
Smocked Necklace with Liesl Gibson

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(light music) - Smocking is a very traditional fabric embellishment technique and it looks complicated, but it's surprisingly easy to do. We're gonna do smocking on a very small scale to make a necklace and this is a great little project because it gives you a chance to try smocking without making a major time commitment to a larger project. I'm gonna show you first how to pleat the fabric, then how to embroider it with a very Simple embroidery stitch that looks really impressive and then we'll add a chain to make it into a necklace. I think you're really gonna like this project. (light music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- If you do any sort of sewing or embroidery, this is one of those projects where you'll probably already have a lot of these tools at hand. We're going to start out with just a little bit of gingham, just to practice the stitches and sort of learn the technique, and any scale of gingham is just fine, you'll still be able to figure out how it all works. You'll also need a lighter weight fabric, this will be the fabric for your necklace itself, and this should be something that is lighter than a quilting cotton. I'm using an Indian cotton, this like like a Shot cotton, it's very, very lightweight and sheer, and for my actual necklace, I'll be using this peachy color, but anything in the area of maybe a lawn or a voile, even a Liberty of London would work really nicely, but something that's very lightweight and sheer is ideal for this. You'll need some thread that coordinates with the fabric you're using for your necklace, and this will enable you to put your necklace together and sew all the edges down. You'll also want some contrast thread that will allow you to do the pleats on your smocking, and this is something that should be visible enough and different enough in color from your necklace fabric that you can really see it. This will help you with guiding your embroidery stitches as well. You'll also want a stronger thread, I'm using a hand quilting thread, and this will actually allow you to cinch up that top edge and make that fan shape that makes the necklace. And moving on, you'll need an embroidery needle, I'm using a size eight embroidery needle, and you probably don't wanna go any bigger than this, particularly if you are going to be adding beads to your necklace, and I'll show you how to do that as well, but just be sure that your needle can go through the beads. So keep that in mind if you want to use beads. I like to use a thimble when I sew, so that's a matter of preference, feel free to pick one up if you need one, and then you'll need some embroidery floss. I would recommend picking an embroidery floss that contrasts with your fabric, so it shows up fairly well, especially for your first attempts at smocking. I know that these fabulous metallics and neon embroidery thread can be really attractive, but be a little careful with these, simply because they're much more slippery than an ordinary embroidery floss, and they can make smocking a little bit trickier, particularly for your first attempt at smocking, so keep that in mind. Seed beads if you want them, and embroidery scissors can be really handy. You'll also need a small ruler, I really like these clear rulers because you can see through them and it makes it a little bit easier. We're going to be using this to mark the position of our running stitch for the smocking, for the smocking pleats, so you'll definitely need a ruler. A larger scissors for cutting out your fabric to make your necklace. You'll need some sort of a tool for marking the fabric, we're going to be starting out with the

gingham, but once we move to the necklace, we'll actually need to mark a lot of lines on the fabric. So something that will show up well on your fabric. The ChacoLiner is good, a fabric pen, tailor's chalk is fine too, whatever you prefer. You'll need either a chain for your necklace, and if you use a chain, you'll probably want a wire cutter to break the chain so that you'll have two ends to sew to your necklace, or you can also use a ribbon. I've got a silk ribbon here, and this is a cotton sort of a mesh ribbon, these can both be really pretty too. So again, take your pick there. You'll also need some ordinary sewing pins, and if you have a sewing machine handy, that's a really good idea too. You can do this by hand, but it's definitely faster and easier if you have a sewing machine handy. Once you've gathered all those, we're all ready to begin.

Chapter 3 - Prep and Practice

Pleat fabric

- To get started, I wanna show you how to pleat your fabric, and then we'll practice the embroidery stitch before we actually move on to doing the necklace. So we're gonna start by pleating on the gingham. And the reason I like the gingham is because it already has this nice grid for you. It's got little squares so you can actually follow the square and create a running stitch, a very even running stitch, and when you've created several rows of those running stitches, then you can pull up on the ends of the threads and it pleats up that fabric really beautifully, like this sample. It's actually, this is a gingham, but when it pleats up, you get this interesting little stripe because it's so evenly pleated. So I always like to get started, it doesn't really matter what size your fabric scrap is, but you just want a small rectangle of gingham, and start out maybe an inch or a half inch down, an inch to a half inch in from one edge, and just start running, a running stitch. In this example, I've already done a few rows of the running stitch. You can see that my thread consistently goes over the blue and under the white, and I do the same thing on each row so that each row of stitching is going over the same sort of stripe in the gingham and under the same stripe in every row of stitching. I've already threaded up a needle here. My thread is longer than my piece of fabric, and then again, I'll just start from one side and I'll just consistently follow that grid, just going over and under at each corner of the gingham. When you've taken a few stitches, pull it through, be sure not to pull the end of the thread through, leave a nice tail, and then you can continue. And I would say you probably wanna do this, you just want enough that you can pleat up and practice a little bit of this embroidery, so you probably wanna pleat a good, say six inches of your gingham and then we'll have something to work with. So probably four rows of stitching for at least six inches, and more if you wanna experiment a little bit and try different techniques, but four rows of about six inches should give you plenty to work with initially. So once you've finished those four rows, then we can pleat up the fabric, and since I have one here that I've already stitched, why don't I show you on this one. You can see, if I take all four of these threads and hold them in my hand, and then start pulling, we get these wiggles or pleats that start developing. And they look a little uneven to start out with, but I'll do the same thing on the other side, and as I pull them tighter, I'm just pulling and allowing everything to gather within the fabric, you get these nice pleats that happen. And if I pull on the ends, you can start to see those really come into place. Now what I like to do generally, is either put a knot in one end of the thread, and then just pull up on the others, or you can pull up on both ends of the thread if you put a pin in. I generally do this with two thread ends at a time, put a pin in the fabric so it comes out at one thread and goes in at the other end. If you pull up on those, you can wind them around in a figure eight, and this allows you to not knot the thread, you can release it somewhere down the road, and I think that's really helpful, especially when we get to our necklaces,

