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Must-Have Tote Bag

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This tutorial was created by Vanessa W. (Crafty Gemini)

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What you'll need:

1 yard of cotton home décor,
outdoor canvas, or duck cloth
fabric.

90/14 or 100/16 sewing ma-
chine needle for thick fabrics.

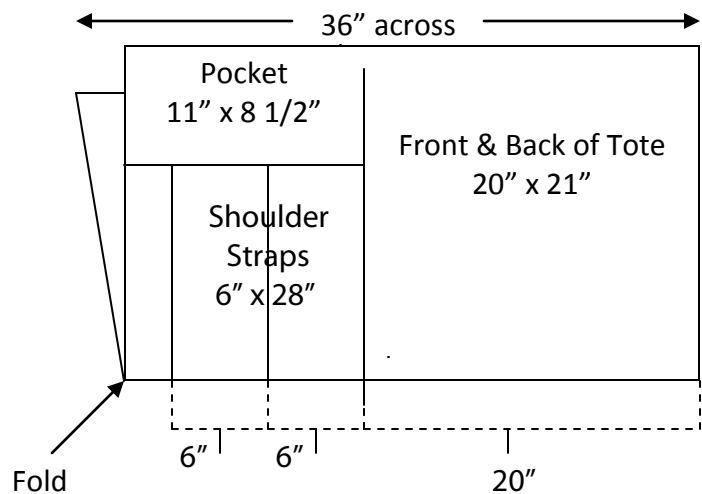
coordinating thread

iron

sewing machine

basic sewing supplies (scissors,
pins, etc.)

Cutting Diagram



Cut the following pieces according to the diagram above:

2 pieces measuring: 20" x 21"

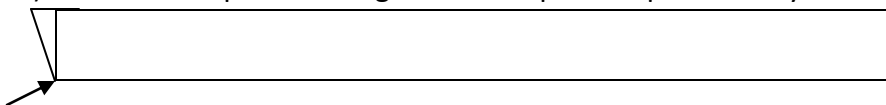
2 pieces measuring: 6" x 28"

2 pieces measuring: 11" x 8 1/2"

Instructions:

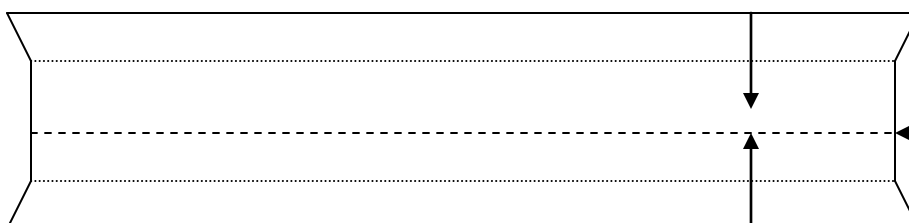
1. Prepare your shoulder straps/handles: You should have cut 2 strips that measure 6" x 28".

A) Fold each strip in half lengthwise and press in place with your iron.



Fold & Press

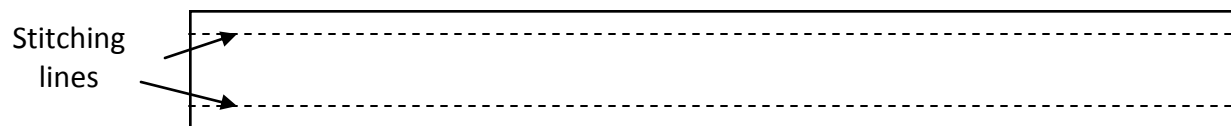
B) Now open it up and fold the edges of the strip toward the center fold line. Press in place.



Fold edge up to center fold line

Center fold line
from Step 1A

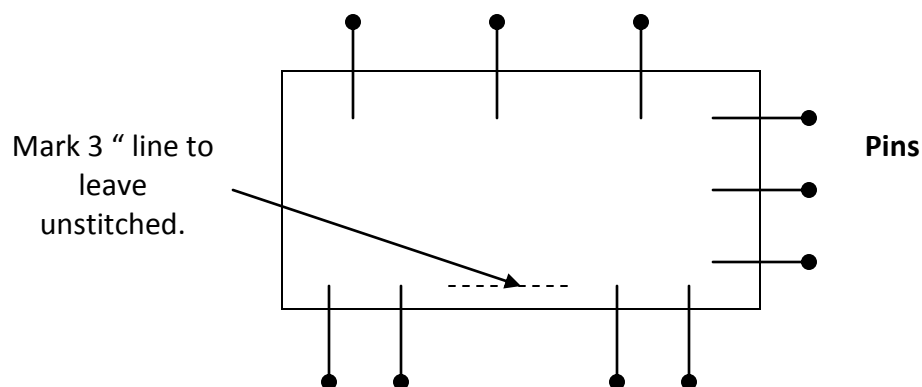
C) Now, fold the entire strip lengthwise again, just like you did in Step 1A. You will end up with one strip that measures approximately 1 1/2" x 28". Press in place and pin to hold it together. Stitch about 1/8" from both edges the entire length of the strip. See diagram below. Repeat for other shoulder strap/handle.



