

A woman with long brown hair is shown from the chest up, holding a baby in a grey patterned ring sling. She is wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat with a colorful band in red, yellow, and blue. The baby is looking towards the camera. The background is a clothing store with racks of clothes. The text "How to make" is written in a white, cursive font with a black outline at the top, and "a Ring Sling" is written in the same font at the bottom.

How to make a Ring Sling

Tutorial Assembled by Alyssa Leonard

Sources linked as much as possible

Ring Sling Construction: Basic Steps

A brief summary of what all is covered within this tutorial

- 1) Pick a safe fabric** **pgs 3-10**
- 2) Buy the right length** **pg 11**
- 3) Wash and/or scour your fabric** **pg 12**
- 4) Dye (optional, not covered in this tutorial)**
- 5) Buy the right rings** **pg 13**
- 6) Cut to width** **pg 14** *(reference pg 11)*
- 7) Hem** **pg 14**
- 8) Pick & Sew the Shoulder** **pg 15**
- 9) Learn to use** **pg 16**

Step 1: Pick Your Fabric

An ideal fabric for a ring sling is thick and sturdy, breathable, made of 100% natural fibers, and has NO stretch along its length.

Some easy-to-find recommendations:

Osnaburg (shorthand "osna")		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
100% cotton, off-white, slightly thicker muslin with brown flecks. Slightly scratchy/pilly on the bolt.	Fabric stores (JoAnn Fabrics, Hobby Lobby, etc) Walmart Usually kept near/with the utility fabrics (muslin, burlap, etc.)	Between \$2.50-\$5 a yard regular price. Most fabric stores have coupons available online for 40% off.
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
100% cotton = easy care/washing Fairly breathable, second only to linen. Incredibly inexpensive and widely available. Easily dyed.	Must be "scoured" before use. Only comes in one natural color. Shrinks a lot - up to 20%. Some people don't like the texture, even after the wrap is broken in. Most fabric store employees have never heard of it and will not be able to help you find it.	Anecdotally, osnaburg from some online sources is much thicker/rougher than the osnaburg available in stores. According to SleepingBaby.net, "J Thompson" brand osnaburg is much thinner than most and less desirable.

Duck Cloth (shorthand "duck")		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
Feels sometimes almost like canvas (but not quite as stiff) or thick upholstery fabric. Comes in solid colors or one-sided prints.	Fabric stores (JoAnn Fabrics, Hobby Lobby, etc) Walmart Online fabric retailers Sometimes sorted with the "home decor" ("HD") fabrics. A popular brand to use is Waverly Duck which has "wv dk" on the label.	Varies - \$5-\$30 a yard regular price. Most fabric stores have coupons available online for 40% off.
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
100% cotton = easy care/washing Beautiful colors and patterns. Fairly inexpensive. Very strong and supportive with more "glide" than osna. Less grippy. Great for wraps, ring slings, mei tais, and structured carriers.	Single-sided prints have a plain white "wrong" side that show on ring slings or flipped wrap carries. Takes longer to break in and feels stiff at first. Thicker than linen or osna; not as hot-weather friendly.	Check the care instructions on the fabric. Avoid anything with the instructions "wipe with a damp cloth" (which implies a waterproof coating). "Duck Canvas" (as opposed to "cotton duck") is (anecdotally) much stiffer. Only buy if you can feel it in person.

Bottom Weight Linen		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
Thin but sturdy apparel fabric, usually with a fairly simple weave. Available in solid colors online Typically only available in neutral solids in brick & mortar stores.	Fabric stores (JoAnn Fabrics, Hobby Lobby, etc) Kept either in its own "linen" section or in the "bottom weight apparel" section near denim fabric. Online retailers: look for medium weight linen around 5-6oz/yd www.fabrics-store.com	Between \$10-\$20 a yard. Use a coupon in store. Check for sales online.
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
The "gold standard" for breathable, hot-weather-friendly fabric. Stronger than cotton, so you can go with thinner fabrics. Very toddler-worthy!	More expensive. Usually only available in solid colors. Tends to "permacrease" when braided/folded/bunched; must be stored more carefully.	Thin, dress-shirt weight fabric. If weight is listed, 5-7oz/yd or 185-220gsm is desirable.

