



## ***Dressing The Lace Pillow***

'Dressing' is the term used for arranging the pricking and various protective cloths prior to commencing work. These instructions are for a domed pillow but they can be applied to other pillows with only minor changes.

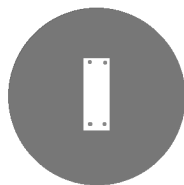
In addition to the fabric holding the stuffing and base, your lace pillow should have a pillow cover (loose cover) that can be taken off and laundered. Pillow covers and cover cloths do not usually come with the pillow, you have either to find a supplier who stocks pre-made cloths, or you have to make them<sup>1</sup>.

If you do not have a sewing machine and do not know how to sew then, as substitutes, buy some inexpensive, plain fabric pillowslips (pillow cases), or large table napkins in a medium-dark colour, and use those. The loose cover must be removed and washed frequently but just how often you do so is up to you. Washing at the completion of each piece of lace is recommended.

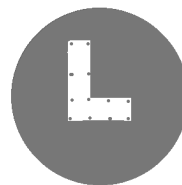
### **The order of the dressing**

- Pillow cover
- The pricking
- Cover cloths if used
- The pillow skirt
- Pin cushion

**The pricking** is positioned on top of the loose cover and as close to the middle of the pillow as possible. The more equal the space at sides, top and bottom of the pricking, the fewer problems there will be with the bobbins when working. Bobbins constantly rolling off the pillow will hamper the work and are a nuisance.



Pricking centred &  
pinned to pillow



Pricking  
pinned to pillow

Obviously, a straight length of pricking is simple to position but other shapes pose more of a challenge. The pricking for a right angle edging can be especially challenging to position well, particularly as it will usually have one side longer than the other to allow for moving up. The best solution is to position the top end (starting end) well to the back of the pillow which, when the pillow is turned, will allow a little more space along the outer

edge of the second side. When you have positioned the pricking as well as possible, pin it down at the top corners.

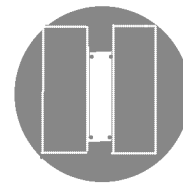
### Pinning down the pricking

Prickings must be secured to the pillow with pins to prevent the card from rising up as you work. Pinholes are pricked outside the pattern area and just inside the edges of the card. The top and bottom ends must always be pinned down securely. Whether you need one or two additional pinholes down each side of the pricking, depends very much on the length and shape of it.

Make any additional pinholes needed along the side edges. Position the two pins at the top corners first. These and the side pins should be angled toward the back of the pillow.

If the pricking is a corner section of pattern, pin the inside and outside corners as well. Turn the pillow 1/4 turn to the right (clockwise) so the second side is facing toward you. Pin this side as for the first, angling the pins to the back corner.

**The rectangular cover cloths** are used when dressing a pillow. They are used to prevent wear on the threads, caused by the thread rubbing along the edges of the pricking. Coarse thread is not affected but the fine threads are. I rarely use cover cloths when working Torchon lace in either cotton or linen, because I rarely use thread finer than a No.30 cotton, or the equivalent 80/2 linen. I do, however, use cover cloths with Torchon prickings when working with silk thread or a soft, loosely plied thread.



Cover cloths down sides of pricking

If using cover cloths, they are positioned vertically, one laid along the left side edge of the pricking, and one along the right. Leave a little space between the pinholes and the edge of the cloths or you will not be able to work comfortably. Pin the cloths above and below the pricking card, angling the heads toward the back of the pillow.

If the pricking is a corner section of pattern, the cover cloths will have to be rearranged at the corner turn.

Cover cloths do not need to be folded prior to pinning down unless the hem is too tough for the pins, then you will have to fold the cloth and pin the fold.

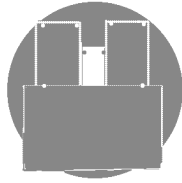
**The pillow skirt** lies over the pricking (and cover cloths if used) and underneath the bobbins. The name applies to the position of the cloth, not its shape or fabric type.

The pillow skirt is positioned horizontally across the pricking so that only a small part of the pricking is visible. Exactly how much visible pattern there should be will vary according to the pattern components. To begin with, two or three pattern repeats, or one-third the length of the side is a reasonable distance.

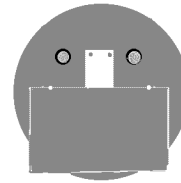
If the pillow skirt is too far down the pricking, the bobbin threads must be lengthened too far when working. The thread length between the working row of pins and the bobbin heads should not exceed 150mm (6") as an absolute maximum.

If the pillow skirt is positioned too high, it is a nuisance because you have to stop working too frequently to move it down.

Pin the top edge of the hem (or the fold) to the pillow, in a similar manner to pinning down the pricking. Pull the cloth reasonably firmly and position a second pin. The pins should be placed out toward the top corners, well away from the working area. The heads should not stick up and the pinpoint should be inside the pillow. If the cloth is not tensioned sufficiently, the threads will catch on the top edge and slow down the work.



Pillow skirt over  
cloths and pricking



Pincushion at  
left or right

**The pincushion** must now be pinned in place using a long pin such as a divider pin or hatpin. The pincushion should be well filled with pins beforehand. Pin the cushion so it is within easy reach. Generally, for right-handed people this would be a more or less below the top right corner of the pricking, or the top left corner for left-handed people.

Once a pincushion has been pinned onto the pillow, dressing of the pillow is finished and you are ready to explore the wonders of making bobbin lace.

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<sup>i</sup> Information Note No.3 “*Making Pillow Covers and Cover Cloths*”