we'll wanna be able to see how much smocking we have and how open it can be. So I will continue to pull up on those, I wanna get that pretty tight initially. I'll do that same figure eight on the other end, and now you can see that I'm getting those nice pleats. I'll do the same thing with the other two threads. Just a pin to anchor the thread tails on one end and the same type of pin and thread to anchor the thread tails on the other end, and that gives me those nice tight pleats. So when you're twisting that thread around the pin, you can sort of think of like an interoffice envelope, that's that same technique where you're going that figure eight around the two, they have the buttons on the envelope, in this case you're just going around the ends of the pin. So then if we just pull on the ends of the fabric above the stitching lines, you can really get those pleats put into position. You can also, if you want, you can hit this with your steam iron and just kind of, the steam will also sort of coax those pleats into place, and once you've got it pleated like that, you're ready to start trying the embroidery.

Practice smocking

- To do the actual smocking stitch, we'll need a short piece of embroidery floss. Embroidery floss is usually six strands. For most embroidery, we only need two strands of this. Once you've cut a piece, no more than two feet long, then I like to just pull a single strand at a time. I think it has less chance of getting all tangled and twisted on itself if you pull one strand at a time. So, two strands of this. Then thread up your needle. Then we can thread the needle with the two strands. You can put a knot at the end of that thread as well. Again, this doesn't have to be a very long piece of embroidery floss because when it's really long, it has a tendency to get tangled up on itself and it gets a little messy. Try to keep it under two feet. Probably 18 inches or shorter would be better. I'm gonna put a knot on the end. Then we're ready to get started. If we take a look at our pleated fabric now, with smocking stitches, generally what you wanna be doing is stitching through just maybe the top half of your pleat. So just to get sort of oriented here, I wanna show you with each of these pleats, if you open up the fabric in between a couple of pleats, you can see that this is kind of like if you think of this as a landscape, it's sort of like a series of mountains and valleys. When you're doing a smocking stitch, you generally wanna stitch only the top half of one of those pleats. So you'll be coming in about halfway up the mountain and then going back down about halfway down the other side of the mountain. So we'll come up here and we'll be going down on the other side. We're gonna be stitching two mountains together with each one. To get started, first of all, let me just tell you since the figure eight on our threads twisting around the pin sort of messes up the first couple of pleats, I'm gonna skip a couple of pleats, maybe I'll start about here and I'm gonna come in from the back of the fabric about halfway up the left side of that mountain. Here we go. I'm halfway up on this side of the pleat, on the left side of pleat. Now I'm gonna bring the thread up above my stitching and I'm going to go over that first pleat that I came up and then one more pleat. So I'm gonna be stitching two pleats together and I'm only going to go through the second mountain. So I'm gonna be coming again halfway down the mountain. I'm gonna be going right through that single pleat. When I pull this stitch tight, not too tight, but pull it taut, you're actually stitching those two pleats together. You can see how those came together nicely. Here I am, I'm down in the valley in between those two mountains that we stitched together. One of the things I really like about using gingham to get started is that it has these nice stripes that we can follow. This will help us to keep each of our stitches even. I started out just below this stripe. Now I'm gonna jump down just a couple, about two rows here, and I'm going to skip over that first mountain. See, we've got the two mountains here. I'm gonna skip over, but actually I guess you should call that really the second

mountain. I'm going to go over to what would be the third mountain and I'm gonna go in from the right side, I'm gonna take another stitch just like that one that we did going right to left. I'm gonna go through that single pleat, that single mountain. And now keeping my thread below, I'll take the same stitch in the next pleat. Again, always about halfway up or down the mountain. Going through a single mountain. See, here we are, we're stitching these two mountains together. We're bringing the two pleats right up together. And pulling it relatively tight. Not tight enough that you're cinching up the fabric between these two levels, but tight enough that you're bringing the two pleats together. So now we're gonna travel back up to that first row where we started out. And we're always gonna be going forward one pleat with this stitch. Always think of that. You're coming out to the left side of the pleat but you're going to be going into the right side of the next pleat. So just keep that in mind. That will help you to stay oriented with where you are and help you remember where you are in the stitching. We're traveling back up to that top row again. Remember, now we just finished stitching this pleat, so even though we're over to the left of it, we're going to skip that pleat and move on to the next pleat. I'm gonna come in to the right of it. Stitch to the left of it. Get the threads out of the way. Then again we'll bring the thread up above the stitching. Now I'm going to go to the next pleat. Going from the right to the left through the pleat halfway. This stitch will stitch those two pleats together. You're always going over one pleat and alternating between stitching two pleats together and traveling down to the next row. So we've brought those pleats together. Now, since we just stitched this pleat, we'll move on to the next pleat down below. Going through from the right to the left. Halfway down the pleat. So we traveled on that stitch. Now, since we're in the bottom row, we'll leave our thread down toward the bottom and stitch through that next pleat to bring the two pleats together. Again, alternating between traveling and stitching them together. There we go. We'll continue like that. We just stitched this pleat, so we move on to the next one at the upper level. Right to left. We're at the top so we'll leave the thread up the top, go through the next one to bring the two pleats together. We'll just continue that way all the way along the row. Again, you can use those stripes to help keep your stitches nice and even. Here we go again. Traveling down to the bottom. Then we leave the thread down below and move on to take that bite out of the next one. Pull it tight but not too tight. Since we've just stitched this pleat, then we'll move that aside and travel back up to take this next pleat. Then keeping the thread up above, go through and stitch the second pleat to that other one. Then we can move back down again. We've stitched this one, so now we take the next one. So we finished that and now we move on to the next one with the thread down below. Then we travel up again. We stitch this pleat, so now we're gonna move on to this one. So I'm gonna do one more row. Ordinarily, you would continue this for as far as you need to in order to get to the end of smocking, but since we are just practicing here, I'm gonna show you how to end this row and then I'll show you how to start the next one as well. Since I started at the top, I'm going to end at the top as well. I'm gonna move on to this top row again. I'll take the first stitch just like we usually do to travel. Then again, moving the thread up above. So this time, instead of going all the way through the pleat like I normally would, I'm just gonna go through the right side of the mountain and I'm gonna go straight through to the back of the fabric. Then, we can make a little knot. For something like this, I like to make a really secure knot, so I'll take a teeny tiny stitch just a few threads through the fabric, pull a loop, go through that loop. Then before I pull it completely tight, I'll go through the other loop that I formed and that's like a double knot. That makes a nice secure knot in my floss. Sometimes just for a little extra security, I might also just take a stitch or two through that. Oops, I missed there. You don't want this to show, but you also don't want it to let go. That would be a real shame. There, just to be absolutely sure.