More Recommended Fabrics

Bottom Weight Cotton (Also known as Twills, Denim, Drill, etc)		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
<p>100% cotton, sturdy, pants-like apparel fabric with a complex, typically diagonal weave. Most commonly available in neutral solids.</p>	<p>Fabric stores (JoAnn Fabrics, Hobby Lobby, etc) Look for a "bottom weight apparel" section, or look near the denim fabric. Online: look for "twill," "drill," and "denim." For weight, look for 5-7oz/yd or 185-220gsm.</p>	<p>Between \$5-10 a yard. Check for sales or coupons.</p>
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
<p>100% cotton = easy care/washing Typically easy to locate in a store. Fabric employees might actually be able to help you locate it.</p>	<p>Rarely available in fun colors or patterns. Thicker, less breathable</p>	<p>Stretch along width or length (minimal stretch along bias okay) Polyester or Rayon blends Thin, dress-shirt weight fabric Corduroy (too thick)</p>

Tablecloths (shorthand "TCs")		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
<p>100% cotton tablecloths. For wraps and slings, look for 90" oblong TCs or longer.</p> <p>Jacquard tablecloths (where the pattern is woven in on both sides) are ideal.</p> <p>Printed tablecloths (with a blank back side) are fine as long as they are thick enough.</p>	<p>Best quality are Mahogany brand jacquard tablecloths available on Amazon.com.</p> <p>Target (Threshold brand) ChristmasTreeShops (online) LinenTablecloth.com (online) TJMaxx, Ross, thrift stores</p>	<p>Anywhere from \$2 for a thrift store find to \$55 for a Mahogany.</p>
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
<p>Jacquard TCs feel most similar to a "purpose-woven" wrap. Soft and easily broken in. Most of the hemming is already done. 1 TC yields 2 short wraps or 2 ring slings.</p>	<p>Can be thicker/less breathable. To make a long wrap, requires seaming (which is controversial.)</p>	<p>Thin, shirt-weight tablecloths. Anything that says "wipe with a damp cloth" or "stain resistant" or "easy care." Polyester blends (less than 30% okay)</p>

Colimaçon et Cie (shorthand C&C)		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
<p>Unhemmed purpose-woven wrap material in solid colors.</p>	<p>Buy direct from C&C's website</p>	<p>Approx \$11/meter plus shipping Occasionally on sale</p>
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
<p>Exactly like a purpose woven wrap Soft, floppy, easily broken in.</p>	<p>More expensive Solid colors only</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Sometimes Used Fabrics

“Stretchy” Cotton (Jersey, Cotton Interlock, Knits)		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
100% cotton, stretchy fabric. Stretches in all directions.	Fabric stores (JoAnn, Fabric Hobby Lobby, etc.) Walmart Repurposed Fabrics	Varies, \$2-\$10/yard
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
100% cotton = easy on washing Often doesn't require reinforcing Soft; doesn't require breaking in	Only safe for front and hip carries with three reinforcing passes (like a Moby wrap or a Kitan style carrier) Not safe for back carries or ring slings or structured carriers. Typically only comfortable for babies under 15lbs.	Polyester blends. Thinner-than-t-shirt fabric. Holes or runs.

STRETCHY FABRIC IS FOR WRAPS ONLY, NO RING SLINGS

Athletic Mesh (Basketball jersey material)		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
100% polyester, solid-colored thin fabric with regular holes. May or may not have stretch.	Fabric stores (usually only available seasonally or in limited colors; usually bright school colors.) Online retailers like www.stylishfabrics.com	Varies, \$2-\$10/yard
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
Can be used in water. Breathes well. Doesn't need to be hemmed.	Slips through knots/rings when dry. Sags when dry. Not safe for back carries.	Large holes Stretch in all directions is okay for a stretchy-style wrap with 3 reinforcing passes. Stretch from selvedge to selvedge is okay for wraps and ring slings. Stretch from end to end is not safe for single pass wraps or ring slings.

Cotton Gauze		
What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
Loosely woven cotton fabric with thicker threads. Easy to see light through.	Fabric stores Online retailers	\$5-15/yard
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
Airy, light, breathable	Unclear safety standards “Diggy” and uncomfortable with bigger babies/toddlers	Safety standards for gauze vary widely. Some sources recommend only front and hip carries and no back carries. Some recommend only three-pass reinforced carries like fwcc. Some say a double-layer ring sling is okay. Use your best judgement with your baby's safety.

