

a gift bag to keep sewing tutorial



This sweet patchwork gift bag uses fabric remnants to make a bag that will be treasured as much as the gift it holds.

MATERIALS & TOOLS (photo a)

- Assorted fabric: 1 piece of interior fabric and scrap rectangles of fabric to cover the interior fabric (see note)
- 2 contrasting colors of embroidery floss
- Pins
- Hand sewing needle
- Iron
- Selvedge edge of fabric strip or ribbon to use for the tie closure

There are times I find myself deeply consumed by tasks like untangling a mess of thread or smoothing out packing paper into neat, folded stacks. Mindless projects like these might be considered a waste of time and I often flow right into them without intending to. I end up here when I need a distraction or when I am feeling overwhelmed, and this time is often accompanied by constructive mind wandering. Today I was meticulously removing tape from a large stack of saved tissue paper so I could reuse it for gift wrapping. While deep in the project, thinking about gift giving and gift wrapping, I decided it was time to stop and instead make some gift bags out of fabric scraps. I made progress in my pile of tissue paper and decided that the rest of it can be used in packing boxes. I am just as excited about these little gift bags as I am about the gifts that they will hold this holiday season. They use remnants of my plant-dyed fabrics, and they are a sweet little gift in themselves.

This project is completely adaptable to what you want your bag to hold. Here are three examples: a bag for an awkward item (a wooden spoon), a bag for a little journal or a card (simple cards sometimes hold the very best gifts, like invitations for an adventure or a special experience), and a bag for one of the most common gifts of our time (a gift card).



A note on fabric and thread: I used 5-ounce plant-dyed organic cotton/linen fabric for this project. Use what you have on hand, I just recommend that you use a lighter weight fabric (linen, cotton muslin, or quilting fabric) so your bag isn't too stiff. The weight of the interior lining doesn't have to be the same weight as the patchwork, but I recommend using a very light weight fabric. I prefer to rip my fabric. I like the look of the raw edges, and I also appreciate how ripping fabric makes an actual straight line with the weave of the fabric. I did all the stitching on my bags with 2 plies of embroidery floss, and I randomly alternated the two contrasting colors. If this feels like too much hand stitching for you, you could use a sewing machine.

- Embroidery floss has 6 plies (threads) and the plies are easily separated. Long strands can get easily tangled, cutting them to 18-inch strands helps prevent this. It also helps to very gently separate the pieces from the center of the strand instead of starting at one end.
- If your thread becomes too short while you are sewing, attach a new piece of thread to the end with a knot. Tie it close to the fabric and hide the knot.



1. Measure the height and width of the item. **(photo b)** This is straight forward with a flat item but requires a little more consideration with an object with depth and irregularity.

2. **BAG WIDTH:** Decide which dimension will be the opening of the bag. In my sample bags, I used the small dimension for the opening. **For a flat item:** (like a gift card) the width of the bag is the width of the item plus at least 1.5" (allowing for at least .75" on each side of the item). You may want to make it a bit wider in case you want to tuck another trinket inside. **For a non-flat, irregularly shaped item:** You can incorporate the depth of the sides of the item into the width measurement, but I think it is easier to wrap the fabric halfway around the item at its widest spot and then add an extra 1.5".

3. **BAG HEIGHT:** **For a flat item:** the height of the bag is 2 x the height of the item plus at least 3" (this allows for 1.5" on each top edge of the bag). Be generous with fabric at the top of the bag; if there are wide corners on your gift, you will need more length so you can gather and tie the fabric. **For a non-flat, irregularly shaped item:** You can incorporate the depth of the base and top of the item into the height measurement, but I think it is easier to place your object in the folded fabric strip and gather the fabric at the top. Trim or rip the fabric a few inches above the gather at the height you want your bag (this depends on how much bunched fabric you want above your tie). Keep in mind that you will be folding the top edge over ¼" in step 7. **NOTE:** If you don't have a large enough piece of fabric for the interior lining, you can piece together smaller pieces to get the dimension you need.

