

## **Heavy duty shopping bag with a base and two handle lengths**

### Materials

- A piece of strong fabric twice as long as it is wide - we used a piece 70cm wide by 140cm long. You can use old bedsheets or curtains, tea towels sewn together, old table clothes or new fabric like strong cotton. Make sure it's a fabric that doesn't stretch.
- Some extra fabric for handles - the long strap is 20cm x 110cm, the short one is 20cm x 40cm - make them to suit your preferred length (eg, one goes across the shoulder, the other is a handle)
- Sewing machine - you can't really sew this by hand because it won't be strong enough
- Strong cotton or polyester thread
- Scissors
- Pins
- A pencil or felt pen

### **Some sewing basics you'll need to know about...**

- Measuring and cutting out (or tearing!)
- Sewing a seam - a seam is a line of stitching used to join two or more pieces of fabric
- Sewing a French seam - a French seam is where the seam is sewn twice to enclose the raw edges inside so it doesn't fray and fall apart
- Sewing a hem - a hem is where the edges of the fabric are folded inside and sewn to make a neat finish, like the bottom of a skirt or end of a sleeve

- Attaching handles
- Right and Wrong sides - every fabric has a "right" and a "wrong" side - the right side is the side you want to see outside on the finished item, the wrong side is usually on the inside. If the fabric has a pattern or texture on it, this is more obvious, but with some fabrics you might just decide which side you prefer!
- Fraying - when the threads of a fabric start to come away and the fabric falls apart - most non-stretch fabrics will fray if you don't secure the cut edges in some way. The cut edge of a fabric is called the raw edge.

## **How to make the bag**

1. Cut out the pieces of fabric - one big piece 70x140 cm, one long piece for the strap (20x110cm) and two short pieces for the handles (20x40cm). Some fabrics you can also tear along the grain, and this is often a good way to get a straight edge. Some fabrics will be too strong to tear, and others may not tear how you want them to - test it out on scrap piece.
2. With the Wrong sides of the fabric together, match up the two shorter sides of the fabric and sew them together with a seam about 1cm in from the edge of the fabric
3. Turn the tube you've made inside out, so that the seam you've made is now on the inside
4. Sew the seam again, about 1.5cm in from the edge, and making sure that the previous seam is completely enclosed inside the new seam - this will make the bag strong and stop it fraying
5. Turn the bag inside out again, put the seam you've just made into the middle of the bag and pin across the bottom to hold in place. Sew the base of the bag together along the bottom, about 1cm in from the edge.
6. Turn the bag again, and sew across the base again, making sure that the first seam is enclosed inside the second one, like you did before.
7. Now make the corners - measure 15cm in from one side of the bag, along the base seam you've just sewn. Mark this point with

a pen or pin it. Flatten the base and sides of the bag into a triangle - one point of the triangle is the end of the bag base seam, sides are made when you flatten and spread out the bag sides. Draw a line from the 15cm mark you've made, across the base of the bag, to make the base of the triangle. Pin in place, making sure there are no bumps or folds.

8. Sew across this line, going through all layers of the fabric and the base seam.
9. Repeat on the other side
10. Hem the top edge - fold about 3cm of the raw edge down, then fold again another 3cm, so the raw edge is completely enclosed inside. Pin in place and stitch all the way round the hem on the top and bottom edges of the fold.
11. **Making the Long strap** - fold the long strip of fabric in half down the length, then fold the raw cut edge into the middle, and put the folded edge on top of it, to close the raw edge inside. Sew all the way down the middle. If the fabric is thick or heavy, you might want to use a narrower piece and only fold it once; just make sure you fold over the top raw edge when you stitch in place.
12. Find the middle of the bag using the seam line along the base, and mark it with a pen
13. Fold the edge of one end of the strap underneath and pin it in place on the inside of the bag about 5cm from the top edge of the bag. Sew firmly in place through the fabric of the strap and the bag. You can sew in a square, zigzag, a cross or random pattern, just make sure there are plenty of stitches!
14. **Making the short handles** - sew the smaller strap pieces as above. Bring the two sides with the strap attached together in the middle, and mark the opposite corners of the bag with a pen (the "other" middle of the bag). Measure out 15cm on either side of the mark you've made and make these points. Attach one short handle on either side of the bag, using the points you've marked and the method for attaching the long strap, above (13).
15. Trim any loose threads, fill with heavy shopping and you're done!