NOT Recommended Fabrics

Quilter's Cotton (also called "calico"*)

What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
The majority of what is available at most fabric stores. Thin fabric (like a bedsheet, dress shirt or handkerchief) often in fun patterns and prints.	Fabric stores Walmart Online retailers	Between \$4-\$10 a yard
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
Cheap, pretty, easy to find	Might spontaneously rip in half at a moment's notice.	Lightweight fabrics with tiny threads and high thread count. Descriptions such as "great for quilting"

* Fabric called "calico" sold in the UK is thicker than the "calico" in the US and may be suitable. Compare to a known safe fabric and use your best judgement.

Muslin

What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
Thin, white or natural colored fabric, usually with the utility fabrics (near the burlap)	Fabric stores Online retailers	\$1-\$3/yd
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
Super cheap Good for an unusable "practice run" for a SSC or other pattern.	Might spontaneously rip in half at a moment's notice.	Anything that says muslin on the bolt. A safe alternative is OSNABURG which will be labeled as such but kept in the same place in the store.

Flannel

What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
Buttery soft, pajama-like fabric Variety of patterns, plaids, and colors	Fabric stores Walmart Online retailers	\$3-\$10/yd
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
Super soft and cozy.	Fabric texture comes from distressing the fibers, creating weakness which could lead to spontaneous tears.	Anything that says flannel on the bolt.

Pashmina Scarves

What does it look like?	Where can I buy it?	What will it cost?
Thin, woven material in intricate patterns. Sold for use as a scarf or shawl.	Gift shops, clothing stores, online, everywhere.	varies widely
Pros	Cons	Things to look out for/avoid
Beautiful woven patterns just like expensive woven wraps	Quality and thickness varies greatly. Most are much too thin and prone to tearing unexpectedly.	Do not use a scarf unless you are an experienced wearer familiar with fabrics and weaves. Even then, use only as an emergency backup.

4 Rules of Fabric Selection

To use a fabric for baby wearing, it must pass all four rules:

- 1) Fiber Content 2) Weave 3) Weight 4) Care Instructions

1) Fiber Content

Fiber	Usable?	Details
Cotton	Yes	Breathable, easy to care for (wash it however you want.) May shrink quite a bit.
Linen	Yes	The most breathable fabric. Very strong. Easy to care for. May “permacrease” and need regular ironing. May get “crunchy” or stiff with over-drying. <i>Note: Check fiber content on the bolt tag. A lot of fabrics sold as “linen” or “linen-like” fabrics are actually cotton, rayon, or other blends.</i>
Hemp	Yes	Very strong and toddler worthy. Harder to “break in” and soften. Usually hard to find in a light enough weight to use.
Wool	Yes	Softness and breathability depends on weave. Can potentially be very soft and surprisingly great for heat/summer wearing. Much higher maintenance; cannot be machine washed. Must be gently hand washed and air dried.
Silk	Usually yes, if true silk	“Real” silk (from the silkworm) such as shantung or dupioni is safe. Most “silk” brocades are actually polyester/rayon blends. Lightweight silks such as charmeuse are too light and slippery. “Silkessence” sold at JoAnn is not silk; it is polyester and should be treated as such.
Rayon Bamboo Viscose	Sometimes	Rayon is a semi-synthetic fiber. It can be sourced from many different plants, including bamboo. Rayon CAN be very strong and incredibly breathable, but it can also be thin and slippery. It all depends on what it is made from originally and the weave. For beginners, rayon should usually be avoided. If you are knowledgeable about fibers and fabrics and can shop by feel, rayon can be used without problem. Because rayon is also weaker when wet, a blend of less than 40% rayon mixed with cotton or linen is preferable. <i>Note: All Bamboo is Rayon, but not all Rayon is Bamboo. This is a common misconception about rayon.</i>
Spandex or Lycra	Usually No	Generally avoided. Only for use in a water wrap with 3 reinforcing passes (fwcc or pwcc.) Stretch due to weave is preferred over spandex content.
Polyester or Nylon	Usually No	Hot, sweaty, not breathable. Slippery: may not hold knots well and may slide through sling rings. “Safe” for use in buckle carriers but not ideal because of how hot it is. A blend of less than 40% polyester is considered “okay” but not ideal. <i>Exception: water carriers made from 100% polyester or nylon athletic materials are okay. Keep in mind that it is still more slippery and that mesh ring slings and wraps should only be used in the water where the moisture will add grip.</i>
“Other fibers” “mixed fibers”	No, Never	No mysteries allowed in your carriers! Would you buy food with ingredients that included “5% other ingredients”?

