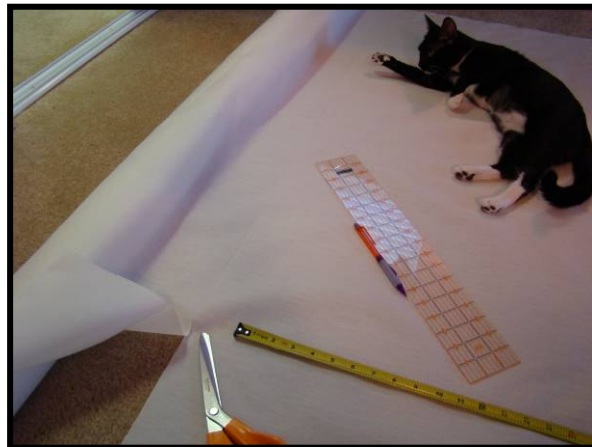


Instructions:



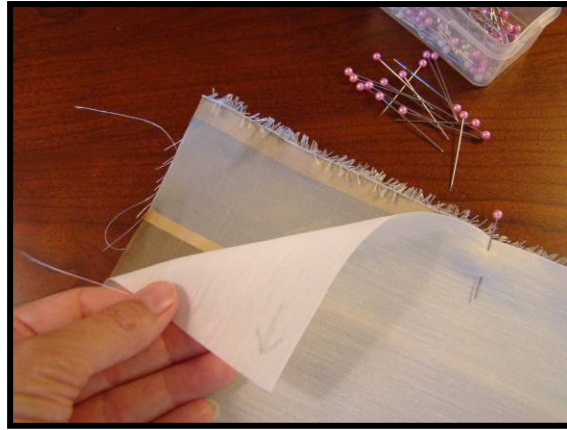
1 Start your project by determining the length and width of your panels. I decided to create stationary panels and use only one width of fabric for each panel. My finished width was planned at about 24", so a single width of fabric would be plenty. For length I measured from the bottom of my rod location (I'm using wooden rings and drapery pins so the drapery hangs below the rod.) to 1/2" above the floor. I then added 5" for my hem and 3" for my header, for a total cut length of 105 1/2".

Unfortunately, I don't really have a table for cutting long lengths of fabric so I spend a lot of time crawling around on the floor. I'll bet I'm not alone in this! I use a metal tape measure for cutting the long lengths and I have a couple of straight edges I used to draw straight, perpendicular lines across the fabric so I am cutting a nice straight line. I use my drafting triangles to help with the 90 degree angles! And, as you can see, I get a lot of help when I'm working on the floor!

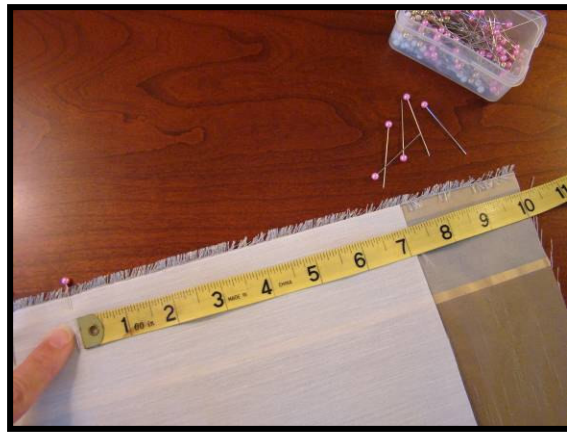


While you're down there, cut your lengths of lining fabric as well! They should be about 3" shorter and 2" narrower than the main fabric. On the back of the fabrics along the selvage edge I always put an arrow towards the top edge of the fabric to make sure that all the panels go in the same direction just in case the fabric looks a little bit different hanging one way or the other.

2 Once the main fabric and lining panels are all cut out, it's time to sew them together. Line up the top edge of the fabrics and one side seam. Pin the side seam together.



Stop pinning along the side about 7 inches up from the bottom edge of the lining. This last portion of the lining will be folded into hems and it's easier to do if the sides aren't stitched all the way to the bottom.



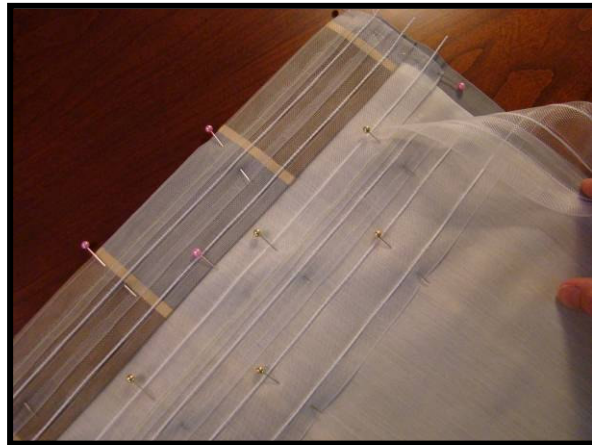
3 Once both side seams are stitched, trim the seam allowance in half. When you get close to the bottom edge of the lining where the stitching ends, cut the seam allowance off on an angle and leave the original 5/8" seam allowance where there is no stitching.

