

Gut Skin Pouch

INSTRUCTIONS BY SUSAN MALUTIN

This activity creates an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq style pouch from animal gut.



MATERIALS

- Gut (clear collagen casing 100 mm x 24")
- Straight pins
- Embroidery thread (2 or 3 colors)
- Washcloth
- Needles – 1 regular, 1 round point (tapestry)
- Pencil
- Measuring tape
- Scissors
- Warm water
- Paper templates (see pages 5 & 6)

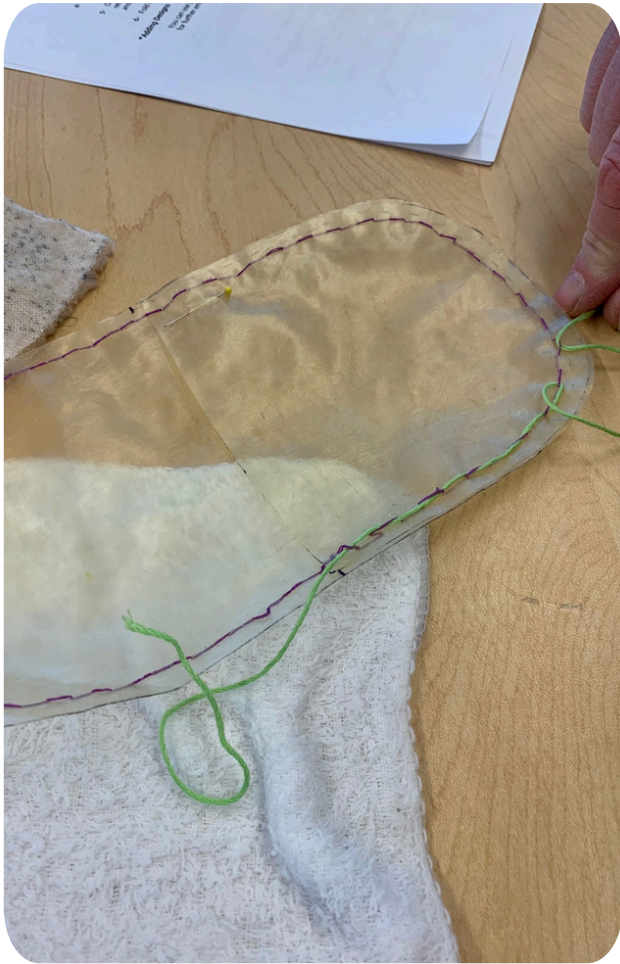
ABOUT GUT

Gut skin is animal intestine. For this activity, we recommend using collagen-based sausage casing instead. This can be purchased online from The Sausage Maker. Look for clear casing that is 100 mm wide. The Sausage Maker sells packs of 10 that are 24" long.

STEP ONE: PREPARATION

1. Choose a pouch size (large or small) and cut a length of gut. You will need 14" for a large pouch, or about 8" for a small pouch. Now cut the gut lengthwise to create a flat piece.
2. Soak a washcloth in warm water. Fold the gut into the washcloth and let it soften for 15–30 minutes.
3. Print a paper template (pages 5 & 6) for the pouch size you would like and cut it out.
4. Cut a 36" piece of embroidery thread. Separate the thread into single strands and thread one on a regular sewing needle. Double the thread but do not knot the end.
5. Remove the gut from the washcloth and trace a pouch pattern onto it. There will be one large piece and one small piece.
6. Cut the gut skin to the shape of the pattern. The larger piece will be the back of the pouch. The smaller piece will be the front. When the pouch is completed, the larger piece will fold in the middle, and half of it will become a front flap.

STEP TWO: STITCH THE POUCH



1. Pin the two pieces of gut skin together to hold them in place as you sew. Align the smaller pocket piece with one end of the larger back piece—as shown.
2. Using a pencil, draw around the gut, approximately 1/8" from the edge. This will be your sewing guide.
3. Start sewing in the center of one long edge, where the smaller piece of gut meets the middle of the larger piece. Leave a 2" tail of thread to tie off later. If the gut becomes stiff, dampen it with the wet washcloth to prevent tearing.
4. Sew a running stitch around the pouch using the doubled strand of embroidery thread on the sewing needle.
5. When you have stitched around the entire pattern and returned to your starting point, use your thread and the 2" tail to tie a knot. Trim off any access thread.