2) Weave

Fabric for any panelled carrier (SSC, Mei Tai, Onbu) should have zero stretch besides a little give along the bias (diagonal.) A ring sling or wrap can have a little bit of stretch along the bias or from rail to rail, but should have NO STRETCH from tail to tail. A three-pass stretchy wrap like a Moby can have stretch in all directions, but stretch should be due to the weave, not added spandex (except in the case of a water wrap, which may be made of 100% spandex/lycra.) Less stretch is better than more. Anything with “knit” in the name or description is going to stretch. Anything with “woven” in the name or description typically does not have any stretch.

Weave should be comprised of visible, thicker threads in a tight weave.

You should not be able to see between the threads.

You should be able to discern the individual threads. Complex weaves (such as twill/denim/duck) are stronger than plain weaves (which simply have threads crossing over one another like a tic-tac-toe board.) Fabric like quilter’s cotton and bedsheets have too small threads in too high a threadcount, making them prone to tearing. Fabric like flannel has distressed threads that make the weave hard to see. Fleece has no visible threads. None of these are safe to use.

3) Weight

Fabrics for weight bearing should be “bottomweight” - that is, heavy enough to make “bottoms” (pants) out of. Compare the fabric in feel to a pair of men’s dress pants, a pair of jeans, or a sturdy tote bag. When in doubt, pass and go for a fabric of known weight.

If weight is listed, look for between 5-7oz per square yard or 185-220gsm (grams per square meter.) Some brands (such as Waverly and some denims) list this information on the bolt tag.

If “suggested uses” are listed, look for suggestions such as “great for pants, upholstery, and bags.” Avoid fabrics recommended as “great for blouses, lingerie, crafts and quilting.”

