

# THE DUFFEL BAG PROJECT

Bringing Dignity to Children in Foster Care

A Project of the American Sewing Guild Maryland Chapter

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These instructions are for a square-bottomed bag which is 28" tall and 24" in circumference, is made of heavy-duty fabric, with a long adjustable side-strap and a drawstring opening. The instructions incorporate heavy-duty sewing techniques for use on home sewing machines.

Please do not reproduce these copyrighted instructions or make these bags for sale or profit. You may use or share these instructions to benefit a charity. Always include the attribution to Maryland ASG and the link to our website.

If you use the instructions for the above-mentioned purpose or have received one of these bags, we would love to hear from you. Please send an email to me at [service@marylandasg.org](mailto:service@marylandasg.org). Thank you!

Carolyn Pesterfield, Community Service Chair

Materials	General Sewing Guidelines	Tools
<p><b>Kits contain the following materials provided by the Maryland Chapter of the ASG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 yard of 10.5 or 11 oz. twill/denim or similar weight fabric (60" wide) gender-neutral colors – ie. natural, blue, olive, grey</li> <li>2 – 2 yard lengths of ¼" drawstring</li> <li>2 yards 1" wide belting or webbing (to be called strap for this purpose)</li> <li>2 one-inch D-rings</li> <li>Thread – Heavy duty polyester or nylon (<b>All-purpose thread is not strong enough.</b>)</li> <li>Maryland ASG label</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>All seams are ¾"</b> and must be backstitched/ locked.</li> <li>All straight stitches are 3.5 long</li> <li>Multi-stitch zigzag is 5.0-7.0 wide and 2.0 long</li> <li>Bar tack is 4.0-7.0 wide and 0.6 long</li> <li>Machine tension – may need adjustment at various times</li> <li>RST = right side together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size 14, 16, or 18 Sharp or Jeans/Denim needle (#14 Titanium Topstitch works w/Bernina)</li> <li>Easy Threader Drawstring Tool, Bodkin or large safety pin</li> <li>Rotary cutter</li> <li>Cutting mat</li> <li>6 ½ x 24 inch ruler/Measuring Tape/Yard Stick</li> <li>Sewing machine and serger or sewing machine with zigzag function</li> <li>Tailor's chalk/ballpoint pen</li> <li>General sewing supplies – (pins, scissors, etc.)</li> <li>Presser foot recommendation: all-purpose zigzag foot. An edge-stitch foot is optional.</li> </ul>

## 1. Prep work:

- Cut 2 rectangles measuring 27" x 36" – do not use selvages
- Serge all four sides of each of the rectangles (4-thread stitch is preferred).
- The 36" side becomes the side seams which need to be **marked from the top as follows:**
  - On the wrong side at 2½", 4", and 29".
    - Draw a line across the bag connecting the 2½" marks
    - Draw a line across the bag connecting the 29" marks
- Attach the Maryland ASG label to the **INSIDE** of the bag - Sew it about 2" inside the side seam and 5" down from the top edge. This will keep it away from the side seam and upper edge of the bag where the casing will be sewn.

## 2. Sewing the first side seam:

- With right sides together (RST), sew along the 36" length, from the 4" mark at the top to the bottom of the bag. Be sure to use a ¾" seam allowance.
- Press the seam and 4" opening open.
- Topstitch the 4" opening ½" in from the fold. Reinforce the seam through all layers starting with a bar tack stitch for the first ½ inch below the opening and continuing down the entire seam with a multi-zigzag stitch.
- The second side seam will be sewn **AFTER** the strap is attached.

### **3. Attaching the strap: Use the optional edge stitch presser foot, if you have one:**

Note: The strap will be sewn to the bag through the seam allowances, which will provide reinforcement.

- On the seam you just sewed, measuring from the top, make a mark 8" down and another 28" down. To guide the placement of the strap on the bag, draw a chalk line ½" away from and parallel to the seam line starting at the 8" mark and ending at the 28" mark.
- On the strap, place marks 1" and 5" from one end. Slip on 2 D-rings and fold the strap, matching the 2 marks at 1" and 5" to each other. Pin in place.
- Match the marks on the strap with the 8" mark on the bag, making sure the loose end is sandwiched between the strap and the bag.
- Center the strap over the seam, lining it up with the chalk line parallel to the seamline. Sew the strap to the duffel from the 8" mark at the top to the 28" mark at the lower end of the bag, being careful to catch the seam allowances; pivot and sew across the strap at the 28" mark; pivot and sew up the other side of the strap to the 8" mark; pivot and sew across to the start point; pivot and sew a box with an "X" inside it for reinforcement. Backstitch.
- If you missed sewing through the seam allowance, sew again inside the first row of stitches making sure to catch the seam allowance.
- Reinforce the bottom of the strap by folding the strap over itself and sew a box with an "X" inside it across the width of the strap and through all thicknesses. Backstitch. This will go thru 2 layers of strap, 1 layer of duffel, 1 layer of seam allowance.
- Tip: Slip the long end of the strap through the D-rings to help keep it out of the way while sewing the rest of the bag.

