

Easy Reference Sheet

Making Pouches for Orphaned Joeys

Version 3: October 2023

What is a joey and why do they need pouches?

The term 'joey' refers to the baby of any marsupial. Baby possums, gliders, kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, wombats and bandicoots are all referred to as 'joeys'. When hand-raising orphaned joeys we aim to imitate the way their mother would care for them, which includes providing them with a warm and secure pouch to live in until they're old enough (...and brave enough!) to start to venture away from mum.

About these instructions

There are various patterns and instructions available online for joey pouches. We have created these instructions based on preferences from our own wildlife carers. If you are making pouches for another wildlife group or carer, we suggest you check with them first if they have any specific preferences.

Making joey pouches is a great way to not only help your local wildlife, but for less-experienced sewers, they are a fantastic project to practice your sewing skills as they are easy to make. We have developed these instructions to cater for everyone – regardless of your sewing knowledge or experience. Experienced sewers will be able to skip through to the specifics, whilst less-experienced sewers will benefit from the step-by-step instructions with accompanying photos.

Fabric choices

Below are some guidelines for selecting fabric to make pouches:

- Pouches **must** be made from natural fibres such as 100% cotton (however see note below about fleece).
- Cotton jersey (t-shirt/knit fabric) and flannelette are the **most** preferred fabrics as these are warm and soft.
- Cotton sheets can be used but these would be a second preference over jersey and flannelette. Cotton sheets that have a **very small** percentage of polyester are okay.
- Please do not use non-natural (synthetic) fabrics as they do not "breathe" and can cause the joeys to overheat.
- Unfurred joeys have delicate skin so the fabric needs to be soft so that it doesn't cause irritation.
- New fabrics are **preferred** but not essential. Good quality second-hand fabrics sourced from bed linen can be used (e.g. flannelette sheets) but please ensure that they are washed and in good, usable condition. Sheets that are well worn rip easily once an active joey is wriggling around. Remember also that pouches are washed regularly so they need to be able to withstand regular hot washes.
- Just like any other baby, our marsupial joeys like to suckle, sometimes on their pouch, so materials that do not shed any lint, or pill, or have any loose threads are essential.
- There is no preference for specific colours or fabric designs/patterns – our joeys don't mind if the fabric is slightly "ugly"! You'll often find the "ugly" ones on clearance.
- If using new fabric, there is no need to pre-wash the fabric or to wash the pouches before sending. Our carers will wash before using.

What you will need

- Suitable fabric as per above
- Sewing machine (*hand-sewn pouches are not suitable sorry*)
- Basic sewing notions (*ruler/tape measure, scissors, thread, pins/Wonder Clips*)
- Iron (*no one likes ironing ... but it really makes a difference to the quality of your finished pouch*)
- Optional** - Cutting tools (*cutting mat, ruler and rotary cutter*)
- Optional** - Overlocker (serger) – *only required for Pouch C and beneficial for Pouches D and E.*

Pouch sizes

Different species require different size pouches. Small species such as gliders will need much smaller pouches than larger species. Some, like kangaroos and wallabies, stay in their pouches for much longer than others so they require a larger range of pouch sizes.

We have listed below a guide on cutting your fabric, which should result in the finished pouch sizes listed. Measurements in both metric and imperial are included.

Please don't stress if your pouches end up being slightly different in size – joeys come in all sizes! Make the most of the width of your fabric to prevent wastage.

Metric measurements

	Cut fabric to size <i>Sizes include seam allowance of ~1cm. If cutting on the fold, divide the depth by 2.</i>	Finished size of pouch	Suitable for:
Small	12cm wide x 35cm deep **	10cm wide x 15cm deep	Gliders, Antechinus (unfurred)
	17cm wide x 45cm deep	15cm wide x 20cm deep	Gliders (all ages) Koalas (unfurred) Possums (unfurred) Bandicoots, Antechinus, Native Rodents
Medium	22cm wide x 55cm deep	20cm wide x 25cm deep *	Koalas (furred) Possums (furred) Kangaroos and wallabies (unfurred)
	27cm wide x 65cm deep	25cm wide x 30cm deep *	Koalas (furred) Kangaroos and wallabies (furred)
Large	37cm wide x 85cm deep	35cm wide x 40cm deep *	Kangaroos and wallabies (furred)
	54cm wide x 135cm deep	50cm wide x 65cm deep	Kangaroos and wallabies (furred)