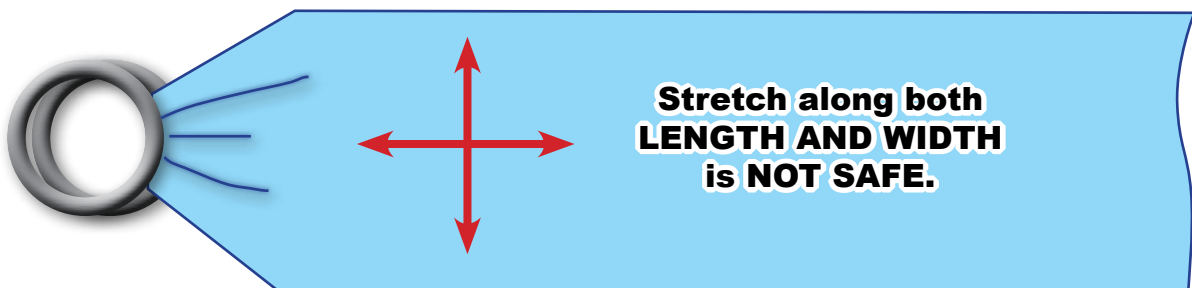
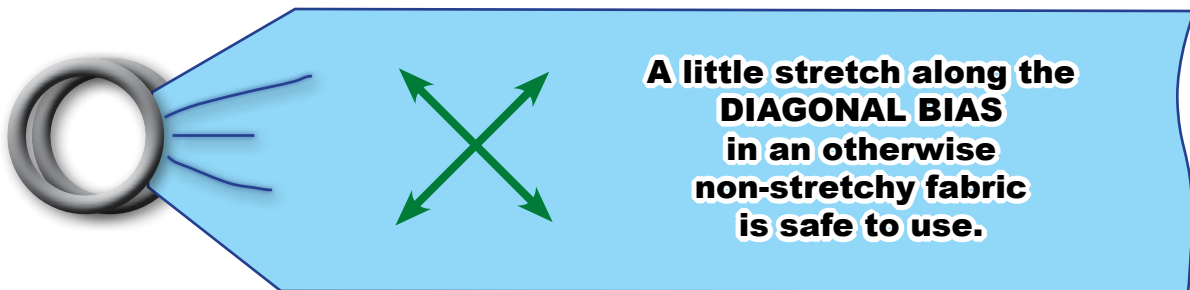
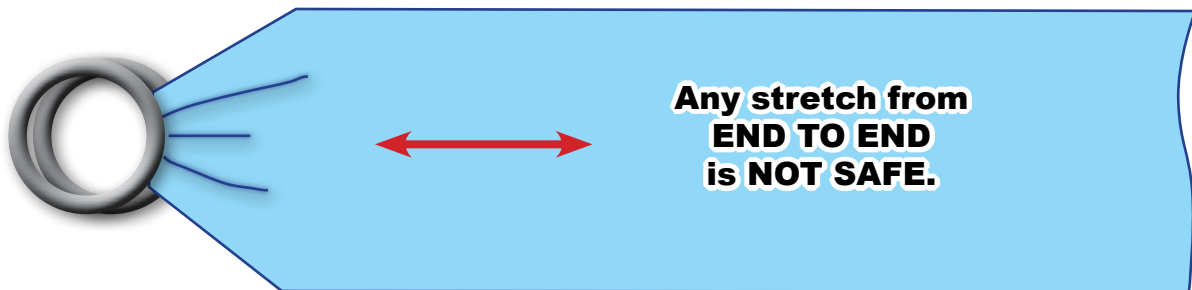
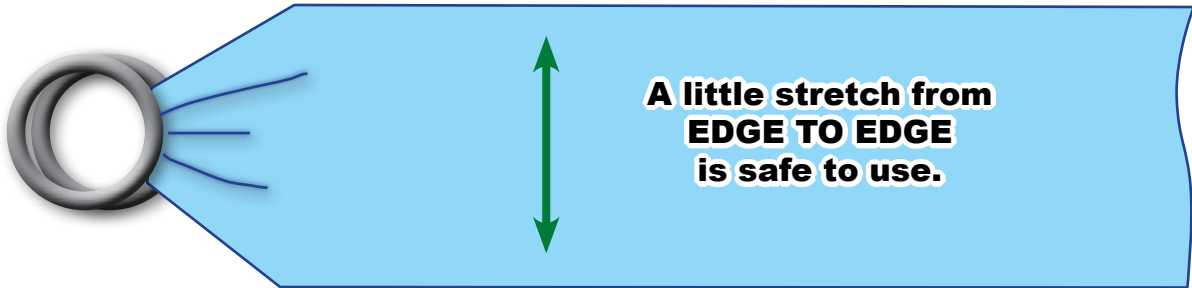
4) Care Instructions

Avoid fabric/tablecloths whose care instructions indicate “wipe with a damp cloth,” as this implies that it has been chemically treated to be water resistant.

“Dry clean only” is usually fine (machine wash; dry cleaning chemicals are not baby safe) but keep in mind that the fabric may pucker, shrink, or fade.

“Fabric my crock” means that the dye may rub off the fabric (as opposed to dye bleeding, which only occurs when the dye is dissolved in water, crocking can happen just by touching/rubbing the dry fabric.) Some people avoid fabrics like this to keep their child from ingesting any excess dye; others simply prefer to run the fabric through several hot washes to remove any excess dye before using (and recognize that this may produce some fading.)

Can my ring sling be stretchy?



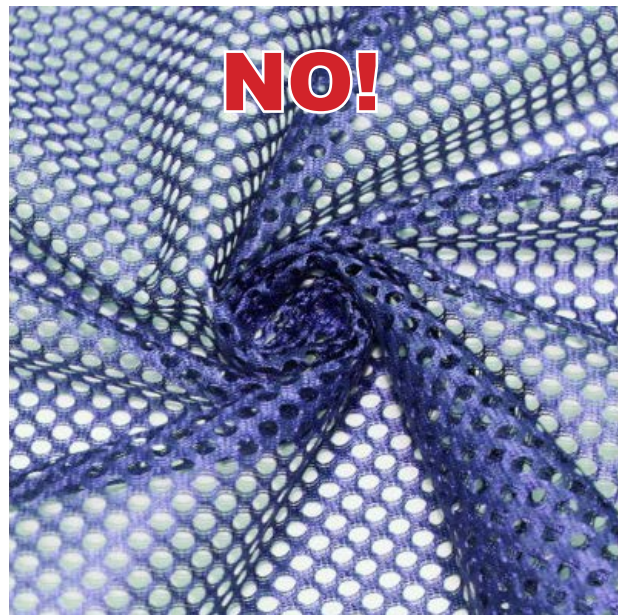
Picking Mesh for a Water Ring Sling

A water ring sling's fabric **SHOULD...**

- be an athletic mesh, or football mesh material
- have a regular pattern of clearly defined, small holes
- have some stretch from selvedge to selvedge
- be 100% polyester or nylon

