

# BASIC SKILLS

## TUBE TURNING

A variety of projects, such as narrow dress straps and wide purse handles, require fabric tubes for both functionality and embellishment. Learn eight stress-free tube turning techniques using common sewing room supplies and specialty tools.

### TUBE ANATOMY

**Create a tube** from a fabric strip that's twice the desired finished tube width plus the seam allowance. The wider the tube, the easier it is to turn right side out.

**Cut fabric strips** on the lengthwise, crosswise or bias grain to accommodate different tube widths and stretch amounts. Most tubes are created with woven fabric, however knit fabric is also suitable.

- Lengthwise grain fabric strips are stable, have the least amount of stretch and are best for straight tubes. Don't cut narrow tubes

on the lengthwise grain because there's not enough stretch to facilitate turning.

- Crosswise grain fabric strips have slightly more stretch and are best for straight tubes and gentle curves.
- Bias fabric strips have the most stretch and are best for curved and narrow tubes because the stretch makes turning and shaping the tube easier.
- Knit fabric strips have a lot of stretch and are best for making waistline drawstrings or jewelry.

**Select an open or closed tube** based on the chosen project. Fold a fabric strip in half lengthwise with right sides together. To create an open tube, stitch the long edge. To create a closed tube, stitch the long edge and one short end.

**Insert cording** into a tube for definition and stability. Or increase the fabric-strip seam allowance to match the tube width. The seam allowance acts as a lightweight filler for added stability when the tube is turned right side out.

## TUBE TURNING METHODS

To turn a tube, a tool of some kind is generally required. This can be as simple as a safety pin or pencil, but there are also several tools on the market specifically designed for easily turning tubes. Each is effective in its own way, though some may work better for certain sizes and types of tubes than others. Which you choose really comes down to individual preference.

### SAFETY PIN

Using a safety pin to turn a tube is the most basic method. However, a safety pin is often difficult to push through narrow tubes and can open before the tube is completely turned, causing a finger prick and/or the inability to finish turning the tube.

**Select a safety pin** that's slightly narrower than the tube width. Attach the safety pin to one tube short end, and then push the safety pin head into the tube.

**Push the safety pin** through the tube toward the open short end while pulling the fabric in the opposite direction to turn the tube right side out (1). Remove the safety pin.

### PENCIL OR CHOPSTICK

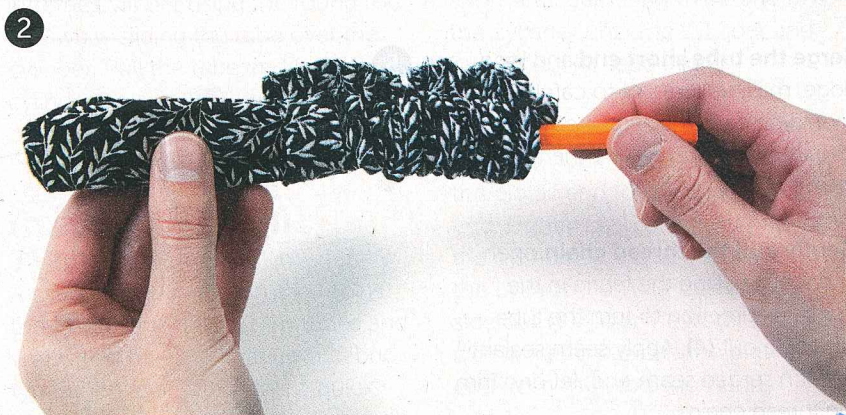
Use a pencil or chopstick for turning closed tubes.

**Place the pencil eraser** or chopstick blunt end into the closed tube short end, and then pull  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of the fabric over the pencil or chopstick end.

**Push the pencil** or chopstick through the tube toward the open short end, while pulling the fabric in the opposite direction to turn the tube right side out (2). Remove the pencil or chopstick.

### RIBBON OR YARN

Using ribbon or yarn to turn a tube provides a secure "handle" to easily turn the tube right side out.



**Cut a length of stable ribbon** or yarn several inches longer than the fabric strip length.

**Fold the fabric strip** with right sides together, centering the ribbon or yarn between the two layers and extending the ribbon or yarn short ends just beyond each strip short end.

**To create an open tube**, baste one strip short end, securing the ribbon or yarn in the stitching. To create a closed tube, stitch one strip short end, securing the ribbon or yarn

end in the stitching. Stitch the strip long edge, making sure not to catch the ribbon or yarn in the stitching.

**Gently pull the ribbon** or yarn unstitched end while pulling the fabric in the opposite direction to turn the tube right side out (3). For an open tube, remove the basting stitches and ribbon or yarn. For a closed tube, carefully trim the ribbon or yarn.

### SERGER THREAD CHAIN

Use a serger to create a thread chain for turning the tube, and then stitch a closed tube.

**Set the serger** for a 3-thread or 4-thread overlock stitch. Serge a thread chain several inches longer than the fabric strip length. Don't cut the thread chain.

**Fold the fabric strip** in half lengthwise with right sides together, centering the thread chain between the two layers and extending the thread chain ends just beyond each strip short end.

**Serge the tube short end** and long edge, making sure not to catch the thread chain in the stitching. Trim the thread chain and remove the tube from the serger.

**Gently pull the thread chain** open end while pulling the fabric in the opposite direction to turn the tube right side out (4). Apply seam sealant to each serged seam end; let dry. Trim the thread chain.

### LOOP TURNER

A loop turner is roughly 10½" long with a ring on one end and a hook on the opposite end. A loop turner turns ⅜"-wide or wider tubes.

