

Beginner's project: How to sew a basic tote bag

Materials needed:

- Fabric:
 - Front and back pieces, each 48 x 44 cm
 - Two handles, each 10 x 80 cm (to carry the bag over the shoulder) or 10 x 50 cm for shorter handles
 - Matching sewing thread
 - Sewing machine. Stitches in the description refer to the W6 N 5000 Exclusive sewing machine available in FabLab@TU-Ilmenau
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Have a label ready. Place the front and back pieces right sides together, pin the label in place, and topstitch with a 1 cm seam allowance along both sides and the bottom (straight stitch, stitch length 2–2.5). If desired, stitch again along the bottom seam about 2 mm next to the first seam for extra reinforcement. Then finish the raw edges with a zigzag stitch (zigzag stitch no. 9, stitch length 1.0).

Sewing the boxed corners (bottom): Align the side seam and bottom seam exactly on top of each other. Measure 4 cm from the top seam (there will also be 4 cm to the left and right). Press the seam allowance (SA) of the side seam to one side and the seam allowance of the bottom seam to the opposite side. Stitch across and finish the raw edges again with zigzag stitch no. 9.

For each handle: Fold once lengthwise, wrong sides together, and press. Open it again and fold both outer edges in toward the pressed center crease. Then fold in half lengthwise again (you will now have four layers of fabric). Secure with fabric clips or pins if needed. Topstitch close to both long edges.

Press the sewn front and back piece: from the right side, shaping the side and bottom seams neatly. Turn the bag wrong side out again. Fold the top edge over 0.5 cm once and press, then fold over another 2 cm and press again. Secure with fabric clips or pins if necessary.

Insert the prepared handles 10 cm away from the outer side seam under the folded top edge (the bag is still wrong side out) and topstitch close to the lower folded edge to secure them for the first time.

Now turn the bag right side out and topstitch the upper edge from the right side. This secures the handles a second time.

If desired, reinforce the handles with a cross-shaped stitch.

Done!

Revision #4

Created 2026-02-26 12:05:23 UTC by Nicola Henze

Updated 2026-02-26 12:13:30 UTC by Nicola Henze