

MAKE A MODERN ZABUTON

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The Japanese "zabuton" (floor cushion) or "suwari buton" (sitting cushion) as it is sometimes called has become quite popular in contemporary interior decorating. It adds not only color and interest to our homes but also comfort for T. V. viewers.



The "zabuton" was known in early Japan as "shitone" and was a circular cushion used by aristocratic families. At that time it was woven flat and round from stems of "gama" (cattail or bullrush). The "shitone" was also used in the Zen training (meditation) when an individual had to sit for many hours and days with his legs folded under him. Later it was made into a square cushion with a cloth cover and cotton or feather filling. Probably it was then that it was named "zabuton."

The "zabuton" is made in large and small sizes. In Japanese homes the large ones are kept for the use of guests and the smaller ones are used by members of the family. Like the custom practiced in some western homes of reserving a particular chair for a certain member of the family, particular zabutons in some homes are assigned to certain members in the family.

Zabutons are made for both summer and winter use. These differ in thickness, color and design, and cover fabric. About once a year the covers are taken off to be washed and have the filling fluffed.

The zabuton is made commercially in Hawaii and is also imported from Japan. But it is so simple to make that, if you can handle a needle and thread or a sewing machine, you can make one yourself in a jiffy.

Choose fabrics of colors, designs and textures that coordinate with other furnishings in your home. Our experience shows that fabrics with a wrinkle resistant finish are especially good for these cushions. Other suitable fabrics are plain, printed or striped cottons and silks; drapery and upholstery fabrics; Japanese printed cottons, plain linens or pure silks, (meisen or kabe' yūzen) or rayon and cotton mixtures (spun mosu); taffeta and satin. When plastics are used, however, leave off the tufting.

THE MODERN "ZABUTON", for which the instructions are given in this leaflet, is made with an inside muslin case for the cotton so that the outside cover may be more easily removed and washed.

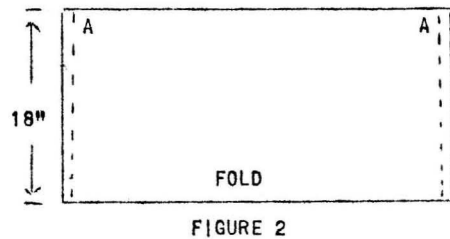
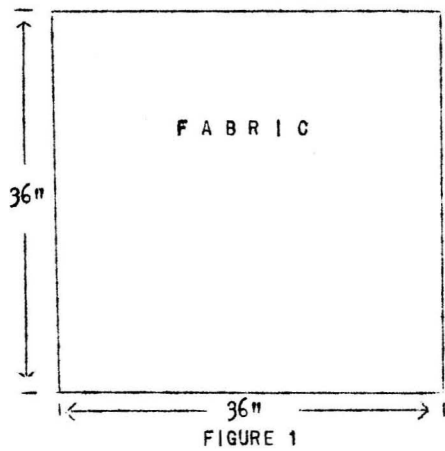
Here are the supplies that you will need to make a modern zabuton **with the inside muslin case**:

- 1 square of fabric for the cover. A 36-inch square of fabric will make a large zabuton 25 inches square. A 28-inch square of fabric will make a small zabuton 18 inches square.
- 1 square of unbleached muslin - the same size as the cover fabric.
- 3-4 sheets of zabuton cotton. One six-pound bundle of zabuton cotton contains 10 sheets - enough for two to three zabutons.
- Thread to match cover fabric.
- Embroidery thread or special zabuton tufting thread.

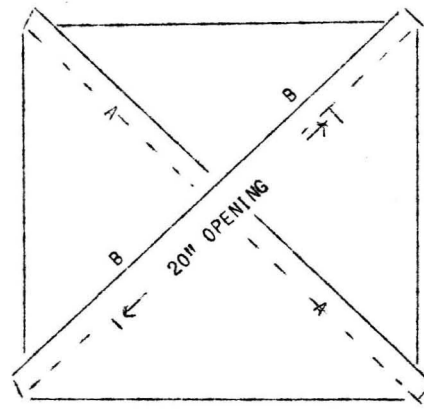
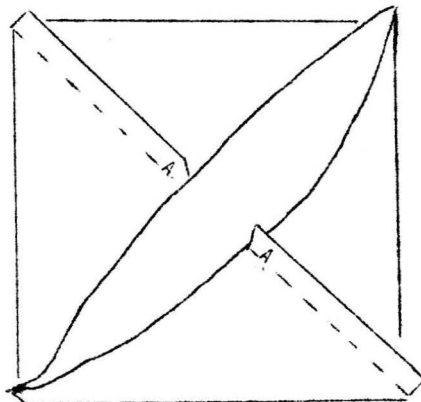
Here are the steps in making a zabuton:

Step I: Cut and Sew Case and Cover

- a. Cut fabric squares. (Fig. 1)
- b. Fold each square in half to form a rectangle and stitch on the 18-inch edges (A). Make a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch seam on the muslin case and a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch seam on the cover. This will make the finished cushion look "full." (Fig. 2)



- c. Bring the two seam ends (A) together at the center. (Fig. 3)
- d. Pin and sew unstitched edges (B) leaving a 20-inch opening in the center. (Fig. 4)



Step II: Stuffing

- a. Lay case on a table with the seams down on the table. (Fig. 5)
- b. Tear the first layer of cotton approximately 10 inches larger than the case on all four sides. Place it on the case. Put more layers of cotton, slightly larger than the case, on the first layer for the desired thickness. Usually 5-7 layers are used. (Fig. 6)

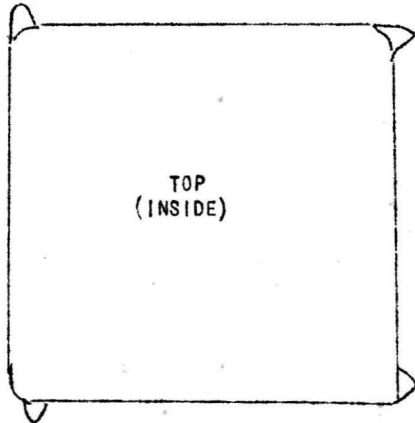


FIGURE 5

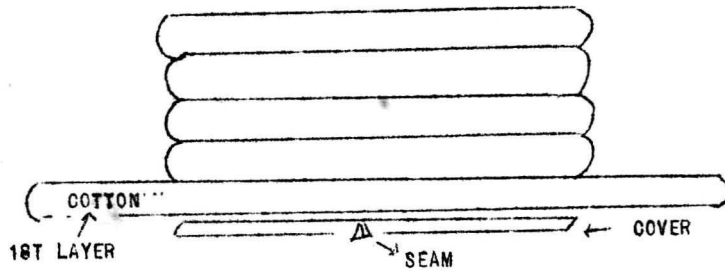


FIGURE 6

- c. Fold the extra 10-inches of the first layer of cotton over the sides and top of the other layers of cotton. (Fig. 7) Trim the cotton from the corners before folding it up to get even thickness at the corners.
- d. Tack all corners of the cotton to the corners of the case. Use embroidery thread or zabuton thread with no knot or back stitch at beginning and end.
 - 1) Start about 3 inches from the corner on the fold of the case and make large running stitches to the corner.
 - 2) Take the needle and thread between the cotton and the case about 3 inches in from the corner. Bring the needle straight up through all the layers of cotton.
 - 3) Carry the thread down over the cotton and insert the needle in the corner of the case. Continue running stitches on the fold for 3 more inches. (Fig. 8)