A water ring sling's fabric **SHOULD NOT...**

- contain any rayon, spandex, cotton, or unlabeled "other" materials
- have any significant stretch from end to end (longways)
- have large holes that make it look like fishnet
- be labeled "utility mesh"



images sourced from www.stylishfabric.com

What kind of rings should I use for a ring sling?

Small rings. Aluminum and nylon are both acceptable.

Can I wear it out of the water for a good hot-weather wrap/sling?

Not recommended. Polyester is notoriously slippery when dry and can slip through the rings. Some moms get around this by tying a knot in the tail right below the rings to "lock" it in place, but for a dry-use, hot-weather wrap, you are much better off using linen or osnaburg.

How long of a wrap should I make?

As long as your mesh doesn't stretch in all four directions, you are fine to make however a long a wrap as you want. You can make a short (size 1 or 2) wrap for a simple rebozo carry, or do a base size wrap to do a three-pass FWCC or PWCC.

Why can't I just use my cotton/linen/etc wrap in the water?

Natural fibers absorb water and swell, causing a normally comfortable wrap to become exponentially heavier, saggier, and dig into your shoulders along the rails. Also, rayon/tencel/bamboo actually becomes weaker when wet and so there is a risk of tearing.

How much fabric should I buy?

For a ring sling, length is simply a matter of how long you want your tail to be. You need a minimum of 12" of tails beyond the rings for safety. Some people prefer a tiny 12" tail, while others like a very long tail that can wrap around the rings or double as a nursing cover or burp cloth.

When in doubt, buy a little extra, and save hemming the end of your tail until last. That way you can try it on with baby, pick how long you want it to be, and then cut and hem it.

Ring Slings	Approx T-shirt Size = Tail to Hips	Meters	Inches	Yards
Width		0.7m - 0.8m	26" - 32"	0.7y - 0.9y
Additional length needed for shoulder		0.1m - 0.3m	4" - 13"	0.1y - 0.4y
XS	Small	1.7m	65"	1.8y
Small	Medium	1.8m	70"	1.9y
Medium	Large	1.9m	75"	2.1y
Large	XLarge	2.0m	80"	2.2y
XL	2XL	2.2m	85"	2.4y

To determine how much fabric to buy, you need to know how **LONG** you want your sling (we'll call this "L"), how much fabric you need for your **SHOULDER** ("S", usually about 5-6 inches for a pleated, or as much as 12-16 inches for a floating gathered shoulder.) The extra "+1" is an extra inch for hem allowance at the end of your sling. After you add all these together, you multiply it by "1.2" to add 20% for shrinkage. Omit the x1.2 if you are making a polyester water sling.

$$\text{Total Fabric Needed} = (L + S + 1) \times 1.2$$

Wash Your Fabric (Special Instructions: Scouring Osnaburg)

Regardless of your fabric choice, you'll want to wash it as soon as you get home. The general rule is "wash it however you will wash your wrap." Despite the fact that I regularly cold wash/low heat dry my wraps, I still choose to always do my initial wash on hot with a hot dry just to get any shrinkage out of the way up front, especially in case any helpful family members ever decided to help and hot washed/dried my wrap. There are lots of opinions on "wrap-safe" detergents. The most important (in my opinion) is to avoid fabric softeners or any detergents with built in softeners because they will coat the fabric and make it slippery. Also, stick to a liquid detergent, since powdered detergents can build up in the fibers and weaken the fabric.

For most fabrics, one wash and dry is sufficient. If you bought osnaburg, however, you'll want to scour it. Not only does scouring make the fabric take dye more effectively (because, let's be honest, osnaburg is boring) but osnaburg is also NASTY off the bolt, so scouring helps deep clean it. Once you see/smell the water after scouring, you'll understand why you did it.