### **4. Sewing the second side seam:**

- RST, using a ¾" seam allowance, sew from the 4" mark at the top to the bottom of the bag.
- Press the seam and 4" opening open. Topstitch the 4" opening. Reinforce the seam through all layers starting with a bar tack stitch for the first ½ inch below the opening and continuing down the entire seam with a multi-zigzag stitch.

### **5. Sewing the pull cord/drawstring casing and inserting the pull cord/drawstring:**

- At the top of the bag press 1¼" to the inside, matching the top of the bag with the line you drew on the wrong side at 2½".
- Wrong side up, sew 1" from the edge but be sure stitches are well within the serged stitches. This will allow room to insert two rows of the pull cord. Less than 1" can make the casing too tight. Reinforce the beginning and end with some reverse stitches.
- Repeat for the second side.
- Cut the 4-yard piece of cord in half and knot all 4 ends to prevent too much fraying.
- With a bodkin or large safety pin, thread the first half through the channel. When you get to the opening at the seam, jump the space and insert it into the other side. Tie the two ends together.
- Starting it at the opposite opening, repeat with the other half of the cord, feeding it through in the same manner.
- There is now a knot and a loop at each opening of the casing. When the knots are pulled in opposite directions the bag will be gathered shut.

### **6. Sewing the bottom seam:**

- RST, match the seams so they are lined up with each other and sew across the bottom of the bag using a ¾" seam allowance. This puts the seams in the middle of the bag.
- While the bag is still inside out, lay it down and smooth it out with the seams in the center.
- The folds on the sides will become the guidelines to square off the bottom. Mark the fold lines with chalk for at least 7" up from the bottom – these markings will be used in Step 7 when the "box" bottom is created.
- Press the bottom seam open and reinforce it with a multiple zigzag as far as you can sew from one end to the other – start and stop approximately 4" from each end.

### **7. Creating the "box" bottom:**

- RST, one side at a time, line up the bottom seam with the 7" chalk line drawn in Step 6. This creates a triangle. (If you pull the seams the triangle will form naturally.)
- The line drawn across the bag at 29" from the top on the wrong side will be perpendicular to the bottom seam and is approximately 12" long. Pin thru the bottom seam line and the fold line which is marked with chalk.
- Sew along the 12" perpendicular line. Sew a second time, about ¼" to the right of the seam just sewn, to reinforce. Repeat for the other side. This creates a box bottom like a grocery bag.
- Serge the excess off, or if you don't have a serger, trim off the excess leaving a ¼" seam allowance and zigzag over the raw edge.

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## Quick Reference

Materials	General Sewing Guidelines	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two 27" x 36" rectangles</li> <li>2 - 2 yard lengths of ¼" drawstring</li> <li>2 yards of 1" webbing for strap</li> <li>2 D-rings</li> <li>Heavy duty polyester or nylon thread (<i>not</i> all-purpose)</li> <li>Maryland ASG label</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>All seams are ¾"</b></li> <li>Straight stitch - 3.5 length</li> <li>Multi zigzag - 2.0 length x as wide as machine allows</li> <li>Bar tack - 4.0-7.0 wide x 0.6 length</li> <li>RST - right sides together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14/16/18 sharp or denim needle (#14 titanium topstitch for Bernina)</li> <li>Easy Threader Drawstring Tool, Bodkin or large safety pin</li> <li>Presser foot recommendation: all-purpose zigzag foot. An edge-stitch foot is optional.</li> </ul>

### 1. Prep work -

- Cut two rectangles 27" x 36" (remove selvages)
- Serge
- Mark from the top: Wrong side - 2½", 4", and 29" - draw lines across 2½" and 29"
- Attach Maryland Chapter ASG label

2. **Sewing the first seam** - starting at the 4" mark near the top, sew to the bottom, using a ¾" seam allowance. Press open. Topstitch opening. Reinforce seam with bar tack and multi zigzag.

3. **Attaching the strap** - mark bag 8" and 28" from the top. Mark strap 1" and 5" from one end. Slip on 2 D-rings. Match to 8" mark on seamline. Sew all around. "X" top and bottom of strap. Backstitch. Fold end over twice and sew across.

4. **Sewing the second seam** - starting at the 4" mark near the top, sew to the bottom. Press open. Topstitch opening. Reinforce seam with bar tack and multi zigzag.

5. **Sewing the pull cord/drawstring casing and inserting the pull cord/drawstring** - fold top edge down to 2½" line. Press. Sew. Knot ends of cords. Pull thru casing. Jump. Pull. Repeat at opposite opening. Knot.

6. **Sewing the bottom seam** - Line up seams with each other and sew ¾" seam across bottom. (*Mark fold lines with chalk to identify sides of bag - see Step 7*). Press open. Reinforce as far as possible with multi-zigzag.

7. **Creating the "box" bottom** - Line up the bottom seam with the 7" chalk line drawn in Step 6, creating a triangle. Pin together. Sew along 12". Sew again ¼" away to reinforce. Serge off excess or cut and zigzag.