

Sew Powerful Purse Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Where do I find the patterns? Which one should I make?

There are two patterns to from which to choose – they can be found on the Sew Powerful website; for the Beginner Pattern:

<https://www.sewpowerful.org/products/sew-powerful-beginner-purse-pattern> and for the Intermediate Pattern: <https://www.sewpowerful.org/products/sew-powerful-purse-pattern>

If you are a beginner sewist or have no bag making experience, the Beginner pattern will be the better choice for starting out. Advanced beginners and Intermediate sewists may enjoy making the Intermediate pattern. The Intermediate pattern has a gusset while the Beginner version has boxed corners. Download both patterns! The flaps are interchangeable regardless of which body style you choose to make. Both patterns are also free.

How do I print the pattern? My pattern is printing too small; what do I do?

When you first get your pattern, either from the website/email or here in our files, it will be pulled up in your browser. Save the pattern file to your computer and open it in Adobe. If you do not do this, your pattern pieces will not be true to size.

Open the file and select print. In the dialog box, select the pages you wish to **print and then select "custom scale" and enter 100%**. Then Select the print button in the bottom right corner. The pattern will probably default to a smaller size so this step is very important.

On page 24 of the Beginner pattern booklet, there is a 1" scale. (You will find the scale on page 29 of the Intermediate pattern.) Print this page by itself, first. Measure that scale with a ruler both horizontally and vertically for accuracy.

If everything is accurate, print your pattern pieces, cut them out and sew a purse!

Information with a screenshot of the Adobe print screen is available here:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/sew-powerful-purse-project/printing-the-pattern/1100757126798644/>

What kind of fabric should I use to make a purse? Are there fabric prints that are not appropriate?

You can use any material you'd like as you make the purses. Denim and canvas are good choices, or any heavy-weight material you like. If you use quilting cotton, we recommend using interfacing to add stiffness. Regarding colors and prints, we've found that girls love colorful purses, vibrant florals, geometrics, and creative embellishments! Although we've never had a problem with culturally insensitive prints, hyenas, bats, owls, and cats have a negative connotation in some of the more rural areas of the Country. For this reason, our staff in Zambia, who understand the nuances of their regional culture, manage the distribution in a manner sensitive to those cultural differences.

Can I upcycle fabric into purses?

Fabric stores and quilt shops offer endless selections of new, colorful prints. But don't overlook yard sales, thrift shops, and even the back of your closet for interesting fabrics in **good condition**. When upcycling, consider gently used jeans, curtains, tablecloths, sheets, etc., that can be repurposed into beautiful purses. The purse may be the most special gift a girl has ever received, so please keep quality in mind when upcycling fabrics.

Upcycled items featuring brand names or your favorite cartoon character may leave the girls wondering what it all means. Fabric with colloquial phrases, sports teams, or puns may not translate well either. See above for suggested prints.

It is optional to pre-wash fabrics. Some fabrics contain odors from production or from being in storage. Most girls do not wash their purses, but if they do, pre-washing your fabric will eliminate the risk of shrinkage or bleeding colors.

Amazingly, many dry-clean only upholstery and home decorator fabrics can be pre-washed and dried before making the purse to allow for likely shrinkage.

Should I use interfacing? If so, what kind?

Heavier fabrics like denim, home dec, upholstery, etc., do not need interfacing. If you are using quilting cotton, other light weight fabrics, or something with a bit of stretch, interfacing is highly recommended. Interfacing will add strength and stability to the fabric and give some body to the purse.

A woven interfacing is going to be your best choice. Pellon's SF101 (buy on sale or with a good percentage off coupon), Home Sew's Staflex (homesew.com), muslin, drapery lining, or an ugly cotton you have in your stash will all work well. SF101 and Staflex are both fusibles. For the muslin and cottons, just steam press to your main fabric. It

should hold well enough for sewing purposes. Polyester interfacings are very inexpensive but they also tend to disintegrate quickly and really don't stand up well for purse making.

In general, most main purse pieces will require interfacing. If you are using lighter weight or stretchy fabrics. Most linings will not require interfacing. If you are ever in doubt, just ask in the Facebook group since there are so many variables.

Use of interfacing will take your purse to the next level. It will make for a sturdy, not wimpy, purse that a girl will be able to treasure longer. The girls live in a pretty harsh environment. You can certainly make a purse without interfacing, but it will most likely not hold up very long.