Instructions for scouring vary, but the common steps are:

- Steaming/boiling hot water
- Blue Dawn Dish Soap, Synthrapol, or Fairy (depending on your area)
- Soda Ash

Chemical name Sodium Carbonate
Found on the laundry aisle as Arm & Hammer Washing Soda
Found in pool supplies as PH+ or PH up
Can be made by [baking Baking Soda \(sodium bicarbonate\) in the oven](#)

- Hour long soak

Some people prefer to literally simmer the fabric on the stove in a non-reactive (not aluminum) pot (if you do, it is recommended to not use the same pot for food.) An easier option is to pour boiling water into a cooler and shut it to keep the heat in. I scoured mine in the sink starting with boiling hot water and just kept the sink covered to keep it hot enough. After an hour, my water was still steaming hot. The important thing is just to keep in hot - whether you do that through direct heat or just insulation is up to you.

As far as amounts of soda ash and soap, for a size 6 wrap I've seen everything from "a few teaspoons of each" to "several tablespoons of each." Don't agonize too much over it. I always aim for "a generous scoop/squirt of each."

After an hour long soak (making sure to turn the fabric so it all is soaked), properly appreciate how brown and stinky the water is, and then dump the fabric into the washer for a good wash or two with wrap-safe detergent. Dry, then cut to size. Osnaburg is delightfully easy to get down to proper width - simply snip it at one end and rip it straight down.

Protip: if you plan on dyeing your ring sling, look up the group [Dyed Baby Carriers](#) on Facebook for great info and support. Use only fiber reactive dyes that permanently bond to the fabric. Avoid dyes such as premixed liquid dyes and RIT. It is easier to dye your fabric before sewing the rings on, especially since the soda ash used in the dyeing process can damage the finish on sling rings.

What rings should I buy?

The best rings available in the United States are from Canadian source for official SlingRings.com rings:
UK source for rings:

www.SlingRings.com
www.BabyweaRings.ca
www.littlezenone.com

Both SlingRings' aluminum and nylon rings are rated to a minimum 250lbs. Aluminum rings are typically preferred because they are thinner and widely considered prettier, but it is simply up to personal preference. A lot of people prefer nylon for water ring slings, but either will work for both wet and dry applications.

You CAN buy rings from a hardware store (NOT a craft store - craft rings are not weigh tested) but you'll want to go with very thick rings and check for a very smooth weld that won't snag your fabric. If you use welded rings, check the fabric regularly for wear.



Aluminum	Small	Med	Large
Inner Diameter	2"	2.5"	3"
Outer Diameter	2.5"	3"	3.5"

Nylon	Small	Med	Large
Inner Diameter	2.25"	2.75"	3"
Outer Diameter	3"	3.325"	3.625"

Pictures and information sourced from SlingRings.com

Large Rings:

Ideal for most Ring Slings. Allows for easy adjustment.
Great for osnaburg, wrap conversions, tablecloth conversions, and duck cloth.
Good for beginners.

Medium Rings:

More grip; more difficult to adjust.
Better for ring slings from thinner fabrics (such as 5oz linen) or for advanced wearers.
Good for ring finishes on woven wraps.
Preferred by some advanced wearers for water wraps (can slip too much.)

Small Rings:

Good for water ring slings from athletic mesh.
Perfect for onbuhimos, ruck-bus/reverse onbus, ring-waist mei tais
Good for ring-waist pouches
Usable as toy loops on carriers

Hem your edges



Image sourced from Sleeping Baby Productions' YouTube Channel. Video linked below.

After washing and drying your fabric for shrinkage (and scouring it if it was osnaburg) and cutting it down to the right width (26"-32" wide is standard) hem both of the long edges and, if you are confident on the length, one of the short edges. (If you aren't sure how long you want it, leave the end of the tail unhemmed until you are done and can try it on, cut it to length, and hem it then.)

Hem with whatever method you are comfortable with. A double folded hem of between 1/4"-1/2" is typical. You can iron and pin your hems before sewing, or just pinch press them like Jan does [in this video](#). Serging not preferred, but is okay (although the rails will not be as strong and more prone to damage.) Hemming by hand is tedious but safe.

If you really want perfect mitered corners at the bottom of your tail, [this video](#) shows how to do it.

You can also add a taper to your tail if you prefer, or a decorative panel if you are using a fabric you don't like the back side of.

Protip: Jan recommends folding the hem over onto the *right* side of the fabric instead of rolling it inside to the wrong side, so that the raised fold is hidden on the wrong side of the tail (which shows when wearing) and isn't pressed into baby's legs. This is optional.

