

## **Making a Super Simple Duffle Bag**

This tutorial is written so that beginning and intermediate sewers can create a simple, unlined, functional duffle bag with just a few quick steps and some fabric.

To follow this tutorial you'll need the following skills:

- Know how to measure fabric
- Know how to cut a straight line using a rotary cutter OR a good scissor (\*\* Note: Scissors used for cutting fabric should NOT be used for cutting anything else)
- How to cut a circular pattern using the folded paper method

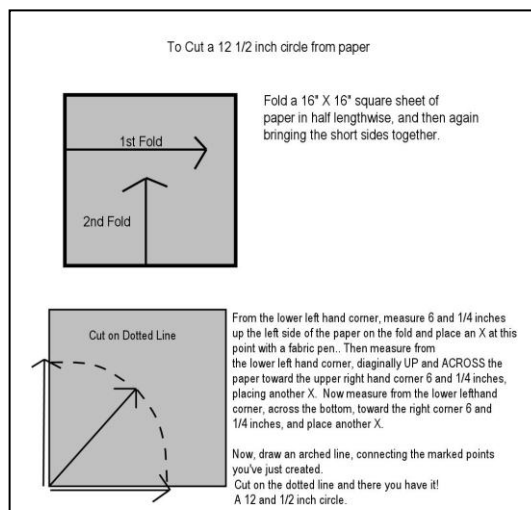
### **Materials**

*A small side note – be sure to launder any fabric before beginning a project. This helps reduce fraying, shrinkage and removes any factory sizing, which can cause skin irritation in some people.*

- 1 Yard of heavy cotton such as canvas, duck canvas, good upholstery fabric or other suitable fabric such as barks cloth, cotton or denim. I chose a nice floral chintz and a complimenting striped fabric for this project.
- 18-inch purse zipper (NOTE: If you do not have a purse zipper, a regular 18" zipper will work. I did not have a purse zipper on hand for this tutorial. )
- 2 - 26 inch long by 4 inch wide strips of contrasting fabric for your handles
- 1 Package of Wright's Maxi Piping (Optional)
- 4 Appliqué's to cover handle ends (Optional)
- Thread
- Straight edge ruler or cutting matt
- Rotary Cutter or good scissors
- Iron and Ironing board
- Straight or stick pins



### **Cutting the Pieces**



- First you'll need to cut a circle pattern using the diagram to the left (A larger version of this diagram is included at the end of this lesson)
- Cut 2 – 12 and 1/2 inch circles from the fabric you've chosen for the body of your bag.
- Cut 1 rectangle from the same fabric measuring 19 & 1/2 inches by 35 inches.

- From the coordinating fabric cut 2 strips that are 36 inches long by 4 inches wide.

### **Beginning To Assemble the Bag**

*First, we'll make the handles because we'll need to attach them to the body of the bag before we sew the entire thing together, so:*

1. First, turn the short ends of your straps in towards the **WRONG SIDE** of the fabric by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch, and press. Do this for all of the short ends on both straps.
2. Next, turn the long sides of the strips in towards the **WRONG SIDE** by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch and press down.
3. Next, fold the strip in half lengthwise and crease to mark a center point.
4. Now, fold one **LONG SIDE** in towards the new crease and **OVERLAP** the crease by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch, then press down.
5. Turn the fabric and repeat step 4, pressing down.
6. Now, pin the strips along the new seam line you've just created.
7. Now take your straps to the machine and sew them together, one at a time, down the center so that the overlapping pieces are locked in.

***Turn short ends under and press***



***Turn long sides under and press***



***Fold in half lengthwise and press to crease***



## **Assembling The Bag**

Before you begin this part, iron your 19-1/2 by 35" piece of fabric so there are no wrinkles or creases.

1. Fold the 35" piece of fabric in half along the 35" side so that you end up with a 17 – 1/2 by 19 – 1/2 inch rectangle.
2. Mark the fold by gently pressing with your iron.
3. Open the fabric back up so that it is back to a 35" by 19-1/2" rectangle, with the right side facing up.
4. With your tape measure or straight edge ruler, measure 4 inches up from the long edge of the fabric, toward the center, and mark on the fold with either a straight pin or a fabric marker.
5. Next, measure 6 inches in from the short side of the rectangle back towards the center crease. Mark the 6-inch point with either a straight pin or a fabric marker.



6. Next, place the sewn ends of your handles at the six-inch mark and pin down for sewing. Your layout should look like the one below.



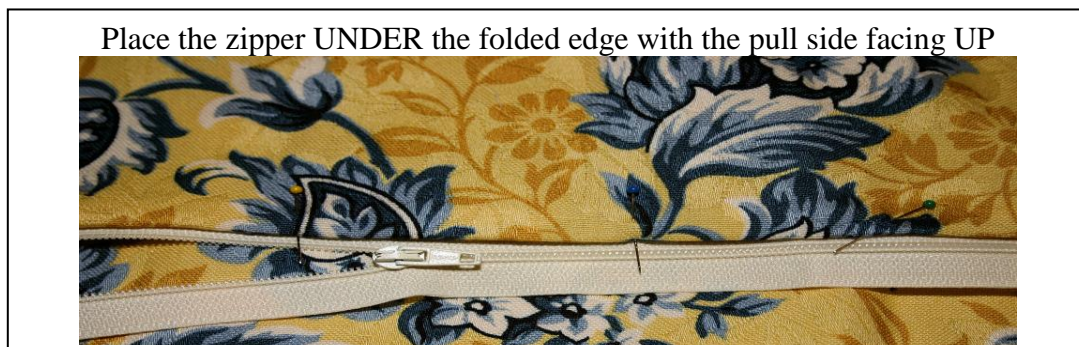
7. Now take your layout to your machine and starting where you marked the 6 inch placement mark on your fabric from the SHORT SIDE back toward the center, stitch first ACROSS the width of the handle, turn the fabric and stitch DOWN one side to the end, turn again and stitch back across, turn again and stitch back UP the other side until you've formed a rectangle. Repeat this process with the three remaining handle ends.
8. At this point, you can attach some sort of appliqué over the ends of your bag if you wish. I chose to simply sew the common Handbag X on mine by starting at one corner of the



stitched rectangle and sewing down and across to the opposite corner, then turning my fabric, sewing back across the bottom stitching, and back up diagonally to the opposite corner.