For expert guidance on when to interface, please refer to the pattern booklet.

Is there a different way to make a fabric strap?

Many purse makers find the simplest and sturdiest sewn strap is to cut a piece of fabric 52" long by 4" wide (joining 2 fabric strips to get the length is perfectly fine). Fold the fabric in half length-wise then fold each side in to the center, pressing well at each step. Then edge stitch along both lengthwise sides.

If you'd rather not sew a strap at all, 1" wide webbing is a perfect option. Use either poly or cotton webbing (the latter is more expensive). If using poly, be sure to melt or zigzag/straight stitch the ends in order to prevent fraying. Our friends at HomeSew.com have a great selection of webbing at reasonable prices, including a multi-pack they put together just for Sew Powerful. (Use the code SP10 for a 10% discount on your purchases there.)

Must I follow the pattern?

Yes. The pattern has been professionally designed and thoroughly tested. More than 120,000 purses have been made following its design. You have your choice of making either the Intermediate-A, Intermediate-B or Beginner purses. The flaps are interchangeable so you can vary your purse and use your preferred purse body with your favorite flap. There is LOTS of room for creativity in fabric choices, color combinations, embellishments, strapping and flap/body combinations.

In addition, making the purse the size specified in the pattern is very important for 3 reasons:

- 1 – It is designed to hold the supplies (pads, soap, underwear)
- 2 – The purses are packed 100/box to send to Zambia. Having the correct purse sizes ensures we are able to pack correctly so that when it comes time to distribute the purses to the schoolgirls, we know exactly how many purses we have
- 3 – The girls all want to feel like they have a purse that is equal to what their classmates are receiving

Do I need to include a label? Where do I get them? Where in the purse do I put the label?

There is no requirement to use labels. Some purse makers do use them, though, and we have a template to print your own in our files:

<https://www.facebook.com/download/preview/1458443970885846/>

To use these, print on fabric printer sheets (Buy them with a coupon at Joann's if you're in the U.S.) following directions. Adhere Wonder Under or Heat and Bond to the back, cut into roughly 2" x 1" labels, and adhere to one of the lining pieces as needed. (There are also several ideas for creating your own fabric sheets by doing a Google search.) Please stitch around the perimeter of the label (straight, zigzag, decorative stitch...whatever strikes your fancy) to ensure that the label stays put.

How may I embellish the purses I make?

Although we ask that no metal, heavy, or thick embellishments be used, there are lots of embellishments possible. Please do not add zipper closures or snaps to the purse but creative placements of buttons, ribbon, bows, lace, yo-yos, and machine embroidery will make your purse special. Embellishments are really your opportunity to unleash your creativity when making a purse. Some ideas are available in this tutorial:

<https://www.facebook.com/download/preview/472088643561776/>

Note: We do ask that all embellishments be of minimal bulk (a yoyo with a button should be the maximum height). Please ensure that all embellishments are sewn onto the purse; no pins, please. Glue does not always hold and we want your beautiful creation to last a long time for the young lady who receives it.

May I include anything extra in the purses I make?

No. Please do not include cash, gum, candy, jewelry, a matching wallet or anything other than your encouragement note in the purses you send in or drop off at an approved location. Extra items will be removed and discarded.

What should I write in my encouragement note? Do I have to use the format on the website?

Your note card can be very simple...or not. You do not have to use the Sew Powerful logo format. You may use card stock, scrapbook papers, postcards, index cards, or even a sheet of paper. You may keep it very simple or, if for instance you're a scrapbooker, make something more elaborate. You may laminate your cards or use

some other protection method (Contact paper or packing tape, for instance) but you are not required to do so. Use stickers, a Bible verse, a poem, a memory or observation, etc, if you wish. The important thing is to encourage the young lady receiving the purse you make to study and keep going to school.

For some writing prompts, check out inspirational quotes on Pinterest or via Google, or use the ideas included here:

<https://www.facebook.com/download/preview/1897979226903109/>

The Sew Powerful website has lots of ideas for creating notecards:

<https://www.sewpowerful.org/pages/sp-notecard-tutorials> You may also find lots of ideas in the Files section of the Sew Powerful Purse Project group on Facebook.