Then we can cut that thread. That's our first row of smocking. Again, you would continue this for as long as you need to. But since it's just practice, we're just doing a few stitches. Now, if you look, if I open this up, you can see that that's sort of 1/2 of the diamond shape that we're making for the necklace. We wanna do the other half as well so we're gonna start a second row and we're gonna do exactly the opposite. Instead of starting at the top, we'll start at the bottom. Then our top row will meet the bottom row from the previous. So we'll be going the opposite back and forth. Let me put my interoffice envelope back together here. Get those pleats nice and tight. There. It's the same but different only in the sense that instead of starting at the top, we're starting down below. Starting again from the back, coming in to the left of our little mountain pleat. Sorry, that's a little hard for you to see. There we go. I'm going to start out by stitching two pleats together just like I did up there. With the thread down below, I'll take a stitch through that next pleat. Bring those together nicely. Since we stitched through this one, this is a really good way to check yourself too. You'll always wanna be stitching through the same pleats obviously so that you get that nice diamond shape. We're skipping the pleat that we just stitched through. Now, we're going to go in the valley, in between the two mountains here. Coming out through that first pleat. Then again, stitching those together, we go over, coming to the right side of the next pleat and just stitching through the pleat. This can be a little bit tricky because it's already cinched together, so use your needle to kind of separate the two pleats. Then take that stitch. So I used my needle to kind of push those stitches right on top of each other. So you really are stitching in the same place as you had with the previous row. Then again, since I came up through the valley on this pleat, when I travel, I'm going to go through the next pleat. Right to left through the pleat. Then again just keeping the thread down below, I'll take the next stitch, second pleat to bring those two pleats together. Those threads keep getting in my way. There we go. Then again, traveling back up to this next one. So stitching pretty much in the same place as my previous stitch. Moving that one over to stitch through the next one and bring those two stitches together. Again, just use your needle to kind of push those separate on top of each other. So you really can't even tell there are two stitches there. Might be a little bit heavier looking than the top and bottom stitches, but for the most part, it should look the same. We've just stitched this pleat, so we'll move that over and stitch through the next one. Now we stitched this pleat, so we'll go to the next one. Again, I really like the gingham for this because you can keep this perfectly even. When we move to the necklaces and since we don't have those nice stripes in the gingham, we're going to use our gathering stitches themselves as a guide, and you can kinda see those if you pull the threads apart. That's what your gathering stitch is. That will be a useful guide as well but not quite as handy as the gingham itself. We'll just continue this. Again, just matching up with that top row of stitching with each stitch that we take on the top. Always moving forward one pleat. It sort of feels like moving forward two pleats because you're coming up to the left side of the pleat. But in reality, you're in the moving forward one. We'll just continue that until we've reached that same pleat on the bottom row. Once you've done that, if you open it up a little bit, you can see that pretty diamond shape developing. That's what gives us such a nice necklace.

Chapter 4 - Make Necklace

Create pleats

- Now we get to start making our actual necklaces, now that we're familiar with all the steps. And to get started, we need to cut the fabric for the necklace itself. So we've got this nice, lightweight fabric, and you're going to want to cut it at least 15 inches long, you can go longer if you want, but

