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# *Canvas For Cruisers The Complete Guide*

*Written and illustrated by  
Julie Gifford*

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The author has made every effort to ensure that all the information and instructions provided in this book are accurate. However, because conditions, skill levels and materials vary, the author will not be responsible for any liability, unsatisfactory results or injury resulting from the use of information in this book.

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## *Canvas for Cruisers*

### Equipment Covers and Bags

To cover all sorts of miscellaneous deck equipment – from jerry cans to jet skis, the principles are all the same.

The covers usually are required to protect the equipment from physical damage, salt spray, rain and sun. It is difficult to sew a cover that is totally waterproof. Even if it were, a vinyl cover will hold any moisture inside, and any metal or electronics inside will quickly dissolve into a pile of rust. Vinyl covers should somehow be vented to allow trapped water or moisture to escape. Vents can be mesh inserts, grommets or other openings.

Covers can be padded with foam to protect the boat from being scratched by heavy awkward and sharp things like dive tanks and drop boards. Or they can be lined with something fuzzy like Odyssey Soft Touch to protect finishes such as tables or furniture.

A cover can simply be a drawstring bag which drops over the equipment and tightens at the bottom, or it can be tailored to fit the equipment exactly. If the cover is to be used merely to protect the equipment during long-term storage (for example when the boat is on the hard), then simple drawstring bag covers are fine. But if the cover is to be used while people are on board, it is kind of nice to have the cover tailored and good looking.

The more tailored the fit of the cover, the more important it can be to make a plastic pattern first.

If the equipment that is to be covered needs to be carried around, then you should consider a storage bag with handles. For more on storage bags, see the Section 7 - Interior Projects – Bags

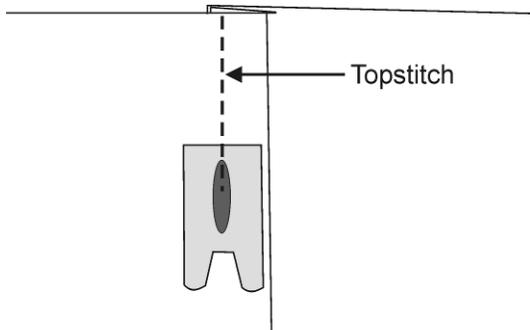
OK ready to start? First, some techniques.

# Canvas for Cruisers

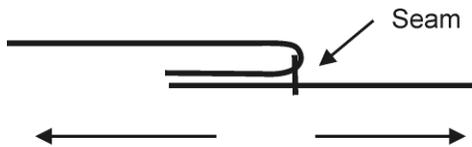
## Topstitching

Topstitching **Error! Bookmark not defined.** adds strength to a seam, and makes things look nicer and more finished.

Usually you use the machine's foot as a guide (Fig 2-7), or you can topstitch close to the fold.



**Fig 2-7** Line up the sewing machine's foot along the fold line and make a row of stitches



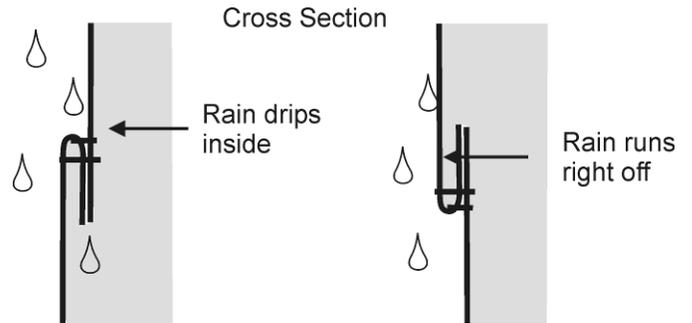
**Fig 2-8** Stretch the seam open with both hands as you topstitch



Wrong - top piece is folded slightly over the bottom piece

### Tips:

1. For seams that will be topstitched, cut the seam allowance a little larger than the normal 1/2". This will help ensure you catch in the seam allowance when doing the topstitching.
2. Always topstitch with the fabric facing *right* side up. This way you can see that you are making a nice straight line parallel to the fold.
3. As you stitch along, really spread the seam open so that the cushion cover or whatever you are working on doesn't get smaller! (Fig 2-8)
4. Try to start and stop the stitching in an unobtrusive place.
5. When topstitching projects that will be outdoors exposed to the elements, consider which way water will drain. Fold the seam allowances toward the top as shown in Fig 2-10 so that water doesn't soak into the seam.



