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Shopping Bag Sewing Instructions



Create this zero-waste foldable shopping bag!

This bag is modelled after those annoying plastic shopping bags, but with an inside pocket you can fold it into, making it easy to throw in your pocket or handbag. It measures approximately 18 inches (45 cm) wide and 16.5 inches (42 cm) deep, with 11 inch (28 cm) handles. The bag can be made from scraps, but if you're going with an uncut width of fabric, the layout of the five pieces should not result in any waste.

You will need:

- A 0.5 m (19 inches) of 117 cm wide fabric ... quilting cotton weight or lighter. Rip stop nylon or other strong but light wind breaker type fabric will also work. Remember you want to roll or fold it into that little pocket. You could choose a heavier fabric (like denim) and just skip the pocket. Fabric comes in a variety of widths. If your fabric is wider, that's great, you'll have some leftovers. If your fabric is slightly less than 117 cm wide, then you can adjust the pattern pieces to fit. More on that in the next steps.
- All-purpose sewing thread.
- Pins or clips.
- Iron and ironing board or pressing surface.
- Sewing machine with a needle suitable for the fabric you've chosen.
- Time and patience 😊



The bag in these instructions is made from quilting cotton. I have an out of service parachute that I've been making many bags out of lately. See those on my Instagram feed (January 2023 - @fourpatchtextiles).

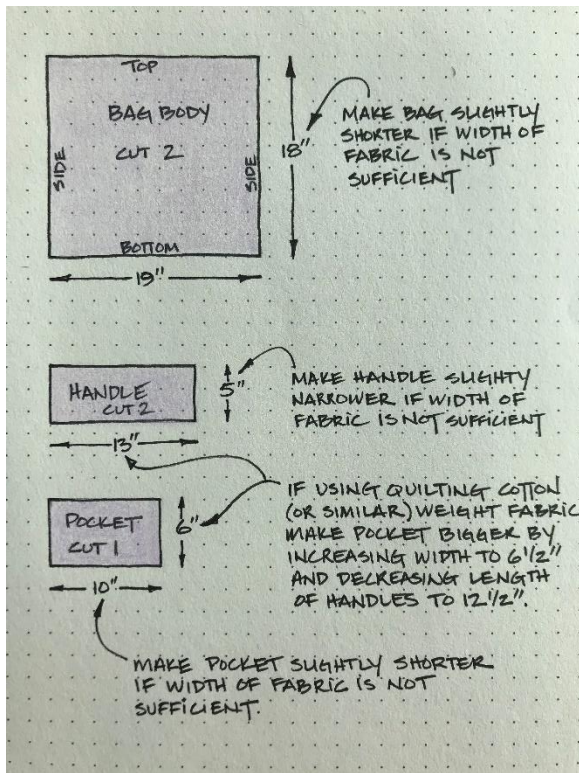


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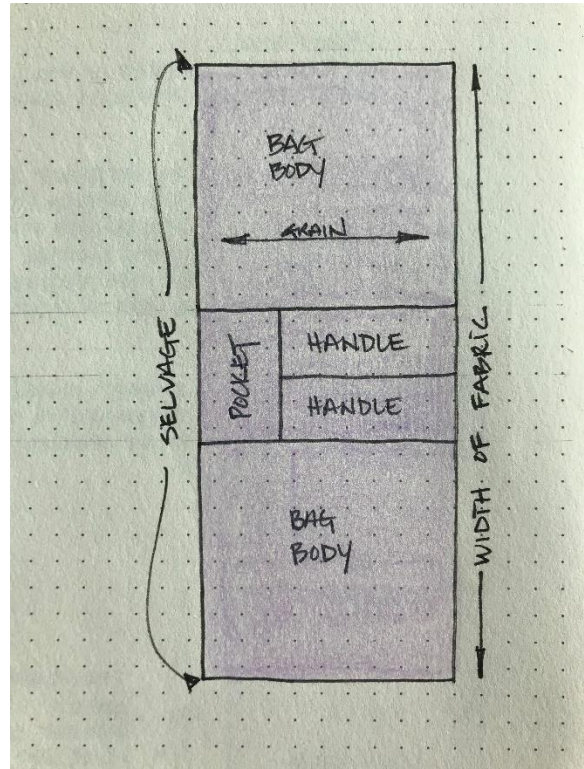
Step 1: Layout and Cut Your Fabric

The bag is made of five rectangles. Two bag body rectangles, two handles and one for the pocket.

The optimum or ideal dimensions for each of the five rectangles is shown here. Don't cut your fabric yet. Let's talk about grain and some adjustments you might want to make.



