
Beginner Sewing: Market Tote Bag with Cal Patch

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

(soft music) - Sewing is a really useful thing to know so today I'm going to show you the basic skills and we're going to make a simple tote bag with a lining, and even a pocket inside.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- Before we get started, I'd like to show you the tools that you'll need to sew a tote bag, or really any basic project. You'll need a nice sharp pair of sewing shears and make sure they're really good fabric cutting scissors, don't use them on paper. I think it's also useful to have a small pair of scissors just for snipping threads and clipping seam allowance. You'll need pins and it's good if they're in a pin cushion so it keeps them contained. You'll need a seam ripper, for any little mistakes you might make. You'll want some marking tools, Tailor's Chalk or Tailor's Wax is a good one, or you might find some pencils, it's good to just have a variety of ways to mark, so different colored fabrics can have different options. These are also disappearing ink pens, which can be pretty useful. You'll need a tape measure, bobbins for your machine and some nice all purpose thread. So now I'll talk about, how to select some fabric for making your tote bag.

Chapter 3 - Prep Materials

Choose and cut fabric

- When you're choosing fabric to make your tote bag with, you really have a lot of options. You definitely want something woven, not knit. But any medium weight or lightweight fabric should work fine. I've chosen a nice chambray, which is sort of like a denim. This'll be the outside of the bag, and for the lining, I'm using a printed cotton, like a quilting fabric. So really, anything in that kind of weight, corduroy, denim, shirting fabrics, printed cottons, all will work just fine. You probably just want something a little bit heavier for the outside of the bag, and something a little lighter for the inside. The pieces for this tote bag project are all just simple rectangles. So I'm going to tell you how to cut them any size you like, and you can kind of design your own dimensions of your bag. The first piece you'll need is just the bag piece. So decide how long and wide you want your bag, and then just add an inch in each direction. So, say you want a 15 inch square bag, you'll cut two pieces that are 16 inches square. You can also use rectangular dimensions, that's fine. Then you'll also need, out of your same outer bag fabric, two strap pieces. Determine how long you want your straps, you might try holding something over your shoulder, or find a bag you have that you like. And you'll need the strap length plus an inch. And then for the width, decide how wide you want it, and multiply that times four. So we've got about a six inch wide piece here, and that will give us about a 1 1/2 inch strap. Out of the same fabric you'll need a pocket piece. And again, just decide how big you want the pocket, and add an inch in each direction. And that will give you your rectangle for the pattern. And then, finally, just cut out of your lining fabric the exact same pieces you did for the outer bag. So you've got two of your outer bag piece, two of your lining, one pocket, and two straps. Now we're ready to sew.

Thread machine

- In order to sew, we need to identify the parts of the machine and wind ourselves a bobbin. Then we can thread it. I'm going to turn the machine on. Find your spindle, and you'll probably need to pull it up like that, 'cause it holds the spool much better. You're going to take the thread and wind it around the little bobbin winding doohickey. And thread the bobbin from inside to out through the little hole. And with the thread coming out, place the bobbin onto the bobbin winder. To turn it on you'll push the bobbin over. You may want to check your manual just to see how your machine is different from this one, if it is. The flywheel here is often used to turn off the needle. It may pull out, or there might be a button inside that will disengage the needle mechanism while we're winding the bobbin. It looks like this machine automatically turns off the needle, so I think we can go ahead and wind our bobbin. So I'm holding the thread straight up in the air. I've pushed the winder over, which turns it on, and now I'm pressing, I'm putting my foot on the pedal. And it begins to spin. (sewing machine whirs) I need to be sure to keep holding the thread up above until it's wound a little bit, then I can take my scissors and cut the thread off. Now I can keep winding, and I don't have to worry about the tail getting tangled into the thread. Keep winding your bobbin until it's full, and most machines will have an automatic turn-off feature that will stop the winding function when the bobbin is full. (sewing machine whirs) So now we can cut the thread and disengage the bobbin winder. Remove the bobbin, and we're ready to thread the machine. I'm going to unthread where it was wrapped around for the bobbin and begin with the first guide at the top of the machine. Carry it straight down, around the tension dials, and up and into the take-up lever. And make sure the take-up lever is up near the top where you can see it. If it's not, you may need to put your hand on the flywheel and bring it up. From there you go straight down toward the needle. And there's always a guide right at the top of the needle. And then you can thread the end of the thread into the eye of the needle from front to back. Okay, there we go. And then you want to tuck the thread under the presser foot, and your top thread is threaded. Now we can put the bobbin in. So, take out the bobbin case. I'm going to hold it in front of me so I can see the thread coming off in my left hand, and the bobbin case is in my right hand. Putting them together, sliding the thread into the groove until it pops into place. And then the handle will let me put it into the housing of the machine. And I like to tip the machine back so I can see the groove that bobbin case fits right into. So now I just need to bring the bobbin thread up through the hole under the needle, and to do that I hold onto the top thread and I turn the flywheel one rotation. So the needle comes down, brings the top thread into the machine and around the bobbin case. You'll see it coming, see that? That's making a stitch. So it wraps around, and it pulls the bobbin thread up through that hole. If I grab my scissors, it'll help me pull that out, and now both of my threads are on top of the machine, which is where I need them. You can shut that door. Put the box back on, which gives me a flatbed surface to work on, and I'm ready to sew.