**Fig 2-10** Think about how the rain will run off and fold the seam allowance so the rain won't run inside.

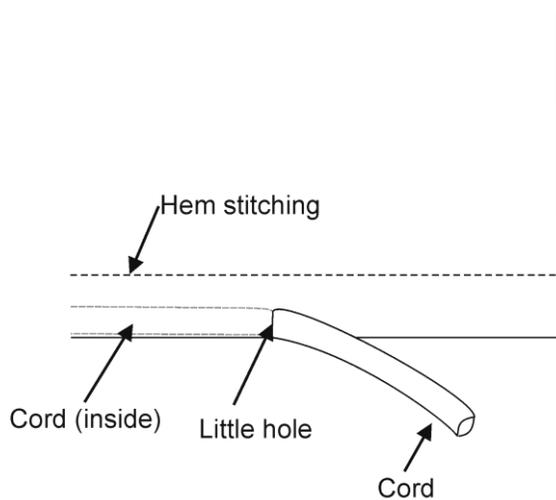
## Canvas for Cruisers

### Hems: Where a line exits a hem or casing – one method

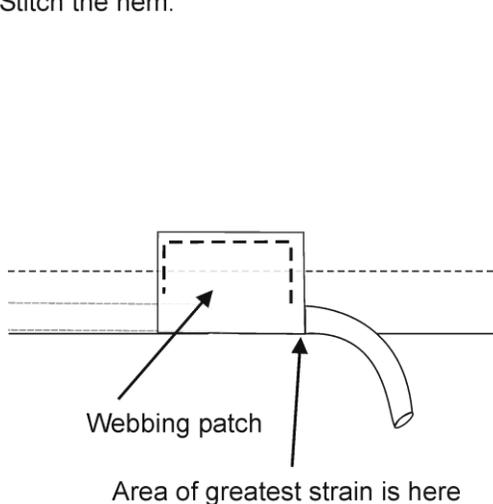
(e.g. shock cord or drawstring):

In all cases where a line or elastic is to be inserted into a hem, stitch the cord right into the hem. In other words, don't try to fish the cord through the casing after you have done the sewing.

See Fig 2-70.



Fold the cord up inside the hem and cut a little hole for the cord to exit. Stitch the hem.



Stitch a webbing patch over the hem fold where the cord exits the hem.

**Fig 2-70** Where a cord exits a hem

Step 1 – Mark the fold line for the hem or casing.

Step 2 – Lay out the shock cord or line along the hem fold line and fold up the hem, encasing the cord inside.

Cut or hot knife a little hole at the fold of the hem where the cord needs to exit. Insert the cord through the hole.

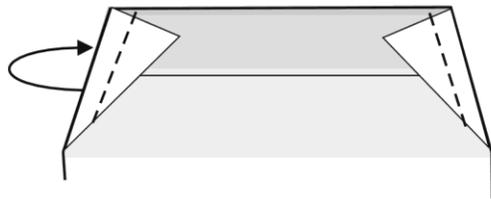
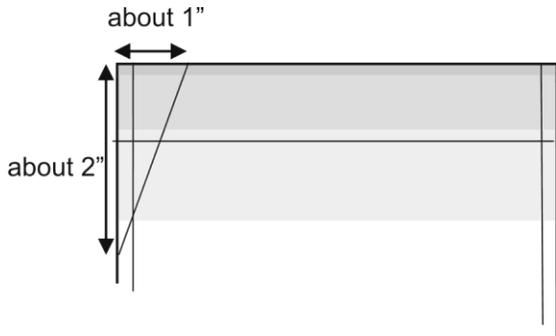
Step 3 –Stitch the hem.

Step 4 – Fold a rectangular piece of nylon webbing in half and cover over the fold where the cord comes through, to take the strain and cover the little hole. The area of most strain is 'forward' of the hole as marked in the diagram. Make sure this area is well-covered by the webbing.