***These pouch sizes are the most needed!**

** Make with a curved bottom

Imperial measurements

	Cut fabric to size <i>Sizes include seam allowance of ¼" – ½"</i> <i>If cutting on the fold, divide the depth by 2.</i>	Finished size of pouch	Suitable for:
Small	5" wide x 13.5" deep **	4" wide x 6" deep	Gliders, Antechinus (unfurred)
	7" wide x 17.5" deep	6" wide x 8" deep	Gliders (all ages) Koalas (unfurred) Possums (unfurred) Bandicoots, Antechinus, Native Rodents
Medium	9" wide x 21.5" deep	8" wide x 10" deep	Koalas (furred) Possums (furred) Kangaroos and wallabies (unfurred)
	11" wide x 25.5" deep	10" wide x 12" deep	Koalas (furred) Kangaroos and wallabies (furred)
Large	15" wide x 33.5" deep	14" wide x 16" deep	Kangaroos and wallabies (furred)
	21" wide x 53.5" deep	20" wide x 26" deep	Kangaroos and wallabies (furred)

***These pouch sizes are the most needed!**

** Make with a curved bottom

Making Pouches for Orphaned Joeys

Wildcare Australia Inc.

www.wildcare.org.au



5 different styles of pouches

These instructions include details on making the following variations of pouches:

- A. Pouch with French seams and straight sides and bottom (*preferred option*)
- B. Pouch with French seams and straight sides and a curved bottom (*preferred option*)
- C. Pouch with sewn and over-locked straight seams (*least preferred option*)
- D. Double pouch – fleece outer pouch with a fixed inner pouch (option 1 – folded at top) (*preferred option*)
- E. Double pouch – fleece outer pouch with a fixed inner pouch (option 2 – flush top) (*preferred option*)

We suggest reading through the instructions before starting and decide which style of pouch you would like to make. You can then print out only the relevant pages for that style of pouch.



Straight or curved bottom – does it matter?

Some wildlife carers prefer pouches with curved bottoms. Some carers feel that joeys can get ‘stuck’ in the corners of square/rectangular pouches. The only joeys at risk of doing so would be the smaller species such as tiny gliders and antechinus. Making the smallest pouch sizes with curved bottoms would prevent this from occurring.

Some carers believe that the curved bottoms are essential for larger species. Most of our carers don’t mind either way – they are just incredibly grateful that kind people have sewn beautiful pouches for their joeys! Some carers actually prefer non-curved pouches as it provides a bit of extra wriggle room for active joeys. Many joeys, such as koalas and possums, have a little teddy bear in their pouch with them for comfort so the extra room helps. Joeys lay in all sorts of weird positions – upside down, on their side and snuggled up amongst their siblings.

If you are making hanging bags for kangaroos and wallabies, it is important that those are curved but these instructions do not cover those types of bags.

How many pouches do we need?

Pouches need to be changed regularly (sometimes as often as each feed), so each joey will need at least 30 pouches. Most carers will have at least a few joeys in care at any one time, so that's a lot of pouches! Carers are pretty busy people so having sufficient pouches that they don't have to wash every day is a huge help to them.

The donation of even just a few pouches is more than welcome!

The need for pouches is always great and any assistance that you can provide to our volunteers is greatly appreciated. Having a joey in care not only takes time with chores such as feeding (sometimes up to eight times a day - through both the day and night) but also cleaning, food preparation and collecting natural food for older joeys. Most of our wildlife carers have more than one joey in care, which also greatly increases their workload and most volunteer wildlife carers work full time in other areas of employment.

Where can I send pouches?

Completed pouches can be posted to Wildcare for distribution.

