

So Sew Easy Schlep Bag

a nearly perfect tote

This style bag is a favorite because of it's versatility, easy construction and ability to schlep around just about anything you want to carry. I first saw a basic squares bag in a Japanese quilting magazine , then on HGTV.com as a free pattern to download. It's been posted on a few web/blog sites and a couple of quilters have published patterns of this type of bag which you can probably find at your local quilt shop.

Over the years I've made several variations and am happy to share my adaptations along with my tips for sewing. You can make your bag from almost any fabric. I've seen them made from wool, denim, antique feedsacks, vintage barkcloth fabric, decorator fabric, pre-quilted fabric and even vinyl coated fabric too. I've made them made like a rag quilt with fluffy seams and you could even make it from terry cloth and it would be a great beach bag. The addition of batting or interfacing is a matter of personal preference as is the length of the handles, adding pockets to the inside or making the bag reversible. I love taking this tote to quilt shows and flea markets. Without the batting it can be easily folded, tucked in my purse and is ready to use. There's a lot of information here so read the pattern carefully, choose your options and schlep some of your favorite fabrics over to the cutting table and get started!!

Basic *Squares* Bag:

Choose 4 fabrics. One of these fabrics will be the top triangle row of your bag and the handles. Label them "A"—"B"—"C" and "T/H" (triangles/handles). Refer to the diagrams for fabric placement. I usually put my favorite fabric in position "A". I like to use a darker fabric for position "C" since that's the bottom of the bag.

1/4 yard each of three fabrics for the outside of your bag.* **

**You can use fat quarters but will need two of each color.*

*** Scraps work well as long as they are at least 9" square. You'll need 28 pieces & 2 pieces at least 8" x 22" for handles.*

1/2 yard of fabric for the triangles sections & handles.*

**You can use a fat quarters.*

For the lining you'll need 5/8 yard of fabric

Batting for the handles*

**I like to use fusible cotton batting but any cotton or cotton blend batting will be fine.*

Cutting:

- Cut four 8" squares each from three of your fabrics for the outside of the bag. (A-B-C)
- Cut two 8 1/2" squares and two strips 7" x 22" from the 1/2 yard piece of fabric. (T/H)
Cut the 8 1/2" squares diagonally one way to yield 4 triangles.
- Cut two 22 1/4" squares from lining fabric.
- Cut two strips 2" wide x 22" long from batting.



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Basic Squares Bag:

All seams are 1/4" unless otherwise noted

1. Sew four "C" squares together like a four patch quilt block stopping your stitching 1/4" from the outside edge on all the seams. Backstitch at this point to secure the end of the seam. **Fig. 1**
2. Sew the "A" squares to the "B" squares. If you have a focus fabric or are using a quilt block for one of your squares you'll need to decide if you want it in position "A" or "B". I usually use position "A".
3. Sew a triangle to each "A" square referring to the illustration to make sure they are facing in the correct direction. Note; the triangles are longer than the squares to allow for the seam allowance at the top of the bag but this is not shown in the illustration. **Fig. 2**
4. Sew a "A-B-triangle" strip to each of the "C" squares stopping your stitching 1/4" from the edge indicated by the arrows in **Fig. 2**.
5. Bring edges 1 to 2, right sides together, pivoting the seam allowance where the "C" squares come together. Pin to hold in place. Match the seams of your squares and pin to hold in place.
6. Stitch from where the two "C" squares meet out to the top edge of the bag. Backstitch at both ends to secure. **Fig. 3**
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 bringing edges 3 to 4, 5 to 6 and 7 to 8.
8. Your bag should now look something like **Fig. 4**