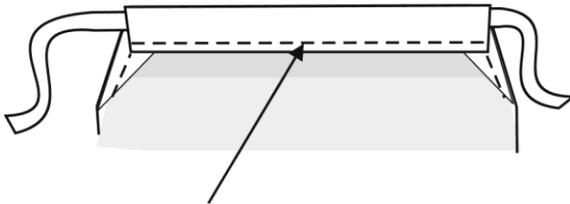
Stitch the webbing along 3 sides being careful not to catch in the cord (see Fig 2-70).

## Canvas for Cruisers

### Hems: Where a line exits a hem or casing – another method



**Fig 7-36** Turn the top corners under as shown and stitch  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from fold



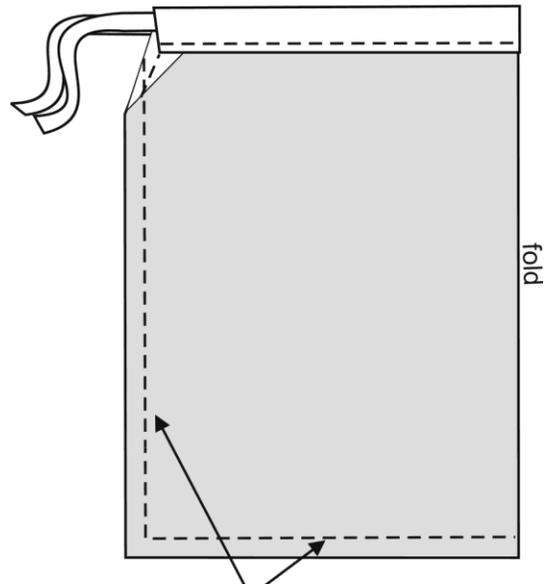
**Fig 7-37** Lay the drawstring along the fold line, fold the hem over and stitch the cord into the fold.

Step 1 – Measure and mark the hem as shown in Fig 7-36. Turn the corners in and stitch as shown. (This example is for a drawstring bag)

Step 2 - On the *wrong* side, lay out a length of cord along the edge. Turn the edge over the cord by about 1" or whatever feels right, leaving the cord along the fold. Stitch down the hem with the cord inside. (Fig 7-37).

Step 3 – Fold the fabric in half vertically, *right* sides together.

Stitch along the side and bottom of the bag as shown in Fig 7-38.



**Fig 7-38** Fold in half and stitch along side and across bottom.

## *Canvas for Cruisers*

### Jerry Jug Covers

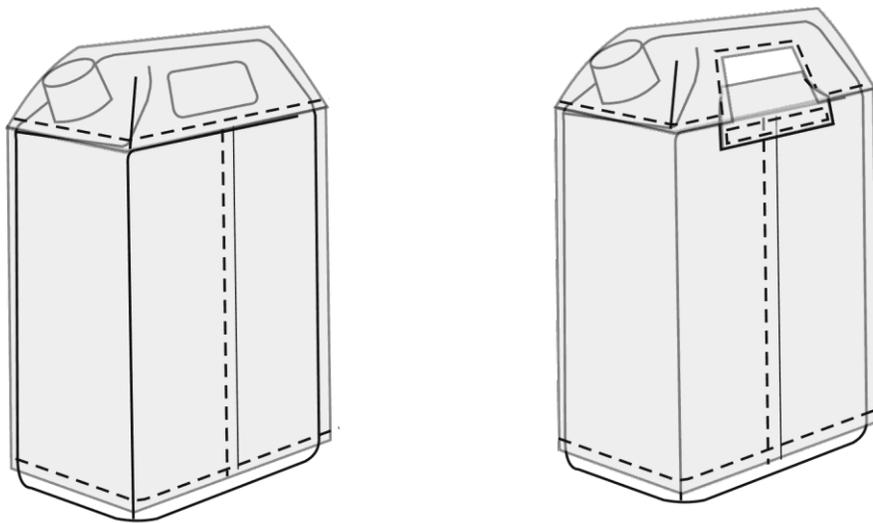
Plastic Jerry cans are expensive. If you have to store yours outside along the side decks, it doesn't take long for the hot sun to discolour them and damage the plastic. Then, not only do they look crappy, their life is shortened considerably. The answer.....covers of acrylic canvas.

You can choose a colour to match the sail cover or other canvas on the boat, or a neutral ivory or light grey which will make them less noticeable.

