

## Sewing Tote Bags for Haiti

These instructions are for making a basic tote bag. You can dress it up by adding pockets or top stitching if you like.

The best fabrics to use are sturdy, decorator fabrics. Denim, twill, corduroy, drapery and upholstery fabrics work well. You want to use something that will wear well with lots of use.

The cutting instructions are for large pieces of 53" wide fabrics. If you are working with smaller pieces just use the measurements as a guide and cut what works. The bags can vary in size and the length of the handles can also vary. You can make bags with coordinating handles if I don't have enough of the matching fabric or if you just like to play. Piecing together two different fabrics makes interesting two-tone handles.

It is best to use a denim or quilting needle in your machine to avoid breaking needles – especially with heavier fabrics.

White or off-white thread works fine for stitching the bags if you don't want to try to match thread colors.

### Cutting:

For best results use fabric that is about 53" wide. Cut one piece (entire width) 36" long and one piece (entire width) 13-1/2" long. This is enough to make 3 bags. Trim off the selvages. Cut the large piece lengthwise into 3 pieces about 17-1/2" wide each. Cut the small (13-1/2") piece of fabric into 3 long strips each 4-1/2" wide for handles.

### Sewing:

Fold each large piece in half with WRONG sides together so the fold is the bottom of the bag. Starting at the top of the bag, sew a 1/4" seam down each side. (By starting at the top, any shifting of the fabric will work itself out at the bottom fold and the top edges will still be even.) Clip the seam allowance corners at the bottom of the bag to make turning easier. Turn the bag RIGHT sides together. Use the blunt end of a wooden skewer to push the corners out so they are square. Press the side seams.

Sew another seam (about 3/8") up each side so the raw edges are enclosed. Trim away the top 1" of each seam allowance. This makes it easier to sew the hem on the top edge of the bag. Turn the bag right side out, push the corners out, and press. Trim away any stray threads coming out of the side seams.

Press the top edge down about 1/2". Turn it down again about another 1/2" and press. Stitch the top hem about 3/8" from the top.

Each long strip makes 2 handles. Fold the strips right sides together (2-1/4" X 53") and sew both ends and the side closed with a 1/4" seam. Trim the corners and cut the strip in half. Turn each half right side out. (A turning tool works well for this step.) Use a skewer to push out the corners on the closed end of the strap. Turn in the raw edges of the open end under about 1/2" and press.

Attach the straps to the bag about 4" in from each side with the ends extending about 1-1/2" down from the top edge of the bag. Sew a box about 1/8" in from the outside edge of the strap and then sew an X through the center of the box to securely attach each end of the straps. Done!

### Delivery:

Return completed bags to **Littleton Church of Christ, 6495 S. Colorado Blvd., Centennial, CO 80121**. There is a drop-off bin in the church lobby for completed bags. If you have questions, please contact Barbara Dean at [BarbaraBD@msn.com](mailto:BarbaraBD@msn.com).