If you'd like to print the logo card, four to a sheet, here is a template for you to use:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sewpowerfulpurseproject/permalink/893627820844910/>

Who should use the Service Project Starter Kits? How do I get a Service Project Starter Kit?

Service oriented groups frequently select a charitable organization to benefit from a one time or short time service project. Sometimes students need a service project to fulfill a graduation requirement. For both of these situations Sew Powerful has created a **Service Project Starter Kit**. The starter kit contains everything the group leader needs to orient her group including a step-by-step guide. There is great content as well as links to videos and other sources of information. If you know of a group or student who would like to make purses and/or notecards for Sew Powerful as a Service Project, please have them fill out the request form. They will receive the starter kit by return email. They can find the Service Project Starter Kit on the 'Resources' menu of the SewPowerful.org website: <https://www.sewpowerful.org/pages/service-projects>. On the other hand, if you are an individual who wants to make purses and notecards for Sew Powerful, the best way to get started is to simply download the free purse patterns. The patterns are available from the SewPowerful.org menu under the 'Purse Project' menu or [CLICK HERE](#).

I've finished my purse(s), where do I send them?

There are several good options for getting your purses to Sew Powerful.

Mail Them: To mail purses to Sew Powerful, **do a quick check of the website page for the latest address details before you ship anything:**

<https://sewpowerful.org/pages/where-to-send-your-sew-powerful-purses>. A few important things to consider:

- There is now an option for shipping within the United States called **Give Back Box** that allows you to ship to the Sew Powerful headquarters for a flat rate fee of \$20 (as of April 2024).
- Purse makers in the US **may choose to use USPS** for shipping if they wish.
- **International purse makers** will find several country purse collectors who will consolidate the shipments to Sew Powerful.
- **Guidance, addresses and options for trouble free shipping**, can be found here: <https://sewpowerful.org/pages/where-to-send-your-sew-powerful-purses>

Drop Off: For in-person drop off, if you are attending a Quilt Show or Sewing Expo where Sew Powerful has a booth, bring your purses with you. Just drop them off at our booth to save yourself the cost of mailing. Bonus: you get to meet the really spectacular volunteers running the booth and see purses made by others! We also have dozens of retailers who have agreed to collect purses and ship them on your behalf. To find the location nearest you, check out this page on the SewPowerful.org website: <https://www.sewpowerful.org/pages/where-to-send-your-sew-powerful-purses>

Should I include a Packing Slip with my shipment? Where do I find the Packing Slip?

Purses and Notecards shipped to Sew Powerful are counted, packaged and acknowledged by Sew Powerful volunteers. The inclusion of an official Sew Powerful packing slip with your shipment greatly improves the accuracy of our count and allows us to more quickly get your generous donation on its way to Zambia. The Packing Slip is available on the SewPowerful.org website under the 'Programs' menu: <https://www.sewpowerful.org/pages/purse-packing-slip>. Follow the instructions on the Packing Slip to submit, print, and include your packing slip in your box. We welcome your generous contribution to Sew Powerful with or without a packing slip, but including a packing slip in each box of your shipment certainly is appreciated.

May I include financial donations with my purses?

We would love your financial support of the program! For a gift of \$10 we can fill each purse with the soap and pads (made in Zambia), as well as the underwear that will go to the girl who receives the purse. These funds not only allow the purse program to run

effectively, but also allow us to pay the soap makers and pad makers – creating good paying jobs in the process. The \$10 contribution isn't a requirement, so if you cannot afford it, please don't feel obligated. But a gift of any amount will help us fulfill our mission. The Sew Powerful packing slip now has the option of making your donation of any amount while you are completing the form.

We also request that you not include a check in the box with the purses as they can easily get lost. We recommend you donate online at <https://sewpowerful.org/pages/donate> or mail your donation to this address: **Sew Powerful, 229 Clark Ave, Ste O, Yuba City, CA 95991**

One last note: In order to access files found in the Sew Powerful Purse Project group, you must be a member of the Facebook Group. If you're not already a member, request to join, answer 3 easy questions, and you will be welcomed as an old friend. It's a great place to ask questions, share ideas, and connect with other purse makers around the world.

*Have you signed up to receive the
Sew Powerful weekly newsletter?
Stay up to date with all the
breaking news. Sign up here:*

<http://eepurl.com/butgIr>