4 Turn the “tube” right side out, center the lining on the main fabric and iron the side seams in place. There should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ ” – 1” of the main fabric folded to the back “lining side” of the drapery panel. Pin along the top edge of the drapery panel about 5” down to hold the lining and main fabric together and in line.

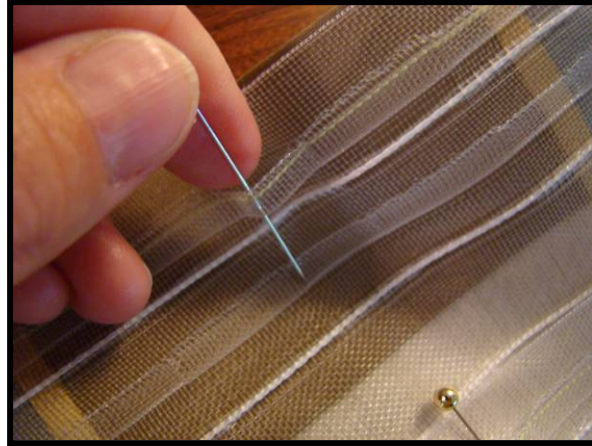


5 Iron the header into the drapery panels first turning down 1” then turning down 2”. Press this in place.

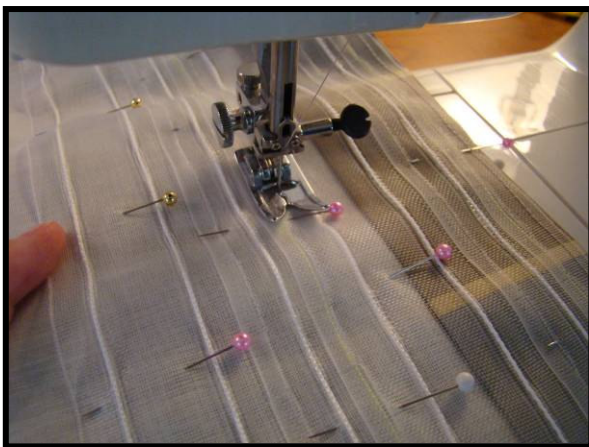
6 I used two lengths of pencil pleat tape to create a 6” header instead of a small 3” header. I pinned the first tape across the full width of the panel placing it just down $\frac{1}{8}$ ” from the top of the folded header. I made sure that at the very edge of the drapery panels there was extra pleater tape to fold underneath. And allow the strings to extend past the edge. When I placed the second strip of pleater tape, I had to overlap the first strip so the cords would be evenly spaced. I also had to pay attention to where the cords versus the drapery pin sleeves were located. Those MUST line up correctly or the header won't pleat evenly.



This shows me placing a pin in the drapery pin sleeve so you can see it. Several of these line up vertically on the tape so you can place your drapery pins in a variety of positions.



In this photo I'm using a pin to pull up the cording so you can see how it is open in areas and travels through a pocket in other areas. These too line up vertically along the pleater tape so the pleats are perfect when the cords are pulled.

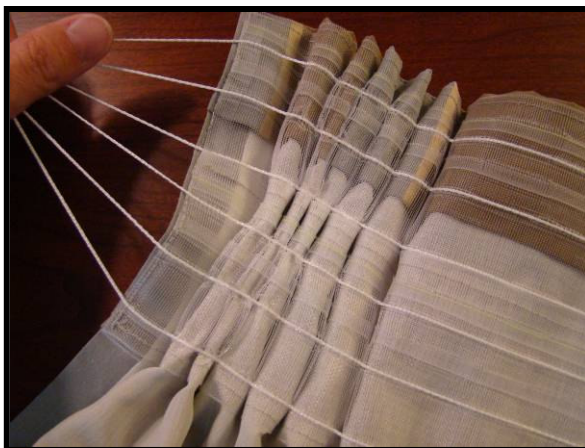


7 Once everything is pinned in place, stitch the pleater tape down. Stitch once along the top of tape 1, once through both tapes in the middle and once through the bottom edge of tape 2. (You may be able to use 3" tape for your project, or even 4" tape and it will make things much easier for you!)



Make sure you have the ends of the pleater tape folded under before stitching across the panel. Then at the ends, hold the cords back and stitch along the edge of both tapes.

8 To gather the header into pencil pleats, tie one end of the cords together so they don't pull through the pleater tape. Then, hold on to the cords at the other end and push the fabric in the opposite direction. I will say this takes a little practice to find the best way to make it happen. Just keep fussing with it and you'll do fine. It's best to gather up some like in this photo and then push those pleats along toward the other end. When the fabric is somewhat flat again, gather more pleats at the end you are working from then push them along toward the other end. It's a process.....



