

Baby Wipes and Handkerchiefs

About these Wipes/Handkerchiefs

This is a pattern for baby wipes and for small handkerchiefs for all the family.

You will find the uses for the wipes almost infinite: for mucky hands & faces, as wipes for the nappy area, for runny noses, general mop-ups and even as things for baby to chew on or play with! Terry-towelling makes great 'grippy' wipes for dealing with more stubborn muck, whilst cotton flannel is soft and gentle on sore bottoms or noses, so it's great to make some of both.

The larger handkerchiefs are perfect for all the family to use, from a box in the house or car, or in a pocket or bag.

Materials and Equipment

The amount of **material** you need will depend entirely on how many wipes or hankies you want to make!

Make buying new fabric your very last option. First, see whether you have anything around the house you can re-use – often items that have worn in some places have other areas that are still strong and perfect for these wipes. Look out any old towels, nappies, face flannels, flannel/brushed cotton bed linen and pyjamas, tea towels and muslins. Ask friends and relatives!

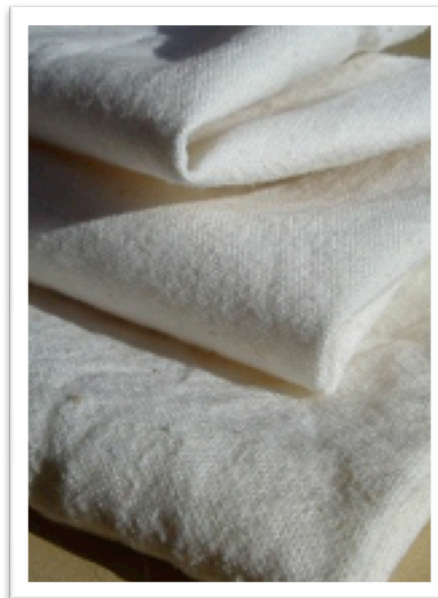
Your next port of call should be your local recycling network (Freecycle, Recycle.co.uk, etc). Then have a look in your local charity shops and jumble sales.

Before resorting to buying new fabric off the roll, do a price comparison with new flannel sheets and towels – you may find you get more fabric for your money buying a new sheet or towel, especially if they are bundled or on special offer, and you will often find a wider choice of colours.

For guidance, if you do get to the point of buying new fabric off the roll, cotton flannel typically comes in a width of 110cm, so a length of 1m will give you 25 wipes.

Remember that even the more expensive fabric options will work out cheaper over time than repeatedly buying disposable wipes!

Your baby wipes don't need to be pretty – I mean, who's looking? But it may cheer you up to use patterned or colourful fabrics, it could be nicer for a gift, and it may encourage toddlers to use hankies if they like the colour/pattern. Patterned fabrics are usually more expensive, of course. And organic fabric is usually limited to unbleached white and a few plain colours. You could always try dying (or even tie-dying) your fabric, if you have a dye you're happy to use on your baby's sensitive bits.



Finally, your fabric *must* be **washable** at at least 40°C, preferably 60°C. Most cotton fabrics will be okay at 60°C or higher even if they don't say so. You will use and wash these items so often that they *will* shrink and become wonky, but they still work!

Jargon Buster

Fabric jargon can be a mystery if you're not used to it!

What you want to look/ask for, for the wipes and hankies, is *flannel*, *flannelette*, *brushed cotton* or *winceyette* - these fabrics (all pretty much the same thing) are soft and slightly fluffy (think old-fashioned pyjamas). *Muslin* is also suitable, used double or triple, for hankies or wipes. For wipes only, a fabric with a pile (like a towel) is also suitable, called *towelling* or *terry cloth* or *terry-towelling*.

In all cases, you want the fibre the fabric is made from to be cotton, bamboo, hemp or linen, or a mixture of those fibres. Avoid synthetic fibres which are not absorbent enough. Cotton is by far the most widely available and cheapest.

Note that I personally do not recommend using *fleece* for baby wipes – it tends to be slippery and not absorbent enough.

Materials and Equipment (cont)

You will need cotton **thread** (try to use actual *cotton*, not polyester) in any colour you like. These wipes are a great way to use up any half-empty reels/bobbins you have knocking about or colours you no longer need. You don't even need to match the bobbin and top thread colours – just call it “funky”!

It will be quicker using a **sewing-machine** to make the wipes/handkerchiefs - you need a sewing machine that can do a zig-zag stitch. There is no reason at all, however, why you can't sew them **by hand**. They're so small you can sew whilst you're feeding a baby, or take them with you to toddler groups and sew whilst you chat.