probably don't go shorter, and 4 1/2 inches wide. And once you have that, then you can double it up. If you have a right side, the right sides of the fabric should be together, folded along the long edges, and we are going to stitch this. If you want a few pins in here, you can certainly use some pins. We'll stitch this at the machine with a quarter-inch seam. And one other thing I should mention is, if your fabric has a very distinctive grain, and probably with a really finely woven fabric like this, it probably will have a very distinctive grain, it's a really good idea to cut this as on-grain as you possibly can. So if you need to pull a thread to find the grain, I would recommend that you do it, just because it's a little bit easier for the fabric to form the pleats, if it's exactly on grain. So keep that in mind when you're cutting your fabric. Again, I'm just putting a few pins in here. So we'll be sewing these two long cut edges together, and we'll do this with a quarter-inch seam allowance, which is not a very big seam allowance. It's right in between an eighth and 3/8ths. 2/8ths is a quarter. Back stitch a couple just to get started. And then, again, back stitch at the end just to knot your threads. So we've essentially created a tube now, and at this point, I like to go over to the iron and press the seam allowances on this open, which I actually did with this one here. You can just press the whole thing flat, it doesn't really matter that much. But if you press the seam allowances themselves open, then, when you turn it right side out, which I'll do now, I'll just coax the tube so that the seam is on the inside and it won't show in the necklace. And the reason I like to press the seam allowances open is that once we get the tube turned right side out, then we'll press that seam so that it's along one edge of the tube, so the flattened tube. And by pressing the seam allowances open, you just get a nicer, crisper edge to it, and that way it won't show on the necklace so much. And if you don't have an iron handy, you can totally finger press this too. It will work. So now I have it turned right side out. Here's my seam, right here, and I'll just press it so that the seam is along one edge. And that edge with the seam on it will be the bottom, the outside edge of the necklace, so when we look at the necklace, if you look closely, there is a seam at the very open edge. If you put it at the top edge, you just have a lot of extra bulk there, and it would be harder to gather that all up nicely. So just keep that in mind when you're making your necklace. Now, I have another one over here. I'm actually going to be working with this peach color fabric today, just because it's a little bit easier to see. So this is kind of a shortened one. Yours will be a little bit longer than this but this is what I have handy. So I'm going to be working with this today. Once we've got that flattened tube, and again, you can see my seam right here, now comes the, I have to say, this is kind of the tedious part of making the necklace, we have to draw our own grid on here because we don't have that nice gingham to use as a grid, and you can use either the fabric-marking pen or the chalk for this. I like the chalk because it gives a really nice fine line, but I think it's a little bit easier to see the fabric-marking pen, so I'll use that today instead. If you do use the chalk, I've also found that, because it's a powder that's getting laid down on your fabric, it has a tendency to just sort of disappear after a while, it just sort of floats away, so one thing I have done when I'm making the smock necklaces is use just a light mist of hair spray, and that will actually sort of work as a fixative to hold the chalk in place. So keep that in mind as you're working. So with the fabric-marking pen, sort of like with our gingham, we want to do five rows of gathering stitches across here, and you'll probably want to have one row about a quarter-inch away from either edge. So one row, one row, another row down the center, and then a row on either side of that center row, as well. So you'll sort of just want a, about a quarter-inch here again. You can kind of eyeball these, but the ruler does really help. And then I'll turn it around and do the same thing on the other side, about a quarter-inch away. And then, since this is two inches wide, we'll put one at an inch, or maybe slightly less, so it really is in the center. And then about halfway in between, and that's probably a little bit more than

a quarter-inch. Doesn't have to be exact. As long as it stays even, it doesn't really matter. And the same thing on the other side. And that looks pretty good right there. That one's a little bit uneven. Let me draw that again. There we go. That's a little better. Alright, and this is the most not-fun part, I'll tell ya right up front, but it has to be done, unfortunately. I'm gonna start about a half-inch in, and every eighth of an inch or slightly less than an eighth of an inch, I'm going to draw another line. And the closer you can do these, the better. I mean, slightly less than an eighth of an inch is probably ideal. I won't get into 32nds of an inch, 'cause that just sounds way too technical, but you can see, this is why I like that clear ruler, because I can line up my previous line just to the inside of that eighth-inch grid line and then draw the lines. And you'll do this all the way across. So this grid replaces that gingham that we were using initially, but it still allows us to get those running stitches, and it can also act as a guide when you do the smocking. And we'll just continue this all the way across. Once you've drawn the grid all the way across, then we can do our running stitch again. And I've got my threaded needle. And just like we did with the gingham, I'm going to just do a running stitch, over and under, with each intersection on that grid that I've drawn. And I'll do that on all five of the rows so that we can pleat that up again, just like we did with the gingham. So there's also such thing as a smocking pleater, which saves you the tedious part of this step, and smocking pleaters are fantastic if you really get into smocking, especially, but they are a bit pricey, and I don't have one, so I do this whenever I make a smocked necklace. But I have a friend who has a smocking pleater, and she pleated up a few of these for me, and I'll actually be showing you on the smocking stitches themselves, on a panel that she pleated for me. And part of the reason I want to show you that is that you won't have this grid to use, this nice grid with these lines to use to position your embroidery stitches, so instead, you just use the running stitches themselves to position everything and keep all your stitches straight. So we'll continue this until we've stitched all five rows of running stitches, and then we can pleat it up just like we did with the gingham, and we'll continue on with the rest of the necklace at that point. So let me show you what this will look like coming straight out of the smocking pleater. Instead of that grid, we simply have these five rows of running stitches. And it doesn't really, in this instance, it just so happened that there were five different threads in the smocking pleater, that's not really important. The important part is that there are five rows of running stitches here, and I can do, like I said, exactly the same thing we did with the gingham here, where if I take all five of those threads, and I start pulling them, look what nice pleats we get. And I'll do that at this other end, as well. And we start to get all of those smocking pleats all ready for us. So again, here, I'll use my pins. I'll do my little figure eight movement. I think I'll pull the thread so that it starts on the top side. There we go. Pull it nice and tight, do the figure eight, and then do the same thing on the other side. Let's try down here first, there we go. And I'll do that with the other three threads that are left, and then we'll have these pleats all ready to start smocking our necklace.

Smock necklace

^- Now that I've got the fabric all pleated ^and ready to start smocking, ^we can actually start the embroidery itself. ^And I just wanna show you a few things. ^This is gonna be almost identical ^to what we were doing with the gingham. ^But a couple of differences ^that we just need to keep in mind. ^One is, I always like to start with the bottom row. ^The bottom row of stitching that will be the outside edge ^of the necklace. ^And part of that is so that I can determine ^how many smocking stitches I need to do. ^How many pleats I need to include in the necklace ^in order to get that rounded shape that we get. ^The other thing to keep in mind is that ^because we don't have that grid anymore, ^from our gingham, we would if I was using this one. ^I could follow those grid lines.

