

Reusable Shopping Bag Tutorial

Tutorial by "littlebitofheaven" <http://www.quiltingboard.com/main-f1/tote-bag-bottom-t220958.html>

Here is an easy and quick "shopping bag" pattern.

When I found "shopping bag" fabric at JoAnn's, I was ecstatic because I could finally make cute bags for snow gear. The fabric is very inexpensive and the bag is quick and easy to make. I used the store bags as a guide to make these since I was informed that they are exactly the right size.

Materials

2/3 yard utility fabric for bag
1/3 yard utility fabric for handles and trim in contrasting color
coordinating thread

Instructions

Cut all fabric. I cut all of the strips 60 inches long (the width of the fabric) and then cut off the excess as I went along. I didn't want any pieces to be sewn together to make the length because I think it is stronger that way.

You will need the following:

Bag Front and Back – cut 2 pieces 13.5 inches wide x 14 inches tall

Front Pocket – 9 inches x 12 inches

Bag Sides and Bottom – 8.5 inches x 45 inches

Straps – cut 2 straps 4 inches x 48 inches

Bias Tape (trim) – 2 pieces 1 inch x 40 inches (I called it bias tape, but it really isn't since it isn't cut on the bias.) You can also use purchased bias tape instead of making your own trim.

To make straps, fold fabric in half lengthwise with right sides together. Sew edge with a 1/4 inch seam to make a long tube. Turn tube inside out and iron flat with the seam on one side. (I highly recommend the Turn-It-All tube turning tool. I have used it for years and it is the BEST. My kit was purchased at JoAnn's.)

Please note that this fabric is kind of plastic-y and will melt easily. Iron on the lowest setting or use a press cloth or do both.

Topstitch both long edges using an 1/8 inch seam allowance. Do not worry about the short edges since they will be sewn down later.

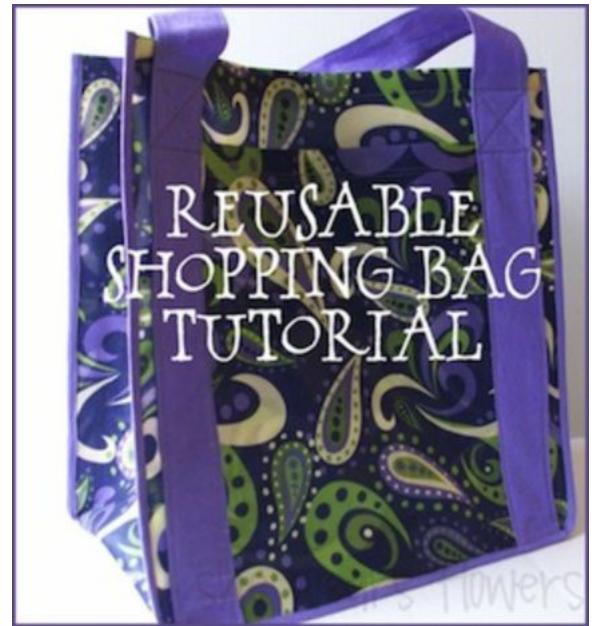
Fold the top edge of the pocket and the front and back bag pieces down (towards the wrong side of the fabric) about 3/4 of an inch.

Sew in place using a 5/8 inch seam allowance. I used a double stitch (5/8 and 3/4) for the pocket. This fabric doesn't fray so I didn't worry about folding the edge under or serging it. You could trim it with pinking shears if you are concerned about the way it looks.

Center the pocket piece on the front bag piece. Using a zig zag stitch, sew in place close to the edges on each side of the pocket.

Sew strap in place along the sides of the front piece. The bottom (raw) edge of the strap should line up with the bottom edge of the bag.

Be sure to cover the edge of the pocket completely and leave at least 1/4 inch for seam allowance along the outside edge of the front bag piece. Sew from the bottom of the bag to the top ending even with the stitching line on the front bag piece top edge.



Using a ruler, draw a box with an X through it. Use this as a guide to sew reinforcement stitching along the top of the handle to prevent it from pulling away from the bag. The top edge of your box should be in line with the stitching line from the front bag piece.

(Incidentally, I used pencil and it doesn't wipe right off—you may want to use disappearing ink or a light chalk line.)

Loop the strap around to the other side of the front piece and repeat the last step to sew the other side of the handle on.