Practice sewing

- I've got some scrap pieces of fabric here and I'm just going to pin them together so I can sew my first seam. So I've lined up the two edges and I'm just going to pin them. You wanna make sure you're pinning right in the area where you're going to be sewing, which is a half inch in from the edge. So probably two or three pins is plenty, and we're ready to sew. I'm gonna place my pieces right under the presser foot, which is this guy here, and find the lever. It might be on the side or the back that lowers the presser foot down, and this is holding my fabric in place. You'll want to notice these lines to the side of the presser foot. They're what indicates the seam allowance. We have a half inch seam allowance built into our pattern, so I'm going to be making sure my edges are lined

up with the second line over from the edge of the foot. So now that the foot is lowered, I can begin stitching. I've got my foot on the pedal and I'm going to just press gently and make a few stitches. At the beginning of any seam, you wanna backstitch, so you'll find your reverse button, press it down, and make a few stitches backwards until you're close to the edges of the fabric. You wanna take your pins out before you sew over them and just keep moving along. I wanna show you that even though my hands are here, they're not actually doing a whole lot. The machine will actually sew a straight line without holding on to anything, but you should keep your hands one to the side and one in the front just to make sure everything stays straight. So, I'm approaching the other end and when I get close to the final edge, I'll back stitch again just a few stitches and go forward again. That locks my stitches into place just like a knot would, and then I can raise up the presser foot, pull this out, and cut my threads. Now you've sewn your first seam and playing with practice swatches like this is really a good way to get comfortable with using the machine. So take some time, do this for a little while until you feel confident enough to begin the tote bag.

Chapter 4 - Sew Bag Exterior

Sew side seams

- To begin sewing your tote bag together, you'll need to start by pinning the two large bag pieces to each other. And you'll wanna be sure that you've got your right sides together, in my case, the fabric is the same on both sides so it's not noticeable. But if you have a print, you'll want the printed side toward the inside, and you're looking at the wrong side. So we can take this to the machine. Place it under the presser foot, and lower it. And we can start stitching. Backstitch. (sewing machine whirs) Make sure to take your pins out, it could break the needle if you hit a pin. (sewing machine whirs) And just keep sewing. (sewing machine whirs) Until you approach your first corner. (sewing machine whirs) Stop a little bit before you get to this corner, because you want to try to precisely hit the half inch mark. So I often might take the last stitch or two with my hand on the flywheel. So that I can stop right a half inch from the corner with the needle down. This'll allow me to lift up the presser foot, turn, because the needle's down, it keeps everything in place. And it allows me to make a nice, sharp corner. I lower the foot and I can continue on my way. (sewing machine whirs) I'll do the same thing. (sewing machine whirs) Stop with the needle down, lift up the presser foot, and pivot. Put the foot back down, continue. (sewing machine whirs) And again, I'm going to backstitch at the end of my seam. (sewing machine whirs) Another tip that's handy to know is when you finish a seam, put your hand on the flywheel and raise both the needle and the take-up lever to the highest position. Now, when I lift up the foot and pull out, the machine is finished with the stitch and the threads will release. If you ever stop and the take-up lever is in the middle, if you try to pull your threads out, they will often be stuck because the machine's still in the middle of making a stitch. Now I can cut my threads. And I'm done with the first step of the tote bag. So now I've sewn three sides, each side and the bottom, and of course the top is still open, and I'm ready to move on.