4. Iron the interior piece of fabric and your fabric rectangles.

5. Lay out your rectangular pieces to cover the interior fabric. They should overlap by at least ¼" to ensure that both layers will be caught in the stitching that will connect the patches to the interior fabric. Vary the way that the pieces overlap. When you are happy with the layout, pin the pieces to the interior fabric. **(photos c & d)**

6. With 2-ply embroidery floss, stitch the patches on to the interior fabric. I used the whip stitch and randomly alternated two colors of thread. You could use a more decorative stitch if you prefer. **(photos e, f & g)**

7. At the opening of your bag, fold the top edges of both sides toward each other by ¼" to create a finished edge. **(photo h)** If your seam is long you may want to iron and pin the fold in place. Make two lines of the running stitch to secure the seam. **(photo i)**

8. Fold your bag in half with the wrong side facing out and whip stitch the sides closed. Stitch close to the edge while making sure you catch all the layers of fabric in your stitches, and add a few reinforcing stitches at the bottom corners. **(photos j & k)**

9. Flip your bag right side out. Decide which side will be the front and which will be the back. I recommend putting your item(s) in the gift bag at this point so you can decide where you want to place your tie. Tack the center of your tie closure down with a few stitches centered on the back side, a bit down from the top edge (how far you go down will be determined by how much space you have and how much "bunch" you want at the top). **(photo l)**

10. Your gift bag is complete! **(photo m)**



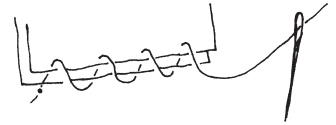
GUIDE TO BASIC STITCHES

THE WHIP STITCH

This stitch is used to connect two pieces of fabric along the outer edge or to connect two overlapping pieces.

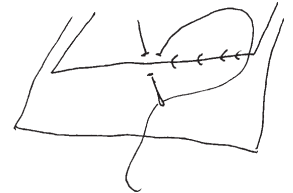
• TO CONNECT TWO PIECES ALONG THE OUTER EDGE:

Thread your needle and tie a knot at the tail. Start your first stitch between the two layers of felt to hide the knot. Wrap your thread around the two lined up edges and push your needle up through the two layers of felt. Repeat, spacing your stitches evenly.



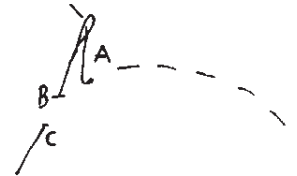
• CONNECTING TWO OVERLAPPING PIECES

Thread your needle and tie a knot at the tail. Starting at the back side, poke your needle up through both layers of felt, 1/8" in from the edge and then push your needle through the single layer of felt, directly across from your first stitch and close to the overlapping edge. Continue your next stitch up through both layers, and then straight down through the single layer again with evenly spaced stitches. Make sure you are not pulling the stitches so tight that you cause the fabric to bunch.



RUNNING & DOUBLE RUNNING STITCH

- Start with the threaded needle on the back side of your felt and bring it up through the felt (A) and back down into the front side (B).
- Pull it the whole way through, then bring the threaded needle back up through the felt from the back side (C).
- Try to keep the size of the stitches and the space between them consistent.
- A double running stitch is used to make a solid line.
- Start with a running stitch. When you reach the end, reverse your direction and fill in the space between the stitches with another running stitch so you have a solid line.



ABOUT KATA GOLDA:

Alison Kaplan is the creative force behind Kata Golda, a craft studio in the mossy seaside town of Port Townsend, WA. Kata Golda is a flourishing business that explores crafts such as needlework, letterpress printing, bookbinding, block printing, hand-thrown pottery, hand-dyed textiles, and jewelry making. Alison finds inspiration in the woods, farmlands, and beaches of her Pacific Northwest wonderland. See her work at www.katagolda.com.

