
Sew a Linen Bucket Bag with Elke Bergeron

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Bag of the Month - Series Promo
(upbeat music)

Overview

- Hi, my name is Elke Bergeron and I'm a designer. I specialize in leather goods. We're going to make a linen bucket bag today with some leather strapping and a leather tassel. First, we're going to sew together a linen shell and lining and add an inner pocket. Next, we'll make a leather strap and attach it to the bag. Finally, we'll add a leather tassel. The style of this bag can be translated in so many different ways with different fabrics. I like natural fabrics especially linen. I like the way it crinkles and wears as you use it.

Chapter 2 - Materials and Bag Construction

Materials and getting started

- For the sewing portion of this project, we'll need an ironing surface, an iron, a lining fabric. We're using linen here and this is cut to 18 by 36. We need your shell fabric which is also a linen and that's also 18 by 36 and an extra piece that matches your lining, cut to 15 by 12 and this will be a pocket. Scissor, chalk, pins, ruler and a sewing machine threaded with a color that will match your bag. We're going to start by assembling the pocket. We're gonna fold it in half lengthways and we're gonna sew all the way around the edges, leaving a three inch gap to turn it inside out. I'm going to put the fabric in the machine leaving about a 3/8 inch seam allowance and when we start our stitch, we're going to give it a nice little back stitch to hold it in place. (sewing machine whines) We need to make sure our edges are straight together. (sewing machine whines) and when we get to the corners we just, give it a pivot. This one's a little bit extra but when you turn it inside out, it's very forgiving. It's not the end of the world. (sewing machine whines) When I get to about my three-inch point, you just want enough space so that you can turn the fabric inside out. You're gonna wanna back stitch again. (mumbles) Cut the thread and then we're going to take the pocket and turn it inside out. First we might want to clip the corners so they don't get really bunched up so just cut the extra fabric on the corners and cut our thread and then let's just slowly and carefully, turn it around. Sometimes it can start looking like a ball but once you get it on the inside you can really, play with that and get all the pieces out where they need to be. And you just have a really nice rectangle when it's all finished, see. Here it comes. And what this does is it basically gives you a double layer for your inside pockets so it's a little bit stronger and a little bit more hardy than if you just sewed a single-layer pocket on there. I've pressed my pocket flat and now we're gonna position it on the inside lining. The easiest ways to find your middle. We're going to make this into two pockets actually is to fold your pocket in half and give it a good crease, especially with the linen, it shows really nicely. You can see it right away. Then you'll fold your shell just slightly. You wanna make sure it's even and just give it a light crease to just show where your center is on the shell. Once you open it up, it's really clear and I like to lay the folded side at the top because it's really nice and clean and neat as opposed to where it's been sewn together that we can attach by the sewing so we're going to lay it smack in the middle and you can see our lines measure up. We'll drop it down by four inches so just a little bit more and make it nice and even then we'll take a