Sizing

Not critical!

The patterns are for the sizes that in my experience are most useful for the different types of fabric, but this is not fixed. You may get more efficient use of your fabric to cut the pieces slightly smaller or slightly larger; it doesn't effect how they are made or how they will work!

My suggestion is to have *rounded* corners on the wipes, and *square* corners on the handkerchiefs. There are two good reasons for this:

- a) the square corners help distinguish the handkerchiefs from the wipes in the wash, and give a more traditional look since the handkerchiefs are more likely to be seen than the wipes; and
- b) I find it less work to sew around a curve, rather than make a neat square corner when finishing the edges, and you will probably be making more wipes than handkerchiefs.

About this Pattern

If you have any difficulties with this pattern, please contact me so I can help you and improve the pattern for others.

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Instructions

1 Create your pattern

Print out the pattern page of these instructions one, two or three times as necessary, and cut out the pattern piece(s) you wish to use.

In the case of the handkerchief pattern, you need to add the missing half of the pattern (this is just because the whole hankie won't fit on an A4 page). Print the pattern again and stick the two pieces together, or trace found the pattern twice.

You may then like to trace your pattern on to a piece of card (the trusty cereal box) to make it more robust as you are going to be drawing around it a lot.

2 Prepare your fabric

If you are recycling fabric from made up items – such as old sheets, pyjamas, etc – you need to open the items up first to get the fabric to work with. Cut along seams and hems, and unpick darts and pleats so you can open items out into a single thickness. Cut off parts where buttons, zips, etc are sewn. The next stage may be easier if you now iron your pieces of fabric.

3 Trace the pattern on to your fabric

Lay your fabric out flat on a hard surface – either side up.

Trace around the pattern(s) as many times as you want to get the number of wipes/handkerchief you want. I just use biro or pencil – it won't show and you're going to wash them.

If you are using muslin, or your fabric is very thin, I would recommend using the fabric double: cut two pattern pieces for each wipe/handkerchief, pin them together in pairs and treat them as one piece of fabric when continuing with these instructions.

Before you start tracing, have a little think about how to get the most out of your fabric, especially if you're using odd-shaped remnants or working around worn patches.

Try to keep your pattern in line with the grain of the fabric (look closely and line the pattern up with the threads that make up the fabric). This will mean you end up with squarer wipes/handkerchiefs – you may find this means not drawing all your wipes quite parallel with each other as you move across the fabric (strange but true).

4 Cut out your wipes/handkerchiefs

Cut out the pattern shapes you have drawn on the fabric.

5 Over-sew edges

Start in the middle of one edge and over-sew around the whole edge of the wipe/handkerchief until you are back where you started.

If you are hand-sewing, over-sew or use a blanket stitch, with the stitches spaced fairly close together.

If you are using a sewing machine, use a zig-zag stitch over the edge of the fabric (or if you have a fancier machine, you may have a special stitch setting for over-sewing edges). You don't need to use a securing stitch or back-stitch at the beginning/end

of sewing (and I find this can be bulky and unsightly especially if your thread contrasts with your fabric), just work back to meet your starting point, break off, knot the threads together using a reef know (US: square knot) and trim the ends off close to the knot.

In both cases, experiment to find the best length and spacing of stitch for the fabric you are using.

Towelling fabrics in particular can be tricky because of the pile and may need a wider/closer stitch than other fabrics.

On the handkerchiefs you need to take a little more trouble to form neat square corners. Work right up to the corner, stop your machine with the needle down in the fabric, lift the presser foot, turn the fabric through 90°, replace the presser foot and continue.

I find there is no need to make an actual hem (by rolling or folding the fabric edge over) and it makes the wipes harder to pack, etc. This simple over-sewing is all that you need to do on these fabrics.

Using the wipes

Wash the wipes once before starting to use them or giving them as a gift (to get rid of any biro, etc).

Keep dry wipes next to your changing table or in your bag/pocket and use with water as needed. If you prefer your wipes pre-wetted, make up a wipe solution and store them in a sealed tub, or zip-lock style bag if you are out and about. If real life intervenes, plain water is absolutely fine instead of a special solution; it just won't keep as long if you store them.

