

The Caroline Bag

A SewGreen Reuse Project

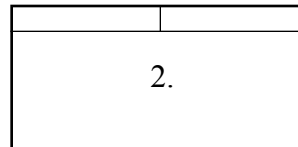
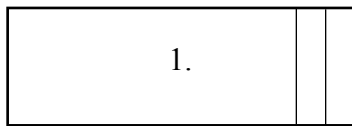
The Caroline Bag is a flat tote with a finished dimension of approximately 14 inches wide by 14 inches deep. It has two loop handles that can be made of the same material as the bag, or from webbing or heavy grosgrain ribbon.

To be a true Caroline Bag, all materials (except thread) must be reused, second-hand, re-purposed, or otherwise already existing and not purchased new. Anything from a second-hand store, yard sale etc., or currently found in your closet or sewing room is fair game!

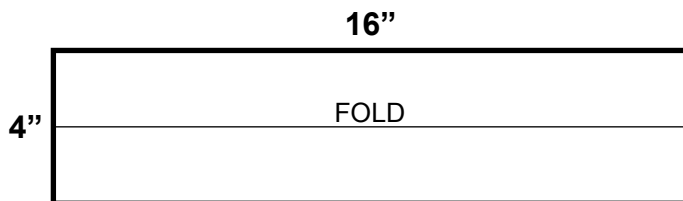
You need a sewing machine, scissors, chalk, and a measuring tape. Recommended fabrics are lightweight denims, twills, corduroy, muslin, polished cotton, linen, homespun blends—anything that is durable and has some body or stiffness. Dark solids, stripes, plaids, and patterns are fine.

Instructions

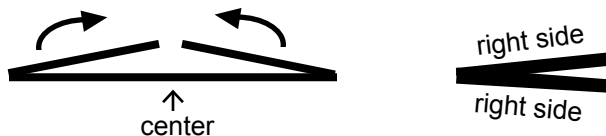
1. Choose and cut the fabric. For the bag, you need a rectangle of fabric, approximately 32 inches by 16 inches. The handles are made from two rectangles, approximately 16 inches by 4 inches. **SUGGESTED CUTTING:** 1.) Cut a piece that is 40 x 16, and cut the handles from the end. 2.) Cut a piece that is 32 x 20 and cut a strip along the side for the handles.



2. Make the handles.



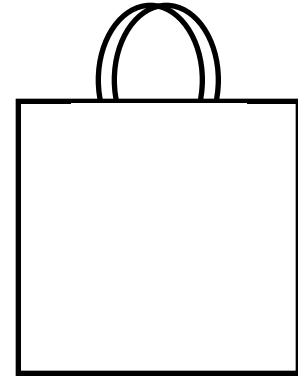
Estimate visually or draw a chalk line lengthwise down the wrong-side center of the handle. Fold the edges into the center, so that right sides are up. Fold toward the center again, so that you end up with a 1-inch wide strip. Finger-press it to hold a crease, or use an iron.



Top-stitch along the lengthwise edges of the handle. You may want to zigzag the ends of the handle to keep it from fraying.



Repeat. (Or make one 32" handle and cut it in half after you have top-stitched.)
IN A HURRY? Use webbing, woven straps, or heavy grosgrain ribbon.



The Story of the Caroline Bag

ITHACA NY—In a public gesture of “anonymous generosity,” sewing enthusiasts contributed over 1,000 reusable tote bags to a collaboration between SewGreen and Energy Independent Caroline. The home-sewn bags were made from all reused or existing materials.