couple pins, as many as you feel comfortable with attaching to keep it in place. Specially do to the tops. And we're through maybe just all the corners just to keep it from shifting around. Alright, now let's sew our pocket onto the lining. For attaching the pocket, I like to go closer than $\frac{3}{8}$. I actually like to do as much of an edge stitch as I can so you would call that you know, maybe $\frac{1}{8}$ stitch. The three inches that we left in the hole is now ironed in and shut and we'll close that hole by just sewing over the edges so let's start and then we're gonna do a back stitch at the beginning and the end again. Just make sure everything looks pretty straight. (sewing machine whines) And then we'll turn it up the corner. Just all that nice and taut and that'll help keep it straight. (sewing machine whines) Alright, do your back stitch again at the top (sewing machine whines) So now we have one nice-sized pocket. The option is you can leave it that way if you'd like use it for an iPad or something but I prefer to make two pockets so we'll put a seam right down the middle and that way, you can put your phone and your keys and a couple of different things in there. So we're going to position the needle right down the center. We're going to give, let's see, get it going. A nice back stitch to add some strength and we're gonna follow our crease all the way down. (sewing machine whines) Keeping it nice and even. (sewing machine whines) And then another back stitch. (sewing machine whines) Next, we're gonna sew our lining together. We can just fold it in half and if you'd like to use pins to keep it together, I might put just a couple to make sure the edges stay together. I'm using really loose fabric. If you're using anything more stiff, it'd would probably be a little easier. We're going to sew down one side and then we'll sew down the other side and then we'll add some corners so we'll have a nice rounded bottom. We're going to put the edge just under the foot and this time we can have about a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch seam allowance. I just like to follow the edge of the foot. That helps me guide it nice and straight. We'll do a back stitch. Again, at the beginning and the end. (mumbles) Take out the pin. (sewing machine whines) Okay, we'll just follow it carefully. (sewing machine whines) If you're using a fabric that has a right and a wrong side on it, you want to make sure that the right sides of your fabric are facing each other inside on the lining. (sewing machine whines) Alright, so we'll clip the threads and, then we're going to add our corners. Let's move all these pins away and to add the corners, basically, you wanna put your hand inside and you're going to line up the side seam with the bottom crease of the bag so it's nice and even and you'll come out with a triangle shape. We'll lay that flat down and to make it easier to keep your line straight, we're going to measure down about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches and make a line with our chalk and then, we'll go straight across and kind of make sure just by eyeballing it that everything looks even. And to make sure this doesn't wiggle around anymore, we'll just put in two pins to keep it straight. Put your corner back into the sewing machine and you're basically gonna follow your line and so it should. Adding the back stitch to the beginning and the end again. Let me make sure that's on there. (sewing machine whines) Here we go. And you'll clip your threads and you can cut your corner off about half an inch from the stitch. Sewing cut your second corner and then prepare your shell the same way you did your lining and we'll be ready to assemble the bag.

Assembling the bag

- Now that we've got our two pieces sewn together, we're going to quickly press out the seams before we assemble them together. You might wanna turn it a little bit sideways. You're gonna use your fingers a little bit. You can get close to the bottom but it's really the top part of the bag that's gonna be the most visible, especially for the lining. Press out your seams on your shell as well. Then we're going to put the bag together. You're going to start by turning the shell inside-out so it really starts to look like a bag. You'll leave your lining exactly the way you sewed it. You'll slip the lining on

the outside and put the shell on the inside. You can shake it around a bit and make sure that your side seams are put together before you start pinning. We're gonna pin a bit around, starting at the two side seams. Make sure they're both the right size, which looks pretty good. Measure it up nicely. Then continue around the bag and stick in a couple extras so it doesn't move around on you. Once you're finished pinning, we're going to sew about half an inch down all the way around the bag, leaving a nice section open in the center-back, about three to four inches so we can turn the whole bag inside-out. I took my tray off to make it easier for the bag to sew around. We're going to add the back stitch again, of course. (machine whirring) Now I have a nice sized opening in the back. I'm going to back stitch again so the stitches don't pull out when we're turning it inside-out. Now we're gonna pull your bag inside-out so the lining is where it should be and the shell is on the outside. You can reach in and basically, you need to pull everything to the outside. If you find that maybe your hole is a little bit small, you can always make it a little bit bigger. We're gonna wrestle it a little bit. Basically the same kind of thing like we did to the pocket. But because this is so big, you need to be a little bit gentle and kind of move around and pull it as you go. When you get to a certain point, you could probably shove it all inside and that helps a lot. And you end up with your two pieces. The next thing you're really gonna wanna do is get your lining inside your bag. You push it inside so it's in its proper place and give it a nice shake, because we're gonna press the top out so it's all nice and even and that will hide our hole so when we do our stitch around the top, it'll close the hole. You don't need an additional stitch for that. Let's press it out. I suggest you go nice and slow because it is balled up a bit. I like to press my lining inside about an eighth of an inch. From the outside, you'll only see the shell edge. You won't see the edge of the lining. When you press it in like so, it's much easier to sew that line. We're gonna press all the way around, being very careful to leave our spot and you go slowly. When you get to the part where the hole is, you're going to wanna tuck all your pieces inside so it looks even, just like the rest of your seam on the outside. Let's see. I think I'll deal with this first. We'll fold that on top. Leave eighth of an inch. If we want, that would also be an opportunity to drop a pin on there as well, to keep it in place because that's really the only section of the top that is gonna be moving around a little bit. Just make sure it stays there. Then continue slowly pressing out your edge. You're gonna wanna make an edge stitch going along the lining piece that you've dropped down an eighth of an inch. I like to start just before the hole so we get that nailed down first. For doing it all the way around, you don't necessarily need a back stitch because you can overlap and follow your stitch so you don't get extra thread marks when you get to the end. (machine whirring) When I get to the end here, instead of doing all the back stitches, we can just overlap it very carefully to an inch, inch and a half, and that'll be a really great way to complete the stitch. So the lining doesn't shift around too much, I like to add an additional top stitch, about an inch and a half down. My pattern has a stripe, so it might be easier for me to follow the stripe line. We've added a piece of tape here so I know where an inch and a half is, right to this edge. It actually ends up being right on this plate, but we're adding it anyway so it's easy to follow the edge. Let's start on the side seam. Then we're gonna go all the way around, just like we did the first time, but this time we're sewing on the shell side. Now that we get to the end, we're gonna do the same thing. We're going to carefully overlap our original seam. Now you're done with the sewing and your bag is almost finished.