Prep straps

- The next step is to begin the pocket. And the first part of making a pocket is to hem the top edge. I need to turn the edge under half an inch, and press it. This'll help it stay in place. And then I'm going to turn a second time at a half inch, press some more, so I'll have a nice, double-turned edge for my hem. And then I'll place some pins, just to keep everything secure. I pressed and pinned the top edge of my pocket, and now I'm ready to sew. And this'll be your first hem, but it's really very similar to sewing a seam. The difference is you're just following this inner folded edge to sew

alongside. So, you can begin with your backstitch. (sewing machine whirs) And just keep an eye on this left side and try to be sewing right alongside it. (sewing machine whirs) And at the end you'll do your backstitch just like you always do. If it scrunches up like that, don't worry, it'll flatten out. And there's your hem. Now I need to turn under the remaining three edges of the pocket. So I'm just going to take this and fold it under a half inch, and give it a press. Same on the other side. And then the bottom edge. And there's a little trick I'd like to show you for pressing the corners. So once I've pressed both sides, I can open it up, fold that corner in, and then refold the corners and give it a press. That makes for a nice neat corner, and it won't have a little edge sticking out like it would if you didn't do that. So let me do that to the other side. And our pocket is pressed. While we're here at the ironing board, we're also going to prepare one of our straps. So I've got two of these long strap pieces. I'm folding it in half lengthwise, pressing it. This is going to make a nice, sturdy, four-ply strap. So I've folded it in half, and then I open it up, take the two outside edges and fold them into the center fold. And refolding there. And then press the four layers into place. So you'll prepare both of your straps this way. And then we can go back over to the sewing machine.

Add pocket

- Now you'll take the pocket piece that you just pressed and place it onto one of your lining pieces with all the edges nicely tucked under. So just take a look at your placement. Make sure you're at least close to center. If you're super perfectionistic you can measure it. But I think that looks pretty good. Also take into account how close it is to the top edge. You don't want it too close, and you do have a half inch of seam allowance up there, but I think this placement looks fine. So, we can pin it down. Make sure you get the corners. One more pin, and we can stitch this pocket up. This time I want to sew right along the edge of the pocket. It's called edge stitching. Lower the foot, and I can begin stitching. Definitely backstitch, because the corners of the pocket will need a little reinforcement. And just continue along. I find when I'm stitching close to the edge, it helps that I can see in that little space in the middle of the presser foot. It helps me stay consistent. (sewing machine whirs) And I'm going to do the same pivoting technique when I get to each corner. (sewing machine whirs) So about here I probably want to use my hand on the flywheel and stop when I'm right near the very corner with the needle down. Lift up the foot, pivot, put the foot back down, and continue. (sewing machine whirs) And approaching the end of the pocket. (sewing machine whirs) Just wanna slow down, maybe take that last stitch with your hand, and backstitch. Might even want to backstitch twice at the beginning and end of this pocket. Just to make sure it's nice and secure. And you've sewn your first pocket.

Sew strap

- Now, I've pinned together the strap that I already pressed, and I'm ready to begin sewing it. Just like with the pocket, I want to sew right along the edge of the strap. And I always want to backstitch. (sewing machine whirs) Just make sure that your edges are really even or you could be sewing, but not catching the bottom layer. (sewing machine whirs) And we need to sew along the other edge as well. So if you want, you can just pivot and stitch across to get to the other side. (sewing machine whirs) Get yourself positioned. And we can just sew right up along the other side. Even though this edge is a fold, so it's already connected, it's going to make it a more secure strap if we stitch it up too. (sewing machine whirs) I've turned the bag right side out, so the seam allowance is on the inside. And I'm just gonna make some marks where I want to place my straps. Let's say about four inches in from the side seam. Now I can take the strap. You might wanna look and see if

there's a right side and wrong side, meaning one side might look a little better. The good side is the one you wanna face down. I'm centering the strap over the mark, and I'll put a pin to hold it in place. You'll notice that I pinned the straps on upside down so that the raw edge of the strap lines up with the raw edge of the bag. This is how I need to sew it on so that when you flip it up, it'll be right-side up. And right now I'm just temporarily stitching them in place so that when I sew the final seam, the strap can't move around. So, for this seam, I just need to sew anywhere less than a half inch. This is called basting because I'm just doing a temporary stitch that's not really going to show later. (sewing machine whirs) But giving it a little backstitching will reinforce the straps for later. And again on the other side, anywhere less than half an inch from the edge. (sewing machine whirs) So I've sewn one strap in place, and I'll repeat on the other side.