**Cut one tube short end** at an angle. Insert the loop turner hook end into the opposite tube end, gathering the fabric onto the loop turner until the hook and angled fabric end align.

**Attach the hook into the tube** ¼" from the short end. Hold the ring and gently pull the loop turner through the tube while pulling the fabric in the opposite direction to turn the tube right side out (5). Remove the fabric from the hook end.

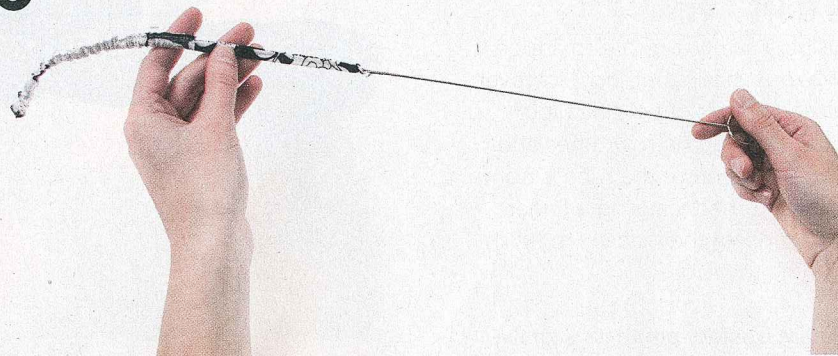
### FLAT TUBE TURNER TOOL

A flat tube turner works well for delicate or slippery fabrics, such as chiffon or satin, and is usually available in a small size for ⅜"- to 1"-wide tubes and a large size for ¾"-wide or wider tubes.

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**Insert the flat tube turner** pointed end into the tube, sliding the clip over the tube short end; close the clip (6). Push and gather the fabric onto the turner.

**Hold the turner pointed end** while pulling the fabric in the opposite direction to turn the tube right side out (7). Remove the fabric from the clip.

### CYLINDER & ROD TURNER TOOL

A cylinder and rod turner tool comes in various sizes, including a  $\frac{3}{16}$ "-diameter cylinder for  $\frac{3}{8}$ "- to  $\frac{5}{8}$ "-wide tubes, a  $\frac{3}{8}$ "-diameter cylinder for  $\frac{3}{4}$ "- to 1"-wide tubes and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ "-diameter cylinder for 1"-wide or wider tubes. Each cylinder has a corresponding metal or wooden rod.

**Select the cylinder and rod** that corresponds to the tube width. For

a closed tube, insert the cylinder into the open short end, gathering the fabric onto the cylinder until the cylinder and opposite short end align. For an open tube, insert the cylinder into one open short end, gathering the fabric onto the cylinder until the cylinder is 1" from the opposite open short end.

**Push the closed or open short end** into the cylinder using the round rod end while sliding the tube over the cylinder. Pull the tube end from the cylinder, turning the tube right side out (8). Use the rod end to push out the tube corners. Remove the rod.

### CYLINDER & HOOK TURNER TOOL

A cylinder and hook turning tool is the fastest method to turn tubes and works for the widest range of fabric types. The tool also offers a quick and easy way to fill fabric tubes with

cording. Each cylinder has a corresponding wire hook with a "pigtail" end. The tool comes in a six sizes for  $\frac{1}{8}$ "- to  $\frac{3}{4}$ "-wide tubes for light- to mediumweight fabric and three sizes ranging from 1"- to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide tubes for heavyweight fabric.

**Select the cylinder** and hook that corresponds to the tube width. Insert the cylinder into the open short end, gathering the fabric onto the cylinder until the cylinder and opposite short end align.

**Insert the hook** into the cylinder. Turn the hook clockwise to attach the pigtail end to the tube short end. Gently push the short end into the cylinder and pull the hook from the cylinder, turning the tube right side out (9). Turn the hook counter clockwise to remove the pigtail end from the tube short end.

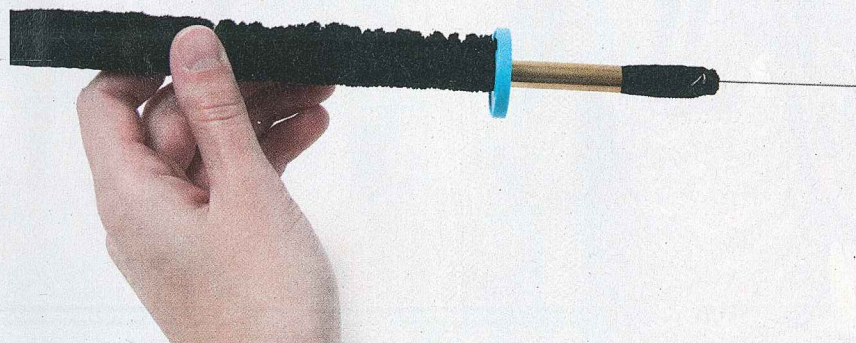
**To fill a tube** with cording or yarn, follow the previous instructions but after the pigtail end is attached to the tube short end, place the cording or yarn end into the cylinder end. Gently pull the hook from the cylinder, simultaneously turning the tube right side out and covering the cording or yarn. 5

**TIP:** Easily press tubes flat by inserting a cardboard strip that's slightly narrower than the finished tube width.

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#### SOURCES

Dritz makes the Loop Turner, Clip 'N Turn flat tube turner tool and Quick Turn cylinder and rod turner tool: dritz.com. Fasturn makes the cylinder and hook turner tool: fasturn.net.