Chapter 3 - Create Leather Strap and Tassel

Make a leather strap

- The tools and materials you'll need to make your leather strap are an eight to nine ounce quality of

veg tan belting leather, strap cutter, poly board, tape measure, a poly hammer with a soft top, scissors, rotary cutter, rivets, you're gonna need a small piece of leather to reinforce your rivets so it doesn't tear your fabric, water, sponge, you need an extra sponge with some leather conditioner, a pen, a rivet setter, a hole punch, an awl, an edge beveler, and an edge burnisher. We also have a hand press rivet setter that I like to use especially when you're putting in lots of rivets. But if you're just going to be putting in a couple rivets at home you can always use the regular rivet setter with the post. A lot of these tools that we use for this project are specific to leather and can be found at tandyleather.com. To make the strap we're going to need a strap cutter. And it comes in three separate parts. So you have your handle with a big screw that comes in the middle. You have the two sticks that are held together with a blade in the middle and can be adjusted on the end for the width of the leather. You also have the metal disk which will help keep the wooden sticks in place. So we're going to start with putting the hole of the disk on top of the screw, and you're kinda just going to balance it. You'll take the two sticks and you'll slide it on top of the disk so you have the ruler then facing you when you're looking at it. You can balance it with your fingers and you then tighten the top screw to the size that you need. So we are going to need an inch and a half for our strap, so we'll loosen this just a little bit. I'll slide this out until it says an inch and a half along the arm, and then we'll tighten it again. Really nice and tight so it doesn't move when you're pulling it down the leather. You wanna make sure that your leather has a really nice straight line on the edge so that your strap will come out even the whole way down. So to start your strap we can unroll our leather. Let's see, we'll get our straight side. And sometimes if it's really long I just leave it rolled up on the ends so I can reach it. Let's see. You'll put your straight side of the leather on the edge of the strap cutter and you'll pull down until you get a top flap coming. So you'll grab the top with your left hand, pull with your right, making sure that you have pressure on it so that the handle and the leather stay together the whole way down. And go slowly, because this like anything else, takes practice. If you'd like to do this and you don't have the strap cutter you can also use a long ruler and a rotary cutter. You just have to be really careful about making a straight line, and you might wanna just draw it out on the back first. When you're cutting the strap you generally wanna go the whole length of the skin. Because if you stop it with just the amount that you need, the next time you go to cut something you'll have a notch in your leather and you won't be able to have a full nice piece. So although this is much longer than what we need we'll just cut what we need and save the rest for a future project. Once your strap is cut, we're going to need to measure the proper length. So to do this I'm gonna make sure that my end is nice and straight, so I'll put it on a grid. Hold it tightly and just cut it off with a rotary cutter. Let's see, it's a little bit thick so take your time. There we go. Then using my tape measure, we're going to measure out 23 inches. Let's see, 22, 23. So we'll come down here and make a little mark with my nail. We know it's right on that line. And we'll do the same exact thing. So we'll make sure it's straight. And put the ruler down, and then we'll take, and just chop through it a little bit. So you can put the rest of your leather away for another project. Before we bevel the edges and get the leather strap finished, we're just going to miter the corners. Which is really, you can eyeball it, and just kind of chop off the corners. What this does is, once you put your rivets in, you don't want the corners kind of flipping up on you. I think this makes it a little bit neater and tidier. So we're gonna do that to all four sides. And once you get the corners off you're ready to bevel the edges. To bevel my edges I'm gonna use a number four edge beveler. You could also use something in a lower number like a two or a three if your leather's a little bit lighter. To bevel the edges you're gonna want to hold your beveler at a 45 degree angle. So basically you're shaving off the corner, so it's not so stiff and sharp on the edge. You're gonna hold the strap with your left hand