Add corner

- Now I'm going to show you how to make a three dimensional boxed corner, which will give your bag a little bit of depth. So, you've got your bag that's sewn around the three sides. And you wanna open it up so that you're pinching the center of each side together, and your side seams are lined up, one on top of the other. Come down to the corner. Pull it out so that your corners are nice and neat, and open up these seams. You wanna make sure that the side seam is laying right on top of the bottom seam. And the way that you can check that is to take a pin, stick it through, and make sure it's coming up centered over the seam, and you can adjust it if it's not. So now I'm going to mark where I wanna sew. Let's say two inches up will be a good spot. You can draw a line straight across. That's gonna give me a nice, about a three inch seam for the boxed corner. And I can pin it to keep it flat as I sew. And take it right over to the machine and stitch it up. So I wanna sew right on that line. (sewing machine whirs) So I've stitched across the corner, and now when I flip it right side out, I have a nice three dimensional boxed corner.

Chapter 5 - Finish Bag

Add lining

- I've gone ahead and sewn the three sides of the lining pieces just like I did with my bag. And then boxed the corners the same way, as well. And now I'm ready to put the two together. So I need to turn one of them right side out. I'll do the lining. It doesn't matter which one's right side out and which is right side in. You just need one of each. So, I'm going to take the lining and put it right side out inside the bag. And my straps are inside, in between the two layers. It might seem a little strange, but that's how it should be. You want to match up the two side seams around this perimeter. If it seems a little confusing just make sure that your right sides are touching each other and then you'll know everything's okay. So I've got lining side seam matched up with bag side seam. Opening them up and pinning. So I will start by pinning both seams and then I'll pin around the entire top circumference. And by sewing the seam that connects the lining to the bag, it's actually putting the whole bag together and it will almost be done. There will just be one more seam after that to finish it off. That's probably enough pins for me, but you might want to use a few more. And I'm ready to start sewing. I just need to make sure to leave an opening about four inches wide at one end so that I can put my hand in and turn the entire thing right side out. So let's take it to the machine. I'm going to start sewing about two inches past the side seam. Back stitch. Make sure everything's flat. I'm using my standard 1/2 inch seam allowance. And every time you get to one of those straps, just make sure it's laying down and flat. It doesn't get twisted. And I'm almost the whole way around. I need to remember to stop before I get to where I started so I have a hole. This

is one of the rare times when you want a hole or you won't be able to turn your bag right side out. Okay, I'm about two inches from the seam at the end. I'm going to stop there. So now I've sewn around the entire top and I've got this hole, which I can use to turn everything out. And at first it might seem like you have a Siamese twin bag, but you just need to tuck the lining side into the bag side. Line everything up. So the bag is basically finished. We just need to give the top edge a little press, stitch around it one more time to close up the hole, and our bag will be finished.

Finish

- I've pressed the top edge so everything lays nice and neat. And I've pinned across the section where the hole was so that I will be closing up the opening. And now I can go to the machine, and I'm going to stitch right close to the edge, just like I did on the straps. (sewing machine whirs) Be careful as you work that the straps don't get caught underneath the bag. Make sure they're sticking out the top. (sewing machine whirs) And just keep stitching around the entire top edge. (sewing machine whirs) If you want, you can go around the top edge twice, which is called double stitching. That will reinforce the top, but I'm just going to go once to save time. (sewing machine whirs) And I'm coming back around to where I began. (sewing machine whirs) So I'll just overlap about a half inch of those first stitches. Backstitch again. (sewing machine whirs) And this seam is finished. Oops. That's what happens when you don't turn the flywheel and lift up the take-up lever. You'll get all those threads. But when you raise it up, it will release. And look at that. You've sewn your first tote bag.