

Quick to Make

If you're busy and have only limited time to sew, try these quick-to-make ideas.

FOLD A FABRIC-ORIGAMI TREASURE BOX

by Louise LoPinto Hutchison

As the holidays approach, it's great to have a store of elegant little boxes like those pictured below and on p. 84 up your gift-giving sleeve. Folded from a square of beautiful paper or from plain paper covered with fabric, these origami boxes are easy to construct in dimensions to accommodate a variety of small-sized contents, from jewelry to socks to handmade chocolates, or even cash. And the best part is that these boxes can uncomplicate your holidays! Make up a batch in a variety of fabrics to hold gifts for

friends, special coworkers, teachers, and other lucky recipients.

And this is a wrapping that won't be thrown away. The empty box is a treasure in itself, and can quickly be adapted to a variety of other uses—perhaps as the perfect stash for buttons, earrings, business cards, tubes of sparkling beads, or sewing notions.

Colorful, folded-fabric gift boxes are sure to be recycled, and make an elegant presentation for any small gift. A single button makes a perfect decoration for the top.

Fabric or paper?

The word *origami* comes from the Japanese *ori*, meaning "to fold," and *kami*, meaning "paper." The idea of folding paper originated in ancient China, and became a truly creative art in the hands of the Japanese.

To experiment with the simple folding technique required for this box, I suggest that you practice making a box in paper before you begin with fabric. Ordinary computer, plain bond, or copier paper all work well for practicing, and can be used for the base layer of a fabric-covered box.

To make a fabric box, you'll bond the fabric to plain paper using HeatnBond Lite, Pellon's Wonder-Under, or a similar fusible web. The paper base stabilizes the fabric and gives it the ability to "hold" a creased fold.

Fabrics that work well include firmly woven cottons and medium-weight silks like dupioni. If you enjoy creating your own fabrics, try making boxes from hand-painted silk or fabric with marbled or rubber-stamped designs. You need only a small piece of fabric for each box (an 8½-in. square makes a 3-in. box top), so your handmade fabric will go a long way.

When I'm making a batch of boxes for gifts, I often use fabric-covered paper for the box top and a coordinating paper alone for the bottom. If the box will contain chocolates or other items that might stain the box, I cut a square of clear plastic (for example, from a school-report cover) that just fits inside the bottom to protect it.

If you'd like to use paper alone for the box bottom, top, or both, choose a heavier-weight charcoal

drawing paper, available at a supply or craft store. Or, if you prefer lightweight paper you can use instead, like rice paper or a child's drawing, or wrapping paper, bond it to plain paper the way you would fabric to plain next.

Sizing, fusing, and cutting tips

First, cut the paper to the exact size required for the box top. In order for the box top to fit together neatly, cut the piece about ¼ in. larger on the bottom. For example, for 3- by 1½-in. boxes, start with an 8½-in. square for the top and an 8¼-in. square for the bottom.

For a smaller box, use a 4-in. square for the top and a 3½-in. square for the bottom, with a box that's 2½ in. square and over 1 in. high. Tiny boxes are also possible—for example, a 4-in. square makes a 1½-in.-square box that's ¾ in. high. It's easy to experiment with box sizes to get one that perfectly fits its contents.

Cut the fabric and fusible web to ¼ to 1 in. larger than the paper in both directions, then fuse the web to the fabric side, following the manufacturer's directions for heat level and fusing time.

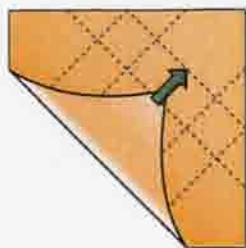
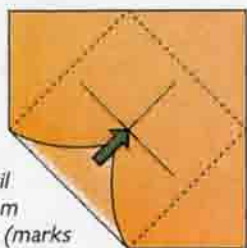
When the fabric has been fused, move the web's protective sheet to the other side, lay the fabric right side up, and fuse it with the paper base. Use the protective sheet, and fuse a second time, using steam or moist heat, allowing the layers to bond together. Finally, use a straightedge and rotary cutter to trim the fabric



A UNIQUE GIFT BOX BEGINS WITH A SQUARE

For 3-in.-square box, begin with 8½-in. square for top and 8¼-in. square for bottom. For other sizes, experiment using plain paper.

1. After fusing your fabric to paper base, lay fabric-side down and mark center of paper square with pencil cross roughly from corner to corner (marks won't show in finished box). Fold each corner to center, crease, and unfold.

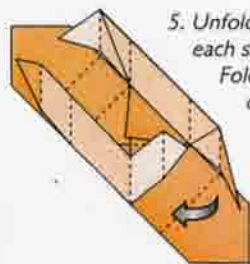
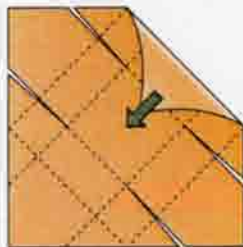


2. Fold each corner to center of farthest fold on opposite side. Crease and unfold.

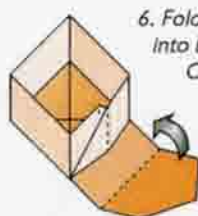
3. Cut in four places as shown, along foldlines, just to inner crease. Cuts will be on two opposite sides.



4. Fold one uncut corner to center on original crease. Fold same side again to center and crease folds. Repeat with opposite corner.



5. Unfold last folds halfway on each side, so sides stand up. Fold cut tabs toward each other, overlapping them.



6. Fold each extended end over its tab side and down into bottom of box, creating final two box sides. Crease inside bottom with fingernail.

Place dot of white glue under four corners and hold in place for moment (or, when using paper, anchor with small piece of double-sided tape).



(Drawings adapted from *Origami Ornaments* by Eastwind Art; see address in text below.)

it's even with the paper base.

And now you're ready to fold, following the step-by-step instructions in the drawing above. For neat, crisp creases, use the flat end of a burnishing tool, a bone folder, or even a plastic pen barrel to flatten each fold.

For a finishing touch

Embellishing the boxes is a delight! I like to add a single new or antique button to the box top, stitching it in place with embroidery floss, metallic cord, yarn, or fine wire. The challenge is to find the right button to match the personality of each box.

To attach the button, mark a tiny x at the center of the box top. Then, holding the button in place, very gently punch a hole through the buttonholes and box top, using a hatpin or large needle. You can tie and cut the thread ends so that they flop on the box top, or hide them inside. A dot of white glue or Fray Check will anchor the knot. In place of a button, you can tie on a single, chunky bead, or use hot-melt glue to attach a seashell, small piece of driftwood, beach glass, or other unique decoration.

For more information about origami, consult the many books

available at your local library or bookstore. You can purchase books and supplies from OrigamiUSA (send a SASE to 15 W. 77th St., New York, NY 10024; 212-769-5635; www.origami-usa.org), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to paperfolding. And origami patterns for a variety of ornaments are available from Eastwind Art (PO Box 811, Sebastopol, CA 95473; 707-829-3536; www.eastwindart.com).

Once you get started, I think you'll be surprised at how much fun these boxes are to make. And they're sure to make your gift-giving feel more special this year.

Louise LoPinto Hutchison of Warwick, NY, is a graphic designer, writer, and quilt designer.