



### Are you in need of a reusable, washable, homemade face mask?

After making face masks for everyone in our family and some for staff at a long-term care home, I shared information on how to make face masks on my Facebook page. That led to requests from friends asking me to make face masks and offering to make a charitable donation in return. So in an effort to provide people with face masks and at the same time provide support for the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery I started making face masks (within the limits of my ability to keep up with requests) in return for donations to the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, and I continue to do so.

Many public health officials have recommended that people wear face masks when in public settings and several municipalities and businesses now require face masks. I would be remiss not to note that homemade face masks are not a substitute for N-95 masks. However, as we all know efforts are being made to reserve N-95 masks for frontline medical workers.

My masks have a layer of non-woven interfacing between the outside fabric and the lining. Because woven textiles have small gaps (through which viruses can travel) between the interwoven threads, the addition of non-woven interfacing is reported to enhance the filtering capability of the mask. My masks all have a piece of wire pipe cleaner (with rounded ends) inserted into a compartment on the top edge of the mask enabling one to shape the mask to fit the contour of the bridge of one's nose. They also have a pocket into which one can slide either a disposable procedure mask or other filtering material such as a coffee filter, for additional filtering, if desired. My masks can be made with any one of the four fastenings shown below:



Fastener #1  
Elastic Ear Loops



Fastener #2(a)  
Twill tape/ribbon  
that ties at the back  
of the neck



Fastener #2(b)  
Twill tape/ribbon that  
ties at the back of the  
head



Fastener #3  
Elastic that encircles  
the back of the head &  
the back of the neck

I find people have different preferences for fasteners, based on what they find most comfortable and what they will be doing when wearing a mask. However, as you make your choice, I encourage you to consider fastener #3 which, from my own experience and feedback from those who have worn my masks, seems to work best in a variety of circumstances.

**Fastener #1** is really easy to put on and take off for quick trips into a store etc., but some people wearing masks for hours on end find loops around their ears become irritating. If you are just using your mask to do curbside pick-ups and/or pop into the grocery store, but won't be doing a lot of talking while wearing the mask - the #1 fastener is very convenient. However, if you are going to be doing much talking while wearing a mask, the ear loop fasteners may not

be the best option. My experience has been that when talking while wearing a mask with the #1 fastener, the mask tends to get tugged down toward my chin and off of my nose as I talk.

**Fasteners #2(a) and 2(b)** let you get a really snug fit (which is what you want with a mask - all the edges should rest smoothly against your face, without any areas that gape or bubble) but these take a little more time to put on and take off. If you are in a setting where you will be taking a mask on and off frequently, the 2(b) fastener makes it easy to just undo the bow, pull the mask down and let it hang from your neck while you do something that doesn't require the mask, leaving it ready to pull up, and retie when needed again.

**Fastener #3** (which has become my favorite) is a little faster to put on and take off than #2(a) or 2(b); provides for a good smooth fit without areas that gape or bubble; avoids the irritation of ear loops that can be problematic for people wearing masks for hours on end; and does a great job of keeping the mask positioned correctly while one talks. If you are taking your mask on and off frequently it is easy to pull the upper band of elastic over the top of your head, toward the front, to let your mask hang down in front of you until you next need it in position. If you are going to be quite active while wearing a mask, this fastener will hold your mask in position very comfortably and securely. **Please note that when people order masks for children (either age 3-6 or age 7-12) with the #3 fastener**, I provide the mask with the elastic inserted but not joined - as the dimensions of children's head vary from child to child and year to year. That way you can try the mask on your child and determine the appropriate length for the elastic in order to achieve a comfortable but snug fit, before joining the ends of the elastic by hand sewing them together with about a 1-inch overlap.

**I make masks in four sizes:**

- for children age 3-6 years;
- for children age 7 - 12 years;
- Small Adult (which I previously labelled as Teenager/Women); and
- Large Adult (which I previously labelled as Men)

I now keep a Google docs file which I update regularly, indicating the specific fabrics in which masks in each of the four sizes are available. You can view it here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kU10wok5Nj8pBosj7m21jqsHsdfe71\\_K7oSKAN5COE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kU10wok5Nj8pBosj7m21jqsHsdfe71_K7oSKAN5COE/edit?usp=sharing). In it I identify both the masks that I have on hand (completed and ready just to have the fastener attached) as well as the ones that can be ordered, even if I don't have any already made up in that fabric. Each mask takes a little over an hour to make.

**To request face masks in return for a donation to the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery please send me an email at [jstephenswells@gmail.com](mailto:jstephenswells@gmail.com). Please be sure to indicate, for each face mask requested:**

- **the size (Large Adult, Small Adult, Child age 7-12; or Child age 3-6)**
- **the letter-number code for the fabric for that mask; (e.g. L-10, S-23, BK-2, K-4 etc.)**
- **the fastener selected for that mask. (#1, #2(a), #2(b), #3), and**
- **please also include your mailing address**

As I am currently out of town much of the time (but back occasionally for a day) I either pop masks into the mail or drop the masks off for pick-up from the front desk at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery. If I send them by regular mail (i.e. not by Express Post) I am happy to cover the cost of postage.

Donations to the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, made in return for the masks, can be made:

- online, through the Gallery's website <https://kwag.ca/civCRM/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=7>
- online, through Canada Helps at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-kitchener-waterloo-art-gallery/>
- by e-transfer sent by email to [finance@kwag.on.ca](mailto:finance@kwag.on.ca)

If you have friends or family who would like to request face masks in return for a donation to KWAG, please feel free to share this message with them.

Stay well,

Judy Stephens-Wells

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