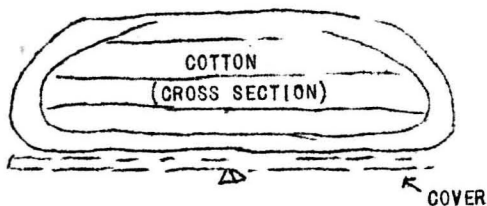


FIGURE 7

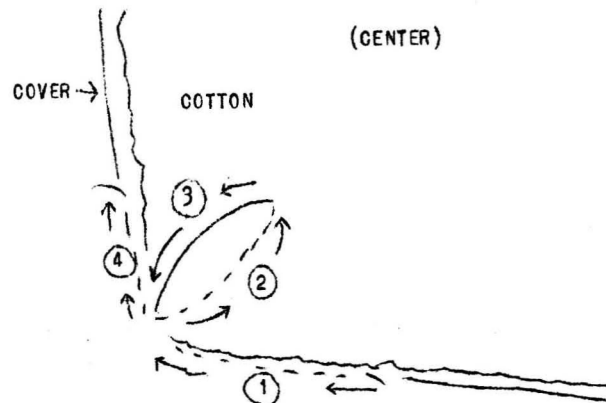


FIGURE 8

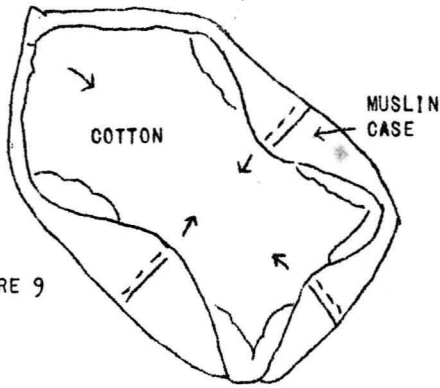


FIGURE 9

- e. Roll the corners of the case and cotton to the center. Pull the opening of the cover, which is on the bottom, over the cotton and at the same time push the cotton into the cover. (Fig. 9)
- f. Pull cotton to the corners of the cover. To do this, draw the two ends of the running stitch thread out at each corner; pull and tie securely. (Fig. 10)
- g. Pin and hand stitch to close the opening.
- h. Place cushion on the cover and turn the muslin cushion into it in the same way as you did in step "e" above. Blind stitch the opening as you did in step "g".

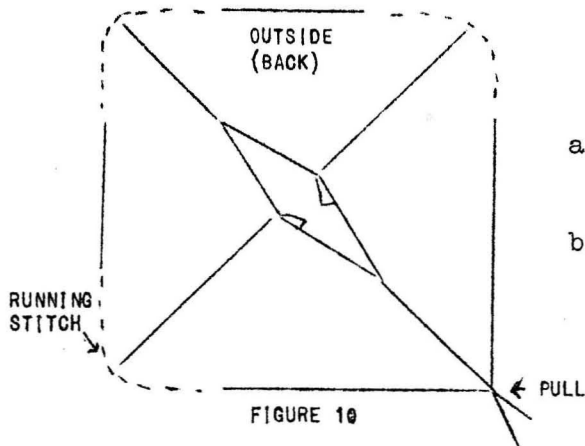


FIGURE 10

Step III: Finishing

- a. Tuft zabuton through the center and in four corners, approximately half way from the center. (Fig. 11)
- b. Make corner "ears" if desired: Push in each corner about 3 inches and tack it down to the seamed side of the zabuton using embroidery or zabuton thread. (Fig. 12) Tie a knot and cut the thread about 2 inches from the knot to make a little tassel.

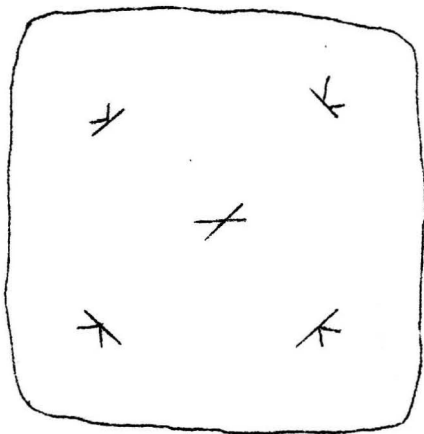


FIGURE 11

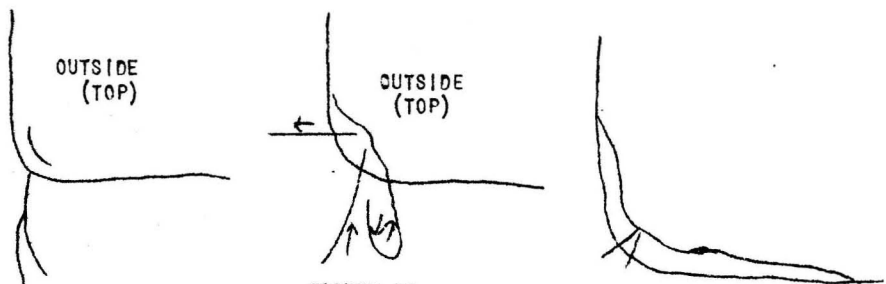


FIGURE 12

This circular was prepared at the request of the Agricultural Extension Service for our use.

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Acknowledgments:

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