Please include a note with your name and postal address, so that we can let you know the pouches have arrived.

Our postal address is:

Wildcare Australia Inc
PO Box 253
Burleigh Heads Qld 4220
Australia

If you would like a printed copy of these instructions posted to you, please feel free to email karen@wildcare.org.au and we will post you a copy. *(Australia only)*

We are happy to provide a printed copy even if you are making pouches for another wildlife group!

Sending via courier:

Wildcare Australia (Att: Karen)
c/- First Mortgage Investments
11 West Street
Burleigh Heads, Queensland, 4220

If you are sending a parcel or box of pouches within Australia, it may be more economical to use a parcel delivery service such as Sendle where the parcel is collected from you and delivered to us directly. Their parcel prices are often cheaper than Australia Post. <https://www.sendle.com/>

If you are sending from overseas, please investigate the shipping charges before sewing, as international postal charges to Australia are very high. We cannot assist with shipping costs.

Needing more information?

If you have any questions about making joey pouches, please don't hesitate to contact me. I am never too busy to talk sewing!

Karen Scott
Email - karen@wildcare.org.au
Mobile 0400 165 462

Thank you!

On behalf of all of our volunteer wildlife carers, thank you for taking an interest in caring for our precious little wildlife!

Pouch A - Pouch with French seams (straight sides and bottom)

Note: We have used a contrasting thread colour in the diagrams to make it easier to see. Most sewers would pick a thread colour to match the fabric.

Pouch A - Step 1 – Cut your fabric

Cut your fabric as per the measurements on the previous pages.

It is much easier to fold your fabric with right sides (the pretty sides) together. That will give you a nice folded edge along the bottom that won't need to be stitched.

The pouch in the diagram is a medium-sized pouch cut around 20cm wide x 25cm deep on the fold (so ~50cm in total length).

You will achieve a much nicer finish if your fabric is flat before cutting. If it isn't, give it a quick iron before cutting.

Fold

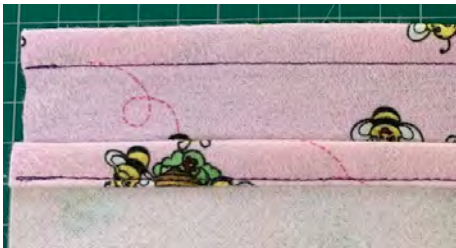


Pouch A - Step 2 – Hem the top

Fold the top edges over ~1cm (¼") and then fold again. Give the hem a good press with a hot iron to hold in place. Fold towards the wrong side of the fabric.

Stitch along the edge of the hem to secure.

Make sure that you use a reverse stitch at the start and finish.



Pouch A - Step 3 – Stitch the sides

With the right sides of the fabric together, fold in half.

Make sure that the folded hems at the top match up evenly.

You can pin or clip the fabric together to keep it in place before sewing if required, but if the fabric is nicely ironed, this generally isn't required for smaller pouches.

For the larger sizes, pinning is recommended.

Using a ~1cm (¼") seam allowance, stitch down each side of the pouch.

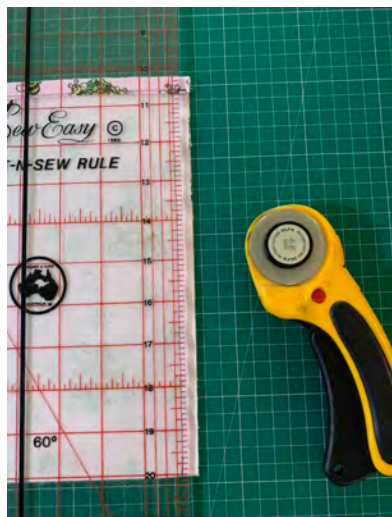
Make sure to do a reverse stitch at the start and finish to secure the seam.



Pouch A - Step 4 – Trim the sides

Using a ruler, cutting mat and rotary cutter, trim the seam allowance to around 0.5cm (1/8"). If you don't have a rotary cutter, use scissors. You need to trim the seam on both sides.

