

Supply List for Scrap Happy Handbag Workshop

Note: I'll bring kits so you can learn the basics of making a simple bag, but after we make that bag, you can make a bag with a patchwork body. I'll be bringing some fabrics you can use for the patchwork bag, but please bring decorator-weight fabrics from your own stash for a greater variety of choices.

Please mark your tools and rulers with your initials, an address label, or another identifier. It's easy for things to go missing!

- Sewing Machine: At home, I use an industrial straight-stitch machine to make handbags. If you have a choice of machines to bring, pack a heavier-duty one. I tried making a bag on my Featherweight at home, and it was just too small. I'm bringing my mechanical Bernina for class. A wide harp (opening) on your machine is a real plus.
- Basic Sewing Supplies: seam ripper, scissors, rotary cutter, a few pins, extra needles, etc.
- A cutting mat for trimming that will fit into your sewing area. I'll be bringing larger mats for cutting bag bodies, lining, and handles.
- I'll bring acrylic rulers for us to share, but if you have any smaller rulers, please bring them.
- Thread: I strengthen and beautify seams with "topstitching." I put the topstitching thread in the bobbin and work from the wrong side for this technique.

So for class, you'll want three kinds of thread:

Topstitching

Construction and

Invisible / nylon thread. (This is optional, but I use invisible thread a lot.)

You can prewind bobbins with the invisible and topstitching threads, and the construction thread will be used through the needle.

- Optional:

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- Large buttons for button tabs

Note: I'll bring fleece scraps for handle and bag bottom stuffing, and leather scraps for zipper pulls.

Fabric Selection: Decorator fabrics are lovely for handbags because they are made for wear and tear, and most are washable, even if they aren't marked as such. You can always wash a small square to test.

We want lovely fabric with body that will wear well, but not too heavy. We might be sewing through 6 or 8 layers of fabric and don't want to break needles. If you have questions about the weight of your fabrics, please show them to me.

In class, we will make bags out of a rectangle measuring about 16" x 28". The first bag will be made from a plain rectangle, the second from patchwork. We are exploring two things: the basics of bag making and, second, making fun patchwork for the body. You can make bags in many sizes and shapes using the techniques we'll use, but this is a good basic size.

Patchwork and the topstitching naturally adds body to your outer bag fabric. I like a bag that will stand up and stay open. But if your bag seems too floppy, choose a lining with body. The inside and outside pockets also add structure. There's a happy medium between floppiness and stiffness. The stiffer and larger the bag, the harder it is to get under your machine. The idea is that if your outer bag needs more body, use a lining with more body. If your outer bag has enough body, use a lighter-weight lining. One can add interfacing for more body, but I avoid that step if I can.

Some people like a light-colored lining that makes it easier to find things, but some like it darker to hide dirt.

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If you decide not to use a zippered closure and opt for a button tab, choose something wonderful for your lining as it will show.

Choosing fabric can be time-consuming! Bring a small stash of materials that you like if you are working from your stash. This technique is ideal for using the fabric in fabric sample books. Early on in the process, watch for fabric to use for your handles. Handles take a lot of wear and get dirty, and although I'm usually using scraps, I do buy fabric for handles. I'm always on the lookout for nice denim and heavier cottons.

For handbags, I usually cut two handles 3 ½ " wide and 28" long. This is a good length so that you can carry your bag at your side or over a winter coat on your shoulder. But you need more of this fabric than for just the handles. It's easier to pull the look together if some of your handle fabric is also in your patchwork. Think of your wardrobe; I like to include black or denim blue when possible. Think of purchasing ¼-½ yard of heavier fabric if you don't already have some in your stash.

For crossbody bags, I cut handles 3" by 58" plus 10" for the loop. Again, watch for denim that is usually 58" wide. Think of purchasing a minimum of ⅛ of a yd.

For outer pockets, consider using little pieces of stunning fabric to showcase.

Making the patchwork fabric is my favorite part of the process. Don't worry about making too much. You can use the leftovers to make another bag, a crossbody bag, pencil cases, organizing pouches, book covers....

Don't agonize over your fabric choices too much. Your first bags will be a learning process. When in doubt, the right pockets can pull everything together. My techniques are industrial, practical, and fast; they are not fine-tailoring. Feel free to improve on any of these methods. I do think about improvements as I work, but I also want to have fun every step of the way.

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