^But because we don't have the grid lines, ^on the smocking pleated version of it, ^I'm going to use those running stitches ^as the guidelines instead. ^So in order to sort of orient myself, ^I don't need to be stitching directly ^where those stitches are, ^but I want to keep those in mind ^so that I can keep my stitches even, ^and have a really nicely finished smocking embroidery. ^Another thing to keep in mind, ^as we're stitching that bottom row, ^is we need to decide how far away ^from the edge of the fabric we want the stitching to be. ^And it makes a difference, simply because, ^if you look at the two necklaces that I have here, ^on one of them I stitched fairly close to the edge ^and the result is that it really looks nice and even ^and almost tailored in a sense. ^With the other one, I kept my stitches farther away ^from the edge. ^And the result is this more ruffly look. ^So you can really kind of decide what you want ^the necklace to look like before you even get started. ^That will help you decide where you want ^to start your stitching. ^Just like with the gingham, ^I'm going to leave a few pleats on the edge, ^especially because I'm going to need to finish that edge ^when I'm all done. ^But also, because the pleats get a little bit messed up ^with the figure eight stitching. ^So I'll move in a couple of pleats here. ^That's probably good. ^And I'm going to do the one with the stitches ^closer to that bottom edge. ^The more tailored looking one. ^So I'm going to start out probably a little less ^than a quarter inch from the edge. ^So I'll come in below that first stitch there. ^My first row of fronting stitches. ^And again, I'll come in half way up the left side ^of the mountain. ^About there. ^And... ^Because you have this thicker edge here, ^you will have to fiddle around with these pleats ^a little bit. ^It's not hard. ^As you approach each one, you'll see ^that you just need to move it down a little bit probably. ^So I'll go across two again, ^stitching into the next one. ^Going half way through the mountain. ^And bringing those two pleats together. ^And then I'm going to move up, ^travel to the next one, ^so I just finished stitching this pleat. ^I'll move up to stitch this next one ^and I have to decide how high to bring it. ^I think I'll go the same distance ^from the gathering stitch as I did just below, ^as I did with this one. ^I'll stitch right about there. ^Just going through from right to left, ^just like we did with our gingham. ^Traveling. ^And then bring the thread up above, ^to stitch through that next pleat. ^Then again, bringing it tight but not too tight. ^Now I can move on to the next pleat, ^again, going just below that running stitch. ^And see here again, you can kinda see ^that my pleats are getting a little bit open there ^because there's nothing to hold them below that. ^It's okay. ^You'll make this work as you're stitching it. ^There we go. ^And then moving on to the next one. ^And bringing those nice and tight ^and I'm just going to continue that way all the way across. ^Traveling up to get that next one. ^It's a little deep. ^And the reason that I like to start with this bottom row ^is like I said, that way you can sort of open it up ^and determine how much smocking you're going to need. ^How many rows of the smocking stitches you'll need ^to get that nice semi circle shape that makes the necklace. ^If you get less than a semi circle, ^you run the risk of the necklace not being round enough ^and being a bit top heavy. ^In which case, it'll have a tendency to sort of fall forward ^when you're wearing it. ^So keep that in mind as you're stitching, ^and I've found ^over the number of these necklaces that I've made now, ^you need about 50 pleats, ^or that's what it's worked out to me. ^It's worked out to be about 50 pleats across. ^So I kinda count in groups of two. ^So I've got two, four, six, eight, 10. ^And I'll just continue doing that until I've got about 50. ^And then I'll open it up. ^I'll release these pins and just sort of separate it. ^To see what it looks like. ^If I need to add more stitches, I will. ^But that's why you want about 15 inches of fabric as well, ^so that you have a little bit to play with. ^You can cut off the extra, but you can't really add any on. ^So let's just count here a second. ^Two, four, six, eight, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, ^22, 24, 26, 28, 30, ^32, 34, 36, 38, 40, ^42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52. ^So let me just open this up. ^And take a look and see if we have enough. ^So I just took out both my figure eight threads on the end.

^Maybe I'll take out this one too. ^You don't have to undo them all. ^But you wanna be able to open it up a bit. ^And now, if I start separating this. ^Oh yes, we have plenty. ^This will reach around and get us a nice semi circle shape. ^So I'll tighten up those threads again, ^and I'm gonna finish this row by knotting in the back again. ^And then I'll start the next row. ^So since I have enough, I'm just going to tighten ^those threads back up. ^And finish up this row, and then I'll start the next row. ^So figure eighting along here. ^And then I want to finish, ^since I started at the bottom, ^I'll finish as the bottom as well. ^So this time I'm ending up with 52 pleats. ^Sorry 54 pleats instead of my 50. ^And again, since this is my very last stitch, ^instead of going all the way through the pleat, ^I'll go through the right side, ^and then travel to the back of the work. ^To knot it. ^And one of the nice things about working with two layers ^of fabric, like we do for this necklace, ^is that it gives you a really good opportunity ^to hide a thread tail, just in case ^it should come loose at all. ^So I'll take a little knot there again. ^And instead of just cutting that flush, ^I think what I'll do is very carefully, ^just run my needle between the two layers of fabric. ^So underneath that back layer, ^about that far. ^And then if I cut the thread tail, ^it still doesn't show on the front, ^but it's short of, a little extra security there. ^Now we can start the next row. ^And I'll just do the same thing ^that I did for the first row, ^but again, instead of starting at the bottom, ^I will start up above, ^so that we get that nice diamond shape. ^So I'm gonna follow that first pleat along. ^And I'm gonna come in, ^looks like I'll be coming in. ^There's my gathering stitch, my running stitch. ^So I'm gonna come in right about there. ^Coming in from the back. ^If you have trouble finding that, ^feel free to turn it over. ^Get your location. ^There we go. ^And then we start that next row. ^And again, I'm using those threads, those gathering threads ^as my guide. ^So for the first one, ^I go over two pleats. ^I should have my thread up above here. ^And then I'm gonna travel over. ^And come in, we're going in through that valley. ^To stitch that one pleat. ^Those threads keep getting in the way. ^There we go. ^And then again, stitching the two pleats together. ^As close to that first stitch as you can get. ^There. ^And then we travel up. ^So we just stitched this pleat, ^now we're gonna take this pleat. ^And I'm again using that gathering thread as a guide there. ^Keep my thread up above, when I'm at the top. ^Stitch across one pleat. ^Pull that tight. ^And then we stitch down to get that next pleat going ^in to the valley between those two. ^Those two stitches, ^or those two pleats that are sewn together. ^Get my thread out of the way there. ^Take that same stitch across. ^Coming up as much in between the pleats as you can. ^And then going back up. ^So I'll just continue this row all the way to the end. ^So I've done the same, in my case, 54 stitches, ^or 54 pleats. ^And I'll keep doing those rows as many times as I want. ^Until I get up to the top of the necklace. ^On average, I guess I'm doing about four rows ^for most of these necklaces. ^But you can do as many as you want. ^Heres one where I'm nearly done, ^with my four rows, ^one, two, three, yes, four rows. ^And you can see I do have extra pleats left over. ^This piece of fabric was actually longer ^than the one that I'm working on today. ^So I have quite a few pleats left over. ^That's fine, just be sure that you're always stitching ^the same number of pleats all the way up, ^because we are going to cut off this extra fabric ^when we make the necklace.