Large Back Piece



Small Pocket Piece



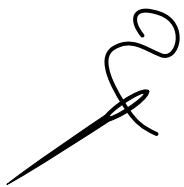
RUNNING STITCH

To make a running stitch, start from the back of the gut pieces and bring your thread through both. Then, stitch down through both pieces of gut working parallel to the edge of the gut. Repeat, leaving a space between each stitch. Try to make your stitches about the same length.

STEP THREE: ADD A DECORATIVE BORDER

1. Using a different color, cut a 72" strand of embroidery thread and thread it onto your rounded point needle. Use the full strand of embroidery thread – do not divide it.
2. Leaving a 2" tail, start a weaving stitch at the corner where you began stitching the pouch. Weave the embroidery thread through your stitches around the entire pouch.
3. When you reach the starting point, push the needle through one of the needle holes to the other side of the gut skin.
4. Continue weaving the thread through the stitches on the other side of the pouch.
5. When you reach the starting point, tie your thread and the tail into a knot.

WEAVING STITCH ALSO KNOWN AS THE LACED STITCH



To make a weaving stitch, cut about an arm's length of embroidery thread. Thread a tapestry needle with a round bottom, keeping all 6 strands. Tie a knot at the end. Put the needle underneath the pouch to come up through the last hole where you started the running stitch. Go under the running stitch and then over the next running stitch. Repeating this pattern all the way around.



STEP FOUR: FINISH THE POUCH

1. Fold the larger piece of gut in the middle to create the front flap of the pouch.
2. If desired, you can use permanent markers and stencils to add images to the gut.

Kakiwik — Sewing Bag



Photo: Decorated sewing bag, Etholen Collection, National Museum of Finland.

In classical Alutiiq society, both men and women carried sewing tools, particularly when traveling. Men kept sewing kits in their kayaks to repair tears in the boat's skin covering. Alutiiq women are known for their sewing skills. In ancient times, they used delicate ivory and bird bone needles, bird bone awls, and wooden spools of animal sinew to stitch fine clothing. Their tools were stored in sewing bags with scraps of fur and gut. Each bag was uniquely decorated with animal-hair embroidery and appliqué of dyed gut. When not in use, sewing bags were rolled up and tied closed. Sewing was often a social activity. Women enjoyed each other's company as they produced clothing and covers for skin boats. Girls began participating at the age of six, making thread and braiding lines.

EXPLORE MORE SEWING TECHNIQUES

INSTRUCTIONS

- <https://alutiiqmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Pouch-Stitching-Instructions.pdf>