very firmly with your fingers cuz it's gonna wanna slide. So sometimes to get it started just get a good grip on it. I like to put my finger down at the bottom, hold it at an angle, and try and just get a nice steady push. This technique takes lots and lots of practice. It's not, it might look easy but it actually is something that requires a bit of muscle memory. You might wanna practice on some like old belts or maybe a belt that you bought from the thrift store, something like that so you have scrap to practice on. And then when you feel like you've mastered it to a certain extent then apply it to your project. Because sometimes it can look very easy but it actually takes a little bit of work. You're gonna wanna go around all your edges, even the small ones. And when you're finished with all sides then we'll flip it over and we'll do the back side. When you're beveling the back side you'll notice that it's a much more crumbly composite. It's kind of pressed leather. So if it's looser leather you'll, it might be a little bit difficult to come off, just do your best, and it'll be repaired a lot in the burnishing process. All right, so now we'll burnish the edges. You start by taking a damp sponge. It should be nice and clean. You're gonna wanna squeeze out the excess. We're gonna be rubbing this on the edge of the leather and you really don't wanna soak your leather, you just want it nice and damp. I like to do one side at a time so that it doesn't dry in the meantime. We're gonna just wipe it gently over the edges. All the way down the side to the tips. We'll give it one more. And then we're going to use our edge burnisher which comes with all different sizes for different thicknesses of leather. For this thickness we're going to use this medium size. You'll hold it and rub it really nice and vigorously to kind of push down all those fibers and make it nice and smooth. And when you've done it enough you'll realize it starts coming up with a really nice shiny smooth finish, which gives the strap a really nice look. The key is to make sure you do this while it's damp. If it's wet it just won't have the same effect. So you can always put a little bit more water on your edge if you find that it's drying out before you kind of get to it. Continue burnishing all the edges of your strap and then you'll be ready to condition. Using a sponge you're going to use leather conditioner which looks like a cream, it's really not an oil. You're gonna take the sponge and you'll wipe it all over every edge of your leather. And you can really rub it in there. It'll protect it and it'll also start it on its way to a nice beautiful color. So. And also don't be shy or skimp with the conditioner, you kinda wanna use a lot. So let's see, we'll use that piece, we'll flip it over, you wanna do all the sides and then you wanna go back and kinda push it into the edges as well. Let's just get a whole bunch in there. Yeah, in a one way, I mean you can never really have too much, so don't be afraid of overdoing it. Because if you do put on a bunch like right there you just rub it in. And then we'll get the sides. Once you finish conditioning your large strap you're gonna make a nice small strap so that we can attach the tassel to the bag. This length is five inches by half inch wide. You're going to do the same process and finishing that you did for the large strap with the beveling and the burnishing. Next we need to punch our holes so we can attach the straps to the bag. I use my awl for making the spots where we're going to be putting the rivets in. I center it on an inch mark, kind of in both directions, so we're half an inch up, and I like to go right to the edge, I'm on the one inch mark there. And then I'll do it evenly an inch away. Once you have your marks, you'll take your leather punch which is about an eighth of an inch, just long, just wide enough for your rivets to fit through. And we'll go and knock out all those holes. I'm putting my holes about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch from the edge. And the reason I'm kind of spreading everything out is so that when it's attached to the bag it's really securely put on the sides. If you put the rivets more in the middle or closer together with a lot of space on the sides, you're gonna find your leather curling up or not behaving on the bag like you would like. So we kind of just make it nice and wide but without going too close to the edge as well. So three eighths is probably a really good distance. So once you've made one side, the easiest thing

