

Basic Shopping Tote Tutorial

The finished tote measures 13" high, 12" wide, and 8" deep. I based it on the reusable grocery sacks that you can buy at the grocery store.

Use sturdy fabric like denim or canvas for the exterior and the straps, light-weight such as cotton for the interior. One inch wide cotton webbing can also be used for the straps. You will also need fusible fleece, interfacing, or batting, muslin, and plastic canvas.

If you want to make the tote by piecing old jeans together, make sure your pockets for the front and back are at least 3 inches from each side so you can attach the straps and at least 1 inch from the top for all four sides. If you put the pockets on the side, make sure that they are at least 3/4" away from each side so they are not in the seam allowance.





Cut the following:

Exterior

Two – 13” (width) x 14” (height) (front and back)

Two – 9” (width) x 14” (height) (sides)

One – 9” (width) x 13” (height) (bottom)

Lining

Two – 13” (width) x 14” (height) (front and back)

Two – 9” (width) x 14” (height) (sides)

One – 9” (width) x 13” (height) (bottom)

Fusible Fleece or Batting

Two – 13” x 14” (front and back)

Two – 9” x 14” (sides)

One – 9” x 13” (bottom)

Bottom Insert

Plastic Canvas – 7 3/4 ” x 11 3/4”

Muslin – 9” x 26 1/2”

Straps

Two – 3 1/2” x 47” pieces of sturdy fabric such as denim, home décor, or canvas

OR

Two – 47” pieces of 1” wide cotton webbing

Now it's time to sew!

I used 1/2" seam allowances throughout unless otherwise indicated. I also press as I go. Since this is a shopping bag that I want to be able to carry a watermelon in, I double-stitch all seams.

STRAPS

I am presenting three different methods to make the straps.

In the first method, take the fabric for the two straps, fold the long sides (right sides together) and stitch with a 1/4" seam. Turn right side out and press. Top stitch close to the edges. Turning the fabric right side out can be difficult!



The second way is easier and ends up looking the same as the first method. Take the same 47" pieces of fabric and fold 1/4" along the long sides and press. Then fold the wrong sides of the fabric together and press. Top stitch along each side.



In the third method—the easy peasy way—just use 47" of 1" or wider cotton webbing. I do not use polyester webbing because it can melt. I do a lot of pressing with a hot iron!

ATTACH THE STRAPS

Take the 13" x 14" pieces of the exterior bag.

Put the straps 1 1/2" from each side. Make sure the strap is not twisted. The end of the strap will go all the way to the bottom of the piece. Stitch very close to the edge on both sides, ending 1" from the top. Do the same with the second side.



EXTERIOR

Now use the “Plus Sign” Method to put the pieces together.

With right sides together, stitch the bottom to the four sides. Sew each piece by starting at $\frac{1}{2}$ ” from one end and ending at $\frac{1}{2}$ ” from the other.



Fold the plus sign right sides together and sew the outer edges.



Fold right sides together and sew up the remaining two sides.



LINING

Center and press the fusible fleece onto the wrong side of the fabric for the interior bag.

If you are using batting rather than a fusible, do some quilting on the lining so the batting does not move around.

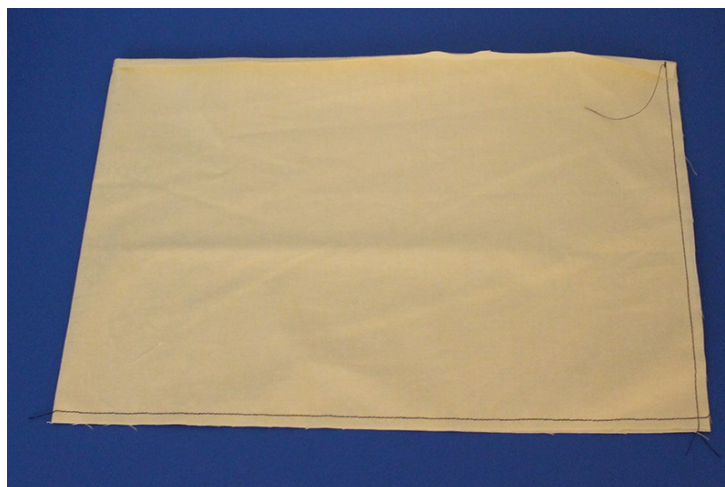
Then use the plus sign method as explained in the exterior of the bag to stitch the bottoms together.