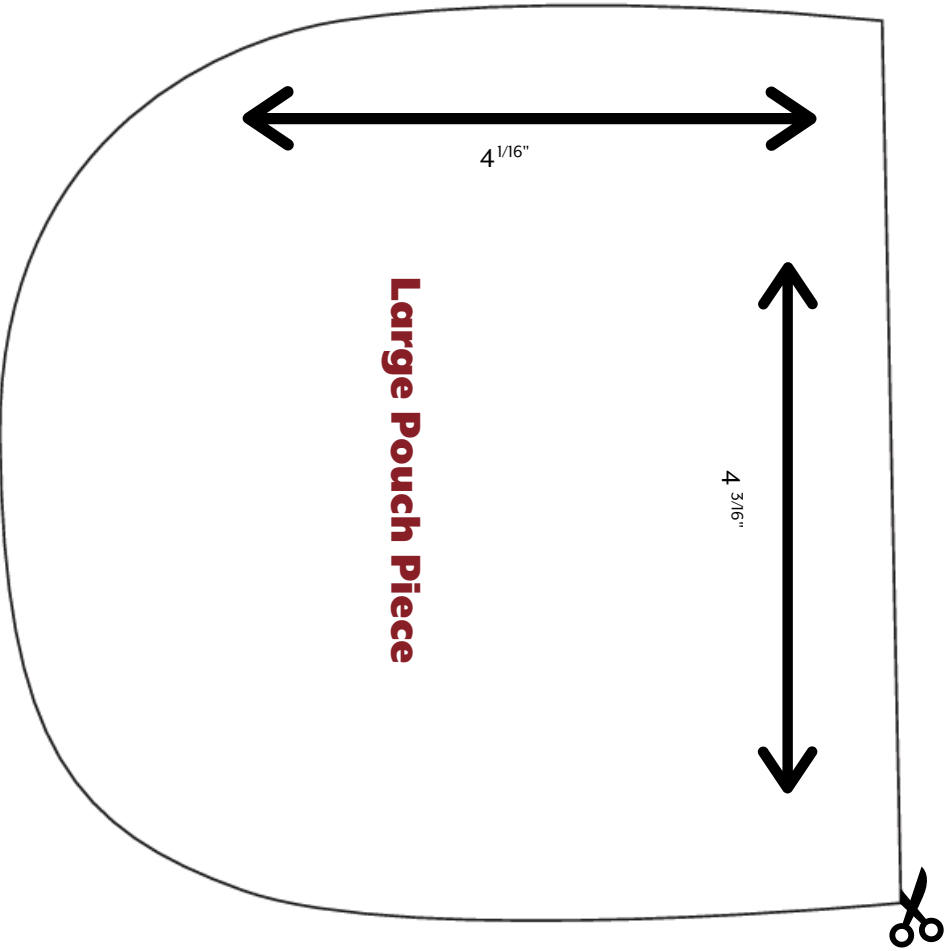
VIDEOS

- Alutiiq Stitching Part 1—Intro & Blanket Stitch <https://vimeo.com/705820939>
- Alutiiq Stitching Part 2—Running Stitch <https://vimeo.com/705817092>
- Alutiiq Stitching Part 3—Laced Stitch <https://vimeo.com/705805670>
- Alutiiq Arts Sewing <https://alutiiqmuseum.org/alutiiq-people/art/arts-blog/sewing/>

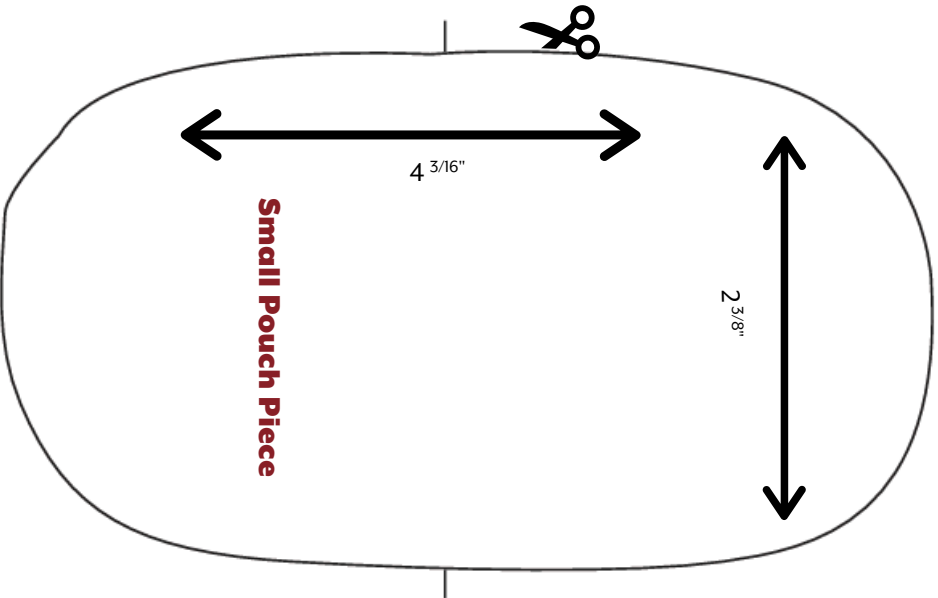


Gut Pouch Templates

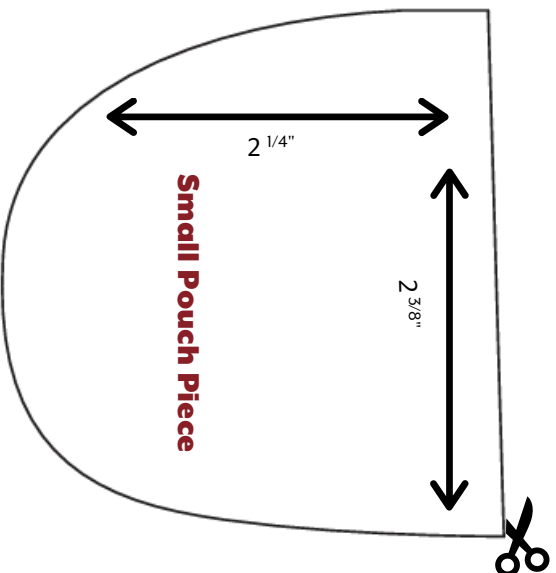
Print this template on an 8.5 x 11" piece of paper in portrait orientation.



Large Pouch Piece



Small Pouch Piece



Small Pouch Piece



Gut Pouch Template

Print this template on an 8.5 x 11" piece of paper in portrait orientation.

