

LARAMIE SQUARED TOTE

Designed and woven by Constance Hall

Instructions by Constance Hall and Gail Matthews

Difficulty rating: Easy

Size: Unfelted 21" x 14" x 7"; Felted 17" x 10" x 6"

Yarn: Mountain Meadow Wool Laramie Worsted Mountain Merino, 2 ply, 196 yards/skein, 3.5 oz. Natural Cream, 160 yds. (1 skein); Natural Grey Light, 128 yds. (1 skein); Natural Grey Medium, 160 yds. (1 skein); Natural Grey Dark, 352 yds. (2 skeins).

Note: If you substitute different yarns, consider making sample blocks and felting them, as some yarns or colors may felt different amounts.

Other notions, equipment or tools: Tapestry needle, US size 4 double pointed knitting needles, 4 buttons, 4 rectangular rings, 1 decorative buckle, 10 small magnets, or 8 small magnets plus 1 magnetic bag closure. Plastic canvas, 5 mesh, about 5-1/2" x 16-1/2", to stiffen the bottom of the bag. About 3/4 yard each of fabric and heavyweight iron-on interfacing, for bag lining.

Weaving: Weave 100 squares:
 Natural Cream (C): 20 squares
 Natural Grey Light (L): 16 squares
 Natural Grey Medium (M): 20 squares
 Natural Grey Dark (D): 44 squares

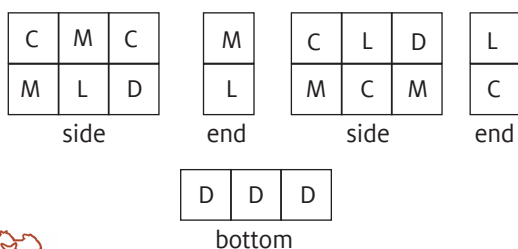
Weave the end back into each square before you take it off the loom. Leave the long tail for sewing the squares together.

The body of the bag uses 76 squares. 4 squares are for the tabs, 4 squares for the buckle strap, and 16 for the 2 handles, all in color D.

Overview: This is an easy color block bag. Each color block is 4 woven squares sewn together. After assembling the bag, an I-cord is knitted on the top. The bag, handle, tabs, and strap are felted. The tabs are sewn on and the handle is attached. This bag is fully lined. The lining has heavyweight interfacing ironed on the wrong side of the fabric. There is plastic canvas grid in the bottom, under the lining, for stiffness.

Assembly

Bag: Sew 4 squares of the same color together. Use the long tail from each square to sew it to its neighbor. Make sure to use the same color yarn to sew each color block together. The squares on the bottom are all the dark grey as well as the tabs and the handles. Layout the 4 square color blocks and plan where each color goes so the same color blocks don't end up side by side. Suggested layout:



Handles: Sew 8 squares together in a long strip. Fold the long edges together and sew with matching yarn into a tube. Repeat for second handle.

Tabs: Fold a square in half and sew side closed. Sew both ends closed. Make four.

Buckle strap: Sew 4 squares together into a strip. Fold and sew the long edge together into tube. If desired, fold one end to make a point. Sew closed.

Knitted on I-cord top edge:

Cast on three stitches on a double pointed knitting needle. Knit the stitches but don't turn the work. Slide stitches to end of needle and insert needle into loop of edge of square, working on the wrong side of the bag. Knit the edge loop together with a cast on stitch and knit the last two stitches. Don't turn the work! Slide stitches to the end of the needle and pick up the next loop. Repeat until you are back at the starting point, then bind off leaving a long tail. Use the tail to sew the ends of the I-cord together. Hide a couple of inches of the tail in the I-cord and trim.



When felting a bag like this, the top edge tends to flare out quite a bit. If you skip picking up a loop about every 6 loops, it will cause the top to draw in. This helps counteract the top flaring out when felted.



Felting: Soak the bag in warm water with a touch of dish detergent for 30 minutes. Start the fulling process by hand, with a gentle swishing and agitation. The goal is to start the felting gently before going into the washer with its more aggressive agitation.



Place handles and tabs and buckle strap into lingerie bag and into washer. Add the wet bag, being careful not to stretch the bag. This bag went through the washing cycle two full times. Not the rinse or spin, just the agitation, about 20 minutes. Check it often and when it seems fully felted let it rinse and spin. It might need two rinses to get all the soap out of the now-thick fabric.

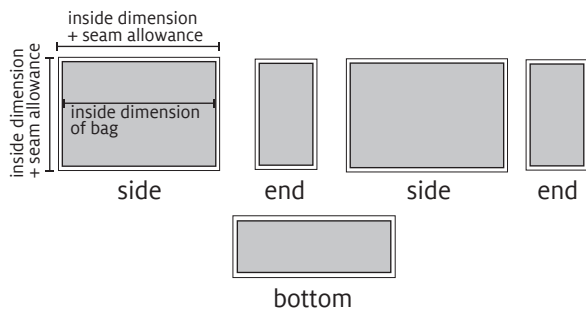


Remove from the washer immediately. Block the bag into the desired shape. Pay particular attention to establishing the bottom and side edges. These can be folded and clipped to keep the folds sharp. Lay flat to dry, turning it over often.

Flatten and stretch the tabs and handles and strap while they are wet. Lay flat to dry.

Finishing

Make the Lining: Measure the inside dimensions of the bottom of your bag, and cut the plastic canvas to fit. Tack the canvas in place at each corner and in the middle of each long side.



Measure the inside dimensions of the sides and ends. Add 1/2" to each measurement for a 1/4" seam allowance (or more if you prefer). This gives you the sizes to cut for the lining.

Iron the heavyweight iron-on interfacing to the wrong side of the fabric, following the instructions for your interfacing. You can make a paper pattern for your lining pieces, or draw the on the interfacing, Cut out the lining pieces. Sew the sides and ends together, right sides together, in the order shown above. Sew the second end to the first side to complete the loop. Attach the bottom lining piece with the corners aligned with the seams. You may find it easier to sew the bottom on if you clip into the corners of the sides.

Folded ends: The folds are held in place with magnets sewn into the lining. Take four magnets and stack them together. If you maintain the orientation of the magnets, all the folds are held together. Using a felt tip pen, mark the top magnet with a +, then turn it over and mark it with a -. Repeat for the remaining magnets.



orientation of magnets

Using small squares of lining fabric, make pockets on the wrong side of the lining. Insert a magnet using the orientation shown above, and sew the pocket closed. The pockets are approximately 1" from the seam and 1-1/2" from the top edge of the bag. You may choose to adjust these measurements depending on how much your bag felted and how the end folds up. Repeat for the other end of the bag.

Tabs: Thread a tab through a rectangular ring, and fold the tab over the edge of the bag and sew down. Repeat for all tabs. Make sure the tabs line up on the front and back, and that they are the same distance from the ends. Sew the decorative buttons on the front of the tabs.



Handles: Thread the handle through the ring and sew the end to the back of the handle.

Buckle Strap: Insert a magnet into the buckle strap. Use matching yarn to tack the magnet in place. Sew the buckle strap to the back side of the bag. Sew a magnet into the lining to match where you want the buckle to stay. A snap could also be used or a decorative button instead of the buckle.

Insert the Lining: Put the lining into the bag, with the interfacing against the felted fabric. Fold the top edge of the lining toward the felted fabric so it lies neatly against the knitted I-cord. Hand sew the lining into place.