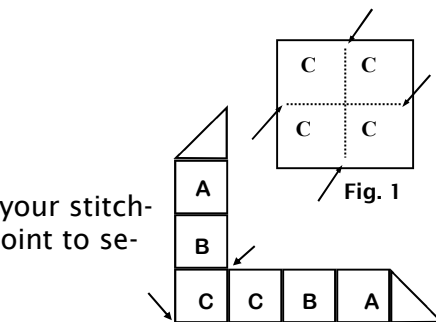


Fig. 1

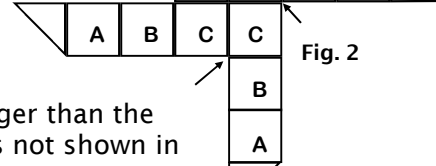


Fig. 2

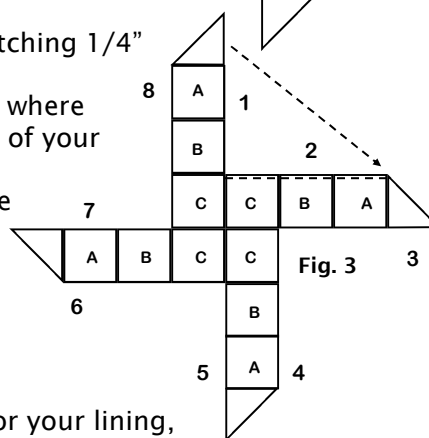


Fig. 3

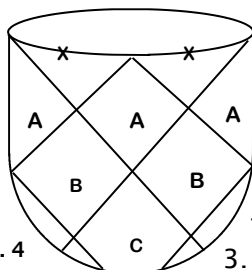


Fig. 4

Simple Lining:

1. Using the two 22 1/4" squares of fabric cut for your lining, sew them right sides together, using a 1/2" seam allowance, around 3 sides leaving an opening in one of the sides about 5" long. **Fig. 5**
2. Trim bottom corners of the seam allowance diagonally about 1/4" from stitching. Press seams open.



Fig. 5

3. To shape the bottom, with right sides together, bring one side seam of the lining to the bottom seam and pin. This makes the corner come to a point. Measure from the point 7 3/8" along the folds and mark a dot. Lightly draw a line connecting the dots. Pin to hold in place and stitch on the drawn line backstitching at the beginning and end of the seam. **Fig. 6** Repeat on the other side seam.
4. Press the corner points toward each other and tack to bottom seam. If you are using a heavyweight fabric, trim off points 1/2" from seam line to reduce bulk.

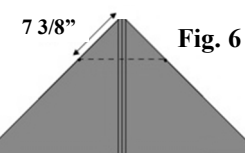


Fig. 6

Handles:

1. Using the two 7" x 22" pieces of fabric, fold in half wrong sides together and press to form a crease down the center of the fabric.
2. Fuse a 2" x 22" piece of batting to the wrong side of the left half of the strip aligning the right hand edge of the batting along the fold line. **Fig. 7**
3. Fold left edge of fabric strip over batting and press to hold in place. **Fig. 8**
4. Fold the right side of the strip over to meet the edge of the batting along the center fold line. **Fig. 9.** It should look like **Fig. 10**
5. Bring folded edges of fabric together and press.
6. Topstitch close to both edges of the handles. I like to stitch down the center of the handles too. **Fig. 11**

Fold line

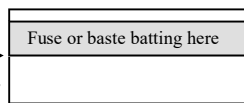
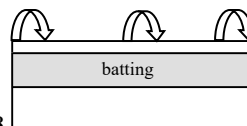


Fig. 7

Fig. 8



Fold to here

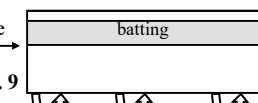


Fig. 9

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Fig. 10

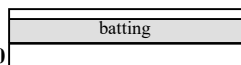
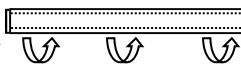


Fig. 11



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Final Assembly:

All seams are 1/4" unless otherwise noted

1. Baste handles to the upper edge of the bag in the center of two triangles on one side of the bag and two on the opposite side. **Fig. 12**
2. Put outer bag inside of lining, right sides together. Pin around top edge matching side seams of lining to the top of the "A" squares. **Fig. 13**
3. Stitch around top edge using a 1/2" seam. I like to stitch a second time over the handle area for added strength.
4. Turn right side out through opening in side seam of lining. Hand stitch the opening closed.
5. Push lining to the inside, move handles to the top and press the seam.
6. Topstitch close to the edge around the top of the bag.

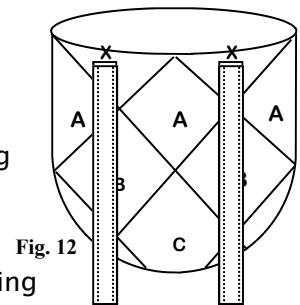


Fig. 12

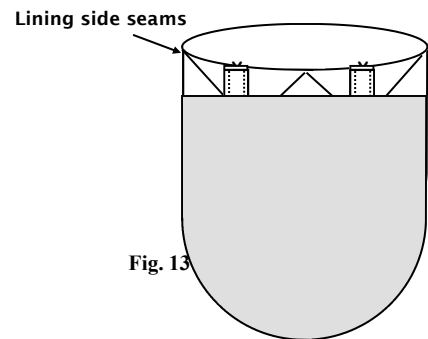


Fig. 13



Focus fabric in "A" position



Focus fabric in "B" position



Made with a wide stripe and large scale print fabric instead of squares.