BOTTOM INSERT

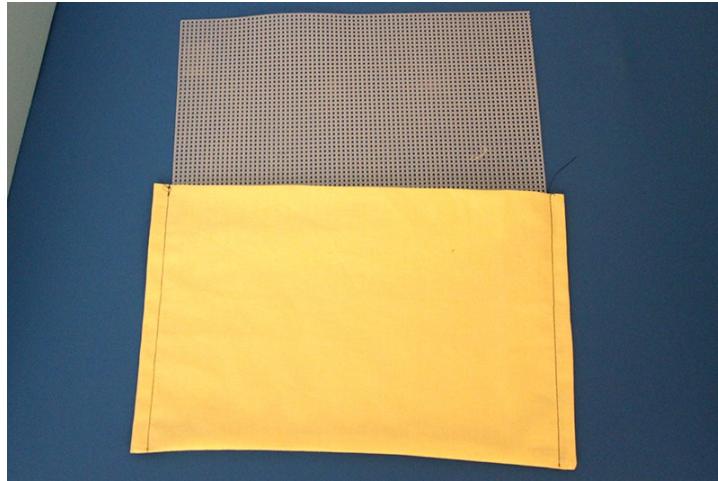
Take the muslin piece and press under $\frac{1}{4}$ " on one of the long sides.



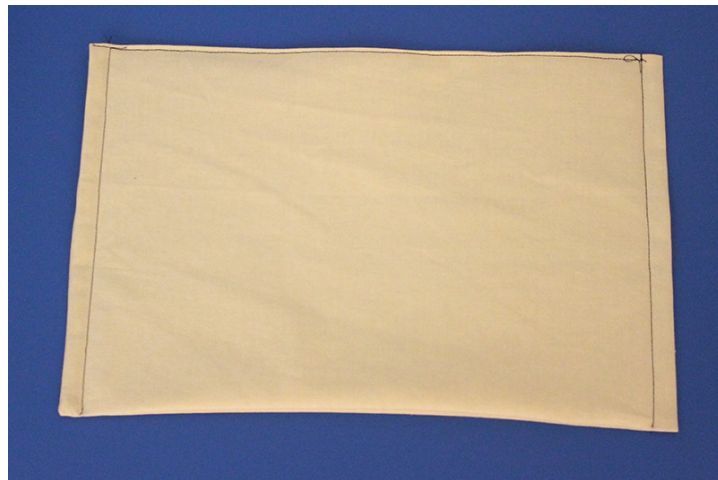
Fold right sides together of the muslin. Sew the other two open sides with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam—leaving the side with the pressed edge open.



Turn right sides out. Stitch a seam $\frac{1}{2}$ " away from each short side. Slip plastic canvas into the open pocket—all the way to the bottom.



Stitch close to the open pressed edge, do not catch the plastic canvas in the stitching.



Take the interior bag and turn so the bottom is facing up.



Clip or pin the insert onto the 8" side seam allowances.



Stitch each side onto the 8" seam allowance. Now the insert is attached to the bottom of the lining.



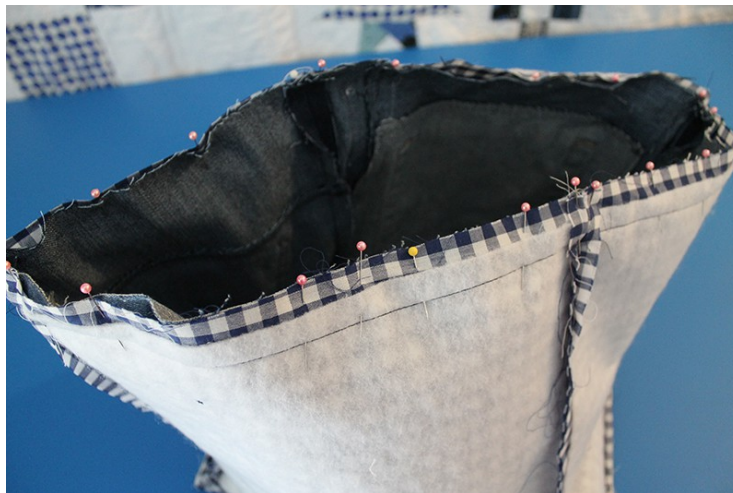
Done with lining!

Now lets put them together!

Place the exterior bag inside of the interior bag. Right sides together. Make sure the straps are inside.



Pin, matching the seams of the interior and exterior.



Stitch the top with a 1/2" seam, leaving about a 6" opening.

Pull the bag right side out through the opening. Tuck the interior bag inside the exterior bag. Right sides are now out.

Stitch close to the edge, catching the 6" opening.

Done!