If you don't have a fold on the bottom and have a stitched seam on the bottom as well, you will need to trim that also. Trimming the edge helps to make the next step easier and creates a neat 'french seam'.



Pouch A - Step 5 – Turn and press

Turn the pouch out so that the right sides are facing outwards.

Using a pointed object (e.g. chop stick), poke the corners out to make them sit square.

Give the pouch a good press with an iron and make sure that the seams are flush on the sides.



Pouch A – Step 6 – Final seam

To finish the French seam, sew a ~1cm (3/8") seam long each side.

Doing this will fully encase the raw edge of the inside seam. If you have ironed the pouch, you will be able to feel the edge of the seam inside and use that as a guide to ensure that the seam is fully enclosed. Once stitched, the inside of the pouch should have no raw/exposed edges.

And you're done!!!



Pouch B - Pouch with French seams (straight sides and curved bottom)

Pouch B - Step 1 – Cut your fabric

Refer to the instructions for Pouch A above.

It is easier to cut the fabric in a rectangular shape to start with.

Pouch B - Step 2 – Hem the top

Refer to the instructions for Pouch A above.

Pouch B - Step 3 – Create the curved bottom

Draw a curve towards the bottom of the pouch.

Use a plate as a guide to create an even, neat curve.



Pouch B - Step 4 – Sew the side and bottom seam

Using a ~1cm (1/4") seam allowance, sew down the right side of the pouch and then follow your drawn line around the curve and then back up the left side of the pouch.

If you aren't confident sewing curves, slow down your machine if you can.

This makes it easier to stay on the drawn line.

Sewing curves this way (before cutting out), gives you a little more control to help guide the fabric as you stitch around the curve.

You can see I went off track a little bit on the left hand side - but near enough is close enough!

Make sure that you use a reverse stitch when you start and finish.



Pouch B - Step 5 – Trim your edges

Trim your side seams down to around 0.5cm (1/8").
Refer to Step 4 in Pouch A instructions.

Trim the curved bottom with scissors to the same measurements.



Pouch B - Step 6 – Turn and press

Turn the pouch out so that the right sides are facing outwards.

Using a pointed object (e.g. chop stick) to push out the seam around the curved bottom to make it sit correctly.

Give the pouch a good press with an iron and make sure that the seams are flush on the sides.



Pouch B - Step 7 – Final seam

To finish the French seam, sew a ~1cm (1/4") seam long each side.

Doing this will fully encase the raw edge of the inside seam.

If you have ironed the pouch, you will be able to feel the edge of the seam inside and use that as a guide to ensure that the seam is fully enclosed. Once stitched, the inside of the pouch should have no raw/exposed edges.

And you're done!!!



Pouch C - Pouch with overlocked seams (straight sides and bottom)

Note – this is our least preferred method as the overlocked edges can still cause a hazard for small joeys that may get their claws caught. Even with the overlocked edges on the outside of the pouch, joeys offer squirm their way out of the pouch and into the next layer of pouches.

Pouch C - Step 1 – Cut your fabric

Refer to the instructions for Pouch A above.



Pouch C - Step 2 – Stitch the side seams

With the wrong sides of the fabric together, fold in half.

You can pin the fabric together to keep it in place before sewing if required but if the fabric is nicely ironed, this generally isn't required for smaller pouches. For the larger sizes, pinning is recommended.

Using a ~1cm (¼") seam allowance, stitch down each side of the pouch.

Make sure that you do a reverse stitch at the start and finish to secure the seam.



Pouch C - Step 3 – Overlock the seams

Use an overlocker (serger) to overlock along each edge. Trim a little off the seam allowance as you overlock to achieve a neat finish.

Leave a small section of thread tails at the start and finish of the overlocked edge to prevent it unraveling (circled in red).

To ensure that the pouches last longer, we prefer that the edges are both sewn and overlocked.



Pouch C - Step 4 – Turn inside out and hem the top

Turn the pouch inside out and fold the top of the pouch over ~1cm (1/4") and then fold again.