to do is to take your strap, fold it in half on itself, measure it up so it's totally even, and using your awl you can then mark where you need your next holes. So that we don't have to measure them out again. And we're going to do exactly the same thing. All right now it's ready to be attached to the bag. We can also punch the holes on our leather tassel at the same time since we have our leather tools out. For the tassel attachment, we're just going to do the first two holes that will be attached to the bag. So we'll go in about half an inch again from the end and you're gonna center it on your strap. And then we'll do another one an inch apart.

Prep rivets and attach strap to bag

- Before we attach the leather strap to the bag, we're going to need to make some little leather washers to protect the fabric from ripping against the edge, the sharp edge of the rivets. To do that we're going to need our hole punch that has about an eighth of an inch hole for the leather. We're going to give a space on our small leather piece so that when we put the rivet through there's plenty of room to cut. So the size only needs to be slightly bigger than the rivet head itself. It doesn't need to be huge. It just needs to be enough that if the rivet head curls in, it's not cutting into the fabric, instead it's cutting into the leather. So because we're going to have, I think, 10 rivets altogether on this bag, we're going to need to make 10 of these. So when you're finished, let's see, we have a general nice circle. You can clean it up as much as you'd like, but what it looks like is basically a leather washer. So every rivet before it's put on the bag will have a leather washer around it. Go ahead and make your 10 washers for your rivets so that next we can attach it to your bag. We're going to lay the bag, make sure the side is tucked in so that your side seam is facing up. And place our strap end approximately just over half an inch down from the top and you're going to want to visually put it, the side seam, right down the middle. To mark it, we'll take a pen, that we can then mark our fabric. So we can see where our rivets are going to need to go. We'll take a small leather punch which I can swap out the tip now 'cause we needed the large ones for the strap and we just need a really small, extra small it's called, stitching punch for fabric. Because fabric can stretch, you can push the rivets through. So we'll take our small punch and punch each of our spots that we just marked. Once we have our holes marked, we can take our leather washers and our rivets and just kind of feed them through so that you have all four are coming through the side. Once you get them coming up, you're going to lay the strap down on top of it, adjust your rivets so it all fits nicely and take the cap of your rivet. For this size of our strap because it's a kind of thick strap, we used medium sized rivets and that seems to work perfectly. Rivets come in four sizes, extra small, small, medium, and large. And for this a medium rivet works great. The caps snap on which is nice so they won't fall out as you're adjusting things and playing with it. I'm going to show you how to set the rivets in two different ways so you can see the options. One is the rivet setter which comes in two pieces. You slide it so that your rivet sits in the dome. Put it flat on the table. And then you take, take your hammer, and give it a really nice hit, and it should be totally set in there. We'll do one more with the hand set. Let's make sure that, yep, it feels good. And this also can take some practice. If your post is too long on your rivet, it might bend or shift so it's really important to get posts that are a similar size for what you're doing. For anyone that's putting in a lot of rivets or actually even snaps, it's nice to invest in a nice hand press. These are super sturdy and everything goes in really nice and straight. And they're much easier to use. For this technique, we'll take the bottom of the rivet and you put it into this loaded spring bottom and you can feel when it's caught and stuck in there. You just hold it steady and lower this slowly and it's in and it's absolutely perfect every time. So this is really fast and it gives really great results. Now we're going to flip it

over and do the same exact thing to the other side. To attach your tassel, we're going to add the leather strap, the small leather strap, and it's going to be on the back of your bag. So the back is actually where your pockets are. So make sure before you do your markings that you're on the correct side. So my back side of the bag is facing up. I'm going to measure from the edge of the strap. So the edge I have about 16, let's mark it 16. So here's my center. The first hole will be centered between the two stitch lines and the second one will go below it. And we're going to do the same thing. We're going to mark it with a pen. And when we punch the holes for this one, you want to make sure that you either clear out beneath it or you can always just slide a piece in between. Let's make sure everything's clear. And we'll punch our holes just like we did for the strap. And we'll get our rivets with the washers. Where did it go? Put them on in the back side, push them through, add your top. And your caps. And then set your rivets like you did for your straps. And now we're ready to add a tassel.