The cover can be a simple drop cover, or it can have an opening around the handle so you can move the jugs around with the covers on them. The opening also allows the jerrys to be lashed or locked securely in place with a line or chain and lock. A flap stitched to the cover and passing under the handle to the other side helps protect that part of the jerry from the sun, and helps keep the cover from flying off in the wind and sea.

Some covers are pretty fancy, with webbing loops and straps for affixing to lifelines, or some attempt to cover several jerrys all together. It all depends on your boat, and your preference. The instructions that follow are for a single cover, with optional opening for the handle.

Fit – the cover must fit loosely, so that it can be used easily. It should drop easily over the jerry jug and not be a struggle, or you will hate using them. Plastic jerrys expand a lot in the heat, so the best time to do a measuring and fitting is at high noon when the jerry is all puffed out. If this is not possible, make the measurement around the jug at least 3" too large, and make the side seam allowance 1" instead of 1/2". Then you can always let things out, but it's hard to make a cover bigger after the fact.



**Fig 4-60** The jerry cover can be simply a loose drop cover, or an opening can be made so the jerry can be moved around easily with the cover on.

## Canvas for Cruisers

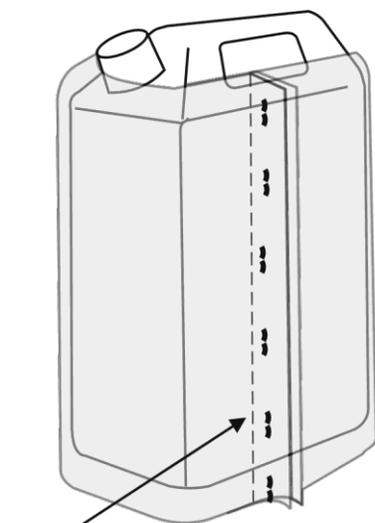
Step 1 – Wrap the jerry loosely in a piece of canvas (*wrong* side out) as shown in Fig 4-61. Staple in place, and mark the stitching line. Remember to keep the fit loose, and leave a fairly large seam allowance.

Step 2 – Stitch the side seam along the marked stitching line. Fold the seam allowance over to one side, and topstitch  $\frac{1}{2}$ " away from the seam line.

Step 3 – Stitch a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " double hem around the bottom.

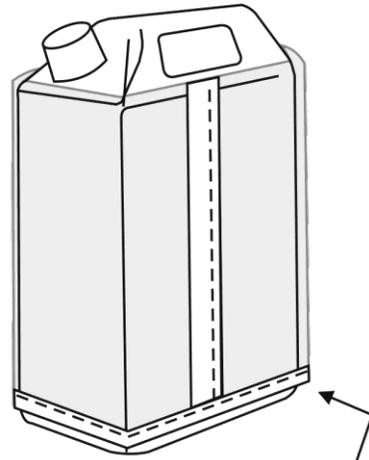
Step 4 – Leave the cover *wrong* side out. Place it over the jerry again as shown in Fig 4-62.

Now take a rectangular piece of canvas and staple it along both long sides – *right* sides together. Staple the lid such that the hem of the jerry cover does NOT touch the ground. (This is so that water will not collect around the bottom of the cover and possibly blister or discolour the deck.) When this is done, place a staple at the center point of the short sides. Now, staple darts into the corners, to take up the excess. See Fig 4-63.

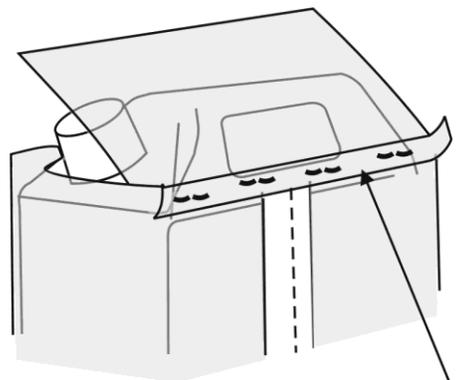


**Fig 4-61** Wrap the jerry loosely with the canvas. Staple in place. Mark the stitching line.

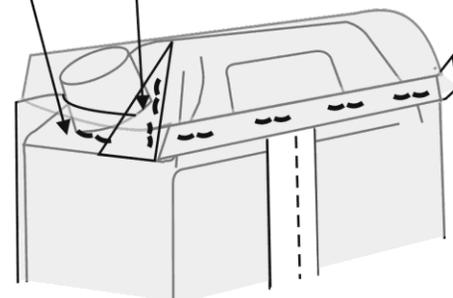
Step 5 – Gently remove the cover. Stitch the darts and trim the excess seam allowance to  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Stitch the lid onto the cover. Trim the seam allowance to  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Turn the seam allowances up, and topstitch in place.



