

Tote Bag

Fabric – Mid-weight decorator fabric, 54” wide. I use the decorator fabric sold at JoAnn that is on bolts, and usually on sale. I get 1 ¼ yards for two bags.

1. Cut out

Cut a rectangle 36” wide by 20” long for body of bag. Cut two straps, 20” by 4”. Placement may depend on whether you have directional fabric, and which direction the print runs. I would normally cut the 20” side going lengthwise on the fabric and the 36” across the width, with the straps being cut from the 20” x about 18” remaining piece.

2. French Seams on Side and Bottom

Fold in half widthwise wrong sides together. Sew ¼” seam along 20” side and across bottom. Press flat and trim slightly using ruler and rotary cutter if needed. Turn wrong side out and press seams flat; sew another ¼” – 3/8” seam with right sides together to enclose seam allowances. Press flat so that there is a crease on the side that does not have a seam.

3. Box Bottom Corners

From wrong side, pinch the sides of each corner and pull apart, so that the corner forms a point with the two seams (or the bottom seam and the side crease) are opposite each other on top and bottom of the point. Seam allowances should be opposite each other to reduce bulk. Using a ruler, draw a line perpendicular to the seam line that is 5 inches wide. Sew on this line. Do not trim the seam. Finger-press the seam toward the bag bottom. Fold the triangle down across the bottom seam and sew the edges of the triangle to the bottom of the bag.

4. Straps

Fold straps lengthwise – fold 1 inch in from each side, then fold in half so that you have four thicknesses. Edge stitch open edge, then topstitch folded edge.

Fold over top edge of bag 1 inch, then fold over another inch and pin in place. Trim top 1 ½” of French seam allowance on top of side seam to reduce bulk. Measure 5 ½” from side seam and from side crease, and mark on bag top with pin or marker. Place the ends of one strap under folded top edge on the inside of these marks. Repeat on other side with other strap. Make sure they aren’t twisted – guess how I know this. Sew folded edge, enclosing ends of straps. Fold straps up over the folded edge, and stitch them down onto the folded edge to secure them. I stitch a square with an X through the square.

5. Topstitching

This is optional, but I think it adds a nice look. Starting with one of the bottom corners, fold the side of the bag from the corner up to the top, through the folded edge, parallel to the side seam or crease. Top stitch close to this edge, about 1/16”. Repeat for other corners. Top stitch around bottom between the bottom corners.