9. Now that you've got your handles sewn to your bag, pin them back against the body of the bag so that you don't get them caught in your machine as you finish sewing.
10. The original instructions for the bag called for leaving the edges where the zipper will go, raw. To me this made no sense because cotton tends to unravel and will get caught in the zipper over time, tearing the zipper and possibly the bag. SO...
11. At your ironing board, turn the short ends of your rectangle (19.5 inch ends) under towards the **WRONG SIDE** of the fabric by  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. Press down with your iron. **NOW**, take the edge that you just turned under, and turn it under again by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch, so that the raw edge of the fabric is completely concealed. Press down. You can pin this into place while you place the zipper if you like. I didn't find it necessary as the cotton I used held a crease really well.

Now place the zipper under the edge you just created, with the right sides of the fabric facing up, and the zipper **PULL** side facing up.



12. If your machine has a zipper foot attachment, dig it out now and put it on the presser foot.



14. Using your zipper foot, sew the zipper to the fabric, turn, sew across the **CLOSING END** of the zipper, turn and sew back up the other side. The raw edges of your zipper tape will be concealed under the fabric and your zipper closure will have a nice clean look.



15. You'll notice in the last picture that I have two seams running along side the zipper. This isn't necessary BUT it does provide extra strength and a more finished look to your zippered opening. To create the double seam, simply sew a parallel line along side your first seam.
16. We're almost finished! If you've chosen to add piping to your bag, like I did, now is the time to attach it. LEAVE THE ZIPPER FOOT ON YOUR MACHINE. This makes applying piping a breeze!
17. Pin the piping to the right side of the fabric, with the decorative edge of the piping laying towards the center of your bag, like this:



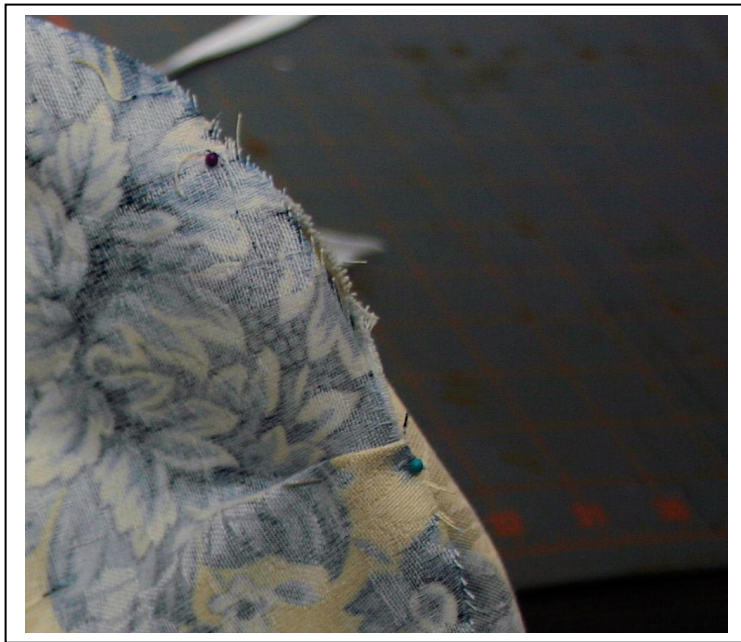
18. Now, using the zipper foot again, sew the piping to the body of the bag, keeping the rolled edge of the piping as close to the zipper foot as possible. A NOTE OF CAUTION: I do not recommend sewing OVER your straight pins. This can damage vital parts of your machine. When sewing, take your time. Don't get impatient. Anything worth doing is worth doing well. 😊

19. Next its time to attach the circle ends of the bag. FIRST, take your circles to your ironing board. Fold in half once, then fold in half again and press to make creases at the quarter points. At the same time, fold your bag in half lengthwise so the zipper is at the top, and then fold in half again, to create quarter creases. These will guide you

in pinning your circles to your bag's ends.



20. Now pin the circle ends of your bag to the bag body. You may end up with a few tucks or creases in the finished product, but that's okay. This does NOT detract from the bags appearance or usefulness.



21. Now, with the zipper foot still attached to your machine, sew the ends of the bag to the bag's body, going VERY SLOWLY and using your fingers to help you feel where the piping is placed. Stay as close to the piping as possible. Remember, take your time. You'll be very pleased with the outcome.

22. Now, at this point, I went back over the

raw edges left by step 21 with a zigzag stitch to help prevent fraying and add extra durability to the bag. You could also use a product called FRAY CHEK, which is a liquid you apply to raw edges to prevent fraying, however after time and laundering, the product stops working.

23. And there you have it! Turn the bag right side out and you've got a beautiful duffle bag for taking to the beach, a weekend get away, a trip to the gym or whatever your heart desires!