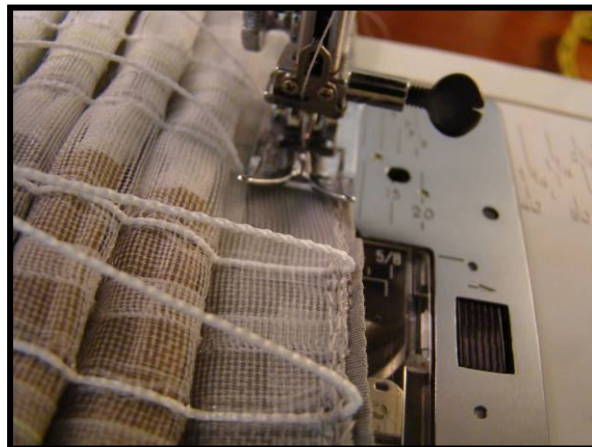
On the front of the panel, the gathers should look even like these. Make sure you take the time to take a look at the front. It's so exciting to see the pleats fall into place!

9 As you get close to having the entire panel pleated, sew down the cords at the end opposite from where you are doing the gathering. You may have to reverse and forward twice over the cords to make sure they won't slip through the stitching. This will help with the final gathering.



10 If you recall, I wanted my finished drapery panel to measure 24" wide, so when I thought I was done pleating, I turned the drapery over and measured the width. I actually had to loosen the pleats a bit to get enough width.

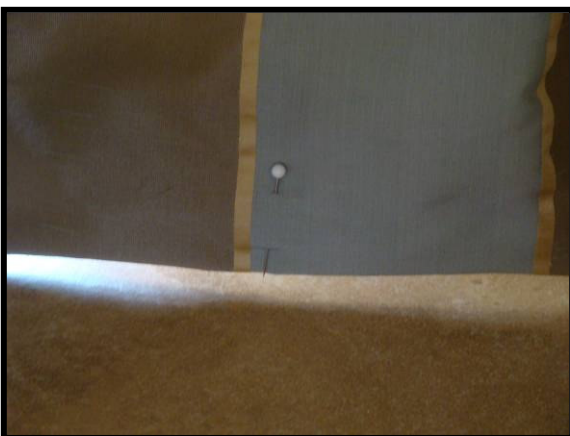
11 When the width was right, I took the drapery to the sewing machine and stitched down the other end of the cords. This time I bent them backwards and did forward and reverse over each one a couple times to make sure the pleats stayed in place.





12 Next you might think it's time to hem the drapery, but I find that hanging the rods and testing out the length before hemming is a better way to go.

I often make my draperies too short and the rule is to hang them about ½" up from the floor. Of course pooling on the floor is an option too, but not for someone who has cats...like me! So I'll have to shorten them a bit from what you see here. Getting the length right while they are on the rod is what makes me feel most comfortable.

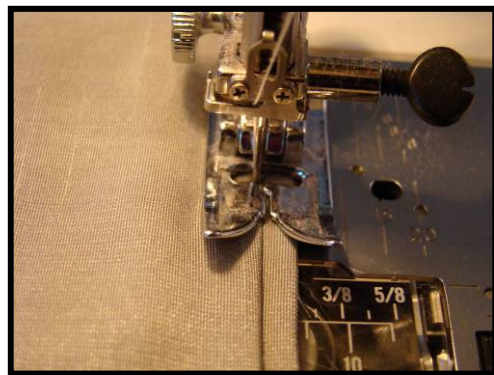


This isn't ½" up from the floor, it is somewhere in between. The half inch looked a bit too high like in the old days when your jeans would shrink up and your shoelaces would show...ew!

13 Once you know where your hem will lie, fold the raw edge under 1" and over again 4" and iron in place.



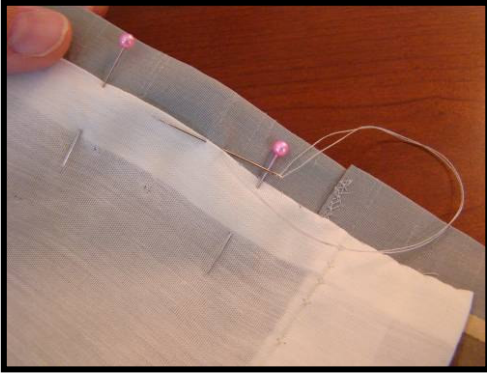
I try to place my pins in parallel to the stitching line so I can go right to the sewing machine and use the blind stitch to put in the hem.



14 Once the outer fabric hem is in, put the hem in the lining the same way. Fold over the raw edges and then fold again until the lining is about 1 1/2" up from the bottom edge of the drapery. Pin in place and blind stitch on the machine. You can hand stitch both of these hems if you wish.

15 I like to add drapery weights to both end of the drapery panel right inside the hems. Just hand stitch them in and you'll cover it up when you stitch the side seam of the lining in place.





16 The last step is to hand stitch the side edge of the lining in place.

I guess the actual last step is to hang the panels and show them off to your family and friends! I have one hung and three to be made. I'll give you an opportunity to see them completed in one of my Whole House Design series articles that are coming up.

Shari

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