Beaded variation

- If you want to add beads to your smocking, it takes a little bit of pre-planning, not too much. But you wanna think about where you want those beads, you could add them at one level of your stitching or at both. So, once you've determined where you want them, then as you're stitching, I'm starting a new row here and I think I'm gonna add my beads right up on the top of this row. Rather than putting them down here. And I'll show you why in a minute. So I'm just starting my row. I will

take my stitch up to that next level. So I've finished stitching this pleat, I'll move on to this one. So I'll take that stitch that travels up to the next row. And this is where now, I'll add a bead. So I put the bead on my needle. And when I take the stitch across to cinch the next pleat to this one. I should have my thread up above here, there we go. Then, with that bead on the thread or the floss, you can see that when I cinch it up, it just positions that bead really nicely, right in between the two pleats. And we can continue on from there, so now I'll move back down, get this out of the way. To join up to this bottom level again. The reason it takes a little pre-planning is because if I had wanted the bead to be down here, I would have wanted to add the bead at this level when I was stitching this row. Because you'll want to stitch through the bead with both rows of stitching if that makes sense. Let me show you a couple more and then I'll come back and explain that a little bit. So I'm not adding a bead on this level, I'll just do my usual embroidery. And now I'm gonna go back up to that next level, traveling up here. So I travel the thread, then I add my bead. There we go. And now I'll take the stitch across to bring those two pleats together. And again, I should have my thread up above here. There we go. And so again, just sort of coax your bead into position and then we can move back down. Now let's say I was doing another row, let me just grab another needle and thread. If I was doing another row, I would start out up here, because I wanna make that diamond shape. When I come back down here, I would take my stitch through. Let's just pretend, here I'll come up from up here someplace, we'll just pretend like I'm in the right spot. I would take my stitch down here, the way you ordinarily would and now instead of adding the bead, I'll just go through the bead. And then continue the same way. But by doing that, again, we want those stitches where the two rows join to look like just one thread. If you go through the bead at both levels then it will look like just a single stitch, so that's why I say it takes a little bit of pre-planning, not too much, just a tiny bit. And then you would just continue on and that's really all it takes to add the bead. Let's do another one just to show you again. I'm gonna travel up to take the stitch on the upper row. Keep my thread up above, there we go. And then when I travel down, I'm not going through the bead for this stitch, it's just like adding the bead except I don't need to add the bead, I just go through the bead. And then, I take that stitch to bring the two pleats together. And by doing that you can see, aside from the fact that I hadn't pulled that stitch all the way through before, you can see that both of the stitches are going through the bead and so both rows are going through that bead at the same time, or simultaneously and it keeps the stitch looking the same there. You can really choose to add those beads wherever you want to, once you understand how to put them on. It might be nice to add them just to the bottom row, so they're on the outside edge of your necklace when it's finished. You could add them at every row if you wanted to. You could even do every other stitch, so they're not so consistently across but more periodic. So that's another detail that you can play with as you're designing your own necklace.

Chapter 5 - Finish Necklace

Finish sides

- Now that we've done all of our smocking, all four rows, or however many rows you want to do, and also knotted off all the embroidery thread on the back, now we can trim off the extra fabric that we don't need anymore on the sides. So I have quite a bit of excess fabric on this edge. Before I actually trim it, I'm going to open it up a bit, and it looks so pretty, and we can start moving from here, I'm going to trim off enough fabric, I'm gonna leave about a half-inch on either side of the furthest embroidery stitches, on this end as well as on this end. And before I'll do that, I don't want to trim that top gathering stitch. So I'm using my scissors here, or whatever you have handy. I'm just