Sew the strap onto the back bag piece the same as the front except there isn't a pocket. Be sure the strap is the same distance from the edges as the strap is on the front piece so that the handles line up when it is finished.

On the side piece, fold the top down and sew in place like you did on the front and back bag pieces. Only do this on one end. The other one can be done when you get close to the end of sewing it in place so that it is exactly the right length.

Using a 1/8 inch seam (or close to the edge), sew the side piece to the front piece with wrong sides together. Start at the top of the bag and go down towards the bottom. When you get about 2 inches from the bottom corner, remove from machine to make the corner.

Pull the fabric around the corner as you hold the part you just sewed firmly in place.

There will be excess fabric poofing up that doesn't turn the corner. Grab this part and press it together.

Flatten the "poof" so it is out of the way of the corner. The fabric at the corner will be pretty flat and will still make a corner.

Carefully sew around the corner being sure to make a sharp corner by using straight lines. When you reach the corner (about 1/8 inch away from the edge), stop with the needle in the fabric. Lift the presser foot and turn the fabric 90 degrees to the right. Put the presser foot down and continue sewing a straight line 1/8 inch from the edge.

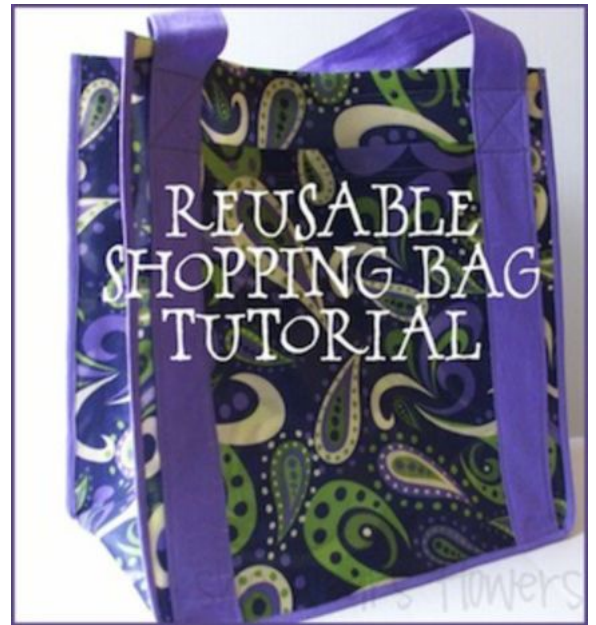
By making this little fold for the corner, your bag will be able to stand on its own.

Continue sewing the side piece along the bottom edge of the front piece. Make another corner as you sew from the bottom of the front up the other side towards the top. As you get close to the top edge (about 3 inches away), stop and trim the side piece to the correct length with enough fabric to fold it over and sew down the top edge with a 5/8 inch stitch line. Then, finish sewing the side to the front piece and your pieces should line up perfectly.

Repeat this whole process (minus trimming at the end because it is already done) with the bag back piece and the side piece. This one is a little more difficult because there is more bag in your way as you try to navigate the corners. Go slowly and carefully. The edges do not have to be exactly perfect because you are going to cover them with the bias tape or trim.

Trim corners.

You can purchase bias tape (single fold) if you would like, but I wanted mine to match exactly the same. Also, the bag is surface washable and pretty easy to wipe clean and purchased bias tape wouldn't clean quite as easily. It's entirely up to you, but here is how to make the trim (which is not actually bias tape) if you choose. (I used the term bias tape but it is NOT correct since this is not cut on the bias. Because the fabric is not very stretchy, nor does it need to stretch, I didn't think it would matter much and I was right. Sorry to use it interchangeably—it really isn't.)



Using a nearly cool iron, iron the edges (about 1/4 inch—I wasn't exact) of the trim towards the inside.

Fold it in half again and iron it flat. It will pop right open again, but the crease will hold for the next step.

Fold about 1/4 inch of the top edge down and then place the edges of the bag inside the trim and hold in place as you sew it down. You will sew through everything at one time.

Go slowly around the corners and pull the trim in place as you go. This fabric will "bend" or stretch around the corners just fine.

The trim takes about as long as the rest of the bag put together takes, but I love the way it looks when it is done!

You could add a clasp of some sort, but experience tells me that children are more likely to get their things in the right spot if they have less steps to take to get it there! And, the bag is deep enough to keep everything tucked inside.

So get to work—you've got some gorgeous shopping bags/snow gear bags just waiting to be made and filled!

