

Braided Tablecloth Bag

by Rubyellen Bratcher

This bag was inspired by a Free People tote and it is absolutely sweet and funky. It is perfect for that free-spirited girl to have all the whatevers she loves on hand whenever in this large, wonderful bag. The handles are made of various fabrics and are braided together to give it an extra special edge. The elastic top allows for easy access to the bag, while at the same time keeping everything safe. This bag can be made in various sizes and shapes and they would all be equally as fun and lovely. Enjoy and happy crafting!!!

MATERIALS

Outside bag fabric and lining fabric:

- (2) 1 yard of fabric for outside of bag (I used a vintage tablecloth, get creative with the type of fabric you want to use!) See illustration #1 for approximate measurement of bag.
- (2) 1 yard of fabric for lining or inside of bag (I used some new Amy Butler fabric)
- (1) 1 yard of quilters cotton batting for weight to put between fabrics
- (12) 3.5" x 30" strips of different fabrics for the handles (preferably different from fabrics used on bag, but still coordinated in color, also can be made shorter or longer depending how long you like your straps)
- (1) 30" piece of 5/8" braided elastic for the top of bag (could be made shorter depending how you like the opening)
- (1) Spool of coordinating thread
- (1) Safety pin
- (4) Rubber band

SEAM ALLOWANCE: 1/4"

Use illustrations to help guide through each step.

1. Cut out all pattern pieces for the bag (the outer fabric, lining fabric, cotton batting). There should be 6 pieces in all.



- Using the outside fabric, place outer fabric with right sides together and sew around the sides and bottom of the outside fabric; turn inside out (right sides out) and press.



- Lay out lining fabric and cotton batting. From bottom to top: cotton batting; lining, right side facing up; lining, wrong side facing up; cotton batting. Sew around the sides and the bottom of the bag; turn inside out and press.



- With wrongs sides together, place the lining bag into the outer bag. Make sure the lining fits nice and is correctly placed in outer fabric.



5. Turn inside out, so the lining fabric faces out. Fold the top of the bag over about 1". Then, make a second fold over about 1" to hide the raw, unfinished edges in the fold. Pin the fold into place. This is a large fold to allow room for the elastic. Once it is folded, the outer bag fabric creates about a 1" border at the top of the lining fabric.



6. Top stitch the top of the bag about 3/4" from the edge of the fabric. Stitch close to the bottom of the fold. DO NOT sew all the way around, but leave a 1 1/2" opening to feed the elastic through.



7. Feed elastic through the top of the bag (I like to attach a large safety pin to the elastic to help feed it through). Cut according to how large or small you want the opening of your bag to be. Once your desired size of the bag opening is determined, stitch each end of the elastic together. Make sure elastic is placed inside the top fold of the bag.



8. Stitch the small opening of the bag closed.



9. To make the handles, use 6 strips of various fabrics; tie the ends together using a rubber band. Then, braid the fabrics together (make sure ends are tied with a rubber band). Repeat with the remaining 6 fabrics (Some may want shorter handles, so the braids can be cut before being stitched onto the bag).



10. Place handles on bag (I like my handles closer together towards the center, but some may like it farther apart, more at the sides of the bag). Using the ends of the braided handle that is not braided, pin in place right under the fold. Stitch handles onto the bag using the end portion that is not braided. Stitch and backstitch each of the braided ends a few times to ensure strength and security from the handle to the bag. Trim any excess fabric you do not want on the handles. Turn bag right side out.



11. Cut any loose threads that can be seen throughout the bag.

12. Go out!!! Strut your new bag, shop at Free People and purchase lots of goodies to fill up your new bag and closet!!!



HINTS AND TIPS

- To make the strips for the handles, get a various 1/2 yards of fabric (and share with others). Make about a 5" cut into the fabric and tear the rest of the length. This is so the handles of the bag will a fresh and raw edge to it, which will just add to the uniqueness of the bag.
- When placing handles on bag, make sure handles are both about equal length.
- Trim any excess edges after stitching pieces together.
- You determine how large or small you want the opening of your bag to be, so you may use the entire amount of elastic or as little as you like.
- I like to use vintage tablecloths for the bag, but any fabric can be used, even fabric from old skirts, shirts, etc...

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