



place mat tote

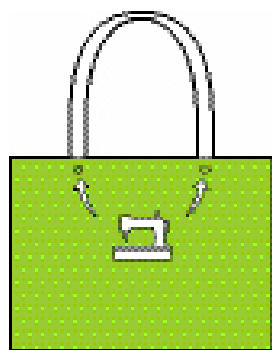
You'll have to look closely to see that this traditional-looking tote is actually made from a few woven place mats. Place mats make great bags! They're the perfect size to work with, and the finished edges make everything go much quicker. Doubled straps help reinforce the bag and make it quite sturdy. Not only are place mats easy to use—they're also readily available and inexpensive. The tote pictured here is fashioned from two striped place mats I picked up at Target for less than \$3 each and a solid-colored mat I found at Pier One for under \$5. At such prices, you can afford to make a tote for everyone seated at your table!



finished measurements
5½" x 17¾" x 14¼" (14cm x 45cm x 36cm)

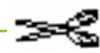
supplies
4½ yd (4m) of 1" (2.5cm) wide cotton or nylon webbing (for straps)
Three 19" x 14" (48.5cm x 35.5cm) place mats (1 contrasting and 2 matching)
Sewing machine
Thread (to match webbing)
Stapler and staples (optional)
Duct tape (optional)

1. Make the "inside" straps: Cut 2 lengths of webbing, each 26" (66cm) long. Zigzag stitch back and forth over the raw ends to keep them from fraying.
2. Attach the inside straps to the two matching place mats: Lay out one place mat with the longer edge at the top. Measure 4½" (11.5cm) in from each side, and pin the straps to the inside top of the place mat, with the ends 1¼" (3cm) from the top edge. (There should be about 8" [20.5cm] between the straps.) Sew each end in place by stitching a small square over it. (The stitching will be covered by the outside strap, so don't worry if it isn't perfect!) Add a strap to the other matching place mat in the same way, making sure that the front and back straps line up.

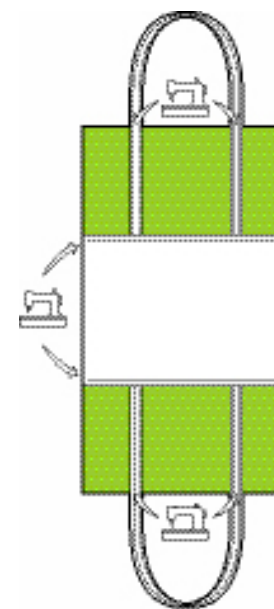


3. Attach the outside straps: Cut two more lengths of webbing, each 51" (129.5cm) long. (Note: You may need to cut these a little longer or shorter depending on

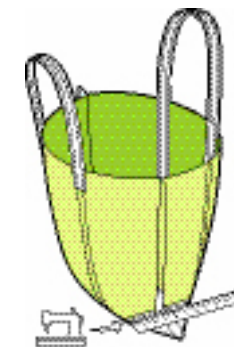
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the size of your place mat.) Pin the outside strap over the inside strap and down the front of the bag, ending at the bottom of the place mat. Use a ruler to check that your straps are straight and an equal distance from the side edges. Topstitch the outside strap to the inside strap, beginning at the top of the place mat and sewing the strap handles together first. Then continue stitching down both sides on the front of the bag, sewing very close to the webbing edges. Repeat on the other matching place mat.



4. Attach the bottom of the bag: Pin the contrasting place mat to the front of the bag, overlapping the other place mat by 4" (10cm). Stitch the contrasting place mat to the bag front across the width of the bag, topstitching close to the edge. Attach the bottom piece to the back of the bag in the same way.
5. Sew up the side seams: Fold the joined piece in half, right sides together, matching top edge to top edge. Pin and sew each side using a ½" (13mm) seam allowance.



6. Make the bottom: With the bag still inside out, flatten one corner to create a triangular point, and draw a 5½" (14cm) line perpendicular to the seam and 2¾" (7cm) from the corner point. Sew along this line. (Note: If the fabric is too thick to go through your sewing machine, staple the seam instead. If you staple the seam, trim the fabric and cover the seam with duct tape to reinforce. Trim the tape along the seam to neaten the edge.) Repeat on the other side. Turn the bag right side out.

a note on needles

The needle you use can make a big difference in how your sewing machine sews. When working on heavier-weight materials, such as place mats or fabric shower curtains, try using a larger needle, such as a "90-14" or a "100-16" (the first number is the European number, followed by the smaller American number). If

your stitches look jagged, you can try switching to a "sharp" needle, which will split the fabric fibers instead of going around them and will help keep your seams straight. But beware: "Sharps" will snag woven materials like T-shirts and knits, so use a "ball-point" needle on these kinds of fabrics. A good rule of thumb: Change your needle after every eight hours of sewing. Your machine and your stitches will thank you!