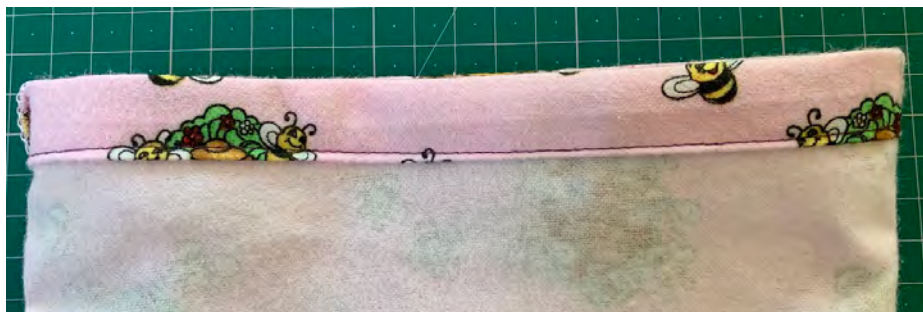
Give the hem a good press with a hot iron to hold in place.

You need to fold towards the wrong side of the fabric.

Stitch along the edge of the hem to secure.

This will secure the open overlocked tails at the top of the pouch in the side seams.

Make sure that you use a reverse stitch at the start and finish.



Pouch C - Step 5 – Secure the bottom overlocked tails

On the bottom of each side, fold the overlocked tail threads up and using your sewing machine, sew a few stitches back and forth to secure the threads.

This will prevent them from unraveling.



And you're done!!!



Pouch D – Double pouch – Fleece outer & fixed inner pouch (folded at top)

Pouch D - Step 1 – Cut your fabric

Double pouches are made from an 'outer pouch' and a pouch insert, which are sewn together. Sports Active Fleece (as Spotlight refers to it) is ideal for these pouches. It washes well and 'breathes' more than other synthetic fleeces to prevent the joey overheating.

Cut your fleece fabric as per the measurements on the previous pages.

Grey fleece is used in the photo example.

Cut your pouch insert to the width as the fleece pouch BUT MAKE THE LENGTH AROUND ~7CM (3") LONGER.

Pink flannelette is used in the photo example.

It is much easier to fold your fabric with right sides (the pretty side) together. That will give you a nice folded edge along the bottom that won't need to be stitched. You will achieve a much nicer finish if your fabric is flat before cutting. If it isn't, give it a quick iron before cutting.



Pouch D - Step 2 – Stitch the side seams

Place the fabric with right sides together and the fold at the bottom.

You can pin the fabric together to keep it in place before sewing if required but if the fabric is nicely ironed, this generally isn't required for smaller pouches. For the larger sizes, pinning is recommended.

Using a ~1cm (¼") seam allowance, stitch down each side of both the outer and inner pouches.

Make sure that you do a reverse stitch at the start and finish to secure the seam.



Pouch D - Step 3 – Overlock edges (optional)

You can overlock both sides of each pouch.

Trim a small amount off the seam allowance as you overlock.

If you don't have an overlocker, don't worry – just miss this step.



Pouch D - Step 4 – Turn your pouches

Turn your fleece pouch the right way out.

Exposed seams will be on the inside.

Leave the pouch insert inside-out.

All exposed seams will now be on the outside of the pouch.

Make sure that the pouch insert is sitting evenly in the fleece pouch and that the inside bottom corners meet up.



Pouch D - Step 5 – Fold the top of the pouch insert

Fold the pouch insert over the top of the fleece pouch.

Press the pouch with a hot iron making sure that the fleece is sitting neatly underneath the crease.

It is important that the fleece is sitting correctly. If it isn't, the next step will not work correctly.



Pouch D - Step 6 – Stitch the pouch insert to the outer fleece pouch

Run a line of stitching about ~0.7cm (¼") under the fold at the top.

This top stitch should secure the pouch insert to the fleece, if they are lined up correctly.

If your sewing machine has the ability to remove the cover to expose the 'free-arm', use this feature as it will make stitching much easier.