going to pull that thread out of the excess fabric. And I'll do a little bit more. Let's say I want to go right to the end of the embroidery here. That we need to be loose, and then I'll do the same thing on the other side. So here's my last embroidery stitch. I want that top thread to not get caught when we cut everything else. So I'm just gonna pull both of those threads in toward the center. And now I can actually cut the fabric, I'm gonna cut through everything, don't be nervous, it's OK, leaving about a half-inch excess fabric beyond. I think I'll cut right down the center of this pleat here. And that will leave me enough that I can roll this fabric underneath and get a nice, clean edge. So I'm going to cut. It doesn't matter if you cut through the other gathering stitches here, you just want to leave that top row of gathering stitches, and I'll show you why shortly. There we go. So that's about a half-inch, maybe a little more than a half-inch. And then I'll do the same thing on this side. Just again being really careful not to cut through that thread. I'm gonna cut about over here I think. So leave yourself, like I said, about a half-inch, approximately, can be a little bit more, could be a little bit less, but just to be safe. Now what I'm gonna do, I can first of all pull out these stitches, if you happen to have stitched through one of these stitches which does sometimes happen, don't worry about it, just find where you stitched through it and cut on either side of it to free it. I'm just gonna pull those out to get them out of the way. So I've removed the bottom four rows of stitching, and I've kept this top row. Now what I'll do is I'm gonna turn it over, and I'm gonna take my coordinating sewing thread on the needle, and I've put a knot in the end, and because this fabric is so delicate, it's a little bit tricky to roll it. So what I found works best for me is I'll take a little fold on the edge of the fabric, and I'm folding to the wrong side of the necklace, just a tiny little fold. And then, with my needle and thread, I'm going to do a quick running stitch, and this won't show because it's going to be rolled to the other side. So just fairly close to the edge. This gives you sort of a firm foundation I guess I'd say for doing the rest of the roll. I just find that it's a lot easier for me to roll that, it's almost like a hem if I do it this way. So I'm just taking little, it's not tiny, again, it's not gonna show, so it doesn't really matter, but it just helps me to get that firmer edge, and you'll see that in a minute. So just a quick running stitch all the way down. And now I can start to really roll this. I'm gonna tuck those thread tails in and just tightly roll the fabric. You'll just kind of feel when it's right. You want that roll to be right up against the last embroidery stitch. So you see that, you can see that embroidery stitch just starting to come around to the back of the necklace, that's exactly where you want your hem to end. And I think I'm even gonna just put a couple of pins in here to hold that so that when I get down there, I just hold that in place. And then I'll keep doing that same roll up to the top edge of the necklace. Tuck that thread tail in. There, and see, there again, you can see that very first stitch, embroidery stitch, just starting to come around to the back. And you can see that gathering thread sticking out. That's important, we're gonna need that shortly. So a couple of pins in there. Like one more in the middle. And you can see that that running stitch is completely hidden now because we've rolled and rolled to cover it. And then I'm going to take the same needle and thread, I didn't need to knot it or anything, and I'm just gonna do a little whip stitch. And I'm gonna whip stitch it to whatever feels natural here. You could whip stitch the roll to the first pleat or even to the second pleat. I might go through both of them there just to hold them together. Yeah, I think I'll go through the first two. And I'm catching that roll in the stitching. And this is really just hemming the edge, that's all you're doing. And it blends right in, you're working on the back of the work, so it's really not gonna show. As I work my way down, I think I will just start sewing it to the first pleat instead of the first and second so that it allows the second pleat to open up a little bit more. And you can see, they're just little stitches, they're nothing fancy. They don't have to be invisible because they're on the back of the work. Take out the pins as you get to that portion. And you can readjust

this as you need to as well. The other nice thing about the pleated fabric like this is that, because you're on the back side of the pleat, on this side it looks like a mountain, on the other side it looks like the valley, it really doesn't show that much. If your thread is really matching the fabric itself, it's pretty much invisible from the other side. And it also gives a little bit of a foundation for the necklace to hang from, and I think that's kind of important. You need a little bit of something to give the necklace stability and to really help it to keep its shape once it's on the chain and you're wearing it. And if you stitch it in the same direction that I did, if you start out at the bottom edge, the outside edge of the necklace, and you do your running stitch up to the inside edge, the top part of the necklace, then, when you come back and do your blind stitch, you'll be stitching back down towards the bottom edge, towards the hem edge, and that's kind of handy because you could actually leave your thread, and when it comes time to attach the chain or the ribbon or whatever you're using to wear the necklace, you can use the same thread to sew the chain. So I'm just gonna leave that, I'll take my needle out. I'm gonna leave that thread hanging, and when it comes time to attach the chain, then I'll just rethread my needle and I'll have something to sew it to. So now I'll do that same little rolled hem with the other side of the necklace, and once I've completed that, then we're going to thread up a needle with that strong thread, that heavy quilting thread, the hand quilting thread, and we'll cinch up the inside of the necklace to give it that nice shape. I'm coming up to the end here, I'm just taking a few last stitches. And then, just like on the other side, I'm going to leave this thread so that I can sew this to the chain to finish it. I'm just bringing the thread out to the outside edge of the necklace, and then I am going to make a tiny, little knot there just to keep all those stitches secure. And now I'm just going to leave that thread so I have a thread on either end of the necklace, that's for attaching to my chain. Now I'm going to use the heavy thread to cinch up this top row of the smocking and the pleats, and that will bring the whole shape into place. So I've got a needle here threaded with my really strong hand quilting thread. You don't need a knot at the end of this one, you can just leave it. And I'm going to start at one edge, and I'm pretty much following right where that top row of gathering stitches is. And that's why we left it here, because we want to be able to follow it, and we want to be able to cinch it up. In fact, what I'll do is pull on the thread to get it nice and tight. And then you probably won't be able to do this all in one pass, but I'll do it in sections. So I'm just going to sort of feed the needle right through those pleats. Why don't I come out right about here, that seems like a fairly manageable amount. Leave a tail, don't pull it all the way through. And then I'll continue. Here's another group of pleats. Pull it through there. Again, leaving that tail, make sure you don't pull that all the way through. And then we'll continue the same way. All the way to the end, and I'll come out approximately, not quite, but close to where that gathering thread comes out. Now I'm gonna turn around and go back through, and I'll show you why in a minute. Makes it extra strong and it also gives you a place to knot it. So I'm just gonna continue, same thing, in reverse. Go through a bunch of pleats. Come out right there. Do the next group of pleats. And then I think I can get the last group all in one pass here. And I'll come out just as close to where I started as I can, right there. So now the two ends of my thread are right next to each other, which makes it really easy to tie a little knot here. And if you know some fancy knot that you can use, go for it, I don't know any fancy knots, I'm just gonna use an ordinary double knot. So I'm gonna get that pretty good and tight. You can see I'm cinching that right up on itself. And then I'll knot it again. Then maybe a third time just to be sure. And then I'm going to take the two ends of thread, and just to kind of hide these and not have them sticking out the end of the necklace, I'll rethread my needle with both ends, and I'm going to sort of bury them some place in that row of pleats. I'll come out about here. This is where that thimble comes in really handy because it's a little

