

E-Z Shopping Bag Totes

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SUPPLIES: A 44”x21” piece of pre-quilted fabric (This can be larger or smaller, depending upon your preference.)
Optional: a 10”x21” (or longer) piece of matching or coordinating fabric for either inside or outside pockets
(I buy 1 ½ yards of prequilted fabric—exactly enough for TWO totes, and I double the quantities of the next items.)
3 ½ yards of tote bag strap (sometimes called “belt webbing”)

One pack of bias binding (This can be either the SINGLE or the DOUBLE fold—your choice. I use the double.)

INSTRUCTIONS: • Cut a 44”x21” piece of fabric for the base unit, and an optional a 10”x21” piece for pockets.

- Sew folded bias binding onto the TOP and BOTTOM of the long piece (so the raw edges will be secured) AND to the TOP and BOTTOM of the 10” strip. I use a 4.5/1.5 zigzag stitch. (All four of these bound edges will be on the shorter sides.)
- Turn down TWO INCHES of the TOP and BOTTOM edges to the INSIDE of the LONG piece (as if you will be “hemming” it). Iron in position, but don’t stitch it at this point. (See first photo below.)
- Spread out this long piece on a flat surface, and position the narrower piece at the center—both horizontally and vertically. Stay-stitch ONLY the two non-bound edges of the smaller piece onto the larger to hold it in place.
- With the 2” hem turned under, pin on the tote bag strap, beginning at the center of where the bag **bottom** will likely be. [Optional: After sewing to the top of each pocket, begin an angle so the straps will be only 5” apart at the top. This improves the carrying ability and reduces the bag stress considerably.] Stitch the strap as shown, leaving a 14” piece of open strap at both ends for the handles. (See the second photo below.) While you are stitching these straps, backstitch 2-3 times at each pocket and top opening.
- Optional: Stitch two straight seams where the bottoms of the pockets might be after it is finished and shaped into a “bag” shape. This keeps small pocketed items from slipping through to the bottom or to the other side. OR you can make ONE seam at the CENTER of the bottom.
- Fold everything in half with **RIGHT** sides together and stitch a 5/8” seam on both left and right sides—with the “hems” OPENED.
- BIND these two raw edges with double-fold bias binding—stopping about 3” from the top edge. (This part will be hidden by the hem, and this will reduce the bulk of the fabric.)
- While this piece is turned inside out, sew triangular corners that will shape the fabric into a bag. The width is your choice. I select 2 ½” for skinnier bags and 4+” for wider bags. Hand tack the two triangles to the bottom.
- Turn the two hems back under, and topstitch all around the bottom edges of the hem AND a quarter-inch from the top edge. Turn right-side out and ADMIRE!!



The first photo at the left shows the fabric spread out flat. The two curled edges expose the two-inch “hem” (with bias binding sewn on) ironed under but not stitched. The 10”x21” piece of fabric placed atop this base piece is the reverse side shown in this photo ONLY so it can be SEEN in this illustration. In the actual bag, the SAME side of the outer fabric was used rather than the reverse side. The second photo on the left shows the straps IN PLACE and ready to stitch. Note that the straps begin angling closer to the center after they have been sewn onto the pocket piece. The photo below shows the finished bag. EnJOY!