Pouch D - Step 7 – Fold and stitch the lower part of the pouch insert

Tuck the bottom section of the pouch insert up underneath ensuring that it is evenly spaced in line with the top stitching that you just sewed.

Press into place with the iron.



Run another row of top-stitching along the bottom edge of the fold.



And you're done!!!



Pouch E – Double pouch – Fleece outer and fixed pouch insert (flush top)

Pouch E - Step 1 – Cut your fabric

Double pouches are made from an 'outer pouch' and a pouch insert, which are sewn together. Sports Active Fleece (as Spotlight refers to it) is ideal for these pouches. It washes well and 'breathes' more than other synthetic fleeces to prevent the joey overheating.

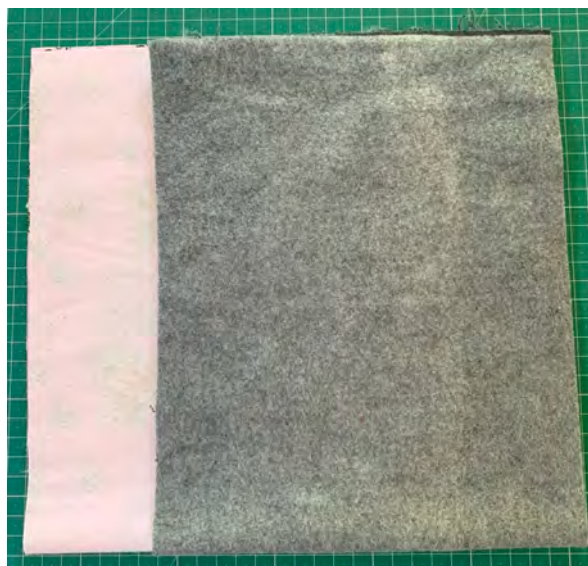
Cut both your fleece fabric and the pouch insert as per the measurements on the previous pages.

Note – both outer and insert fabrics will be the same size.

Grey fleece used in the photo example is the outer pouch.

Pink flannelette used is the pouch insert.

It is much easier to fold your fabric with right sides (the pretty side) together. That will give you a nice folded edge along the bottom that won't need to be stitched. You will achieve a much nicer finish if your fabric is flat before cutting. If it isn't, give it a quick iron before cutting.



Pouch E - Step 2 – Stitch the side seams

Place the fabric with right sides together and the fold at the bottom.

You can pin the fabric together to keep it in place before sewing if required but if the fabric is nicely ironed, this generally isn't required for smaller pouches. For the larger sizes, pinning is recommended.

Using a ~1cm (¼") seam allowance, stitch down each side of both the outer pouch and pouch insert.

Make sure that you do a reverse stitch at the start and finish to secure the seam.



Pouch E - Step 3 – Overlock edges (optional)

You can overlock both sides of each pouch but it's not necessary.

Trim a small amount off the seam allowance as you go.

If you don't have an overlocker, just skip this step.



Pouch E - Step 4 – Turn your pouches

Turn your pouch insert the right way out.

All of your exposed seams will be on the inside.

Leave the outer fleece pouch inside out.

Exposed seams will be on the outside.

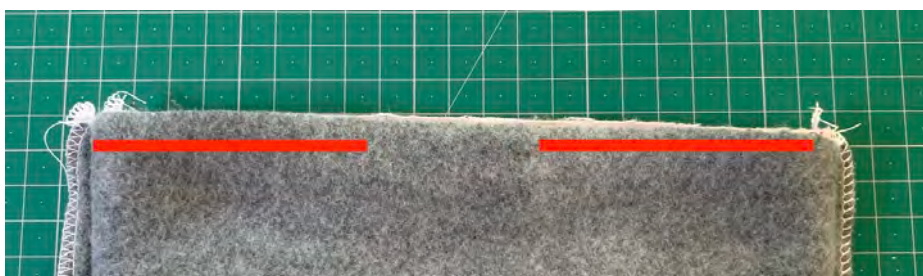
Make sure that the side seams of each pouch meet.