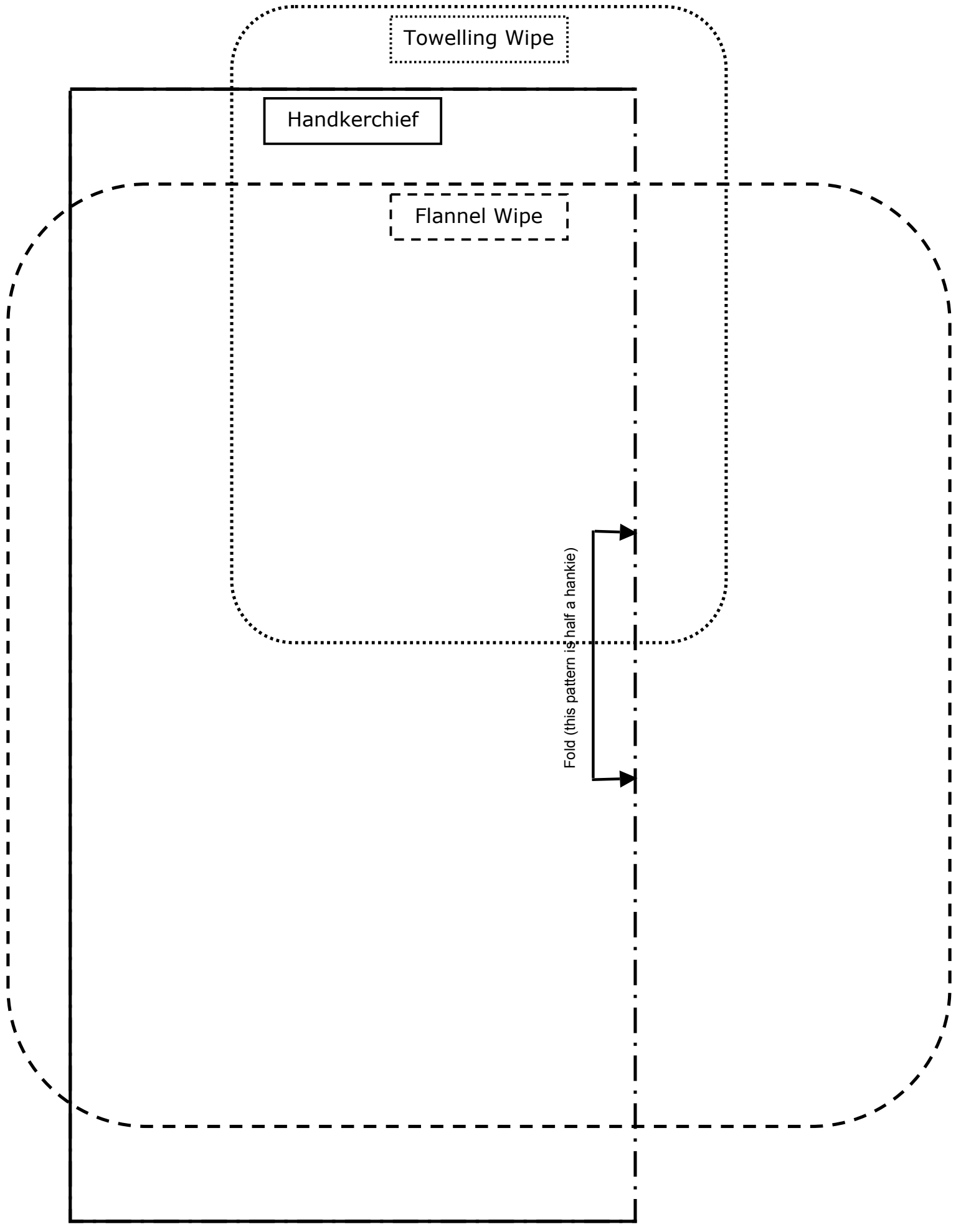
See littleconkers.co.uk for a simple wipe solution recipe, and an attractive card with the recipe on it if you are giving the wipes as a gift.

You can fold hankies into a box or tub for easy availability for the whole family.

Wash wipes and hankies in your normal laundry. At home, if you don't have a nappy bucket on the go, have a tub to hold used wet/dirty wipes until you wash them. Fill a large-ish, lidded plastic pot (an ice-cream tub is ideal) one-third full of water, and add one drop of tea-tree oil (provided your baby is not sensitive to this). An alternative is to use a weak solution of a nappy sanitizer powder in the tub. Drop dirty wipes in the tub as you use them. When you're out, a small plastic bag (zip-lock style is ideal) will hold your used wipes till you get home to your tub.

See littleconkers.co.uk for full details on using washable wipes.

My Notes



Towelling Wipe

Handkerchief

Flannel Wipe

Fold (this pattern is half a hankie)