tough to pull through all those layers of fabric. Really tough, actually. There, OK. And now I can just trim off the extra. So now we've really got that shape of the necklace. We've got that all cinched up. We can now pull out the gathering thread, the colored gathering thread. I think I stitched through mine at some point, so I'll trim it really close on that side, and then I'll work it out on the other side and just get that out of there entirely. If it doesn't show at all, you could leave it in there too, but I think mine shows a little bit. There we go. So now the only thing left here, we have a completely finished necklace, we have the shape with the cinched top, the open bottom. We have our rolled hem, and we've got our threads all set to attach the chain itself.

Add chain

- To finish your necklace, you can add a chain or a ribbon, and I have a few different examples here. My chain is open enough, the links are large enough that I can get a needle through, which is sort of important when you're actually sewing the thread to the chain itself. I also have sort of this mesh ribbon, which I think is a really pretty addition, blends right in with the color of the fabric itself, or for sort of a fun, more of a contrast, I've got the bright red silk ribbon as well. So you really have a lot of options here as to which one you pick. You'll need to cut the chain in half in order to attach it, so generally I just fold the chain, find the center, and then I use a wire cutter or some sort of a metal cutter. So I've cut it in half now, I think another good thing to do is to actually take this to the mirror and hold this up, you can fasten it, decide how long you want it to be. This is an 18 inch chain, I find that it's a bit long for my preferences, so I generally cut an inch or two off of each end. But this is really up to you, what you feel comfortable with, and you don't have to worry too much about cutting one particular link, just sort of cut in the general area, and any excess links, any links that get cut will just fall off. So I've re threaded my needle and now I can just go through the very last link of the chain, and then I'm just going to go through the fabric and the link, and I think I can just do them in one stitch, and I'll do that a few times to really secure it. This is that same thread that I had left on the end of the necklace. If you didn't leave the thread, or you need a new thread, you can always just add one, but I'm just going through, I'm taking a bite of the fabric right on the edge of the necklace, and then I'm also going through the last link of the chain itself. And I can do that in one stitch. So I'll do that a few times to secure it, and then, once that's secure, I'm going to take a stitch through the hem, back to the edge where it's rolled, and I'll knot my thread back there just to keep it from showing on the edge. So take a maybe a knot or two there, and again, I kind of like to bury the thread tail just to secure it and so you don't have little threads waving around all over the place. So I'll just take a little stitch along that rolled hem and then I can cut my thread, and that's one side of the necklace done. Now I'll re thread the needle with the other thread on the opposite side of the necklace, and then I can attach that thread to the other side of the chain, go through the last link again, and then again I'll take a bite of the fabric and go through the link, and I'll do that a few times. You wanna be sure it's nice and secure, and then I'll travel the thread down to the edge of the rolled hem again to knot it, knotting down there where it's not visible. Take a couple of quick knots, and then just travel the thread tail a little bit before I trim it. There. And the necklace is finished, there we go. Chain and everything. Let me show you a few other examples, a few creative ideas that you might wanna try. Once you get comfortable with the embroidery itself and you wanna try the metallic or the neon thread, feel free. Again, it's a little bit more slippery, so it can be a little bit harder to work with, but if you start to feel like you've gained a little confidence, I think it's worth a try, and it certainly is pretty. I like it on the beige fabric like that because it really pops. Here's another one, this is a different smocking stitch. I showed you one smocking stitch today, there are

lots of different stitches. So once you get comfortable with the first stitch, you might try some other stitches as well, and there's lots of information about different stitches that you can find online or just ask around and people will be able to refer you. So this is a different, I think this is called a honeycomb stitch, and it's all just the green on the blue. I did that same stitch that we did today around the outside edge of it, you can kind of see that there, and here I used the ribbon to attach to it. This one I started out with that same beige fabric that we used on the pink neon, but on this one, I actually dip dyed it in indigo, which gives it this nice ombre effect and then I really like, I added the beads here, and this is more like a matte tone bead, so it almost looks like wood, or like something like that, it gives it sort of a nice organic feel. And then I played with different shapes and different fabrics as well. Here's one I've just started working on. This is Liberty of London fabric, and I think it's kind of fun to have that print where when this opens up a bit, you'll be able, you won't really be able to see the print itself, but it gives this nice color palette and the neon still pops on that as well. And then here are some different shapes that I tried. Instead of just doing the 50 pleats that we did for the other necklaces, I added a few extra, so I really got, it's not quite a full circle, but it's more like 3/4 of a circle, so you get a different shape there, and then I tried another smocking stitch, I forget what this one is called, but I was really able to get this flower or star shape with this. So that is fun once you get a little bit more advanced, if you wanna play with it. And this one, I don't recommend linen so much for this necklace because it is a bit heavy, this is a metallicized linen, and I didn't quite get all the way around, so this is a bit top heavy, but I really like the pink beads and the pink embroidery. You can play around with your color palette as well, I have a few different colored fabrics here. It might be fun to again, combine maybe the neon with them, try different combinations, try different beads with them, and by playing around with the different colors and the different stitches, this really gives you a chance to try a very traditional smocking technique, but make it contemporary and give it your own style.