



Yo-Yo Pillow, 14" x 14". Made by Catherine Redford.

YO-YO Pillow

by Catherine Redford

Skill level: Easy

Finished pillow size: 14" x 14"

Yo-yos, or Suffolk Puffs as they are known in the UK, were first recorded in the 17th century. In the 19th century they were made out of old clothes and fabric scraps by farming families in Suffolk, England, and sewn together to make quilts. In the USA the same type of quilts became known as yo-yo quilts seemingly after the introduction of the yo-yo toy.

The technique was very popular from 1925 through the 1950s. Yo-yo coverlets made from thousands of handmade yo-yos stitched together survive, along with pillows and even clothing. My pillow is inspired by a friend's garage sale find dating back to the 1930s. Solid colors and a little embroidery bring the traditional technique into the 21st century.

Cutting

From the yo-yo fabric:

- 48 squares 4½" x 4½"

From the pillow front fabric:

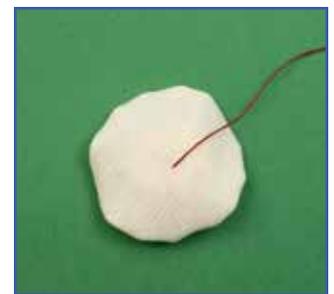
- 2 squares 16" x 16"

From the pillow back fabric:

- 2 rectangles 15" x 19"

Making the yo-yos

Follow the Yo-Yo Maker manufacturer's directions to make 48 yo-yos from the 4½" x 4½" squares. Use the hand quilting thread to make the gathering stitches. Finish each yo-yo with 2 small stitches and then take the thread through to the back before cutting so that the threads will be inside and under the yo-yos.



MATERIALS

Note: Requirements are based on 42" usable width of fabric.

- Yo-yos – 7/8 yard
- Pillow top – 5/8 yard
- Pillow back – 1/2 yard
- Low-loft cotton batting – 16" x 16"
- Clover "Quick" Yo-Yo Maker – size Large; yo-yos finish to about 1¾"
- Hand quilting thread – I used Coats & Clark Bold
- Pencil
- 50 or 60 wt. hand sewing thread to match the yo-yo fabric
- Hand sewing needles
- Sewing machine with walking foot
- 14" pillow form

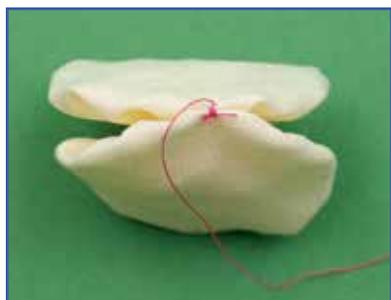


Assembling the pillow top

Using a pencil, mark the back of each yo-yo at the $\frac{1}{4}$ points.



Referring to the photo of the finished pillow, arrange the yo-yos in 3 sections; one is 3 rows of 8 yo-yos, another is 1 row of 8 yo-yos, and the last is 2 rows of 8 yo-yos. Hand stitch the yo-yos in each section together using 50 to 60 wt. thread. To join 2 yo-yos, place them pleated sides together and with $\frac{1}{4}$ marks aligned. Take several small stitches at the marks. Repeat for all yo-yos in the section.



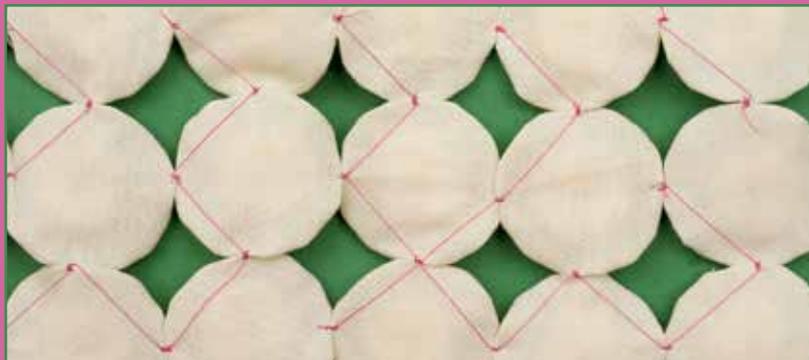
Layer a pillow top square, the batting, and another pillow top square right-side up. Baste to secure. Machine quilt with lines approximately $\frac{5}{8}$ " apart.

Tip: Move the needle over so you can use the edge of your walking foot to space the lines evenly.

Square up the quilted square to 15" x 15". Arrange the yo-yo units on top and pin in place. There should be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " open for seam allowance all the way around the outside of the square.



Tip: You don't need to cut the thread each time you finish stitching 2 yo-yos in a section; simply bring the thread to the back of the piece and travel to the next 2 yo-yos.

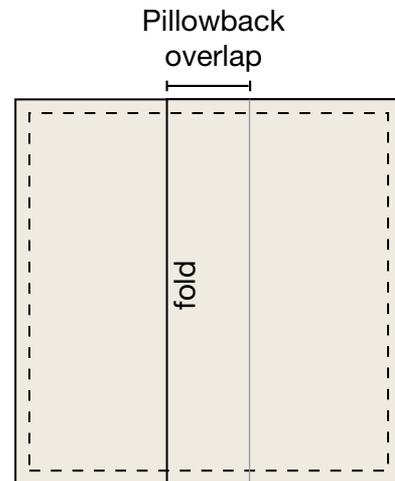


Take small hand stitches at the $\frac{1}{4}$ point of the yo-yos on the outside edges of each section. This leaves the units “floating” on the surface of the pillow for a realistic vintage look. Add embroidery between the units. I added a running stitch and stars using the hand quilting thread.



Finishing the pillow

Fold the pillow back pieces in half lengthwise with wrong-sides together. Press. Line up the folded pieces over the right side of the pillow top with raw edges aligned and folded edges overlapping near the center. Pin. Stitch all around using a $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance.



Turn the pillow cover right-side out. Insert the pillow form through the opening in the back.

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Brought up in the North West of England, Catherine Redford moved to the United States with her husband and four children in 1995. She has enjoyed all forms of stitchery since childhood. A friend introduced her to quilting in 1998 and she hasn't looked back! The resurgence in the popularity of

handwork and a fascination in reviving traditional quilting techniques have led her on an interesting journey including this modern yo-yo project. Catherine is the author of the new DVD *Modern Machine Quilting: Straight Lines, Spirals, Serpentine, and More*, a Quilting Arts Workshop from Interweave Press.