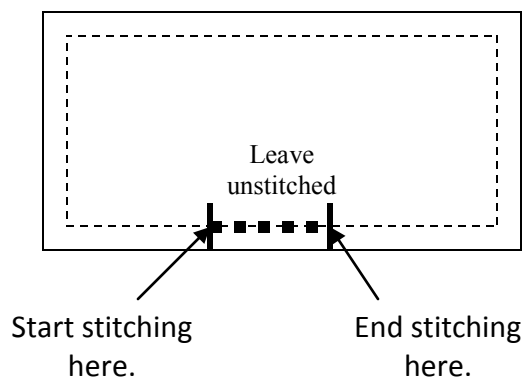
2. Prepare your pocket: You should have 2 pocket pieces that measure 11" x 8 1/2".

A) Place both pieces together with *pretty sides* touching. Pin in place.

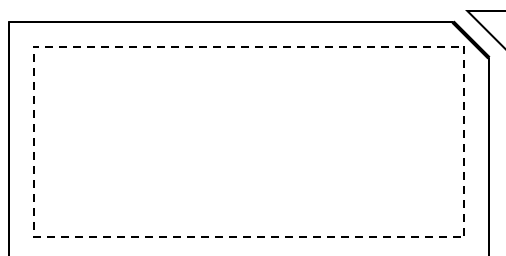
B) With a pencil or chalk, mark a 3" line on one of the long sides of your square. Like this:



C) Using the edge of your machine's presser foot as your guide, stitch all the way around except for the 3" line marked. Make sure to back stitch at your start and end points. Look at diagram to where you should start and stop stitching.

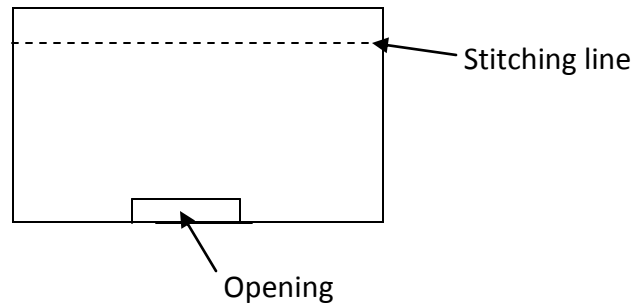


D) Clip all 4 corners like this:

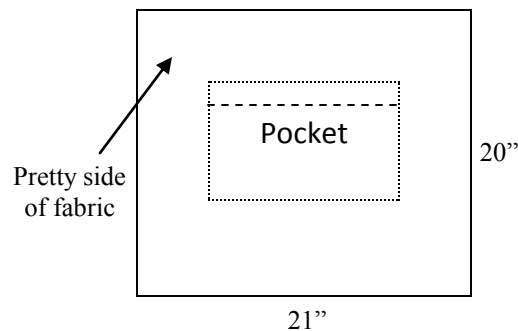


E) Turn your pocket inside out through the 3" opening you left unstitched. Make sure to poke out all corners neatly. Press in place.

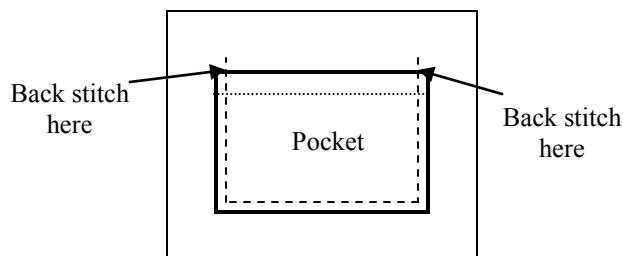
F) Using the edge of your presser foot as a guide, stitch across the top of your pocket. Make sure you are stitching on the edge that is opposite your 3" opening. Like this:



3. Attach pocket: On one of the 20" x 21" pieces of fabric, place your pocket where you want it to be located on the outside of the bag. In other words, place the pocket on the *pretty side* of one of your 20" x 21" pieces of fabric. Like this:



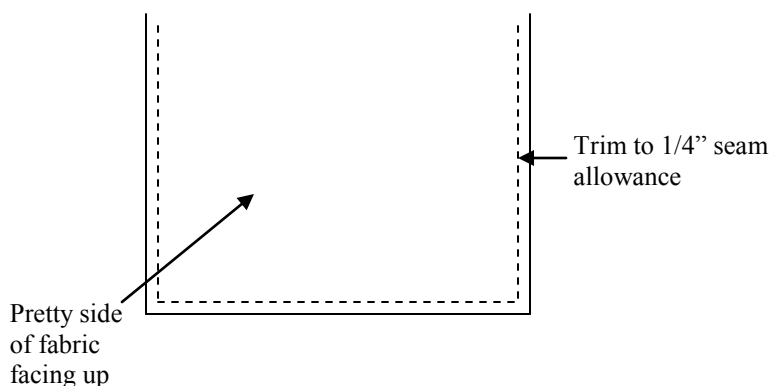
4. Make sure the line you stitched in Step 2F is on the top edge of the pocket, as shown above. The 3" opening in the pocket should be along the bottom edge of your pocket. Pin the pocket and then stitch it into place on 3 sides only as shown by the dashed line in the diagram below. Stitch close to the outer edge of the pocket making sure to back stitch where the pocket opening meets the tote bag body. Like this:



5. Put together tote bag body:

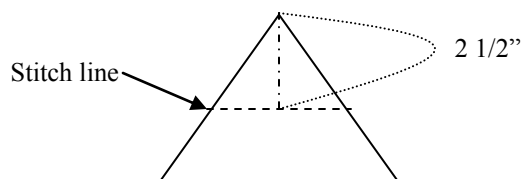
A) Place the 2 tote bag body pieces together with the *ugly sides* touching. Yes, this is correct, it is NOT a typo. You are going to sew French seams for a clean, professional look inside the tote bag. So, first put *ugly sides* together. Pin all the way around 3 sides (the 2 sides and the bottom of the bag.) Make sure you have the pocket opening facing up before you stitch the bag together so you don't end up with an upside-down pocket when your tote is finished.

B) If you have a 1/4" presser foot for your machine use it as your guide to sew 1/4" seam on the 3 sides of the bag you pinned. If you don't have a 1/4" presser foot, use the edge of your regular presser foot as your guide and then trim the seam allowance down to 1/4". Like this:



- C) Turn your tote bag inside out so, that the *pretty sides* of the fabrics are now touching. Press seam in place with the iron. Pin in place and stitch along the same 3 sides of the bag again using our machine's presser foot as your guide. Make sure your seam allowance is bigger than the 1/4" seam allowance you previously stitched so that the entire 1/4" seam is encased in the new wider seam. Press in place.

6. Make box corners to the bottom of tote bag—Flip your tote bag inside out and grab one corner . Pulling the fabric on both sides of that point, open up the corner to form a triangle. The seam down the bottom of the tote bag and the seam running down that one side should meet and go down the center of the triangle. Pin the corner in place. Repeat to other corner. Measure 2 1/2" down from the tip of the triangle and draw a line across. Stitch across the marked line, making sure to back stitch at the beginning and end to secure it in place. Repeat for other corner.



7) Attaching shoulder straps/handles:

- Turn your tote bag inside out (so the *ugly* side of the fabric is facing you) and fold the top edge down towards you 1/2" around the entire top edge of the tote and press in place.
- Fold that same edge **again** another 1 1/2" around the entire tote bag and press in place.
- Figure out what distance apart you want your straps to be. I like to place my tote bags about 5" apart.
- Now tuck the ends of one of your straps under the hem you created in steps 8A & 8B where you want your straps to be. Pin in place. Repeat on other side of tote with other strap. I like to use the placement of the first strap to pin the second strap to ensure they match up.
- Stitch as close as you can to the bottom edge of the hem around the entire tote bag to secure both straps in place.
- Now fold your straps UP (so they are in the position they will be when you are carrying the tote) and stitch close to the top edge of the tote bag around the entire tote again to re-secure those straps in place.

You're all done! Congratulations!