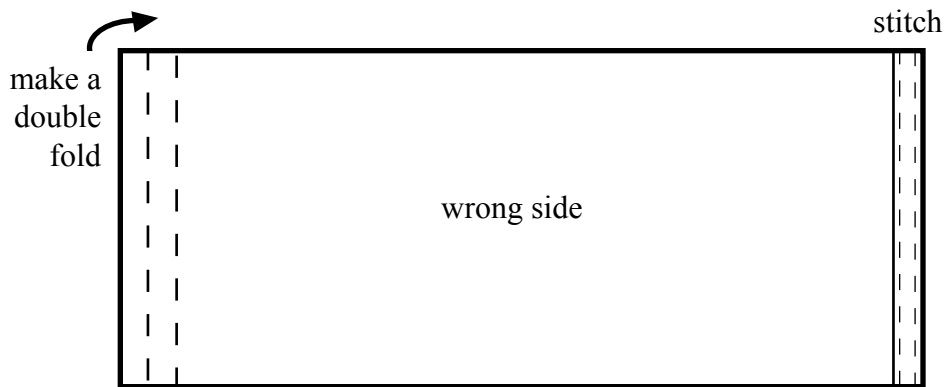
On April 19, 2008, a bag containing an energy-saving compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL), was distributed to each household in Caroline NY, a rural town in Upstate’s Tompkins County. Giving a CFL and relevant literature to every one of the 1,400 homes in the town was intended to raise awareness about renewable energy and conservation.

Sew-ins were held in Ithaca and Caroline, and Cornell University class, Girl Scouts, a 4H club, and countless community members sewed for the cause.

SewGreen delivered 1,010 bags, each uniquely beautiful, to “Lighten Up Caroline,” which made up the rest with reusable bags from a supermarket chain.

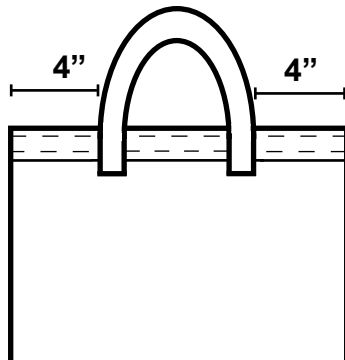
The grassroots collaboration garnered considerable media and public attention, and was celebrated as a success for creative reuse and encouraging a more sustainable lifestyle.

3. Hem the top edges of the bag.

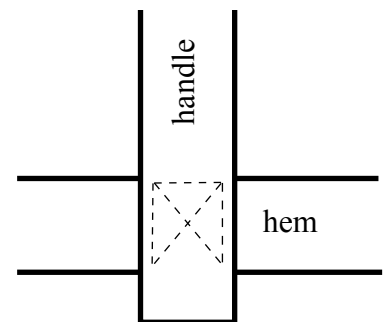


Fold the raw edge to the inside (wrong side) of the fabric, and turn a neat hem, approximately one inch in depth, along what will become the top edges of the bag. *Fold twice to conceal the raw edge.* Stitch along both edges of the hem. Hem both ends of the rectangle.

4. Attach the handles.



With the wrong side up, measure 3 to 4 inches in from the outside edges and make a chalk mark. Using the marks as a guide, pin or hold the ends of the handles securely to the hem. Let the ends of the handle extend about one-half inch below the hem. Stitch each end using an “x” pattern.



5. Sew up the sides with a French seam. Oh la la.

Fold your rectangle, which now has handles attached to each end, in the middle, wrong side to wrong side. Stitch up the sides, about 1/4 to 3/8 from the edge.

Turn the bag inside out, so that now the right sides are facing each other. Stitch up the sides, about 1/2 to 5/8 inches from the edge.

You're done! Turn the bag right-side out to admire your handiwork!

A PDF file of this instruction sheet can be found at www.sew-green.org. You may duplicate this pattern for not-for-profit use, but please ask us for permission to distribute multiple copies, and credit SewGreen, which developed the pattern. For more info, call 607-277-7611.

SewGreen, P.O. Box 681, Ithaca NY 14851-00681.

Note: This is a basic version of the Caroline Bag, intended to be easily sewn by beginners.

You may want to employ other construction techniques or refinements, such as sewing the ends of the handles under the hem, trimming excess fabric from the French seam, or adding trim or decoration.

Contrasting fabric can be used for the handles, the bag can be lined and the handles can be made longer to fit over the shoulder.

Make it your own. Reused materials only, please!