Push the pouch insert down into the fleece pouch making sure that the pouch insert is sitting evenly in the fleece pouch and that the inside bottom corners meet up. If done correctly, the top edges should be flush as per the photo below.

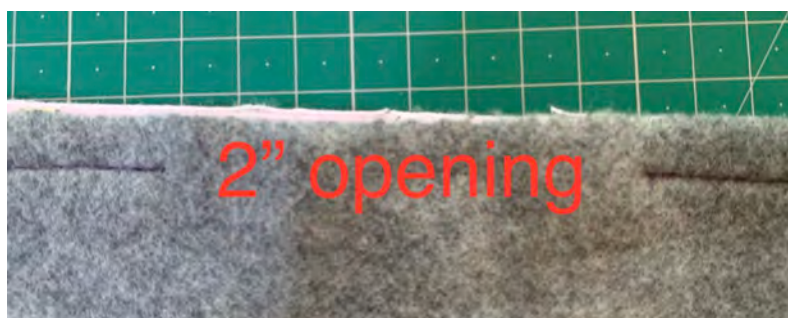


Pouch E - Step 5 – Stitch the pouches together

Pin the pouches together, making sure that the side seams meet.



Run a line of stitching around 1cm (1/4") from the top edge. The stitching will run all the way around the pouch leaving a gap of around 2" for turning.



Pouch E - Step 6 – Turn pouches out and press

Using the 2" opening in the stitching, turn the pouches out the right way.

Use a pointed object (e.g. chop stick), to push the corners of both the pouch insert and fleece pouch out so that they are square.

You will end up with the opening in the pouch, which will be stitched closed in the next step.



Give both pouches a quick press with the iron.

It is worthwhile at this point to press the pouch insert neatly above the opening so that it is nice and straight.



Push the pouch insert into the fleece pouch and push the corners down so that they meet. This should result in the top of the pouches being flush.

Use either pins or Wonder Clips to keep the opening in place before stitching in the next step.



Pouch E - Step 7 – Top stitch

Top stitch around the top edge of the pouch about 0.5cm (3/8") from the top
Make sure that use a reverse stitch at the start/finish to secure the stitching.
This should close the opening that you had pinned.



You can run another additional row of stitching around the top.



And you're done!!!



And here are some of our joeys!

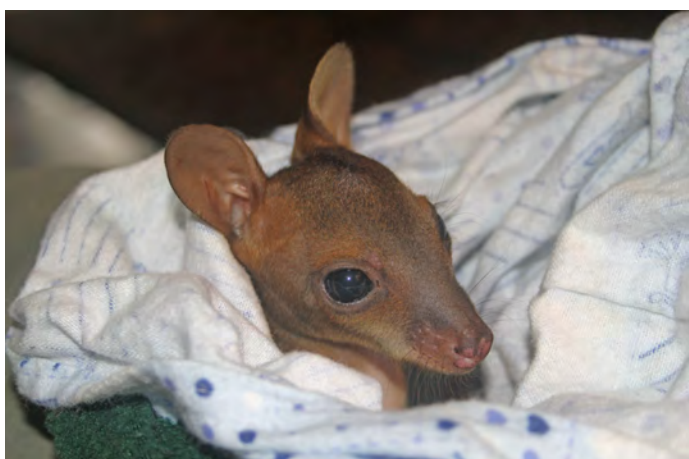


Oliver the koala joey

Oliver was found on his own at the base of a tree with no sign of his mother. He was extremely dehydrated but with specialised veterinary care and a dedicated wildlife carer, he gained strength quickly. Here he is snuggled up in several layers of pouches.

Miffy the Long-nosed Bandicoot

Miffy was orphaned when her mother was hit by a car. She was so tiny when she came into care, her eyes hadn't even opened yet. Miffy was hand-raised and released back to a suitable bush habitat.



Chrissie the Red-legged Pademelon

Chrissie was orphaned as a result of road trauma but received the loving care of one of our volunteer wildlife carers who specialises in raising pademelon joeys. She was raised with several other pademelons and was released back to the wild.