**Fig 4-62** Place the cover on the jerry so that the hem does not touch the floor.

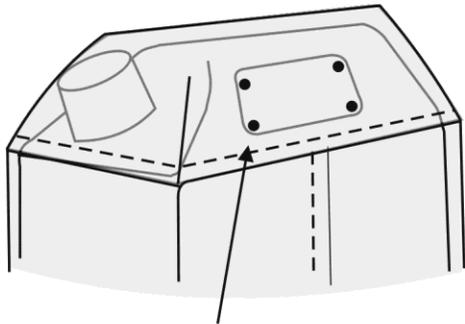


**Fig 4-63** Staple a rectangular 'lid' to the top edge - along the long sides first. Then staple at the center point of the short sides. Staple in darts at the corners.

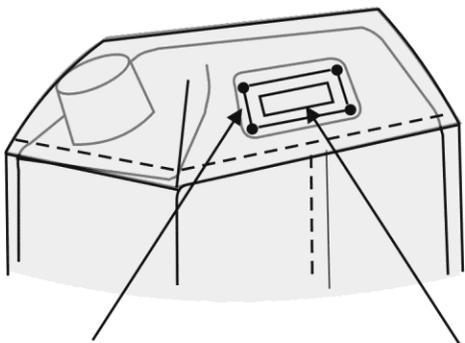


## Canvas for Cruisers

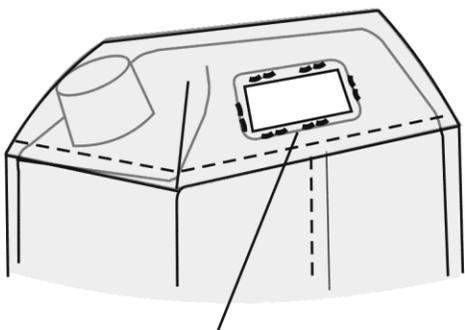
Step 6 – Turn the cover *right* side out. Put the cover back on the jerry. If you are not making an opening for the handle, you are done.



Mark corners of the opening.



Join the corners into a rectangle. Mark another rectangle  $\frac{1}{2}$ " inside the first one.



Clip the corners, and turn the edges under by  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Staple in place for now.

**Fig 4-64**

Step 7 - To make an opening for the handle, mark the corners of both openings for the handles - See Fig 4-64.

Mark lightly – you are marking on the *right* side of the fabric. Remove the cover.

Flatten out the cover and mark the lines for the openings – lightly. This is the fold line. Mark another rectangle  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to the inside of this one – this is the cutting line.

Cut out the rectangles along these cutting lines. Clip the corners, and turn the seam allowance to the inside. Staple in place for now.

Step 8 – Put the cover on the jerry and make any adjustments to the opening if necessary.

If you are adding a flap, measure:

The distance from one side of the opening, under the handle to the other side.

The width of the opening.

For the flap, cut a piece of canvas:

Width = the width of the opening plus 1" for seam allowances.

Length = twice the measurement you took from one side of the opening to the other, plus 2" for Velcro overlap, plus 1" for seam allowances.

Turn the long ends under  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Fold the flap in half along its width, and staple in place. Cut a piece of Velcro loops and seamstick along the folded end. Stitch the long sides close to the fold, and stitch on the Velcro. (See Fig 4-113 in the Dinghy Cover instructions.)

On one of the openings, place the raw edge of the flap under the lower edge, with the Velcro side facing down. Stitch in place, and stitch around the opening all in one step.

On the other opening, place Velcro hooks along the lower edge - on the *right* side of the fabric. Stitch the Velcro, and around the opening.

Drop the cover onto the jerry, thread the flap under the handle and secure it to the other side with the Velcro.

*I hope you have enjoyed this excerpt from Canvas for Cruisers.  
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