

Tricks to speed mask production

This example is based on a simple pleated mask but the concept is the same for any style. (I have gotten the time down to 8 minutes per mask this way).

1. If making multiple masks always do each step for every mask before going on the the next step. Once all the fronts and backs are ready put them right sides together and sew the same edge for every mask without stopping the sewing machine between each piece, just feed the next one in as soon as the first one is stitched. Quilters know this as chain piecing. They will all be strung together when you are done. Cut them apart and chain the opposite long edge the same way.



3. Pleating is very fast if you use the manila folder pleating method. There is a pdf describing this process. Stack all the pleated masks ready to bind the top or the sides, depending on the style you have chosen. It is faster to iron right over the manila folder, slide it off and press the whole thing.



2. Turn all the masks right side out and stack them up ready to press. I use a metal edge ruler to quickly open the seams on the turned mask and stack them ready to pleat.



4. If you are going to bind the edge with bias tape precut the pieces of bias to 3-3.5 inches and have them ready. Then you can chain the binding step as well, adjusting the pleats a little as you go to fit the bias strip, doing all of one side, then cut them apart and do the other side. (Straight grain binding is a little slower because you have to turn the ends in to prevent raveling which is why I prefer to use bias.)
5. Attach ties or elastic however you choose to but keep the assembly line approach.