Create and add a leather tassel

- The final step to complete our bag is to make our leather tassel. It's very simple and very straightforward. I'm starting off with a nice long piece of leather. Mine happens to be a veg tan, it's a little bit thick, but any quality that you like that you feel matches your bag would be perfect. To cut the strips for our tassel, we're going to need a ruler and a rotary cutter. We also got a nice big cutting mat, because the size of the leather was too big for our small one. My leather is eighteen inches long, which will make it, when it's doubled, it'll make a nice nine inch string. So basically, you're going to take your ruler, and you're going to measure about an eighth of an inch all the way down, and you're going to need to just eyeball it. This is something that you're going to be doing a lot of these strips. So you just go slowly. Start at the bottom. Hold your ruler really nice and steady and tight. And just scooch it over another eighth of an inch. We're gonna go ahead and I'm gonna cut about 14 pieces. Alright, those are my 14 pieces. I'm gonna grab the first 13. I like to lay them all in the same direction, and I kind of just pick them up and keep layering them on. And the last piece we're going to use to wrap around and secure the tassel. If your leather is really thin, you might wanna cut extra pieces so it's a little bit more full. You're gonna put it through the ring and make it so that the bottom is even on the front and the back. Once you get your ends pretty even, you're going to take your last piece. And the way we're going to wrap it is you have an end that will stick up about two inches, then you'll go down an additional two inches and make a loop. Bring it back and put it under your thumb. From there, we're just going to wrap. So we start going counter-clockwise. Keep your leather nice and taut. You're going to keep adjusting your tassel as you're wrapping, because it's doing a squeezing motion. So you just carefully keep going. And the length of your tie will depend on how long your wrap will be. So if you want a really nice long wrap, just make your last lace longer than the others. Let's see if we can get one more. Alright, when you get to the end, you need to slip it through the bottom loop and hold it nice and steady. You'll go back to the top lace and pull it. So you're going to kind of wiggle and pull so that it starts fitting beneath your wrap, and that's what's going to hold it secure. If you have a hard time, if you wrapped it very tightly, you can always grab a small awl or something similar or a screwdriver to try and loosen it up a little bit so you can get it more straight so it is a little bit of a push and a pull. So once you kind of get it right in the center, I feel like that's a really secure spot. Then you'll take your ends, and you can just snip them off. You've got yourself a tassel. If you don't like that the bottom is a little bit uneven, it's really easy to just take some scissors. I actually like to cut them at angles. So I'll kind of give it a little bit of a haircut, and we'll just snip it. Making it even but not perfect. And give

this one guy a little... So that one, it's a little bit loose. It has a nice even, but uneven, feeling. Alright, this is it, now we can add the tassel to the bag. We'll take our strap. We can easily just punch a hole halfway down, centered. And what I actually like to do is actually measure and see how far in we're going to need to go for the ring. Because all the rings are different widths and sizes. This is a 1.5 inch brass ring, and I like to get my brass hardware at Buckleguy, they have a lot of different rings available at really nice quality. So we'll flip it over, give it some space, use our awl, and mark where we need to put the next hole. On the backside, which is the bottom, you're gonna put your rivet. I'll turn it around, I'll push the cap on, and throw it in the rivet press and secure it. As you can see by the soft nature of this bag, the leather tassel is really what keeps the bag closed. You know, this is one of those bags, the construction is really simple, but you can use any color leather, any fabric you like. If you prefer different colors for your belting leather, you can do that as well. So it can be customized to just about anything you'd like. We have some other variations that include just canvas, where we popped the stripe on the inside, and in this version we added a snap closure so that it could be fully closed. We've also made it up in leather, with just all black leather, which is a really simple bucket bag. The options are really endless, and you can have a lot of fun with making different combinations.