It doesn't matter too much what thread you use for the hems. For the reinforcing stitches, though, you will want to use a 100% polyester all purpose thread (or heavy duty thread IF your machine can handle it - most can't without fiddling with the tension) so I generally use that for my hems too so I don't have to re-thread between hems and shoulder. Just keep in mind that polyester thread will not take dye if you choose to dye your sling later.

Pick your shoulder style



Pleated



Eesti/Hybrid



**Gathered/
Floating Gathered**

Images sourced from Sleeping Baby Productions' website.

Shoulder styles are a **COMPLETELY** personal decision. There are no hard and fast rules to be able to determine what style you are going to like. Sometimes you just have to try one and see if you like it. If you have a friend with a ring sling you can try, that can help, or see if you can find a Babywearing group to meetup with where you can try different types.

IN GENERAL, pleated are going to have the least amount of spread on your shoulder (and therefore often preferred by petite women) and be the easiest to keep the fabric straight. It creates a very neat and pretty shoulder that doesn't get bunched up on itself, but makes it more difficult to "cup" your shoulder with the fabric, and therefore can tend to dig into the wearer's neck.

The "eesti" style shoulder has a few pleats on each side and gathered in the middle. It is a hybrid style.

A gathered shoulder simply runs the fabric through the rings and sews straight across, allowing the fabric to gather naturally instead of in neat pleats.

A floating gathered shoulder is the same as a gathered, but the fabric is pulled through even more so instead of having the stitches right by the rings like the previous shoulder styles, the stitches are around 12" away from the rings (allowing 12" of space that the rings can "float" around in.) This allows the stitches (which can keep the fabric from gathering neatly) to lay across the back of your shoulder where the fabric is stretched out flat. This allows for the shoulder to cup the shoulder for best weight distribution. The double layer of fabric over the shoulder adds extra "cush." Some people find this much spread overwhelming and easy to get tangled in the rings, or the fabric can fold up inside itself. On a petite woman, it also means that the fabric spreading and "cupping" the shoulder can spread from her neck all the way to her elbow.

Jan at SleepingBaby.net has a [great guide](#) that explains even more about shoulder styles, from which most of this information (and the images) were sourced.

Once you've picked your shoulder through careful research or a dice roll, check out [Jan's tutorials on YouTube](#) for how to sew them. Jan also has videos if you want to sew a double-layer reversible ring sling, water ring sling, and more.

Learn to use it!

Current BWI safety recommendations include wearing babies upright tummy to tummy (not in a cradle carry position) to help ensure a clear airway and legs outside of the sling in an M position from birth to make sure the baby's weight is on their bum instead of their feet.

The **T.I.C.K.S.** Rule for Safe Babywearing

Keep your baby close and keep your baby safe.

When you're wearing a sling or carrier, don't forget the **T.I.C.K.S.**



- ✓ TIGHT
- ✓ IN VIEW AT ALL TIMES
- ✓ CLOSE ENOUGH TO KISS
- ✓ KEEP CHIN OFF THE CHEST
- ✓ SUPPORTED BACK

There are several videos on YouTube that can help you get started. If you need further help, look for a babywearing group locally or on Facebook.

Some good videos:

“Quick ring sling threading finger walk tutorial” - Jennah Watters

Threading your ring sling and “finger walking” to keep the fabric straight in the rings.

“Troubleshooting ring sling threading and adjusting” - Jan Heirtzler

More troubleshooting if the basics of threading and tightening are confusing.

“How to use a Ring Sling with a Newborn” - WrappingRachel

WrappingRachel is a GREAT channel for learning.

“Babywearing (basics) : Ringsling (classic)” - WrapYouInLove

WrapYouInLove's wordless videos set to soothing music are great if you are watching while trying to get a baby to sleep at 3 in the morning. This video is also great for seeing how a ring sling looks with an older child.

Bonus: How to Wash Your Ring Sling

Unless you went with a tricky material like silk or wool, you can machine wash your ring sling. Cold wash to prevent extra shrinkage and tumble dry on low. Wrap a clean sock around the rings to keep them from banging around and put it in a laundry bag if you are worried about it.

Avoid fabric softener (or detergents with fabric softener added) because it coats the fabric and can make it slip through the rings. Avoid powdered detergent that can get caught in the fibers and weaken them.