The general layout for the five rectangles is shown in the next photo. The seams and the hems of the pieces are narrow and along the straight edges. Aligning the rectangles with the grain of the fabric will help keep those seams and hems straight, particularly if you are using a very lightweight fabric, like parachute nylon. This is important, but not critical. If you're using leftover pieces and can sew a good seam or hem off grain, then go for it and use up those scraps!



Fabric varies in width, and after prewash, this quilting cotton was about an inch too narrow.



I adjusted the rectangles as follows:



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- I made each Bag Body 1/4 inch shorter.
- I made each Handle 1/4 inch narrower.
- I made the Pocket 1/4 inch shorter.

Quilting cotton is a bit heavier than the nylon I had been using and needs a larger pocket to fold into. To make the Pocket rectangle larger I adjusted the rectangles as follows:

- I made the Pocket 1/2 inch wider.
- I made both Handle 1/2 inch shorter.

This is an example of how to adjust your rectangles to fit your fabric width and weight. You might need to adjust by different amounts, depending on the width of your fabric.

If you're using leftover pieces instead of uncut full width yardage, then you can fit it to the pieces of fabric you have!



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Step 2: Make the Pocket

Create a 1/4 inch rolled hem along one short side of the Pocket rectangle by folding over twice and stitching along the inside edge.



Fold the Pocket rectangle approximately in half with right sides facing out and the hemmed edge 1/4 inch from the raw edge of the short side.





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Stitch along the sides, 1/8 inch from the edge.
We're going to make French seams.



Turn the Pocket, right side out, and press.



Turn the Pocket, wrong side out, press and
stitch along the sides, 1/4 inch from the edge.



Step 3: Hem the Sides of the Handles

Create a 1/4 inch rolled hems along the long
sides of the Handle rectangles by folding over
twice and stitching along the inside edge. Press.





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Step 4: Attach the Handles and the Pocket

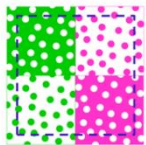
Fold over the top (longest side) of the Bag Body rectangle 1/4 inch and press. Fold this over another 1/4 inch and press again. Mark the centre and 4 1/2 inches either side of centre.

Place the Handles wrong sides together on the Bag Body rectangle, matching the inside hem of the Handle to the 4 1/2 inch mark, and slide the raw edge under the folded hem. Pin or clip in place.



Mark the centre of the Pocket along the raw edge. Place the Pocket opening side down on the Bag Body matching the centre marks and slide the raw edge under the folded hem. Pin or clip in place. Stitch along the inside edge of the hem along the top of the Bag Body, through all layers.





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Note: The pocket is intended to sit flat and closed on the inside of the bag when the bag is unfolded. That's why it is placed opening side down.

Fold the Handles up and press. Leave the Pocket in place but check to make sure you didn't catch the Pocket opening in the stitching.





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Attached the Handles to the other Bag Body rectangle in the same way. You will end up with this.



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Step 5: Sew the Sides

The sides will be stitched with French seams. Fold the bag wrong sides together and stitch the sides at just slightly less than 1/4 inch seam allowance. Turn wrong side out, press the seams, and stitch them again with 3/8 inch seam allowance. Be sure to back stitch at the start and finish of each seam.





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Step 6: Sew the Bottom

With the bag laying flat and wrong side out, fold the side seam towards the centre lining up the hemmed edges of the Handles (approximately 3 inches) and pin.



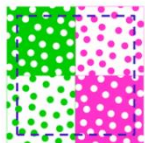
The bottom of the bag will be closed with a reverse French seam.

Stitch along the bottom, through all layers, at just slightly less than 1/4 inch seam allowance. Turn the bag right side out and press the bottom seam flat.



You'll see that the sides have an accordion fold that is secured into the bottom seam.





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Top stitch along the bottom 3/8 inch from the edge and through all layers. Be sure to back stitch at the start and finish of this line of top stitching.



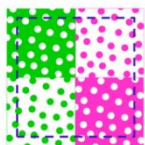
Step 7: Stitch the Top of the Handles

With the side seams folded in, the Handles will now naturally fold in half lengthwise, wrong sides together and with the side hems matching.



Mark the top and centre of each Handle.





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At this mark, stitch across the Handle, back stitching at the start and finish. This will keep the Handle folded at the top but allow the bag to fully open. Do this for both Handles.



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Step 8: Fold the Bag

Here are the simple steps to fold the bag into the little pcket ... I know, it's not the same bag, but you'll get the idea.

Lay the bag flat with the pocket side up.



Flip the pocket out so the opening is facing up.





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Fold the handles down and towards the centre.



Fold or roll the bag from the bottom towards the pocket.



Fold the sides in.



Fold once more to put the bag into the pocket.



Congratulations! You are finished! Enjoy!

If you find any errors in these instructions or have suggestions for improvement, send me (Robyn) an email me at fourpatch@outlook.com or DM on Instagram @fourpatchtextiles